

1 Corinthians 15 and the Resurrection – Pt. 5 – Eternal Victory

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Corinthian church was a struggling church.
 - A. It struggled with pride, division, personal disputes and how to deal with them.
 - B. It struggled with how holiness demanded their separateness from the world, especially in relationship to immorality and idolatry, and how to deal with those who refused to be holy.
 - C. It struggled with their assemblies and how to conduct them in holy and orderly fashion.
 - D. It struggled with completing the works God desired and that they had even promised to do.
 - E. This was a church struggling to be focused upon why it existed, why they were Christians, why they assembled, and why they served.
2. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul sought to refocus them by reminding them that the gospel upon which their faith and service were built is the gospel of the resurrection.
 - A. And that resurrection is why they exist, why they are Christians, why they assemble, and why they serve the Lord, **though some there had apparently rejected it.**
 - B. And I believe the truth of the resurrection is something we need to be reminded of regularly in order for us to know why we exist, why we follow Christ, worship, and serve Him (Phil. 3:8, 10-11 – “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,...¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”).
3. To remind the Corinthians (and us) and bring them back to the truth of the gospel concerning the resurrection and what that means to Christians, the Spirit through Paul has:
 - A. Shown how if there is no resurrection, then Jesus is not raised, there is no gospel, or good news, to be preached seeing there is no salvation in Christ.
 - B. Presented how the risen Christ is the firstfruits, or the assurance, of our resurrection.
 - C. Explained how just as a seed planted in the ground produces a completely new body, so our fleshly bodies, formed in the fashion of Adam, that we plant in the ground will be raised and changed into spiritual ones fashioned after the resurrected Christ, and ready for God’s eternal kingdom.
4. In the final section of 1 Corinthians 15 we will consider Paul’s concluding instructions concerning:
 - A. Why the resurrection requires that our bodies be changed
 - B. How the resurrection brings victory to God’s people
 - C. The life required and inspired by the hope of the resurrection

BODY:

I. The resurrection requires change (15:50-53).

- A. Flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s kingdom (15:50).
 1. *Now I say this* emphasizes the importance of what follows.
 2. What follows is that *flesh and blood*, our physical bodies, which are perishable cannot inherit God’s imperishable kingdom, or heaven.
 - a. *Flesh and blood* was used here of our bodies because it was the Jewish way of addressing human frailty because both are peculiarly liable to decay—they are what goes first.
 - b. That is important because if we were raised to again inhabit perishable bodies that die, what good would it do us to enter God’s *imperishable, eternal*?
 - c. We need something new, something different from this body made for this physical world, to live in the eternal realm.
- B. The resurrection *mystery* is revealed (15:51-53).
 1. *Mystery* refers to what cannot be known without God revealing it.
 2. This mystery revealed includes how not everyone will have died, or be asleep, when the resurrection takes place, but all will be changed.

- a. So, whether one is *alive or dead*, all will be *changed*.
- b. This is important because questions would have naturally arisen about those still alive and still inhabiting “flesh and blood,” which cannot inherit God’s kingdom.
- c. So, the body that we have now will necessarily be changed, whether alive or dead.
- 3. Paul then reveals the mystery of how and when this will happen (15:52).
 - a. It will happen *instantaneously*.
 - i. It will be in a *moment*, or flash (*atomos*), which means *what cannot be divided*, or the shortest time possible. We get our word *atom* from it.
 - ii. It will happen in the *twinkling (rhipē) of an eye*, or the time it takes to cast a glance, or to flutter an eyelid.
 - b. It will happen at the *sounding of the last trumpet* when Christ returns (1 Thess. 4:16 – “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 will rise first.”).
 - c. So, at the sounding of the trumpet when Christ returns, in a flash the *dead will be raised imperishable*, and *those who are alive will be changed into imperishable beings*.
- 4. Paul emphasizes the importance of this change at Christ’s return (15:53):
 - a. The perishable and mortal body we have **must** put on the imperishable and immortality.
 - i. God has to clothe us in incorruptible and undying bodies for us to enter the realm of incorruption and eternity.
 - ii. Do not miss the beauty of what is said. The resurrection, therefore, means the cessation of all corruption and death and pain and suffering connected to them.
 - b. Though this indicate change for all, it also *implies* that our identity will remain.
 - i. For, though we put on a different set of *clothes*, we are still the ones wearing them.
 - ii. So, in the resurrection God will exchange for **you** will this corruptible/mortal body for an incorruptible, immortal one fit for the eternal spiritual realm.
 - iii. But who you are, your identity, will remain.

