

The glory of resurrection

1. Corinthians 15:35-58

Key verse 15:58

„ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

Happy Easter! The Easter season is always the time to experience God's creative power and to renew our minds through the new sprouting and flourishing nature. The Easter season is above all the time to receive the Gospel of Jesus again and to stand firm in the faith of the Resurrection. Through the previous lesson, we have come to know the power of the resurrection. All will be made alive in Christ as they die in Adam. The power of the resurrection is much stronger than the power of sin and death. We no longer need to live under the power of death, but have risen with Christ to a new life. Now, like Paul, we can give our new life daily for the Lord by joyfully fulfilling God's mission and proclaiming the gospel of salvation of Jesus' death and resurrection in this generation.

Today's text is about the glorious hope of the resurrection. It is also about the resurrection principle, that without dying there is no resurrection and without suffering there is no glory. Paul encourages us to live our lives according to the resurrection principle and to seize the glory of the resurrection. Let us give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord this spring with the glorious hope of the resurrection and thus bring about the spiritual resurrection in Europe.

I. The Resurrection Principle (35-49)

Let's look at verse 35: "But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" Paul begins this passage with a question often asked by doubting people, but especially by those who

try to justify their unbelief: "How? ... How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body will they come?" It is not easy to explain the resurrection of the dead in scientific detail comprehensive to the human mind. The reason why some Corinthians asked these questions back then was not the lack of scientific proof, but their godless lives. Death was the end of life for them. The resurrection of Christ was not good news for them, because they would have had to draw the consequences and live differently if the dead really resurrected. So they distorted Paul's teaching of the resurrection of the body by making it ridiculous or impossible. But Paul's teaching of the resurrection of the body is about the resurrection of the spiritual body.

Even today there are many people who like to put their unbelief and doubts into a theological package or question the spiritual reality of truth with scientific arguments. The deep reason for their questions, however, often lies in their false aim in life, to seek happiness only in this visible earthly world and to enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin. They do not want to admit the resurrection because they only want to live with the visible earthly world.

How did Paul answer their question? Let's look at verse 36: "How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies." Here Paul teaches them the universal principle of life, which Jesus also proclaims in John 12:24. It says: "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." "Without death there is no resurrection, and without suffering there is no glory. Jesus himself used the image of

a seed to explain the resurrection principle: A seed must first fall to the ground and die there so that a new glorious plant can rise from it. The glorious form of a plant only becomes visible after the seed has fallen into the earth and died. Every farmer knows this universal principle of life and takes it for granted, even if he does not know and understand exactly how the new plant is created. In the same way, our present body is also a seed for eternal life, namely for the glorious resurrection body.

We can experience this principle of life in many areas of our lives, for example in sports, in studies or in learning to play a musical instrument. Johann van Beethoven recognized the extraordinary talent of his son at an early age and ensured a solid musical education. His father was considered to be very strict, sometimes so strict, that he locked his son in his room and had him practice the piano for 8 hours a day. But without such a hard discipline and intensive practice we would not have been able to hear the famous intro "Ta-Ta-Ta Taaa" of Ludwig van Beethoven's "5th Symphony".

When our Mustard Seed orchestra staff died of pride and self-confidence and practiced disciplined and regularly every Saturday, although none of them studied music professionally, they were able to develop their musical gifts and form a beautiful orchestra, encouraging and delighting many people every year through the Christmas concert.

Mother Sarah Barry was born into a very wealthy family in Mississippi. After her studies, however, she decided to dedicate her life to the Korean mission. At that time, after the Korean civil war, Korea was a very poor and war-devastated country. Her decision practically meant that she renounced a pleasant life, the recognition of the people, and a promising future in America. Because she spent 20 years wholeheartedly working for the student mission in Korea, she had no opportunity to marry. But God blessed her devotion and produced countless fruits through her. Many

students not only received Jesus as their Lord, but also, inspired by her life, decided to serve world mission, so that through our church more than 3000 missionaries have been sent all over the world.

