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

The Hope of the Resurrection
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1-58
Code: 1206

This morning, as we look at the Word of God in a lesson dealing with the resurrection, I'd like to ask you to turn to the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, if you will, please. Before we look specifically at the text of 1 Corinthians 15, let us consider some opening thoughts.

Job said, "If a man die, shall he live again?" No question can more seriously engage the attention of any man than that one. All throughout the history of men, continuously, that interrogation has forced its way up from the depths of every human soul. Every man poses to himself the question of immortality. From the earth's earliest morning, the thoughts of the man, which link life purely from the cradle to the grave have been rejected, and man has longed to understand the future life that is in his soul by way of anticipation. Every arch every built in the name of religion has, as its cornerstone, immortality. The hymns, for example, of ancient Babylon and Assyria - their great religious epics - bear witness to their belief in a future life.

Some of the oldest literature in the world is the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, and in that *Book of the Dead*is found a belief that immortality that is prominent and detailed. In fact, the Egyptians believe that the soul could not enjoy immortality unless the body was preserved. And so they went to tremendous lengths to preserve the body, soaking it in the chemical solution for 70 days, wrapping it carefully, that it might be preserved for its immortality. The huge pyramids and rock-hewed tombs that are discovered in the land of the Nile show the care and the great length to which they went to preserve that body. The mummy, when put into its tomb was accompanied by a copy of the *Book of the Dead*, in order that it might understand the prayer that it was to offer. It was also accompanied by a chart of the journey through the unseen world in order that it might know what direction to take. As recently as 1955, in the discovery of the great tomb of Pharaoh Keops, which undoubtedly is at least 5,000 years old, inside that tomb, they found the solar boat in which Keops was supposedly to have traveled through the uncharted, unseen world of immortality.

In India, for example, the records of Hinduism and Brahmanism, as described in the Rig-Veda, reveal a clear belief in immortality. Buddhism, which is a later development of Hinduism, introduced the idea of immortality from the concept of the transmigration of souls. In Persia, Zorastronianismset forth a dualism in eternal immortality. In the ancient Greek religions, there was a belief in many gods and to future life, and in fact, in some cases, a silver coin was placed in the mouth of the one who died in order to pay the fare across the mystic river of death. In Rome, the worshippers of Jupiter and the worshippers of Minerva looked forward to the shadowy realm of the dead. In China and Japan, belief

in immortality took the form of ancestor worship. And even the American Indians placed within the grave of the departed one his bow and his arrows and, very often, his pony in order that he might be well equipped for the happy hunting ground.

You see, it makes all the difference to the soul of man whether or not life is more than just the cradle to the grave, whether or not life is only a gleam of consciousness somewhere between birth and death or whether in fact there is something after death. And men have, since the beginning of man, longed to understand what there is out there in that immortal life. My dad used to tell the story of the little blind boy who was flying his kite, and the pastor came back and said to him, "How do you know your kite's up there? You can't see it." He replied, "I know because I can feel the tug of the string in my hand." And every man feels the tug of immortality. And though he cannot see it, and though he cannot define it, yet he senses it is there.

Dean Charles Brown of Yale University said there are three things that I could never believe. Number one, that God would create a world like ours and then turn His back on it. Number two, that He could create man and then desert him at the grave. Number three, that he would plant a desire for immortality in the human heart and fail to provide for a realization of that desire.

And the Bible promises immortality. First, there is a tragic promise that the soul that dies without a knowledge of Jesus Christ goes into an immortal and eternal hell. The one that dies with a knowledge of Jesus Christ enters into a glorious, blissful heaven where God's presence is forever and forever. In both cases, whether heaven or hell, man is immortal and lives forever. Jesus said in John chapter 5 and in verse 25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Verse 29, "And shall come forth they that have done good under the resurrection of life and they that have done evil under the resurrection of damnation." Everybody will be resurrected. Some to the resurrection of life, said Jesus, some to the resurrection of damnation. But everybody will be resurrected.

