An Overview of Resurrection Truth

1 Corinthians 15:1-58 - John MacArthur

Take your Bible and turn to the fifteenth chapter of *1 Corinthians...1 Corinthians chapter 15*. We're going to go back to our study of *Corinthians* this morning, we've been studying *1 Corinthians* for a couple of years and we have been having a great time as we've been going through it. We finished the fourteenth chapter some months ago and we branched out in to some other subjects that we talked about and now we get back to the fall time, we're going to come back to chapter 15. Now I'm not going to really begin a careful verse-by-verse exposition of the fifteenth chapter until next week when, hopefully, everyone is back and ready to go again. But what I want to do this morning is give you an overview of the whole fifteenth chapter. This is a chapter with 58 verses and it's going to take us a while to get through it paragraph by paragraph, and so I thought it would be more beneficial for you if before we tear it apart in paragraphs, we just got the whole sweep of the chapter. And that's what I want you to see this morning. It isn't perhaps going to be anything revolutionary or brand new for you, but I want you to see the flow of Paul's argument in the fifteenth chapter and how critical it is that we understand the reality and the hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the cornerstone of Christian theology and so it demands a careful look.

This is the greatest chapter in the Bible on the theme of resurrection and so it's well worth our while to get the whole sweep of it. And then we'll go back, starting next week, and go paragraph by paragraph to dig out the depths of the treasury of this chapter. Job asked the question, *"If a man dies, shall he live again?* But Job isn't the only one that asked that question. I would venture to say that every human being with a functioning brain who ever lived has asked the question about immortality. Is there life after death? Now there may be people who don't believe there is, but at least they've grappled with the question.

In the city of Corinth there had arisen some people who had denied the resurrection. If you look at the twelfth verse you'll find the problem that keyed the writing of the chapter. It says, *"If Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"* It is apparent then that in the city of Corinth there were some people denying the resurrection, and perhaps they were even located within the congregation of the Corinthian church. For the most part, as we have seen, the errors of the Corinthian church were practical errors. They were errors of behavior. But in this chapter we come to the one major doctrinal error and that is this issue of resurrection. Some of them were denying the resurrection. Well that has such incredible results and ramifications that Paul must deal very sternly with such an error. To deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ is to destroy the entire basis of the Christian faith. The Christian faith is not based primarily on the teachings of Jesus. It is not based on the life of Jesus. It is not based upon the compassion of Jesus. It is not based upon the miracles of Jesus. It is not even based on the death of Jesus. The Christian faith is based on all of those things culminating in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And if you don't have the resurrection, you have just destroyed all those other things. And Paul realizes this and so the longest chapter in the book is devoted to the error of saying there is no resurrection. He approaches it carefully here.

Now all throughout the history of mankind, the interrogation about life after death has found its way into society. Every man, every society, every religion, every system has always had to deal with this reality. For example, you can go through all of the world's religions and you'll find the idea of immortality there. The hymns of ancient Babylon, the hymns of ancient Assyria, their religious epics

deal with issue of immortality and the future life. Some of the oldest literature in the world would be the Egyptian Book of the Dead and much of the Egyptian Book of the Dead centers around immortality. If you know anything about Egyptian culture or about the pyramids or about any of the tombs and graves and burial processes of Egypt, you know that this was a major concern.

They believed, the Egyptians did, that the soul could not enjoy immortality unless the body was preserved and so they mummified people who were worthy of immortality. Recently in the city of Chicago, King Tut was on display. King Tut is very old, thousands of years old and yet he is preserved. I will never forget being in Cairo in the Cairo Museum and looking down about one foot from my nose to the nose of a Pharaoh who was alive when Moses lived and he still had hair on his head because of the tremendous way in which the Egyptians could mummify. The huge pyramids and the rock hewn tombs in the land of the Nile, the careful embalming of the dead show that they had a great hope for immortality. In fact, they would usually bury with their dead a copy of the Book of the Dead in order that they might have a chart to find their way through the course of the afterlife. When they found the tomb of Pharaoh Keops (?) they found what they also found in other tombs, they found a solar boat by which he was going to be able to float his way through the uncharted heavens.

In India, the records of Hinduism and Brahmanism as described in the Rig-veda, detail immortality. Buddhism which later developed out of that initial Hinduism introduced the idea of the trans-migration of souls in the afterlife. In Persia, Zoroastrianism set forth an afterlife involving a dualism. In the ancient Greek religion, for example, there were beliefs in many gods and in a future life with those gods. In fact, in many Greek corpses they would place a coin between the teeth so that the dead person would have the fare to pay his way across the mystic river...whatever the mystic river is. In Rome they worshiped Jupiter and Minerva and they looked forward to the shadowy world of the dead. In China and Japan, belief in immortality took the form of ancestor worship. In the American Indian culture, very frequently an Indian was buried with his bow and his arrow and very often his pony so that he could have all of those things when he got to the Happy Hunting Ground.

