

**One Truth That Will Change Your Entire Life**  
**“Part 7: The Victory of the Resurrection”**

*1 Corinthians 15:50-57*

~ **Delivered at Central Baptist Church on March 18th, 2018 by Steve Edelman**

Welcome everybody. We are so glad that you are able to join us this morning. We are in the middle of a new series on “One Truth That Will Change Your Entire Life.” Today we are on part 7 in the series and will be talking about “The victory of the resurrection.” Our text this morning is 1 Corinthians 15:50-57. At this point in the text, Paul has already addressed the doubters and is now focused on the celebration because the final victory is coming. The final section of the passage is like unwrapping your favorite chocolate bar and you’re about to take a bite so you can enjoy the flavor. But not yet. As you are going to see, Paul is going to deepen our anticipation of Heaven and challenge us to walk closer with God as we wait.

**Introduction:**

About a year ago we wanted to do something memorable with our family before the kids grow up. We priced out a couple of options including Disneyland, Mexico, and Hawaii. We decided on Hawaii because it was doable in our budget if we made some sacrifices. I believe my wife pulled up some pictures of the potential future of what it could be like if to help us make a decision. She may have used such pictures of beaches and landscapes to sway me and my daughters. One of the sacrifices was a red-eye flight from Vancouver to Waikiki. We had it in our heads that they would just sleep the entire trip and we would save money. We had these expectations in our head of a quiet flight in which the lights were dim and we could read a book or watch a movie. Around midnight, over the Pacific Ocean, we would hear, “I can’t sleep” or “I can’t get comfortable” which turned into “I don’t want to go to Hawaii.” The complaints turned into a screaming protest which is burned into my head because the entire section of our plane was watching, and the situation turned to chaos. There was nothing we could do because the seatbelt sign was on and my little one didn’t have the capacity to function in a tired state. We could have said, “Stop it or you’re not going to Hawaii.” “Can’t you picture the destination?” As the crying and protest turned from one to two, I started to

say to Megan do something and she said, “do what.” “I don’t know... something! Was this worth it?”

Isn’t life like that though? We can get stuck and forget about the image of where we are going. If you were to stop the story there and focus or zoom in on that part of the trip, it would be a complete disaster and when you are going through it, that is all you can see. If you were to fast forward to the moment when our feet hit the sand and the beach in paradise satisfied the picture of what we anticipated. Everything changed in that moment. It was a moment worth celebrating. It was the moment we were looking forward to. It was the moment that erased all of the chaos we went through to get there.

As you are going to see in this passage Paul is giving us a lens in which we see and live beyond hard moments of today. He is handing us a picture of the future that will erase all the difficulty of today. It’s like a professional photographer who usually has multiple lenses in their tool belt so they can capture multiple perspectives. The perspectives range from a zoom lens (close shots) to a wide lens so one can see a larger scope of what is going on. For example, If you were to view a mountain range or sunset with a zoom lens you will only see individual rocks and miss the view of the of the entire beautiful picture of the mountain range or sunset.

What you are going to see today is that Paul is saying that we need to live with a heavenly perspective that is beyond today, beyond a year, beyond this life time. We need to keep that picture in front of us. When you do that, you will be able to rejoice and celebrate what is coming. Paul wants us to see this beautiful image of what Jesus is going to do when he returns so we can anticipate and celebrate the future.

I am going to break this up into two parts. First, **THE FUTURE TRANSFORMATION OF OUR BODY**; Second, **THE FUTURE ELIMINATION OF DEATH.**

**BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION, WE CAN CELEBRATE:**

**1. THE FUTURE TRANSFORMATION OF OUR BODY.**

**a. The transformation is needed (v. 50).**

Look with me at 1 Corinthians 15:50 which says, *“I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”*

In verse 50, Paul is expounding on the transformation that is necessary for all of humanity about a major gospel principle that is found throughout scripture. A necessary change is needed because our perishable body (flesh and blood) cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. The Greek word for ‘inherit’ means ‘take possession of.’ We can’t take possession of the Kingdom of God or enter into heaven until our body undergoes a radical conversion. Our body cannot reside or perfectly rest with God and heavenly things because of their opposing natures. Meaning a sinful state or body cannot rest with a holy God in a heavenly place.

