

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

### **What Jesus' Resurrection Means to Us**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 80-22

What a joy it is to be together on this very special day. Every Sunday for me, and I trust for you...is a wonderful time, a highlight, a focal point of life. The privilege of coming together to worship God has no equal. And among those very special Lord's days, this stands out as one of my very favorite. We call our attention to the resurrection of the living Lord Jesus Christ. This will be my eighteenth Easter Sunday at Grace Community Church. And every year as I come around to seeking the Lord as to what I might share with you, it seems as though He directs my attention in a very unique way. As long as I've preached on the subject of Easter, as much as I've thought about it, in no sense, nor in any way has the subject been diminished. The truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ could occupy our minds and our sermons until Jesus comes. And so it's with great joy that, again, we approach this wonderful theme.

I want you to open your Bible, as we look together at the significance of the resurrection, to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, perhaps the greatest chapter in all the Bible on the resurrection. It covers it from every facet. We have studied it at times in the past, but I want to draw your attention to a portion of this chapter that we have not specifically looked at and is often overlooked. And, yet, the very heart of the meaning of the resurrection.

Listen as I read 1 Corinthians 15 verses 29 through 34. Beginning at verse 29...pardon me, at verse 29 and reading to verse 34. "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? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your boasting, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord: I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me if the dead rise not? 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!' Be not deceived: 'Evil association corrupts good morals.' Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame."

Now, that rather obscure and somewhat difficult passage is tucked in the middle of this great treatise on resurrection, and that particular portion, in many ways, is the most essential part of Paul's discussion, for it speaks to us of the implications of the resurrection in very practical terms. Before we look specifically at the text, let me remind you that it is axiomatic...that is, it is a given, it is an obvious truth, that unbelievers and hypocrites do not become martyrs. People do not die for something they hold lightly. They do not die for something about which they have doubt. They do not die for things they do...do not believe are worthy of life and death. People give their lives only for causes that they are wholeheartedly committed to. And one of those great realities is the death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who said, "Because I live, ye, too, shall live also." And millions of Christians have given their lives in living and given their lives in dying with the hope of that resurrection truth.

It is estimated that up to 4 million Christians were interred in the ground in the 600 miles of catacombs that are woven under the city of Rome. During 300 years of Christian suppression, Christians had to be buried underground. Etched in the ground, along many of those tombs, are the words, "You live in God,"...which recognized that, though they were dead physically, they were alive in the presence of God. They died with that hope, up to 4 million of them. It is estimated that during the Dark Ages, as many as 50 million believers in Jesus Christ gave their lives in His cause. They did so with the hope and the faith that that was not a wasted martyrdom, but that they would awake in the presence of God and eternal life. Some believed that it would be conservative to estimate that 1 million Chinese Christians died in the Communist seizure of China. Hundreds of thousands have died in the revolutions of Africa, rather than deny the faith of Jesus Christ. Century after century, and individual after individual, people have lived and died in the confident hope there was life after death based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul said that, "We recognize that the sufferings of this world...Romans 8...are not even worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." And that is why we look for the redemption of the body. He said to the Philippians that, "Our citizenship is in Heaven from which we look for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, in coming, shall change this lowly body, this vile body, and make it into a body like unto His own glorious body." It was that confidence that allowed Steven, when being crushed beneath the bloody stones of martyrdom, to cry out in hope that the Lord would receive him. It was that hope that allowed the Apostle Paul to give his life, to have his head cut off, in the confidence that he would be brought into the presence of Jesus Christ.

All of the people of all of the ages who have died in this faith have died with faith based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the very heart and soul of Christian truth. It is not something that is worthy only of a day a year. It is the very cornerstone of everything we believe. We live because He lives. We hope because He arose.

