

# In a Moment

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-57 • RESURRECTION (PART 6)

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Four Lakes Church of Christ  
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**\*\*COVID-19 SPLIT SERVICE\*\***

It is good to be together this morning! I hope all of us have the elements for the Lord's Supper (either from home or from the table in the entryway), as John/Aaron will be leading us in the prayers for the Supper right after our study today. And then, Michael/Caleb will be leading us in three songs before we head outside to do our visiting outdoors.

Here at the beginning, we want to be sure we preach the gospel, the good news concerning what God has done to save us. We've sinned, but God sent his only Son to die in our place. After he was crucified, Jesus was buried, he was raised up on the third day, and in response, we must believe this good news and obey it. We turn away from sin, we confess Jesus as being the Christ, the Son of God, and then we allow ourselves to be buried with him in baptism, for the forgiveness of sins. At this point, God adds us to his kingdom, the church, and the Christian life begins. If you have any questions about this, if you would like to study together, we invite you to get in touch.

As our tradition has been, we are passing along some good news today! First of all, we welcome Blade, who was baptized here at the Four Lakes congregation earlier this morning! Beyond this, we actually have too many to share, which is a great problem to have! I noticed this one because Patsy shared it a few days ago! This comes to us from Mark Warren through the Lower Paw Paw congregation in southeast Ohio. Mark says, "The most beautiful sight in any church building, and proudest moment for a congregation. The wet hair of a newly saved soul for Christ. My niece KylaMae Britton made the most important decision in life, to accept lord in baptism today at the Lower Paw Paw Church of Christ." So, thanks to Patsy for sharing this, and we certainly rejoice with KylaMae this week.

Then, we have an update from Uday Kumar, concerning a baptism in India last Sunday. He says, "Glory be to God. Today another Soul added into our New Testament Church. Our Gospel work was blessed by God and made fruitful. God added another soul in to the body of Christ. Our preacher brother Y. Samson had given Baptism to a new soul. All their family members and Church believers are happily participated in this work. Please remember our work in your prayers." We don't know the man's name, we will probably not meet him in this life, but we look forward to meeting him in the next.

And then, we have another update from Eugene Lawton, who preaches in Newark, New Jersey. We had one from him last week, and this week he says, "PRAISE THE LORD FOR TWO MORE BAPTISMS THIS SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 13, 2021, AT THE NEWARK CHURCH OF CHRIST, Newark, New Jersey. I am super delighted to welcome V. Grant and Vida McNair into Church of Christ and commend them on the great step that made. Oh praise His holy name! Let us pray for new sisters in Christ." We are thankful for these two new Christian sisters. And we share all of this by way of encouragement: What these men and women have done this week, you can do today. Pull me aside after worship, get in touch with either one of our other elders, and we would be more than happy to open the word of God and study together.

This morning, I would invite you to return with me to 1 Corinthians 15. Several months ago, one of members asked for a lesson on a rather difficult verse in this chapter, we covered it a few weeks ago, but, we are looking at the whole chapter, which is perhaps one of the first written accounts of the Lord's resurrection. And Paul writes this, because some members of the church in Corinth were questioning and perhaps even denying the possibility of a future resurrection.

Several weeks ago, then, in the first eleven verses, we learned that Paul starts to combat this by appealing to the resurrection of Jesus. He starts with what they already believe and he makes a series of appeals. We then moved into the next paragraph, and we came to a new line of reasoning, as Paul encourages these people to imagine what life would be like if Christ had never been raised. Then, we came to verses 20-28, as Paul gives the reminder that **"...Christ HAS been raised from the dead."** And because of this, we learned that we will rise, death will die, and God will reign. And then, two weeks ago, we looked at the resurrection as motivation – the resurrection motivates us to be baptized, the resurrection motivates us to live dangerously for the Lord, risking everything for him, and the resurrection motivates us to live lives of sobriety. Then, last week, we looked at two questions, **"How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"** And last week, we looked at some of the particulars and at some of the differences between this body and the next one.