When a man dies without Jesus Christ, his soul/spirit goes into the abode of the wicked. His soul and spirit enters into the hell where God is not. And that happens at the moment that he dies. For a believer whose faith is in Jesus Christ, the moment he dies, his soul and spirit goes into the presence of Jesus Christ - "Absent from the body," said Paul, "present with the Lord. I long," said Paul, "to be not here but there with Christ," Philippians 1. So when a man dies, immediately the soul of that man either goes out of the presence of God or into the presence of God. What we are talking about in resurrection is a body that God raises from the dead to join that immortal soul. There will be a bodily resurrection, both of believers and unbelievers, in a new kind of body, to meet the soul that has already gone on to its destiny.

Now, for our study today, since the Bible says absolutely nothing about the body of a unbeliever that is resurrected...since the body of an unbeliever is never particularly detailed at all in the Scripture, we

cannot conjecture. But we do know some things about the body of a believer in the resurrection morning. And the great analysis of resurrection that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 15 really gives us about as much detail as we have, and it's exciting. Paul's chapter begins with a resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that's the ground for our resurrection. Then from there, he moves to ours. And then he closes the chapter with great cries of joy because of what he just said.

Now, by way of introduction to this chapter, let me say this - that the resurrection from the dead is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine. It is mentioned at least 104 times in the New Testament. It was and is and always will be the absolute most prominent fact in the history of the world. When the apostolic company, for example, after the apostasy of Judas, set about to choose one to take his place, the first chapter of Acts record for us that they wanted to have one, that he might be a witness with them of the resurrection. The resurrection was the great emphatic point in the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost. He said, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses." When the apostles were later filled with the Holy Spirit, the one central result was that "with great power," the Bible says, "gave the apostles witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." The central doctrine the Apostle Paul preached on Mars Hill in the city of Athens in Acts 17 to those philosophers was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Later on, when the Jews caught Paul in the temple in Acts chapter 26 and sought to kill him, he received help from God, and he preached to them the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The resurrection is everything to Christianity. The crucifixion loses its meaning without the resurrection. The life of Christ is a waste without that resurrection. Without the resurrection, the death of Christ becomes the heroic death of a noble martyr. Or it becomes the execution of a fraud. Or maybe it becomes the pathetic death of a deranged madman. But with the resurrection, it becomes the death of the atoning Son of God. You see, it wasn't His teaching, and it wasn't His miracles, and it wasn't His dying that accounted for the church and accounted for Christianity. It was His resurrection. There would be no church if He had not risen. When He died, the disciples were scattered like chaff to the wind, and it was in His resurrection that He regathered Him, and it is by His resurrection that He continues today to regather His own from all over the world. We are products, my friend, of the resurrection. And because the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so important, Paul takes this entire chapter to detail out every part of it.

Now, I want you to see six things here as we skim over the chapter: the evidence of the resurrection, the importance of the resurrection, the sequence of the resurrection, the body of the resurrection, the event of the resurrection, and the victory of the resurrection.

First of all, notice the evidence of resurrection. That's in the first part of the chapter. Now, Paul has naturally a logical mind, and he's not about to push off on somebody something that can't be verified. And so, as he begins to talk about the resurrection, he substantiates it by amassing proof that, in fact, the resurrection did happen. He gives three basic lines of proof, and they're beautiful. The first one is

the existence of the church, and I don't mean the building on the corner; I mean the body of Christ, believers. Notice verses 1 and 2: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel, which I preached unto you." And of course, it was a gospel of resurrection, wasn't it? "Which also you have received, in which you stand, by which also ye are saved."

Now, salvation cannot happen if Christ is not raised. And so Paul says the fact of salvation vindicates the resurrection. The believers who exist experiencing resurrection life are proof that He rose. The apostle Paul even said in Romans 10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believe that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt," what, "be saved." Salvation is predicated on the resurrection. And any saved individual is testimony back to the fact that He rose. Listen, I know Jesus Christ rose because I live in resurrection life. I walk in newness of life. I experience a kind of existence that I hadn't even dreamed of before I came to Jesus Christ. And I have beating within my heart the absolute certain hope that someday I shall go to be with Him in glorious eternal life. My salvation is testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If He didn't rise, He didn't get saved. But I did, so He rose. Reasoning back from the testimony of the church.