Now, the treatise on the resurrection, which explains all of its implications, is here in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And just so that we understand what Paul is saying, let's go back to the beginning of the chapter. And I want you to understand the flow of his presentation. First of all, in verses 1 through 11, Paul presents the facts, irrefutable, undeniable facts related to the resurrection of Christ. Luke, in writing the book of Acts, calls them infallible proofs that Jesus arose. Listen as Paul speaks under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Good News, which I preached unto you, which also you have received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved if you keep in memory what I preached unto you - unless you have believed in vain, unless your faith is less than true saving faith."

Now, in those first two verses, He says, "Remember the Gospel I preached which you believe, in which you stand, which you have experienced." The first great evidence of the resurrection is the experience of a transformed life. How do I know that Jesus Christ lives? Because He changed my life. How do I know that Jesus Christ is alive? Because I've seen Him change your life. The evidence of salvation.

Then he moves to the evidence of Scripture. Verse 3, "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that He was buried; that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." We have not only the testimony of transformed lives, but we have the testimony of the Word of God. Scripture affirms, both Old Testament and New Testament, the resurrection of Christ.

Then beginning in verse 5, He goes to the eyewitness account. First is the evidence of those who were transformed. Secondly, the evidence of the Scripture. Thirdly, the evidence of the eyewitnesses. Verse 5, "He was seen by Peter, then the twelve. After that he was seen by five hundred brethren at one time, of whom the greater part remain to the present time, but some have died." In other words, the eyewitnesses are still living when Paul pens this letter. "After that, He was seen by James, and then by all the apostles. And last of all, He was seen by me also, as one born out of due time. I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But, by the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all - yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so you believed."

So there is the testimony of experience, the testimony of Scripture, the testimony of the eyewitnesses, including the Apostle Paul. All of this to say that that the facts of the resurrection are irrefutable. It is, indeed, one of the best attested facts of ancient history. Jesus Christ arose from the dead. That is a monumental truth. And in spite of that, some deny the resurrection, turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the truth. Verse 12, Paul says, "Now if Christ be preached, that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" How can you say that, he says. When all of the evidence is to the contrary, and all of the preaching is to the contrary. When there is experience and Scripture and eyewitness account, how can you say there is no resurrection of the dead? How can you say that and be associated with the church? Of what value is the church? Of what point is the faith?

And here, launched in verse 12, he begins a discussion of the logical conclusions to the belief that there's no resurrection. This is not a small matter. If you deny the resurrection, the implications are frightening. First of all, in verse 13, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen." That's his first of seven disastrous facts if the resurrection is not true. If there is no resurrection, if we just die and go out of existence, if evolution is true and there's just a continual recycling of the specie,

then death is all. There's no resurrection, then Christ is not risen. If men don't raise, He Who was a man didn't rise, either.

If that's true, the second disaster follows in verse 14. "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is useless." Why? There's no Good News. There's no message of salvation. There's no message of grace. There's no message of hope. There is no Savior. God was not satisfied with what He did. There is no Lord. He did not conquer death. All of His claims are lies. Preaching is useless. There's no message.

Thirdly, faith is useless. The end of verse 14, "Your faith is also useless." Verse 17, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is useless." He repeats it again. If there's no resurrection of the dead, then Christ didn't rise. If Christ didn't rise, Gospel preaching is pointless and faith is just as pointless. Hope is a delusion. All saints, all martyrs, the millions who have died, died as absolute fools.

Fourthly, the apostles were liars. Verse 15, "Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." We are liars, and history is going to have to reverse its verdict on the apostles, and instead of canonizing them, history will have to admit that they not only were not the best of men, they were, in fact, the very worst of men. In fact, history will have to say that these were the worst men who ever walked the earth. Why? Because as a result of their lying and their falsehood and their deceit about the resurrection of Christ, they sent millions and millions and millions of people to an unwitting martyr's grave because of the hoax they perpetrated. They are not, not only the best of men, they are the worst of men. And they who claim to be eyewitnesses of a resurrection were, in fact, liars of the worst order. Perpetrating a fraud which cost millions of people their lives, to say nothing of their time and money.

