Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Abolishing Death: The Ultimate Triumph
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:54-58
Code: 1203

Turn in the your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, as we look at our lesson for this morning from the Word of God. When you have arrived at that point, just hold your thumb in that area or something to mark verse 54, where we shall consider our text in a few moments. There is a preacher of the old school, but he speaks about as boldly as ever today. He's not very popular, even though the world is his parish, and he travels to every part of the globe, and he speaks in every language. He visits the poor. He visits the rich. He preaches to people of every religion, and he preaches to many of no religion. And the subject of his sermon is always the same. It never changes. He is an eloquent preacher, and he is able to stir emotions in hearts that are not emotional. He is able to bring tears to eyes that seldom weep. His arguments are beyond refutation. There is no heart that remains untouched and unmoved by the force of his appeals. This preacher shatters life. This preacher disturbs the status quo. Most people hate him. Everybody listens to him. His name is death. Every tombstone is his pulpit. Every newspaper prints his text. And one day you will be the subject of his sermon, and he will stand at your graveside and preach to others...

With this in mind, Thomas Gray said, "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, and all that beauty, all that wealth ere gave, await alike the inevitable hour, the paths of glory lead but to the grave." With every living soul that comes into this world, there is a built-in little time fuse, and we all have one. And when we're born, it's lit, and it begins to burn. And some burn fast and some burn slow, but all burn. And every birth signals the beginning of a countdown, and every countdown zeroes on an exit. And some countdowns are long and some are short...

And so life is just the process of dying. And yet men shrug off their indifference, and they yawn in God's face while their fuse burns and their countdown continues. And to many men, life may seem like a dead end street. And at the end of that dead end street is the inevitable pine box, and that's about all they have to look forward to...The day when the fuse burns out, the day when the hearse arrives and somebody has reached zero hour. And then what? What after that? I mean is there a hope? Is there an escape from doom? Is there something that has power over death, or does death grab us and hold us?

One night, many years ago, and you all remember it very well, in the Atlantic, there was a very serious, grim countdown. The countdown began for some people who were on a ship called the Titanic, and a huge question mark still hangs over the spot where the Titanic sank. Many people met their countdown then. Life zeroes in on an exit...And I've often looked at the story of the Titanic and

asked myself, "Was that the sinking of the world in metaphor?"...Because many people reached their zero hour that night, reached their dead end voluntarily, refusing with scorn the lifeboats that left the ship half filled, thinking that ship couldn't sink. Soon their scorn turned to terror...

Is the earth nothing but a larger Titanic with people scorning the way of escape and someday finding their scorn turned into terror? Are men today submitting to a dead end voluntarily? Each of us has a fixed rendezvous with death. It's lonely. We're the only one there. And today was borrowed time, and tomorrow is borrowed time, and time is always borrowed...And the countdown goes on, and maybe the countdown to you is almost audible...

Is there an escape? Is there a freedom? Is death the final disaster? Has anyone conquered death? Is there any way to go into death and come out the other side? Is there any possibility of beating it?...Has anyone ever shown power over death? And if they have, have they made it possible for me to have victory?

The answer to that question lies in the resurrection of Jesus Christ...You see, somebody did have power over death. In Revelation 1:18, Jesus Christ said this. Listen and don't ever forget it. He said, "I am He that was dead and am alive forever more." Somebody has beaten death. Somebody has gone into the grave and out the other side. And that brings me to my second question. Has He made a way for me to do it? And the answer is yes. Jesus said in John 14:19, "Because I live...what?...ye shall live also." That answers my question. Somebody beat death, and that somebody made it possible for me to beat it, and to escape into an eternal, glorious life with Him.

Jesus Christ turned death, the ultimate tragedy, into the ultimate triumph. And for anyone who knows and loves Jesus Christ and accepts His death and resurrection, for themselves, that same triumph belongs to them. I fear no death. Death, for me, will be an escape into the presence of Jesus Christ, the greatest possible joy I could imagine in the universe...because Christ made the way. He was the first fruits, and I'm following, and so are all those who love Him...

