WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR VICTORY?

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

Key Verse 55

 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

**Introduction**



 President Trump had an aspiration projection that we would go back to our workplaces by Easter Sunday. But he extended social distancing orders till the end of April. Dr. Anthony Fauci pointed out that we are not supposed to determine the date of lifting up “Stay at home” rather it is the virus that determines the timeline. But Isaiah 54:16b reads, “it is **I** who have created the destroyer to wreak havoc.” Neither our president nor the virus set the time, but it is our Creator God who created and withdrew the destroyer. It is because everything is under His control even our birth, death, and pathogen. At this global pandemic, people are gripped with fear and anxiety. But at this time we believers are supposed to go back to our basic and fundamental truth, that is to live by God’s dimension and His plan. His plan is to save mankind from sin and death through the second Adam. “And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.” (verse 49) If we bear in this life the image of Christ in our natural bodies, we also shall bear His image in glory. All the remnants of Adam are finally stripped away. As we become like Him death so also we become like Him in resurrection. It means we will be holy like Jesus. We will be obedient like Jesus. We will be glorious and powerful like Jesus. This is the real hope of every believer. We praise God for blessing us with the resurrection hope in the midst of unprecedented pandemic. It is said that there are 8 strains due to the colorful mutation of Covid-19. It means that those who were infested and recovered from it are possibly infected with a different strain down the road. Our battle does not end until the time of our glorification that is the resurrection. May the Lord help us to renew our hope!

1. Read verses 50-53. What must take place, that our earthly body made of flesh and blood may inherit God’s kingdom? (50-51) What will happen to our bodies at the last trumpet? (52) What are the characteristics of our new bodies? (53)

1-1, Read verses 50-53.

50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

1-2, What must take place, that our earthly body made of flesh and blood may inherit God’s kingdom? (50-51)

***50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—***

* Here Paul says about a mystery. A mystery in Scripture is something that was previously hidden, but is now revealed by God.
* Paul has already told us in part what will happen to those who have died. When Christ returns, their bodies will be raised and made imperishable.
* He also reveals to us what happens to those who are still living when he returns. He says, “we will not all sleep” meaning we will not all die.
* When Jesus comes again, the believers who were dead will be coming with Him to receive their resurrection bodies.
* So now those who have died in Christ and those who are still alive when He returns, **we all will be changed.**

1-3, What will happen to our bodies at the last trumpet? (52)

***52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.***

* The present dead in Christ are with the Lord in a spiritual body, awaiting their final resurrection body. Or because of the nature of timeless eternity, they have received their resurrection bodies already because they live in the eternal “now.”
* In a flash. In the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. Those who have already died will rise first, then those who are still alive.

**References**

 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 reads,

 *Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

2 Corinthians 5:8 reads,

 *Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 For we live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

1-4, What are the characteristics of our new bodies? (53)

***53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.***

* It is the sure thing with the word “must” that we believers must be clothed with the imperishable to become immortality.
* Our new bodies are imperishable and immortal in nature. Our earthly body is very fragile. It is vulnerable to genetic disorder, pathogens, and harmful environment.
* Also our bodies already and inevitably degenerate over 20 years old. But our new bodies are like that of Jesus Christ who became the first fruit of all of us.
* May the Lord help us look forward to being clothed with such a glorious body and live with Jesus forever and ever. Amen.

1. Read verses 54-55. What does it mean by “Death has been swallowed up in victory”? (54, Isaiah 25:8) What can we learn from the apostle Paul? (55, Hosea 13:14)

2-1, Read verses 54-55.

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”[[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28773h)]

55

“Where, O death, is your victory?

