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must be correspondence at every point to the enviroing medium. If we be in Christ then we are to be like Him, to walk as He walked and to love as He loved.

In the intimacy of the soul with God thus manifested will there be possible this communication of further knowledge and deep understanding of His ways and purposes, and that understanding is not for our own benefit only, but for the benefit and blessing of those to whom we are sent.

Let us note from these examples that the touched life can never be the same as it was ere that touch was felt. Sinful ways cannot be the habit of life, selfish ends can no longer be diligently pursued, and spineless ideals can not allure the soul from those purposive ways in which God would lead His people. For that life is a cleansed life, cleansed from its old ways and its selfish interests, cleansed to be 'meet for the Master's use'. That life is charged with a new dynamic; the communicated power of the risen Lord is in that touch; the will constrained to ever blessed obedience to the guidance of the Spirit is found by that touch. It is a life which burns itself out for God, which blesses itself in blessing others and which brings to itself that deeper knowledge of divine purposes as it keeps vigil with its God.

STUDIES IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15

H. C. HEWLETT

5. The Day of Victory (1 Cor. 15:50-58)

The teaching of the chapter now reaches its climax. Rich has been its unfolding of the resurrection of Christ, and then that of 'they that are Christ's at His Coming'. But there will be many still alive at that Coming who are equally His. They, too, must be brought into the same blessing as that reached by risen saints, and hence Paul goes on to describe the change that will take place in them at that day. This is a revelation peculiar to the New Testament. The germ of the doctrine is in the words of the Lord to Martha: 'And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall

never die' (John 11:25), but it is in Paul's letters that the doctrine comes to full development.

It is for this change of the living believers that the heart longs. 'We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life' (2 Cor. 5:4). 'We ourselves groan within ourselves also, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body' (Rom. 8:23). Not the vagaries of 'faith-healing', not its speciousness and frustration is our hope, but the application to this mortal body of the redemptive work of Christ.

Verses 50-53. The Change, Necessary and Complete

'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption' (v. 50). The change is imperative. In flesh and blood, that is, in our present condition of natural life, in the natural body, we cannot enter upon the actual experience which awaits in the kingdom of God. The kingdom is viewed not in relation to our present possession of it by virtue of our eternal life, but in its fulness in a scene beyond mortality, corruption and death. In 1 Cor. 6:9-10, it is stated that the unrighteous, etc., shall not inherit the kingdom of God. There the barrier is one of moral character, but here in 1 Cor. 15:50 it is one of physical condition. God is the incorruptible God, who gives incorruptible inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4), but that very inheritance is the promise that we will yet be of nature to enjoy it. Corruption cannot experience incorruption, for they are opposites, nor does the one yield the other. Only the body that shall be will have capacity for the experience of heavenly things. 'New wine must be put into new bottles' (Mark 2:22).

'Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump' (vs. 51-52). Here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, mystery (*mustērion*) refers to that which has previously been revealed. Sleep, as in verses 6, 18, and 20, has to do with physical death. Not all believers will go through death, but all, whether they die, or are still alive at the Coming of the Lord, will experience

the change into His likeness, into 'the image of the heavenly.' As we saw in verse 23 there is here no partial rapture, no selection of some on account of greater spirituality. 'They that are Christ's' is the requirement.

'*We shall all be changed*', and that at the precise moment of the last trump, which is identical with 'the trump of God' of 1 Thess. 4:16. 'In a moment' ('*atomos*,' that which is indivisible), 'in the twinkling of an eye.' Seeing that twinkling (*ripē*) can be used of any rapid quivering motion, as the rustling of a leaf, or the movement of a bird's wing, it is most suggestive that it should here be linked with the eye. The transfiguration of the believer, whether in process now or in climax then, is often linked with vision. See 2 Cor. 3:18. 'We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is' (1 John 3:2).

'*At the last trump.*' This is entirely unconnected with the seven trumpets of Rev. 8:2. They speak of judgment upon a Christ-rejecting world, but the 'last trump' speaks of the completeness of salvation. The thought is given in Numbers 10:2, where the silver trumpets were used for 'the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps'. The last was that which set the last of the camp in motion. In 1 Cor. 15 the thought is not that of the last of a series, but that which finalizes the work of God in taking out of the nations a people for His Name.

'*For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality* (vs. 52-53). Incorruption and immortality both refer to the same state of blessedness, though from different viewpoints as befitting the different experiences of believers. Those who have known the corruption of death will have it behind them forever. 'There shall be no more death' (Rev. 21:4). Those who have known only mortality, that is, the weakness of the present body in its liability, its subjection to death, will know it no more. The words incorruption and immortality both apply here to the body, and are not used in Scripture of the soul. Up to the moment of death, man's body is mortal; from that moment is known corruption. The soul of the one who is dead is still in conscious exist-

ence, though, in the case of the believer, it is 'absent from the body, and present with the Lord'. The soul of the unbeliever who has died is also 'sent from the body', but it is in hell.