This is the thought that Paul expands in 1 Corinthians 15:54 to 58. In this passage, Paul changes character. See, Paul is the epitome of logic. Everything comes cranking out of Paul's brain in just exactly the right fashion. And it all fits together and slots together like a well-oiled machine. He's very logical, very prosaic, and very defined. And all of a sudden, Paul blows his whole cool right here. And he stops his logical process, and his soul explodes all over this page. And what is normally logic breaks into rhetoric. And what is normally prose breaks into poetry...and all you see here is Paul, the emotional...and he begins to cry out of the victory that he has over death.

Now, for the first 53 verses of this chapter, long chapter, for the first 53 verses, he has been majoring on the resurrection. He has been majoring on the resurrection from the dead from two standpoints. First Christ's and then ours. Now, notice Christ's resurrection and what he says in verse 3 of chapter

15. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Paul says, "Christ rose." Now, he's been talking about the resurrection of Christ in this chapter. You can jump over to verse...20, verse 20, and he's still talking about Christ's resurrection. "But now is Christ risen from the dead." And so he's been majoring on the resurrection of Christ. All through this chapter, he's concerned with the resurrection of Christ.

But he is also concerned with the resurrection of those who are Christ's. Those who know and love Christ. And that comes to fore in verse 23. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." And so he's been talking about the resurrection of those of us who belong to Christ. And it's gonna be some resurrection. Look at verse 42. "So also is the resurrection of the dead...watch all the changes that take place...it is sown in corruption; raised in incorruption." This is the transfer between death and life. "Sown, we die in dishonor; we raise in glory. We die in weakness; we raise in power. We die a natural body; we raise a spiritual body." An so the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the one who is in Christ and belongs to Christ are Paul's themes in this chapter.

Now, having shown us that Christ's resurrection secures ours, and death is a final triumph, not a final disaster, having shown us that, we come to verses 54 and through verse 58. At the end of the chapter, he stops his logical process and just lets out with a...with a paean of praise that perhaps has few equals in the Bible. Praising God for this resurrection, both of Christ and of us who are Christ's. And I want you see four aspects of Paul's praise. The great transformation, the great triumph, the great thanksgiving, and the great therefore. The great transformation, the great triumph, the great thanksgiving, and the great therefore. Four things, and we'll understand this passage when we know these four things.

First of all, notice the great transformation that takes place in the life of a human being who knows Christ. Verse 54, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption...that's quite a transformation...when this mortal shall have put on immortality...another fantastic truth of our transformation, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" Paul says, "There is coming a transformation." We're gonna be changed. Something's gonna happen to redo us. You see, our earthly state is corrupt, mortal. We're susceptible to disease. We're susceptible to injury. We're susceptible to death. Indeed, it's inevitable. We are victims of our mortality. In fact, Paul, in another place, calls our bodies...listen to this...bodies of humiliation.

We are victims in this world of the process of decay. We are victims of deterioration. And you know it. And the older you get, the more stark it becomes. You discover all kinds of new deteriorating things...More wrinkles, gray hairs, the inability to do what you used to be able to do, all of this. And we make light of it, and we kid about it, and we say, "Life begins at 40," and a lot of other lies like that...We are, and get it, we are in the process of dying...You see, we live a dying life. We just keep

decaying until, finally, the final decay and we're gone.

But Paul says, "That's okay. Doesn't matter, because there's gonna be a transformation take place. You're gonna become incorruptible. That is no more decay, no more dying. You're gonna become immortal." And, of course, Revelation 21 says, "When that happens, death shall be no more." No more sorrow, no more pain, no more sickness, no more death. That's a great transformation. God's gonna take this corruptible me, this mortal me, and reverse it and make me something that I never was. Because I belong to Christ, because I am His, incorruption and immortality shall be mine.

I want you to look at two words in this verse. You know, when we study the Bible, we look at the big, long words and the big, significant names, and we think about those things as the important things. This verse is keyed on two little, tiny adverbs. When and then. Two keys to verse 54. Second word, when, and down in the middle, then. When and then give you the interpretation of this verse. You say, "How?" Well, I'm here to help you to see how.