Looking at it from the larger biblical picture we remember that in the beginning, God creates order, then sin happens and creation moves to disorder (the middle part of the story) and then back to order or wholeness when Jesus returns. We are currently stuck in the middle part of the story where sin is creating chaos in our lives and in our world. Paul is saying, change is coming, and as we are in the middle part of the story a necessary transformation will take place and you can anticipate it.

Our body needs to be changed because it’s in an incomplete state and is marked by sin. The perishable body does not have the ability to change itself and become imperishable because it’s trapped in a fleshly selfish disorderly state of expiry. A scholar says, “The human body ends: it ages, dies, decays, deteriorates, and wastes away to dirt and dust. A seed of corruption is embedded within its very nature (see 1–2 Peter 1:4. See 1 Peter. 1:23.) Paul has explained that our earthly perishable suits are not made for heaven. For those who know Jesus, their body will be transformed and the imperishable body will be a mode of existence which will characterize Christ’s spirit body.

**ILLUSTRATION:**

Let me illustrate it this way. When I got my first car it was everything to me. I took really good care of it by washing it, vacuuming the inside, changing the oil, and put a new stereo in it. Maybe I even got the wax out to give it some shine. Then I got married and had kids and all of our vehicles mysteriously started to break down at a quicker rate than they did before. New dings in the door, it somehow now backs into poles, and

once, even Bambi came through our windshield. I don't know how these things happen... maybe my wife was driving. I blocked it out. Our van some years ago was rear-ended at a red light. It was bad enough that our insurance company had to write it off because it was damaged to the point it was not worth fixing. There will come a point in which your vehicle will break down. It will most likely end up in a junk yard and some of them will be melted down and refashioned into a better model. This new model will have features and abilities that we have not even thought of yet. It will be better equipped for the future. This is what Paul is saying to us.

What does this mean for those who are changed by Jesus? This means you will never look into a mirror and notice wrinkles or a receding hairline. You will never have a day of sickness. You won't be vulnerable to injury, disease, or mental illness like depression. There will be no more slander, gossip, lying, anger, jealousy, starvation, school shootings, war, abuse, prostitution, and lust. This means that you will no longer be marked by sin. There will be none of those things in heaven. There will only be absolute, imperishable perfection. The transformation of our body is needed and should be celebrated.

**b. The transformation is a brand-new revelation (vv. 51–52).**

Look with me at verse 51, *“Behold! I tell you a mystery?”*

What does Paul mean by “Behold! I tell you a mystery?” He is disclosing what will happen in the future. He is providing some of the facts that will be part of a transformational ending. He is giving us see through the wider lens of what is going happen.

In other words, Paul is giving us a spoiler of what will transpire for those who follow Jesus when He returns. **It will be a moment when everything that Jesus has promised will culminate to one spectacular moment.**

Let me illustrate it this way, before watching a film, I will often go on to the website IMDB to check out a number of details of the movie before viewing. I will often look at things like ratings, content, actors, and a general overview of what the film is about. When viewing the content, you will see “spoiler alert” which exposes what is going to happen and in turn can ruin the experience of the film. Paul is revealing what is

going to happen, not with the intention of spoiling but expanding our perspective so that we can celebrate His future change. So that we can look forward to and anticipate that day.

**Here are some of the revealers that we can celebrate:**

**REVEALER #1 - The change involves both the living and the dead (v. 51b).**

Look with me at verse 51b, “*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed...*” The word “sleep” refers to those who have passed on into the presence of the Lord and are now *resting* from their labor and suffering in this world. Note the words “we shall not all sleep.” Here sleep is a euphemism for death. Paul is simply saying that when Christ returns there will naturally be some believers who are still living and some who have already died. He does not mean that he will be alive when it happens. The future transformation will be for all Christians in the past and also in the present moment. At this point, is when both the living and the dead will receive recreated bodies, new bodies, bodies radically and completely changed.

**REVEALER #2 - The change will be a quick and sudden change (v. 52).**

Look with me at verse 52 which says, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.” The Greek word for ‘*moment*’ means definitive or an unstoppable moment, a time that cannot be cut or penciled into your calendar. You cannot know the exact day or hour of Christ’s return and it will take place so quickly. How it will happen? “*in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.*” 1 Thessalonians 5:2 says, “For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.”