 Where, O death, is your sting?”[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28774i)]

2-2, What does it mean by “Death has been swallowed up in victory”? (54, Isaiah 25:8)

***54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”[***[***h***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28773h)***]***

* Simply speaking, a resurrected body is not a resuscitated corpse. It is a new order of life that will never die again. Death is defeated by resurrection.
* As long as we remain in these mortal bodies, we experience the sting of death, because we cannot satisfy the righteous standard of God’s law.
* The Bible declares, “The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23a).” Not merely physical death, but spiritual death and separation from God in hell for eternity.
* Another characteristic of death is fear. As the virus spreads globally or nationally, the fear of death spreads and people are afraid of losing loved ones and assets.
* The most important command in the Bible. It is to love God and love others. But the most frequently repeated command in the Bible is “Do Not be afraid.”
* It is because the fear of death can make even the believers cowards. Fatalism, despair, sorrow, and anxiety are all just elements of death.
* What hope do we have when death can claim the life of anyone at any time? Our only hope is in Christ Jesus our Lord because only he claimed the victory.
* When Jesus proclaimed on the cross, “It is finished.” (Jn 19:16b). Our hope was secured in Jesus Christ who died and raised from the dead.
* The righteous requirements of the law were fulfilled through the blood of Christ. And his resurrection was the receipt proclaiming paid in full!
* The words written by Isaiah are here assured to come true. When Christ comes again, the perishable will be clothed with the imperishable. The mortal, with immortality.

2-3, What can we learn from the apostle Paul? (55, Hosea 13:14)

***55 “Where, O death, is your victory?***

 ***Where, O death, is your sting?”[***[***i***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28774i)***]***

* The song of Christians shall be “ ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’.”
* Now if we hold firmly to the gospel we have believed as Paul said at the beginning of this chapter, then we have nothing to fear from death.
* Neither do we need to wait for His return before we can experience God’s victory over death. It is because He is already here.
* He is with each of us through the Holy Spirit every day. We have no resurrection bodies yet, but even now we can experience Christ’s victory over death and sin.
* It is because we have One who lives within us. That same resurrection power that allowed Jesus to defeat death is available to us through Him.
* His victory has become our victory. Thanks be to God who has imparted to us Christ Victory through faith in Him!
* This victory does not come through our hard work. This victory comes to us only as we build our life on the victory that Christ attained on our behalf.
1. Read verses 56-58. What is the reason for our thanksgiving to God through Jesus Christ? (56-57) What should be our attitude in serving God’s redemptive work? (58a) Why? (58b)

3-1, Read verses 56-58.

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

3-2, What is the reason for our thanksgiving to God through Jesus Christ? (56-57)

***56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

* The resurrection proves that we are not under the law any longer. We are no longer subject to the penalty of the law (death), and we are set free from sin.
* Sin is the ultimate cause of death ([Romans 6:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/romans/6/23/s_1052023), [Genesis 2:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/genesis/2/17/s_2017)), and the result can’t be defeated unless the cause is defeated.
* Paul here links together sin, death, and our identification with Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Romans 6:2-14 reads,

 *By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+6&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28075a)*] that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. 14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

* Paul also used the word ‘us’. He gives ‘us’ the victory. Resurrection faith is not only within each of us who believe, but also among ‘us’ as the body of Christ.
* We not only experience victory through Christ individually but we experience the greater victory together. We also have victory as we work together as one body.

3-3, What should be our attitude in serving God’s redemptive work? (58a)

3-4, Why? (58b)

***58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.***

* Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.
* Even if your labor is vain to everyone else, and everyone else doesn’t appreciate what you do for the Lord, your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
* It doesn’t matter if you get the praise or the encouragement. But resurrection means that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

**Conclusion**

 Christ’s resurrection changes everything. If we rely on the victory that Christ has attained on our behalf, then we can enjoy all the fruits of labor in the Lord. We can, die to our sinful nature, and plant our life seed into His holy ground where it shall grow to bear the likeness of the man from heaven and one day we receive our glorious resurrected body fit to enjoy Christ and his kingdom forever and ever. What a hope it is! That is why we never lose our sense of direction as the basic and fundamental matter that stems from our God and his eternal plan. This plan is already firmly established in Jesus. Nothing is fearful as long as we remain in Him! **One word: Death is swallowed up in victory!**