II. The resurrection change brings victory (15:54-57)

- A. Note how *when* we are changed, *then* we will be victorious (15:54-55).
 - 1. So, victory *follows* Christ’s returns and change of the resurrection.
 - a. Until the day of Christ’s return, death and decay still hold some power over us. Our bodies still deteriorate, die, and decay.
 - b. Only at the resurrection will we experience victory in its fullness when death can no longer assault the living and when those who have died are raised for eternity.
 - 2. The resurrection fulfills God’s promise to defeat death.
 - a. For, 15:54-55 references O.T promises of death’s defeat.
 - i. In 15:54 Paul references Isaiah 25:8 which says, “He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken.”
 - 1) The resurrection means rising to eternal joy when tears and pain cease!
 - 2) At that time our reproach will be removed before all peoples everywhere! Those who have sneered and fought against Christ will know we were right!
 - ii. In 15:55 Paul references Hosea 13:14 where death is personified as a defeated enemy and a scorpion that has lost its sting.
 - b. Because of the resurrection death has been robbed of its power and is totally defeated.
- B. But as is always true, Paul is quick to point out that this victory is through Christ and His sacrificial death for our sins (15:56-57).
 - 1. Death gained its sting in **sin** (15:56a).
 - a. Sin is what brought death into the world.
 - b. And, dying in one’s sin, or as a sinner, is to face condemnation.
 - i. Jn. 5:28-29 – “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice,²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to

- a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”
- ii. Rev. 21:8 – “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”
 - c. All face the first death, but then sinners are raised to face the eternal second death in hell.
2. Sin gained its power through the law (15:56b)
 - a. That is true because sin is violation of God’s law.
 - i. 1 John 3:4 – [HCSB] “Everyone who commits sin also breaks the law; sin is the breaking of law.”
 - ii. Romans 4:15 – “For the law produces wrath. And where there is no law, there is no transgression.”
 - b. By setting before us the holy standard of law we ought to reach, that law becomes sin’s stronghold, making sinners of us all and condemning us all when we fall short.
 3. Christ has brought us victory over sin and death (15:57).
 - a. He did this by sending Jesus to become a man to die for our sins (Heb. 2:14-15 – “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”).
 - b. We need to be so very thankful to God because He freely **gives** us that victory through Jesus.
 - c. *Gives* is present tense which means that we live in victory through Jesus as we are forgiven of sins and provided hope of our glorious resurrection from the dead.
 - d. So, we should be so thankful to God because as Paul said, Jesus has “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

III. The resurrection life (15:58)

- A. *Therefore* shows that what Paul is about to say is based upon what has already been said.
 1. What has been said is that the resurrection is at the heart of the gospel, that it will happen, and that the reality of resurrection is our hope of salvation and eternal life.
 2. Therefore, knowledge of the resurrection to come, and faith based on that knowledge, is to produce a life very different from those who do not have this hope.
 3. That is a question we need to ask ourselves...what the resurrection has done to change my life.
- B. The resurrection motivates us to devote ourselves to God’s service.
 1. We should be steadfast and immovable.
 - a. To be steadfast (*hedraios*) means to be firm, settled.
 - b. To be immovable (*ametakinētos*) echoes this idea, indicating that we are to be firm in our position in Christ, not to be moved away from our faith and conviction.
 - c. So, whether we are faced with temptation, evil, trials, suffering, death, loss, or heartache, we must not be moved away from our confidence in Christ.
 2. We should be always abounding in the work of the Lord.
 - a. As those who live with confidence in the resurrection, we are to put our whole selves into doing the work of the Lord—work that is ultimately rewarded after this life!
 - b. We can do this because we should know that our *labor/toil is not in vain in the Lord*.
 - i. What we do for God has value toward our eternal salvation.
 - ii. You may be ignored or passed over in the workplace, relationships, etc., but not with God. He sees and knows and will reward our efforts!
 3. If we have stopped abounding, overflowing, excelling, and increasing in the work of the Lord, then we have stopped appreciating the grace of God seen in the resurrection of Christ.

CONCLUSION:

1. God offers you victory over sin and death today in Jesus Christ and His grace to forgive your sins.
2. So, what will you do with that offer today, right now?
3. Will you come to Jesus in faith, trusting him as your Lord and Savior, giving your life to him and repenting of your sins, confessing His name, dying to self and sin, and being buried and resurrected to newness of life with Christ in water baptism that you might live with hope of eternal life through the resurrection at Christ's return?
4. Your decision is truly a matter of life and death, of eternal hope or eternal loss. What will you do?