

ARGUMENT SIX: THE RADICAL CHANGE OF THE BODY 1 CORINTHIANS 15: 50–58

Introduction

If a person is going to live eternally, if it is possible for a person to live in the presence of God, then the human body must first undergo a radical change. The human body must be completely remade. This passage discusses the change that is to take place.

- I. The change is needed (v. 50).
- II. The change is a brand new revelation (vv. 51-52).
- III. The change will be the infusion of a totally new nature (v. 53).
- IV. The change will swallow death; it will bring victory over the grave (vv. 54-56).
- V. The change will be wrought through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 57).
- VI. The change demands staunch work (v. 58).

I. *1 Corinthians 15:50 Human Body Needs a Radical Change*

There are two clearly understood reasons why the change is needed.

1. The human body is flesh and blood. It is physical, not spiritual. It is made of physical material and substance, not spiritual material and substance. It is of the earth, not of heaven; and they who are of the earth are physical and earthly, not spiritual and heavenly.

Man's body in its present state is made...

- to live in the physical world and dimension, not in the spiritual world and dimension.
- to oversee the kingdoms of this world, not to inherit the Kingdom of God.

2. The human body is corruptible, not incorruptible. This is clearly seen in everyday experiences. The human body ends: it ages, dies, decays, deteriorates and wastes away to nothing but dirt and dust. It has embedded within its very nature the seed of corruption (see *Sin, Death, Corruption*, 2 Pet. 1:4. Cp. 1 Pet. 1:23.)

The point is that the human body must be completely changed if it is to ever become incorruptible and given the privilege of living in the Kingdom of God. The human body must be changed and recreated, totally remade.

2 PETER 01:04 SIN; DEATH; CORRUPTION

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 01:04

The body of man has within it the principle or the seed of corruption, and the world in which man lives has within it the principle or the seed of corruption. Therefore, man deteriorates and decays — he dies and returns to dust.

This seed of corruption is caused by sin. Sin is selfishness or lust. Sin is acting against God, against others and even against oneself.

When a man offends — when he acts selfishly, does what he wants instead of what he should do — when he acts *against* instead of *for* — he energizes and sets in motion the process of corruption. Man's selfishness corrupts himself and the world in which he lives — including the ground and the air and the water of the earth (Rom 8:21). His selfishness corrupts the relationship between himself and God and between himself and other persons and even the relationship between other persons. His selfishness and sin corrupt his own body (1 Cor. 15:42). It may be nothing more than eating too much or failing to stay physically fit, but his selfishness and sin set in motion the process of corruption. And the process of corruption just continues and continues to eat and eat away at life. Sin, that is, selfishness, has caused and is causing death, both physically and spiritually. (See Mt. 6:19-20; *Disease, Sickness, Corruption*, Mt. 8:17; *Sin and Death*, Rom. 5:12; notes, 1 Cor. 15:50; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; *Death*, Heb. 9:27.) □

II. 1 Corinthians 15:51–52 Resurrection: A Brand New Revelation

The change is a brand new revelation. The word “mystery” means revelation, a fact that would never be known unless God revealed it. Man could never find out about the resurrection without God telling him. Man knows about the resurrection and radical change of man's body because God told him. Man has no other way to find out about it. It is one of the mysteries, one of the revelations that God has chosen to make known to man. And what a glorious hope it is! Note four quick facts stated about the radical change of the body.

1. The resurrection involves both the living and the dead. The word “sleep” refers to those who have passed on into the presence of the Lord and are now *resting* from their labour and suffering in this world (cp. v. 18).

Note the words “we will not all sleep.” Paul is not saying that he and some others will be alive when the resurrection takes place. He is revealing a mystery about all believers: when Christ returns there will naturally be some believers still living and

some who have already died. The point is that both the living and the dead will receive recreated bodies, new bodies, bodies radically and completely changed.

2. The resurrection will be a quick, sudden change. The word for “flash” (*atomos*) means indivisible, that which cannot be cut. It is the word from which we get the English word *atom*. The idea is that the resurrection will take place so quickly...
 - that you could not divide the time into two moments.
 - that you could not blink an eye.
3. The resurrection will be at the end time, at the end of the world. This is what is primarily meant by the *last trumpet*. It will be the last trumpet ever blown; however, it will be the trumpet that will summon the end of our bodies lying in the graves and living in this corruptible world. It will be the trumpet that will sound the end of the world as we now know it. (Cp. 1 Th. 4:16.)
4. The resurrection and the change of the body are both an absolute surety. Note the strong affirmative “*wills*” of this verse:

The trumpet will sound.

The dead will be raised imperishable.

We will be changed.

There is no question about the event to take place. God has revealed the glorious fact: He Himself shall raise the dead and change all our bodies.

John 5:25, 28-29 *“I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live....Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*”

John 6:40 *“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;”*

1 Cor 15:22 *For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

2 Cor 4:14 *Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.*

1 Th 4:16-18 *For 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.*

III. 1 Corinthians 15:53 Resurrection: Infusion of a Totally New Nature

The change will be the infusion of a totally new nature. Note two significant facts.

1. The nature of the believer's present body is perishable and mortal; the nature of his new body will be incorruptible, imperishable and immortal.

=> The "perishable" and "mortal," the corruptible nature means that men are earthly; that they age, deteriorate, die, decay and decompose. Every man, no matter who he is, is earthly and will return to the earth once he dies unless Jesus returns while he is living on the earth.