This teaches us that self-preservation is a great stupidity. Many people try to preserve their life in this world or to lead it as pleasantly and successfully as possible. They try to collect great earthly treasures that they cannot take with them. There are quite a few who think that God's blessing would be the fulfillment of their human desires. But this is a great stupidity because they do not know that their earthly life is only the seed of eternal life. The earthly body is created to be given and to be a seed for the resurrection body. Because our life is only a seed for eternal life, we may always give it joyfully at any time to attain the resurrection body.

Paul describes the difference between the physical body and the resurrection body in verses 39-41 with many pictures. A seed is very small and hard and usually not very beautiful. But the plant that grows from each of these seeds is large and its flower is as beautiful and fascinating as the cherry blossom in Bonn's Old Town, which is admired every spring by many tourists from all over the world for its pink natural spectacle. In the same way, although we now have a low, poor earthly body, we will rise with a wonderful eternal resurrection body of unimaginable beauty, just as an ugly caterpillar is transformed into a colorful butterfly.

Let us look at verses 42-44: "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." We human beings would like to remain young and healthy. But in fact, we suffer much even if we are only attacked by small and invisible viruses. We grow old from day to day and eventually die, although we would visit the gym every day and train

our bodies. But Paul says here what the resurrection body looks like. It is of a different quality than our current body. Its quality is dimensionally different from that of our current corruptible body. A transient, low, poor and weak body will be sown, but it will resurrect as an imperishable, glorious, strong, spiritual body. Then we will never again have to torment ourselves under various allergies. Visually impaired or hair loss, migraine, itching, cancer no longer exist. Unfortunately, all doctors and pharmacists will have nothing to do. Let us look at verse 45: "So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"⁶; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit." The first man, Adam, was made of earth. Adam only brought us sin and death and shame and misery. The last Adam, Jesus, came from heaven. Jesus frees us from sin, gives us eternal life, restores us and changes us to His image that we may praise and glorify Him for eternity.

Let us read verse 49: "And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man." Because we bear the image of Adam in this world, we must still live in a transitory, weak and sinful body. But verse 49 gives us God's wonderful promise that we will be transformed into the perfect image of Jesus. This work of change does not happen only in the kingdom of heaven, but already now, when we live with the glorious hope of the resurrection. The foretaste of this transformation is the fruit of the Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. (Gal 5:22) If we live daily with the glorious hope of the resurrection, we will bear the fruit of the Spirit already in our present life, and Paul's confession will also be our confession: "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." (2 Cor 4:16) In every situation, let us give our lives with the glorious hope of the resurrection for the kingdom of God and seize the glorious eternal life. Amen.

II. The Resurrection of the Believers (50-58)

Let's look at verse 50: "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.." Perhaps some thought that they could simply enter the kingdom of heaven without being changed and transformed, as if it were just a continuation of earthly life. But Paul says here that we must necessarily put on the spiritual body in order to inherit the kingdom of God. Let us look at verses 51 and 52: "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." When Jesus comes again, the dead will rise again in a single moment, at the time of the last trumpet, and all believers who lived and live with the faith of the resurrection will be transformed into their incorruptible, immortal resurrection body. This will be the most glorious and blessed day for all believers. They will go into the glorious kingdom of God and reign eternally with Christ. But for the unbelievers it is a day of terror. They are also raised from the dead, but not to enter the kingdom of God, but to appear before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged according to their sinful works.

Let us look at verses 54 to 57: "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." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.?" But the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Through Jesus' resurrection from the dead, the power of death has already been broken. It's like in a tennis game in which Roger Federer already leads 2:0 against Rafael Nadal and in the 3rd set 5:1 and 40:0, now only the match point remains in order to win. Federer's victory is then only a matter of

time. Likewise, the victory over the power of death is already a decided matter. This is the spiritual reality which we find ourselves in. Even if we still have to bear pain and grief in view of the remaining power of death, we can and may lead our life of faith with the certainty of victory, because the victory over the power of death has already been sealed. Paul does not say "he gave us victory" or "he will give us victory", but "he gives us the victory". This present tense means that God gives us the victory now. Not sooner or later, but from hour to hour he gives us victory. Therefore, like Paul, we can rejoice triumphantly: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" Praise and honour to Christ Jesus, who through His death on the cross and his resurrection gave us the final victory over the power of death, and the gift of eternal life.

