

## I CORINTHIANS 15

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Corinthians chapter 15 as we continue our study through Paul's letter to the church in Corinth.

We began our study of this chapter last week and the focus is the resurrection. And there is so much in this chapter that we have broken it down into two studies and thus, we will finish up looking at the doctrine of the resurrection this evening.

Last time we began looking at six important facts about the resurrection, and we covered the following points:

*Christ rose from the dead – I Corinthians 15:1-11*

*Why the resurrection of Christ is important – I Corinthians 15:12-19*

*The resurrection order – I Corinthians 15:20-28*

*Moral implications of Christ's resurrection – I Corinthians 15:29-34*

This evening, as we finish up this chapter, we will deal with the last two points and they are:

*The bodily resurrection of the dead – I Corinthians 15:35-50*

*The bodily resurrection or translation of the living – I Corinthians 15:51-58*

And remember what we said last time about how Paul concludes this section on the resurrection. He gives to us this powerful edification and it is basically saying, in view of all of this, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** I Corinthians 15:58.

Now this whole idea of resurrection life is very controversial today, just as it was back in Paul's day. One writer gave us this insight. He wrote,

Can the Christian doctrine of the resurrection make sense? Where is there overlap and continuity with the present world? Where is there discontinuity? Does the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead have any practical significance?

Paul continues with his focus on the resurrection of the body. He is talking to the Corinthians about the claim that all Christians will be raised from the dead when Christ returns. In essence, if Jesus was raised, it follows that all those who are in him will also be raised. If he has defeated death, then death will not ultimately reign in the lives of those who belong to him. . .

If Jesus was not raised, it follows that there is no means of escaping death or hoping for something beyond the present life. But because Christ was raised from the dead, Christians must attempt to comprehend the claim that he is going to raise from the dead those who belong to him.

The most significant implication of the passage is the importance of the body. How the human body is viewed will radically shape the way one thinks and lives.

If the body is unimportant, one will either be an escapist mystic or an unfettered hedonist. The material world will not matter.

- Stephen T. Um, *I Corinthians – The Word of the Cross*, p. 273

So, as I have said, Paul is going to continue talking about the doctrine of the Resurrection as he focuses on these last two points, the bodily resurrection of the dead in I Corinthians 15:35-50 and the bodily resurrection or translation of the living in I Corinthians 15:51-58.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 35 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

### I CORINTHIANS 15

#### VERSE 35

I believe these questions that Paul was asked by the Corinthians was not something they were interested in knowing, for some of them were denying the bodily resurrection.

So, this is more of a mocking of Paul and the teaching of the resurrection from the dead.

And remember that we saw that with the religious leaders of Jesus day. They weren't interested in the truth, they were just trying to catch Jesus making a mistake and discredit Him before the people. They had their own ideas, even though they were wrong, and it didn't matter what anyone told them, they were right, or so they thought. And the same is true here with the Corinthians and what they were believing about the resurrection.

And like I have said, I think what we see here is that they are mocking Paul for believing in the resurrection from the dead and if you still doubt that, in verse 36 Paul says of them, "**Foolish one.**" He is calling them fools, someone that has no understanding on a matter!

But, even today people have a hard time with this, and this is how their rational of the resurrection might go.

"The body dies, and it is put into the ground where it turns to dust and mixes with the soil. The grass grows out of the soil picking up some of the minerals from the dead body. The cows eat the grass and some of those minerals go into their milk. We drink the milk. Therefore, how can the resurrection of the body be possible when that person's body is all over the place?"

And this is very true. You see, when the body of the founder of Rhode Island, Roger Williams, was disinterred, it was discovered that the roots of a nearby apple tree had grown through the coffin. To some degree, the people who ate the apples partook of his body.

Why did the Corinthians deny the resurrection of the body? It may be because of the Gnostic influence. You see, they believed the body was evil and only the spirit was good so why would you want to resurrect something that is evil? You wouldn't, at least that is how they saw it in their mind, that was their thinking.

Two questions they ask and the reason they ask it is because they do not believe that God is all powerful, they do not believe what Genesis 1:1 says, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”**

If you believe Genesis 1:1 then everything else is a piece of cake.

I know, there still are those who say, “What about those who were eaten by a shark, or blown up, or donated an organ when they died?”

If God created the heavens and the earth and is able to keep them going, do you really think this is going to be too tough for Him?

