

Title: Changing your view on Change

Text: 1 Corinthians 15.50-52

Theme: The necessity and guarantee of change by Christ

Series: 1 Corinthians #93

Prop Stmt. Christ guarantees our permanent and final victory.

Whenever I buy a Christmas present for someone, I want to give it to them right away. It is one of the reasons why I usually wait so late into the season to do my shopping. I'll ask my kids if they got my present yet. If they have, I ask them what it is. They don't tell me, but I tell them that I will tell them what I got them if they tell me, and they know I will. Well, I have been waiting for a long time to open with you the present that is given to us in these last nine verses of 1 Corinthians 15. This passage, rightfully understood stands alongside of Romans 8 and Revelation 19 as one of the most beloved passages of Scripture. As I read this text, listen to the language of affirmation. This text resonates with resoluteness and certainty and then, on that basis it appeals to us to be faithful.

Read Text: 1 Corinthians 15.50-58

I am going to preach three sermons from this text. This morning, we are going to focus on verses 50-52. But, just before we launch into this text, we need to remember the flow of this passage. The church at Corinth was a pretty raw bunch of people with some very serious problems such as: unity, immorality, lack of church discipline, abuse of communion, lawsuits in the church, confusing and abusing spiritual gifts, and behind it all was an enormous confusion of what it meant to be an authentic, spiritually-growing believer. The book of 1 Corinthians is a letter that Paul writes back to the church that he started in response to a letter full of questions they sent him. He is also responding to a report that he has been given to him about the health of the church. Over and over in this letter that we call 1 Corinthians, Paul reminds these believers of the gospel. He starts the book by addressing how important the gospel is, in spite of the fact that the world hates it. Then, he demonstrates how the implications of the gospel are the solution for the practical problems that the church is dealing with. In chapter 15, Paul is responding to the fact that some of the people have been denying that there is a resurrection for the believers, as if the body is so corrupted that it is beyond hope of being changed. Responding to this is the occasion for this magnificent chapter. It stands as one of the majestic mountain peaks of Scripture that awes us with its immense height and dazzles our imagination as we get a peak into our future. In this chapter, Paul is arguing intensely for the resurrection. He has already pointed out that the actual gospel includes the resurrection, that Christ Himself was resurrected, that the resurrection is consistent with creation, and with the fact that the resurrection is critical. If there is no resurrection, there is no gospel, there is no hope there is no future because what we are right now, presents an enormous problem that we cannot fix all by ourselves. That is Paul's point in v. 50.

1. **You've got to change!** (v.50)

Now, before we go on, I need to stop and deal with something. We live in a culture, where there is an extreme emphasis that is placed upon our physical appearance. I am not being harsh when I say, our culture worships the body. Does it not seem the least bit odd to you that we have entire TV shows and networks devoted to food, and then at the same time you can watch TV shows devoted to helping you work off those extra pounds? To those who worship the body, I need to tell you something – your body does not define you. What you are on the inside is infinitely more important than how you appear on the outside. However, hold the phone for a second. What you are on the inside is not all that you are either. God made you as body and soul. Just as the body does not define you, neither does your soul completely define you. You will spend eternity with your body. You are both body and soul. That is your being. Your body matters and your soul matters. What you are on the inside affects your body. Change on the inside does not begin with the outside and go in, it begins on the inside and goes out.

Now, you are born into this world with a sinful nature. What you are on the inside is in rebellion against God. You and I are naturally hostile to God. That sinful condition affects our bodies. Because we are sinners, our bodies have the seeds of death planted in them and over time, our bodies succumb to the death process. Now, when you come to faith in Christ, you are changed on the inside. You are made into a new creation. Your true identity has been altered from being a child of Adam to being a child of God. That is who you are. However, your body has not caught up with that – yet. Do you remember what Paul said in Romans 8.10? “But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.” Your body is corruptible and it needs to change. In fact, you’ve got to change.

Now, interestingly enough, the believers in Corinth had that part figured out. They knew that their bodies were corruptible, but they viewed their bodies as being inherently bad and evil and essentially worthless or irrelevant, which is why some were concluding that it does not matter what you do with your body, when after all your soul is the part of you that is eternal. So, whereas, we tend to define ourselves almost exclusively by the outside, the Corinthians were trying to ignore the physical. That is the issue that Paul has been correcting. You are both, body and soul. This passage is speaking about the body part of the picture. The body, as it is naturally is a problem.

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” You’ve got to change.