All right, then Paul gives a second line of proof. The Old Testament Scriptures validate the resurrection. Verse 3, "For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." By Scriptures, he's referring to the Old Testament. Now, Paul is saying the Old Testament prophesied and promised Jesus would die for our sins. You say, "Where's that in the Old Testament." Well, it's all over the place. Particularly, it's in Isaiah 53, where it says, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter and as a lamb before a shears is done, so He opened not His mouth." It describes His crucifixion right there in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. But even more than that, you read sometime the 22nd Psalm, and you'll read every detail of His death, written hundreds of years before He was even born. It even starts out that Psalm by saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," the very cry of Jesus on the cross. It moves on to describe a man who is parched, whose bones have become exposed, the picture of crucifixion. It even describes the mocking of the people and the spitting of the people upon Him. Every detail is right there in the 22nd Psalm. When Jesus died, He fulfilled to the very letter the Old Testament prophecy.

But more than that, perhaps, the entire Old Testament sacrificial system is a great and glorious type of Jesus Christ. Every one of the multitude of hundred thousand of lambs that were slain and goats and _____ and all the rest - every one of them was a type of Jesus Christ. Every one of them was a picture that someday the final lamb would come and shed His blood. Through the entire system in the Old Testament, Christ is presented in type and in verbal prophecy. And so, says Paul, the Old Testament promised that Jesus would come and that He would die.

And then in verse 4, he says, "And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Did you know that the Old Testament also indicates that Christ would rise from the dead? Perhaps Paul has in mind the Word of God in Psalm 16:10, where it says that He would not

leave His soul in Hades, He would not suffer His holy one to see corruption. And of course, in Acts chapter 2, that same passage is picked up again in the great sermon there in verse 31, as it says, "He, seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, neither did His flesh see corruption." Now, that tells us that that prophecy was a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's a specific prophecy. And there are others. Perhaps Isaiah 53:10 is a good illustration of the prophecy of resurrection.

And then there's the type of Jonah, of whom Jesus said in Matthew 12:40, "As Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the earth three days and three nights." Jonah was a type of Christ.

But beyond that, I think that when you begin to study the Old Testament, you see two things about the promised Messiah. Number one, it is absolutely obvious from beginning to end of the Old Testament that Messiah had to die as a sacrifice. That's everywhere. It also secondly obvious all over the Old Testament that Messiah would have an eternal kingdom. Now, if you've got a Messiah who dies, and the same Messiah has an eternal kingdom, then somewhere in the middle, there has to be a resurrection. And so the resurrection is latent in the entire volume of the Old Testament. It has to be there. For a Messiah to die and then reign forever, there must be resurrection. The Messiah then prophesied as a resurrected Messiah.

So Paul says not only is there the witness of the church, there's the witness of the Old Testament that Messiah would die and rise again. And then, thirdly, there are personal witnesses. And these are just really exciting.

Verse 5 meets the first one: "And that He was seen of Cyprus." That's just another name for Peter. He was seen of Peter. Now, why does he single Peter out? Why was it so important that Peter saw Jesus? Well, it's interesting, when you look at the Lord's attitude toward Peter in Mark chapter 16:7, the Lord says this - thisChrist has been resurrected. Listen to this, "But go your way. Tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee. There shall you see Him, as He said unto you." And over in Luke chapter 24 in verse 34, the Bible says that He talked to Simon.

Now, why did the Lord wanna go after Peter? Now, after all, it's an amazing thing that He would even care about Peter. The last time you saw Peter, He was doing something, and He did it three times. He denied Christ. And He did it with a curse on His lips. He denied He had any connection with the Galileans who followed the man Jesus. Three times he did it. And then after he got done doing that, the Bible says he went out and wept bitterly; great big old fisherman just cried his heart out. And I'm sure that Peter probably said to himself, "I'm not worthy to ever see Him again. I'm not even worthy to belong to the fellowship of The Twelve . After what I did, I'm just gonna crawl off somewhere and just die. That's the end of me. I'm not worth anything anymore. And I'm sure old Peter's heart was just broken into a million pieces. And isn't it typical of the wondrous love of Jesus Christ that the first

thing Jesus wants to do is find that erratic fisherman and set him back on his feet. After all, He's gotta have him because he's a key witness. And so what does He do? He searches out Peter.