Of course not! And when you think about it, bodies that are embalmed and placed in the earth are going to decompose and still go back to the dust of the earth, it just takes longer than if you were cremated!

In fact, Paul said to Agrippa in Acts 26:8, **“Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?”** Thus, it should not be incredible that God raises the dead!

God knows what He is doing and when the time comes, He will bring all those molecules together and put them back together. And He doesn't even need all of the dust that our bodies went to. All He needs is our DNA!

***“How are the dead raised up?”***

***“And with what body do they come?”***

That is what Paul will be answering as we continue on and he will show them that yes, the dead in Christ will rise!

### VERSES 36-38

Paul now illustrates this for us by saying the resurrection of our body is like a seed that a farmer plants in the ground and when it dies it brings forth life that looks different than the seed and yet it is related to that seed.

Think about it. You plant a corn seed in the ground and a corn stalk and eventually a corn cob grows from that seed. It does not look like the seed, but it is related to the seed.

And the point that Paul is making is that our bodies are no different, they go back to the dust of the earth and one day, at the Rapture, God will raise them up, like our physical bodies and yet different!

We see this in Jesus as He died and was buried and His earthly life came to an end, the body was dead and after the death there was life in the new body, the resurrection body. And that is also true for us, this life will give way to a new life in our resurrection bodies!

Spurgeon put it this way, “Truly it is never a pleasant sound, that rattle of the clay upon the coffin-lid, ‘earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes.’ Nor to the farmer, for its own sake, would it be a very pleasant thing to put his grain into the dull cold earth; and yet I know no farmer ever weeps when he sows his seed.”

And I understand that some people freak out over cremation or donating organs or dying at sea and being eaten by fish or whatever.

But think about this. How much of us does God need to make for us a new body, a glorified body? I touched on this already!

You see, every cell of my body, every cell of your body contains the DNA blueprint to make a new me, to make a new you.

I think that is sufficient for God, don't you!

And if you still are having doubts listen to what Paul says next about God and what He can do.

#### VERSES 39-41

Okay, what in the world is Paul talking about here?

Paul is speaking of God's creation and the variety of life, the variety of things that He has created and thus, can it be that hard for God to create for us new bodies for our spirit and soul to dwell in? Of course not!

Regarding the variety of life, one writer tells us, "I have read that there are some six hundred octodecillion combinations of amino acids. An octodecillion is 10 to the 108<sup>th</sup> power, or 1 followed by 108 zeros. Amino acids are the building blocks of all life. Not only does each type of plant and animal life have a distinct pattern of amino acids, but each individual plant, animal, and human beings has its own unique grouping of them. No two flowers, snowflakes, seeds, blades of grass, or human beings – even identical twins – are exactly alike. Yet each is completely identified with its own species or kind." (John MacArthur)

That is impressive to say the least and to hear some people say that life just happened, life arose from nothing and evolved into what we see today – how foolish! Thus, if God has done all this, He can and will transform these bodies to glory!

As we move on Paul is going to tell us that these bodies of flesh can't enter the kingdom of God, they need to be changed and God will do just that.

Jesus said in John 14:1-3, **“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”**

I don't believe Jesus is speaking of a physical mansion as some teach with doors and windows, but He is speaking of our glorified body and when He comes, we will be changed!

Paul also spoke of this in II Corinthians 5:1-5 as he tells us, **“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.”**

These bodies our spirit and soul dwell in are only temporary, they are like a tent.

Now if any of you own a tent you know very well that they wear out, zippers break, holes appear and the same is true with these tents, these bodies we now have, these bodies of flesh.

Thus, God is preparing for us, not another tent, but a mansion, a new body that will be fit for heaven, fit for eternity that will never fade away, never wear out, never break down! Praise the Lord for that!

And then Paul speaks of celestial bodies, the sun, the moon, the stars and they all differ in their glory, in how they shine. And we all differ in how we shine, in a sense, for the Lord. We have different gifts, different talents to be used for Him and it seems to be true even in the eternal state!

#### VERSES 42-44

I don't think this is a shock to any of you, at least it shouldn't be. From the time we are born we are in the process of dying! We are all going to die unless the Rapture happens first. But let's face it, for most of us, we are going to die.

Let me put this into perspective for you, these are some crazy numbers.

As of March 20, 2019, at approximately 2:11 pm there have been 12,709,450 deaths so far this year!

