LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

1 Corinthians 15:12-58

The Resurrection of the Dead

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Hey, welcome back to our study in 1 Corinthians. We've got a lot to cover in this chapter because the Apostle Paul is going to be dealing with the resurrection. And this is something that the Corinthians apparently had had some confusion over. Maybe some people were coming into the church and messing with their understanding of the resurrection, telling people that the resurrection of the dead had already taken place, all kinds of things. Anyway, Paul is going to clear up a lot of that, but this is a long chapter, so we're going to pray and get right into it.

All right? Father God, open our hearts, open our eyes, help us to see in your word what you'd have us to see. Help us to make sense of it. We ask it in the authority granted us through Jesus our Lord, amen. We're picking it up in verse 12 of chapter 15.

Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Wow. So what the Apostle Paul is doing in these opening verses is he's connecting the resurrection of Jesus with the general resurrection of the body of Christ and saying that if one hasn't happened, the other hasn't happened or will not happen. And if that is the case, then the gospel is nil. It is meaningless and you are still in your sins and there's no hope.

So you can see in these opening verses the importance that the Apostle Paul placed on the resurrection. You can also see why the resurrection of Jesus has been so attacked over the years. Remember something. We are the body of Christ. Jesus is the head, the head of his body.

And if the head has been raised, the body will also be raised. That's the point that Paul is making here. And the importance is undeniable. Verse 18, then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ, meaning those who have passed away believing in Jesus, have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

In other words, if believing in Jesus is only for now, then we are to be greatly pitied. Our faith in Jesus Christ goes so far beyond this life. If it's just for this life, forget it. No, we have put our faith in Jesus for eternal life, life that goes on. And that's the point that Paul is making.

Verse 20, but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. That word first fruits is very important. Take note of it. For as by a man came death, speaking of Adam, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive, but each in his own order. Christ, the first fruits, there it is again, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God, the father, after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. And then I love this, this next verse, the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

So this is what the resurrection frankly is all about. Ultimately, it's about turning back the curse of sin, which is death, death to the body. Now Jesus does not stop death to the body for believe and for believers, except for those who are alive when he comes again. But they will just be changed, as Paul says, in the twinkling of an eye. For the rest of us who may pass from this world before the Lord comes, we may experience physical death, but he has taken the sting away from that as we're going to see at the end of this chapter.

He's taken the power of death away. The physical body may die. We go to be with the Lord. And then when he returns, he raises our bodies incorruptible. In other words, with a new body that cannot die.

And we're told that the last enemy to finally be destroyed is death. And it is important for us to see this. Death is an enemy. Death, you know, it's kind of funny, I get comments or questions sometimes from people who are just beginning to understand little bits and pieces of the Bible. And they'll say, but one thing I just don't get, why did God create all this rottenness, all this death and disease?

And my response is, he didn't. He didn't create any of it. Death is an intrusion in God's creation. It came about as a result of sin, which we learn in the first few chapters of the book of Genesis. And it is something that God is going to overturn.

He has already begun that work by sending his son to bear the penalty of our sin, which is death. And it will one day be completely obliterated. That's what Paul is saying here in verse 26, the last enemy to be destroyed. Listen, death is an enemy as far as God is concerned. He never intended death to be part of our existence.

We invited it through sin and rebellion, but God is going to overturn it. Verse 27, for God has put all things in subjection under his feet, under the feet of Jesus. But when it says all things are put in subjection, it is plain that he is accepted who put all things in subjection under him. In other words, the father is not under the feet of Jesus. When all things are subjected to him, then the son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

Wow. These few verses that we just read are not something that I necessarily pretend to fully understand. But we know that Jesus had to empty himself, according to Philippians, had to empty himself in order to become a human being. And he still, to this day, and I believe for eternity, will bear the marks of his crucifixion and that humanity. He has become a man.

Yes, he is God in human flesh, but also a man, and he will retain that. And the Bible says that after he finishes all of his work, he will be in subjection to the father. It's difficult for us to understand what we're saying here, but Jesus has for all eternity surrendered himself to be under the subjection of the father. The Bible tells us he did not consider equality something to be grasped, held onto, but made himself a servant, and he will forever be that servant. He did that for you, and he did that for me, and that's pretty powerful.

Verse 29, otherwise what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? Now is Paul teaching baptism for the dead? the dead? No, he's asking questions about what practices people do.

There was obviously, we don't know if this was a practice among the Christians or not. We don't know if it was simply a practice among the pagans, for sure. The issue is Paul is using an example to make a point. But understand this, nowhere in the Bible, nowhere in the Bible is it taught that we are to be baptized for the dead. It simply is just never taught, never brought up.

