

## The Mystery and the Victory.

In this document, we throw the spotlight on the necessity and the nature of the 'change' which the bodies of all believers will undergo at the sounding of 'the last trumpet'.

### THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory".

"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades [better, 'O Death'], where is your victory?"

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

1 Corinthians 15. 50-58 (*The New King James Version*).

### INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

In brief, the outline of the chapter (1 Corinthians 15) is as follows:

**Verses 1-34** deal with the **denial** of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. The section ends with the practical implication of believing that this life is all that there is.<sup>2</sup>

**Verses 35-58** deal with the **main intellectual objection** to the doctrine. The section ends with the practical implication of believing that this life is not all that there is.<sup>3</sup>

In **verse 35**, the apostle cites two questions posed by those at Corinth who denied the resurrection of the body:

- (i) 'How are the dead raised up?', and
- (ii) 'With what kind of body do they come?'

Metaphorically speaking, Paul then crosses his hands.

He gives, first (in **verses 36-49**), his answer to the second question. And, second (in **verses 50-57**), he returns to answer the first question.

### EXPOSITION

**Verse 50**. The opening expression ('Now this I say') ... is introduced for the sake of emphasis.<sup>4</sup> In verse 49, Paul had stated the *certainty* of the great physical change which all Christians are to undergo, 'as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we *shall* also bear the image of the man of heaven'. But verses 50-53 stress, not so much the *certainty* of the change as the *absolute necessity* for that change – for both living and dead believers.

Note, in particular, the words 'cannot', v. 50, and 'must', v. 53. The resurrection is not only necessary:

- (a) because it is an essential part of God's programme, vv. 20-28,
- (b) because it is consistent with the pattern set by nature, vv. 36-44a, and
- (c) because it flows inevitably from our links with Adam and Christ, vv. 44b-49, but
- (d) because it is altogether essential if we are to enter heaven physically.

At the outset, Paul impresses on the Corinthians that neither the living nor the dead are physically suited and equipped to enter (to inherit) the heavenly realm, the manifested kingdom of God. In chapter 6, Paul had twice warned the Corinthians that the *unrighteous* 'will not inherit the kingdom of God', and had listed the kind of specific sins which exclude men from that kingdom, vv. 9-10. Some of the Corinthian Christians had in fact once practised these very sins but Paul bears them record that

they are no longer what they had been then, v. 11. Yet, although they are now accounted *righteous* (justified) 'in the name of the Lord Jesus', and are, therefore, fit for heaven spiritually and morally, they are still not fit for heaven physically. And neither are we.

The expression, 'flesh and blood' describes a living person (as, for instance, in Galatians chapter 1 verse 16; 'I conferred not with flesh and blood'), and, in particular, the kind of mortal bodies we occupy here and now. 'Corruption' (related to the word 'corrupt', v. 33) describes the state of the bodies of those who have died in Christ. The point is that neither those who will be alive when Jesus comes, nor those who previously die in Him, have bodies adapted for the manifested kingdom of God.

The apostle John notes that 'it does not yet appear what we shall be';<sup>5</sup> that is, we do not possess the faculties now to grasp what our *new bodies* will be like. But we do know that we must have *new bodies* if we are to enter heaven physically. This change is not an optional extra in the programme.

**Verse 51.** It is not necessary that we die. Some will not and, because they are alive when Jesus returns, they will bypass death completely. But it's absolutely necessary that we be changed.<sup>6</sup> 'Behold, I tell you a mystery', Paul says. That is, 'I tell you something which has been hidden in the past and which could never have been discovered by human reason; but is now openly disclosed and revealed to the favoured few'.<sup>7</sup> By using the word 'mystery', Paul alerts us to the fact that he is appealing to a special revelation from the Lord, much as he does when, in a similar context, he uses the expression, 'by the word of the Lord', 1 Thess. 4. 15.