A. Because what you are is a serious problem – 50a

Let me ask you a question: What human, in your opinion, is responsible for more death and violence than any other? While many of us may be tempted to say, Stalin, Hitler or men like that, the truth is, it is Adam. We bear, in our image, the man of dust, the man of the earth – Adam. That is a huge problem because the seeds of death are planted within each of us.

Imagine that you are named in Bill Gates’ will. But, in order to receive this inheritance, you have to meet certain qualifications, such as not owning a MAC computer. If you do

not meet the qualifications as they are stipulated in the will, then you are disqualified from receiving the inheritance that was intended to go to you. Now, that is the kind of language that Paul using here in the beginning of v.50. God made this world primarily so that He could live with the human race. We are the highest order and the pinnacle act of His creation. No other aspect of his creation was made in His image. We were invested by Him with so much capability and potential, which is why we can do extraordinary things, and we are also capable of evil of staggering proportions. God made us, to reflect Him, because He designed us for an eternal relationship with Him. God with us, (Immanuel), God living with us and reigning over us, all of life being carried out in the very presence of God, under the very eyes of God, and being done exactly in line with and harmony with the very character of God, is what He planned. That is what His kingdom is all about. He made you in order to live in His kingdom. But, what you are is a serious problem. The way, you and I are born into this world disqualifies us from inheriting his kingdom. Your life, as you know it right now, is a problem, because what you are right now is not going to work in the Kingdom of God. Paul is speaking about the body here. Your body is perishable. It has a shelf life to it. Then in a parallel statement he basically reiterates the point by saying...

“nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” You’ve got to change.

B. Because what you are won’t last – 50b

How can your mortal, corruptible, perishable, decaying body be part of God’s kingdom that is immortal, incorruptible and imperishable? It can’t! You’ve got to change. But, you can’t change yourself – can you?

2. God is going to change you. (v. 51-52)

At this point, Paul says, “Hey, pay attention to this! I am about to reveal something to you that you haven’t known before. That is what a NT mystery is. It is a truth that God has kept under wraps, but has now brought out into the open. The assumption is that every person who lives, will die. But here, Paul tells us, that while that is generally true and that we should count on that happening to us, that death is not going to be the case for everyone who is a follower of Christ. Keep in mind that in this chapter, Paul has been arguing for the resurrection. He has been showing that the resurrection of Christ is the pattern for those who are in Christ. We will die, our bodies will be buried, but will one day be resurrected into a glorified and perfect body. However, “we will not all sleep” he now says. Although God is going to change us so that we are completely ready for life in His kingdom....

A. Some will change without death.

“We will not all sleep” – In other words, not everyone is going to die. But, since the way we are right now (flesh and blood as we know it) is not good enough for eternal life, we have to be changed. So, for those believers who are still alive at the return of Christ, they will experience the necessary change, but without having to go through the death process.

Some of the believers in another city (Thessalonica) were very upset about the fate of those who died before the return of Christ. To them Paul said that the dead in Christ, were in no way disadvantaged. Fact is, at the 1st resurrection, that I believe is the rapture of the church, the bodies of those who have died, will rise first. Then, we who are still alive will rise to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. 4.13-18) Here in Corinth, Paul is explaining that the problem is not for those who died (as the believers in Thessalonica were concerned about), but the problem is for the living. How can this flesh and blood participate in His perfect and eternal kingdom, when we have a frail, broken, and decaying body? The answer is, this body has to be changed, and it will be changed.

So, whether you die in Christ and your body is buried, or you are alive at the return of Christ, your body must be and will be changed.

B. All will be changed at God's appointed time.

And Paul goes on to describe that this change, will be the fastest and most incredible change you can imagine that will happen to your body. This change is not a long process. This change is:

- a. *Instantaneous* – in a flash, in a moment

The word that Paul uses here, is the Greek word for atom, because he is referring to the smallest segment of time that one can imagine. He then goes on to describe this as “the twinkling of an eye.” This flash, this moment, is as fast as the glancing movement of the eye. The change is something that is planned by God.

- b. *Planned* – at the last trumpet

This phrase, “at the last trumpet” has certainly received a lot of attention. And the temptation for me is to dive into the issue of when. When is this going to happen? Is this “Last trumpet” referring to the event known as the rapture? Is this the first resurrection spoken of in Rev. 20.5? Unpacking all of that satisfactorily means that we have to understand the 3 views on the millennium (pre, post and a) and then identify the three views of the pre-millennium view (pre-trib, mid-trib and post-trib). All of which takes demands much explanation. As interesting as that is, (and it is); it is not the point of this text. Those issues are classified as general eschatology. The point of the text here, is on what is going to happen to you – personally. We call that personal eschatology. So, as tempted as I am to dive into all of that right here, (and I am) I would at this point be guilty of making a major point over a minor issue in this passage. Paul's point here in 1 Corinthians 15, is not on the timing of this, but on the completeness of this.

