

# Our Redeemer's Great Victory

**Text:** 1 Corinthians 15:50–58 (**Pew Bibles, page 1143**)

**Theme:** Jesus Christ's victory over death and sin secured our victory in life now and forever

**Introduction — May 13, 1940, Sir Winston Churchill told the House of Commons**

- You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war by sea, land and air
- with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us:
- to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark lamentable catalogue of human crime
- that is our policy. You ask, What is our aim?
- I can answer with one word: victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror,
- victory however long and hard the road may be
- for without victory there is no survival

**Victory presumes two things**

- first, that there is an adversary; no matter what it may be, it is against you, against us
- second, it is better to win than to lose
- and who would ever choose to lose
- all of us are competitive to some degree, in games, in sports, in life

**Our text before us this morning shows us the great victory won by our Redeemer, Jesus Christ**

- it begins at the start of chapter 15, where Paul tells us what the true good news is: Christ was raised from the dead!
- this has been established by evidence and fact
- Paul cites those who were eyewitnesses of resurrected Lord
- well over 500 people saw Jesus, touched His hands and scars
- many still alive when Paul wrote and could easily refute his claims
- however, if they were wrong and there is no resurrection...
- then Jesus is still dead, our faith is foolish and futile
- it's meaningless to claim to be a Christian
- “however” again! Jesus is alive, did rise from the dead
- therefore our faith is not in vain, but real & powerful
- all of this due to the great victory of our Redeemer
- He faced adversity all His life
- from Herod seeking to kill Him as a baby to the Jewish leaders nearly 2,000 years ago this weekend
- so, as we consider our Lord's great victory, there are three questions I wish to ask
- **Why do we need Christ's victory?**
- **How do we get or participate in this victory?**
- **What does this victory look like?**

*Let's ask our first question and look to God's Word...*

**I. WHY DO WE NEED CHRIST'S VICTORY?**

- this can be seen by looking at a number of contrasts which Paul makes in these verses

**1. Because we are perishable**

- **“I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.” — v. 50**

- when Paul uses the phrase “flesh and blood” he is referring to this world
- when he talks about the “kingdom of God” he means that world which is to come
- there is this current state we live in and there is the one that will be ushered in with Christ’s return
- this contrast tells us things are not the way should and could be
- this world is opposed to God’s kingdom
- the perishable is opposed to the imperishable
- and you and I are perishable: we grow ever weaker every day
- ask anyone over 30 who is in reasonably good health and they will tell you this is so
- ask those of us over 60 and we will testify greatly of the truth of this

### **1) All things are subject to death and decay**

- everything created has been subjected to futility by the One—God—who subjected it
- it is breaking down, spiraling in decay to an end
- one of our greatest desires, as humans, is to have victory over the perishable
- namely—our own bodies
- it is what drives so many to be the best, strongest, fastest, smartest, richest, most beautiful

### **2) So strong is this desire to avoid perishing, we’ll do just about anything**

- one author put it this way
- we believe if we run carefully enough, live in the right manner, we won’t have to die
- we strive to some level of the perfect life: immortality in this world
- but the truth is that you will die anyway
- and there are vastly many more who simply go about living life and enjoying it a lot more

### **3) Health industry**

- think of all the insane workout regimens one could use in pursuit of this victory
- physical fitness can become a religion with many
- you go to the gym to dispel your guilt, rid yourself of shame at how people view you
- you judge others by what they do in this arena, you are justified by your exercise routine
- there are dietary laws you must follow—another religion unto itself with many
- this world wants to think it can do certain things and overcome the perishable
- so far, however, there have been no breakthroughs to physical immortality yet
- and there won’t be, according to the Word of God

## **2. Because we will ultimately die—we think we’re losing**

- C.S. Lewis said that “100% of us die, and the percentage cannot be increased”
- you remember the slogan: “the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat”
- it applies to you & me: the agony of defeat is the appetizer to death
- we are reminded every day that the perishable wins
- there is a power in death: it levels the playing field
- there are no victors in this competition:
- it has been appointed unto man once to die and then face judgment
- death is a constant; it is always traumatic; it is counter to our living
- some simply give in and think: why fight it?
- if others believe differently, what is the basis for that belief?
- if victory is possible, how can it be obtained?

*That brings us to our second question...*

## II. HOW DO WE GET OR PARTICIPATE IN THIS VICTORY?

- v. 53 says: **“For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.”**

- yes, we know we want to, we know we must...but how?