You know, it wouldn't have been too hard to believe if Jesus hadn't even cared about Peter, would it? I mean, if it was a human analysis, we'd say to ourselves, "Boy, I'll never talk to that guy again. What a fair-weather friend. What a coward he turned out to be." And you'd not only hate him, you'd probably just figure, "That's all. I don't even wanna see him again." But not Jesus. He wanted to find that fisherman and cement His love for him and set him back on his feet. The amazing Jesus comes out of the grave, got the whole world in front of Him, all the duties of the God of the universe, and His heart is set on Peter. And He wants to comfort Peter in the pain of his shattering disloyalty.

And you see, that's the measure of divine love, isn't it? You see, love can't go any further than to think more of the heartbreak of the one who wronged it than it does of its own hurt. That was the love of Jesus. Well, finally, when He got His time with Peter - and evidently, He saw him at least a couple times, but when He got the time back in John 15, listen to what He said to him. He said, "Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" That was the right question, wasn't it? After he denied Him three times, Peter said, "Yes, Lord, You know I love You." He said, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter said, "Yes, Lord, You know I love You." Third time, He said, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" Peter said, "Yes, Lord, You know all things. You know I love You." Now, that's just like Jesus. Peter had denied Him three times, so He gave him three chances to tell Him he loved Him. And just like that cemented Peter into a relationship with Him that caused Peter to become a shattering, devastating preacher of the Gospel, who turned right around from that incident and turned to the people of Jerusalem and proclaimed to them a sermon in which 3,000 people came to Jesus Christ. You see, that's just the way the love of Jesus works. So Peter was a witness, and what a witness he would've been.

Then there's another witness group. Verse 5, "The Twelve," and also called "The Apostles" in verse 7, and several times He met with them. But it's interesting to see what happened when Jesus appeared to the apostles after His resurrection. Verse 19 of John 20: "Then the same day and evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut while the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them, 'Peace be unto you." You get the picture? The doors are all shut. All of the sudden, Jesus comes through the wall. No wonder he said, "Peace be unto you." The Bible tells us they were panicked. They thought they saw a spirit. They were in a frenzy. They didn't learn too well because over in verse 26, He came back again after eight days, and this time Thomas was there, and it says, "Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and again He said, 'Peace be unto you.' Then saith He to Thomas, 'Thomas, reach here your finger and behold my hands. And thrust out your hand and put it in my side and be not faithless but believing.'" And Thomas didn't even want to touch Him. He just cried out, "My Lord and my God." The resurrected Christ. Thomas was convinced, and so were the others. So the testimony of The Twelve. Of course, you realize they were only 11, but the group

became known as proper name, "The Twelve."

Then, in verse 6, we meet some more witnesses. "After that, He was seen of about 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present time, but some are fallen asleep," some have died. Now, I say in any court of law, 500 witnesses all agreeing to the same testimony would be fairly convincing. It's amazing how the critics have attacked these 500 witnesses. One has said, "They all had a hallucination." 500 individuals all with the same hallucination at the same point in time at the same location. Slightly difficult to believe. 500 people saw Jesus at one time.

Then I like this one. It also says in verse 7, "He was seen of James." Now, who was James. There were several James in the Bible, and evidently, from best we can tell from what's going on prior to this, this James the brother of Jesus. This is His half brother, of course, since He was virgin born. But James, like the rest of the Lord's brothers, didn't believe in Christ before His death. In fact, back in the 7th chapter of John, the Bible tells us very explicitly in verse 5 that "his brothers did not believe on Him," period. John 7:5. They didn't believe. But by the time you get to Acts chapter 1 and verse 14, you read an exciting verse. There's a prayer meeting going on prior to Pentecost, and they're continuing in prayer, and look who's there, "the women, Mary the mother of Jesus and his brethren." And by the time you get to Acts chapter 15, James has been chosen to be the head of the church in Jerusalem. Now, something happened between the 7th chapter of John and the 1st chapter of Acts. Something happened at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to convince James and the other brothers. Now, the Bible doesn't tell us what the incident was, but it says right there that evidently Jesus appeared to James. And I don't know what He said, but whatever it was, evidently James was convinced. He probably...all He had to say was, "James, it's me. It's I." Sorry about that. That'd convince me. And so He wanted to see James. Again, you see the love, don't you? Here was a brother who had not believed in Him, resented Him, but He wanted to find him out and say, "Brother, now do you believe?"

