

## **1 Corinthians 15:50-58**

*September 3, 2017*

May 13, 1940 was day that Great Britain's newly named Prime Minister Winston Churchill addressed the House of Commons for the first time.

Churchill received only a tepid smattering of applause, while Neville Chamberlain the outgoing Prime Minister received a raucous ovation. Chamberlain was the man who famously said after striking a deal with Adolf Hitler, "We have peace in our time."

There at the House of Commons he had to give a call to arms because Germany had just attacked France, Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg.

His brief, less than 6 minute address, would be one of the most rousing call to arms ever spoken in English.

"You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory. Victory at all costs—Victory in spite of all terror—Victory, however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival."

With that a spark of hope was lit in the hearts and minds of English citizens that would burn bright through the arduous WWII years.

Victory—seemingly so distant—did eventually come, but it did not come quickly. Victory did not come without cost. Victory did not come without great effort. But the victory that Churchill promised in 1940 did eventually come.

The road was long and hard, but it did come.

1 Corinthians 15 speaks of a victory over a greater and more perilous power than Hitler and his menacing 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich. An enemy as creative as he is diabolical. A potent enemy against whom no one survives.

That great enemy is death.

And 1 Corinthians 15 proclaims the great and final victory of Jesus over death. A proclamation that a victory has been won and battled fought and waged against death—

A victory that did not come quickly.

A victory that at great cost.

A victory that came with great effort.

But a victory nonetheless. A victory after a long, hard road that ensures our survival.

**PROP:** Because Jesus rose from the dead we have victory against the power of death.

Death has no power.

“I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

<sup>55</sup> “O death, where is your victory?  
O death, where is your sting?”

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

## PRAY

We are going to examine the nature of the victory that is ours at the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Victory over—

Pervasive Mortality

## Resolute Enemy Why it matters

### **1. Victory! Over Pervasive Mortality (1 Cor. 15:50-54)**

There is coming a day when a mighty trumpet will sound with a mighty blast the world over. The mighty note will carry throughout the world to signal the last day. The remarkable feature is not that everyone will hear it, but that the dead Christians will hear it too.

“Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”

The day of the trumpet will be the day that our victory over mortality will be finalized. When the trumpet sounds the victory won by Jesus at the resurrection will be transferred to all Christians.

Our Pervasive mortality will be put off and we will have—in the twinkling of an eye—new bodies with pervasive immortality.

This is the sound that will wake and call the dead back to life. And all those saints found on the face of the earth will be changed from these bodies that are wearing out and become imperishable.

In an instant.

The last trumpet will be sounded on the day of Almighty God's choosing. No one will rush or alter that day. He has set the day and the trumpet let the rest of us know at the same time when it is.

Until then, no one will know.

Notice, there is one trumpet, more than a second coming—it is a first going for us. There is no room or picture here of a secret rapture that causes the saints to disappear. Nope.

When the trumpet calls for the dead ones, everyone is going to see and know.

At that trumpet we will take on the bodies that we talked about last week. We will be once and for all:

Imperishable  
Glorious  
Powerful

Notice this text does not give us a sense of the timing of this great trumpet blast. It is enough if we know that God has the day marked and we will know when it arrives.

Any teacher who claims to know when Jesus is going to come back—is wrong. It is always wrong to predict when he will return.

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” Matthew 24:36 (ESV)

Nobody.

We might not know when all this is going to happen, but we do know what is going to happen.

“For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”

How Paul?

Vs. 53,

“For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

What I didn't get that...

“<sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality...”

Verses 53 and 54 essentially say the SAME thing so that we understand that we must trade in these old decaying bodies for the imperishable and immortality.

He is so bent on getting the message across of the victory that is ours in Christ that he makes sure we understand that part of our victory means that we get new, imperishable bodies.

Those that are alive are going to be changed too after Jesus calls the dead ones to himself.

Did you notice the word? Sleep.

