

Resurrection: Mystery and Victory

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Date: 11 May 2025

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[0:00] Before we dive into those verses that we've read, I just want to quickly recap for us what we've seen, or some of what we've seen, some highlights in 1 Corinthians 15.

! So we started on Easter Sunday morning with basically the ABCs of the Gospel, that very early Christian creed, probably the earliest Christian creed recorded in verse 3.

For what I received, I passed on to ye as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve, and so on.

And so we heard that early Christian creed, Christ died, was buried, and rose again. And those are important truths which our salvation depends on, and so we need to be reminded of them, we need to take our stand in them.

And then Paul unpacks, well what does Christ being raised means? And he unpacks it in a slightly weird way, we thought on Easter Sunday evening, well what if there was no resurrection?

[1:14] Paul was asking lots of questions? And we reversed them on that evening, and so actually because Christ has been raised, we are the most blessed people on earth, because we know a resurrected Saviour.

And in verse 22, quite a key point in the chapter, Paul showed us that all in Adam die, but all who are in Christ will be made alive.

And then he does various things, he looks forward to the end, when Christ will have everything under his feet, including that last enemy, death.

And then last week we saw that we can trust in God's creative power to give us new resurrection bodies.

If he's made everything, if he's made everything in all of creation, all sorts of things, fish and birds and animals, with all sorts of kinds of body, he can give us new resurrection bodies.

[2:28] It's not going to be a problem for God. And Paul was particularly addressing that because some in the Corinthians were like, ooh, rubbish, God can't do that.

Doubting our future resurrection bodies. But how foolish, he says. Don't you believe in a God who has all the power in the world to create things?

So that's what we've seen in a nutshell. We've seen a lot more than that. But that's what we've seen in a nutshell. And we're going to get to these verses now. In a moment, I'll pray.

But just to say, as has been our pattern of recent weeks, we'll go through it. So lots of me talking.

And then we'll sing a song. And then if you want to share reflections or if you've got questions on what we've looked at, either this week or in previous weeks, we've looked at lots of big stuff.

We can share those a little bit later and have a prayer as we help one another to hear God's word. Let's pray.

[3:38] Father God, thank you so much for what we've seen in this chapter so far. And thank you that you've brought us to this week to see the climax of the chapter.

To look forward to our victory day. Father, we pray that as we see these wonderful things, that it would help us in the reality of today, living in this sinful and broken world and these sinful and broken bodies.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You probably didn't escape your attention that this week was VE Day, Victory in Europe Day.

A day of great celebration of the freedom and the peace that we now enjoy. It was good to remember it 80 years on.

And in this final section of 1 Corinthians 15, we see our own Victory Day. A day when we will be raised to live in new bodies and live in a world full of peace and freedom.

[4:53] Peace in a new world order. Free from the effects of the fall. Freedom of no longer living in decaying bodies, enslaved by sin and death.

And with this Victory Day that Paul talks about, there is a sense of mystery to it. Sense of mystery. How will this work out? What's going to happen?

Well, Paul says this mystery, excitingly, has been revealed. Verse 51. Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.

So the mystery, according to Paul, that's revealed to us is, not all of us will die. Not everyone in history will face that enemy, death.

That's what sleep here means. It's not going to bed tonight, but it's about the end of the Christian life, where when we do die, it will be like falling asleep, for we will wake up, as we'll see shortly.

[6:05] But those who are asleep in Christ, their souls, they are safe with him, awaiting the end of all things.

That's what we saw back in verse 23. There's an order to resurrection. Christ first, he's the first fruits. Then when he comes, those who belong to him.

And then the end will come. There's that order to this. And so whether we die or remain alive when the end comes, whichever is the case, Paul says all of us will be changed.

All of us will be changed. Verse 51. Tell your mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed. In a flash, in the twinkling of eye, and eye at the last trumpet.

Often change feels like it takes time, doesn't it? It's a process. It's a change of jobs, or the change of housing, the change of waiting for a baby.

[7:13] But in this change of receiving our new resurrection bodies, when the end of all things come, it will happen in a flash. And the click of the fingers, in a clap of the hands, or in the twinkling of an eye.

And in an instant will be changed. And that should appeal to us, shouldn't it? As people in 21st century life, we love instant things. We love to tap and pay for something.

We love that we can instantly get in touch with friends. We love that we can instantly have entertainment in front of us. And instant noodles. Our new resurrection bodies will come to us in an instant.

For our creating God is doing this. He speaks and creation comes to be. As we saw this morning with Jesus, he says a word and the dead are raised.

In an instant will be changed. This old, decaying, sinful body will be taken off. It will be done away with. We will put on our new bodies in an instant.

[8:26] In an instant will be changed. And it will happen at the sound of a trumpet. That's what verse 51 says. At the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised, imperishable, and we will be changed.

And that trumpet to me sounds a bit like an alarm clock. An alarm clock that you won't want to hit sneeze to.