You see it has always made a big difference with man that there is more to life than just here. Man has never been content to assume that he's nothing but a gleam of consciousness between two dead ends, that he is protoplasm waiting to become manure. Man has always longed to be something far beyond that.

My dad used to tell the story of the little blind boy who flew a kite and somebody said, "Well you can't see your kite, how do you know it's there?" He said, "I can feel the tug of the string in my hand." And so it is with man. He may not understand immortality and he may have no idea what's out there but there's a tug in his soul that says there's something there. Gene Charles Brown of Yale University said there are three things I could never believe. One, that God would create a world like ours and turn His back on it. Two, that He would create man and then desert him at the grave. Three, that He would plant a desire for immortality in the heart of man and not fulfill it. And so man has always longed for immortality. Man has always chased immortality. Man has always tried to define immortality. It's there. He feels the tug in his soul. And the Word of God confirms this consciousness of man. The Word of God confirms this innate understanding of man because repeatedly the Bible discusses life after death. The Bible says there is an afterlife for every soul, either in eternal hell or in eternal heaven, so says *Matthew 25:46*. Jesus says in *John 5* that *some shall be raised to the resurrection of damnation and some shall be raised to the resurrection of life*. There is eternal life and there is eternal death. There is eternal hell and there is eternal heaven. Life after death is a reality. The Bible is clear about that.

Now pursuing the positive side of life after death, we come to *1 Corinthians chapter 15* which details for us the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and what it means to those whose faith

is in Christ. Some time on another occasion we'll talk about the negative aspect of resurrection, the resurrection on the damnation in hell. But for this time, *1 Corinthians 15* is concerned with the importance of the fact that Jesus rose and that because He lives, ye shall live also. That's Paul's theme. He is going to take on the deniers of the resurrection and show why there is evidence and why it is necessary that we believe Jesus died and rose again and we shall live as well in resurrection life. By the way, this is the theme of most of apostolic preaching. The resurrection is mentioned a hundred and four times in the New Testament, it is the most profound and prominent point in all of the apostolic preaching of the *book of Acts*. From the very beginning in *Acts chapter 1* when Judas had done what he did and had taken his own life and the ranks of the disciples were to be filled up with a twelfth member, when the decision was to be made, it was stated that the criteria was *Acts 1:21 and 22*, that he be a witness with us of the resurrection. Why? Because that was to be the key proclamation item of apostolic ministry. And so that was to be a characteristic of anyone to fulfill the role of an Apostle.

The first sermon Peter ever preached was the great liberating sermon that freed so many thousands of people from their sin on the day of Pentecost was a sermon built around the resurrection. "*This Jesus hath God raised up of whom we are all witnesses,"* said Peter. And later in the *book of Acts* when the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, it says, *"With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."* The central doctrine of Paul on Mars Hill in *Acts 17* was the resurrection. In *Acts 26* when the Jews caught Paul and attempted to take his life, he received help from God and then he preached the resurrection. And so the resurrection is foundational. Without the resurrection the death of Jesus Christ becomes the heroic death of a misguided martyr, or the pathetic death of a deranged madman or the execution of a fraud. And none of those things is going to do anything to help us. But with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, His death becomes a significant atoning death which pays the price for sin and frees those of faith to eternal life.

And so, we as Christians gather around the resurrection. It is the core of our faith. You cannot be a Christian and not believe in the resurrection. In *Romans 10:9 and 10* it says, *"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in thine heart that...*what?*...God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."* Salvation is predicated on that belief in the resurrection. So when you hear somebody who doesn't know whether they believe in the resurrection, you know you've just met somebody who is not saved no matter what they claim.

Now let's look at the fifteenth chapter and I'm going to break it down into eight sections. We're going to cover the whole chapter, believe it or not. We're going to cover 58 verses this morning fast. Get comfortable. Get your Bible on your lap and follow along. This is a tremendous statement on the resurrection. There are eight separate sections and I'll just give them as we go.

Number one, the evidence of resurrection. Paul begins this counter-attack on the heresy that had come into the Corinthian situation by a statement of the evidence of resurrection. And he picks basically three areas of evidence. Area number one is the church. Area number two is the Old Testament. And area number three are the personal witnesses. So here comes substantiation for the resurrection.

