Victory in Jesus

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

[Men's Retreat 2026 - Friday Night]

Introduction

The theme of this year's retreat is *"Victory in Jesus",* and I'm going to open the weekend with a message by that same name. As you look at the rest of the titles on your schedule, *"Waging Warfare", "Defending the Work", "More Than Conquerors"* and *"Overcoming Evil,"* there's an obvious focus on spiritual warfare.

§ But when you talk about spiritual warfare, a lot of Christian men get the wrong idea (pic of AR-toting, bible-thumping demon slayer). Now, I'm not saying that we aren't going to encounter demonic resistance in our lives and ministries. Ephesians 6 makes it very clear that, *"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."* (**Eph. 6:12**)

However, the day-to-day battle is often against a more insidious enemy… our flesh. I'd like to blame the constant battle in my heart and mind on Satan, but the truth is, the more common enemy is myself! *"We have met the enemy, and he is us!"* (*Pogo* comic strip, Walt Kelly)

§ In our text, Paul declares our victory through Jesus Christ… but victory over *what?* Death! This entire chapter is about death and resurrection… not only Jesus, but us as well. And not just physical death, but the spiritual curse of death through sin. § So, let's dive into the text and consider our *Victory in Jesus* as we see God's desire for each of us to be…

1. Transformed
2. Triumphant
3. Tenacious

[**read text**]

I. Transformed (vs. 50-54) {straight read}

Some years ago, a popular "Christian" pastor and author wrote a book titled, *"Your Best Life Now."* I'm so grateful that he's a false teacher, because if *this* is the best God has for us, I'm deeply disappointed. The bulk of this chapter, and our first few verses this evening, are a look ahead to better things… to our best life! We're given a promise of *transformation*. The initial promise here is future tense… Something to look forward to.

Vs. 50… *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.* Simply put, we won't be rocking these bodies in heaven… Which is good news, because as I look around the room tonight, I gotta be honest. I always pictured heaven as better looking than this!

Nor does corruption inherit incorruption. If you haven't figured it out yet, these bodies aren't gonna last forever (I know you young guys don't know what I'm talking about!). Our earthly bodies break down and decay, but we're going to live forever.

2 Cor. 5:1 *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

§ **Vs. 51…** *We shall not all sleep…* That describes the weekend for some of us! I love this euphemism of sleep as a description of death because, for the Christian, there really is no death. We close our eyes, go to sleep, and wake up in the presence of our Creator!

When Paul wrote, *"We shall not all sleep,"* he did so with a sense that the return of Christ was imminent. He earnestly believed that Jesus was coming soon and understood that there would be believers who never died because of His return.

But we shall all be changed. Whether you get resurrected or raptured, you will be changed. There's such an assurance in knowing that who and what we are today is not what we will always be!

Philippians 1:6 *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*

§ **Vs. 52…** The rapture! *The dead will be raised incorruptible.* No mummies or zombies. Eternal perfection. *We shall be changed.* This is a promise, not just a hope. What a victorious day!

§ **Vs. 53…** *Corruptible/incorruption* (decay)*… Mortal/immortality* (time). Once attended a funeral at the church I grew up in for a brother in the congregation who had gone home to be with the Lord. The pastor was sharing from this passage and boldly declared that we should rejoice because our brother had put on *immorality!* (One letter makes such a difference!) We're talking about *immortality* tonight though. Transformation!

1 John 3:2 *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

§ *Must put on…* A picture of getting dressed. This body is just an outer shell for the inward man. We're going to change clothes in a physical sense when we step into eternity, the outward man will be transformed. But the transformation of the inward man begins now… changing the clothes of our hearts and minds. [**Colossians 3:8,12**] The transforming power of the resurrection is not just for our bodies in eternity, but for our hearts and minds today.

2 Cor. 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

§ **Vs. 54…** *"Death is swallowed up in victory."* Right now, we're at war with the curse of death… in our bodies and in our souls. The Lord promises victory though, in the form of transformation: The decaying becomes perfect and the temporal becomes eternal.