Verse 16, he reiterates his thesis, "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised." Almost like a reprise from verse 12. Then he goes on to a fifth disastrous result if there's no resurrection. In verse 17 at the end, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is useless, and you are still in your sins." Fifthly, sin's power is unbroken. You heard the song that Richard sung a minute ago, which is the testimony of Peter when he sees Christ. "He's alive, and I'm forgiven. Heaven's gates are open wide. He's alive, and I'm forgiven." Well, if Christ is not alive, you're not forgiven. He did not accomplish your atonement. He did not deal with sin. He did not satisfy the penalty of sin for God, and your sin is still bound to you, and so is mine, and we are forever damned. There is no forgiveness. There is no hope of Heaven.

And that takes us to verse 18, the sixth disastrous result, "They also who are fallen asleep, those who have died in Christ, are damned." The dead who died with their hope in Christ are in hell, damned forever. And, finally, that means, in verse 19, that Christians are the most pitiful people on the face of the earth. "If this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiful." If we're spending all

of our time for something that only happens in this life, we are to be a pitied people. What a tragic bunch of deceived people. Millions of whom have died, all of whom have tried to live their lives based on a lie, if the dead rise not.

So the facts are that Christ arose. To deny those facts is to strike a death blow at the heart of the Christian faith and all human hope. But Paul turns the table fast in verse 20 and reiterates the positive truth again. "Now is Christ risen from the dead," and then goes on to describe what that resurrection means. He becomes the first fruits or the guarantee of all of our resurrection. He defeats sin. He restores men to God. He conquers death. He takes over His Kingdom. He subdues the world. It takes you all the way down through verse 28. Christ is risen from the dead. Marvelous affirmation, glorious truth. The Son of God becomes a servant. He comes to the earth to take back the world and man from the usurper, Satan. And when He has come and died and risen again and redeemed His people, He will gather them to them to Himself. He will conquer death. He will take the Kingdom and present it to the Father, and all things will be resolved in the eternal glory of the Trinity. That's what verses 21 to 28 are saying.

Belief in the resurrection, beloved, is the heart of everything. The whole redemptive plan of God goes to pieces without the resurrection. You cannot come along and knock that prop out from under Christianity and expect it to stand. That is what holds it up. And if somebody comes along to deny resurrection, they have just struck a death blow at the Christian faith, and that is why Paul, in verse 21 to 28, hurls resurrection facts at the Corinthian error, to set that error aside. And so does he affirm that Christ is risen.

And because He is risen, we now come to verse 29 to 34, our text. Because He is risen, there is motive for three things. Because He is risen, there is motive for salvation. There is motive for service, and there is motive for sanctification. And here are the practical implications of the resurrection. They come right down to practical aspects. The motive for salvation, the motive for service, the motive for sanctification in our lives is built on the resurrection.

Listen, put it simply, if there were no resurrection, would you come to God for salvation? If you were just going to die and go out of existence, would you come for salvation? Let me ask you the second question. Would you spend your life diligently, faithfully serving God with all your heart if there were no resurrection? Would you try to build the b...trying to assist in building His Kingdom if His Kingdom ended when this earth ended? Would you live a circumscribed, holy, godly, virtuous life if there was no future reward or accountability or punishment?

Well, the answer to the question is probably not. Why be saved if there's nothing to be saved from? Why serve if there's nothing to serve for? And why be sanctified if there's no ultimate reward or punishment? You see, it is the fact that there is a future life that makes salvation incentive possible, that draws us to service and to sanctification.

Now, let's start with the first one, salvation in verse 29. "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 this particular verse has been discussed and discussed for centuries, and there are somewhere between 40 and 400 different views of what it means. And because it is a discussed verse, it's often overlooked. But I think if you just take the verse very simply, and one term at a time, it can be readily seen what it means. There are cults and sects that have pushed this verse to all kinds of bizarre interpretations, where they're baptizing living people on behalf of dead people. The Mormons do that. There are all kinds of strange and bizarre interpretations.