Oh, Jesus, even in...it's amazing...Jesus, even in redeeming all the saints of the ages in the tremendously cosmic act of resurrection, cared about individuals. Does that let you know how God is?

And then old Paul can't resist, and he throws himself in there in verse 8. "And last of all, He was seen of me." You can just hear Paul, "Well, of course, I was born out of due time. I came along a little late, but I saw Him." Yeah, on the road to Damascus, saw Him. And He was so brilliant when Paul saw Him it blinded him.

There's the evidence, my friend. The evidence of the church. Every saved individual today is living testimony that Jesus burst out of that grave. The Old Testament is evidence that Jesus came out of the grave. The witnesses - over 500 of them - personally saw Him. He arose. The evidence is conclusive. So we see the evidence of resurrection.

Now, the importance of it, and we'll see this very quickly. Verse 12 - and we're just gonna pick some highlights. How is it so important? Why is the resurrection important? Well, the critics jump on in verse 12, "Now, if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Now, you can just hear the critics, and Paul's already premeditated it. "Some guy's gonna come out and say, 'Oh, Paul, all that stuff about, you know, somebody's gonna rise out of the dead, that is ridiculous. I mean, a whole lot of decomposed rubbish floating up out of the ground. It doesn't make any sense at all. No bodily resurrection.'" That's the Sadducees. They didn't believe any resurrection was gonna happen. And here's the typical argument: "Why, Paul, the rock and all that stuff. It'll never come out of the ground." That's the typical criticism of resurrection.

Paul answers in verse 13, "Okay, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ didn't rise. And if you say that Christ didn't rise, then you gotta argue with all the evidence. Take your choice. Either He did rise, and therefore there is a resurrection or He didn't rise, and you're stuck with what to do with 500 plus witnesses, a saved church and the whole Old Testament." To deny the resurrection, then, would be to deny the resurrection of Christ. And that would be to be blind to the massive evidence and to shatter the hope of every man who ever breathed.

Not only that, look at verse 14, "And if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is also vain." We might as well take the whole system of Christianity, lock, stock and barrel, and can it. It's a joke. And the whole creation of the world is a sick, cruel joke by a sick, cruel God who must be up there laughing and saying, "Look at them. They think that they've found the answer," and it must be a funny, funny thing because ever preacher is a liar; morality, justice, goodness are pointless; and God's duped man into thinking that there is a resurrection, and He must be laughing His head off as He watches us stumble around in our idiocy, if there is no resurrection. It's the end for everything. It's the end of Christianity. It's the end of the Christian faith. It's the end of everything. Christianity becomes a system of good advice that turns out to be bad advice. And you might as well go out and live like you wanna live 'cause it doesn't matter anyway if Christ be not risen. If there be no resurrection, who cares?

Then he says in verse 15, "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God's. We're liars, God's liars. God's a liar and so are we because we've testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised not up if so be that the dead rise not." "Oh, Paul, how's a lot of dust coming out of the grave? How's a lot of decomposed stuff gonna get out of there? What's the point of that?" Paul says, "Well, there better be a resurrection because if there isn't one, then Christ didn't rise. And if Christ didn't rise, we're all liars, and the whole Christian faith is a joke."

But that's not how it is because He did rise. Jesus said one day to Martha...he said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And he that

liveth and believeth in Me shall," what, "never die." Paul believed it. Paul believed it, and listen to what he said: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. For am I in a straight between two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Our faith depends upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Verse 16, Paul reiterates the fact, "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised?" Our faith becomes a philosophy, a waste.

But listen, our faith is based upon a historical fact. If that fact didn't happen, then the Christian faith is annihilated. Verse 17 says that "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain. You are yet in your sins," and what Jesus said in John 8'll come true in every man's life, "You will die in your sins, and where I go, you can never come." And he repeated again in verse 24, "You will die in your sins" again. Men will die and spend forever in hell if Jesus didn't come out of that grave. You might as well slam the church doors shut and break it to the ground and turn it into anything you want. Turn it into a bar. Take your Bible and throw it into the incinerator and burn it if Christ didn't come out of the grave 'cause it doesn't matter. It's all a waste if Christ didn't rise, and everyone's who's ever named the name of Christ is duped, and every preacher who ever proclaimed His name is a liar if Christ didn't rise.

