

Grace to you and peace ... from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead....

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵ “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?” ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 A Easter 4/21/19 Is. 12:1-6 Jn. 20:1-18 Psalm 96 Resp. Ps.: 30
Hymns: 799, 732, 200 (1-2, 5, 7-8), 199

DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY!

I know that my Redeemer lives; What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead; He lives, my ever-living Head.

He lives triumphant from the grave, He lives eternally to save,
He lives all glorious in the sky, He lives exalted there on high. (TLH: #200:1-2)

Dear fellow believers in Jesus Christ, our risen and living Savior,

Some years ago a woman in a congregation I was serving died. Not long afterwards her little grandson asked me, “Pastor, how’s my grandma doing?” At first he caught me off guard. But then it dawned on me that he figured that since I’m a pastor I have some kind of special ‘hotline’ with God in heaven and would know just how his grandma was doing. I told him, “Your grandma is very happy with Jesus.” The little boy went on his way with a big smile on his face. For all of us who believe in Jesus, when we die and go to heaven we will experience only peace and happiness in the presence of the Lord forever. Truly Scripture is right when it declares, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, ... that they may rest from their labors” (Rev. 14:13). On this Easter Sunday our Lord assures us that **DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY!**

We read in Romans 5:12, “Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Adam disobeyed God. He wasn’t perfect anymore. He was sinful. Because he was no longer perfect, he eventually died. We all come from Adam, so we’ve all inherited his sinful nature. Because we’re sinful, unless the Judgment Day comes first, we, too will die.

Death, especially our own death, is not a pleasant thing for us to think about. In our text God confronts us with the reality of death: “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.” Romans 3:20 says, “By the Law is the knowledge of sin.” God’s Law shows us that we’re

sinner because we can't obey it as we should. If we were perfect, we could live forever and not die. Because we're sinful mortals, we die. But physical death isn't our real problem. Our real problem is eternal death.

Death isn't the end for anyone. Everyone lives forever, Christians as well as unbelievers. Jesus says, *"The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear [My] voice and come forth"* (Jn. 5:28-29). The *"[unbelievers] will go away to everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"* (Mt. 25:46).

On Easter we celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Why did Jesus have to die? For our sins. Jesus was punished for our sins on the cross so that we don't have to be punished. In His Word God says that the punishment we deserve is hell. On the Judgment Day Jesus will tell everyone who does not believe in Him as his God and Savior, *"Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Mt. 25:41). Hell is a real place of eternal separation from God, and of eternal suffering and never finally resting in peace.

We're told, *"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ... We shall all be changed."* This sinful, mortal body can't live forever. God has to change it into a perfect, immortal body. The believer Job acknowledged this when he said, *"After my skin is destroyed"* (after this mortal body dies), *"this I know, that in my flesh"* (in my perfect, immortal body), *"I shall see God"* (19:26).

The believers who are still alive when the Judgment Day comes won't have to die before they go to heaven. We're told, *"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."* The believers who are alive on the Judgment Day won't have to go through the "sleep" of death, but they, together with all the believers who have died, will be changed.

When He learned that His friend Lazarus had died, *"Jesus wept"* (Jn. 11:35). It's hard when we have to struggle in life. It's hard to face the final struggle of death. Jesus knows this. He is deeply touched by our struggles in life and death. He went through it all Himself. Jesus doesn't want us to have to struggle like this forever.

When God made our human race, He intended for us to live forever and never die. Since the Fall into sin, death has become a part of life. That's the way it is. Believing in Jesus, when we die God changes our sinful body and sinful selves, once and for all, and makes us perfect: *"We shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."*

Philippians 3:21 says about everyone who believes in Jesus, *"[God] will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body."* This mortal body, subject to sickness, injury, aging, and death, will be changed into a perfect, immortal body. For all of us who trust in Jesus Christ for our salvation, when we die we receive eternal life in heaven. We will stand before Jesus and hear Him invite us, *"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Mt. 25:34). The Apostle John says that in heaven *"God Himself will be with [us] and be [our] God. And God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more*

pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:3-4). “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory? ... Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus’ enemies were very troubled to hear from those guarding His tomb that they had seen a bright angelic being, and that Jesus’ body was gone. They thought they had defeated Jesus by putting Him to death, but they were wrong. Scripture says, *“Jesus Christ ... was ... declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead”* (Ro. 1:3-4). As almighty God, Jesus gave His life on the cross to save us, and then raised Himself back to life again!

“Because I live,” Jesus promises us, *“you shall live also”* (Jn. 14:19). *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”* but pass from life here into eternal life with Jesus (Jn. 11:25-26). Because Jesus was able to bring Himself bodily back to life, He is able to bring us back to life bodily when we die. Every one of us, everywhere? Absolutely; *“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”!* The God who created the entire universe and everything in it will have no trouble locating us all and raising us back to life. For everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, death is not defeat, it is victory!

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” We who know Jesus don’t have to simply exist from one empty, depressing day to the next. We have the joy of our salvation in Christ! We have the joy of living each day in Christ and for Christ, and one day of living with Christ forever in heaven!

When there was no earthly reason for Job to be happy, he found happiness by reminding himself, *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and ... this I know, that ... I shall see God ... for myself”* (19:25-27). One day we will see Jesus! That keeps us going in life. And no one can take that away from us. Jesus says, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone pluck them out of My hand”* (Jn. 10:27-28).

We can never hear it too often: Jesus loves us and died for us and rose again and is taking us to heaven. Don’t live like you’re going to die. Live like you’re going to live! We don’t have to be afraid of death. Easter’s message is that because Jesus lives, we will live forever! *“O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?” ... Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Death is not the end. **DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY!**

He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives my mansion to prepare; He lives to bring me safely there.

He lives, all glory to His name! He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives, “I know that my Redeemer lives!” Amen.
(TLH #200:7-8)