

VICTORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (Key Verse 57)

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[I thank God to have helped me prepare this message, I believe I received strength to prepare it through the victory we have through Jesus Christ]. We are born as little babies, grow up, get some job, marry, have children, and die. This seems to be the cycle of life. The start is birth and death seems to be the end of everything. This is our human agony. This is why people despair. Just yesterday from our two messengers we heard about how Jesus was killed because of our sin. Jesus did something that his very disciples struggled to accept and believe. However, in today's passage we are reminded that not only did Jesus die but he actually rose again on the third day. We learned from yesterday bible studies and messengers why Jesus died for us. We learned that Jesus died because of our sin that God placed all our sin upon Jesus. However, the gospel of Jesus Christ does not end there. After three days from his burial, Jesus rose from the dead and this is what we call the resurrection. How could it be possible for Jesus to rise from the dead? what does it mean to us and the world? May we learn the victory that we have received through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

Look at verse 50, "I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." Before Jesus was crucified for our sin he used to teach about the kingdom of God. However same time Paul now says in verse 50, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does perishable inherit the imperishable. To really understand what he is talking about, we need to look at the second part of verse 50, it says, "...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." What he means here is that, our current bodies are perishable. Our current bodies become weak and even decay. So in our current bodies we cannot inherit the kingdom God because our current bodies are perishable. Our current bodies are like expiring, the things I used to be able to when I was young now it's a bit difficult to do. I even get sick easily these days. It's a known fact that by age of 6 our brain grows to 90%. There after in our 30s to 40s every 10 years we lose 5% of our brain. Put another way, 85,000 brain cells die each day from our adult years. So this is the condition of our current bodies. We are perishable, become weaker and weaker as we age and ultimately we die. Our bodies are weak. Some people look strong. But the flu makes them powerless. Also we suffer from constant temptation from sinful desires. But the spiritual body is different. It is imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. An example of such a body is the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. He could eat with the disciples and be touched by others.

However, the resurrection of Jesus tells us that death is not the final. Look at verse 51-52, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52in 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." The last trumpet is the day when Jesus comes back. We don't know when Jesus comes again. When

Jesus came first to this world, he came as the good shepherd and Savior of the world. He became a friend to everybody. He healed the sick and preached the good news of the kingdom of God. But when he comes again, he will not come as a shepherd and friend, he will come as the Judge of the living and the dead.

Verse 52 tells us that the dead will be raised to life and those still living will all be changed, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye. The new changed body will be imperishable and those raised to life also their bodies will be imperishable. Right here Paul is explaining the ministry of the resurrection of the dead. Our bodies will be changed to be suitable for our lives in the kingdom of God. Look at verse 54-55 "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." 55"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" Death will no longer have any authority or sting after the resurrection or our changed bodies. Because that new body is imperishable and is eternal or immortal.

This may be hard to believe just like the Corinthian believers struggled to believe the resurrection. We need to first remember how death came about. Look at verse 56, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law." A sting is like poison, so in other words sin is what causes death. Death entered the world because of sin. We read in 1 Corinthians 15:21 that, "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man." Sin came into the world through one man Adam. Death came into the world because of the God's law, that the wages of sin is death. When we are in Adam we are ruled by the power of sin. We did not commit Adam's sin, yet we are ruled by Adam's sin because he was the embodiment of us all. Similarly just as through one man Adam we are all born sinners, likewise, through one man, Jesus Christ we are set free. 1 Corinthians 15:22 says. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

Let us all read verse 57, "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, we have been cleansed from sin. The resurrection of Jesus also testifies that the power of sin has been conquered. If we identify with Jesus, we have been purified from sin and we are whiter than snow in God's eyes. God has given us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. This does not mean we will not die, we will die however since Jesus rose from the dead after his crucifixion. We too will be risen or resurrected from the dead. Having new bodies that do not perish just like Jesus new body. This is the good news to the world, that though Jesus seemed weak on the cross and died, he actually rose again on the third. He conquered the power of sin and death single handedly. If Jesus had not risen from the dead then we would still be under the power of sin. There would be no hope for our current bodies to be changed to imperishable. However, thanks be to God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. However, what does this victory mean to us? Firstly, that sin no longer has power on us. The death and resurrection of Jesus gives us hope to live for God and surrender our lives to the will of God. Because death is not our final destiny. Secondly, this victory means that there is

life after death. That the kingdom of God is real, we can have living hope by placing our hope in the coming kingdom of God. Thirdly, this victory means that the power of Christ's resurrection is not limited to giving life to believers. It also brings an amazing change to the whole universe. Jesus' resurrection destroys all the power of darkness and restores God's righteous reign in life and peace to the whole creation [24]. We do not need to fear the evil and relativistic cultural changes that seems to be taking over in our generation and generations to come.

