

# First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

June 9, 2019

**Scripture** 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 (New International Version)  
51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 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." 55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my dear brothers, 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.

## **Congregational Prayer: "Our Father"**

Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespases, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom, The Power And The Glory. Forever And Ever. Amen

## **Sermon "Death - Victory-less and DeStung"**

### Introduction:

- I hated writing exams. Maybe that is a given for everyone, but when it came to exams, I never enjoyed a one - until they were over. So many times I would sit there, nervous energy flowing from me, re-asking the same questions over and over in my mind - will I remember everything? Will I express it well? Do I have enough supplies - a few pens in case one breaks, and anything else just in case. I felt much like Mr Bean in his video clip of exam writing, where he took so many pens with him,

that he had a pen in each pocket, and a handful in his bag just in case. And so, because I fretted, I learned to pray before each exam. I would ask God to bless my thoughts and my pen, and to let my result be a reflection of how much I knew, and how hard I had worked. And then, once in a while, I would add one prayer - kind of a loosen-up-David prayer, "And Lord, if you are about to return soon, make it be now, or some time before the exam begins so I don't have to write it, otherwise, please don't come right after the exam, as it's time to go have some fun!" And God never did.

- Now, none of us knows when the Second Coming will happen. Maybe the next time I have a test, or something else very difficult to do, and just as it's all uphill work, poof! Or maybe the Lord shall return when I finally get home to rest and recover from a hard day. Either way, we know that He will certainly return, and I think that He will come sooner than later. Today, we want to look at the last part of 1 Corinthians 15, and see how the Apostle Paul is lead to finish this message to us about the resurrection and those who love the Lord.

### Part One: The Change (verses 51-53)

- There is change a-coming! The Apostle Paul says that he has a secret,

as some translations says, a mystery. And the mystery is that there is a change coming. Paul says at the end of verse 51: *“We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed..”*

- Now some get some confused by this, even theologians over time, and those who try to see all sorts of things in this passage. Paul says that “we will not all sleep.” He is referring to the end of times, the eschaton, to the beginning of the end, to the first stage of the coming of Jesus for the Second Coming. And when this happens, as Paul begins in this passage from 1 Corinthians 15, not all the people at that time will come to the end of their earthly lives by death. This is when we understand that the Rapture happens.
- Now, we all understand the other way of the end of our lives - we have seen it enough. Our hearts stop beating and our lungs stop breathing, and our brains no longer function because of disease or a catastrophic injury that releases our soul to stand in the presence of the Lord.
- But Paul is saying that not everyone will end their life in this way, will end their life in physical death. Instead, there is another way - The Rapture, the coming home directly of those who love the Lord, Jesus Christ, and serve Him with their lives, and have had Him as Saviour and Lord, and will consistently serve Him until the day He comes in the

clouds to call His people home at the beginning of the End of Times. For those of you who can say that this is you, that you love Jesus, that you are God’s own, that you walk in God’s Holy ways, that you live your life for Jesus, you can rest assured that you will have nothing to fear at the time of the Rapture, or even at the time of your death.

- Now, in all fairness, we are all still anxious, and we are all feeling some excitement about the Rapture or about the process of dying. But let me assure you that for those who love Jesus, neither death nor the Rapture are something to fear.
- Paul goes on (v. 51): *“We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.”* Not everyone will physically die, some will be raptured, and for those who are, there is a change coming. We shall arise, says 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 says: *“According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”*

- Now I find great comfort in the coming Rapture. Paul says here in 1 Thessalonians 4 and in 1 Corinthians 15 that it will happen. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul even gives some details: The dead in Christ, that is those who have died before the Rapture has happened, shall rise first. Then, those who are lovers of Jesus shall go next to meet Jesus in the air, in the clouds. In Matthew 28, after Jesus defeated death on the cross of Calvary, and then appeared to many in forty days, He ascended to heaven. This account of the Rapture from 1 Thessalonians 4 and from 1 Corinthians 15 sound remarkably similar.
- Paul adds some more details about the Rapture of the end times, about the change. Verse 52 says: “...in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” How fast will it happen - that fast. A twinkling of an eye. A flash. Poof.
- But there will be other signs - a trumpet sound - a shofar, no doubt - a huge ram’s horn. The shofar’s sound is eerie and pure. And with the right practice, a blower of a shofar can play a song. What song do you think Jesus will have heralding His Holy return to earth in the Second Coming? Amazing Grace? A Psalm? Maybe just a one long, deep, resounding note, but one that fills the entire earth, and brings us all to

the realization that the Lord is behind it.