First of all, the church in verses 1 and 2, watch as we read. *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you which also ye have received and which ye stand by which also ye are saved if you keep in memory what I preached unto you unless you have believed in vain."*

Now what he is saying is this, watch, unless you are a spiritual fake, unless you have not had genuine faith, unless you have just sort of made a tacit grab on this and let go of it *which indicates it was never genuine.* In other words, if you're a true believer, if you are truly one holding to the faith, then what has been preached to you, you have received, you have been saved by and you stand upon. This is the basic

indication that you are the church. If you are a true believer, then the gospel which I preach unto you, you are holding to, you are receiving, you are standing on and you are saved.

Now you say, "What's the point?" The point is this, he is identifying them as the church born from the gospel. In other words, he says, you people who have heard the message of the resurrection, who have stood on that message and have been saved by that message are proof number one that that message is true. You know, the very fact that Grace Community Church exists on Roscoe Boulevard in Panorama City this half, Sun Valley that half, North Hollywood that quarter, and Van Nuys that quarter, the very fact that we're here in this spot, the very fact that you're here, the very fact that every group of believers across the face of the earth meets together in the name of Jesus Christ is evidence that He's alive. Do you understand that? He says the fact that you received it, you stood on it, you were saved by it and you exist today holding to it is indicative that Jesus Christ is alive and is building His church. That's His first proof, that's the evidence of the resurrection...the church.

Secondly, he says the second evidence of the resurrection is the Old Testament Scripture, verse 3, *"For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received that Christ died for our sins...*what?*...according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."* Now the Scriptures that he has in mind are the Old Testament Scriptures. He is saying the second reason to believe in the resurrection is because it is prophesied in the Old Testament. The Old Testament, verse 3, indicated that Jesus would die for our sins, that Messiah would die in our place. Where? *Psalm 22* for one place, described in detail the crucifixion. *Isaiah chapter 53* for another describes the crucifixion. And every sacrificial lamb in the Old Testament is a picture of the death of Christ. And the serpent lifted in the wilderness is a picture of Christ being lifted up and that the look to Him can cure sin. There is a Scripture loaded with prophecy of the death of Jesus Christ and that Scripture is the Old Testament. And then in verse 4 he says, *"And the resurrection is there as well." Psalm 16:10* says, *"Thou wilt not let Thine Holy One see corruption."* The prophecy was that the Holy One of God would never decay in the grave, and He didn't. That's prophecy. And even the third day is prophesied in picture, or in type and Jesus picked it up when He said, *"As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the earth."* And so the prophecies of the Old Testament are evidence of the resurrection, so the church and the Old Testament.

And thirdly, he says the eye witnesses, verse 5, *"And that He was seen of Peter and then of the Twelve, and after that He was seen of about 500 brethren at once of whom the greater part remained to this present hour, but some have died. And after that He was seen of James, then of all the Apostles. And last of all, He was seen of me as one born out of due time,"* a sort of miscarriage, a sort of a Johnny-come-lately. He says, Look, there are plenty of people who will give testimony of the resurrection. There is Peter and there were 500 brethren at one time. They couldn't have had a common hallucination. And then there were the Apostles on a couple of occasions. And then there was James. And then there was me, and he throws himself in there because he's kind of a different character. He says, *"For I am the least of the Apostles that I'm not fit to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the church of God."* In other words, his argument runs like this, these people all saw Jesus Christ after He had risen from the dead. And somebody is going to say, "Yeah, sure, they loved Him and this was on their minds and they wanted to see Him so desperately that they manufactured a hallucination. And they thought they saw Him because they were so eager to see Him." And Paul says, "*Well what about me? I was on my way to Damascus to kill Christians when I saw Him."* That's a little different. *"I was one who saw Him born out of due time.* And it isn't that I wanted to see Him and it isn't that I was looking for hallucinations, and I wasn't fantasizing. In fact, in my case...verse 10...*but by the grace of God I am what I am. And His grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain, even though I came late and even though I wasn't willing,*

once He got a hold of me with His grace, I labored more abundantly than the others did. And it wasn't really me, it was the grace of God ...or them, we all preach and we all believe the same resurrection." See his point? Sure they were sympathetic. I was non-sympathetic and we all agree on the same resurrection, eye witnesses.