What conclusion does Paul draw from the faith in the resurrection? Let us read verse 58: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." In this verse the word 'in vain' has a profound spiritual meaning. While worldly people were only concerned with seeking personal advantages and living a comfortable and pleasure-seeking life, the saints in Corinth worked with all their strength for the Lord. But the rewards of their devoted lives seemed to be misunderstandings, rejections, and persecutions. Then Satan whispered to the Christians in Corinth: "The life of faith has no meaning after all". But Paul clearly says here that worldly people basically work in vain. Maybe they earn more money, get more human recognition or can take more holidays. But all their efforts are ultimately in vain, because death destroys everything. Even Solomon, who had enjoyed all wealth, royal power and even a glorious palace life with more than 1,000 women, sighed: "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;

nothing was gained under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 2:11)

Is there anything in this world that's not in vain? Yes! The work in Christ and for the Lord is not in vain. It is God's great grace and great blessing for us that we were granted to meet the risen Jesus and work for the ministry of the Lord already in our youth or college days. Even if we cannot see any direct fruit of our devotion, we should not draw back, but always increase through the faith in the resurrection in the work of the Lord, because we know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. Although sometimes it requires infinite patience to serve the seemingly unchanging students, we do not despair, but serve the Lord's work even more devotedly and resolutely. Why? Because we know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

We know the story of Jim and Elisabeth Elliot. When Jim Elliot and his four friends were killed by the Huaorani Indians at the first meeting near the river Curaray in 1956, their missionary work seemed to be in vain. But Jim's wife, Elisabeth, went there through resurrection faith and continued her missionary work with the Indians. As a result of their faith in the resurrection, a translation of the New Testament into the language of the Huaorani appeared for the first time in 1992 and many Indians came to believe in Jesus Christ. This beautiful story gives us the certainty that our work in the Lord is never in vain.

Let us read verse 58 again: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Paul encourages us that through the faith of the resurrection we can always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord. Resurrection faith motivates us to always give ourselves fully to the Lord's work, regardless of our situation or age. Dr. Peter Chang has given himself unconditionally for the ministry in Bonn and for world mission in the past 40 years. God blessed his devotion to the Lord abundantly by raising many outstanding local shepherds and the next generation as

a vast army of God for world mission. But he does not think about retiring now or sitting back and relaxing. Instead, he serves God's work even more resolutely and challenges the mobilization of the next generation worldwide through the Global Leadership Empowerment Forum and by establishing three mission base camps for Muslim mission, knowing that his labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Inviting students and serving them one-to-one with Bible study is not in vain in the Lord. Our early morning prayer is not in vain in the Lord. The struggle of faith of our co-workers and the cooperation of the next generation for the spiritual revival in Europe are not in vain in the Lord. That is why we must have confidence in victory and not decrease but always increase in the labor of the Lord. In accordance with the principle of resurrection, let us always increase our practical and spiritual responsibility and devotion for European mission, so that 1,700 universities may be reached and Germany may be used as a shepherd nation and Europe as a continent sending out missionaries.

Today we have come to know the glorious hope of the Resurrection. We will rise with a glorious incorruptible resurrection body and receive the glorious eternal life if we give our present life for the Lord according to the resurrection principle. Not only that: through the resurrection of Christ we have the final victory over the power of death and a firm confidence that our work is not in vain in the Lord. In this resurrection season, let us challenge spiritual renewal and restoration in Europe and always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord. May the risen Christ always be with you and fill each one of you with the glorious hope of the resurrection and use you as witnesses of the resurrection of Christ.