Not only that but as of that same approximate time, there were 95,710 deaths that day and we still had some ten hours to go in that day!

Someone has written,

“There is a preacher of the old school but he speaks as boldly as ever. He is not popular, though the world is his parish and he travels every part of the globe and speaks in every language. He visits the poor, calls upon the rich, preaches to people of every religion and no religion, and the subject of his sermon is always the same.

He is an eloquent preacher, often stirring feelings, which no other preacher could, and bringing tears to eyes that never weep.

His arguments none are able to refute, nor is there any heart that has remained unmoved by the force of this appeals.



He shatters life with his message.

Most people hate him; everyone fears him.

His name?

Death.

Every tombstone is his pulpit, every newspaper prints his text, and someday every one of you will be his sermon.”

- Source Unknown

This is Paul’s first point in these verses, we are moving from that which is perishable to that which is imperishable, from corruption to incorruption.

And what is interesting to me is that we try to stop this from happening, at least make it look like we are not wearing down, sagging, finding our chest now in our drawers!

Plastic surgery is a multi-billion-dollar industry and for what?

To show people we are not getting old but if you have enough face-lifts, eventually everyone will know because your bellybutton will be on your forehead, you can only pull the skin so far!

It is as Psalm 103:14-16 tells us, **“For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more.”**

How true that is, and I guess you can say that is the negative, we are but dust and to dust we will return.

But Peter gives to us the positive outlook on this as he tells us in I Peter 1:3-4, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”**

Paul also tells us that this body was sown in dishonor, it was born with the inherited sin nature of Adam.

David said in Psalm 51:5, **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”**

But God does not leave us there for as Paul said in Romans chapter 5 beginning in verse 9, **“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned . . . For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Romans 5:9-12, 19-21.

Thus, we were sown in dishonor but because of what Christ has done for us, because of our faith in Him, we will be raised in glory!

Yes, these bodies are imperfect, we still drag around that stinking, rotting flesh nature but one day it will be raised in glory!

Next Paul speaks of these bodies being weak, frail.

Think about this, these bodies not only succumb to being tired but to diseases also, they are weak!

But our new bodies will not get tired, they will not succumb to diseases, they will not fade away or wear out, but they will be raised in power!

And, of course, these earthly bodies are natural, they are equipped for living on this planet.

But one day we will have new bodies, spiritual bodies that will be able to live in heaven, to move about freely without limitations, it will be glorious!

Now please understand we are not going to be ghosts like Casper! That is not what Paul is saying, and that is not what I am saying.

Remember in Jesus' resurrected body you could touch Him! Yes, His new body was different from His fleshly body, but this spiritual body will have flesh and bones as Jesus said in Luke 24:39 regarding His resurrected body!

And the difference between a natural body and a spiritual body is that the former is suited to life here on earth whereas the latter will be suited to life in heaven.

It is as Paul said in Colossians 3:1-4, **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**

Praise the Lord!

VERSES 45-49

There should be some, ***“Praise the Lord!”*** here! Wow, where we were at and what God has done and will do in our lives, ***“Praise the Lord!”***

What I want you to see here is the contrast that Paul is making between the first man, Adam and the last Adam, Jesus.

When Adam was created, he became a living being. He was perfect and yet he disobeyed God, he sinned and through Adam the sin nature has come to all men and with it the death process.

Thus, God removed Adam from the Garden of Eden and placed Cherubim with flaming swords to guard the entrance to the Garden of Eden, not to keep Satan out, but to keep Adam and Eve out so they would not partake of the tree of life and live in that condition forever!

But the last Adam, Christ has come to give to us life.

But, without believing and receiving Jesus Christ into your life as Lord and Savior you are only a natural man, you must be born again, born of the Spirit to enter into heaven!

You see, we all don't decide if we want to be born, our parents do.

But we all must decide if we want to be born again!

Jesus, in speaking to Nicodemus said in John 3:3-6, **“... ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’”**

And once we come to Christ, the Holy Spirit is purging out the garbage in our lives to make us more like Jesus and it is called the sanctification process. And it is a lifelong process, but God will complete it.

Paul, in Philippians 3:17-21 tells us, **“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame - who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”**

The point Paul was making here in I Corinthians and in Philippians is simple. The resurrection body completes the work of redemption and gives to us the image of the Savior.