This morning, we move along, and we are looking at 1 Corinthians 15:50-57. And today, we are looking at something of a timeline. Today, Paul gives us a series of events. And as we are about to discover, these things will happen at the end, **"...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet."** We will save verse 58 for next week, but today, we have a really encouraging message. This is something these people really need to hear. It's something we need to hear. So, let's look at the words of Paul in verses 50-57,

***<sup>50</sup> Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup> 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 will be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. <sup>55</sup> O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE 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, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

As we look at what Paul says here, let's notice some events that'll happen at the end of time.

I. **And we start with verses 50-52 as we find that those who are LIVING at the end will be CHANGED.**

It's almost as if Paul anticipates the next question. Last week, we learned about the physical body dying and being resurrected in a new and improved form. The next logical question is: What if we aren't dead yet at the end of time? Does Jesus have to kill us so we can get our new bodies? Do we need to die so we can be buried so we can be raised? Inquiring minds want to know! This is a great "**mystery**," Paul says. This isn't a who-done-it kind of mystery; this isn't a Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew or Scooby-Doo kind of mystery. But this is a mystery in the sense that God has always known, but we haven't, and God is finally revealing it. Paul, then, is telling us the "secret" of what will happen at the end of time.

He starts by explaining that something needs to happen. If the Lord were to return right at this moment and take us to heaven just as we are right now, these bodies couldn't handle that, "**...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.**" Last week, we talked about our bodies as being "earth-suits." This earth-suit is perfectly designed for life on earth, but the next life is spiritual. A purely physical body couldn't survive the glory of what is coming.

So, as Paul explains here, since "**...we will not all sleep, ...we will all be changed.**" And this, by the way, is addressed to "**brethren**" (as we see at the beginning of verse 50). This doesn't apply to everybody, but for God's people who are alive at the end, we will not "**sleep**" (that is, we will not die), but "**we will all be changed.**" This is the "**mystery.**" This piece of information was previously unknown. This is new.

And before we move on, notice the timing of this change, "**in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.**" The word "**moment**" translates a Greek word that is the basis of our English word "atom," and it literally means "uncut, or indivisible." Of course, when we first discovered the atom, we thought that was it – there is nothing smaller, it cannot be divided. We've learned otherwise since then, but that's the concept. And in this case, we are dealing with an "indivisible moment of time," the tiniest fraction of time, "**in the twinkling of an eye.**" The word refers to any rapid movement, "in the blink of an eye," as we might say today. And the point is: It will be incredibly quick! It won't be a matter of me noticing that some of you are looking a bit more spiritual this week than you did last week. No, this will instantaneous.

And knowing this is awesome! This is great news! This is a great relief! If the Lord were to return today, we would not have to die, but we will be transformed instantaneously. This will happen "**at the last trumpet.**"

II. **Notice, halfway through verse 52, Paul continues with the trumpet, and he explains that something else will happen: THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED IMPERISHABLE.**

We have a somewhat parallel account with a bit more information in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, where Paul addresses a concern from those whose Christian loved ones had died, and they were worried that they had perhaps missed the second coming. In that passage, Paul says,

**<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in**

***Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.***

And this is what we have going on here in 1 Corinthians 15, “...***for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*** <sup>53</sup> ***For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.***” In this sense, those who are alive and those who are dead at his coming are the same: Both “***must***” be changed. Whether alive or in the tomb, we “***must***” be changed in some way.

And again, all of this is great news! We no longer need to obsess over keeping our bodies young. We don’t need to keep these bodies propped up on life support, as if this life is all there is. Just a few days ago, I got a message from a Christian woman at another congregation here in Wisconsin, and she was looking for advice on behalf of a loved one. Cancer was taking its toll, chemo was causing some other issues, the woman was ready to give up, and this Christian sister was basically wondering: Are we obligated by scripture to do everything humanly possible to lengthen a life, or is it ever acceptable in God’s sight to say “enough,” and to stop treatment? I sent her some good material by Wayne Jackson (through ChristianCourier.com), where he reasons through this issue. But my answer is basically: No, we are not obligated to always take heroic measures to extend human life. And yes, there are some scenarios where it is okay to say “enough.” And the reason goes back to what Paul says here: If we are alive when the Lord returns, we will be transformed, but if we die before that day comes, we will be raised up as the perishable puts on the imperishable and as this mortal body puts on immortality. Either way, we look forward to what comes next.

