

12/14/25

Our Resurrection Hope

1 Corinthians 15:50–58

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:50–58

Sermon Introduction

Charles Spurgeon once said that “[**The resurrection of the body**] is the Christian’s brightest hope.” I don’t know about you, but the study of 1 Corinthians 15 has done a lot in my heart to deepen my appreciation for the resurrection. I have to confess, while I knew of and believed in the teaching of the resurrection, I had not consistently slowed down to meditate on how incredible it truly is.

The hope of receiving a renewed body and dwelling in a renewed creation with our risen Savior is beyond amazing. When we truly reflect on it, it fills the heart with anticipation and joy. That is why John Calvin could say, “**Let us consider this settled, that no one has made progress in the school of Christ who does not joyfully await the day of death and final resurrection.**”

The resurrection is not a dry theological doctrine. It is meant to shape how we live, how we suffer, and how we serve our Lord in this life.

Main Point: 1 Corinthians 15:50–58, gives four resurrection realities that reshape how we live for Christ.

Outline:

I. The Necessity of the Resurrection (50)

II. The Mystery of the Resurrection (51–53)

III. The Celebration of the Resurrection (54–57)

IV. The Motivation of the Resurrection (58)

I. The Necessity of the Resurrection (50)

Paul has spent this entire chapter teaching the Corinthians about the resurrection, and in this section, he begins to bring this instruction to its conclusion. As he does, he wants them to understand that the resurrection is necessary for eternal life.

Look at verse **50** it begins with, “**Now I say this, brethren.**” In the Greek is an emphatic statement. It is a way of signaling that what he is about to say is especially important and that the Corinthians needed to pay attention.

This is followed by two statements that reveal why the resurrection is absolutely necessary. The first is this: “**that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.**”

This is a similar statement to what Paul wrote earlier in **1 Corinthians 6:9–10** “**Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.**”

In chapter 6, Paul’s point is moral: those who persist in unrepentant sin will not inherit God’s kingdom because their lives demonstrate that they do not belong to Christ. But here in chapter 15, Paul’s point is physical: even believers, as we now are in our present mortal condition, are unfit for God’s eternal kingdom. A transformation must occur.

The phrase “**flesh and blood**” refers to our bodies in their current fallen condition. And the “**kingdom of God**” in this context points forward to the fullness of Christ’s reign in the new heavens and the new earth.

As John Marc pointed out last Sunday, our present bodies are affected by the curse of sin and subject to disease, decline, decay, and death. My sons have been talking about the five “Bs” of aging all week: Baldness, bifocals, bridges, bulges, and bunions.

Notice the second statement “**nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.**” This reinforces again that our present bodily condition is **perishable** and temporary. There is a limit to how far these bodies can go. There are only so many miles we can put on these engines.

To clarify, as John Marc pointed out last Sunday, Paul is not saying that our resurrection bodies will be floating spirits. The contrast is not between what is physical and what is immaterial, but between two different qualities of bodily existence. The contrast is between what is temporary and perishable versus what is permanent and imperishable.

But notice how Paul phrases it, “**the perishable [does not] inherit the imperishable.**” The perishable does not naturally transition into the imperishable. It does not automatically take hold of or possess what is eternal. In other words, eternal life in God’s kingdom is not humanity’s default condition. Not everyone enters God’s eternal kingdom, and not everyone receives a resurrection body fitted for everlasting life.

Right away, this confronts us with the reality of our need for Christ and His resurrection. The Scriptures that there is one holy, righteous, and sovereign God who created all things, including us, for His glory (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 24:1). We were made to know Him, reflect His holiness, and live under His good and righteous rule (Genesis 1:26–27).

But we all have rebelled against our holy God. Every one of us has sinned. We have rejected God’s authority and have chosen our own way (Romans 3:23; Isaiah 53:6). Because of sin,

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death entered the world (Romans 5:12). Physical death, spiritual separation from God, and eternal judgment are the just consequences for our sin (Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:27).

But God, in His mercy and love, sent His Son, Jesus Christ to live the perfect, sinless life we failed to live (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus died on the cross in the place of sinners, bearing the penalty of God's just wrath that we deserved (Isaiah 53:5–6; 1 Peter 2:24).