The evidence of the resurrection comes from the church, comes from the Old Testament, comes from the eye witnesses. Second paragraph begins in verse 12 and discusses the importance of the resurrection. How important is it that Jesus rises from the dead? That's what Paul wants to say. Some of these people in the Corinthian church were saying, "Well, there's no resurrection." And apparently they're going on about church business, can you imagine that? If I were to announce to you some morning...Folks, I just want you to know that there will be no resurrection. Jesus did not rise from the dead. I've reexamined the Scriptures, it was a hoax. You will not rise, death is the end of it. But be here next week for a wonderful Bible study on how to live a righteous life.

You'd say, "Who cares? Let me out of here. I'm not going to waste my time here if I don't have any more motivation than just this life." Well that's what Paul wants to hit in verses 12 to 20, the importance of the resurrection. The critics come along in verse 12 and they say there's no resurrection. He says, "*Now if Christ be preached and He rose from the dead, how come some among you are saying there's no resurrection?"* You know what that means? Have you considered the ramifications of that? Have you considered the consequences of that? Listen to this. If there's no resurrection of the dead, if these critics are right and there are plenty of them today who are saying the same thing. If there's no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen? All right*? If there's no resurrection, number one point, Christ didn't rise. Now if Christ didn't rise,* verse 14, *then our preaching is useless and your faith is just as useless.* In other words, all preachers are useless and everybody's faith is useless. Forget it. There's nothing there, folks. We just go into the pine box, they shut the lid, the lights go out forever. That's it. Christ didn't rise. Our preaching is a lie. Our faith is ridiculous. Verse 15, *"Yes, even we are found false witnesses of God."* We're shooting off a lot of boloney because we've been testifying of God that He raised up Christ whom He raised not up if so be that the dead rise not.

In other words, Paul really tackles these critics and he says, "They're right and we're all wrong. Every preacher is a liar. God is a mocker. Faith is stupid. The message is pointless if Christ doesn't rise and He can't rise if there's no such thing as resurrection."

This is not a minor detail, folks, do you understand that? This is a major element. And let me tell you, *if the dead rise not*, verse 16, *then Christ is not raised and if Christ is not raised, your faith is useless*...and here's the worst part...*you are yet in your*...what?...*sin*. Now do you see the point? The point is this, if Christ doesn't rise from the dead then that means sin conquered Him, right? Because He bore our sins in His own body and that's what killed Christ, He died bearing our sin. And if He never rose, then sin killed Him and He couldn't conquer it. Do you understand that? And that means He didn't conquer sin and if He didn't conquer sin, we are in trouble because it will kill us too, and we're all damned to hell.

So when somebody trickles along with a philosophical argument that there's no resurrection, says Paul, the ramifications are stupendous. God is a mocker, every preacher is a liar, all of our faith is useless, every message is pointless and we're all in our sins and damned to hell. That's the end of everything. Verse 18, *"Even those folks who have already died in Christ are really in hell, they're perished, they're damned, they're doomed."* And you know what? All we've got left if there's no resurrection is the here and now, right? That's it. Here we are, folks. And...verse 19 says...*in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men*...what?...*most miserable. If all Christ can do for me is something in the here and now and nothing in the afterlife, forget it...forget it*. Who needs it? I can do for myself what I want. I'll become a Hedonist. I'll become a practical existentialist. Why should I bother?

And so what he's saying here is, you can't just dismiss the resurrection as a philosophical discussion. If you dismiss the resurrection, you have just pulled the very heart out of Christianity, you've killed it...you've killed it because it is the resurrection that gives meaning and importance to everything... so, the evidence of resurrection and the importance of it.

Then he turns the corner and gives us what I call the sequence of resurrection in verse 20 to 28, watch. First word of verse 20, what is it? *"But..."* aren't you glad for that word? *"But now is Christ risen from the dead."* He is risen. That is a fact. The evidence supports it as given in the first eleven verses. And here comes the sequence of how it works. *"He has become the first fruits of them that slept."*

Firstfruits is a great concept. I was talking to a farmer, my wife's uncle back in the Midwest in Nebraska, and I asked him, "How long does it take you?" because I wanted to know from the standpoint of the concept of firstfruits in the Bible, I said, "How long does it take you to sow a quarter of land?"

"Well," he says, "with really good equipment, you can sow the whole thing in about two days."

So I thought to myself, "Well that's great. With a $50 thousand machine and all that apparatus, they can scatter that seed pretty fast." Well what would it be like if you had a handful in a pouch and you were walking down a road and you tried to do it? Take a little longer. And then you make sure it was covered up, take a little longer. And because of that, it was very common that when a field came in, if it was, say, grain, it wouldn't come in like this, it would come in like this... Whatever was sown first would come in first, given equal treatment by the weather and the rain and so forth, so that the firstfruits would not necessarily be coming in at the same with the rest of the crop. And when God said to the people, "I want the firstfruits," He was really telling them to stick their neck out a little bit.