That is a euphemism that seems highly inappropriate. When you lose a friend, husband, brother, mother, grandmother and someone says—no, no they are really asleep.

Offensive if it is not true.

Christians who die sleep but will one day be roused by the trumpet of God.

We lack the power to call anyone back from beyond the gates of death, but Jesus is not so limited. When he calls no one can turn a deaf ear.

How powerful is his call?

Powerful enough to call back the dead and finalize humanity's victory over mortality, forever.

That is genuine hope. On your last day you will know—Christian that it is not your last day—but your last day in a perishable body.

That is a victory worth celebrating.

Otherwise death is crushing.

Years ago, I watched a movie named The Perfect Storm. I don't remember much about the movie

except I hated the ending. It was about a fishing boat that was destroyed off the Atlantic coast and everyone dies.

As one guy bobs up and down with the deadly waves—and this is the end—we hear the following dialogue.

*Christina? Christina, can you hear me? I don't know if you can, but I'm talking to ya, baby. Do you know how much I love you? I loved you the moment I saw you. I love you now, and I'll love you forever. No goodbye. There's only love, Christina. Only love.*

And the audience is supposed to walk away and say—that was heart warming.

Except it isn't.

Death erases love. There is no hope in that. There is no victory in a man dying alone in the ocean. That is delusional.

We celebrate a better victory. The victory of Jesus risen, returning and calling us to himself.

Death is beaten, we are victorious.

As Paul thinks about the sounding of the trumpet he sings a song celebrating the death of death—

**2. Victory! Over A Resolute Enemy (1 Cor. 15:54-57)**

The reason we will become immortal and imperishable is because our the resolute enemy, death was be finally defeated.

Victory over the power of death. About time.

The whole idea causes Paul to write a song.

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

How many people has death swallowed?

Humanity bears the marks of death in its family tree. Death has swallowed all of our ancestors. None have escaped. All have been swallowed.

There is no place to run from death.  
Fly to the stars and death can reach you.  
Swim the ocean and death can catch you.  
Ride the roads and death will find you.

Death finds and swallows all.

No one is exempt from death.  
The regal and royal are swallowed in death.  
The anonymous and lonely are swallowed in death.  
The good and the bad are swallowed in death.  
The young and the old are swallowed in death.

Death wears many faces.

Death catches everyone by many means.

Some are claimed suddenly.  
Some are claimed slowly.  
Some are ravaged by disease.  
Some are ravaged by abuse.  
Some are claimed by war.  
Some are claimed by hopelessness.  
Some are claimed by hatred.

Death swallows all.

How many—

Families destroyed?  
Never got to say good bye?  
Have a hole in their life to today?  
How many die unmourned?

The sad reality is that death always, at some point catches and swallows everyone. Always.

I am death, destroyer of worlds.

Why is Paul singing and mocking death? Death is very good at its job.

Look at verse 57,

**“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

The words matter here.

God is one who gives the victory. We do not earn it. We do not merit it. We do not fight for it. We are given the victory God—how?

Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The reason that Paul can sing and we should sing right along with him is that Jesus killed death. Jesus died.

Death came for Jesus and swallowed him up too. Upon the cross, Jesus died.

If our message was only the death of Jesus we have nothing to mock death about. If death can claim our savior and our Lord, death will surely swallow us.

But the victory we have through Jesus is this—

Though he was swallowed by death he returned to life, ensuring his total victory.

Having died once, having received the full force and power of death and dying...but living again that means he cannot die.

Even more, his life is an invitation for shelter.

There is no place to run from death but run to Jesus and he can protect you. Fly to Jesus and death cannot reach you.

No matter what face death wears when he comes to you, he disguises himself as an all-powerful force. In Christ, he is not.

One greater than death has come. One has died and thereby sounded the alarm for the defeat of death.

Death is dead.

So if you are claimed—

Suddenly

Slowly

By disease

By abuse

By war

By hopelessness

By hatred

Jesus can and will protect you. Death may still swallow all, but only Jesus can protect you. Death may pierce us all but there is no sting left in it for us.