You see, once we come to Christ we are made in the image of God as far as personality is concerned, but in the image of Adam as far as the body is concerned. One day we shall bear the image of the Savior when we share in His glory.

And we did talk a little about this, but what do these resurrection bodies look like?

Look at Jesus’ resurrected body for ours will be like His.

In Luke 24:39-43 we are told, **“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, ‘Have you any food here?’ So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.”**

His resurrected body was not like a ghost, you could touch Jesus, you could feel Him. He also ate food, I like that!

Also, in Luke 24:31, 36-37 we are told, **“Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight . . . Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.”**

Also, in John 20:19 we are told, **“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”**

The laws of nature Jesus was not affected by.

Thus, we get a glimpse of what these new bodies will be like, similar to these and yet with no physical handicaps or limitations, they are heavenly bound!

#### VERSE 50

Let’s put this into perspective for a minute. Paul is saying that these physical carbon-based bodies are not fit for heaven. They are suited for life here on the earth with its atmospheric conditions but not for heaven.

And the problem with these bodies, and there are many, but one of them is the fact that they are under the curse and thus, affected by the Second Law of Thermodynamics. What that means is they are moving from order to disorder. They are wearing out and will someday die and decay, or what Paul speaks of, corruption.

That’s why they are not suited for heaven, because in heaven there will be no aging, no sickness, no death and decay.

Folks, this is a glorious truth, not that we are all going to die one day, but we will be raised up in glory. It is the hope of every Christian.

We see this expressed in the epitaph Benjamin Franklin wrote for himself and is engraved on his tombstone in the cemetery of Christ's Church in Philadelphia.

I don't know if he was a believer or not, but this is correct. This is what it says: "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."

I do love that.

Make no mistake about it, death is not the end for us. We will be with the Lord for eternity and have bodies that will never fade away, they will never get sick, they will never grow old!

But this is also true of the unbeliever, the only difference is that their eternal bodies will be in the Lake of Fire!

Everyone lives forever, you just have to choose where!

Now, as we read on, we will see in I Corinthians 15:51-58 that Paul is going to speak of the bodily resurrection or the translation of the living to glory.

### VERSES 51-53

Paul opens this section up by speaking of a "**mystery**" and he uses the Greek word MUSTERION, (moos-tay'-ree-on) which speaks of something that was once hidden and is now revealed.

It is not something that Paul came to know through his learning but a revelation from God that Paul wants the Corinthian believers and us to know.

The question here that Paul is going to answer may just be something that Paul himself was anticipating they would ask, “Okay, so the dead will receive glorified bodies but what about the living when the Lord returns?”

Paul tells us that some will not have to die or as the Bibles says regarding believers, “sleep,” but we will receive our resurrection bodies when the Lord returns for His bride, the church.

Thus, those who have died in the Lord and those who are alive will all be changed, and he uses the Greek word ALLASSO (al-las’-so) which speaks of making different! We will get our new bodies! A kind of metamorphosis will take place. Like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. They are the same creature, but they do look different!

Now, how will this take place? When will this take place? Why will this take place?

Those are great questions and Paul is going to answer those questions for us.

Paul tells us in verse 52 what we need to know.

This will take place in a “moment” which is the Greek word ATOMOS (at’-om-os) which is the smallest conceivable quantity. You can’t divide it any further.

Not only will this occur in a moment but also in “the twinkling of an eye!”

Think of it like this. The twinkling of an eye can be the time it takes for light to hit the surface of the eye till it hits the retina.

How fast is that?

Let me put it into perspective for you.



Light travels at 186,000 miles per second, which means it would take 1.5 seconds for light to travel from the earth to the moon.

The moon is some 239,000 miles away from the earth!

So then, in the twinkling of an eye the light would reach only one foot off the surface of the earth. Thus, no one will see it happen, it will be instantaneous, but they will feel the effects of the Rapture!

Now the big question today is this, “When does the rapture take place?”

And we have all kinds of predictions from the blood moons, to this to that and yet, we don’t have to guess.

The Rapture will take place prior to the start of the 7-year Tribulation Period at the last trumpet.

First of all, let me deal with this idea of “**the last trumpet**” because many have come to very faulty conclusions regarding this event.

Many people feel that this “**the last trumpet**” is the trumpet that is spoken of in Revelation chapter 11 or the seventh trumpet. Because of that they have come to the conclusion that the church is not raptured until the midpoint of the Tribulation Period or just a little after the midpoint of the Tribulation Period!