Because He was telling them whatever comes in first, you gather up and give to Me and then trust Me to bring the rest of the crop in. And if you were a purely pragmatic farmer, you might say, "Hey, God, I'll be happy to wait until the whole deal comes in and if there's any left, I'll give it to You. But to give You the Firstfruits...I mean, that's the part I know came in." See. "I don't know about the rest." That's just the part God wanted because that's how you live by faith and God says if you'll bring Me that part, I'll fill your barns. That's...that's...that's a principle for giving that we have experienced. If you'll give God the top of what you have, then He'll bring the rest in. That's living by faith. So that's the concept of firstfruits.

Let me tell you a little bit how this works. The feast of Passover had many significant aspects, but one of them was that it occurred at the time of the barley crop. The law laid down some principles in *Leviticus 23:10,11* about this. It said, *"You shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest and he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah to be accepted for you and on the marrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it."* All right, after the barley crop, you're to bring in the firstfruits, the sheaf of grain. The sheaves of barley were then given to the priests. They were to be reaped from a common field. This wasn't to be some special little garden you planted for God, this was to be right out of the common field. You were to believe God by faith for what you had planted for your own sustenance, not some little special thing that you weren't going to use anyway. And if it didn't come in, too bad, God, Yours didn't come in, mine did. No. It was to come out of the common field. And when it was cut down, it was brought in a sheaf, wrapped up, to the temple. There given to the priests and the priests would thresh it very carefully so as not to bruise it. And then they would put it in a perforated pan and they would put it over the fire and it would scorch every single grain, every grain touched by the fire. It was then thrown to the wind and the chaff was blown away, the grain wasn't put in the ground but in a barley mill and ground into flour and the flour was given to the priests. The priests dedicated it, then they made bread and they ate it. That's the process. And it was a sign of

the food and the bread that would come and the feast that would come when the full harvest came in. But the first went to God.

Well, Paul says, Christ is like that. Christ was the first out of the grave, the firstfruits. He was the one who had to have His life cut off like the grain and offered to God and burned in the fire of death. And then He was made fit to be the bread of life. And He is nothing more in this sense what Paul is saying here, then the gilt-edge guarantee that you will rise again. You are the harvest of which Christ is the firstfruits. It's a great thought. And so he says He's the firstfruits. Now he goes through the sequence in verse 21. *"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead, for as in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* In other words, Adam is the one who introduced death. He was the firstfruits of death. Who's the first one into whomever entered the principle of dying? Adam. *"In the day that thou eateth, God said*...what?...*you shall surely die."* The seeds of death were planted first in Adam, in Adam and Eve. The seeds of life, resurrection life first planted in Jesus Christ. That's the message here.

And the order comes in verse 23, "*Every man in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, after were they that were coming."* When do we get to be resurrected? At His...what?...coming...at His coming. And he says further, if you want to know what will happen, *"Christ rises from the dead. At His coming you rise*, then cometh the telos, the completion, the final thing, *when He shall delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when He hath put all...put down all rule and authority and power, for He must reign till He's put all enemies under His feet."* Paul gets in to the end time, he says there's coming a day when the harvest will come. We'll all be resurrected and then the end will come and we'll be gathered together, the great harvest in the Kingdom. The whole resurrection will take place. Christ will receive the authority. He will subdue all the enemies. And verse 26 says, "*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is...what?...death, for He*...that is God the Father...*hath put all things under His feet*, that is Christ's feet, *when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is accepted who put all things under Him.* Now that's a little confusing. What it simply means is this, in that day when the harvest is gathered, it will all be given to Christ. And the Father, verse 27, will give all things to Christ except Himself. In other words, He will not be made subject to Christ, but everything else will. Verse 28, *"And when all things will be subdued to Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto the Father that put all things under Him that God may be all in all."*

Now we'll get into that in detail, but let me give you the picture. Adam came and the seeds of death were planted. Every individual born into this world is born with a ticker ticking down to count-down zero when he dies. We all have the seeds of death. Christ comes, rises from the dead, starts the new resurrection potential. And those who are in Christ will be resurrected. When? At His coming when the harvest is gathered, the Kingdom will be His, He will take the Kingdom and subdue everything in the universe to Himself, except the Father. And when He has subdued everything, He will take it, including Himself, and He will give it to the Father who created it and the cycle will be complete. That's the sequence of resurrection. Everything is going to come back to the Father and God will be all in all. And so, the Apostle Paul laid it out for us very clearly the sequence of the resurrection.