Now, look at when. Now, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptive...incorruption, and when...implied... this mortal shall have put on immortality...then shall be brought to pass the saying, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" Now when? You know what that tells me? That tells me not yet. I'm waiting for something in the future. When I become incorruptible, I'm not yet, needless to say. When I become immortal. I'm not yet. When is very important. That tells me, now watch it, that tells me that my resurrection is a future event. Future event.

Now take Christ's resurrection. It's a past event, right? Happened 2,000 years ago. He rose from the dead. He came out of the grave. Did He have a different body when He came out of the grave? He sure did. He had the kind of a body that was very different. Not only did he have hands and legs and arms and all of the things that make up a human body and scars, nail prints in His hand, not only that, not only did He eat, He actually ate with His disciples. But beyond that, He walked through a wall. And if you know anything about science, you know how very simple that is. Because, after all, most things are total space anyway, aren't they? With just a few molecules running around. All you have to do is rearrange the molecules in your body. Go right through. Nothing to it.

Christ had a different body. It was a body that had characteristics of human body, and yet it was a glorified body that could walk through a wall. And when it got ready to leave, it just left. And He ascended. That's what a glorified body's like. And Christ received His when He rose. And I will receive mine, and you will receive yours when...that's the word, isn't it? When you rise. See, it sounds good. When do I rise? Look at verse 51. "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep." That is they'll...some...there'll be some peoples who will never die. In other words, those Christians that are alive when Christ returns for the church, they're not gonna die. "But we shall be changed." You say, "Someday I'm gonna be changed? What's gonna happen?" Verse 52, "How long is it gonna take to change me?" "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...when?...at the last trumpet. For the trumpet

shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Do you know when I get my glorified body? You know when I have my resurrection? That is if I die, unless I'm still around when Christ comes. At the Rapture of the church, when Christ comes to catch away His church. And all those people that have died, their bodies are gonna be resurrected. Now, remember this, if you're a believer and you would die today, you're a Christian. Your spirit would go to be with Christ. Absent from the body, what? Present with the Lord. But your body goes into the grave. When Christ comes, your body comes out of the grave.

You say, "Wait a minute, if He doesn't come pretty soon, I'm not gonna be any body to come outta that grave." And you're right. That's no problem. You're gonna get a new body. Not gonna do a thing with the old one. But when Jesus Christ comes for His church, all over this world, there are gonna be glorified bodies coming out of the grave. How are they gonna get out? No problem. Christ's body went through a wall. Nothing to go through the lid of a coffin and a little dirt. Glorified bodies coming out of those graves to join the spirits that have been with Christ, and then we which are alive and remain should be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. That's resurrection day. That's the real Easter for us.

When Jesus Christ comes back, we're gonna go. You say, "What's my body gonna be like? Is it gonna be different than the one I've got now?" Hopefully...Why, of course, it's gonna be different. You say, "What will it be like?" I'll tell you what it'll be like. Now watch this..."Beloved," John said, 1 John 3:3, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be...we don't know yet, but watch this. Well, this is good..."We know that, when He shall appear...when He comes to get us...we shall be...what?... like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

You wanna know what your glorified body's gonna be like? It's gonna be just like the body of Jesus Christ when he came outta the grave...Fantastic thought. When you die as a believer, your spirit goes to be with Christ, but you await the day when Christ comes for His church and your new, glorified body meets your already redeemed and glorified soul, and you go to be with Christ.