Are you ready for Jesus to return? What do I mean by that? Are you right with God? Do you know with certainty that you are going to heaven when you die or if Jesus comes tomorrow? The only way to actually do this is to live each day with an eternal perspective in mind. This means making every effort to reconcile with people in your life where there is brokenness. This means making every effort to tell your family and friends about Jesus. The amount of time and concern we spend on the temporary things like social media or being entertained are exposed as insignificant. Are you ready for the quick and sudden change? Do you live knowing your time is limited? The answer is probably no for the majority of us if we are honest. But when Jesus changes us, we start to live different and can celebrate the transformation that is coming.

## Story – A thief. Being ready.

### **REVEALER #3 - The change will be at the end time, at the end of the world (v. 52b).**

Verse 52b says, “*For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*” A scholar says, “The trumpet blast in this verse is in an announcement of the Lord’s arrival in battle, a battle that does not last more than a moment in time. It is the Lord’s act of changing us from perishable to imperishable, of making us people over whom death has no power whatsoever, that constitutes death’s defeat and our victory over it.”<sup>1</sup> It will be the last trumpet ever blown; however, it will be the trumpet that will beckon the end of death, tears, pain, and life in this corruptible world. It will be the trumpet that will sound the end of the world as we now know it. (See 1 Th. 4:16.) How I look forward to that trumpet sound!

### **REVEALER #4 - The change of the body is an absolute guarantee (52c).**

The end of verse 52 says, “*and we shall be changed.*”

Note the strong affirmative “shall” of this verse which is secured in a promise. Do you remember the receipt that was given by Christ? The receipt Jesus gave you and me says your debt was paid in full and the matter is finished. Sin, no longer has power over you. When we doubt we need to be reminded of His absolute guarantee. The ultimate vanquishing of death, with which 1 Corinthians 15 culminates, speaks volumes to those who continue to live in fear of death today. Christians ought to fear less. They may grieve the loss of loved ones and have a certain anxiety related to the unknown factors surrounding their own death, but neither reaction ought to be “like the rest of men who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13).

The skeptic says that body dies and that’s it. We become the dirt and your life was all for nothing. Loren Eiseley talks about the problem with this view and says, “*Man is the cosmic orphan. He’s the only creature in the universe who asks, ‘Why?’ Other animals have instincts to guide them, but man has learned to ask questions: ‘Who am*

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<sup>1</sup> Ciampa, R. E., & Rosner, B. S. (2010). *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (p. 831). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

*I?' 'Why am I here?' 'Where am I going?'" Ever since the Enlightenment, when men threw off the "shackles" of religion, man has tried to answer those questions without reference to God. But the answers that came back were not exhilarating, but dark and terrible: you are the accidental by-product of nature - the result of matter, plus time, plus chance. There is no reason for your existence; all you face is death. Modern man thought that when he got rid of God he freed himself from everything that stifled and oppressed him; instead, he found that in killing God, he had only orphaned himself. For if there is no God, then man's life becomes, ultimately, absurd. If God does not exist, then both man and the universe are inevitably doomed to death. Man, like all biological organisms, must die. With no hope of immortality man's life leads only to the grave."*

The Christian can say with confidence that we are not cosmic orphans, God, revealed the end for us and we can celebrate a great future because of what Jesus did for us. As we have been talking about, all these things have been revealed to us so we can look forward to that day.

As we have seen, because of the resurrection, we can celebrate the future transformation that has been revealed to us.