And then he says in verse 18, "Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Every man who ever died hoping in Christ is damned forever. And God is laughing at a colossal joke. And we are, in verse 19, "of all men most miserable because we have hope only in this world and none there." Is that how it is? Either Jesus arose, or He's the biggest liar of all time.

But look at verse 20, and here's the key: "But now is Christ," what, "risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." He is risen, praise God. If Christ is not risen, we perish. Our bright hope is black. We are to pitied. Our faith is destroyed. He failed to deal with sin. He didn't pay its penalty right. He didn't cover our sins. We'll die in our own sins and be sentenced to hell forever if Christ didn't come out of that grave. But praise God, He did, and we have hope, don't we. And no man ever needs to go out of God's presence to hell because Christ provided life.

The phone rang the other night. I picked it up, and a man on the other line said this to me. He said, "I am going to hell, and I'm glad. I wanna go there." And do you realize that's the only way a man'll get there is if he wants to go there because Christ came out of that grave, and He said, "Because I live, ye too shall live also. If you believe in Me, you will live immortal, everlasting life." What a promise. Christ is risen! And John said He has the keys to unlock death for every man.

So we see the evidence and the importance. Let me show you, just quickly, the sequence of resurrection; how does it happen? Verse 20, "Christ is the first fruits of them that slept." Then verse 23, "Every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits. Afterward, they that are Christ's," when, "at His coming." Now, Christ is the first one to be resurrected. He is the first fruits. And you know, the farmer would check his field, and he would take a little bit from every section of his field and put it

together, and it would represent the first fruits. And if the first fruits were good, it would guarantee a good crop, a good harvest. When Jesus came out of that grave, He was the guarantee that the harvest of every other godly life will be good as well. He is the first fruits. And because His resurrection was valid, so will ours be. He's the guarantee of that resurrection. When Jesus Christ comes out of that grave, He opens up the way for us. "Because I live, ye shall live also." So what is the sequence? Christ and then they that are His at His coming.

Now, remember, when you die, anytime, your soul goes to be with Christ. The resurrection is for that new body to meet that soul. You say, "Well, what's it gonna be like when He comes?" Well, I'll read it to you. 1 Thessalonians 4:15, "For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we are who alive and remain under the coming of the Lord," obviously, there are gonna be some people still alive when He comes, "shall not precede them who are asleep." The dead believers are gonna come out first, the next verse. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout." Have you ever thought about what He might say? What do you think He's gonna say? Well, I know what He said in Revelation 11 in prophecy when He called those two witnesses. Maybe it'll be this: "Come up here," right out of the graves. Maybe He'll say what He said to Lazarus, "Come forth." Whatever it is, the Bible says the voice of the arc angel, the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ rise first, out of the graves. Every grave where a body was placed of a believer releases a new glorified body. Those graves are gonna be emptied. And they enter into the air to meet that soul, already with the Lord. And then it says, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." At His coming, we're gonna be resurrected, those glorified bodies at His coming. That's the sequence of resurrection. First Christ, then the rest of us when He comes for us.

You say, "Well, then that brings up an interesting question. What kind of a body are we gonna have?" Well, I'd like now to present to you your resurrection body, if you're interested. Verse 35...now, here's the body of resurrection. What's it gonna be like? Oh, this is exciting. And naturally, the question comes up, verse 35, "But man will say, 'How are the dead raised up?'" See, same old question. "'And with what body do they come?'" And it's a mocking question. You can just hear 'em kind of jeering, "Oh, really? The dead are coming out of the grave. Well, how 'bout that. What kind of a body are they gonna have, Paul?" See? Notice how Paul answers that kind of an attitude. In verse 36, "Thou fool," see? He crawls right down there on the level with the guy who asked the question. "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not made alive except to die. Don't you know the simplest law of planting? You take a seed. You drop it in the ground. The outer part decomposes, rots away and dies. And out of the middle of it comes life. Don't you realize that God can take something rotted, decomposed and turn it into a living thing?"

