

Strength Through The Storms #15
The Greatest Change
1 Corinthians 15.50-58
May 5, 2024

Strength Through The Storms has been the title of the series of messages we have been looking at through Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Their "**storms**" had caused them to stray from where they needed to be, and the church at Corinth was having trouble looking anything like what God intended.

We have not gone verse by verse like we do on Wednesday nights, but today this 14th message will be the final one in the series. Before we get to our text and message, I would like us to consider one verse that is "**in between**" because it is so important. It is a verse you need to remember and apply.

1 Cor. 15.33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

It is really important to choose those you hang out with carefully. Their influence will be greater than you can imagine!

Our final message is not a rebuke regarding inappropriate behavior, but rather is instructional, informative, and encouraging. The title of this message is THE GREATEST CHANGE.

Change. Does that word not cause chills to go up and down your back? For most it probably does, but for others you have been wanting change. What is the greatest change you have had to deal with so far? A baby? Marriage, Job, death of a spouse or somebody close? Change can be good or bad. Today we will see what Scripture says about what will be your best change and make no mistake about it – it will come! Today, we will look at the doctrine of the second coming.

Read 1 Cor. 15.50

The main things to think about today, the first is your...

I. INHERITANCE

1. Is that a good word, or a word that scares you? Maybe you have been blessed by an inheritance. Maybe it has been more like a curse because the inheritance you received was a mess.

FROM A CAVE TO A CASTLE

Flat broke and homeless, brothers Geza and Zslot Peladi literally lived in a cave near Budapest for years. They left their dank home only to scrape together whatever money they could through selling scrap metal and candy. Theirs was a hopeless situation.

But then everything changed.

One day, out of the blue, charity workers informed the brothers that they had inherited a substantial portion of their late maternal grandmother's \$6.6 billion fortune. And just like that, two destitute brothers, should they want to, could call a castle their home when all they had ever known was a cave.

(Brian Lowery, managing editor, PreachingToday.com; source: Mike Krumboltz, "From Cave to Castle," www.buzz.yahoo.com (12-3-09) sermoncentral.com)

2. Luke defines the inheritance under consideration here. What does your bible say? What is it that we "**inherit?**" Most all translations say the same thing: "**The kingdom of God.**"
3. Exactly what is "**the kingdom of God?**" It can mean different things. It can mean God's rule here on this earth. Though it may not look like it, we now live in the kingdom of

God from the perspective that He is the creator and ultimate ruler – but – we live in a fallen world where sin and Satan abound.

4. In our text, the “**kingdom of God**” refers to the ultimate INHERITANCE for the believer which is heaven. To be in heaven is to genuinely “**arrive**” ... it is the ultimate eternal destination.
5. Heaven is a very real place, that God prepares for His children. Remember what Jesus said in John 14?

John 14.1-3 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

6. What is it about heaven that intrigues you the most? Walls of jasper? Pearly gates? Streets of gold?

Passing Through

An American tourist's visit to the 19th century Polish rabbi, Hofetz Chaim:

Astonished to see that the rabbi's home was only a simple room filled with books, plus a table and a bench, the tourist asked,

"Rabbi, where is your furniture?"

"Where is yours?" replied the rabbi.

"Mine?" asked the puzzled American.

"But I'm a visitor here. I'm only passing through."

"So am I," said Hofetz Chaim.

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7. Think about heaven and you will really appreciate the nature of the place which is opposite from the nature of this place. It will be totally different. No tears, no pain, no sorrow, no problems. Can you imagine? Can you imagine physically being with Jesus?
8. Why aren't you there right now? It is because right now you are perishable. That's the next thing we need to think about which is the fact that you must be...

II. IMPERISHABLE

1. You might not like thinking about the fact that you are "**perishable.**" What does the word bring to your mind?
2. When you go to the grocery store, they primarily have two types of food. The fresh food section, which would include fruits,

vegetables and meats, and the “**non-perishable**” section, where everything is so full of chemicals and preservatives, they “**last forever**” – not really.

The Resurrected Body is Free From the Restriction on Lifespan

I read with interest Internet accounts on how long living creatures live. Let's start with creepy crawlies. The itty-bitty spider lives a short 100 days. The nuclear-surviving cockroach actually lives just up to seven years. The lifespan of an adult American cockroach is between 6-12 months, but the bad news is that a female can produce up to eight hundred cockroaches a year. The average life span of a slithering snake is 15-20 years.

Water creatures differ in lifespan according to their species. The average lifespan for guppies is 3-5 years, but 10-30 years for Goldfish and Koi. The Chinese longevity gui or turtle lives but 25 years; the seal lives longer at 46 years.

Birds, also, differ in life expectancy. Canaries live 7-10 years, doves 10-15 years, parrots 15-20 years, and cockatoos live to a ripe old age of 30-40+ years.

Animals do not necessarily live longer than other creatures.

- **The average lifespan of any dog is 10-12 years.**
- **The poodle lives 10-12 years but the small Chihuahua 13 - 15 years.**
- **The cat with nine lives has an average lifespan 12-15 years for**

indoor cats and 2-3 years for outdoor cats.

- **The rat's is 33 months and a year longer for lab rats.**

Earthlive.org documents the age of mammals in years:

- **Grey Wolf/ Tiger/Leopard/Jaguar - 20**
- **Camel - 25.5**
- **Indian Rhinoceros - 47**
- **Chimpanzee and Orangutan (the longevity monkeys) - 55+**
- **Indian Elephant - 78**

<http://www.earthlife.net/mammals/age.html>

Man, in contrast, is durable. The World Health Organization estimated that people in 24 countries live over 70 years, and half of the WHO member countries live over 60 years.

