

## THE GLORY OF THE RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Key verse 15:49

"And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven."

At this time of Easter we studied the gospel of the resurrection from 1 Corinthians 15. We were able to learn about the power of the resurrection, which is much stronger than the power of sin and death. Now we are allowed to lay down our lives for the Lord every day, following the example of Apostle Paul, who testified: "I die every day." Today, in verses 35 to 58, we want to learn about the principle of resurrection and the glory of the resurrection. May God help us to lead our new life in Christ according to the resurrection principle and to always increase with the glorious resurrection hope in the work of the Lord, thus challenging the spiritual revival in the universities and colleges in Germany and Europe.

### 1. The Principle of Resurrection (35-49)

Let's look at verse 35: "But someone may ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?'" Among the Corinthians, there were those who doubted the bodily resurrection. They lived as if they could keep this earthly body forever and live in the world forever. Some made fun of the spiritual resurrection because of their unbelief, perhaps saying, "What kind of strange body is this? Will I still be overweight or on medication?" Some of the Corinthians were influenced by the Gnostic heresy that rejected a bodily resurrection and taught that the resurrection was only a resurrection of the spirit. Paul rebuked such false teachers very harshly. Let us look at verse 36: "How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies." Their false teaching was completely contrary to what had actually happened at the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Jesus rose bodily from the dead on the third day. The tomb of Jesus was completely empty. And the resur-

rected Lord physically met His own. He appeared to Mary of Magdala. He also went to Emmaus with some disciples, taught them the Word of God and broke bread with them. He appeared to Thomas, the master of doubt. At the lake of Tiberias, Jesus prepared breakfast for the disciples and shared the meal with them. Jesus was not a spirit! He was risen in the flesh! In our time the resurrection of Jesus is also strongly denied or mocked. Liberal theologians say: "Modern man cannot believe in a physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, nor in His return." Whoever still believes in the resurrection and return of Christ must expect to be ridiculed and slandered as a "fundamentalist Christian".

Let us read verse 36 again and hear Paul's clear rebuke also for us personally: "How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies." Our Lord Jesus himself taught the universal principle of death and resurrection. In John 12:24 he said, "I tell you the truth, 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." Jesus gave up his life completely as a dying grain of wheat - until death on the cross. And we all can now be the fruit of his total surrender and his resurrection from the dead. In Mark 8:34 Jesus taught and said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The principle "what you sow does not come to life unless it dies" we encounter in many areas of life. As children of God, we must also train our sinful body by dying daily, not to follow the pattern of this world or the spirit of the times. We are encouraged by some co-workers of the next generation, who die daily to participate in early morning prayer in the house of God; to be spiritually edified through factual

studies and to prepare for the coming GLEF 2020. Our mustard seed musicians experienced the resurrection principle when they organized a benefit concert in Bonn's Beethovenhalle a few years ago. Although most of them were teenagers and young people at the time, who had no particular concert experience, they accepted the challenge and gave a wonderful concert, which some of my work colleagues are still enthusiastic about today. According to the advice of experts, one student should be enrolled in a special school. However, when his parents prayed with Genesis 1:1, they experienced the principle of the resurrection, so that their son successfully completed high school and even formed a prayer circle with some of his classmates. The resurrection principle teaches us that one can see and experience the glory already here and now, having previously died to the old body or the old sinful mentality. This is our common spiritual struggle. It is the struggle to turn away from the earthly and trivial, even to forget what is behind and to reach out for what is ahead. We think of Jim Elliot, who gave up his young life as a missionary among the Aoka Indians as a martyr. He testified, "He's no fool to give what he can't keep, to win what he can't lose." We also think of Paul himself, who gave his new life completely to preach the gospel even to Europe. In Colossians 3:2-4 he admonishes the faithful: "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

We learn that the resurrection principle is a universal and universal principle of life. Has a beautiful sunflower ever grown without a sunflower seed being put into the earth first? Has a musician ever been awarded a title without first being trained hard through endless self-denial? Could a soldier ever be accepted into an elite unit without first undergoing extreme training? Let us, like Paul and how many predecessors in faith, use our new life in Christ to die daily. Then we will not be fools who only worry about this earthly body and end up losing everything. Then we will rather learn that Paul's word is absolutely true and will be fulfilled: "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies."

Let's look at verses 37 and 38: "When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body." Our present earthly body is already so magnificently created by God. You exist only once in this world! No copy, no clone! Unique among 8 billion people! And God's diversity has no end. Even the resurrection body comes from God's great creative hand. That's why Paul testified: "But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body."