II. Triumphant (vs. 55-57)

We've been looking ahead to the victory that comes at either the resurrection or the rapture, when our corrupted, mortal bodies get traded in for an eternally perfect new model. But I really want to focus now on the triumph the Lord offers right here and now. The Christian walk is not only *toward* victory, but is meant to be lived *in* victory.

Vs. 55… This is a battle cry in the face of the enemy! Paul quotes here from Hosea 13:14 as he asks two rhetorical questions (meaning, he already knows the answer). There's a taunting, mocking tone to his questions in the face of our greatest enemy. The words are spoken, not from fear, but from a position of triumph.

Psalm 27:1 *The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?*

Where is your sting? I.e., *"What do you have that can hurt me?"*

§ **Vs. 56…** *The sting of death is sin…* How many of you have felt that sting? Sin is the sting, the poison that brings death. [**Romans 6:23a**] Here's the thing, though, sin isn't going to kill you some day… It brings a curse of spiritual death right here in this life.

[**Ephesians 2:1-6**] § You were already dead in your trespasses and sins, but you are now alive! You see, the first point was future tense, but we're talking about the present tense now. And for you, Christian, the curse of death that was on you because of your sin nature, that's past tense.

So, the question is, are you living in the past or the present? Are you dead or alive? Listen, if you call yourself a Christian but you're still living like you did before accepting Christ, where's the victory? [**Ephesians 4:17-24**] Are you walking in present triumph or past defeat?

§ I'm not talking about rules. *"We just need to make some rules so we know the boundaries!"* That's the cry of the legalist. The law can save me. But what does our text say? *The strength of sin is the law.* The law *strengthens* sin, it doesn't *defeat* it! The law just makes our sin more obvious.

Romans 3:20 *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

§ **Vs. 57…** You don't need rules, you need Jesus! Thank God! This is basic gospel, but it's important that we understand what the cross was about. Jesus fulfilled the law by paying the penalty and the resurrection defeated death once and for all. He paid the price for your victory.

But note the tense of this passage. Paul doesn't say God *gave* you the victory 2,000 years ago. No, he *gives* us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ today. What Jesus did 2,000 years ago means that you can have victory over sin and death right now. Christians aren't meant to live in sin. If you're a slave to your sin tonight, you can be free!

John 8:36 *Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

III. Tenacious (vs. 58)

I want to close with a few thoughts on our part in this. If Jesus did all the work, why does living in victory seem so hard? This is the *spiritual warfare* portion of our message. The victory is truly something Jesus does in us and for us, but we have a part to play as well and it isn't easy.

Vs. 58… *Therefore…* Because of all that Christ has done, here is what our response should be.

Be steadfast, immovable… God has brought you into a place of victory and freedom over your sin nature. Stay there! Don't go back to your old life. In Ephesians 6, the quintessential passage on spiritual warfare, the word *stand* appears four times.

Ephesians 6:13 *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.* (remain standing)

§ Stop letting the enemy and your own flesh push you around! We'll stand up to a bully but won't stand up to sin!

…always abounding in the work of the Lord. Old saying, *"Idle hands are the devil's workshop."*

God didn't just save you *from* sin… He saved you *to* His good works. [**Eph. 2:10**] The work of the Lord is not church attendance and devotional life. Those are the equipping. Seek calling! Get busy doing what God has called you to do and you won't have time for sin! That's not quite how it works, but when you're actively serving God, your mind and heart are focused differently.

Colossians 3:1-2 *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. [2] Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

§ *…knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* You'll never waste your time actively serving God.

Final thought: § Earlier I shared *this* picture with you as representing our mindset concerning spiritual warfare, but I want to leave you with a more accurate one § (explain). Let me leave you with this admonition:

2 Cor. 10:3-6 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. [4] For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, [5] casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, [6] and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*

[altar call] [stand for prayer, victory over sin stronghold]