Fourthly, we've seen the evidence, the importance, the sequence, now I want to show you the value of the resurrection. And this builds on what we saw as the importance of the resurrection, verse 29. Verse 29 says, and I'm not going to discuss this verse yet, we'll do that in a few weeks, but let me read it to you, *"Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"* Now you'll immediately say, "What in the world does it mean to be baptized for the dead?" Well we'll get into that. There are 40 different views of what that means.

Verse 30, and he says, *"Let me tell you another problem. Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"* At the end of verse 31 he says, "*I die daily. What kind of an idiot am I? If there's no resurrection why*

am I dying every day? What am I doing with my life standing in jeopardy every hour? Why am I putting my neck on the line? Why am I sacrificing my life for this thing if there's no resurrection? I've got to be stupid."

That's a point. Verse 32, *"If humanly*...that's what after the manner of man means...if humanly I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me if the dead rise not?" Why should I sweat this thing? Why should I whack away and fight my life away against evil and against sin? And why should I fight beasts at Ephesus?

Now I don't know what that meant specifically, there's a lot of conjecture, we'll get into that. But he says, why should I make my life so difficult and so hard and so...so threatening and so much in jeopardy and dying every day, every day if there's no resurrection? You know what I should do?

The end of verse 32, *"I should eat and drink for tomorrow I die."* I think I'll just be a Hedonist. I think I'll just kiss it off, burn my Bible, chuck it and live it up. I'll grab for all the gusto I can get. Let the chips fall where they may. I'm going to die. It will be over. So live it up.

He's right. Don't you see if there's no resurrection, everything is lost. All morality is gone. All justice is gone. All ethics are gone. Everything is gone. And we might as well eat and drink because tomorrow we die. Grab it while you can, baby, it's all you got.

Well he says in verse 33, *"Don't be deceived. Evil company corrupts good morals, awake to righteousness and sin not for some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame."* You know what he's saying? There's some people in your congregation who are denying the resurrection and they are living immoral, evil lives. You better separate yourselves from them because there is a resurrection and there will be a righteous reckoning. That's the essence of what he's saying. You better wake up to the fact that there is a righteous standard and you better not run around with people who don't believe there's a resurrection, or you'll wind up doing what they do because evil company corrupts good morals. You know, what you believe has great ramifications on how you behave, doesn't it? There are many people, you see, who want to live an evil life and so they simply tell themselves there's no consequence. They convince themselves there's no God, there's no resurrection. You see, atheism isn't an astute person coming to an astute conclusion, it's an evil man who is a vile sinner wanting to eliminate God so there are no consequence to his sin. That's different. So he says, "Look, the value of the resurrection is this, no resurrection, no morality. No resurrection, no ethics. No resurrection, no righteousness. No nothing. We might as well all run around and do just exactly whatever the flesh tells us to do and live it up if there's no resurrection. But there is a resurrection.

There's another question that comes up and that is leading us to the fifth point in the chapter, the body of the resurrection. He's talked about the evidence of resurrection and he gave you some solid evidence. He talked about the importance of resurrection, that the whole of Christianity is wasted without it. The sequence of resurrection, Christ and then us at His coming and then the Kingdom. The value of resurrection, it is the only thing that gives a moral standard to anybody in this world. And now the body of resurrection because somebody will say, verse 35, *"How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"* Some wise guy comes along and says, "Oh, that's real good, Paul. Well why don't you tell me how they'll be raised up, I've seen some dead folks. After a while you couldn't do it. There's nothing there. They knew that *'Dust thou art and to dust thou doest return.'"* That was a mocking thing and so they said, *"Some of you are saying with what body do they come?"* In verse 36 Paul says, *"Stupid, fool, that which you sow is not made alive except it dies."* Stupid, you ought to know a principle you use every day when you farm. *"That which you sow*... verse 37... *you sow not that body that shall be but a bare grain. It may chance of wheat or of some other grain but God gives it a body as it has pleased Him and to every seed its own body. He says you ought to know yourself that you sow a seed in the ground, the seed dies, corrupts, decays, decomposes*

and out of it comes something else. That's a good illustration, Paul. What kind of body is it? Well you can't know what kind of body it is because it's unlike the one you have. He says, but you know as a farmer you sow a seed...have you ever just...you know, gotten packages of seeds, you can't tell anything by looking at a seed unless you're a specialist at that. You know, if a person just gave you a handful of seed with no designation, you wouldn't know what you had. You could take a little tiny seed, throw it in the ground and 400 years later you'd have a 100-foot high Redwood. You could take a seed that looked very much like that seed, throw it in the same pile of dirt and two days later you'd have a weed. Because the seed itself dies, decomposes but out of it comes something that only God can design, the connection between the seed and that thing. You know, there's absolutely no resemblance between the seed that is planted that comes out as a baby and what that baby looks like, no connection. You could never have known that had you not known medical science and the reality of it just by looking at that microscopic little seed. But, you see, that's the business God is in. And for every seed that falls and dies and fades away, springs new life. And only God knows what that life is like. And listen, we'll never be able to describe it because we have to die to see God do it. So in this life we'll never know.