Christians, Death will swallow you, but it will not be able to hold you. Death will pierce you but it cannot sting you.

Before Jesus' resurrection, death would swallow and hold forever its victims. It wasn't just a forced incarceration, but it was unremittingly painful. It stung.

But the resurrection of Jesus was the beginning of the end for death. Jesus WAS swallowed but he broke the bonds of death. It could not hold him.

Jesus was stung with the venomous force of penalty of sin. He tasted death and writhed in its poisonous grip.

But he got up out of the tomb.

And because he got up we have victory and will one day get up too.

Death will swallow you—but Jesus is risen—death cannot hold you.

Death will pierce you—but Jesus is risen—death cannot sting you.

Death is beaten, we are victorious.

You might say—some victory. I don't feel very victorious. I feel like a failure. I struggle with so many things in my life that there is no way that I am victorious.

Of course you don't feel victorious—no one does all the time.

Look again at verse 57,

**“But thanks be to God, who (WILL) give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

**NOPE.**

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This does not say that the victory that is ours lies somewhere in the distant future OR that our that our victory lies trapped in the distant past, but that Jesus gives us victory TODAY.

Now.

If you are a Christian, Victory is yours today.

You might even render the verse, ‘he daily gives us the victory.’ And I will add—whether you feel victorious or not.

And this is one of the great reasons that the resurrection is so very urgent. Jesus has won the victory by rising from the dead, and he shares with us the spoils of that victory.

Do you know what that means?

We cannot lose.

Yes, we will lose in a thousand different ways throughout our lives but we cannot and do not lose permanently.

Or stated another way, None of our losses are permanent. None of our losses are for good.

The message of the resurrection may not change how you feel about yourself, but let it change how you

think about Jesus. He has won no matter how things seem for you.

His resurrection means that though we lose our losses will be reversed—because Jesus is alive.

What do I mean?

I'm not trying to say that we should pretend that the losses in this life shouldn't hurt. But I am saying that these losses are not hung on us forever.

Why?

He lives.

He gives the victory.

We may lose our health—but in Christ we will be restored to new life and immortality.

We may lose our money—but in Christ you will find that he can and will provide for your needs.

We may lose our friends—but in Christ you will find a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

We may gain enemies—but in Christ you will find that one day he will shame our enemies before our eyes.

We may lose energy—but in Christ you will find that there are times that he empowers you to walk and not grow weary.

We may gain discouragement—but in Christ we will find that we always have reason hold onto hope.

We may lose a great many things—but because Jesus lives—those losses do not make us losers.

Jesus lives and through him we have victory. We know that the victory we have is a victory he has given us.

Because he lives—there are some things we cannot lose.

- We cannot lose his love.
- We cannot lose our forgiveness.
- We cannot lose our reward.
- We cannot lose grace.
- We cannot lose our righteousness.
- We cannot lose our savior.
- We cannot lose our present or future despite our past.

The resurrection of Jesus gives us victory today.

Now, the losses in life without Jesus are permanent and for keeps. Are you losing? You don't have to. You don't have to be special or good to have victory in Christ—just willing.

Willing to come to Jesus and admit you are a sinner and willing to accept his forgiveness and his victory can be yours too.

So what? What does this mean? It is good that we don't have to face eternal death, but what about our life today?

### **3. Victory! Why it matters today (1 Cor. 15:58)**

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

Therefore.

Therefore.

Therefore, what?

Do you see what he is doing? He is saying: Therefore, because Jesus is risen, death is dead—here is what that means. Here is how to live—

Here is what it means to live as a Christian with a resurrected savior who gives us the victory today—

Vs. 58,

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

How?

Be steadfast/immovable

Abounding in the work of the Lord

Knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain

He doesn't say—because you don't have to fear death you don't really have much to do in your remaining life on earth. Just wait and be rescued.

Just sit around and—yawn—I'm saved. I'm good. I can just wait.