But let's just take it a bit at a time. Paul is saying, "Look, if there's no resurrection, what in the world are people doing being baptized for the dead?" Now what does he mean by that? Well, baptism, that word strikes a chord in our hearts, doesn't it? We think of baptism in the New Testament and all the epistles, and we realize that it's always associated with salvation. Always. So we can assume here that it is, in this place, associated with salvation, as well. That's too hard a leap to make. Baptism is a term that describes a physical placing into water and taking out, an immersion, which became the symbol of salvation. In fact, it was so synonymous with salvation, that is to say someone who believed in Christ was always baptized, so that when you refer to a person being saved, you could actually say they were baptized. Which was the outward way to describe what happened on the inside. In fact, Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost says, "Repent and be...what?...baptized." He just, well, could've said, "Repent and be saved." But the baptism and the salvation had become so synonymous, because all those saved were baptized, that he could refer to it as such.

So let's assume that it means salvation, because that's what it always means. "What shall they do who are saved?" All right, now we're talking about some people who are becoming saved, who are coming to Christ. Then he says, "Who are being saved, oopair"...the word translated for...let's take the word oopair and recognize it could mean over, above, across, beyond, with reference to, with regard to, or because of. Greek prepositions are like that. They can mean a lot of different things. But let's assume that it has a causal meaning, which it does very frequently in Scripture. And then let's take that causal meaning and translate it this way. "What shall they do who are being saved because of the dead? What shall we do regarding those who are being saved because of the dead?"

Now what does that mean? Listen and I'll tell you. There are many people who come to salvation because of people who have already died. Can you handle that thought? All right, let's assume you have a...let's assume you're a man and you have a Christian wife, and you love that wife with all your heart. And let's assume that wife dies in Christ and goes to Heaven. How many times have we seen a grieving, unsaved spouse come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ because of the desire for a heavenly reunion? Is that not so? That is one of the strongest motivating forces in response to the Gospel. The thought of reunion. Even David in 2 Samuel 12, when his little boy died, said, "He

cannot come to me, but I shall go to him." And there was in his mind the thought of reunion. There are a myriad of passages that I'll not take time to fully develop in the Old Testament which speak to that very same issue. Genesis 37:35 being one of them. There are some in Job that speak to the idea that there is in glory a reunion. And there has always been in the heart of the believers a hope for that reunion. For example, in Hebrews chapter 12, we find in verses 22 to 24 that the writer of Hebrews is saying about Christians, "You are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." All of those terms are simply to say Heaven. They all equal Heaven. "You who are saved are come to Heaven. And when you come to Heaven...he says...you come to the innumerable assembly of angels."

So the first thing we learn about that is that when we come to Heaven, when we come into the presence of God, the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem, we will come into union with the heavenly angels. So there will be a reunion of sorts with heavenly angels. Then he says, also, with the church of the first born. The first born being Christ, the prototakos, the chief among all those who have been raised from the dead. So when we go there, we not only come to an innumerable number of angels, but we come to the church. We are reunited with the church. All the saints of all the ages. I think about that a lot. I wanna go to Heaven and meet Peter, don't you? And Paul and all the apostles and all the saints of the past, all the great men of God whose lives have affected my life through the printed page. And we will do that.

And then he says, "You'll come to the just...to the spirits of just men made perfect." No doubt a reference to Old Testament saints. And so there will be a reunion there with David and with those of the Old Testament like Abraham and Elijah and Elisha and on and on it goes. And then he says, "You will come to God, and you will come to Jesus Christ." So the whole of Hebrews 12:22 to 24 is about the reunion of the redeemed in glory. And I believe, personally, that, as I said, one of the strongest driving forces in the life of people who come to Christ is the thought of reunion.

Friday, a dear lady friend of mine in the church came to tell me about the passing of her husband, for whom she prayed for many years. I don't know the number, but many, many years praying for his salvation. And a matter of a few weeks before he went to glory, he gave his life to Jesus Christ and filled her heart with joy. She didn't tell me this, but I know that the anticipation of death in his life and the realization of a final and permanent and forever separation from the life of the wife he loved was a stimulus and a factor in him wanting to settle that issue before he left this world. I mean that's to be assumed. If you love people, you wanna be with them.

