

Victory In Christ

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:50-53).

The wonder and awe of the resurrection morning is expressed both in poem and song. Paul has already explored the question some had *"How are the dead raised and with what manner of body do they come?"* (vs 35). His answers do not quell the question through the ages of "how can this be?" Yet, such will be by the assurance of God. In Paul's first recorded and retained epistle (1 Thessalonians), while he assured brethren of the resurrection of departed ones; he did not deal with the kind of body they would have in that resurrection.

In both 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians the author states that some will be living when Jesus returns. Twice in 1 Thessalonians 4 (vss. 15, 17) the apostle mentions those alive when Jesus comes: in verse 15 he assured brethren that the living saints would have no advantage over those who were dead; in verse 17 the apostle tells that after the resurrection of the righteous that those alive when Jesus comes will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

Still, while both epistles mention that there were to be living souls when the Lord comes; it remained for Paul to give special attention to the body all saints would have in the resurrection. It is here that 1 Corinthians amends our deficiency for not only does the epistle tell that the dead will be raised with an incorruptible body; it likewise informs us the living will have their bodies changed because *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."*

Having assured us of the necessity of an incorruptible body, Paul carries us past that transformation to what further awaits us: *"But when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory"* (1 Cor. 15:14). The passage Paul quotes is found in Isaiah 25:8 where it is a prediction of

the victory to be found in Christ which he will further enlarge upon as he concludes this section.

Paul also quotes Hosea 13:14: "*O death where is thy victory? O death, where in thy sting?*" While Hosea points to a future return of Israel, this return finds its real significance in the resurrection of Christ. So, having quoted "*O death where is thy sting?*" Paul concluded, "*The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law*" (1 Cor. 15:54). Well do we understand the punishment inflicted upon Adam and his posterity (his sin was banishment from Eden with the perpetual separation from the tree of life). Just as the bite of a serpent brings about death; so sin was the viper's poison which brought about death to man. To this the apostle added "*and the power of sin is the law.*" The edict of the law was clear: "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezek. 18:20). Law is for the ungodly and the strength of sin is in the law; the violation of law must meet its just retribution. Law cannot make alive and that demonstrates the victory that is ours in Christ. Law cannot give us release from death. Jesus can, for He, through death, has brought to naught both him that had the power of death, the devil and delivered man from the fear of death (Heb. 2:14f).

So then, since God has given us victory in Jesus Christ the apostle urges, "*Wherefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord*" (1 Cor. 15:58). What a thrilling conclusion to this chapter which has presented unimpeachable evidence that Christ has been raised from the dead; exposed and exploded assertions that there is no resurrection of the dead; shown us the promise of an incorruptible body to inhabit during eternity and concludes with thanks to God who giveth us such a victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

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