It has been suggested that, 'The argument here is exactly the reverse of that in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. There the question is: will the deceased at the moment of Christ's return receive the same benefits as they that are yet alive? In 1 Corinthians 15, however, the point is: will they that are yet alive also enjoy the fruits of Christ's resurrection, since they have not been sown as those who are deceased'.<sup>8</sup>

The resurrection of men at the end of human history was no mystery. It was part and parcel of orthodox Jewish belief, as witness the teaching of the Pharisees, Acts 23. 8, and the words of Martha to our Lord, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day', John 11. 24. But nothing had been revealed previously about the resurrection '*out of the dead*'<sup>9</sup> which Paul has in mind here; still less had anything been revealed about the details of what would happen then.

'Sleep' is a delightful euphemism for the condition of the body of the Christian following his or her death. For the believer Jesus has transformed the grim, cold fact of death and burial into a peaceful slumber. Indeed, our English word 'cemetery' derives from a Greek word meaning 'a sleeping place or dormitory'.

But, the apostle insists, we shall not *all* sleep. Some time ago, I came across a humorous ditty:

There once was a pious young priest  
Who lived almost wholly on yeast.  
For he said, 'It is plain, we must all rise again,  
So I thought I'd get started at least'.

But both the priest and the ditty are *wrong!* It simply is not true that 'we must *all* rise again', for the obvious reason that we shall *not all* die. 'But we *shall all* be changed', whether we are still alive (still 'flesh and blood') when the Lord comes,<sup>10</sup> or whether we shall have died (shall have experienced 'corruption') before then.

**Verse 52.** The opening of the verse introduces two very different details of timing. *First*, there is *the speed at which* the change will take place, and, *second*, there is *the occasion on which* the change will take place.

**First**, it will be over 'in a moment', 'in an atom' literally – the Greek word 'atom' meaning to the ancient world 'that which could not be cut or divided', long before the discovery of electrons, protons and quarks. An atom was the shortest measurement of time that could be imagined.

Paul underlines the point by adding 'in the twinkling of an eye'. This expression was equated by the Jews with an atom of time; one of their sayings was 'a moment is as the twinkling of an eye'.<sup>11</sup> The Greeks used the word translated 'twinkling' to describe many things, from the buzzing of a gnat to the twinkling of a star.<sup>12</sup> But the expression, 'the twinkling of an eye', refers specifically to the jerk of an eye, the casting of a glance, the movement of an eyelid.<sup>13</sup>

The apostle is saying then that the 'change' will be more or less instantaneous. He wants the Corinthians to know that God will not find it at all difficult to raise the dead and to change living believers; indeed, it will all be over in a split second.<sup>14</sup> When the time comes, omnipotence will encounter no problem in effecting the great change.

**Second**, the change will take place at the blast of the last trumpet. As has often been pointed out, 1 Corinthians chapter 15 is the chapter of 'last' things; towards the beginning of the chapter, we read of the last *witness*, v. 8; and later in the chapter, of both the last *enemy*, v. 26; and the last *Adam*, v. 45; and now we have the last *trumpet*, v. 52.

It is possible that Paul is referring to the well-known Roman war trumpet, as he certainly did back in verse 8 of the previous chapter, where he speaks of the need for a clear trumpet call if men are to be summoned to battle. I have read that the Roman army employed three distinct trumpet calls to get their troops moving. At the first trumpet, the soldiers would dismantle their tents; at the second, they would assemble in proper order; and at the third, the last, trumpet, they would move out and march off. It was then a case of 'forward'.<sup>15</sup> Paul might, therefore, be saying that this will be the signal for all Christians to 'move out'. But, whether this is so or not, 'the last trumpet' is unquestionably 'the trumpet of God', which is to accompany the Lord's commanding shout and the archangel's voice, 1 Thess. 4. 16. It sounds like it is going to be quite a noisy event!

It seems then that God's programme *for the church down here* will be terminated by the sounding of a last trumpet, much as will be His programme *for Israel*, Rev. 11. 15, when the Lord God Almighty takes His great power and reigns, an event signalled by an angel sounding the last of the seven trumpets, Rev. 8. 2.

We note that here in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, Paul makes no mention, as he does in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, of the Lord's coming. He makes no mention here of the Lord's descending Himself from heaven, or of believers then being seized and plucked away – caught up 'to meet the Lord in the air'.<sup>16</sup> But, wonderful as these themes are, and loaded as they are with encouragement and comfort (especially for those whose loved ones have gone on before), they are in no way relevant to Paul's point here. For the issue in this chapter (1 Corinthians 15) is not *where* we are going to be, or *with whom* we are going to be, but *what* we are going to be. There must be a change!

