

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## ***Death Is Swallowed in Victory*** ***1 Corinthians 15:50-58***

PowerPoint Presentation: *None*

*Keywords: Resurrection, Easter, New Life, Heaven, Transformation*

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Today we again remember the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. It is a time of fun and family. A time to rejoice and to celebrate. It is a time for hope.
- C. But it is also a time that is to cause us to contemplate death. For no resurrection occurs without death—that is self-evident.

Someone has written,

There is a preacher of the old school but he speaks as boldly as ever. He is not popular, though the world is his parish and he travels every part of the globe and speaks in every language. He visits the poor, calls upon the rich, preaches to people of every religion and no religion, and the subject of his sermon is always the same. He is an eloquent preacher, often stirring feelings which no other preacher could, and bringing tears to eyes that never weep. His arguments none are able to refute, nor is there any heart that has remained unmoved by the force of this appeals. He shatters life with his message. Most people hate him; everyone fears him. His name? Death. Every tombstone is his pulpit, every newspaper prints his text, and someday every one of you will be his sermon.

(MacArthur, John F.: *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*. electronic ed.)

- D. Today I want to take you to the single most important chapter regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ and how it impacts the lives of all Christian— 1 Corinthians 15.
  - 1. In the glorious chapter we see Paul develop a theology of the resurrection.
  - 2. And today I want to focus upon the last part of this passage, where Paul puts all of it together.
  - 3. He shows us how the resurrection of Jesus affects every Christian in the future. And he shows us how the resurrection of Jesus Christ should affect us now.
- E. Read 50-58.

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## II.    **Death Swallowed Up in Victory.**

### A.    The Problem (50).

1.    We cannot, as we currently are, inherit the Kingdom of God.
  - a.    Notice the absolute statement that has just been made.
  - b.    The verse is set in a parallelism and is the first of several in this passage. The first and second lines simply repeat themselves. And by doing so they help explain what is meant.
  - c.    The parallel here is that if you are flesh and blood, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God.
2.    Now that means we want to understand a few things.
  - a.    First, what is the Kingdom of God?
    - (1)    It is used in various ways in New Testament.
    - (2)    But here it is speaking of heaven, of eternal life.
    - (3)    By looking at the second line we can see a sense of what heaven is like, it is described as being “imperishable.”
    - (4)    **Revelation 21:3-4** Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, <sup>4</sup> and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be *any* death; there shall no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."
  - b.    Next he tells us that the people who can't inherit this eternal life are “flesh and blood.”
    - (1)    Again, the second line gives sense to what he means by this: “Perishable.”
    - (2)    If you give it a little thought you know that this is a valid description of our life experience.
      - (a)    Babies born with Down's or with deformed bodies.
      - (b)    And those born healthy never stay that way. We all grow and hurt and ache and get sick. . . . and die.

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- (c) We are perishable people, we being the process of dying the moment we enter the world, and our whole life is simply a path toward death.
    - (3) And he says that if we stay in this condition, then we cannot enter God's Kingdom. And that is what we desire.
  - c. To be flesh and blood is simply to be human. It is not speaking of non-Christians who are not saved. But here Paul is talking about those who are Christians [notice "brethren and again in 58], and he is explaining to them that none of them—or us—can enter heaven in the condition we find ourselves.
    - (1) This is because we are designed to die.
    - (2) Our bodies belong to Adam—explain.
      - (a) 1 Corinthians 15:42-45.
    - (3) Point out that if a Christian, who has been forgiven of all sin cannot enter into heaven as he is, how much less can a non-Christian.
- 3. So, here is the question, if we cannot enter heaven as we are then what must happen?
  - a. Fair question isn't it?
  - b. Well Paul gives us the answer to this problem. If the problem is that we cannot enter heaven in the condition we are in, then what is the solution?
- B. The Solution (51).
  - 1. We must be changed, that is the solution.
  - 2. But how? Again we are not talking about a non-Christian.
    - a. If we were, how would we say that the non-Christian must be changed? And the answer would be that God would need to give them a new heart.
    - b. But here we are talking to the Christian and Paul is saying that the saving work of Jesus is not finished.
      - (1) One work of God was to give us new life in Christ.
      - (2) and the forgiveness of all our sins.