You say, "Well, how does it happen?" Very simply, 1 Thessalonians tells us that the angel shouts and the trump blows. It says right here, "The last trump, and the dead in Christ rise," and the rest of us get gathered up, if you're still alive and you haven't died yet. Your body gets changed on the way up. You say, "Well, uh, when is this gonna happen?" Well, the Bible says there's...we don't know the day or the hour, but we believe it's very soon. If you've been coming to this church for any length of time, you know how much we talk about this. Jesus Christ is coming back very soon. Sometimes it almost seems like you can hear His foot...footsteps, 'cause He's coming. The Bible says that in the end time, just around the time that Christ comes, things are gonna happen in the world, and we keep seeing all these things starting to happen. Israel's re-gathered, all the lines are forming for the battle of Armageddon, all the things that are going on in the world, the Bible says that Russia will come

against Israel in the end time. It's going on now. Egypt will fight against Israel in the end time. The kings of the east will come with 200 million against Israel, 200 million in an army? The Red Guard now numbers 200 million. The Euphrates River will be dried up. Two years ago, the Russians started a seven-year project to dam up the Euphrates River. The characteristic of the end times will be lawlessness. What more significant word could characterize our day?

All of these things tell us that Jesus is coming. It's not gonna be long before we're gonna get those glorified bodies. It may be that we'll...we might be the ones that will just be changed on the way up. Yeah, Jesus Christ not only conquered death, He made a way for me to conquer it. And so says Paul, "This corruptible is gonna be...become incorruptible. It's gonna happen when Jesus Christ comes back." What a transformation. What a change. For love...for those that love Jesus Christ, someday corruption will stop and a new body, eternal, incorruptible will be ours, and no more dying, and no more sickness and no more pain. And then, now watch that second word, then...shall we be able to say death is swallowed up in victory. Not now.

Listen, death still has a sting now, doesn't it? You had somebody die in your family, it stings...Death still hurts. But someday it won't. Someday death will die...That will be the hour when death ends. You know, death ended when Jesus rose, didn't it, for Him. Remember what Paul said in Romans 6? Listen, he said this, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead...now watch this...dies no more." Why? Because death has no more dominion over Him. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." Once, and that's it. It is appointed onto men how times they die. Once to die. Once to die. That's all. Once. When you die, it's death's tough luck that you rose from the dead...

And that's what Christ did. Death could not hold Him, and He went into the grave and out the other side. And someday our bodies are gonna die, perhaps. My body may die, but death isn't gonna hold my body. Because when Jesus comes back, He's gonna rip the shackles of death off my body and liberate a glorified body, resurrected to be with Him forever...And there will be no more death. "Death is the final enemy to be destroyed," Paul says right here in 1 Corinthians 15.

So we wait for that day. It already happened for Christ. He'll never die again. We're waiting for the time when our physical body dies and we are raised to glorification. Then, and only then, will the full meaning of the statement, "Death is swallowed up in victory," have significance. You say, "Well, why does Paul say it now?" Well, you can kinda glory in what's gonna happen in the future, can't you? I mean isn't it really true that sometimes the anticipation is just as good as what happens? And Paul knows that death has a sting. But, at the same time, and I'm sure Paul realized some pain when the guy in...in Rome put his head on the block and that ax head came down and cut it off his body...but that was a small thing. Small thing when he lived in anticipation of the resurrection...

Someday the sting and the power of death are gonna be removed, and death is gonna be broken, and all of those who are Christ's are gonna be liberated from death in glorified bodies. Paul says, "I

live in that hope. When and then...but I'm sure enjoying it now." So we see the great transformation that happens to those who love Christ.

Secondly, look at the great triumph. Verse 55 and 56. Then he...he just kinda...he projects himself into the future here. He says, "O death, where is thy sing? O grave, where is thy victory? Death, you've had it. You're a conquered enemy. Christ beat you and made a way for me to do it. I have to wait a while, but that's all right. It's secure. Death, where is your sting?" In glorious anticipation of the when and then, Paul cries out that the sting of death is removed, and the grave is unlocked. What a victory.

Now, lemme give you this thought. Paul is expressing a present attitude about a future event in anticipation of that event. In other words, what is mine in reality in the future is mine now in the promise. Do you see that? What I will someday inherit...in reality, I now enjoy by way of promise...I don't know how that affects you, but it affects me amazingly. I have all kinds of crazy thoughts like that. The other night, we were playing basketball, and I twisted my ankle. I thought to myself, "Well, that's no big thing. In my glorified body, I won't have that problem." And, you know, to just live in the...in the sense and the awareness that someday all the promise is coming true...really changes your attitude toward living in this present age. That's what Paul is saying. He says, "When I project myself into the future, death has lost its sting."...