How then should we respond to this truth? How can we testify to this world the meaning of the cross and that we have victory in Jesus, for Jesus has conquered the enemy of the world, which is death. Look at verse 58, "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." Paul explained in this chapter the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus, the power of the resurrection and the glory of the resurrection. Paul strongly encourages us to work hard for the Risen Christ, for only work done in the Lord is not in vain. The last words of verse 58, "**in vain**," have a philosophical meaning. When the Christians in Corinth looked at worldly people, they were making money freely, in many ways and seemed to be having an easy life. Christians saw worldly people enjoying their freedom for their own pleasure. Satan whispered to them as he does to us, "The Christian life is no fun." But Paul says that what worldly people do is in vain. They make much money cheating and being cheated. They enjoy all kinds of pleasures freely, but they have no resurrection faith, so they do all these things to cover up their deep inner despair at the power of sin and death. Whatever they do is nothing but the expression of their despair. But in Christ, our labor for the Lord is not in vain, we do not despair at our lives because we have faith in Jesus' resurrection. It is this conviction that is the basis of resurrection faith. One who is convinced that his labor in the Lord is not in vain is the one who will someday be clothed in the image of the resurrected Christ. He will receive the kingdom of heaven as his inheritance. Paul said, "I die every day" [31]. In order to follow Jesus, Paul died to himself every day. He died to his desire for comfort, and for worldly honor. He died to serve others sacrificially. He could lose everything for Christ. How could he do so? Paul lived by resurrection faith because this the victory we have in Jesus. May we not be ruled by the fear of man, which is a way of seeking salvation and security from the world. But rather, accept by faith the victorious work Jesus has accomplished for you and me.

Through this passage I am realizing that, though I am believer and leader in our ministry many times my life is governed by routine. I do some of the things which would be expected of a believer, such as pray, read and study the bible and so on however more so out of routine or with a believe that the Lord has placed me here to do what needs to be done. I bath, go to work, eat try to spend time with wifey and son. However, like the Corinthian believers I do believe in the resurrection of Jesus however I have not much faith in that those who died in Christ will be raised to life in new resurrected bodies to live in the kingdom of God. So I find myself not having a living hope in the coming kingdom of God. Such that I am not even have a strong vision for the work of God. So for

me its more like what needs to be done for the Lord should be done, such that even if what am doing for the lord is in vain, it is still ok it had to be done. My wife even sometimes says I have a very pessimistic view of life, kind of a negative out look. She thinks it is because I listen to news too much, such that I have even reduced if not stopped listening to Power FM. At some time I even wondered why I brought a child to this world or even why would I even want to have more children. One thing that I even keep telling my wife is that I don't wish to have a daughter, simply because of the gender based violence in this country. As men because of the power of sin and death we use our physical strength for evil and cause havoc. And so I think I am too attached to this world not having a good sight of the resurrection of the believers one day into the kingdom of God. So I easily become hopeless and sometimes fall into despair and fatalism. Because I place too much hope in the system of this world and human ability. Though I may serve in the things of God, it is not out of a sense of victory. It is not because I cannot await the coming of our Lord Jesus to raise those who passed to life. In fact the death of a loved even exposes me further. I would not have resurrection resulting in me just becoming powerless and falling into despair, seeing death as this unconquered great and powerful thing. However, I thank God through Jesus who firstly died for my sin and rose again from the dead. May I identify with Jesus in the resurrection of the dead and as I identify with him as a sinner whom he died for. Through preparing this message Jesus is helping me to live with resurrection faith, for if Jesus died for my sin and the sin of others, and rose again from the dead, then indeed there is hope for those who are in Christ Jesus. May I truly accept in my heart that one day we will all be raised to life and live in the kingdom of God were there is no sickness, death and sin. It is my prayer to serve God with my family out the victory over sin and death, we have through Jesus Christ. May I lead my family that we may serve God as a unit in joy looking forward to coming of our Lord Jesus Christ who will raise the dead life. May God grant me his vision for my family and ministry based on the victory I received through what Jesus did for me on the cross. Amen!

In conclusion, if Christ has not been raised, we are still in our sins [17], and those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost [18], and Christians are to be pitied more than all men [19]. Many believers sacrificed everything to participate in the suffering of Christ. Some even became martyrs. But if there is no resurrection, then all is lost and believers are the most foolish people on earth, deceived by a false hope. There are many good things in the world. It is easy to pursue perishable things, being deceived by the world. Then we can forget the gospel. We must know that the world and its desires will pass away. Christ's resurrection gives us eternal life, the kingdom of God, and eternal victory. There is power and glory in the resurrection. It is a true hope, worthy of our lives. The resurrection of Jesus is the victory for those who have accepted Jesus as their lord and savior. May we accept Jesus as our Lord and identify with him in His resurrection, for Jesus victory is our victory. May we overcome the world, sinful desires and anything that distracts us from God, through identifying with the victory we have through Jesus. Amen!