



## Repentance Tabernacle Church

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### The Divine Defeat: Swallowed Up in Victory!

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

All Christians will die physically, but every believer will be instantly transformed at the return of Christ. Through Jesus, the sting of sin and the curse of death are completely defeated, giving believers eternal victory. We all face limitations. Some may have physical, mental, or emotional handicaps. Some may be blind, but they can see a new way to live. Some may be deaf, but they can hear God's Good News. Some may be lame, but they can walk in God's love. In addition, they have the encouragement that those handicaps are only temporary.

Paul introduces a previously unrevealed truth (a "mystery") and brings into open light a truth dark and unknown before. Christians who are alive when Jesus returns will not have to experience physical death, but they *will* be instantly transformed. We shall all be given new bodies when Jesus returns and these bodies will be without handicaps, never to die or become sick. This can give us hope in our suffering.

The apostle here makes known a truth unknown before, which is that the saints living at our Lord's second coming will not die, but be changed, that this change will be made in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and *at the sound of the last trump*; for, as he tells us, "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first*" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). At this summons the graves shall open, the dead saints shall rise incorruptible, and the living saints be changed because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Our current earthly bodies are mortal, weak, and subject to decay. For heaven, we must "put on" immortal, incorruptible bodies that can never die or get sick. All will not die physically, but some will be changed. The living will be changed from mortality to immortality as quickly as the dead will be raised to immortality. The time needed for this is but a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Paul lets us know what will follow upon this change of the living and dead in Christ: "*Then shall be brought to pass that saying, Death is swallowed up in victory*" (1 Corinthians 15:54) and "*He will swallow up death in victory*" (Isaiah 25:8). "*That mortality might be swallowed up of life*" (2 Corinthians 5:4), and death perfectly subdued and conquered, and saints forever delivered from its power. And therefore will the saints hereupon sing their *song of triumph*. Because of Christ, the Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled. Death is permanently defeated, no longer a final end but a gateway to eternity. Paul taunts death: "*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, thy victory?*" because it has completely lost its power.

*The sting of death is sin*; but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting. He has made atonement for sin; he has obtained remission of it. It may hiss therefore, but it cannot hurt. Death may seize a believer, but cannot sting him, cannot hold him in his power. There is a day coming when the grave shall open, the bands of death be loosed, the dead saints revive, and become incorruptible and immortal, and put out of the reach of death for ever. And then will it plainly appear that, as to them, death will have lost its strength and sting; and all by the mediation of Christ, by his dying in their place.

"*Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 15:57). The way to sanctify all our joy is to make it tributary to the praise of God. And what can be more joyous in itself than the saints' triumph over death, when they shall rise again? And shall they not then rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of their salvation? Shall not their souls magnify the Lord? When He shows "*wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee?*" (Psalm 88:10).

Praise for the victory (it is great and glorious in itself), and for the means whereby it is obtained (it is given of God through Christ Jesus), a victory obtained not by our power, but the power of God; not given because we are worthy, but because Christ is so, and has by dying obtained this conquest for us. Must not this circumstance endear the victory to us, and heighten our praise to God? Believers do not have to defeat death themselves. God graciously provides the ultimate victory over sin, the Law, and the grave through Jesus Christ.

**READ: Revelation 20:4-15**