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- (3) And the promise of being saved from God's judgment and wrath.
  - (4) And the promise of eternal life in heaven. And Jesus had said that he would return for us and take us to heaven.
  - (5) But here we are finding that we cannot enter heaven as we are.
- c. And so we find that there is more that is to be done for us. We are not in the final condition, but we are in an in between spot if you will.
3. The work that is to be done to us is described as a mystery. It means that it was not clearly seen in the Old Testament.
  - a. There was an understanding of the resurrection in the Old Testament, but it was incomplete.
  - b. Here Paul gives us a much more clear sense of what is to come.
4. Notice that death is not the way of change.
  - a. We tend to think that first we die and then we enter heaven.
  - b. And in doing so we tend to see death as the pathway to heaven, but it is not...Christ is the way of life.
  - c. But that is not quite the description. Our spirits go, but not our bodies. And we are designed to bodily be in heaven.
  - d. If, as a Christian, you died right now, then your spirit would be in the presence of God, but you would be, in a sense, unclothed. And your desire is to be clothed with your body. But your body is rotting and decaying—because it is perishable. And it is not fit for heaven.
  - e. And so, you wait. You wait for that day when you shall be changed.
  - f. But not all who shall be changed will face death. For the day shall come when Jesus shall return for those who are His.
  - g. There is an order that is implied here in the text about how this resurrection occurs. “and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall all be changed.” First the dead, then all who are still alive.” And this is exactly what it says elsewhere.:

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**1 Thessalonians 4:14-17** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

5. This change is something done to us.
6. This change shall be instantaneous (52).
  - a. “Moment” is the word *atomos* which we get the word atom. It speaks of something so small or so fast that it cannot be divided into anything less. It is as fast as fast can be.
  - b. “Twinkling of the eye” just gives us another view of this change.
    - (1) The eye is capable of a huge number of emotions and communications.
    - (2) How many husbands or wives have felt the glare of their spouse as they make fools of themselves.
    - (3) And we have all seen that moment where merry eyes all of the sudden flash and change because of something said or seen.
7. And this change is absolutely necessary (53).
  - a. We must have this done to us. It is not only necessary, but it is part of the promise of the Lord.
  - b. **1 John 3:2** Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.
  - c. The terminology of “put on” is one of putting on clothing.
8. And this change is final—the mortal shall put on the immortal.
  - a. No more aches. No more pain. No more suffering.
  - b. No more persecutions and no more fears.
  - c. No more of what could be called the “human experience.”
  - d. Oh think of what it shall be like.

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- (1) We are so used to things not lasting that we give it little thought.
- (2) We accept change, even though we fight against it. But everything this world offers is but dust. We grasp it, and within moments it falls apart and trickles through our fingers.
- (3) But not then! When you are changed, the lame shall leap, the blind shall see and the dumb shall shout for joy. Old and young alike shall discover life as life was designed to be, filled to the uttermost, with God's glory at the center and our delight in His glory being the very food and drink of our souls.

## C. The Consequence (55-56).

1. Death is destroyed (55).
  - a. Romans 6:1-9.
  - b. Death still is part of our experience. But it is not Christ's anymore. He died, and He rose. And when He rose death lost all its power.
  - c. And for us, we are "in Christ" and therefore we too shall live.
2. Sin is where death comes from (56a).
  - a. Romans 5:12.
  - b. **James 1:13-16** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. <sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. <sup>15</sup> Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. <sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.
  - c. Do you see the point then? Death is still with us, but its sting is removed by Christ.
    - (1) Sin is gone, for the Christian all is forgiven and in Christ we are declared righteous before the Father.
    - (2) Therefore death cannot hold us.
3. Law awakens sin (56b).

## D. The Reason.

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1. God's work for us. "Thanks be to God. . . ."
  - a. We give thanks to God, not anyone else.
  - b. If God had not acted, had not shown mercy, had not loved us with His great and eternal love, then death would be the victor.
  - c. It was God who loved us and sent His Son to die for us.
  - d. It was God who raised His Son from the grave.
  - e. It was God who called us to His Son and saved us from our sins.
  - f. And it is God who gives us this victory (57b).
2. "through our Lord Jesus Christ." But it was through Jesus Christ.
  - a. So we give thanks to God the Father for sending His Son.
  - b. Christ took our sin.
  - c. Christ suffered our penalty.
  - d. And in rising from the grave, Christ destroyed the power of death.
3. But though the power of death is destroyed, the final destruction is yet future.
  - a. Notice verse 54.
  - b. It is temporal, notice the "when" and the "then."
  - c. Only when we are changed from the perishable to the imperishable shall death be destroyed for us.
  - d. If the Lord does not come in our life time, then every Christian here shall die.
  - e. Right now it can seem that death appears to be the victor—but it is not. It is like those who love to persecute our fellow Christians, they seem to win as they destroy the bodies of these poor souls. But the bible says that the vengeance of the Lord shall be upon them all. They only appear to have won.
  - f. That is the fact. And we shall suffer the sting of death, but it shall not hold us, for though we suffer and eventually die, we then enter His glorious presence and we wait.
  - g. We wait for that day when the Lord returns and our bodies rise up and are changed and we are fully like Him.

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h. On that day, death is simply swallowed up. And all things are now new.