**c. The transformation will be the infusion of a totally new nature (v. 53).**

Look with me at verse 15:53, *"For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality."*

We need the power of the resurrected Jesus to help us put on the imperishable. It starts by putting on the gospel. We need to wear it in all areas of our life. The good news changes our nature to be more like Jesus and shapes the way we live. As we said last week, listen Jesus has bought this for you! Through what Christ did, He puts on bodies that have a new heavenly nature. They will never lose their hearing, vision, or mobility. This is why we can celebrate what Jesus has done and is going to do. **Anyone who is not changed in this world cannot experience the change in the next. Change is necessary.** One who puts on the faith of the cross will be different. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as their Saviour, it is the very core of who you are is transformed as you become a 'new creature' in Jesus Christ. All of us including our will, mind, and emotions need to be renewed through the gospel. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

says, *“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

**You can see the different in someone who’s nature is being changed by Jesus from the someone who’s nature is living for the flesh. Look at the contrast between the life of Hugh Hefner and Billy Graham. “2 men. Both died recently in their 90’s. Both influenced the world. Both born into Christian homes. 1 saw only religion and led millions astray. The other saw the Saviour and led millions to faith.” Mark Varughese**

Here is the question, do you make decisions based on your earthly residence or your future heavenly residence? Many are fixated on the temporary woes of their flesh or the desires of the flesh and can’t see beyond that. It’s so easy to be consumed or give up because of the obsessing demand for fleshly things.

Currently, much of culture is focused just on earthly bodies. The message of our current world is... use your body however you want. You don’t need to live by God’s standards. The appearance of our body is everything if you want to be someone in our Western World. We admire and strive to look like certain celebrities. How you project your image or look will determine your success and triumph in life. The problem is that it creates a direct link between appearances and self-esteem. How you use and view your body is connected to the very core of who you are. How you look. How you dress. This does not mean you shouldn’t take care of yourself. However, your body is not your everything and it will fade. Ultimately, your body will fail you.

The message to our young boys and girls is so damaging and confusing. Frankly, it terrifies me as a parent. Our culture is confusing, pushing the envelope even further of what you can do with your body. This mentality, do whatever you feel like in the moment is so damaging and has long term effects. In terms of sexuality, they call it sexual fluency, which is do whatever you want with whoever or whatever if it feels good. Paul is saying that a person who lives in the flesh will not possess the Kingdom of God. How you use and view your body is evidence of who you serve.

If we know Jesus, we will be transformed from our fleshly, sinful state marked by brokenness and WAKE to a transformed condition of glory in which we shall all be changed.

To summarize, Paul is helping us see the larger perspective that our perishable body cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Because of the resurrection, we can celebrate the future transformation of our body! **Secondly, BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION, WE CAN CELEBRATE:**

## **2. THE FUTURE ELIMINATION OF DEATH.**

### **a) The change will swallow death; it will bring victory over the grave (vv. 54–56).**

Look with me at verse 54b to 56, *“then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”*

On this side of heaven, we will all feel the sting of death at some point. The closer the relationship... the greater the sting or pain experienced. However, notice these important words, “then shall come to pass.” These words “then shall come to pass” give us a time frame or an ending point for death. In other words, when Christ returns... then there will be victory over the grave. Not beforehand.

This change will be swift by Jesus, it will swallow death; it will bring victory over the grave. He tramples upon death as if it has fallen at his feet. Death is gone, it is finished, it has vanished away. Christ has not only overcome it, he has destroyed it and eliminated it completely. What a day that will be! Are you excited about that? Are you looking forward to that?

Someone said, *“Scripture repeatedly makes clear that heaven is a realm of unsurpassed joy, unfading glory, undiminished bliss, unlimited delights, and unending pleasures. Nothing about it can possibly be boring or humdrum. It will be a perfect existence. We will have unbroken fellowship with all heaven's inhabitants. Life there will be devoid of any sorrows, cares, tears, fears, or pain.” Do you believe that?*

This gives us a picture of the future for the believer who is standing before the Lord with death behind them. Do you see what Jesus has done and is going to do? Can you celebrate it? When God gives believers a perfect body, then the sting of death is removed. Death will be no more. The promise will be fulfilled. Isaiah talks about this promise that God gave His people long ago, “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it (Isaiah 25:8).”

Don't miss the connection between sin and death. Men die because of sin (Ro. 5:12). Sin gives death its power. Also, the connection between power of sin and the law. The law is summarized as the legal code or standard that is found in the OT that we could never live up to. It is like a knife that separates the good performance from bad performance. The power of the law is seen in that it caused us to know sin better, and then it increased the punishment. Since the law is what empowers sin, the law is defeated too. On that day, Jesus Christ brings victory over the law's power to condemn me.