But, although Paul does not focus here on the programme of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, he does adhere strictly to the sequence of events outlined there, clearly distinguishing the dead believers (who are to be raised incorruptible), from the 'we' who will remain alive when the Lord returns (whose bodies are to undergo the great transformation from their present lowly state to become like the Saviour's own glorious body).<sup>17</sup>

For the dead in Christ will rise 'first', 1 Thess. 4. 16. As Paul was at pains to point out to the Thessalonians, the fact that they have died will *not* put them at any disadvantage when the Lord returns. Indeed, not only will they share in the benefit of that return, but also they will actually be the *first* to benefit – even though, as our verse assures us, everything is going to be over mighty fast. There will indeed be an *order*, a sequence, with the dead raised *before* the living are changed, but there will be no perceptible *interval*! Now God's longsuffering waits<sup>18</sup> (as it did in the days of Noah<sup>19</sup>), but, when God's clock strikes, things will really move!

We must be careful not to read too much into Paul's words, 'we shall be changed'. Paul is not claiming to know that he would necessarily be among those who would be alive when the Lord returns. Back in chapter 6, he speaks as if he expected the very opposite: 'God both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by His power', v. 14. And he says much the same in his second letter; 'knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up', 2 Cor. 4. 14.

The truth was that Paul did not know into which category he would fall, into that of those who would still be alive when the Lord came or into that of those who would have died by then. But he *did* know that, *if he died* before the Lord came, he would be covered by 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 14, and, *if he were still alive* when the Lord came, he would be covered by 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 52. As far as Paul was concerned, the Lord *could* have returned at any time, and Paul lived and watched accordingly.

**Verse 53** opens with 'For'. That is, verse 53 explains the reason for verse 52. Continuing the note struck in verse 50, Paul insists that both *the dead* ('this corruptible') and *the living* ('this mortal'; those who have not died, but who are subject and liable to death) *must* be changed. They must be radically, fundamentally changed. This corruptible *must* put off its rags of corruptibility, to be arrayed in the splendid robes of incorruption. And this mortal *must* put off its rags of mortality, to be arrayed in the splendid robes of immortality. And here lies the proper hope of the Christian, not in death but in the coming of the Lord. This point is expressed well by Horatio Spafford, 'But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait. The sky, not the grave, is our goal'.<sup>20</sup>

The apostle expounds this more fully in his second letter; 'we groan, earnestly desiring *to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven*; since indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent<sup>21</sup> groan, being burdened, *not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed*, so that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life', 2 Cor. 5. 2-4 lit.

In that very context, Paul speaks of believers who die – of those who are ‘absent from the body’ and at home with the Lord, 2 Cor. 5. 6-8. Yes, it is most certainly true that to depart and to be with Christ would be ‘far better’ than for us to stay as we are, Phil. 1. 23. But Paul speaks here and in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 of something far better still, of that which is the *very* best of all. For the victory is not really complete while the great enemy, death, retains even one hair of a believer’s head. We ‘groan’, Paul told the Romans, as we eagerly await the redemption of our bodies.<sup>22</sup> And when the Lord Jesus comes, He is not going to leave the smallest particle of redeemed dust for sin, death or Satan to display as a trophy of what they had once accomplished.

We note that the apostle says that ‘*this*’ corruptible shall ‘put on [shall clothe itself with] incorruption’, which reinforces the point he had made back in verses 42-44; namely, that, while the body which comes out of the ground is not the same in form and appearance as that which went in, *in identity* it continues to be *the same body*. It ‘is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption’.

**Verse 54.** When this happens, death will be well and truly defeated. As far as those Christians are concerned whose bodies lie asleep in the grave, death will be *compelled to release* its hold on all its victims and spoils. As far as living Christians are concerned, death will be *compelled to yield up* any future claim to their bodies; they will never die physically.