So I believe that we have implied here in this people being saved because of the dead, that there is a reunion aspect, and there's nothing wrong with that. We wanna be reunited with those we love who died in Jesus Christ. I never have a funeral of a Christian, never, without saying to the congregation, "If you ever want to see this person again, you must come to faith in Jesus Christ. You must embrace Jesus Christ." In fact, I usually like to say, "If so and so were here today, they're not, but if they could

come back from Heaven and be here and tell you something, I know what they'd say. They'd say, number one...don't weep for me. Number two, it's better than I ever dreamed. And, number three, don't miss it. And there's the hope of reunion here.

Secondly, this thought of being saved because of the dead would also carry the possibility that someone would come to faith in Christ because of another person's ability to face death with hope. There have been many people saved, because they watched a saint die. There have been many people who have said to themselves, "I wanna face death like that." There has been many a son who denied Christ until he stood by the bed of his dying mother and saw that mother face death absolutely without fear and unafraid and in joy and hope of reunion with Christ. And looking at his own life, said, "I don't have that hope in death," and it was because of that dead person that they embraced Christ.

Is it so farfetched then to assume that it is the hope of resurrection, the hope of being able to face death unafraid, the hope of reunion with those of like precious faith, those we love, those we care about? Is it...is it too far out to assume that that's what is referred to in verse 29? I think not, because I believe that one of the strongest stimuluses to salvation is facing death unafraid, facing it with joy and hope and anticipation, and the anticipation of reunion. Reunion.

So what Paul is saying is, "Look, if you deny the resurrection, then what in the world have you done to that great incentive that drives people to the Savior? If you deny the resurrection, then there is no reunion." So a strong motive for people coming to Christ is lost. And you have denied the hope that people had in their heart when they face death, and there is no hope, so you have taken away the incentive.

The second thing that he speaks of is the matter of service, and that also finds, as its motivation, its underlying motivation, the resurrection of Christ. I often think about the Apostle Paul. The day recorded in Acts 7 when he was watching Steven being stoned, it must have been an indelibly impressed scene that he never forgot. There is Steven, wonderful servant of God, lying below a ledge, perhaps as far down as the floor is from the pulpit. People standing immediately over him dropping huge boulders on his body. The first one would be dropped by the one with the leading accusation. The second by the one with the second leading accusation. The idea was to find a boulder to hit his head first of all. And there stands the Apostle Paul giving consent to the whole thing. And as Steven is dying, he hears him speak to God. And out of the heart and mind and soul and the mouth of Steven comes an incredible hope.

In verse 59 of Acts 7, Steven calling on God, said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit...and then he said...Don't blame these people for this sin. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." What hope. And I just have to believe in my heart that that lingered long in the mind of Saul, that that man died under those bloody stones with such a hope, and Paul must've wondered how it is to be able to face death like that. And it may well have been that that very faith of Steven, now dead, was an incentive for the



salvation of Paul...as well as his service, for he had a model of a man who gave his life in the service of Christ. It must've impacted Paul, and so Paul here says, in verse 30, in effect, "If...if you take away the resurrection, then why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"

I mean if there's no resurrection, why in the world am I doing this? Why am I putting my life on the line? Jeopardy means danger. Why am I living in constant danger? Why am I living on the edge of death all the time? Why am I being beaten with rods? Why am I being beaten with whips? Why am I going through shipwrecks? Why am I being thrown in prison? Why am I being put in stocks? Why am I putting my life on the line, as it were, my neck on the chopping block? Why am I putting my life in jeopardy every hour if this is all there is? If it ends right here? If there's nothing else, what am I serving for? Why am I trying to win you to a king that is dead? Why am I trying to populate a kingdom that doesn't exist? If there's no resurrection. It makes a sham out of all Christian service.

