

Anyone who knows me, knows that I'm a sports fan and there is no team that I root harder for than the Clemson Tigers. Both of my sisters are alums as well as two brothers-in-law. My father worked there, my grandmother worked there, and I worked there. It is a mere 14 miles from my parent's house. I once had a shirt signed by many members of the 1981 National Championship team. I met the coach of that team, Danny Ford, in a local convenience store as a kid. My blood runs orange.

If you attended church the last two times the Tigers won the National Championship you would know how big a fan I am. This outfit is the one I wore this year. Two years ago I was so desperate to represent my team that I wore a pair of ladies, purple slacks. As soon as the game was over this year I ordered these pants. I then picked up the phone and called my sister and placed my order for gear I wanted. I have a Clemson putter grip and golf towel. I mark my golf balls with little Tiger paws. This week, in our Easter box sent by my mother I received these two magazines commemorating the championship.

Why? Because that's what we do when our team wins. We break out all of our fan gear and proudly wear it. We want everyone to know that we are fans of the Champs. We all want to be associated with a winner and we will go to absurd lengths to show how devoted we are to "our" team.

So let me ask you, "Why then do we live as closet Christians?" Sure we may wear a cross or stick an ichthys on our car. We may even get a tattoo or give biblical names to our children. But we live each day, secretly celebrating the triumph we have through Jesus instead of boldly proclaiming, "I'm a child of God, a brother or sister of the risen Lord, and a temple of the Holy Spirit." It brings to mind Jesus words from Mark 8:38: For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Maybe one of the reasons we fail to promote our relationship with the Lord is that we have forgotten that we are the victors through Jesus. In our modern day, Christians have taken a lot of losses. Prayer and the Bible have been removed from schools. The Ten Commandments have been taken out of courthouses. Nativity scenes can no longer be displayed on public property and "Merry Christmas" has been replaced with "Happy Holidays."

So this morning, I want to remind you of something you may have forgotten (or maybe something you just take for granted). When we place our God given faith in Jesus Christ and surrender control of our lives to him, WE WIN! And not only do we win in this life, but because of the resurrection we win when this life is over.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

I. We Are Victorious

A. **Victory over the Corruptible**

1. Everlasting body
  - a) Our present bodies are corrupted by sin
    - (1) We bear the consequences of being fallen in a fallen world
      - (a) Our bodies wear out and die as a result of being corrupted by our sin
    - (2) The death of our current bodies takes time
  - b) Our promised bodies will be incorruptible
    - (1) We will benefit from Christ's resurrection with a new body
      - (a) Our bodies will not age or suffer because they will not be corrupted by sin
    - (2) The birth of our new bodies will be instantaneous

B. **Victory over the Coffin**

1. Everlasting life
  - a) Realization of a promise
    - (1) The Lord has promised everlasting life to those who confess and believe but that promise cannot be fully realized until we receive our new bodies

C. **Victory through Christ**

1. Everlasting victory
  - a) Examine the tense
    - (1) "Gives" not "gave" or "will give"
    - (2) Denotes ongoing continuous action
  - b) Exhortation to live victoriously
    - (1) Remain firmly positioned in the Lord
      - (a) Don't be lured into compromise or doubt
    - (2) Remember, we are victors not victims
      - (a) Even in when persecution, especially in persecution, we identify with the one who has secured our victory
  - c) Encouragement of pending victories
    - (1) Rewards await
      - (a) Everlasting life with an everlasting body in the presence of the eternal and holy God
      - (b) God's approval

This is a picture of my favorite athlete of all time, Steve Yzerman, holding the greatest trophy in all of sports. What makes the Stanley Cup so wonderful is not that it is the oldest or biggest of all the sports trophies. It's not even the fact that members of the winning team get to take the trophy wherever they want and do whatever they want with it for one day. No, what makes it the greatest trophy is the fact that anyone who has won the trophy has their name engraved on the trophy. Members of championship teams are "immortalized."

The greatest thing Jesus has done for all who believe in him is that he writes the names of those people in what is called the Lambs Book of Life. It is a list of all the people throughout time who will one day receive an incorruptible body with which to enjoy the remainder of eternity in heaven.

Is your name in that book this morning? If so, you have reason to celebrate and you have the responsibility of serving. We should do both boldly. We should not be ashamed to display our loyalty to the one who died for our sins and defeated death so that we might have a new life now and a new body for the life that is to come.

If your name is not in that book this morning, I invite you to join the winning team. You can come confess and repent of your sins and surrender your life to Christ during our closing song. We would love to celebrate with you as you become one of the victorious.