And then in verse 56, he says, "The sting of death is sin... You see, sin is what brings death...and the strength of sin is the law." The law is what spells out sin, and sin brings death. Notice those three things, because we have three enemies. Three enemies that...that wanna slay us. Did you know that? The law wants to slay us. Sin wants to slay us. And death wants to slay us. You see, the law says, "You break me, and you die." Sin says, "You commit me, and you die." Death says, "You die." All three of those enemies wanna kill us.

Fortunately, I've already taken care of two of 'em. Two of 'em have already slew me and I rose. Two down and one to go. You say, "What are you talking about?" Watch this. My first enemy is the law. The law said, "All right, here are God's standards right here. Line 'em all up. You break those, and you die, because God is holy, and if you don't keep God's holy law, that's it." You know what I did? I didn't keep God's holy law, so you know what happened to me? I died. Did you know that I've already died?...You say, "When did you die?" Nineteen-sixty I died. "You did?" Right. "How?" Well, I invited Jesus Christ to come into my life. "What does that mean?" Listen, Paul said, "When I invite Christ into my life...listen to this...I am crucified...what?...with Christ. I died."

You see, the law said, "You have to die for sin." So Christ gathered up all my sin and died in my place. And I literally died in Him. So you wanna know what? The law's taken care of. It's the law's tough luck that I rose from the dead. And that's why Paul says in Romans 6:14, "The law hath no more dominion over you. You're not under law...what?...you're under grace." I already paid...the law

required death. I died in Christ.

The second enemy is sin. Sin says, "I demand death." I say, "Okay, sin, so I died." "When did you die?" Paul says in Romans 6:14, "Because you were crucified with Christ, sin has no more dominion over you." Sin said, "You have to die." I died in Christ. That took care of sin. So my two enemies are gone. I died to the law when Christ came into my life and bore my death. I died to sin, my sin killed Christ, didn't it? He bore my sin. That was the death that my sin required. So the law is taken care of. Sin is taken care of. I've only got one enemy to go, and that's death itself...

And you know something? Someday I'm gonna even die to death, because even if I die and death gets a few licks in, if I die physically, I'm coming right back outta that grave...In fact, it's only by body that'll be there anyway. So if I die in the next couple of years, don't make a lot to do about my body. Just have a thanksgiving service, 'cause I'll be floating around in Heaven loving every second of it. And just waiting till my body gets reconnected with me...

I've only got one enemy to put down, and you wanna know? That enemy is a defeated enemy. Christ defeated him at the cross and in the grave. And so death is going to be destroyed. But the law was taken care of first, and sin was taken care of second, and then you have this truth in chapter 15 verse 26, after the law was taken care of and sin was taken care of, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is...what?...death." So I'm just waiting for that day to take place.

So Paul says, "The great transformation and the great triumph." Now notice the great thanksgiving in verse 57. And here, he just gets caught up in what he's saying in his praise, and he just goes over the top, and he says, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." You see, Paul knew where the source of his victory was. It was God who gave the victory and used Christ to bring it out. God worked through Christ. The source and author of the victory is God, and no power but God's power could defeat the mighty death, and...and God defeated death. And to do it He used Christ. That's what he says when he says, "He did it through Christ."

Now, I want you to see these same three things again as we look at them. The death of Christ satisfies the law's claim. Now watch this. We have three enemies, remember them? The law, sin, and death. In the case of the law, it was the death of Christ that satisfied the law's claim, right? Galatians 3:13, I think it's Galatians 3:13, says, "He has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us." In other words, what I'm trying to point out is that all of this is through Christ at the end of verse 57, "Through our Lord Jesus Christ, God did all this." He died...we died to law through Christ, right, on His death? We died to sin through Christ. We will also live through Christ in resurrection life.

