



The last enemy

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

1 Corinthians 15:26

Every one of our children is born into a war. The labour room of every hospital is a war zone, for enemies surround us! Satan and a godless society are not our friends and are not prepared to do us any favours. It could not get worse!

There is even an enemy within our own ranks: we are frequently our own worst enemies! Every day we battle the desires of our own sinful nature. If it were not for the saving work of Christ and the powerful message of victory in the blood of Jesus, we would easily succumb to disillusionment and frustration. We would put out the white flag of surrender. To our dying day it is our sinful tendency to be turncoats and to side with the enemy.

There is however, one enemy that no one really longs to meet: death. Our culture is somewhat ambivalent about death. On the one hand, death is treated as just another medical procedure. The countless aborted babies and the growing number of sick and elderly who die by euthanasia testify to this. On the other hand, our culture tries to avoid all thought of death, while youth and beauty are idolized. Many people attempt to outrun death through medical treatments, proper nutrition, dieting, and a general care for the body.

Death is the last enemy we face. For all who die without faith in Christ, death offers no hope but endless sorrow and despair. Only when our life is in Christ can we say,

“Death has been swallowed up in victory... 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.”

(1 Corinthians 15:54, 56-57)

But why do believers need to die if Christ has already gained the victory over death? In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul addresses this issue, confirming and substantiating the glorious gospel of Christ's victory over death. Jesus rose triumphant and therefore death has lost its sting!

Death is not a natural part of our existence. Death came into the world because of sin and since Christ has conquered sin, He has conquered death also. Christ Himself proclaimed, *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life”* (John 5:24).

Jesus Christ will destroy every power that rises up against Him. According to God's counsel and plan, all Christ's enemies must be brought into subjection to Him. Satan, godless men, sin, and death will all be placed under Christ's feet. And the last enemy which Christ will destroy is death. The light of the gospel pushes back the darkness of the grave!

But why is death the last enemy to be subdued? Is it because death is the last of the enemies to enter a person's life? Although this may be true, the real reason lies elsewhere. Think about it: If Christ had destroyed death right after his resurrection, He wouldn't have been able to finish his work of redemption. For it was the will of the Lord to have the message of Christ's victory preached to all nations. Death is the last enemy to be destroyed, to give Christ the opportunity to gather into one all who are chosen to everlasting life.

Notice the mercy of God: He delivers his redeemed and takes them out of this sinful life! The Lord takes his loved ones to Himself, releasing them from the body of sin. They do not have to wait until the return of his Son to be relieved from the suffering, pain, and sin of this present age. And while one person dies and passes through the gates of everlasting life, there are new children born into the covenant.

Those who die in the Lord can be assured that death is the last enemy and that it will be destroyed. On the last day the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised. Death will have no dominion over any of God's children anymore. No child of the Lord will ever die again!

As we face the struggles and battles of each day, let us be comforted. The day is coming when the last enemy will be destroyed. God will be with his people and He will wipe every tear from our eyes. On that day all God's children will rejoice together in what has been accomplished for us through Jesus Christ. He will be everything to everybody!

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