

Vicarious Sacrifice: The Sting of Death Is Sin; Keeping the Law Led Jews into Increased Sin; Ignorant of the Tenth Commandment Paul Submitted to His Lust Patters with Assumed Impunity; Once He Discovered the Commandment He Realized He Was Spiritually Dead; Victory Comes through the Work of Christ & Personal Faith in Him & His Sacrifice; Expanded Translation of 1 Cor 15:51–57; “In that Great Getting’ Up Morning”

1 Corinthians 15:55 - “O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?” (NASB)

(1) This verse is a paraphrase from:

Hosea 13:14b - O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? (NASB)

- (2) Death’s victory is permanent for the unbeliever, but for the believer it necessarily precedes the resurrection.
- (3) Consequently, death no longer is victorious over the believer. The reason it is not is the absence of its sting.
- (4) The word “sting” is the noun **κέντρον (kéntron)**: “goad.” A goad is a pointed rod used to urge on an animal.
- (5) The goad that death has in its power to control man is sin and it is sin that ultimately enables death to have its victory.

1 Corinthians 15:56 - “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; (NASB)

- (1) Death has been robbed of its sting by the work of Christ on the cross and the positive volition of the sinner to believe this is true.
- (2) The power that sin possesses is the Mosaic Law. It was designed to inform man of what God requires to have fellowship with Him.
- (3) It is the attempt to keep the Law that informs man that he does not have the wherewithal to keep it perfectly.
- (4) That realization is the intended result designed into the system to bring man to a moment of clarity and realize that he cannot rid himself of the sting of death.

- (5) It is at this point that man is drawn to the presentation of the gospel after which he has the opportunity to recognize that in his place God provided a savior.
- (6) The sin nature is the source of temptation which man is incapable of controlling volitionally.
- (7) Even when the Israelites kept the Law it did them no good since they possessed a sin nature and to which they constantly submitted to its lusts.
- (8) Human good was the only result from their keeping the Law with the exception of the fact that human good further empowered the Law in the souls of those duty bound to keep it.
- (9) For the Israelite that understood what the Law was teaching, he acquired power through knowledge of doctrine while suppressing the power of the Law.
- (10) Paul gives an entire paragraph in Romans 7 about how knowledge of the Law led him into increased acts of sin:

Romans 7:7 - To what conclusion are we forced? Is the Law sin? Emphatically not! On the contrary, I was not cognizant of the sin nature except through the Law. For instance, I did not understand the lust pattern except the Law kept on saying, "You will not lust."

v. 8 - But the sin nature, having seized the opportunity through the tenth commandment, produced in me every category of lust; for apart from the Law sin is dead [unknown].

v. 9 - Now at one time I lived apart from the Law; but when the tenth commandment came into my consciousness, sin became invigorated and I realized I was spiritually dead;

v. 10 - but that commandment, which was designed to result in life, the same was discovered by me to result in spiritual death;

v. 11 - for the sin nature, having seized the opportunity through the tenth commandment, deceived me and through the same commandment killed me.

Romans 7:12 - Therefore, as a matter of fact, the Law is holy, also the tenth commandment is perfect integrity and intrinsically good.

- (11) Paul relates his realization of how the Law was responsible for alerting him to the presence, the function, and the production of sin.
- (12) He was not even aware of the propensity of the sin nature to solicit lust from his free will. As a result, Paul felt free to do so. (Loss of morality is manifested by the loss of modesty.)
- (13) But the tenth commandment clearly identified it as sin and from this Paul realized that he was guilty of numerous violations of the commandment.
- (14) So it was the Law that made the issue clear, but in doing so, according to Paul, "it killed me."
- (15) Killed in what way? Spiritual death before God. His sin nature was the genetically formed link within his body that united his free will with sin.
- (16) Therefore, Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians that the sting of death is the sin nature. It is present in each of us and each of us is lured by its lust patterns to commit mental, verbal, and overt sins.
- (17) But having believed in Christ, the believer is able to celebrate victory over death and exclaim in triumph, "O Death, where is your victory? O Death where is your sting?"

1 Corinthians 15:56 - "The sting of death is the sin nature, and the power of the sin nature is found in the Law; (EXT)

1 Corinthians 15:57 - but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ. (NASB)

- (1) The word "thanks" is the noun **χάρις (cháris)**: "grace." Obviously we owe Him thanksgiving, but that is not the issue here.
- (2) It is through grace that we have the victory. In eternity past, God did all the work: knowing our need for victory over sin, He made it possible through resurrection by means of Jesus Christ.

- (3) God provided the perfect body in Adam and Ishah, but due to sin, “it killed them”: spiritual death.
- (4) But through procreation, a system was established through which the Savior would be brought into history to make things right again.
- (5) Through Jesus Christ it is possible for fallen mankind to place personal faith in His saving work, be delivered from the lake of fire, imputed eternal life, and resurrected from the dead.
- (6) Here is an excellent synopsis of 1 Corinthians 15:55–57:

What does Paul mean when he speaks of the κέντρον θανάτου [*kéntron thanátou*: “The sting of death” (v. 56a)]? We come closest to Paul’s meaning if, combining verse 56 with the saying, we interpret it as follows. Death rules over the race. The reality of its awful rule rests on the reality of sin. What gives death its power is sin. When sin is overcome, death is robbed of its power. Like an insect which has lost its sting, it is helpless, just as he who drives a beast is helpless without his goad. But sin is conquered by Christ. Hence Paul can cry out in triumph: “O death, where is thy sting? Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 57).¹ (pp. 667–68)

- (7) Here is the expanded translation of the passage:

1 Corinthians 15:51 - Behold, I am going to communicate to you a mystery; we will not all experience physical death, but we all will be changed,

v. 52 - in a moment, a yactosecond, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet of the Church Age; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we who remain will be changed for the better.

v. 53 - For this body of corruption must be exchanged for a body of incorruption, and this mortal body must be exchanged for immortality.

v. 54 - But when corruption will have put on incorruption, and the mortal will have put on immortality, then will come to fruition the saying [**written in Isaiah 25:8a**], “Death is annihilated by a single consummative gulp of divine victory.

¹ Lothar Schmid, “κέντρον,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:667–68.

1 Corinthians 15:55 - [Hosea 25:8] “O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?”

v. 56 - “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law;

v. 57 - but grace to God, Who gives us the victory through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (EXT)

- (8) A new body is reserved for us at the Rapture of the Church. We shall all be forever with Christ through God’s grace and the Lord’s work on the cross.
- (9) Death no longer may employ the victory of the grave over us. Its sting has been removed by grace and we are prepared to meet Him in the air on that great, getting-up morning.
- (10) Mahalia Jackson wrote a song by this title and although not biblically accurate in spots, it does tell the tale with emphasis on the Rapture of the saints:

In that Great Getting’ Up Morning

Well, in that great getting’ up morning,
God’s going up and speak to Gabriel:

“Pick up your silver trumpet;

Blow your trumpet, Gabriel!”

“Lord, how loud shall I blow it?”

“Oh, to wake the children sleepin’;

They be comin’ from every nation,

On their way to the great carnation,

Dressed in a robe so white as snow,

Singing, ‘Oh, I been redeemed.’”

In that great getting’ up morning—

Fare ye well, fare ye well—

In that great getting’ up morning—

Fare ye well, fair ye well.²

Revelation 22:20 - He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. “Come, Lord Jesus.” (NASB)

² “In that Great Getting’ Up Morning”; words and music by Mahalia Jackson. Lyrics © by Bug Music.