It will sound and it will be a thrilling sound for those in Christ. And it will wake up those who have already gone to be with the Lord.

And we will receive our new bodies. We're looking forward to this great alarm clock.

We're going to get dressed in our new bodies when it goes off. Just as we might get dressed when the alarm clock goes off tomorrow morning. For us it will be a day of glory.

[9:26] For others it will be a day of misery. But the good news on that is that the Bible isn't quiet about this mystery. It's revealed to us.

It's shown to us here. The last trumpet will sound. And if you're in Christ. You can have new resurrection life in him.

And so it's good that that mystery has been revealed. It's been revealed to us. And we're his ambassadors aren't we? We can share this news with others.

It's not a quiet mystery. It's only just for some. It's a mystery revealed to us very plainly and clearly in the Bible.

So the mystery has been revealed. And secondly, the victory of resurrection. The victory of resurrection. The mystery is exciting.

[10:27] In this instant we will be changed. But the victory feels even more exciting. The victory feels even more exciting.

So can we read on? Verse 54. For 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. And we read those words in Isaiah 25. Death will be swallowed up forever.

As Isaiah 25 tells us it will be swallowed up. The Lord will do this. The Lord will make sure death will be swallowed up forever. And just want to play with that swallowing image for a moment.

When we swallow something, either we're going to enjoy what we swallow or perhaps not. A few months ago I bought these pack of jelly beans, which has not just your normal flavour of jelly beans, but some weird ones too.

[11:36] Things like dirt and earthworm and vomit. Why fun, eh? But some of them I just couldn't swallow.

And death is something you don't want to swallow. But the good news is it will be swallowed up. The Bible shows us death will be swallowed up.

We will say when the last trumpet sounds, death has been swallowed up in victory. It will be swallowed up in full. And no one will have to taste it again. That is glorious good news.

Victory complete. Death gone. Swallowed up. Never to return. And not just death will be done away with. But the one who holds the power of death.

I was interested by this verse in Hebrews 2, 14. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too, that's Jesus, shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death.

[12:44] And who holds the power of death? That is the devil. A death. Evil. That the devil will be done away with. Will meet their ends.

This is a victory day of a death and evil. Jesus will be victorious at the end of history. Surely, to summarize it, Jesus will win.

Because we're in him, we will win. We're on his side in this victory day. And so we will be able to say this of death in verse 55.

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? Words taken from Hosea about sinful rebels dying.

And given to us today, those who are in Christ Jesus, to say like a chant on the playground.

Perhaps a chant like, I'm the king of the castle, you're the dirty rascal.

[13:53] That sort of thing. We'll be able to say to death, where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? We'll be able to taunt it.

Because it will no longer have the power that it once did. We can say those words now, I think. It's now true of the Christian.

But we still find death to be an enemy. It's still painful. It's still rotten. We take comfort in passages like this.

But it still feels horrible. It takes. It snatches away. But on this victory day, we will be able to fully look death in the face and say these words.

Because finally, it will be swallowed up. Gone forever. And it will have no place in our new eternal life. And there's more information about this in verse 56.

[14:51] It's like Jesus comes in as the bomb defusal team.

Disarming, diffusing the bomb of death. Death has a sting because of sin and the power of sin is the law.

But Jesus comes as the one who has perfectly obeyed the law. And is the one who is qualified then to be this bomb defusal team.

To destroy sin and death. To destroy the power and sting of it. To make it safe and harmless. And he is the one we have to thank for this.

He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. So thanks be to God. This is our victory day.

[15:57] This is what we've got to look forward to. But what about the reality of today? Imagine. Imagine. Sorry, it's a football analogy.

But imagine. You're playing for a football team. And you just keep losing. Match after match. Season after season. Losing. The owners of the team.

The fans of the team. They pour money into the football club. Only to find it just feels wasted. No success. No victory to show for it. The labour all in vain.

And I guess at times. Maybe not long. For long times. But maybe for long periods of time.

The Christian life feels like that. It feels like things are small. Things are hard. We wonder. Would we be better off? Not coming to church.

[16:55] Would we be better off? Not following the Lord Jesus Christ? Christ. Because the reality today is. This world is under a curse.

Genesis shows us that, doesn't it? The book of Ecclesiastes. It's one I've been reminded of in going through this chapter.

Particularly when Paul says down in verse 32. Let us eat, drink, for tomorrow we die. Which was the outlook of some of the Corinthians.

The book of Ecclesiastes says some interesting things about life here. Ecclesiastes 2.17. It reads this.

So I hated life. Because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. Grievous to me. All of it is meaningless. A chasing after the wind.

[17:58] I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun. Because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish. Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil.

Into which I poured all my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labour under the sun.

For a person may labour with wisdom and knowledge and skill. And then they must leave all they own to another. Who has not toiled for it? This too is meaningless. What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving for which they labour under the sun?