### 1. Recognize the source of death’s power over us

- if we understand the source of death’s power, then we’ll know how to achieve this victory
- v. 56 tells us: **“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”**
- the sting of death is sin
- death came into this world through sin
- God created a perfect place and put a perfect man & woman in it
- He told them to enjoy, but not to eat of one tree
- the day they ate, the moment they disobeyed that singular command, they would die
- without sin, death has no power—no sin, no death
- but the reality is: there is sin, therefore there is death
- death has a sting—the word refers to the sting of a bee or scorpion
- sadly, everyone has been stung; boy, girl, man, woman, no difference: all have sinned
- sin is the instrument of death
- death is like the needle, sin is its poison

### 2. The law strengthens the power of sin

- God gave commands—laws—to man that he might live in a way that was pleasing to God
- the one condition which shows how the law strengthens sin is this
- God said, **“Be holy as I am holy,” “Be perfect as I am perfect”**
- this is why we then read in Romans 3.23: **“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”**
- the law points out how sinful we really are
- we think, when we hear God’s commands, “I can do this; I can obey these laws”
- and then we end up failing miserably and stand condemned in our falling short
- there are people in this world who try to live as if this isn’t a reality
- yet, they are the most lawless of people, consciences seared over as with a hot iron
- others, unfortunately far more others, think they can follow as best they can
- by doing so, that will count for something with God
- their hope is God will grade on the curve, which He does not
- “For the wages of sin is death”
- or some are taught and hope that God will work with them; they can cooperate with God
- all these attempts are faulty and only enhance the power of sin & death’s sting

### 3. “Behold, I tell you a mystery”

- so what can we do?
- **“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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.”**
- Paul was given, from God, something which God hadn’t made known yet
- but now He has, and here is what this “mystery”—this new news—is
- something must happen outside of us—a change must occur

- the dead cannot raise themselves
- when Lazarus, dear friend of Jesus died, he could no more come out of his tomb than you or I
- something outside of himself—his dead, already decaying body—had to do a great work
- so Jesus spoke, “Lazarus, come forth!” And Lazarus, even though dead, had to obey

#### 4. This is what we’re told here in 1 Cor. 15

- the perishable must put on the imperishable...but how?
- the mortal must put on immortality...but how?
- “we shall all be changed”—there is the good news right there
- Paul tells us death will ultimately be defeated
- it’s stinger will be plucked from it and it will simply be no more
- we’ll be able to sing “We are the Champions” with the greatest confidence
- how?
- **“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- we win in the end, not because we’re decent folk
- not because we tried hard or gave more or hoped for the best
- no, it is because Jesus Christ has won the victory
- how did He achieve this great victory?
- look back to the beginning of this chapter, verses 3–4
- **“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures”**
- Jesus took on flesh and blood
- the Imperishable became perishable
- the Immortal One became mortal on our behalf
- He would absorb the sting of death
- Christ, on the cross, absorbed the venom of sin, drained its potency
- victory over death now belongs to God & His Christ
- and to all God’s children who benefit from it
- Jesus fulfilled the law—every single bit of it
- in doing so, He took away the power of sin to condemn us
- **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”**
- are you in Christ? Have you forsaken sin and this life to cling to Him?
- look to Him and live

*Well, we’ve asked the why and how questions; let’s consider...*

### III. WHAT DOES VICTORY LOOK LIKE?

- we all know what today is: it is Resurrection Day
- it is the day on which Jesus was raised to life by the power of God the Father
- that’s why Paul wrote: But thanks be to God
- God gave Christ resurrection life, He came out of that tomb, and He lives forever
- that victory over sin and death is now there for all who believe in Jesus Christ

#### 1. This victory is given, not achieved by us

- **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

(Romans 6:23 ESV)

- God gives this victory of Jesus Christ to all who believe upon His name and receive Him
- it isn’t a future gift to be given—it’s already been given to each Christian

- this means you and I no longer need live an anxiety-ridden life
- we can ask questions about death, but we do not need ever fear its arrival
- the believer can rest in the finished work of Christ
- on Friday, Jesus uttered, “It is finished”
- on Sunday morning, God vindicated everything Jesus ever said and did, by raising Him
- Jesus really has paid it all and done it all
- this gift is then given to each one who, by grace flowing from God, trusts Jesus Christ
- and this gift brings tremendous freedom

## 2. What does that freedom look like?

- **“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.”**
- look at that word “therefore”
- it tells us, in light of Christ’s victory, we can live in a certain way
- in some ways, this is like recording the NCAA championship game on DVR
- then, you come around later to watch the game you missed
- but someone has already broken the secret and told you the final score
- and yet, since one of the teams is your favorite team, you watch the game anyway
- but you watch it in a completely different manner
- you’re not anxious about turnovers, fouls don’t make you pull out hair and scream
- no, you’re at peace because you already know the outcome
- this is what living in Christ is like
- He has achieved the victory, God has given us this gift, along with grace & faith
- therefore, we can live in this way

## 3. The way we’ll live

- we’ll be steadfast because Christ was steadfast
- Christ never wavered for an instant in His great task
- we will be faithfully steadfast because Christ has been
- we’ll be immovable, anchored in Christ Jesus
- **therefore, we will know that our labor is not in vain when it is “In Christ”**
- we can quit playing to win, because we’ve already won
- we’ll always be abounding in the work of the Lord
- think of those days where you wake up already dreading someone MAY bring bad news
- you can barely drag yourself out because you just know something won’t go right
- someone will come along and just ruin your day
- however, because Christ has won thru His death & resurrection, Psalm 112..7-8 is true of you
- “He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.”

## Conclusion — Only in Christ Jesus do we win victoriously

- this day, just under 2,000 years ago, brought about our Redeemer’s greatest victory
- and because He rose again, we share in that victory
- **“Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!”**