Verse 37, "And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be." If you wanna grow a garden, you don't plant a garden. If you wanna grow tomatoes, you don't sick a whole pile of tomatoes in the ground. If you wanna grow an oak tree, you don't bury an oak tree. You don't bury

the end result; you plant the seed, right? And when you're body as a believer went into the grave, that was the seed that decomposed that God will use to regenerate into new life and a glorified body. Paul says, "You fool, don't you know anything about farming?" And he says, "Besides that, God can make any kind of body He wants to make."

Verse 38, I love it, "But God giveth a body as it hath," what, "pleased Him and to every seed its own body." Every one of us has a different body. You could take a whole lot of a little seeds that don't look a lot different, throw 'em into the ground. One's a flower. One's a weed. One's a tree. One's a strange thing. It's just amazing. Amazing. And, oh, out of some little seed, it looks absolutely nothing like the product of life that comes from the seed. God's got all kind of bodies designed. Look at verse at 39, "There's some for men, some for beasts, some for birds, some for fish, some up in the heavens," verse 40, "some the sun, the moon, the stars," verse 41. God can make any ol' kind of bodies He wants to make. Pretty simple, isn't it? God'll make the kind of body that pleases Him. And he'll use that old body, all rotted and decayed and decomposed, as the source from which springs a new body. I'm just gonna be me, only with a glorified body and minus all my sin. It's a fantastic thought.

You say, "Well, c'mon, get specific. What's this body gonna be like?" All right, I'll get specific. Verse 42, it'll be incorruptible. "So is the resurrection of the dead, sown in corruption, raised in incorruption." Now, incorruptible means it can't get sick, die or ever be injured. No way. It's an immortal, incorruptible body. Never dies. Revelation says there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, pain. No, no more pain. No more death. An immortal, forever body. Amazing. A deathless body.

In Luke chapter 20, I'll show you a little statement here that might help you to understand this. Verse 35, "But they who shall be accounted worthy to attain that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage." No marriage in heaven. Now, I know a lot of teenagers are upset about that. They're hoping the Lord doesn't come 'til they get married, and they're worried about missing out on the joys of married life and the relationship between a man and a woman that's consummated in marriage and all of this. And I always tell them, it's very simple. If marriage and the union of a man and a woman is the best thing going down here, can't you imagine what must be going on up there. And I don't know what it is, but I know it'll be so far surpassing any relationship down here that you'll be complete in yourself. You won't even need to be married to anybody.

Verse 36, "Neither can they die anymore." No possibility to die. "For they are equal to the angels and are the sons of God being the sons of the resurrection." Incorruptible bodies. Now, your body now really corrupts fast. You wanna know what your body's made of? The constituent parts of a man would be equal to about 1,200 eggs, iron enough to make two ten-penny nails, phosphorous enough to make 4,000 matches, fat to make 75 candles, give or take a few, one cake of soap, enough hydrogen to fill a balloon and pull it up in the air, 60 spoonfuls of salt, a bowl of sugar and about six gallons of water. Charles Mayo of Mayo Clinic said, "enough lime to whitewash a chicken coop,

magnesium enough to make a dose of magnesia, potassium enough to explode a toy canon, sulfur enough to rid a dog of fleas. Total value, 98 cents." And every bit of it is rotting away. And every bit of it is constantly decaying, decaying, decaying. But some day, you're gonna get a body that has no capacity to deteriorate. Incorruptible.

Secondly, it'll be glorified. That's in verse 43. It's gonna be a glorified body. Now, I don't know what all is involved in a glorified body except that I know there'll be none of the restrictions of the natural world. It'll be a supernatural body. We're gonna reign in the kingdom in these glorified bodies, and we'll be able to kinda float around and fly from heaven to earth, obviously, because we're coming back in chapter 19, you know, with Christ in His glory. We'll just, you know, come right out of space, no problem there, moving around to rule over the earth in these glorified bodies. Fantastic. Just as surpassing as the glorious bloom of the flower to the ugly seed that you put in the ground, only in an infinite capacity.

Then it also says they'll be powerful bodies, powerful. Our bodies...we talk about having powerful bodies, but do you realize that a small cancer cell can destroy our body? One bacteria can destroy us. A draft of air, a drop of water. The simplest thing can take our life. Not those bodies. We're gonna have so much power...do you know how much power it takes just to get a rocket up to the moon? Listen, when Jesus comes, we're gonna have so much power we just blast off independent of anything, just whish, see. And power to do anything and be totally unaffected by any outside energy. Total, absolute power. Powerful bodies.