But keep in mind that the seventh and final trumpet judgment in Revelation covers an extended period of time. And yet, here in I Corinthians 15 we see that the Rapture is instantaneous, in the twinkling of an eye!

First of all, I don’t believe that the church goes through any part of the Tribulation Period. Why would the Lord beat up His bride before He marries her? That would make no sense.

Secondly, Ironside says that the last trumpet was a figure of speech that came from the Roman military, when they broke camp.

The first trumpet meant, “strike the tents and prepare to leave”; the second trumpet meant, “fall into line”; the third and last trumpet meant “march away.”

This last trumpet describes the Christian’s “marching orders” at the rapture of the Church. I think that just makes sense.

But if not, let me shed some light on why I believe that the Rapture of the church happens before the Tribulation Period starts, and we won’t cover all the Scriptures but here are a few.

First of all, in Revelation 1:19 Jesus divides for us the book of Revelation as He says, **“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”**

First of all, the things that John has *seen* are in Revelation chapter 1.

Then the things *which are* relate to the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor which are found in Revelation chapters 2 & 3.

This also gives to us a picture of church history with the last days church being Laodicea or the lukewarm church.

The last division of the book, which covers chapters 4-22 deal with the things that will happen *after this* or META TAUTA in the Greek.

This speaks of what will take place after the church age comes to an end and the Lord comes to Rapture His bride, the church to Him. And keep in mind that the church is not mentioned again in the book of Revelation until we return with the Lord at the end of the book!

Also, interestingly enough, in Revelation chapter 4, as Jesus finished speaking of the church age, we are told, **“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’ Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.”** Revelation 4:1-2.

John is a picture of the church and as he looks up, he sees a door open in heaven and a voice like a trumpet calling for him to **“Come up here.”** And we are told that he is immediately before the throne of God, it is the Rapture!

In I Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul again speaks of the Rapture of the church, **“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”**

And, in Revelation 3:10, **“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”**

First of all, the word “**from**” is the Greek word EK and it means “out of” or “away from.”

Now, what is the Lord keeping us out of or away from?

He tells us, “**the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**” Revelation 3:10b.

Look at who this is for. Jesus tells us it is for those who are earth dwellers or unbelievers. You see, Paul tells us in Philippians 3:20-21, “**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**”

Thus, we are not earth dwellers, we are citizens of heaven, we are just pilgrims and strangers passing through this land on our way home to be with our Lord and one day He will come back for us.

Thus, this trial is a judgment upon the earth dwellers and that speaks of the Tribulation Period, that last 7-year period of time where God will pour out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world before the Lord comes back to set up His Kingdom here on the earth with His bride, the church.

And so, the church, believers will be Raptured out before the Tribulation Period begins as I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and I Corinthians 15:51-58 tells us.

In fact, Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 5:9, “**For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

And in II Peter 2:9 we are told, “**then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.**”

Thus, we are, **“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”** Titus 2:13.

Now, why do the dead and the living in the Lord need to be changed?

We have talked about this already. It is because these bodies cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven.

You cannot enter in without the new body!

Now what happens to those who have died in the Lord before they receive their new bodies?

Some say they go into soul sleep but that is not what the Scriptures teach.

We are told in II Corinthians 5:8, **“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”**

The spirit and soul of those who have died in the Lord are with the Lord right now and they are awaiting their new bodies, there is no soul sleep!

If you doubt that then read the story, not the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16!

#### VERSES 54-57

Why do we, as Christians, struggle so much with death?

Because it is not normal. That is not what God intended when He created man. It was the sin of Adam that brought about death!

In fact, Freud, the father of psychology and the father of messing with people’s heads, said this, “And finally there is the painful riddle of death, for which no remedy at all has yet been found, nor probably ever will be.”

Paul tells us that Freud is wrong, he is not all there because we have victory over death in Christ, the sting is gone!

Jesus has taken the stinger out of death and Paul tells us in Galatians 3:13, and this is from The Amplified Bible, **“Christ purchased our freedom [redeeming us] from the curse (doom) of the Law [and its condemnation] by [Himself] becoming a curse for us, for it is written [in the Scriptures], Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree (is crucified); [Deut 21:23].”**

Jesus has taken the sting of death for us and in doing so removed it so that we can live with Him for eternity! Let me show you what I mean with this illustration. We are told,

“A little girl was having a picnic with her daddy. Deathly allergic to bee stings, she became terrified as a bumblebee buzzed overhead. Seeing the bee, her father caught it and held it in his hand for a few seconds before letting it go. As it buzzed around once more, the little girl cried, ‘Daddy, Daddy, why did you let the bee go.’ Rather than explain it, the father chose to simply open his hand to show his daughter the stinger embedded in his palm.”

