

1 Corinthians 15:55

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Analysis

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον; ποῦ σου, ᾗδη, τὸ νῖκος;)—Paul quotes Hosea 13:14, transforming it from threat to taunt. The word kentron (κέντρον, "sting, goad") refers to a scorpion's or insect's venomous stinger—death's power to kill. The word nikos (νῖκος, "victory") in manuscripts varies with Hadēs (ᾗδης, "grave, realm of the dead") or thanatos (θάνατος, "death").

This is resurrection's triumphant cry—death's sting is removed, the grave has no victory. The rhetorical questions expect answer: "Nowhere! Death has lost its power!" This isn't denial of death's reality but proclamation of its defeat. Christians die, but death no longer has dominion (Romans 6:9). Resurrection neutralizes death's venom. The grave cannot hold believers—Christ has conquered it.

Historical Context

Hosea 13:14 in context is threat against rebellious Israel: "O death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?"—God summons death as judgment. Paul reinterprets it as taunt against defeated death. This illustrates apostolic hermeneutic—Old Testament texts fulfill in Christ in ways original context didn't envision. Christ's resurrection transforms God's threats into promises.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does turning Hosea's threat into taunt demonstrate resurrection's transformative power?
2. What is death's 'sting' that has been removed—why is death no longer fatal for believers?
3. How should Christians 'taunt' death—what does bold confidence in resurrection look like practically?

Interlinear Text

ποῦ	σου	θάνατε	τὸ	κέντρον	ποῦ	σου	ἄδη,	τὸ
where	is thy	O death	G3588	sting	where	is thy	O grave	G3588
G4226	G4675	G2288		G2759	G4226	G4675	G86	

νῖκος
victory
G3534

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 13:14 (Parallel theme): I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Psalms 89:48 (Parallel theme): What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

Acts 2:27 (Parallel theme): Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Romans 5:14 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Acts 9:5 (Parallel theme): And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Ecclesiastes 8:8 (Parallel theme): There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

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