Paul is affirming here that he was in peril every hour of his life. At any hour, a blow of persecution could've struck him dead. He was in danger from the moment of his conversion on. It wasn't long, he was converted in Acts 9. But before you get out of Acts 9, he's already trying to escape from a prison in Damascus, because the Jews have plotted to kill him, and they let him out of the window in a basket in a rope and drop him to the ground. He's sent to Tarsus, because even the Greeks were trying to kill him, also, in the 9th chapter of Acts. He said that persecution was a way of life for him.

Second Corinthians 4, he says, "We are troubled on every side, not distressed, perplexed, not in despair, persecuted, not forsaken, cast down, not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. We who live are always delivered unto death. Death worketh in us." He's not talking about some mystical thing. He's talking about the fact that he lived on the edge of death every day of his life, because he confronted people with the Gospel. And what he is saying is, "Why would I do this? The point is I serve the Lord, because someday I'll see Him, and I'll be rewarded, and the people I win to Him will be in His Kingdom, and they'll bring Him praise, and they'll bring Him glory." You take away the resurrection, and you strip him of any motive. And so he gets vehement in verse 31. He says, literally, I swear it's a Greek particle introducing an oath, very solemn. It's intended to solemnize the point. "I swear...he says, literally...by the pride I have in you, by the pride I have in you, which I really have in Christ Jesus implied because of what He has done for you. Look...he says...I swear, folks, I die daily. I put my life on the line in order to do the work of God in you." That's what he's saying. "I'm proud of what God has done in you. I'm proud of what the Lord has done among you, and I'm committed to it. I'm so committed to what God has done among you, that I'm gonna die daily." And if there's no resurrection, then this is ridiculous.

Every day, he says, "I swear it. Every day, I stand at death's door," and he means by that real death, physical death. That was a way of life for him. Daily experience of facing death. And he says, "Do you think I would do this if there was no future life? Do you think I would do this if there was no resurrection? Do you think I would do this if there was no Kingdom? If there was no reward? If there

was no nothing? If Christ was dead?" then he thinks of one particular incident in verse 32. "If after the manner of men...that is, in human strength...human enterprise...if after the manner of men...in other words, if strictly for human reasons...I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me if the dead rise not? If this is all just an exercise in human activity, with no divine element, just after the manner of men, what in the world am I paying this price for? Who care? If the dead rise not, what's the point of getting so involved?"

Now when he says, "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus," we don't know what he means by that. It could mean figuratively, that the mob in Acts 19 at Ephesus that had that great riot was sort of like a group of beasts, wild beasts. Some legends indicate that there was a time when Paul was thrown into arena and actually did fight with wild beasts. We don't know. But whether they were wild beasts who were really beasts, or whether they were wild mobs like beasts, Paul is saying, "Every day, for me, is a fearsome thing. And why in the world would I go through this if all there was was a human enterprise? If there was no future?"

Fearsome experiences belong to people...who have strong motive. People lay their life down because they believe in a future life, and I'm back to what I said at the beginning. It is axiomatic that martyrs are made up of people with strong belief in something for which they will die. What a waste of life. What a waste of life if there's no resurrection. In fact, I'd just go along with the crowd. If the dead rise not, the end of verse 32, "Let's eat and drink; tomorrow we die." And he quotes Isaiah 22:13, this particular phrase appears there, was expressive of the life of Israel when God sent Isaiah to speak judgment to them. Israel was into eat and drink; tomorrow we die. And he says, "Frankly, if there's no resurrection, if we just die and go out of existence and the next generation pops up, and if there's no future, then I just wanna go the way that everybody else goes. If dens...if death ends everything, then life is reduced to eating and drinking, and we are animals, and that is it."

And that's the way it is in our society today. We live like animals. We eat; we drink; we carry out biological function; and we die because we don't believe in the future resurrection. Our society denies the accountability to God, denies a Heaven and a hell, denies the accountability they have to stand before the judge of all the earth and, therefore, they are nothing but biological animals...If there's no resurrection, sensual enjoyment is all that's left. Like the rich man of whom Jesus said, "His philosophy of life was eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Luke 12:19.