Immortality (athanasia) occurs in the New Testament here twice, and elsewhere only in 1 Tim. 6:16, where it applies to the eternal being of God, who 'as such is neither liable to, nor capable of death' (W. E. Vine). To God alone does it belong essentially.

The believer's hope is the Coming of the Lord, which will usher in for him a blessed eternity in which there will be neither experience of death and decay nor possibility of it. Who would wish to exist forever in the present mortal state? Paul's words are fraught with certainty. This corruptible MUST put on incorruption, and so on. The change is necessary to the fulfilment of the promises of Scripture for the future glory of the believer, and the promises cannot fail, therefore we must be changed.

Verses 54-57. The Victory is Ours

'So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory' (v. 54). This reference to Isaiah 25:8 is of profound significance. It must be noted that the word is 'brought to pass' rather than 'fulfilled'. 1 Cor. 15:54 is an instance of the fulfilment of the clause, not the whole of it. There is other fulfilment beyond that mentioned here. In view of the many-sidedness of Scripture we need not be surprised at this.

The initial fulfilment was in our Lord's own resurrection. Remarkably, His first words recorded after His rising again were addressed to drying the tears of a broken-hearted woman (John 20:15). Did not Isaiah say; 'He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces?'

The next stage is that of 1 Cor. 15-54. Death has claimed the bodies of sleeping saints, having apparently gained the victory, but its triumph is short. When Christ comes, His people will share His victory over death, and know its presence no more. But this was hid from Isaiah's view, and his gaze rested on the blessing of Israel at the setting up of the kingdom on earth. In the

dark days between the Rapture of the Church and the Coming of the King, many a life shall be laid down 'for the testimony of Jesus', but when the King takes His throne these all shall 'live and reign with Christ' (Rev. 20:4). Beyond this again is the eternal joy revealed in Rev. 21:4. 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death.' Death itself will be cast into the Lake of Fire, and touch the redeemed of the Lord never again.

'O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (vs. 55-57, R.V.). The challenge of verse 55 is taken from Hosea 13:14 (agreeing more closely with the LXX than with the Hebrew text.) Death is compared to a venomous serpent, whose sting lays its victim low. And now death is taunted as to its sting, its power to hurt. Death, the serpent, is itself swallowed up. We are reminded of the scene in Exodus 7:12, where the serpents of the magicians were swallowed up by Aaron's rod. So the power of Christ, of which that rod speaks, has swallowed up the power of death.

The sting of death is sin, for it is sin that brings doom in death. It is strong by the law, which pronounces death for sin. But Christ's atonement has satisfied the claims of the law, and thus dealt with its sentence on sin. And if sin can no longer hurt with its doom, for the Substitute has borne the sins of His people on the Cross, then death likewise cannot hurt. 'To conquer sin is to conquer death', and Christ did this in His sacrifice.

Here is the unique boast of Christianity. The believer is enabled to stand by the open grave of one who has fallen asleep, and to say boldly to the defeated foe: 'O death, where is thy victory? Not to death is the victory but to Christ, and to those who are His. Viewed from the standpoint of earth, death is the victor, and it has won every war, for as the English poet has reminded us: 'The path of glory leads but to the grave'. But from the standpoint of heaven, the victory is ours, for we are in Christ, and through Him God gives us the victory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us and rose again, we triumph over

the law, over sin, and over death. In the glory of the resurrection we shall stand with Him, fruit of the travail of His soul, having our standing faultless before God, and with every mark of sin and death erased from us. This will be victory indeed. And so our thanks rise to God, the Giver of the Son, and through Him of all our blessing. Thanks be to God, 'for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen'. (Rom. 11:36).

'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord' (vs. 58). Thus the chapter comes to its confident finish. Doubts have been dispelled, problems have been solved, and the light of Revelation has shone with fresh rays of truth. The word of address is no longer that of rebuke—'Thou fool'—but of glad relationship—'my beloved brethren'. They are to be stedfast or firm (*hedraios*), as those whose confidence is solidly based, unmoveable, not moved about by strange doctrines, not shifted from the certainty of the Gospel.

In this certainty, both as to the past (that is, regarding Christ's own resurrection), and as to the future (regarding their resurrection) they are to abound (*perisseuō*), to overflow, to exceed all that which they might have felt possible when surrounded by the mists of doubt, or unaided by divine revelation. The work of the Lord, work of which He should be the source and strength as well as goal, would never disappoint. Their labour (*kopos*—toil to the point of fatigue) would not be in vain (*kevos*—empty, as in v. 14), for it would be 'in the Lord', apart from whom all is vain. Were there no blessed hereafter, no certainty of eternal glory, no tearless triumph, then the end would be vanity indeed, but this cannot be for those who are His, for He is the Resurrection and the Life.