

## MY VICTORY IN JESUS OVER DEATH

Welcome church family – and if you're visiting with us this morning, we are especially honored to have you with us. Whether you accepted an invitation from a friend or relative, or you're seeking a church to call home or you just felt moved to check us out, we are pleased to have you with us. My goal today is not necessarily to try to persuade you to believe what I do – but rather to ask you to consider, and if so moved, to celebrate - the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

The past couple weeks we've dealt with how faith in Jesus can relieve us of fears of all kinds – but today we'll focus on the common fear of nearly everyone who has ever lived. The fear of death itself. We'll be drawing from the Holy Spirit inspired words of the Apostle Paul found in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15...

**<sup>3</sup>For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup>After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup>and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. <sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect.**

Sooner or later, even the greatest skeptics have had to deal with the fact that one man, without civil education or authority somehow started a revolution that began a movement that not only flourished even in the face of armed opposition from the existing governments and religions – but has continued for 2000 years. The answer Paul offers is the personal experience and testimony of 100's if not 1000's of eyewitnesses that He was no ordinary man. He insists the proof that Jesus was the one and only son of God, who not only came to save mankind from the sins but paid the price for them in His death on the cross is in the fact that He didn't stay dead. ***Jesus rose victorious from the grave!***

For the sake of time I'm going to summarize the next section. Paul says that because of sin all men die, but because of Jesus' righteous life and perfect sacrifice ***all men can now live forever***. He asserts that in vs.19-21. ***"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But since Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, He is the first fruits of all those now who sleep in death."*** Death came through sinful mankind, but the resurrection of the dead now comes through the perfection of Jesus. ***How can this be?*** Paul tries to put our minds to rest in vs.35ff.

<sup>35</sup>But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" He says such questions are foolish. <sup>36</sup> "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup>When you sow seed," it's just a seed, "perhaps of wheat or of something else. <sup>38</sup>But God gives it a body as He has determined, and to each kind of seed He gives its own body. <sup>39</sup>All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. <sup>40</sup>There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. <sup>41</sup>The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. <sup>42</sup>So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; <sup>43</sup>it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup>it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup>So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; but (Jesus), a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup>The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. <sup>47</sup>The first man (Adam) was of the dust of the earth, the second man (Jesus) came from heaven. <sup>48</sup>As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup>And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. <sup>50</sup>I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

In other words, *what is sown is changed when it blooms*. This serves as an illustration that the bodies that are buried will be transformed coming out of the grave. They will be fit for eternity without any of the weaknesses and frailties that limit us from experiencing everlasting, amazing, abundant, fulfilling, powerful life. I don't claim to grasp the logistics of it, but I trust Jesus that it will be so. And that is incredibly good news. But wait, Paul's not done. He says...

<sup>51</sup> Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- <sup>52</sup> 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. <sup>53</sup> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup> 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."

Paul expected Jesus to return before some of his readers would pass away. And even if they didn't, he urged believers to anticipate that Jesus' resurrection guaranteed them of their own. No reason to fear the grave as their final destiny. No reason to be overcome with despair when loved ones who had faith in Jesus passed away before they did. In fact, He practically shouts a victory cry, concluding: <sup>55</sup> **Where, O death, is your victory?**

**Where, O death, 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! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!**

Now, what should our response be to that? I mean if it's really true - if Jesus as God's Son really did lay down His perfect life in exchange our messed up ones - and then really truly did rise from the grave victoriously to prove that we can trust in His promise of life after this, what should we do? I'm glad you asked...

In the last verse of our text, Paul says, **<sup>58</sup>Therefore, my dear brothers, 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."**

**Stand Firm. Always Give yourself to the Lord's work. It will not be in vain.** Our life has purpose and it really does matter how we live it. Let's pray.