

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

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[0:00] Okay, we're going to get this morning right to the teaching, so I'm going to ask you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

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1 Corinthians chapter 15. So as we've been doing now for a number of weeks, we are preaching a sermon from the Bible reading plan from this week.

So from our reading this week, I thought that we may all be well served by a careful consideration of our blessed future hope. Paul has been laboring in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 to give evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in verses 1 through 11.

1 Corinthians chapter 15. To explain the implications of denying the resurrection in verses 12 through 19. 2 Corinthians chapter 15. To speak to the plan and the incentives of the resurrection in verses 20 through 34.

[2:08] And a description and explanation of our resurrection bodies in verses 35 through 49. Paul concludes this chapter with a proclamation of the wonderful victory that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Because Jesus has been raised, we too shall be raised. Our hope is expressed by the epitaph engraved on the headstone of Benjamin Franklin, penned by Franklin himself.

I found this week. I don't know if you've ever seen this. He wrote, and this is engraved on his headstone, the body of Franklin printer. Like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here food for worms.

But the work will not be lost, for it will appear once more in a new and more elegant edition, revised and corrected by the author. Now, while we cannot be sure this sentiment was true of its author, we can be sure that it will be true for all who place persevering faith in Jesus Christ.

If we are in Christ, we will have a resurrection transformation and a resurrection triumph. And in light of these two future realities, we will presently live lives of resurrection thanksgiving.

[3:28] So you may have caught it there, the alliteration, as you know, good Baptists like to do. So that's our outline for this morning's text. Number one, resurrection transformation. Number two, resurrection triumph.

And number three, resurrection thanksgiving. So first, resurrection transformation. In verse 50, Paul begins this section by telling us that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

This, of course, in light of the rest of chapter 15, cannot be a denial of bodily resurrection. What Paul means by flesh and blood is to say our human nature as we know it, our mortal bodies, these bodies that we currently inhabit.

It is this state in which we presently exist that cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Now, the kingdom of God here, the context helps us to understand, is not referring universally to God's present reign over the cosmos or to his rule brought to bear in the human heart, right, as it's used in other places in the scripture, but rather to his consummate reign on the glorious future day referenced in Revelation chapter 11 and verse 15, where loud voices declare, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

That's what our text looks forward to, and that's what Paul is saying that our flesh and blood cannot inherit. The human body in its present fallen state is perishable.

[5:09] It is marred by sin. It is aging, deteriorating, and will one day cease to be. Now, some of you are too young to feel this reality, but I promise that one day it will become a stark reality for you.

You will know that your body is falling apart some quicker than others. Our perishable bodies cannot inherit the imperishable, Paul says.

So if we have any hope of inheriting the kingdom of God, we must be transformed. Paul has been making this case in the previous verses.

Because Christ was raised, we too will be raised. He said of our resurrection bodies in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 42 and following, So it is with the resurrection of the dead.

What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power.

[6:14] It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. And beloved, this is glorious truth.

We will one day have new, uncorrupted, and incorruptible bodies. Just as those in Christ Jesus have souls set free from the bondage of sin, we will one day have new bodies that are set free from the bondage of sin.

If you have suffered this week from any ailment, if you have felt any discomfort whatsoever this week, then I think we all could find ourselves in that place. This text should be of great encouragement to you.

One day you will suffer no more. We will be imperishable and immortal. Verse 53 says, For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. Paul inserts a further encouragement in verses 51 and 52. He says, Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

[7:30] 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. Paul tells us that when Christ returns, some believers will not have to die first before they will be transformed.

On that wonderful day when Christ returns, the trump will sound and he will come back. And those who are already dead will be raised, those who are in Christ, and those who are presently alive will be transformed.

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 16 and 17, For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with him in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

Whether we suffer the decay and death of our mortal bodies, or if the Lord returns before deterioration takes us, we have great hope in resurrection transformation.

[8:45] Jesus said in John chapter 14 and verse 3, And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

This is the great and high hope of the Christian, that one day we'll be united, apart from our spoiled flesh, in Christ forever.

If we are in Christ, we will have a resurrection transformation. Also, if we are in Christ, we will have a resurrection triumph.

While death will be experienced by most who are in Christ, we must recognize that Christ's resurrection broke the power of death for those who believe in him. Paul makes two important points concerning this matter in Romans chapter 5.

First, Romans 5, 12, sin brought death into the world. There he says, Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, Adam, and death through sin, so death spread to all men, because all sinned.

[9:58] This is Paul's very point in verse 56 of our text this morning. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Death and the harm of it came into the world through sin, and it, the knowledge of sin brought by the law, written on the human heart, revealed man's sinfulness.

This is our great problem. Sin brought death. Also from Romans chapter 5, in verse 17, secondly, Paul there says that Christ brought life.

In Romans 5, 17, he says, For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man.

Jesus Christ. And he is making this very same point to the Corinthian believers in citing from Isaiah chapter 25, verse 8, and Hosea chapter 13, verse 14, in verses 54 and 55, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, which just for repetition, he says, death is swallowed up in victory.

[11:15] O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? This is precious at the middle of this text, right?

These rhetorical questions being asked. At the end of verse 54, death is swallowed up in victory. And then these rhetorical questions, O death, where is your victory?