**b) The change will be brought through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 57).**

Let's look at verse 57, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

On Easter morning, Jesus' body lay dead and lifeless: flesh, rotting into dust. But God reached down and restored Jesus from the grave. God did what he did at creation: he brought life where there was no life (Romans 4:17). Death is the one force that no person can escape from or overcome. But on that first Easter day, God took on death and won. He overcame the power of death. We've seen how the cross is the great declaration of God's love: if ever we have cause to doubt God's intentions, we can look to the cross and see his goodness written large. The resurrection is the great declaration of God's power and power to yet be seen. If ever we doubt God's power, we can look to the resurrection.

As we are looking forward to when He returns we need to recognize that Jesus gives us both victory for now and final victory in the future. I just want to take a minute to talk about Victory for today. Any victory that does not conquer is just an imitation or a false victory. Are you imitating victory? Or are you actually finding victory in Christ? When we find victory, we see strongholds coming down. We start to see a transformation in our being. It doesn't mean you won't struggle, but you can find victory over sin today! Sometimes God does this in community, through the reading of God's word, through prayer, and ultimately through the power of His Spirit.

Warren Wiersbe says, "*Nothing paralyzes our lives like the attitude that things can never change. We need to remind ourselves that God can change things. . . . If we see only the problems, we will be defeated; but if we see the possibilities in the*

*problems, we can have victory.*” Can you see beyond the problems? Can you that God is at work in the midst of your difficulties?

**In the middle of problems, how do you keep a heavenly perspective in front of you?** The Christian life needs to be patterned around the cross and resurrection. It keeps hope in front of you. It’s making a daily decision to live life with the wider lens given to you by Christ. We experience suffering, just as in the cross and resurrection we see “the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Peter 1:11). We follow the way of the cross in the present with the hope of resurrection glory to come.

Martin Luther says, *“I would not give one moment of heaven for all the joy and riches of the world, even if it lasted for thousands and thousands of years.”*

We can’t celebrate without looking through the gospel lens. The lens that says you don’t need to carry around your burden. Jesus takes that burden off. The burdens of your past. The burden of making a decision according to the flesh. The burden of the fear of the future. The burden of parental expectations. All burdens are taken off. Jesus takes all those burdens and forms them into a beautiful picture that is worth celebrating. Or it refashions a new song out of brokenness into a more beautiful song. The melody of your life becomes “my chains are gone and I have been set free. My God my Saviour has ransomed me. And like a flood His mercy rains. Unending love amazing grace.”

### **IN CLOSING.**

We can’t celebrate until we have been changed by Jesus. When we live with an eternal picture we can’t help but be shaped by the image of Christ.

What is the lens in which you live your life? Is it what Thomas Moore says, *“Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.”*

GET READY! THERE IS AN EMPTY TOMB! GET READY! HE IS GOING TO MAKE THINGS NEW. GET READY!

I want to take a moment of silence so that God can speak to you. I originally wanted to end with a big celebration and I believe God said my people are not ready. What is keeping you from celebrating? What needs to be changed in your life.

**Closing prayer from The Gospel Coalition** (Modified for corporate prayer)

“Lord Jesus, you are a most wonderful, merciful Savior. We praise, bless, and adore you for *everything* you are, *everything* you’ve done for us, and all that you continue to do for us.

We’re thankful that every aspect of our being matters to you—mind, body, and spirit. Every aspect of our being needs your cleansing, healing, and life-giving grace. We long for the Day when we will be completely healthy and whole.

In light of that Day, Jesus, our cry is simple, humble, and earnest. Please bring your healing power to bear to those we love and cherish, even *before* the great Day of complete healing.

For our family members, kids, and friends: Capture their hearts with your love. That’s what we want more than anything else. Make the gospel beautiful and irresistible to them. Heal their emotions with your grace, and their bodies by your power. Deepen our confidence that you are at work; and free us to love them, and not try to fix them.

For ourselves: Heal our unbelief, Jesus. Free us to know all we really need in life is you, plus what you choose to give us, Lord. Increase our joy, peace, and trust—*supersize* them. Make the gospel more precious to us than anything or anyone. So we pray, in the worship-worthy and trustworthy name of Jesus.” AMEN.