With an eye to Isaiah chapter 25 verse 8 (from which very verse John extracted the promise that God will one day wipe away tears from the faces and eyes of His people, Rev. 7. 17; 21. 4), Paul exclaims, ‘then death is swallowed up in victory’. The word translated ‘swallowed up’ signifies overwhelmed, engulfed, drowned (being the same word as in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 29<sup>23</sup>). Death will then be swallowed up ‘*into* victory’ lit. That is, death will then be engulfed, so as to result in complete victory.<sup>24</sup> The death sentence pronounced in Genesis chapter 3<sup>25</sup> will then be reversed! And so, having spoken previously both of *the necessity* for the great change and of *the mystery* of the great change, Paul now introduces us to *the victory* represented by the great change.

**Verse 55.** The prophet Hosea sings joyfully about the resurrection of Israel as a nation.<sup>26</sup> Adapting Hosea’s words, Paul personifies the great enemy, death, and flings down a spiritual gauntlet, issuing the defiant double challenge, ‘O death, *where* is your victory? O death, *where* is your sting’.<sup>27</sup>

As I understand it, verses 55-57 refer in their entirety to that final and ultimate victory which lies in the future, when the Lord comes. The wording of verse 54 seems conclusive. ‘*When*’ the corruptible and the mortal have put on incorruption and immortality, ‘*then*’ shall be brought to pass [‘then will be’, lit.] the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory’. Note the ‘*when ... then*’. Final victory comes only ‘then’.

It may well be that verse 55 continues with the same order which Paul has observed throughout verses 52-54; namely, the dead first and then the living: (i) ‘O death, *where* is your victory?’ That is, ‘Now that you have been robbed of your prey, now that you have been forced to yield up every victim you have ever claimed, now that you have been well and truly spoiled – O death, where is your boasted victory now?’ And then: (ii) ‘O death, *where* is your sting’. That is, ‘Now that you have no power to hurt or injure, now that your sting has been drawn and you are unable to inflict injury on those who still live ... O death, where is your fearful sting?’

The basic meaning of the word rendered ‘sting’ is ‘anything which pierces’.<sup>28</sup> The idea here is almost certainly that of the venomous sting of a snake, or, just possibly, of a scorpion.<sup>29</sup> But, sin having been overcome, death is like a snake which has had its poisonous fang removed, or a scorpion which has had its tail-sting removed. It is altogether helpless.<sup>30</sup>

**Verse 56.** Paul links death to sin, and sin to the law. He does much the same in Romans chapters 6 and 7. And, to some extent, verse 56 is a summary of his argument there. Paul argues: (i) in Romans chapter 6 that, because of his or her links with Christ, the believer is no longer under *sin*, and (ii) in Romans chapter 7 that, because of his or her links with Christ, the believer is no longer under *the law*.<sup>31</sup>

In dying with Christ, the Christian has been set free from both sin and the law. He or she is set free from the law, because the law not only condemned *sin* (and the *sinner*), but also, as Paul had found true in his own case, indwelling sin had taken advantage of the law, using it as its base of operations (a bridgehead) to attack him.<sup>32</sup> He had found in experience that his sinful nature was stirred up by the law; it was roused the more to sin. He had found that the law, which was holy, just and good in itself, served to incite and empower sin.<sup>33</sup> Such is our inclination to disobey that the very presence of the sign ‘No Trespassing’ makes us want to trespass! And so, just as the sting of death is sin, so the power of sin is the law.

**Verse 57.** At the close of Romans chapter 7 (having spoken at length of men’s bondage to both sin and the law, and having cried out, ‘Who will deliver me from this body of death?’),<sup>34</sup> Paul bursts out

jubilantly, 'I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord'.<sup>35</sup> Here also the apostle bursts out with thanks to God. He does so this time, however, because the *final* victory lies, not with death, sin or the law, nor with all three, but with God – and that 'through our Lord Jesus Christ', who has both deprived sin of its power and death of its sting.