And He resurrected from the dead. He conquered sin and death. And He became the evidence of our resurrection hope (1 Corinthians 15:20–22). Through His resurrection, Christ secured the forgiveness of sins we desperately needed, the reconciliation with God we could never earn on our own, and the resurrection transformation that is absolutely necessary for us to enter His eternal kingdom.

Since you cannot enter God's kingdom as you are, you must come to the only One who can make you new. Turn from your sin. Stop trusting your own efforts. Place your faith in Jesus Christ. He was crucified for your sin and risen to give you life. Everyone who trusts Him will share in His resurrection and inherit His kingdom.

This is why the gospel and the resurrection is not a suggestion. It is not a good idea among many options. It is the only way someone can be saved. It is absolutely necessary.

Now the Corinthians needed to know this. And we need to know this. Yet, there were some who still had questions about how this all worked. Particularly for those who were still alive when Christ returned. And that leads us to our next point.

II. The Mystery of the Resurrection (51–53)

In these verses, Paul explains the mystery of what will happen to believers who are still alive when Christ returns. Notice the opening phrase in verse 51 **“Behold, I tell you a mystery;”**

In Scripture, a **mystery** is something that is unknowable to us unless God revealed it. It refers to a truth that was once hidden (in the OT) but has now been revealed through Christ and the apostles in the New Testament.

The particular **mystery** he describes concerns how the resurrection will affect believers who are still alive at Christ's coming and have not yet experienced death.

Now in the Old Testament God revealed glimpses of resurrection hope for His people.

In **Job 19:25–26**, Job expresses this confidence that he would have a bodily form and see God after his death. **“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.”**²⁶ **“Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;”**

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David in **Psalm 17:15**, After contrasting himself with the wicked who perish without hope, he declares, **“As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.”** The context of that psalm shows that David speaks of his own death and of an awakening that leads him to seeing God.

In **Isaiah 26:19**, which is part of a song celebrating God’s faithfulness, final judgment, and the salvation of His people, Isaiah says, **“Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy...”**

And in **Daniel 12:2**, God gives Daniel a vision of the end times, it reads **“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life...”** This is the clearest Old Testament reference to the coming resurrection.

These and other Old Testament gave glimpses of the resurrection, but they didn’t talk about what would happen to God’s people who were still alive at the resurrection.

Now look at the passage again. Paul says, **“we will not all sleep (die), but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”** This imagery is fascinating.

The expression **“in a moment”** translates the word *atomos* which literally means ‘that which cannot be divided’, and it gives the idea of the smallest possible unit of something. We actually get our English word “atom” from this word. This word is coupled with expression **“in the twinkling of an eye”** to convey that this event happens instantaneously. This is an immediate transformation that will take place.

Look down again at the passage, Paul says this will happen **“at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.”**

What is this reference to the trumpet? Now trumpets are used throughout Scripture for various reasons. They were used during certain feasts and holy days (Leviticus 23:24). They were used to summon the Israel to the tabernacle (Numbers 10:2). They were used alongside sacrificial offerings made to the Lord (Numbers 10:10). Trumpets were used when the walls of Jericho fell (Joshua 6). And a trumpet was used announce the Lord’s appearing to Israel (Leviticus 19:16–20). These are just a few of the ways we see trumpets used in the Scriptures.

Some interpret this “last trumpet” as the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15–19, which is the final trumpet in a series of judgments. The word “last” does not necessarily mean the last in short chronological sequence or arrangement. Rather, the word last can indicate the idea “final,” meaning that this trumpet brings the present church age to its conclusion.

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In this way, the last trumpet here more naturally connects with what we see in **1 Thessalonians 4:16–17**. There it reads, **“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.¹⁷ 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.”**

The two passages describe the same event. This is the rapture of the church prior to God’s judgment on the world. During the rapture the believers who have died will be raised and resurrected to imperishable glory and this will coincide with the resurrection transformation of those still alive. And both transformations will all happen in an instant, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

We need to let this truth sink in. Whether you are young or old, healthy or sick, comfortable or in pain, in peak physical condition or feeling like you are down to your last few miles, you need to hear the truth and the promise that if you are in Christ, you will one day soon be transformed in an instant. You will be able to put off this body of death and put on a body fit for everlasting life in the presence of your risen Lord.

Our world is obsessed with avoiding aging and death. There are people like Brian Johnson, Peter Attia, and Andrew Huberman, and other longevity influencers. They encourage people into pouring vast amounts of money, time, and energy into supplements, treatments, and refined daily routines designed to slow aging.