## E. The Result.

1. All of this leads Paul to speak in very practical terms.
2. By practical, what I mean, is that the truth of our resurrection is to affect us now.
3. Yes, we are to look forward to that day when we shall be changed, but we are also to live in a certain way now.
4. “Therefore” pulls everything he has just written together into a call to press on, to continue in the good fight, and to finish the race.
  - a. We are to be like Paul, who just prior to being executed tells his beloved Timothy:
  - b. **2 Timothy 1:12** For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.
5. Three things come out in verse 58.
  - a. Be stable/firm.
    - (1) Here Paul puts this in the negative.
    - (2) It is a steadfastness, where we withstand the constant onslaughts of temptation and the lure of this world.
    - (3) Where we refuse to let this world define life and existence and activity and delights for us.
    - (4) We stand are to be a people who refuses to shift our hope from the gospel of salvation.
  - b. Be busy doing the work of the Lord.
    - (1) Here he speaks in the positive.
    - (2) No longer are we refusing to move, but now we are move forward and abounding in our work.
    - (3) What is this work?
      - (a) It is the work of evangelism.
      - (b) The work of instruction and edification.

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- (c) It is the work of loving our neighbors as ourselves.
  - (d) It is to be obeying the Lord's commands out of a love for Him.
  - (e) It is to be gathering together faithfully to encourage one another, to bear one another's burdens, and to help stimulate one another to love and good deeds.
  - (f) It is, to put it all together, to be busy being a light of the gospel to a very dark world. A world that shall not understand and that shall hate us.
- c. Be faith-filled.
- (1) "knowing" we are to live not in the darkness of ignorance, but in the light of understanding.
  - (2) We are to grasp that this world is not our home and death is not our end—life is.
  - (3) We take the great promises and statements of the bible and we hold them close to our hearts.
  - (4) Therefore as we toil, we do it with faith. We do it faithfully, knowing that though no one else will understand, we "know" it is not in vain.
- d. Beloved, the work of a Christian is hard work, but it is never a vain work.

## III. Conclusion.

### What is Love?

By Nichole Henry at age 16

What is Love?

Love is the strongest-  
The most confusing feeling.

One moment I am elated to the highest point in the heavens,  
My joy reaching to the very edges of the galaxy.  
The next I am lying in bed,  
Too stunned, hurt and sad even to cry.  
I vow to give love up,  
Then crumble at the next hint of its promise

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I surrender to its power  
Then cower in a corner when it turns its back on me.

I lose a friend and swear I'll never have another-  
Acquaintances are enough.  
Then I blink and I have a friend  
A real, perfect, loving friendship-  
And I can already see signs of its end.  
I see people I never wanted to see again  
And hold tightly to the ones I have left,  
Even as they slip through my fingers.

I turn around  
And see more people standing there,  
Smiling,  
Covered in the hint of a promise.  
I turn away,  
Run as fast as I can in the opposite direction.  
I won't go through that pain again.  
I can't go through that pain again.

I glance over my shoulder to see how much distance I've gained,  
And when I see no one,  
Relief threatens to envelop me.  
I stumble and fall.  
A hand reaches out of the darkness to help me,  
And as I grasp it gratefully I can see the people I was running from,  
Surrounding me and caring for me,  
Loving me.

I wonder,  
Is it possible to escape love's vicious cycle?  
Is there anything I can do.  
And then I remember  
Why this earthly love has always failed,  
Why it always breaks its promises  
Why it never lasts.  
I wonder why it took me so long.

I remember the stories I was taught  
Of the day sin and death entered the world.

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How sin coats everything,  
Fills everything,  
Consumes everything,  
Controls everything,  
Destroys everything.  
Of course this love always ends!

We are sinful beings  
Our love is a sinful love.  
It is a selfish love,  
A dependent love,  
An ending love,  
A betraying love.  
I fall to my knees crushed under the awful reality-  
If my love is sinful then it will always fail.

Always,  
Every time-  
With no exceptions.  
I wonder if anywhere there is a perfect love  
A love that never dies,  
Never leaves,  
Never ends.  
And then I remember the One who's Name is Love.

He never changes,  
He always has been  
And always will be.  
His name is the Keeper of Promises,  
Gracious Father,  
Savior of an evil people.  
And He offers perfect love-  
For nothing.

I wonder what took me so long to remember  
My Creator and Savior,  
My Redeemer and Friend.  
I turn to the One  
Who's perfect love casts out all fear,

Who is always ready to forgive,

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Who's love is unchanging and unyielding  
Before my utter unfaithfulness.

I remember how His love conquered death,  
And consequently how death cannot end His love.

I look to Love  
And find ever-flowing,  
Never ending,  
Never changing,  
Pure, full, perfect  
LOVE!

And I change.  
My love can also be perfect.  
I need no longer fear to love,  
For I have been bought by the Perfect Love,  
The Love of Christ Jesus my Lord.  
And nothing-  
No one,  
Can snatch me out of love's Hands.