This is not new. Classical literature is full of this. Herodotus, the Greek historian, tells about a custom among the Egyptians. The Egyptians would have social gatherings among the rich. They would have a banquet. They would all eat in a gluttonous manner. They would drink. And at the end of the banquet, a servant would come in with a coffin. And according to this trasti...tradition, in the coffin was a wooden corpse all painted up to resemble a person as clearly as possible. And Herodotus says to each guest, the man carrying the coffin would say, "Gaze here and drink and be merry, for when you die, such shall you be." Don't hold back anything, because this is where it all

ends. You might as well get it when you can.

Do we live by the world's philosophy? I think about those people in Hebrews chapter 11, of whom the world was not worthy, who gave their lives, who were beaten, who were cut in half, sawn asunder, thrown to wild beasts. And it says they did it to obtain a better resurrection...a better resurrection. And we, it says, in chapter 12, "are compassed about with that great cloud of witnesses who died to this life in order to live to the next life." And they've become the witnesses of that kind of living. The idea is they are our models, and we pattern our lives after them, and we run the race to inherit the eternal prize like they did. That's the glory set before us, the joy set before us, as Christ endured the things of this world for the joy and glory set before Him.

But with no resurrection, who's gonna bother? With no resurrection, let's just be animals. Let's just do the biological function, eat, drink, and die. It isn't necessarily hedonistic. It isn't necessarily a call to absolute immorality. It's just biology. It's just exists like an animal.

But if there's resurrection, then we're not temporal animals. We're eternal people. And that makes all the difference...in what you do with your life. Both in terms of salvation and in terms of service. I give my life to cause of Christ. You give your life to the cause of Christ, because we believe we are laying up treasure in Heaven. Because we believe that everyone who comes to Jesus Christ under our ministry is going into an eternal Kingdom. Because we believe that someday we'll be able to receive from Jesus Christ a reward for the things that we have done, and that reward, I believe, will be an eternal capacity to serve the One we love. And who wouldn't want that? But, if there's no resurrection, there's no reward. There's no eternal fruit. There's no eternal anything, because there's no eternity. So, you see, the resurrection is the cornerstone of salvation. It's the cornerstone of service.

Thirdly, sanctification, and this is closely related. Verse 33, "Don't be deceived...he says...don't make a mistake. Don't miss this one. 'Evil'...and the word is homalea, from which we get homiletics, and the word homiletic or homalea basically means association. Homiletics is...is a word used to describe how to teach or preach or to organize something into a meaningful, logical flow. And what he is saying here is, "Evil systems or evil association." I think it could mean company, as it's often translated, talking about people. But I don't think that's the intent here. I think the word that we use to speak of sermons and lessons being homiletic has to do with a body of teaching. And what he's saying here is, "Bad teaching corrupts bad morals." And what he means by that is, if you don't have a right theology about the resurrection, it's gonna impact your morality. You understand that? If you don't believe right, you won't behave right. If you have a doctrine or a teaching that denies resurrection, that it's gonna affect your living, because if there's no eternal accountability, you're liable to sink to the lowest level...

The next verse, verse 34, speaks of being ignorant of God, not having the knowledge of God. And that's why I think this word is better translated evil doctrine or evil teaching...he's talking about the truth of God. He says in the next one, "Wake up to righteousness and stop sinning." Some of you don't even have the knowledge of God. You don't have the right knowledge. You've got the wrong theology, and so you're plunging yourself into sin. And I speak this to your shame. Bad lecturing, bad sermons, i.e., bad theology, results in bad morals. And the bad theology is described in verse 34 as an ignorance of God. Denial of resurrection theology is the ignorance of God and His Word that will render men reckless and sensual.

You wonder why our society today is getting more corrupt and more corrupt and more corrupt? It isn't because there's a change in police philosophy. It isn't because there's even a change in the courtroom. It isn't because the laws are changed. It is because we have lost our Biblical theology, and we no longer are committed to an eternal life principle that says, "Man will face God and be accountable." And when man is not accountable to that belief, he will live on the lowest level. And that's exactly where he's living. Wrong doctrine always produces wrong behavior.