Every few months we find out about a new food, a new supplement, a new treatment, a new recovery method that claims to be a modern-day fountain of youth. To be sure, not all these things are bad.

But as believers, we need to recognize that even with all the advances of medicine, technology, and longevity science, none of these regimens can reverse the curse of death or grant the immortality our heart longs for. At best, they can slightly prolong the inevitable.

Scripture tells us that our hope in this life is not found in diets, therapies, or biohacking but in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. Only Christ can give a body raised in glory, imperishable, immortal, and forever free from sin and death.

But our hope of the resurrection isn’t just a hope of a new physical body, it’s freedom from the power and dominion of death. And that leads to our next point...

III. The Celebration of the Resurrection (54–57)

I hope that by now your heart is filling with hope and praise to the Lord. Honestly, I think Paul’s own heart overflowed with the joy, praise, thanksgiving, and celebration as he wrote these truths to the Corinthians. Let’s look at verse **54 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.

Here Paul reaches the peak of this teaching on the resurrection. In this chapter he has shown that the full victory of God’s saving plan requires the total and final defeat of death 1 Corinthians 15:26).

So Paul now looks ahead and envisions the time when the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality, and when that happens will be completely and totally swallowed up in Christ’s victory.

This is a quotation from Isaiah 25:8. Go home today and read that chapter. It is a beautiful song of praise to the Lord for who He is and the salvation He has brought to His people. I want to read a few verses of it for you.

Isaiah 25:1 O Lord, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name; For You have worked wonders, Plans *formed* long ago, with perfect faithfulness.

Isaiah 25:6–8 The Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, *And* refined, aged wine. ⁷ And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, Even the veil which is stretched over all nations. ⁸ He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken.

Brothers and sisters, I want your hearts to be filled with joy. As you hear this and as you read it, know that because of what Christ has done, we are reading about a future event that we will be participating in.

After quoting Isaiah, he then quotes Hosea 13:14 and uses it as a celebration cry. Look at verse **55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”** The context shows that these questions are designed to have a dramatic effect and he uses them to further his explanation of the complete and total victory Christ has accomplished through the gospel.

Let’s continue in verse **56 “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”**

The reality of our sin is what gives death its sting. First, Scripture teaches that death exists because of sin (Genesis 2:17; 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:23). Second, sin separates us from God, and apart from Christ that separation is permanent and eternal (2 Thessalonians 1:6–9). Death terrifies us because our sin condemns us before a holy God.

Then Paul says that the power of sin is the law. Now, God’s law is holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:12). Yet because we are sinners by nature, the law exposes our guilt and condemns

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us (Romans 8:3). The law shows us what sin is, it defines sin, and it is God's testimony to us that we are accountable to Him (Romans 3:19–20). It commands us to walk in the righteousness of God but apart from the Spirit's work in us we rebel against it.

What is a person to do? Look at verse **57** **“but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Christ is the only hope a person can have. Only Christ has fulfilled the whole law (Matthew 5:17) and committed no sin (1 Peter 2:22). And it is only through faith in Christ that a person can be freed from the law: **Romans 10:4 “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”**

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has removed death's sting by being our sin bearer (2 Corinthians 5:21). He has satisfied the law's penalty that was due to us by becoming a curse for us (Galatians 3:13).

Not only that but He has conquered death, will never die again (Romans 6:9). I love the way **2 Timothy 1:8–10** describes it: **“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,⁹ who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,¹⁰ but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”**

Because Christ fulfilled the law and absorbed the full sting of death in our place, death is stingless for all who belong to Him. There is no victory that it holds now over us because Christ has had victory over it.

Death is no longer the bailiff that ushers us into God's courtroom for the justice we deserve. It is now doorway to our long-awaited rest, peace, and joy found in our Savior.

There is a story that has been told several times of a little girl riding with her father when a bee flew into the car. The girl panicked because she was severely allergic. Her father reached out, caught the bee in his hand, held it for a moment, and then released it.

Then the bee flew again toward the frightened girl and she panicked. The father opened his hand and said, “You don't need to be afraid anymore. It can't hurt you. I've taken the sting.”

That is exactly what Christ has done. Death is still a reality among us, it still unsettles us, still draws near to us but for the believer, it has no sting. It cannot sting. Christ has taken its sting. He bore the curse. He took the wrath. And now death is a defeated and powerless enemy.