We have three enemies, law, sin, and death. The law, Christ took care of, because He paid the penalty for the law, right? Sin, Christ took care of, because He paid the penalty of sin in death. And death He took care of, because He went into the grave and out the other side. So in every case, it is

true what says...what verse 57 says, look at it again. "God gave us the victory...how?...through Christ." It was Christ that took care of law. Christ took care of sin. Christ took care of death. All through Christ and, consequently, Paul says, "Thanks be to God."

You see, death has no more fear. Death has no more hold. We don't fear death. Why should we fear death? Christ has conquered death. What is death to the Christian? It's nothing but a going to be with Jesus Christ. Some wonderful people have gone on to view the Lord from our congregation this past year, and at several of their funerals, I told a little story. And I was asked to repeat it several times.

Bishop Bergeroff was once asked, he was from Norway, he was asked, "What is death like for the Christian?" And this is what he said, beautiful story. He said, "Death for the Christian is like this...he said...Once there was a peasant who had a little son, and he took his little son by the hand one day, and he said, "Son, I want you to come with me on a journey to another village. I have some business to take care of." And his son said, "I'd be happy to go, Dad." And so they went. They took off, and they came to a stream. It was running very rapidly and it was very deep. And there was a very rickety old bridge, and it didn't look like it would hold them. And it was rather insecure, and parts of it were broken out. And the little boy became very afraid, and he said, "Dad, we'll never make it across, because the bridge won't hold us." His dad said, "Don't worry, I'll hold your hand, and we'll be careful, and we'll make it.

"So he took he little fellow's hand and kinda tagged behind him. And the Bishop made his...the...the peasant made his way across the bridge, and they were safe. And they got to the other side and went to the village and finished their business. On the way home, it became dark, and the little boy began to remember the bridge and the stream. And with tears in his eyes, he looked up to his dad, and he said, "Dad, I know we won't make it. It's dark, and we can't see." And his dad, without saying a word, reached down and picked him up in his arms and, in a matter of seconds, the little boy was sound asleep in his dad's arms.

The next thing he knew, the little boy woke up, and he was lying in his own bed in his own room in his own house, and the sunlight was breaking through the window. He was home. And Bishop Bergeroff said, "You see, that's what death is. What you fear the most, you don't even experience. One day you fall asleep in the arms of Jesus, wake up, and you're home."

For the Christian, that is our hope, and someday to be rejoined by that glorified, resurrected body. What a thrilling hope. No wonder Paul says, "Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God." This world is not all, is it? This is not the end. This is only the beginning.

Now, notice the great therefore in verse 58. And, you know, it's interesting that the Bible never stops with just being doctrinal. It's always practical. You know, the Bible's not all sweet by and by. It's a lotta nasty now and now, too. And sooner or later, the Scripture pulls us back down to this earth. And it

says, "All right, now there's the truth. Now, here's what you do about it." See, so we don't all sit around gloating over the future.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye...here comes the...the commands...be ye steadfast, unmovable, always going overboard in the work of the Lord." Boy, I like people that go overboard in the work of the Lord, as opposed to people, "Could you just...I'm so busy." Go over, do too much..."For you know...what at the end of the verse... cause you know your labor's not in vain in the Lord." You're serving for a purpose.

All right, here's the therefore. "Go to it," he said, "you know Jesus Christ is coming back. You know He's gonna give you a glorified body. You know everything you do for Him is gonna be rewarded, and your labor is not in vain in the Lord. You're not just working futilely." No Christian labors in vain. Christ will reward. So he says, "When you're really live in the light of the resurrection, when you live in the light of what you're gonna be in Jesus Christ someday, get busy. It oughta change the way you are." That's exactly what John meant when he said in 1 John 3:3, "He that hath this hope in himself purifies himself." When you start to live in the light of the coming of Jesus Christ, when you start to live in the light of the day that He comes to take you to be with Him, it changes the way you operate.

"Therefore, be steadfast." What does that mean? That means you don't lose sight of your purpose. You stay right on cue, right on target as a Christian. Unmovable. You don't get distracted by the world and pushed around. You're tirelessly, faithfully working for Christ on the even keel. And you're always abounding. That means you're super-abounding, doing way more than you oughta do by all human standards. And you don't have to worry about your time being wasted. No second did you ever spend serving Jesus Christ is wasted. Never, never wasted.