No.

Neither does he say—you were made for something more than heaven. Be so consumed with the world you live in and give no thought for the world to come. Heaven is overrated—in fact I can build heaven on earth right here, right now.

No.

Rather, Because Jesus lives—we now know how to live.

**“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”**

Notice who he addresses this to—‘my beloved brothers (and sisters)’.

- You cannot enjoy the victory of Christ alone—

He is addressing the brothers and sisters at Corinth. The victorious life in the resurrected Christ is a corporate reality. You need others, others need you. The local church is to be like family.

He doesn't just say—brothers and sisters as a rhetorical device—he is reminding us that we are family.

Whatever local church you are a part of is your family.

We Americans need this reminder because we are apt to think that he is talking to us individually. The scripture is addressing us as a body.

Unless you are meaningfully connected to a local church of believers in Christ you will not be able to fully enjoy the victory Christ has won for you.

He is going to go on and say—

Be immovable  
Abound in good work  
Know nothing is wasted

You won't be able to live that life if you are disconnected from others. In other words,

- Without others (right others) You won't be immovable—you will be fickle.
- Without others (right others) You won't abound in good works.
- Without others (right others) You will not have the assurance that nothing is wasted.

I don't know how you are connected—You could be present in body and absent in heart. You could be absent in body and heart.

This victorious life is for us to live together.

If you are a part of this church it is imperative for you to be involved with others and allow others to be involved with you. It takes time, but it is worth it.

How?

Opportunities to serve  
Small groups to connect with  
We are here every Sunday  
Bible Studies to join  
Prayer groups to join

- Who else are we to be together?:  
Steadfast/Immovable

We live the victory when we stand immovable. What does that mean?

We are to be immovable together when it comes to holding to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are to be immovable when it comes to following Jesus no matter how hard the road. We are called to be immovable when it comes to fighting for unity.

In other words—we are to be immovable together in the matters that matter most.

When the Romans would march into battle—the army would stand shoulder to shoulder and when the arrows started to fill the sky—they would interlock their shields.

They would be able to withstand the thrusts of their enemy by standing immovable together. No one is ever immovable alone.

We live in a world that attacks us and what we believe with fine sounding arguments—

So we stand—holding onto Jesus together.

Reminding each other—

There is always reason to hope.  
There is real forgiveness for grievous sin.  
There is a real danger in division.  
Jesus is worth it.

Because Jesus lives and we are victorious we are called to stand immovable—but also:

- Abounding in the work of the Lord

Yes, we stand immovable on primary truth—but that doesn't mean we stand still. No, There is the work of the Lord to do.

And so much opportunity!

There are beleaguered saints to build up.  
There are unbelievers to pray for.  
There are co-workers to tell about Jesus.  
There is money to give.  
There is unity of the Spirit to maintain.  
There are churches to plant.  
There are shut-in's to visit.

There are new people to have to dinner.  
There are old friends to stick by.  
There are sins to overlook.  
There trials to fight through together.  
There is hope to rejoice in.  
There people to rejoice with.  
There are people to weep with.  
There is good to give in response to evil.

Because Jesus lives, we are can and should abound in  
the work of the Lord.

We stand immovable in truth  
We abound in the work of the Lord

And,

- Knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain

What labor?  
What work?

It is whatever the Lord has called you to do. That  
Labor—that we can do heartily—not one ounce of that  
is wasted. He doesn't specify the labor that we are to  
do—but just what we are called to do.

This means—every Christian is IN ministry—not just  
pastors.

What is your ministry?

Stay at home mom?  
A mechanic?

An engineer?  
A truck driver?  
A police officer?  
A student?  
A teacher?  
Retired?

Whatever you do—wherever you are—you are there for the resurrected Jesus. And he sees. He rewards. Your work is not wasted.

Jesus has given us a great victory. Death is executed—life finally makes sense.

No loss is permanent—victory is ours today in Jesus.

**PRAY**