I will say this. The language that Paul uses here speaks of the last trumpet being the trumpet that tells us that the end is here, not the last in a series of other trumpet blasts. Therefore, I do not think that the last trumpet spoken of here, is the 7th trumpet played in Revelation 11, since the trumpet here in 1 Cor. 15 is a trumpet of resurrection, and the 7th

(indeed each of the 7 trumpets) trumpet in Revelation 11 is a trumpet of judgment, eventually followed by 7 bowls of judgment.

c. *Complete* – changed

While not all of us will die (some will be alive at this event), we will all be changed, which is absolutely necessary. Because flesh and blood as it is now, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. We have to change and thank God He will change us from being perishable to being imperishable.

Conclusion: Alright, let's land this plane.

You are part of the human race. And the human race was made by God to be enjoyed by God in a perfect relationship of worship, trust and obedience. In that condition, we could have experienced what God intended for us to be. But, we trashed it. When Adam sinned, we fell. Adam, and us have chosen to trust ourselves, worship ourselves, follow our own hearts, instead of God's. Our hearts became factories for sin and the curse of sin affected every cell of our bodies. We could not look to ourselves to find our own solution. Satan's promises were found to be lies, and yet we still believe them. But, instead of higher knowledge and greater power, we lost fellowship and we lost intimacy with God and this brokenness, this lostness, this sinful condition affected not only our relationship with God, it has affected our relationships with each other. Because of sin, we are self-centered creatures, who are capable of hurting each other and we do. Our words cut, our actions can be hostile, our promises ring hollow, we are a mess. As far as we could tell, all hope of being restored to God and to each other was lost because we could not recover our original condition. Sin affected us completely. Body and soul are scarred, marred and broken.

Unable to save ourselves, God sent us a Savior. The Savior He sent was Himself. God became man. God robed Himself in the body of a human being, so that He could save your body and soul. When Christ came to this earth, He lived a perfectly righteous life so that when He died in your place, He was able to offer on the cross a perfectly righteous sacrifice. Though He was perfect, He was counted with the transgressors. When He died on the cross, He died as one who bore upon Himself all our sins. And when He bore it upon Himself, He experienced in body and soul our wrath. And He died. That is, His physical body died. He bore upon Himself our sin and paid for it with his own life. However, because his death satisfied the payment for sin, and His payment was perfectly accepted by the Father, the body of Christ was raised back to life, to never die again.

He took your place. He bore your wrath. He paid your penalty. You cannot change yourself because you cannot save yourself. But, because God, against all human logic, loves you, He gave you an infinitely perfect Savior who did it all. What you must do, is personally accept this for yourself. You must trust in Christ alone as the only One who can save you from your sin. And when you do, Christ takes the guilt of your sin from off of you and in turn gives you His righteousness. In an instant, you are credited with the righteousness of Christ. In a flash, in a moment, you are born into the family of God and

made a child of God. The relationship for which you were made has been restored, never to be broken. This change of identity, this change of person, this change of being results in a change of destiny. Your future is changed because you are in Christ. Yes, you are changed from the inside, but that change will also affect your body. Your body will still die (unless you are one of those alive at the trumpet) but your body will not stay dead. Just as Christ was raised again from the dead, so your body will be raised, but this time it will be made alive like it has never known life before. Your body will be raised imperishable, incorruptible. In other words, what you are on the outside will correspond perfectly to what you are on the inside. You will live forever, fully alive. Fully engaged spiritually and fully engaged physically. You will live with God, relating to God with a perfect love, a perfect trust, a wholehearted worship that is experienced in every cell of your being and that is lived out with brothers and sisters in Christ, who just like you are now able to relate to God and each other with a perfect love and a perfect trust. No more cutting words, no more caustic comments, no more broken promises, no more busted lives. When I stand in glory I will see His face and will not run away in fear and shame. When I stand in glory, I will be you along with you worshipping and working and serving and being fully alive forever and ever.

Therefore, (spoon), live now as a taste of what life is going to be like then. That means that you should taste like hope. Don't give up. Your sin and the sins of others won't last. Stand firm. Don't get knocked off course. That also means that your theology ought to affect your body and soul. What you are on the inside matters because Christ died for your soul. Every thing you think matters to God. What you are on the outside matters to God because Christ died for your body and every thing you do and say matters to God. If you are a follower of Christ, your entire being matters to God, because you are His. Forever, you are His.