'God be thanked', Paul says in effect to the Romans, 'that we *now* enjoy freedom from sin and the law'. But 'God be thanked too', Paul says in effect to the Corinthians, 'that we will enjoy final and eternal victory over death *when the Lord comes*, for God gives that victory to *us*, through our Lord Jesus Christ'. Small wonder, then, that, just a few words from the end of this letter, Paul cannot restrain himself, and exclaims, '*Maranatha*' ('Our Lord, come').<sup>36</sup>

**Verse 58.** We should note in passing Paul's fond address, 'my beloved brethren', and compare the very last words of the letter, 'My love be with you all in Christ Jesus'. There can be no doubt that, notwithstanding the many failings, follies and errors of the Corinthian saints, the apostle's affection for them is undiminished.

Paul ends on an intensely practical note. 'But *if* there *is* such a thing as resurrection', he is saying, '*if* there *is* such a thing as life after death, *if* there *is* such a thing as another world, *if* there *is* such a thing as a time of review and recompense (as he had made clear in chapters 3 and 4<sup>37</sup>), *then*'.

'Can we too much abound in zeal and diligence in the Lord's work, when we are assured of such abundant recompenses in a future life? ... Those who serve God have good wages'.<sup>38</sup>

Paul had assured the Corinthians, back in verse 10, that in his own case, *God's grace* had not been 'in vain', because he had laboured and toiled to the point of weariness. Now he assures the Corinthians that such *labour* itself is not 'in vain', because another world awaits the Christian. We live *in* the present but ought not to live *for* the present.

And, in the light of that world, the apostle says, we should be:

(i) Steadfast (a word derived from that for 'a seat'), requiring us to be of settled and fixed purpose in the face of any enticements to evil.

(ii) Immovable, so as not to be turned aside or shaken by any outward assault.

(iii) Always abounding, always excelling, overflowing in the work of the Lord.<sup>39</sup>

Such labour, Paul insists, is not wasted. It is not as if you are going to die, he is saying, and never live again. Your work and labour for the Lord is far from futile.

In his commentary on 2 Corinthians, Warren Wiersbe tells of a faithful missionary couple who returned to the United States on the same ship that brought the then-President, Mr. 'Teddy' Roosevelt, home from a safari in Africa.

Many reporters and photographers lined the New York dockside, waiting to see the President and interview him, and, of course, take lots of pictures. But nobody turned up to welcome the veteran missionaries who had spent their lives serving the Lord in Africa.

That evening in a modest hotel room the couple reviewed the events of the day. The husband tended to be somewhat bitter. 'It isn't fair', he complained to his wife. 'Mr. Roosevelt comes home from a hunting trip, and the whole country is out to meet him. We get home after years of service, and nobody is there to greet us'.

His wife had the perfect answer: 'Honey, we aren't home yet'.<sup>40</sup>

The writer to the Hebrews would have agreed wholeheartedly with that missionary lady; '**God is not unjust to forget your work**'.<sup>41</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 50-58 (The New King James Version).

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 32.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Compare its use in 1 Cor. 7. 29.

<sup>5</sup> 1 John 3. 2.

<sup>6</sup> I once came across the words of verse 51, 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed', printed on a birth congratulation card! My memory of nights when my children were very young endorses the application of the text to such nocturnal events!

<sup>7</sup> 'In the New Testament it ['mystery': *μυστήριον*] denotes, not the mysterious (as with the English word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit', W. E. VINE, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, article 'Mystery'. See also P. T. O'BRIEN, *IVP Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, article 'Mystery', pp. 621-623.

<sup>8</sup> F. W. GROSHEIDE, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, pg. 392. Compare the comment of GUNDRY, 'In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verses 13-18 Paul is concerned to show that deceased believers will be at no disadvantage. Here he's concerned that living believers will be at no disadvantage' R. H. GUNDRY, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation*, pg. 685..

<sup>9</sup> Compare, 'He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of man had risen from [ἐκ, 'out of', 'from among'] the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from [ἐκ] the dead meant', Mark 9. 9-10.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thess. 4. 17.

<sup>11</sup> JOHN GILL, *Exposition of the Bible*, note on 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 52.

<sup>12</sup> A. T. ROBERTSON, *Word Pictures on the New Testament*, note on 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 52.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Greek word ῥιπή refers to a very rapid movement. This has traditionally been translated as "twinkling," which implies an exceedingly fast – almost instantaneous – movement of the eyes, but this could be confusing to the modern reader since twinkling in modern English often suggests a faint, flashing light. In conjunction with the genitive ὀφθαλμοῦ ("of an eye"), "blinking" is the best English equivalent, although it does not convey the exact speed implicit in the Greek term', *NET Bible*, note to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 51-52.