Let's look at verses 39 to 41: "All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor." Even small children understand that men, cattle, birds and fish have different flesh. Even with the sun, moon and stars, we see their beautiful shine every day. Depending on the available energy inside a star, a star appears to us to be bluish or reddish. And let us think of the sun and the moon. When the sun rises it appears like a golden yellow ball and when it sets it appears like a red ball. The moon changes its shape and brightness every day: increasing, decreasing, full moon, etc. How much more glorious it will be when we are gathered together with our resurrection body in the Kingdom of Heaven and will be gathered before the throne of God as an innumerable army of the redeemed. Countless redeemed from all peoples and nations will stand there - and each of them will be created as individually and uniquely as God wants them to be! Our Lord Jesus said in Matthew 13:43: "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." Ernst Gebhardt (1832-1899) expressed it in a song like this: "When the Savior, when the Savior appears as King and unites His own as redeemed in heaven. O then they shall shine as the stars so pure in the Saviour's crown as the precious stone."

What a glorious resurrection principle! In each of us God's glory and his power of creation will be revealed. Let us look at verse 45: "So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being" ; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit." Through the first man, Adam, sin entered the

world. Sin means disobedience and rebellion against God. The result of which was death. We are all born of Adam, born to sin and inherited sin. We are also all under the curse of sin and are going to the judgment of God. But God made a rescue plan. Already in Genesis chapter 3, God promised the Messiah who would come into the world as a descendant of the woman. God fulfilled this promise in Jesus Christ. Just as Adam became the head of fallen humanity, Jesus Christ became the head of a whole new humanity. Jesus' coming solved the sin problem of all mankind once and for all. Everyone who personally believes and repents of the redemption work of Jesus on the cross will be saved. Let us give thanks to God for Jesus: for the accomplisher of God's work of redemption and the Spirit who gives life.

Let us look at verses 46-48: "The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven." Here Paul testifies that just as we have been like the earthly Adam here, so we will be in essence like the heavenly Christ in heavenly eternity. Let us read verse 49: "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." Here on this earth we all carry the image of the earthly. We live in sin and weakness and impermanence and lowliness. But it is just as certain that we will also bear the image of the heavenly. We will be like Jesus, we will possess his inwardness, so that we will be merciful, patient, kind, loving. In this world we will reach our limit so quickly. Like Paul in Romans 7:21, we too must all cry out: "So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me." But we must have the firm hope and certainty that the future life will not be a continuation of this earthly life, but something completely new. Never again in Adam; for ever in Christ! Amen.

Verse 49 is a great encouragement to all believers. Because of our old earthly body in Adam, we groan without exception. Hour after hour we experience and suffer from our limitations, weakness and sinfulness. We want to say the early morning prayer and yet we have overslept many times. We want to meet a student on campus, but our laziness makes us stay at home. We want to concentrate on studying for

school or university, but we quickly get distracted by our smartphone. So we all experience our lowliness, poverty and the limits of our natural body. But in future life we will carry the image of the heavenly. This is already now our great comfort, our confidence and joy with which we may already now practice the resurrection principle and experience the resurrection power in our lives. Shepherdess Joyce, missionary Stephanus and missionary Monika testify during their current treatment period to their victorious faith, because they carry in their hearts the living hope for the future glorious image of the heavenly one. Because of such glorious hope, we too need not despair for ourselves or others. Rather, we may have the hope and firm confidence that as we have borne the image of the earthly, so will the image of the heavenly.

In this passage we have learned about the principle of resurrection: "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. The resurrection of Jesus and also our bodily resurrection is not a myth - it is a historical fact and reality. Let us practice this resurrection principle daily in our lives, as we die with our earthly body and will one day bear forever the glorious image of the heavenly one, the image of our risen Lord Jesus.

## **2. The victory of the resurrection faith (50-58)**

Let us read verse 50: "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." Here Paul makes it clear that as we are now, in flesh and blood, we cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This corruptible body will not inherit the imperishable.

But then Paul speaks of a mystery. Let's look at verses 51-53: "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. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality." The mystery Paul mentions is the Rapture of the saints together with the resurrection of the dead who have fallen asleep in Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, Paul writes: "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. 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. Therefore encourage each other with these words: "All the faithful, whether they are dead or alive, have the great privilege of going up into the air together to meet the Lord on the clouds and be with the Lord always.

Let us look at verses 54-56: "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." All men without exception suffer in this world under the power of death. Rich or poor, death stops at nobody in this world. But the good news is that since Jesus rose from the dead, death has already lost its power. The first phase of our salvation is that we are saved from the power of sin through our Lord Jesus and already have a new life. Now we are in the 2nd phase of God's work of salvation. As Paul testifies in Philippians 3:20,21 "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." This "waiting period" is not a passive waiting period, but an active work for the Lord by fulfilling the mission entrusted to God, preaching the gospel among all nations and dedicating ourselves to the raising of disciples of Jesus at all colleges. Phase 3 begins when our Lord Jesus returns. Then our weak earthly body will be transformed into the glorious, strong resurrection body.

When Paul looked at this glorious day of the return of Jesus, he raised a cry of victory. Let us read verses 54b and 55: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" Death is swallowed up in the glorious resurrection victory of Jesus! Because this victory of Jesus is a reality, we can rejoice, we can sing, we can praise and thank God, because God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! What is your personal victory song?