All their days, their work is grief and pain. Even at night, their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless. Are you encouraged? That's how life feels under the curse.

That's how life feels in our broken world. But. Is there anything positive here? Well. Chapter 3 verse 9.

[19:04] What do workers gain from their toil? I've seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in his time. He has also set eternity in the human heart.

That's interesting. God has made us for something more than this. Something more than just meaningless toil.

Working hard. Labouring hard. Pouring all our efforts and energies into something. And then. Dying and someone else takes it on. Takes the credit for what we've done.

But in 1 Corinthians 15. We're seeing. Eternity. In view. We're seeing.

We have so much more to look for. That brings meaning to the toil. The labour. That we do today. And so.

[20:14] This passage. Seeing the victory day. That we have to look forward to. Can actually really help us. To know that. We're not toiling.

In a meaningless way. Rather. Verse 58. Back in 1 Corinthians 15. Says this. Therefore. My dear brothers and sisters. Stand firm. Let nothing. Move you. Always give yourselves fully. To the work of the Lord. Because you know. That your labour in the Lord. Is not in vain. This passage. Should encourage us.

And inspire us. As we live. In the reality of today. As we dwell. In the tents. Of our bodies. Right now. As we live. In a world.

[21:14] With the effects. Of the curse. We're on the victory side. And so. Stand. Firm. Paul says. Stand. Firm.

When you feel like. You're wobbling. Off the edge. Close to giving up. On the faith. Look ahead. Jesus Christ.

Has won. The victory. Thanks be to God. He gives us the victory. Through our Lord. Jesus Christ. Victory's been won.

The Bible story. Is that Jesus. Wins. Jesus. He is your risen champion. And so you can. Keep. Going. The Christian life.

Is not. A waste. Of life. You're heading. For an eternity. Of pure joy. And bliss.

[22:14] In new. Eternal. Resurrection. Bodies. In a beautiful. New. Creation. So stand firm.

Let nothing. Leave you. And give ourselves. Fully. To something. Halfway through. Verse 58. Again. Always give yourselves. Fully.

To the work. Of the Lord. Because you know. That your labor. Is not. In vain. So because we can. Stand firm. Looking forward. To our victory. Day. We can. Give ourselves. Fully. To the Lord's work. It means.

We can. Take risks. In life. We can. As we pour. Our energies. Into. Gospel work. We can. Take the risk. Of inviting.

[23:08] Friends. To church. Can. Take the risk. Of standing. At the book table. And giving out. Tracks. To people. We can. Take the risk. Of spending.

Money. To do. The Sussex. Ministry. Training. Course. To help us. Better understand. And communicate. The Bible. Better to people. We can. Take the risk. Of giving up. A few hours. A week.

To prepare. To lead. A children's. Group. To teach. Them. From the Bible. Which we had. This morning. Is the word. Of life. We can. Take the risk.

Of giving our money. Away. To church. Or other. Christian organizations. We can. Take the risk. Of coming out. To a prayer meeting. After a long. And tiresome.

Day at work. And we can. Do that. Because it's. Time. Well spent. Or it's money. Well spent. That will.

[24:01] That will. Not just. Impact. Things. Today. But will. Bear fruit. For eternity. And we can do that.

Because perhaps. That woman. We give a gospel. Flyer to. Will. Join us. In the new creation. We can do that. Because.

That neighbor. We invite. To church. And keep. Persistently. Inviting to church. Perhaps one day. We'll be able to go on. Walks with them. In the new creation. We can do that.

Because that money. We. We've given. To the church. Has. Been spent. On continuing. The church's work. And witness. Even. Long after we're here. So that people.

Can keep on. Hearing the gospel. And join. Alongside us. In the new creation. We can gather. To pray together. Because those prayers.

[24:55] We prayed. Have borne fruit. For the gospel. In ways. Perhaps. We'll never know. Until we're in glory. And we'll look back. On those things.

When we're in the new creation. And we won't regret. That we've given up. That evening. For something. We won't regret. That we asked that friend.

To church. We won't regret. That we spend that time. Praying. Because none of this. Kingdom work is in vain. Knowing eternity.

Knowing the side. The victory. Knowing we're on the victory side. Means that. We can. Give ourselves fully. To the work of the Lord. It's not.

In vain. If we didn't have this. Resurrection hope. Do you just eat. Drink. And be merry.

[25:50] For tomorrow. We will die. Life is just. That YOLO. You only live once. But because Christ is raised.

And we will live with him forever. In our new resurrection bodies. We can. Spend our time. Our money. Our energy. On eternal things. Joining in the big.

Gospel projects. Which God is doing. Right around the world. Even as we meet here this evening. God is doing.

And he is pleased. To be using you and I. Simple. Sinful. Human beings. To build his kingdom.

A work. Which will bear fruit. For eternity. We do it. Looking forward. To the victory day. Be good.

[26:48] Be good. Si. Si.