The sting of death for this little girl was removed and the sting of death for each of us has been removed by Christ.

But we still will die, right?

Yes, we will, unless we are caught up in the Rapture before we die.

Then Paul was wrong, there is still the sting of death, right?

Wrong!

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 15:54, **“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”**

In other words, when we go home to be with the Lord, when we get our new bodies, there is no more death, no more sickness!

You see, death for the Christian is not the end of life but just the beginning. We are no longer under the Law and its penalty of death – we have been freed in Christ!

Sin brought about death. And the Law showed us how bad we were, how bad we are!

That is not good, but remember what Paul said, “**But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**” I Corinthians 15:57.

We have so much to be thankful for and thus, as Spurgeon said, “I will not fear thee, death, why should I? Thou lookest like a dragon, but thy sting is gone. Thy teeth are broken, oh old lion, wherefore should I fear thee? I know thou art no more able to destroy me, but thou art sent as a messenger to conduct me to the golden gate wherein I shall enter and see my Saviour’s unveiled face forever. Expiring saints have often said that their last beds have been the best they have ever slept upon.”

We have talked about this already, but for those who are outside of Christ there is a resurrection and eternal life for them also, but unto damnation!

Thus, the choice is ours, to live eternally with the Lord or apart from Him in the Lake of Fire!

### VERSE 58

I like the way that Paul ends this section. He gives this wonderful encouragement to the Corinthian believers and to us.

He is basically saying, “Therefore, in light of this reality that the resurrection is certain, and our faith is not in vain, live for the eternal and not for the temporal.”

Wonderful words of encouragement for us.

You see, death is defeated, these bodies will be raised in glory as was the Lord's, and thus, don't be moved from the course that God has set for you.

Now I do understand it can be discouraging at times, but you are looking at the outward things and you can't see what God is doing in people's hearts until it is manifested in their life.

You may just be breaking up the hard ground and another will come and there will be fruit, praise the Lord!

Thus, don't give up or be discouraged because what you do for the Lord is not in vain, it is not empty!

I remember hearing the story of a gold miner who kept digging and digging and nothing really impressive happened. So, he finally sold his property and the new owner began to dig and he immediately hit the biggest gold mine ever!

Don't give up, you don't know how close you are to bearing much fruit!

I like the way the Gordon Clark paraphrases this verse.

He says, "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."

I like that! Stay on course, don't be moved and the Lord will bring forth the fruit.

And think about this for a minute. There are people all around us dead in their sins and headed for Hell and we sit back and say things like, "I did my part now it is time for someone else!" Or "I am too tired!" Or whatever excuse we might have.

Make no mistake about it, we are not here to rest but to serve and in heaven we will have our rest. Here our rest is in Jesus but there is much work to do. We are to occupy until He comes!



Regarding this one writer put it like this,

Some of God's most faithful and fruitful saints have lived to old age and been active and productive in His service to the end. Many others, however, have seen their lives shortened for the very reason that they were abounding, overflowing and untiring, in service to Christ.

Henry Martyn, the British missionary to India and Persia, determined 'to burn out for God,' which he did before he was thirty-five.

David Brainerd, one of the earliest missionaries to American Indians, died before he was thirty . . . Until the Lord returns there are souls to reach and ministries of every sort to be accomplished.

Every Christian should work uncompromisingly as the Lord has gifted and leads. Our money, time, energy, talents, gifts, bodies, minds, and spirits should be invested in nothing that does not in some way contribute to the work of the Lord. Our praise and thanksgiving must be given hands and feet . . . Our work for the Lord, if it is truly for Him and done in His power, cannot fail to accomplish what He wants accomplished . . ."

- John MacArthur

We have this glorious promise to us, and God says be faithful in your service, don't be moved off course, and in the end we will hear those beautiful words from the Lord, "**Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.**" Matthew 25:21.

As I close this evening, let me leave you with the words of Paul as he was encouraging the Corinthians, may I encourage you, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** I Corinthians 15:58.

May we believe it, and then may we live it!