At the other extreme, people in 32 countries live less than 40 years.

Many of these are countries with major epidemics of HIV/AIDS, among other causes. All the bottom 10 countries were in sub-Saharan Africa, with Ethiopia lowest at 33.5.

<http://www.who.int/inf-pr-2000/en/pr2000-life.html>

The highest average life expectancy in the world is in Okinawa, Japan, at 81.2 years - 86 for women, 75 for men.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1977733.stm>

The latest figure for America is 77.6 years but obesity can reduce a person's life by 2-5 years (USA TODAY 03/17/2005 "Obesity threatens life expectancy"). Smoking slices a life by 5-6 years on average.

Psalms 90:10 reads, "The length of our days is seventy years--or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away."

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3. Since you are “**perishable**” you can be compared to a head of cabbage. You can be fresh from the field or have been refrigerated or set out for a while. All of us are at different stages – some are losing our crunch and firmness, etc. etc. The point is that a head of cabbage is not going to last forever. It will eventually wither away and go back to the dirt, like it came from. What are we made from? Dirt. (**Be careful about being a “clean freak.” When you sweep the dirt off your floor, you may be sweeping up some of your relatives – since we are all related.”**)
4. The point is that “**flesh and blood**” which is what we are – is perishable. Look at verse 50 again...

1 Cor 15.50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the

kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

5. Since we are “**perishable**” and cannot inherit the kingdom of God, we must become imperishable – we need to undergo a **GREATER CHANGE** than we can imagine. We must become “**imperishable.**” How does this **CHANGE** take place? That’s where we will spend some time as we think about the third thing which is the...

III. IMPLICATION

1. The doctrine is referred to as the “**The Second Coming (sometimes called the Second Advent or the Parousia)**”, but that word does not occur in Scripture.
2. In this passage, Paul reveals a “**secret**” or “**mystery.**” (NLT: “**a wonderful secret**”) It was a “**secret**” because most people, if any, knew nothing about it. It is no longer a

“**mystery**” or “**secret**” because it is revealed in Scripture.

3. Understand that in Scripture, “**sleep**” often refers to death – which is the case in this passage. Not everyone will die, but everybody will be changed – from the perishable to the imperishable.
4. To understand this “**mystery**” we need to understand some things about death. Death is obviously separation from other people who are living.
5. At death, the spirit our soul immediately leaves the physical body and goes into the presence of God – if you are a Christian. You immediately become “**absent from the body.**” **2 Corinthians 5.8** says that when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord, but not in the ultimate place where heaven will be.

6. By implication, when somebody dies apart from Christ, they would be in an opposite place, but not ultimate hell. The OT uses a word called **“Sheol.”**
7. So, the body stays here and perishes and the soul or spirit – the true essence of the person lives on.
8. Back to the text. Look at the last part of **verse 51:**

“...we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed...”

9. In other words, not everybody will be dead when Christ returns, but everybody will be **“changed.”** The **“change”** for those who are living is to no longer be **“flesh and blood.”**
10. The Lord’s return will happen **“suddenly”** ... **“in a moment – in the twinkling of an eye.”**

11. When Christ comes, He will come with the sound of a trumpet.
12. As we will see in a moment, Christ comes back with the souls of those who have died. The bodies of the dead will rise to connect with their souls in a brand-new imperishable body.
13. Notice the two “**musts**” in verse 53:

1 Cor. 15.53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

14. At this point of His return, there will be no more death. “**Death is swallowed up in victory!**” (**vs.54-55**)
15. When Jesus comes for His children, it will fulfill his purpose from **John 14**.

John 14.2-3 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

16. The other place we find the “**mystery**” revealed: (with other details)

Read 1 Thess. 4.13-18

17. This message of “**change**” should comfort us! The Lord's return is every Christian's ultimate victory!

1 Cor. 15.57 ...but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

18. Now that you know the “**mystery**” what are you to do? God says:

1 Cor. 15.58 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.

Conclusion

Jesus is coming back! For those who know Christ, it is the best thing that can happen – for those who don't it is the worst!

In Warren Wiersbe's Meet Yourself in the Psalms, he tells about a frontier town where a horse bolted and ran away with a wagon carrying a little boy. Seeing the child in danger, a young man risked his life to catch the horse and stop the wagon. The child who was saved grew up to become a lawless man, and one day he stood before a judge to be sentenced for a

serious crime. The prisoner recognized the judge as the man who, years before had saved his life; so he pled for mercy on the basis of that experience. But the words from the bench silenced his plea: "Young man, then I was your savior; today I am your judge, and I must sentence you to be hanged." One day Jesus Christ will say to rebellious sinners, "During that long day of grace, I was the Savior, and I would have forgiven you. But today I am your Judge. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!"

Doug Van Essen – sermonillustrations.com

When you were **“born again,”** you were born into and for the kingdom of heaven, which is your true home. We are just passing through a few years in this life. As James says, **“life is but a vapor”** – a **“puff of smoke.”**

If you have experienced THE GREATEST CHANGE, then thoughts of Christ returning should quicken your heart and soul. Are you ready for heaven today?

I long for heaven. Many people don't understand it. Ever been on a trip as a child – maybe to a camp or extended stay with relatives? Ever get “**homesick?**” Even while having a good time away? The more you understand God, heaven, and eternity, the more homesick you will be. It's true when you travel. Are you ready for home?

Prayer