A young man lived in the solitude of his attic room. Dominated by the power of death, he fa-

talistically lay on his bed and listened to Wagner operas. But God invited him to Bible study and gave him his word from Romans 13:14: "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." That word became the personal triumphant song of that student. With his new life he serves the pioneering work at the Juridicum through prayer and one-to-one Bible study teams. His victory song for this campus is: "The Juridicum - a house of prayer for world mission and birthplace of a believing chancellor!"

Because of the wonderful grace of God, I too am allowed to sing a personal victory song in my heart: "Once I was dead in sin! All hope was gone. But now, through Christ's death, I have gained His life. Is it possible? Did Jesus also give himself into death for me? "My Savior, yes, I believe in You and love You forever I lived as a ruthless egoist. I was only interested in my own advantage and profit. As a businessman I wanted to make a career and see my name shining day and night in big letters. Although I grew up in a Christian environment, I had no relationship with Jesus. I was baptized and confirmed - and yet without any life roots to Christ and therefore spiritually dead. But Jesus visited me with his proactive love and invited me to his living word. Through Mark 8:29 and Luke 23:34a I was allowed to meet Jesus as my Christ, King and Savior. He revealed to me through the prayer of Jesus on the cross "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing" His absolute and forgiving love for me unlovable sin. So this selfish salesman of light bulbs and vacuum cleaners was allowed to die with Christ and resurrect to a new life with Christ. Jesus' victory over the power of death is also my victory; his resurrection is also my resurrection, that I may now even be used as a shepherd, Bible teacher and servant of the Word of God. Because of Jesus' victory, I may serve with confidence in victory the pioneers of the Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences to raise up 1 Abraham, 1 Sarah and 12 disciples of Jesus and to change this campus into a campus sending missionaries.

Let us look at verses 56 and 57: "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." We ourselves were helpless before the sting of death and the power of sin. We could not make ourselves vic-

tors. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned -" Through the law, our sinfulness and utter desolation were made plain. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' victory is also mine, yours and ours! No one can rob us of this victory, because death is swallowed up by the glorious victory of Jesus.

What is the conclusion of this glorious victory that we have received in and through Jesus Christ? 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." We may serve the work of the Lord with the assurance of final and eternal victory, firm and steadfast. We may even increase in the work of the Lord. What does this mean for our life of faith?

First: to increase in suffering. 1 Peter 4:13 says: "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." Suffering, slander and persecution are part of the life of faith for God's children. Because we carry the glory of the resurrection in our hearts, we are often misunderstood and slandered by the world. By increasing in our participation in the other sufferings of Jesus, we can also grow in our relationship of love and trust with Jesus.

Second: increase in service. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6:4.5: "Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger." Like Paul and many servants of God, we can prove ourselves to be servants of God in all circumstances for the sake of the glory of the resurrection.

Thirdly, increase in gratitude. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we read: „Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.“ Although Paul was in prison, he was an example of being thankful in all things. We too may learn to have a grateful heart in all circumstances, instead of complaining or grumbling. Especially in the time of the Corona crisis we may serve God with gratitude and be a blessing to those who are in fear and worry.

Fourthly: Increase in faith in God's promise. God gave us Ezekiel 37:10 as a promise word: "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet-a vast army." This promise is not an empty word. In faith in this Word, we may increasingly prophesy God's Word to young people by forming 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams this year and by preparing the environment in which God will raise an exceedingly large army of 100,000 Bible teachers and bring about the spiritual revival in Germany and Europe.

Verse 58 gives us a clear direction to be firm and unshakable and always increase in the work of the Lord. We may increase in early prayer and encourage our sheep to participate in it. We may increase in our pioneering work at the faculties of Bonn University, in Koblenz, Rheinbach and St. Augustin. We may increase in the formation of one-to-one Bible study teams, in the raising of disciples of Jesus at every university in Germany and Europe. This year the house church of missionary Dr. Peter and missionary Sarah Chang celebrates its 40th mission anniversary in Bonn. Humanly seen, they could simply be satisfied with what they have achieved. But they are determined to always increase in the work of the Lord. Missionary Sarah testified that she wants to continue to increase in the number of 12 Mothers of Faith at each faculty in Bonn. Missionary Peter serves the co-workers of the next generation through the preparation of the GLEF and through the community of life. He also serves the preaching team through the spiritual breakfast fellowship. And he plants the vision and hope of God in the hearts of the staff to establish three bases for the Muslim mission.

Today we have come to know the glory of the resurrection. "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." Let us make the resurrection principle, that there is no resurrection without dying and no glory without suffering, our firm principle of life. Then we can, like Paul and like numerous servants and maidservants of God, lead our lives daily with the glorious hope of resurrection and increase in the work of the Lord. May God bless us to always increase in prayer, Bible study,

discipleship, so that God may use our country as a pastoral nation and Europe as a continent sending missionaries.