### **III. This brings us to the last few verses as we find that on the last day, we will be given VICTORY OVER DEATH.**

In verse 54, Paul explains what happens next by connecting it to what we’ve just learned, “***But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.”***” When we transition from one body to the next, at that moment we will realize that “***Death is swallowed up in victory***” (a quote from Isaiah 25:8). We are reminded of what Paul said earlier in this chapter (in verse 26) as he described death as the “***last enemy [to] be abolished.***” Death is an enemy. Sometimes we see it coming a long way off, and we prepare for it. Other times, death may catch us completely by surprise, at a time we least expect it. Death robs us of time we would otherwise spend with our loved ones. Death has no regard for age, or gender, or level of education. Death has no regard for income or lack of it. Death comes and leaves us alone while taking a spouse, or a parent, or a child. Sometimes death comes for large groups all at once; but usually, death comes for us one at a time. We think we can put it off for a bit through healthy living, but death eventually finds all of us.

Notice, though, that for God’s people, death has lost its sting. In verse 55, Paul addresses death directly, “***O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?***” And he’s asking in a way that death cannot answer. There is no reply. I think of the memorials to honor police officers where the dispatcher will call the officer’s name and maybe badge number, looking for a reply, but there is no reply. The first call goes out, then the second, maybe a third, and when there is no response, they announce the officer’s “end of watch.” I sent out some links by email on Friday and posted several examples on the church’s Facebook page. It’s a moving memorial, to ask for a response, but to hear nothing but silence as a reply. Now, I know Paul is not memorializing death here, but he’s asking a question, and death has no answer, only silence. And the reason is: Death is NOT victorious. The sting of death has been removed.

He goes on to explain that ***“...the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”*** Most of us know the pain of a sting. Not long after we got married, I got up on the roof of our house to patch a leak of some kind, my wife was spotting me at the base of the ladder, and as I was up on the second story, on the roof of the house, I must have disturbed a hornet’s nest, and those hornets got in my pants. I was wearing jeans with holes in the knees, and they got in there and started stinging me all around my knees. My wife is on the ground and has no idea what’s going on, but afterwards she said, “I’ve never seen anybody come down a 20-foot ladder without using their legs!” I apparently came down that ladder arms-only! We hate getting stung.

Death stings, but ***“...the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”*** Death stings, mainly because of sin. Sin separates us from God, both here in this life and for eternity. The Lord, though, has taken that sting away. The Lord has made salvation possible. As we come out on the other side of the pain of death, Revelation 21:4 tells us that ***“...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*** The Lord has removed the sting of death.

Paul, then, closes these thoughts with praise, ***“...but thanks be God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** This victory over death is a gift. We haven’t done this; he did. This was Paul’s message in Romans 8:1 when he said, ***“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.”*** The author of Hebrews says something similar in Hebrews 2:14-15, ***“Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”*** In his death on the cross, then, Jesus set us free from the law of sin and death. And so, we have come together this morning to worship the One who took the sting of death for us.

### **Conclusion:**

This morning, we have looked at what will happen on the last day. At the trumpet of God, the living will be changed, the dead will be raised, and God will give us the victory over death.

I am looking forward to coming back together next week to look at the very last verse in this chapter, as Paul applies everything we have learned about the resurrection up to this point.

Before we partake of the Lord’s Supper, let’s go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the one and only living God, creator of heaven and earth. We praise you as our loving Father. You know what we need before we even think to ask. You know our deepest fears and insecurities. You know what we try to hide, even from those who know us best. We come to you, asking for your comfort as we face the transition from this life to the next. We pray for courage. We pray that we will represent you well in whatever comes next. We pray for patience as we encourage each other to stay strong as the last great day comes closer.

Thank you for forgiving our sins. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you, Father, for hearing our prayer.  
In Jesus we pray, AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: [fourlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:fourlakeschurch@gmail.com)