=> The "imperishable" and "immortal," the incorruptible nature means this: believers will be made heavenly; they will be transformed and given a *perfect nature* that will never age, deteriorate, die, decay or decompose. They will be completely free from defilement and depravity! They will be given a body that is perfect, a body that is diametrically opposed to their present body, a body that is perfected forever to live with God in the new heavens and earth. (See *Resurrected Body of Jesus Christ*, Jn. 21:1; note, 1 Cor. 15:42-44.)
2. The word "must" shows the absolute necessity for the change of man's body. If man is to live with God, his body must be changed. It is essential, a must, an absolute necessity if man is to live forever.

Luke 20:36 *"And they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection."*

John 8:51 *"I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."*

John 11:26 *"And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

Rom 2:7 *To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life.*

1 Cor 15:53 *For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.*

2 Cor 5:1 *Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.*

1 Th 4:17 *After 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.*

2 Tim 1:10 *But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

IV. 1 Corinthians 15:54–56 Resurrection: Victory over Death

The change will swallow death; it will bring victory over the grave. Paul pictures the believer in the future, as already standing before the Lord in the Kingdom of God. He sees the believer as already incorruptible and immortal. When that day comes, then it can be shouted that “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” Note what is said about this glorious day of victory.

1. The victory was promised by God long, long ago.

Isa 25:8 He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

2. The victory conquered the “sting” of death. The “sting” of death is sin (v. 56). There are two reasons why the sting of death will be gone forever.
 - a. Sin gives death its power. Men die because of sin (Rom 5:12). When God gives a man a perfect body, then the sting is removed. Death will be no more.
 - b. Sin surrounds death with all its fears. If men are perfected, then sin is erased from the picture, and there is no death or surrounding fears. Death becomes helpless.
3. The victory will be over the strength of sin. What is it that gives power to sin, that gives sin control over men? It is the law of God. When believers stand perfected before God, the law hovering over men’s heads will be done away with. There are two reasons why the strength of sin will be gone forever.
 - a. The law gives sin its power. The law and its standards show men their shortcomings. If men are perfected, then there is no need for the law because there is no sin (Rom 4:15).
 - b. If men are perfected and there is no law, then there is no condemnation (Rom 5:13).

1 Cor 15:26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 Cor 15:54 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.”

2 Tim 1:10 But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Rev 21:4 “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

V. 1 Corinthians 15: 57 Victory Through the Lord Jesus Christ

The glorious victory over death has been wrought through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Him and Him alone that man can be resurrected from the dead and given an incorruptible and immortal body. How is it possible for man to live forever through the Lord Jesus Christ? Very simply, because He fulfilled the law of God. This means at least two things. (See note, Mt. 5:17-18; *Christ Fulfills the Law*, Rom 8:3.)

1. Christ fulfilled the law of God by never sinning. He never, broke the law of God, not even once. Therefore, He secured perfect righteousness; and because His righteousness is perfect and ideal, it becomes the model and pattern for all men. It stands for and covers the unrighteousness of all men. His perfect righteousness overcomes sin and its penalty — it condemns sin. It is to be noted that He condemned sin “the flesh,” in “the sinful man.” (Rom 8:3).
2. Christ fulfilled the law in that He bore the condemnation and punishment of the law for man. As the Perfect and Ideal Man, Jesus Christ could bear all the violations and punishment of the law for man. Jesus Christ as the Ideal Man could die *for all men*.

When a person believes in Jesus Christ, truly believes in Him, God counts that person’s faith as righteousness. The person is not righteous, but God loves His Son so much that He honours any person who honours His Son. He takes the person’s *honour of His Son*, the person’s faith, and counts it as righteousness, as the right to live in His presence. It is the person of faith, the person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ that shall be resurrected and given a body that is incorruptible and immortal. The victory over death is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rom 8:1, 3 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,... For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man.*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

1 John 5:4 *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

VI. 1 Corinthians 15:58 Resurrection Demands Great Effort

The change demands staunch work. Note four points.

1. The charge is to believers, genuine believers: “dear brothers.” The promise of a resurrected and changed body is not to unbelievers.
2. The believer is to stand firm, letting nothing move him. Why? Because he has such a glorious hope: the hope of being resurrected and given an imperishable and immortal body, an incorruptible life before God. The hope of this glorious fact should stir the believer to stand firm, letting nothing move him in serving the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - => The words stand firm (*hedraioi*) means to be steadfast, fixed, determined, purposed, faithful. The believer is to stand firm and fixed in his belief and labour for the Lord, determined to live for the Lord and to carry out his purpose for the Lord: The believer is to be faithful to the end.
 - => The phrase “let nothing move you” (*ametakineto*) means to be unyielding, unshaken, undisturbed. The believer is not to be fickle in his service for the Lord. He is to stand as solid as a rock in his beliefs and in the serving of the Lord
3. The believer is to give himself fully to the work of the Lord. Note two significant points.
 - => The word “work or labour” (*kopos*) means toiling and working to the point of exhaustion and fatigue, to the point of collapse.
 - => The word always means never cease, never stop, never slacken up, never quit, never retire.
4. The believer will be rewarded. What a challenge to the believer! Yet, how could less be expected when the promise of being resurrected and given a new body has been given to a person? The believer’s labour will not be in vain, that is, left empty and unrewarded. The believer who...
 - is standing firm,
 - is will not allow anything to move him,
 - is always giving himself fully to the work of the Lord,
 - will be rewarded: resurrected and given a new body.

John. 15:9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”

Gal 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

2 Tim 4:5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Heb 12:1 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

1 Pet 1:13 *Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

Rev 3:11 *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*

Job 17:9 *Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger. ■*