Paul is simply using this idea as an example. He is not saying that this is what we should do. All right? So it's very important that we understand that. Verse 30, why are we in danger every hour?

If I protest, again, he's coming back to the, if there's no resurrection, why am I spending my time, literally risking my life? I'm in danger constantly. And if there's no resurrection, why am I doing this? I protest brothers by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus, our Lord. I die every day.

In other words, I die to my own desires, my own wants and wishes every day, but I'm doing it because I believe in a resurrection of the dead. What do I gain? He says, if humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus. If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow. We die.

Do not be deceived. Bad company ruins good morals. Wake up from your drunken stupor as it, as is right and do not go on sinning for some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. Obviously there were people in the Corinthian church who were saying there is no resurrection of the dead.

And Paul is very strongly opposing that message and those who are preaching it. And he's saying, if that's the case, we're lost and everything I'm doing is for nothing. You can see how important is the resurrection of Jesus. Now he's going to talk about the resurrection body. All right.

Verse 35, but someone will ask, how are the dead raised with what kind of body do they come? You foolish person, what you sow does not come to life unless it dies. So there's a picture, right? And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or some other grain, but God gives it a body as he has chosen and to each kind of seed, its own body for not all flesh is the same, but there's one kind for humans and other for animals and other for birds and another for fish. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind and the glory of the earthly is of another.

There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars for stars differ from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor.

It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written. The first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam, obviously he's talking about Jesus, became a life giving spirit, but it is not the spiritual that is first, but the natural and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust.

The second man is from heaven as was the man of dust. So also are those who are of the dust and as is the man of heaven. So also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I wanted to read this whole section together because it is so powerful.

The apostle Paul is correcting some of their misshapen ideas about Adam and the body that is planted, sown, if you will, into the earth when we die and the body that is raised incorruptible. There were obviously a lot of questions and you know, frankly, there are still a lot of questions that people ask about the resurrection body. What are we going to look like? Are we going to recognize each other? All these sorts of things because Paul does say that the body that is going to be raised is not going to be like the one that was sown or the perishable body.

But there is a promise in these verses just as we have borne the image of the man of dust. So also we shall bear the image of the man of heaven and that is a promise from God's word. If there has been a perishable body for the believer, there will be an imperishable body. One day you and I are going to put on these new incorruptible bodies and death will be no more. Hunger and thirst will be no more.

It's going to be incredible. I mean it's what we were intended for originally before sin came in and marred the whole picture of God's creation. Verse 50, I tell you this, brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Okay, there you go. These physical bodies cannot be in the presence of God.

His glory is too much for them and therefore we cannot inherit the kingdom of God with these bodies, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, he says, I tell you a mystery. And by the way, the word mystery in the Bible refers to something that is not a mystery. The word imperishable refers to something that was previously unknown but has now been revealed. And that's why he says I'm going to explain this because it has now been revealed, right?

I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep. In other words, we shall not all die physically, but we shall be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable. And we, and when he says we, he means those who are still alive on the earth as believers when Jesus returns, right? And we shall be changed.

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable. And this must be done. This mortal body must put on the imperishable. And this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written.

And Paul's going to make quotations from two different Old Testament prophets here. The first is from Isaiah 25. Death is swallowed up in victory. And then verse 55 is a quote from Hosea chapter 13, which says, oh death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting?

Well, he explains the sting of death is sin. And the power of sin is the law. Now Paul talks about this in Romans. He's not saying the law is a bad thing, but it does kill us. It kills us because we can't live up to it.

The law puts us to death. This is something Paul goes into great detail in Romans to explain. How the law, and if all we give people is the law, all we're giving them is death because nobody can live up to the law. The law is perfect. It's great.

It's good to learn. We should learn from it, about it. But if that's all I give people is the law, if I say, all right, here's the Ten Commandments. Here's the law that God gave. Here you go.

Boom. Well, all I'm giving them is a death sentence because it is through the law that I die because I see the standard is unreachable. I am condemned. I am under the curse of the law. However, Jesus has broken the curse by dying in our place, paying literally the curse in our place.

All right? So once again, verse 56, the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God. who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has borne our curse, taken the sting out of death. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. So, be steadfast, immovable.

In what? The gospel, the promise, the good news that Jesus has borne our curse, the curse of the law. The law condemns us, Jesus has acquitted us, and now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Amen? Let's pray.

Father, thank you. It's a long chapter, but it's important. Thank you for the promise of the resurrection. I pray my Father God that we would all stand fast, be steadfast in our faith, immovable. Thank you for loving us, teaching us, instructing us, and guiding us through your Spirit.

Continue to do so, we pray, in the authority of the name of Jesus. Amen.