Then the last thing it says is they'll be spiritual. And by that, it doesn't mean spiritual in the sense of a spirit being or non-tangible, not at all. He means that the body will house the spirit. Finally, the eternal spirit will get an eternal body to match it. It'll be the spiritual body to house the eternal spirit.

What's your body gonna be like? Well, you're gonna have a spiritual body that'll house your eternal spirit, a powerful body capable of supernatural activities, a glorified body with no natural restrictions at all, an incorruptible body with no capacity to fail.

You say, "Boy, I'd like to see somebody with a body like that." Okay, 1 John 3:2. Listen to this: "Beloved, it doeth not yet appear what we shall be. But when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him like He is." Do you know who had that very body? Jesus did after His resurrection. You wanna know what yours is gonna be like? Look at Jesus after He rose from the dead. He had a spiritual body. He wanted to go into the upper room to see the disciples, so He just went, through the wall. That's the kind of body you're gonna have. No problem. And if the city of heaven is built on a cube, you know, it's beautiful. And not only that, Jesus was powerful. He stood on that hillside in Acts 1:11 and said goodbye and just took off, and they could see Him visibly going up into heaven. It's a fantastic thing.

And yet, let me tell you something interesting. Listen to this. In Luke 24:36, "As they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and said unto them, 'Peace be unto you,' and they were terrified," and so forth and so on. Now, listen to this: "He says, 'Why are you troubled? Why do thoughts arise in your heart? Behold, my hands and my feet, that I am Myself. Handle and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me have." That's the kind of body you're gonna have - glorified flesh and bones. "And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet, and while they yet believed not for joy and wondered, He said unto them, 'Have you here anything to eat?'" Watch this. "And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb, and He took it, and He did eat." I don't know what kind of combination body that is, my friends, but that's it. Some people are glad that we're gonna get to eat.

And then the Bible says that He is incorruptible. His body had no capacity to die. Why, the Bible says in Hebrews that "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." You wanna know what your body's like? That's what it's like.

So we see the evidence, the importance, the sequence and the body of resurrection. Now, let me show you, just quickly, the moment of resurrection, verse 51, the moment of resurrection. "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," to put it mildly, "into that new body." How's it gonna happen? When's the moment? "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpets will sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed, for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." The key word, friends, is changed. When the trumpet sounds and Jesus comes back, we will be in an instance changed into those bodies. And those glorified bodies will burst out of those graves, be reunited with our eternal spirit, and we'll ever dwell with the Lord.

Now, by the time Paul gets here, he's about where I am. He's so blessed, he can hardly control himself. And so we see the victory of resurrection in verse 54, and Paul just lets it go. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." And then he taunts Death a little bit, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Verse 57, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us," what, "the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." That's resurrection, my friends. Praise the Lord. When Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also," He meant it. "And he that liveth and believeth in Me," He said, "shall never die."

I close with these thoughts: During the heartless tyranny of the Middle Ages, instruments of torture were developed by men. One method used by the Hohenstaufen House in Germany was to put a victim in a room that looked like a very comfortable room. After a few days in that room, the man would begin to notice that the walls had contracted, and the room was beginning to shrink. The horrible fate would flash across his mind, and in oiled a silent grooves, the walls moved in, and after

several days, crushed him to death. That's the man without hope in Jesus Christ. Things may look all right for awhile, on the surface, but he will at last be crushed in a Christ-less death.

There is an alternative. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believeth in Me, thou he were dead, yet shall live." Eternal life is yours if you believe in Jesus Christ and invite Him into your life. And I wanna say with the Psalmist...said it this way, Psalm 17, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." That's the cry of every believer, isn't it? "Hell and thy sin resist thy course, but hell and sin are vanquished foes. Thy Jesus nailed them to the cross and sang the triumph as He rose."

Our Father, we thank You this morning for the triumphant Christ, and His glorious victory over death. And we thank You for the words of John that ring in our hearts, "He that hath the Son hath life," and the tragic alternative, "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Father, we would ask right now that no one would leave this place who does not have the Son by personal faith inviting Jesus Christ into their life.

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