So what kind of body? Paul says I don't know, but I know this, this one's going to die and when it dies and decomposes, out of it will spring something that only God will know and it will be different because they're all different. Verse 39, "*All flesh is not the same flesh,*" this is because of the operation of amino acids, we'll get into that when we study the paragraph. *There's one kind of flesh of man, another flesh of beast, another of fish, another of birds, there are celestial bodies, terrestrial bodies and the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another. In other words, everything is different...birds, and beasts, and men, heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, and there's a glory of the sun and the moon and the stars and one star differs from another star and glory, so in the resurrection of the dead.* In other words, it's going to be a body we don't know anything about. It's going to be one we've never seen before. It's going to be one we don't understand until we die. God is going to make it such a unique one.

But he says, "*Let me give you four characteristics of it."* These are great, four characteristics. Characteristic number one, it is an incorruptible body. That's a great place to start. It says in verse 41...pardon me, verse 42, "*It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption."* It will never die. It will never decay. It will never grow old. It's going to be different, incorruptible. You say, "Well then it won't be like ours." That's right, it won't be, it will be incorruptible. And you are corruptible, did you know that? Your body is in the process of decay. You want to know what you are? The constituent parts of a man would be equal to 1200 eggs, iron enough to make two ten-penny nails, phosphorus to make 4,000 matches, fat to make 75 candles...or more, one cake of soap, enough hydrogen to fill a balloon, 60 spoonfuls of salt, a bowl of sugar and six gallons of water... that's you. Charles Mayo of the Mayo Clinic says you have enough lime to whitewash a chicken coop, magnesium enough to make a dose of magnesia, potassium enough to explode a toy cannon, sulphur enough to rid a dog of fleas, that's you. But some day you're going to be incorruptible.

Secondly, he said it's not only an incorruptible body, it's a glorified one. In other words, it's not earthy, it's something beyond that. Verse 43, *"Its sown in dishonor, its raised in glory."* A glorified body, something beyond what we can imagine.

Thirdly he says it's a powerful body. Verse 43 at the end, *"It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power."* Some kind of power beyond what we can understand.

Fourth, spiritual body. Forty-four says *it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body*. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.

So here is this marvelous, unique, incorruptible, glorified, powerful, spiritual body that can only be born out of the death of the old body, like a seed falling into the ground and dies brings forth grain, according to God's design. He says this is God's plan for the body designed in resurrection.

And then he goes on to appeal to Scripture to show this. Verse 45, *"So it's written*...he says in *Genesis 2:7...man became a living soul."* He says *the first man, Adam, made a living soul, the last Adam made a life-giving spirit. "However that was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural and afterward that which is spiritual."* In other words, first we were Adamic, first we were earthy, first we were human. And Christ came along and He's the one that provides a different body. *The first man is of the earth, earthy,* 47 says. *The second man is the Lord from heaven. "And is the earthy, that is Adam, such are they also that are earthy. Our first body is like Adam. And as is the heavenly, such also that are heavenly." Our first body is like Adam, our second body is like*..who's? *Christ, for we shall see Him as He is, 1 John 3:2. And verse 49,* what a great statement, *"And as we have born the image of the earthy,"* we're all Adamic with flesh and blood, corruption, as we are born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Someday we'll be like Christ. And it has to be, beloved. We have to have a body like Christ, we have to because verse 50, *"This I say, brothers, flesh and blood could never inherit the Kingdom of God."* We can't go into the Kingdom with corruptible bodies, he says, so we've got to get bodies like Christ, the body of resurrection. We're going to go into that in greater detail when we get to it.