<sup>14</sup> 'The English equivalent would be "in a split second"', GORDON D. FEE, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pg. 886.

<sup>15</sup> 'The Roman army used three trumpet calls in breaking camp. First the trumpet blew loud and continuous for a few moments, which meant, "Strike your tents, pack your baggage, secure the animals". The second trumpet was to assemble the companies, battalions, in formation and await the last trumpet. The last trumpet was simply "March". The argument would run thus: Paul was among Roman soldiers at different times ... and had no doubt often heard the Three Trumpets sounding', HOMER W. HODGE, *Introduction to The Ineffable Glory*, by E. M. BOUNDS; accessible at: [https://hopefaithprayer.com/books/The\\_ineffable\\_glory\\_EM\\_Bounds.pdf](https://hopefaithprayer.com/books/The_ineffable_glory_EM_Bounds.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> And what a glorious prospect that is, that we shall meet the Lord personally!

<sup>17</sup> Phil. 3. 21.

<sup>18</sup> 2 Pet. 3. 9, 15.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Pet. 3. 20.

<sup>20</sup> The fifth verse of the hymn, 'It is well with my soul', HORATIO G. SPAFFORD, 1873.

<sup>21</sup> And we remember that Paul had spent some time making tents at Corinth, Acts 18. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Rom. 8. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Compare Paul's similar use of the word in 2 Corinthians: 'we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life', 2 Cor. 5. 4.

<sup>24</sup> 'That which the prophet predicted shall come to pass—the *swamping of death* in victory', BRUCE WINTER, *New Bible Commentary*, IVP, note on verse 54.

<sup>25</sup> Gen. 3. 19; cf. Gen. 2. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Hos. 13. 14. This text 'is part of a prophecy of judgment upon Ephraim, v. 12. Four rhetorical questions appear ... The first two expect a negative answer: "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death?" Paul quotes the last two, which act as a summons to personified Death and Sheol: "O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?" ... The Masoretic Text, LXX, and Paul's citation exhibit various differences ... Interpreting the passage from the perspective of the resurrection of Christ, Paul turns the summons to death into a taunt. The rhetorical questions now sneer defiantly at death's impotence in the face of God's powerful act of mercy and forgiveness in Christ. If in Hosea death is called on to punish sin, Paul shows that such a role is no longer needed ... Paul turns a text about judgment into one declaring salvation', G. K. BEALE and D. A. CARSON, *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, pg. 748.

<sup>27</sup> Following the rendering in the English Standard Version; cf. the Revised Version.

<sup>28</sup> It denotes a goad in Acts chapter 26 verse 14.

<sup>29</sup> See its use in Revelation chapter 9 verse 10, 'They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails'.

<sup>30</sup> 'Jesus has Himself absorbed the sting on the basis of how His death and resurrection addresses the problem of human sin and the law (vv. 55-57)', ANTHONY C. THISELTON, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians (The New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, pg. 1300.

<sup>31</sup> See also the expression 'not being myself under the law' in the older manuscripts of 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 20.

<sup>32</sup> Rom. 7. 8, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Rom. 7. 5, 7, 9-10.

<sup>34</sup> Rom. 7. 24.

<sup>35</sup> Rom. 7. 25.

<sup>36</sup> 1 Cor. 16. 22 lit. See K. G. KUHN, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, pp. 466-472; J. L. WU, *IVP Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Liturgical Elements, 5. 3 'Maranatha'; and J. N. BIRDSALL, *IVP New Bible Dictionary*, article 'Maranatha'.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 9a-15; 4. 5.

<sup>38</sup> MATTHEW HENRY, *Commentary on the whole Bible*, notes on verse 58.

<sup>39</sup> Contrast, 'Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord with slackness ['carelessly, negligently', KEIL and DELITZSCH]', Jer. 48. 10 ESV.

<sup>40</sup> WARREN WIERSBE, *Be Encouraged*, pg. 126.

<sup>41</sup> Heb. 6. 10.