Reminded of reading of Thucydides, tells about the deadly fatal plague in Athens. And he says that once the plague hit the people and they knew they were going to die, they committed every shameful crime, and eagerly snatched at every lustful pleasure, because they believed life was so short and there was no resurrection. So they would have to pay no price for their vice.

I've often wondered what would happen if we knew there was a doomsday bomb gonna be dropped on the United States in a week. I wonder whether people would rush to make things right in their life or rush into shameless vice. The answer to the question is it all depends on what they believe would happen after the bomb blew up. If they believed there was nothing after that, I don't think they would be concerned or resolve anything. I think they would plunge themselves into the depths of vice. If they, on the other hand, believed they would face God, it would make all the difference in the world.

The point that Paul is making in this heart of the 1 Corinthian chapter is that the resurrection is the substantial basis of everything in the Christian faith. We come to Christ because of the resurrection hope. The hope of reunion, and the testimony of others who have faced death unafraid, like the heroes of 1 Corinthians...pardon me...the heroes of Hebrews 11, who faced it unafraid and are our witnesses and our models.

We serve the Lord. We give Him our lives and our energy and our time and our money, because we believe in the life after death. We believe we're building a Kingdom that's eternal, and we order our lives around the things of God with holiness and righteousness and truth, because we believe we are accountable...The opposite of that kind of living is illustrated by Catullus in one of the most famous Latin poems ever penned. You might remember a little of it. Catullus wrote, "Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love, and let us value the tales of austere old men at a single half penny. Suns can set,

and then return again. But, for us, when once our brief light sets, there is but one perpetual night through which we must forever sleep. So let us love."

If that's what you believe, that's the way you'll live. Take away the thought of life after death, the thought of accountability, the thought of resurrection, the thought of reward, the thought of punishment, life loses its value, and morality has no motive. The Christian faith is not only the only hope for men in eternity. I want you to know it's the only hope for sanity in society...the only hope. And as soon as we lose the hope of eternal life, and we're fast losing it in our society, this society will become as debauched as man can conceivably be.

On the other hand, there is a resurrection, and there is reason to be saved, and reason to serve, and reason to be sanctified. And God holds every one of us accountable, for the truth of that resurrection is absolutely incontrovertible. It is a fact. What you do with it will determine your destiny. It'll determine how you order your life, and it'll determine how you live. But whatever you may or may not believe, know this. The testimony of Scripture written by God, the testimony of eyewitnesses, over 500 of them, and the testimony of millions and millions of Christians who have experienced the saving power of the living Christ, all says He's alive, and there is a future life. You can stand and deny it and pay an eternal consequence. Or with integrity, you can examine it to be sure lest you make a fatal error at the most severe point imaginable. We are called to believe in the resurrection. His, and because He rose, ours, as well.

Father, we now come to You in prayer. We thank You for this Word to us this morning. Thank You that You've given us Your Truth. How gracious of You...to give us every opportunity to understand the truth, to hold back nothing. Oh, God, if there are some in our midst who, in obstinate unbelief, resist that truth, I pray that Your Spirit will convict them with such conviction that they will shake to the very core of their being...in fear. That they will also be lifted up in adoring love and worship of the blessed Christ. I pray this Easter day, this resurrection Lord's day, that no one in this place will awake unto damnation. But that all will come to faith in Christ, that all will someday come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. That all of us will someday be regathered...to the church of the firstborn, the Spirit of just men made perfect, to God, to Christ, and to an innumerable assembly of angels, forever to dwell in Thy glorious presence, alive for evermore. Made like Christ.

To that end, I pray, oh, God, and in view of that, that we may give our lives in service. If need be, that we may stand in jeopardy every hour, and that we may so live...godly, virtuous, holy lives, that when we stand before Thee, we can hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Receive that reward for faithfulness, which, in turn, we can cast at Your feet for glory and praise...Bind to our hearts these truths. With thanksgiving, we pray. Amen.

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