It's non-existent. It does not exist. O death, where is your sting? There is no longer a sting of death for those who are in Christ. R.C.H. Linsky, who was a late 19th century, early 20th century American pastor and theologian, wrote this of this text.

Death is not merely destroyed so that it cannot do further harm, while all of the harm which it has wrought on God's children remains. The tornado is not merely checked so that no additional homes are wrecked, while those that were wrecked still lie in ruin.

Death and all of its apparent victories are undone for God's children. What looked like a victory for death and like a defeat for us when our bodies die and decay shall be utterly reversed so that death dies in absolute defeat and our bodies live again in absolute victory.

[12:32] That is good. That is wonderful truth. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

So if we are in Christ, we will have a resurrection transformation and a resurrection triumph that gives to us, that births in us, that becomes the foundation for present-day resurrection thanksgiving. So that's your third point. Resurrection thanksgiving. In light of the two aforementioned future realities, we ought to presently live lives of resurrection thanksgiving.

Paul states it this way in our text, verse 57, But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should be thankful for a victory that is sure, and it is sure because it is through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is sure because He accomplished it.

[13:36] Aren't you thankful this morning that it is not left up to us to accomplish our victory over sin because we have proven time and time again that we would utterly fail at this, right?

But Jesus has accomplished it. Our victory is a divine reality. Here I would like to briefly describe to you the doctrine of double imputation.

You don't have to know it by those terms, but I would like for you to. So, the doctrine of double imputation simply says this, By faith in Christ, He takes our punishment in Himself on the cross, right?

We are most familiar with this, this accomplishment of Jesus. It's often called Christ's passive obedience, right? He died. He gave Himself to the will of the Father, and He died on the cross, paid the penalty for our sin.

Galatians 3.13 says, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.

[14:45] So, in Jesus' death on the cross, because God is completely just, He must punish sin. He punishes our sin in Christ. So, Christ takes that punishment from us.

But this is not enough for us to be found pleasing before God. This just brings us up to neutral. The debt has been canceled, but God still requires of us perfect law-keeping.

So, having the debt canceled, we now can't live perfectly either. We have no ability in and of ourselves to now keep the law perfectly. So, something else had to be accomplished, right?

So, in Christ's passive obedience, we get our debt canceled. That's the first imputation. The second is this. He gives to us His righteousness. Jesus' perfect law-keeping, often called Christ's active obedience, right?

The one who was without sin, kept the law perfectly, and grants that to us, so that we can stand before God as perfect law-keepers.

[15:54] Romans chapter 5, again, verse 19, For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, Adam, so by the one man's obedience, Christ, the many will be made righteous.

And that's this doctrine of double imputation, right? Our sin given to Christ, imputed to Christ, His righteousness imputed to us.

Martin Luther called this the great exchange. The resurrection of Christ is the sign that these promises are sure through faith in Him.

If He was not raised, He did not fulfill all of the Old Testament prophecies about the Christ, right? He lived a life supposedly perfect, died a death supposedly for us, but if He was not raised, how could we know?

So the resurrection of Christ is the sign that He is, in fact, the Christ, right? That He did live this life that we needed Him to live. He did die the death that we needed Him to die.

[17:04] So His promises are sure through faith in Him. We have victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, through His life, through His death, and through His resurrection.

And we should thank God for this. I hope that you don't find in yourself a coldness towards these truths, that you don't have a, yeah, yeah, the gospel kind of mentality.

But the reality of what Jesus accomplished for you is fresh and new to you each day and in each moment of each day. We ought to always be, as God's people, giving praise for what He has done for us in Christ.

And we should thank Him not only in word, but also in deed. The last verse here, verse 58.

Therefore, all that He said so far, 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.

our lives should be lives of praise, enduring, unshakable, abounding praise. This is what He's saying to us.

[18:28] Because of who we are in Jesus, we ought to live lives that are oriented in this thankful direction. Right? Not to gain our salvation, but because it's been accomplished, because we have victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Right? It's a standing, it's a status that is ours. And as such, then, we turn ourselves outward toward loving kindness, abounding work in the Lord, that we're steadfast, that we're immovable, right?

That we press our lives in that direction without fail. Gordon Clark, a 20th century American philosopher and theologian, wrote a helpful paraphrase of verse 58 in his commentary on this text. He says this, therefore, we should mortify emotion, be steadfast, unchangeable, not erratic and scatterbrained, easily discouraged, and should multiply our good works in the knowledge that the Lord will make them profitable.

God having saved us, that doesn't snap his fingers and take us out of this world because he has chosen to use us as instruments in this world, that we would be the means to his end of saving a people for himself.

[19:50] What a wonderful blessing this is as we live in these mortal bodies, right? As we suffer in this world to know that God has left us here for the great purpose of glorifying him amongst all peoples.

We ought to joyfully rejoice and celebrate and join in on this work, right? Knowing that in the Lord our labor is not in vain.

Now, I'm going to leave off this point here in the hope of leaving a bunch of room for fruitful, continued thought and discussion this morning around this text. So, if we are in Christ, we will have a resurrection transformation.

We will have a resurrection triumph and in light of these two future realities, we will presently live lives of resurrection thanksgiving.

So, let's pray. Amen.