

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 ²⁰ ¶ But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. ²⁴ Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy *that will be destroyed is* death.

Death's Reign will End

A few weeks ago in Sutherland Springs, Texas was the worst church shooting in American History. You may have heard that there is a video of it as the church records the services. The video shows the gunman calmly entering and methodically going down the aisle shooting people in the head. Pausing to reload and then continuing. Shooting children as young as one year old with no remorse and continuing on his way, as if it was nothing. By the end, he had killed 26 people including the pastor's daughter and left 26 others wounded.

You may also have heard how Paul Ryan wrote on twitter that their hearts and prayers were with those people in Sutherland Springs. To which there was a great uproar when one Hollywood Atheist responded that if prayer did any good, then those in a church praying wouldn't have been shot dead. Today I want to address those who are broken hearted and searching for answers about why and how such a thing can happen even to those sitting in church. In so doing I also

address you for while none of us have experienced such a senseless and devastating event, we all have been and will again be heartbroken and left with questions and doubts as why things like this happen.

Christ gives us the answers to these questions and heals broken hearts and fills them with comfort in our text.

One thing that non-Christians often understand sometimes even better than Christians is that death reigns. And because they see this but don't see what Jesus is doing and has done about it they are full of hopelessness and anger and contempt for anyone who believes in Jesus. They are half right. Death does reign. God has not denied it. God has not sugarcoated it. Christ tells us of death's terrible power and effects repeatedly in our text. "By man came death" "IN Adam all die" "the last enemy that will be destroyed is death". You know what that last phrase means? It means death still reigns. Christ has not yet destroyed it. Death reigns in monstrous terrible power over this planet.

What is meant by death? Realize we are talking about far more than the heart of someone stopping beating and their flesh decaying. Although that is its most obvious and final act. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, the consequences, as God warned them, was death. In eating of that fruit, their bodies began to die and their

soul died immediately. Complete goodness and righteousness died and its effects were a shockwave to every aspect of life. Lust, envy, hate, depression, are all parts of the spiritual death to spread to all men in Adam. And do you realize what comes from lust, hate, depression, envy and all the other sinful feelings and desires of men? Genocide, rape, murder, abuse, fear and all manner of evil. And the spread of the reign of death wasn't just over the soul but over the body. Depression, misunderstanding, sickness of mind and body are part of the physical death that spread to all men in Adam.

Although we like to forget it, it is clear death reigns. Yet more so than usual it has been clear that death reigns on this planet. All the sexual abuse people have suffered. The mass shooting in Las Vegas. The shooting in a church in Texas. The terrible hurricanes this summer. Puerto Rico was hit two months ago but the terror has not stopped. At the beginning of this month only a quarter of its residence had power back.

This is exactly as our text says. In Adam, all die. This is a frequentive present. Humanity goes on and on dying. And I am not just talking about the 150,000 people that die on average every day. We hate. We hurt. We are careless and dismissive. We are selfish and

arrogant and we kill and are killed. That includes Christians sitting in churches. And children who have barely begun to life. That is all part of the reign of death. Death is the ultimate terrorist: violent, heartbreaking, senseless and chaotic. It reigns. It can strike anytime anywhere. Senselessly and randomly killing. People want answer and they can't find them in what they see and feel.

Yet I am here to declare to you there are answers. ²⁰ *But now Christ is risen from the dead,...* ²¹ *For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.* ²² *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.* Man destroyed everything, not God. It is because of man that these senseless tragic things happen. Death reigns because of man. Man should fix it. But we cannot. And so God in grace intervened by sending His own Son. That is why Jesus, God became man, had to die and rise. That He might end the rule of Death and Satan over us.

But did you notice the tenses in our verse? They are very important. They make it clear that while the reign of death is ongoing, being made alive in Christ is in the future. ²³ *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.* And *“The last enemy to be destroyed is death”*. Paul starts this section by saying Christ is risen

from the dead. That is a perfect tense. Jesus didn't rise like Lazarus to die again. Jesus rose from death to die never again. He is alive now 2000 years later. And He reigns to destroy and abolish all your enemies. He has abolished Satan's rule over you. I tell you with confidence and joy that it is already ended. Satan has no power over you. You are not his because Christ has taken away your sin and brought you to faith. You do not have to serve Satan. You won't have to suffer in Hell with Satan. But notice whose power over you is not yet completely destroyed - death. He says "in Christ" all will be made alive - freed from the reign off death. He says "and the last enemy to be destroyed is death". These things will assuredly happen but they are in the future.

But when we are broken hearted with tears in our eyes and bleeding hearts, we may cry out "why why why God. Why do you allow such things to happen. Why do you not end the reign off death now. As you freed us from our sin by your cross and freed us from unbelief by your gospel, why do you not free us from the terrible reign of death?"

Jesus gives us that answer in our text. ²³ *But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.*

²⁴ *Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.* Christ has won the war against death for Himself and for us. But battle after battle we lose. We lose daily against our sinful nature causing us to be angry and envious and jealous and lust and death reigns. We are hurt and we hurt others and death reigns. Children are shot in the head and we lose the ones we love to terrible diseases and senseless violence and death reigns. Why? Because each thing must come in order.

Not we might not find that comforting, like God is a cold uncaring accountant who has to finish one ledger before getting to us. But we should. Why does God not put an end to the reign of death now? Why didn't he put an end to it before the world wars? Why didn't He end it a thousand years ago. He has the won victory over it. Why does He not end it's cruel senselessness? Because Jesus is waiting for the end then He will hand the Kingdom over to God the Father. What kingdom is that? It is the full number of believers. Jesus is not idle. Jesus is bringing as many souls as He can as fast as He can into His kingdom to free them eternally from the reign of sin and death. He brings them into this kingdom by the Gospel. And He is doing this as fast as He can working by grace and not force for He will

not force people into His kingdom.

Then comes the end. When the full number of the saints has come in, then comes the end. When Jesus will deliver us all, us and all believers, His greatest accomplishment and greatest joy, a people redeemed to Himself, a people freed from Satan to His Father and then God will bring an end to all powers besides His own and the last one which He shall destroy is death.

See by faith, Christ ruling over death. Jesus has not ended death's power and reign over this world here for 2000 years that you might be created and saved and brought into His Kingdom, you and countless others. Was all the heartbreak and pain and death, the babies that have died, the fathers not coming home from war, the diseases that have taken mother, has all the death that has overflowed over the last 2 millennia been worth it so that so that God might create and bring you and countless others to faith and at last into heaven? We should each one of us confess I am not worth it. But know by faith to our eternal joy that Jesus love for you says you are. The reason Jesus hasn't ended the reign of death isn't apathy or not having the power to do so. The reason is grace. And knowing that and knowing that death's reign will end and knowing that while it lasts God uses death

reign to bring people to Him fills us with comfort and confident hope even living under death.

And when the full number of saints is brought in then even death's reign will end. God granted the Apostle John a vision of that day. **Revelation 6:10-11** ¹⁰ *And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"* ¹¹ *Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.* **Revelation 7:9-10** *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,* ¹⁰ *and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

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