I was talking with Steven Schouten this week about this text and he shared with me something I didn't know about John MacArthur and his last words. Leading up to his passing, John MacArthur spent time meditating on the words of 1 Corinthians 15:55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

And it was reported by those who were with him when he was taking his final breath that in between his gasps for breath he was saying “I feel no sting. I feel no fear.” His assurance at the end came from the truth of the resurrection and the grace of Christ that overcomes sin and death.

This is why Paul erupts in praise and celebration: “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Believer, is this the cry of our heart? Do you celebrate our Savior's victory that we get to share in? My hope and prayer is that this passage produces in us a greater joy in Christ, a deeper gratitude for the gospel, and a steadfast confidence in our resurrection hope. May our hearts celebrate the triumph He has secured and live in the light of that victory. And that leads us to our last point...

VI. The Motivation of the Resurrection (58)

Let's look at the last verse of the chapter, **58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.”**

This verse is the conclusion and application of this whole chapter. Everything he has just written from the certainty of Christ's bodily resurrection, to the promise of our own, to the final victory over death itself all flows into this single transition word: **“Therefore.”**

Since death has been conquered by Christ, and since believers now possess an indestructible, resurrection-grounded hope, our lives must reflect that incredible reality.

To be **steadfast** is to be firm, unwavering, and resolute. This is a call to be firmly established in our faith in Christ and His gospel in light of the sure resurrection hope that we have.

To be **immovable** is to be steady, persevering, and unshaken. The word **steadfast** speaks to the inward resolve or focus and **immovable** points to the outward refusal to be pushed off course.

A steadfast and immovable Christian is not easily distracted from our hope in Christ. We are not to be led astray into temptation or following the course of this world. We are not to be characterized by lukewarmness or spiritual apathy. We are to be devoted to Christ

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We don't need to be worried about social pressure or persecution. We can be steady during trials and challenges because as Hebrews 12:1 says, we keep our eyes on Christ and the resurrection. Our resurrection hope gives us strength and courage and confidence.

If we trust that God is able to resurrect our bodies from the dust, then we should trust that God never forgets even the smallest deed done in His service.

Paul clarifies how steadfastness and immovability are also seen in a believer's life **"always abounding in the work of the Lord."** Resurrection hope is our motivation for active, persistent involvement in the work of the Lord.

To **abound** means to overflow, to give oneself fully, consistently, and enthusiastically to the service of Christ. Half-hearted participation or an indifferent approach, or an uninterested heart towards this is a complete contradiction to the reality of Christ, the gospel, and the resurrection hope we have.

You can't come away from reading and studying a chapter like this and allow these resurrection truths to produce passivity in your Christian walk. It must stir you to want to know Christ more, help others to know Him more, and to proclaim Him to those who don't yet know.

The reality of the resurrection is a fuel for all our ministry and obedience. From evangelism, to discipleship, to acts of love, to perseverance in holiness, to service in the church, and to our prayer and communion with the Lord.

And there is a beauty here in the last phrase of the verse: **"knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord."** In other words work in the Lord is never empty, futile, or wasted. It always has meaning, purpose, and eternal significance.

So whether it is loving and serving our spouses, discipling our children, praying for our missionaries, evangelizing our neighbors, meeting the needs of the saints, serving one another, studying God's Word to teach and preach, or anything else that we are called to do, when we give ourselves to seeking first His kingdom and His glory as our priority, our labor is never in vain.

We have the sure promise of the resurrection set before us. We have the Lord of the resurrection always with us. And we have the power of the resurrection already at work within us by His Spirit.

Until the day comes when we are raised up or caught up to be with Him, we are called to steward the bodies we have now. To use them faithfully and joyfully for His glory, doing all the good we can for as long as He allows. And as we do this we know that we are being prepared for a body that will be like that of our risen Savior.

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I pray that this is the motivation of your heart based on what we have seen this morning. In light of the necessity of the resurrection, the incredible nature of the mystery of the resurrection, the glorious victory of the resurrection, I pray that our hearts would be stirred to live for Christ until He returns or calls us home.

Let's pray.

Benediction: Adapted from **1 Corinthians 15:58** **"Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, may the Lord make you steadfast, immovable, and motivate you to always be abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord."**