So Paul says the evidence of resurrection, the importance, the sequence, the value of the body. You say, "Boy, this is so exciting, I'd like to have this happen right now. How do you get it? When does it happen?" The moment of resurrection...the next point, the moment of resurrection, verse 51. *"Behold I show you a mystery,"* well there it is, folks, you can't know when, it's a mystery. "*We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed."* Now that's the motto we have in our nursery, but that's not the proper...that is not the proper interpretation of the verse. Now you'll never know the proper interpretation because you'll have that in your head all the time, anyway. We shall not all sleep means that every believer will not die, but every believer will be...what?...changed. Why? Because we can't go into the Kingdom unless we're changed. We can't live with God in an incorruptible dominion unless we have incorruptible bodies. We can't live in a glorified realm without a glorified body. We can't express the power of God that He wants without a powerful body. We can't be in a spiritual realm without a spiritual body. And so we must be changed.

You say, "But how*?" "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed for this corruptible must put on incorruptible, this mortal must put on immortality."*

There's coming a day when in a moment we shall be changed and we know when it is, it is Christ first and then we who remain at His coming. When Jesus comes to Rapture His church, that's the moment we're changed. New bodies come out of the graves like the grain that grows from the decomposed seed, we that are alive and remain are changed to meet...as we meet the Lord in the air. It's coming when Jesus comes. Read *1 Thessalonians 4:13* that describes the Rapture. That's the moment when we'll be changed and Jesus could come any time.

So we see the moment of resurrection. The body of resurrection, the value of it, the sequence, the importance, the evidence, now watch verses 54 to 57, the victory of resurrection. You know because we know this, people, it really gives us a sense of victory, doesn't it? What do we have to fear? Man, it's exciting to think about. Verse 54, *"So when this corruptible puts on incorruption and when this mortal shall have put on immortality,"* when we experience this moment of transformation, when it happens, *"then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'"* And when it happens, you know what we're all going to say, *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"* We're going to conquer death, right out the other side.

You know, when you throw a seed into the ground you don't say, "Oh, isn't it sad, poor little seed." No. You say, "Wait till the flower comes." The reason for the seed's existence is to produce the flower. We don't say, "Oh, isn't it sad, a Christian died." That's not really sad because that Christian like every Christian someday will experience the fullness of resurrection life and a new glorified body and cry with the rest of the redeemed, *"O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"* The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the Law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Christ came along and removed the sting from death and death is impotent for the Christian. Death is powerless. And so the victory is ours.

You know, without that victory life is miserable. I remember reading through the Middle Ages, I wasn't reading through the Middle Ages, I was reading...I was reading a writer commenting on times in the Middle Ages and discussing some of the heartless tyranny and the torture instruments used against men. And he was writing about one method used by the Hohenstaufen family to put their victims to death. They put them in a room that looked like a comfortable room and in a few days the victim realized the walls were growing smaller. The walls were fitted into grooves that were oiled and silently moved closer and closer together and finally crushed the life out of the victim. And I thought to myself, that's not unlike a person who has no hope after life...and after death. To have nothing in the future would be to be slowly crushed by the meaninglessness of life. This is the man with no hope, crushed in a Christless death.

But there's an alternative. There's a way to face death with great victory and great joy and to cry out, *"O death, where is thy sting?"* So Paul lays out for us the reality of the resurrection. And then he closes with the last statement that I call the practicality of resurrection.

You say, "Is this just pie in the sky, John? Is this just hope for tomorrow?" No, there's a great practicality here, verse 58, *"Therefore*," and the therefore is there for the purpose of building on what has been said for 57 verses, *"since all of this is true about resurrection, my beloved brethren, don't get shook. Be steadfast, unmovable."* In other words, stand on it, friends, don't fear death, don't worry about the future. Don't get rattled. Have confidence. Boy, that's great.

And a second thing. "*Set yourself to be always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as you know that your labor is not useless in the Lord."* He says, number one-stand firm, and number two-get busy because Jesus is coming with His reward to reward those who faithfully served Him. Boy, let's lay up our treasure...where?...in heaven. The practicality of the resurrection, beloved brethren, is this, number one, it gives us great confidence. It causes us to stand sure and steadfast. And number two, it points us in the direction of laboring for the eternal thing, not the thing of time.

I hope your life is being invested in what matters forever. The reality of the resurrection. You know that reality in your life? You do if you know Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Thank You, Father, for our time this morning, good time sharing together, good time of fellowship, a rich time in the Word. And thank You so much that Jesus rose and because He lives, we who believe in Him shall live also. May that resurrection life have far-reaching implication in our life here so that we are steadfast, unmovable and always abounding, going overboard in the work of the Lord because we know some day He'll reward us for that. Thank You for our fellowship this morning. And I pray that if there's anyone in this congregation who has not yet known what it is to have this hope, that this might be the day they give themselves to Jesus Christ, that they might confess with their mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead and be saved and be a part of this company of people who for all these centuries have hoped in the resurrection promise because of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.