- And then, says Paul, something remarkable will happen - the change. Verse 52 ends with: “...and we will be changed. 53For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. The change from something that will return to dust into something that will remain shall happen: a change from that which knows death and disease, will be altered into something that will know neither: a change from waiting death to knowing eternal life. Poof, all in a twinkling of the eye! What a change, indeed!

Part 2: The Champion (verses 54-57)

- Then the champion shall emerge. We all know who this champion is: it’s our friend and royal king, Jesus. Our champion, Jesus has allowed for this (vv. 54-57): “...then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” 55“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” 56The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The champion is identified as being none other than Jesus. How did Jesus become this champion?
- He came to earth. He left the glory of heaven. He, through whom the world was created, left the Father in Heaven and took a human body to

fix a problem with the creation of God's very best - with humanity.

There was a problem of sin, and there could be only one cure - a sacrifice to appease God's wrath because of what happened with the first couple in the Garden of Eden where humanity turned our backs on God in pursuit of our own wishful, wrongful ways (Genesis 3). Only through a part of the God-head, only through the Son, only through Jesus, only through His blood, His atoning death, His gift of Himself on the cross, has the price of our sins been paid in full. Jesus erased our all our debts, all our trespasses, all our wrongful ways. Paid in full. Jesus was sacrificially given as a gift to raise us above death, to raise us above the stench of death, to raise us above the stain of death that came from humanity choosing to sin against God right from the very first couple in the Garden of Eden.

- And the champion, Jesus, paid for all this with one mighty, glorious deed - His death on the cross, and His defeat over death through God the Father as He snatched the keys of death and hell for you and for I.
- His name is Jesus.
- And now we get to sing that same song as did the Apostle Paul when he wrote this letter to the people of Corinth many years ago: *"Death has been swallowed up in victory." 55* *"Where, O death, is your victory?"*

*Where, O death, is your sting?* Death is defeated. The victory is with Jesus. The sting of death is gone. Dealt with. Handled.

- Our physical bodies will still die, but with Jesus the Champion, our Saviour, we have stepped from life here on earth into life eternal in heaven. Know this though: without Jesus in our lives, we still step from walking in death here on earth, to eternal death in hell forever.

Part three: The Challenge (verse 58)

- There is a challenge, and it's the response that we all should have, every one of us before we leave here today. It's found in the final verse of this chapter. Verse 58 says: *"Therefore, my dear brothers, 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."*
- There are three things that you can and must do if you want this victory over death to be yours.
- First stand firm: I saw a mini van with the word "sport" written on it. Now, you can add a spoiler, fancy racing stripes, even print on the word "Hemi" but it will still be a mini van. So too, you can say that you will stand firm with God, but if your feet are moving, if you are all over the place in your life, if you are being blown by any wind that comes through, you will not be standing firm.

- There is only one way to stand firm - be well anchored. Be grounded in Christ Jesus. Hold to His Holy hand tightly. Walk with your eyes fixed on Him (Hebrews 12:2). Colossians 2:6-7 says: *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”* Stand firm in Jesus.

Second, let nothing move you.

- You might think that this is the same as standing firm. But this has the image of being set on the task before you, of walking with God, and then, bam, out of nowhere, comes temptation, or frustration, or discouragement, or a lack of faith, or bam, a problem arises, and then something moves you. Sometimes it’s something that looks good - too good, a new boyfriend, a bit of money comes your way, or a new job. And your focus is shifted. You suddenly find that you are moving. That you are not focussing. That you are off course. That you have let something alter you. And with God, nothing should move you. Isaiah 26:3-4 says: *“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.”* Let nothing move you.

Third, give yourself fully to the Lord

- *“Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”* (verse 58). To gain peace today. To gain eternal life. To gain certainty over death, triumph even, to have the sting taken out of death, to have victory in Jesus Christ, then give yourself fully to the work of the Lord. Notice that this verse does not say simply, “Give yourself to the Lord.” But to give yourself in two ways: fully and to His work. You need to hold nothing back, and you must put your faith into action. You must let your old self die completely, and then give yourself completely to walking with God. You must allow God to strip you of your old self to be rebuilt by the Holy Spirit of God, and then work daily for the Lord in all that you do.
- And remember that you never do something for God that is a waste of time. You can never give to God without getting something back better. You can never out-give God. Your labour will never be in vain

Conclusion:

- The Lord Jesus Christ will come again, even if I am writing my next exam, facing my next test. If He comes when you are still here, get ready for the ride of your life. He may call you home first, but know this - you will be changed, because He is the champion, even over death, and all you have to do is accept His challenge, and become His own.