But I'll tell you something. Until you get a sense of the coming of Jesus Christ, you may never get a sense of real urgency in service. Many Christians, though they know better, live as if Christ was never gonna come. They live as if there was no urgency at all. And someday, even as a believer, when Christ comes and resurrects you, and you go to be with Him, there's going to be what the Bible calls the judgment seat of Christ. And at that judgment seat, which is only Christians who have been taken in the Rapture, there gonna be a time when Christ is gonna give gifts and crowns to those who've served Him. It's kinda like a rewards banquet, the married supper of the lamb.

You know, that's a thing to think about. Someday you're gonna stand before Jesus Christ. If you've really been living in the light of His soon return and the light of your resurrection, you've been abounding in the work of the Lord. If you haven't been abounding in the work of the Lord, maybe you haven't caught the urgency of it. But you're gonna stand before the judgment seat of Christ, Christian, to receive the things done in your body, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5. Whether you've done 'em for Christ to be rewarded.

My grandfather had a poem in his Bible, and even when I was a little kid, I memorized it. And it goes like this: "When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ...and I'm talking about a Christian...and He shows me His plan for me, the plan of my life as it might have been. And I see how I blocked Him here and checked Him there and would not yield my will. Will there be grief in my Savior's eyes? Grief, though He loves me still. You see, He would have me rich, but I stand there poor, stripped of all but His grace while memory runs like a haunted thing down a path I can't retrace. And then my desolate heart will well nigh break with tears I cannot shed. I will cover my face with my empty hands. I will bow my uncrowned head...O Lord of the years that are left to me, I give them to Thy hand. Take me, break me, mold me to the pattern that Thou has planned."

Someday you're gonna stand before Jesus Christ, that blessed Christ who died and rose for you and for me. I'm gonna stand there, too. In my resurrection body, I'm gonna stand there...Am I gonna have anything to show? Paul says, "Is there a therefore in your life?" Steadfast, unmovable, abounding in the work of the Lord...

In conclusion, lemme say this. What about the person who doesn't know Christ? What about the person who doesn't love Jesus Christ? Is there a resurrection for him? What about the person who's never invited Christ into their life, who's never appropriated His death and resurrection? Is there a resurrection for that person? Wanna know the answer? Yes. You say, "You mean there's actually a resurrection even for those that don't love Christ?" Yes...say, "What's it like?" I don't know what it's like, and I don't wanna know. Because in John chapter 5 verse 29, this is what it's called. "The resurrection of damnation." I don't wanna know what that's like. But there is a resurrection for those who don't want Jesus Christ. The resurrection of damnation. You will be resurrected...At which resurrection is your choice...

Our Father, we thank You this morning for Your Word, so clear, so precise. We thank You for the truth that it conveys to our hearts. And, God, this morning, we pray with a diligence and a fervency and a passion in our hearts that no person would leave this place who does not know Jesus Christ as Savior, and who will not be a part of the resurrection unto life. God, allow no one to go from this place who does not know and love Jesus Christ. Lord, for those who are here who might not know Christ, who've never invited Christ into their lives, God, may they do that this day to be a part of the resurrection of life and not the resurrection to damnation. God, we know You died and rose again that we might live. May there be no one here so foolish as to scorn that resurrection and someday stand in terror at the edge of disaster for eternity.

So, God, we pray that Your Spirit would sweep over our hearts. Search out that one that does not know and love Christ, and may that one invite Christ to become his Lord and Savior this day. And, Father, for those of us who are Christians, for those of us who love You, God help there to be a therefore in our lives. Help us not to sit around only concerned about our doctrine. But God help us to

abound in the work of the Lord. Help us to sacrifice everything that we are and have...for faithfulness to Thee in Thy service. To be involved in loving people and sharing Christ, doing whatever ministries we are capable to do. So, God, we pray that Your Spirit would even search the hearts of those of us who love You. In Christ's name. Amen.

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