**The Hope of Our Resurrection**

**1 Corinthians 15:20-34**

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We’re going to be looking at 1 Corinthians chapter 15 this morning. So let’s turn there in our Bible’s. We believe in teaching through the Word. We’re taking a little mini-series in 1 Corinthians 15 prior to Easter. We began this chapter last week and we continue it today and then next week as well, on Sunday. Today we’re going to be looking at verses 20-34 of 1 Corinthians 15. So let’s read this together.

***20*** *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* ***21*** *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead**.* ***22*** *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* ***23*** *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* ***24*** *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.* ***25*** *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* ***26*** *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* ***27*** *For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.* ***28*** *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.*

***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?* ***30*** *Why are we in danger every hour?* ***31*** *I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!* ***32*** *What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”* ***33*** *Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”* ***34*** *Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.*

May God encourage us, exhort us and correct us through His Word today!

A young man was opening a new business, so his friend sent him a floral arrangement to congratulate him. When he went to visit his friend at his new office he noticed the flowers that he had sent. But it had this message printed on the banner. It said, “Rest in peace.” He was quite embarrassed by this and he phoned the florist to complain. The florist first apologized of course, but then put his dilemma in perspective. He said, “Well, look at it this way. A man was buried today under a wreath that said, ‘Good luck in your new location.’”

The 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians is devoted to a discussion of this new location that will be ours as a result of a future resurrection. Unfortunately, many in Jesus’ church become bored with theology. And that is a terrible curse upon an individual life or upon a church. We miss the relevant foundation that God intends for theology or sound doctrine to have in our lives and in our church. So we become like ships tossed by every wave of circumstance and difficulty. Sound doctrine is God’s anchor to secure us to the harbor that is Himself. The principle we learn through Scripture is that no Christian can withstand the assaults of the enemy if he or she refuses to labor in grasping sound doctrine. This isn’t to say that sound doctrine alone is sufficient. But sound doctrine is the foundation. Without it we surely will be lost. God Himself warns us that a certain trait will mark the church in the last days. And this is what He says:

**2 Timothy 4:3 (NIV)** For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

He’s talking about men in the church. Men in the church will simply say, “Don’t give me that. Give me the practical stuff. Tell me what I need to do.” They’ll just simply not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they’ll gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. “Give me a message that I enjoy. Give me a message that I feel is relevant.”

The doctrine of the resurrection teaches us to live this present life in careful consideration of its temporary nature, and also in focused contemplation upon the eternal nature of the next life. We as believers need to meditate upon the truth of the brevity of this life more often! We’re constantly counseled that way through Scripture. Our joy and our blessing depend upon it. Moses wisely prayed:

**Psalm 90:12** So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Teach us to remember that our days are limited, that they’re fleeting. Teach us that, Lord. Teach us that because we’re not naturally conscious of the fleeting nature of our life.

Jesus told the story of the rich landowner who planned to build bigger and bigger barns to store all of his crops, the abundance which he received in the harvest. He longed to get to a point in his life where after these bigger barns would be full he’d be able to say, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” Take it easy! But Jesus says that God said to him, “You fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:16-21)

It’s riches toward God that mark a life that’s well-lived, a life of wisdom. How foolish to live life as though there is no resurrection from the dead.

One day, a nobleman died very suddenly and immediately his personal servant ran to tell others of his master’s death. One friend of the man asked the servant, “Do you think he went to heaven?” The servant replied, “I am quite sure that he did not go to heaven.”Surprised, this friend asked why the servant would say that. The servant replied, “Because heaven is a long way off, and I’ve known my master all my life. Whenever he took a long trip he would talk about it beforehand and he would make careful preparation for it. Never in my life have I heard my master say a word about heaven and never have I seen him get ready for it.”

People who are on their way to heaven talk about it and they prepare for this journey by joining their lives to the One who came from heaven to show us the way, to provide the way, so that He would take us there with Him. So at the outset of our study of 1 Corinthians 15, I want to ask each of you: Have you made preparation for this journey? This journey leads to a resurrection unto life. Do you think about it? Do you talk about it with others? Would others know whether or not you’ve gone to heaven after you die, as a result of the way you’ve talked about it and the way you prepared for this journey?

This morning we open our Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in verse 20. God calls us to live our lives in the full brightness of this future work of God of bringing about a resurrection to our bodies. Remember that some in the Corinthian church denied the bodily resurrection of the believer. That’s what they were saying in verse 12.

**1 Corinthians 15:12** Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

They likely believed in a spiritual resurrection of sorts, but not a bodily one. And so, to refute this false doctrine, Paul takes us back to the Gospel, which is where we always needs to return to in order to find clarity when we’re confused about anything related to life in God. So, he continues his argument in verse 20 by reminding us of three realities about Jesus that verify our future resurrection. If you’re taking notes, you might just jot down these three realities.

**Reality #1: Jesus is the firstfruits of God’s field.**

***20*** *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead…*

Paul says, “I want you to know that all of this discussion should not lead you to the conclusion that I am doubtful about this event. I am an eye witness. I’m one of them. It is an absolute fact that Jesus Christ has been bodily raised from the dead!”

*…the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

The term “first fruits” has a very specific meaning to those who love God’s Word. Paul is taking us back to the Old Testament. In Leviticus 23, the Feast of First Fruits is described.

**Leviticus 23:9-11** And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

In other words, “Take that very first sheaf that comes out of that harvest, out of that field, and take that to the priest. And he’ll wave the sheaf before the Lord, so that you might be accepted.”

This is Leviticus. They’re not even in the land yet. God is saying to Israel, “I am going to bring you into a land that is very, very fruitful and I want you to praise Me for that. I want you to remember that the fruitfulness of the land is My gift, My blessing to you. Each spring, when the harvest is first being received, I desire that you bring the very first fruits from the harvest so that you will acknowledge two truths about Me. First, that I am the Giver of the Harvest. Remember to thank Me for providing for you so generously. Don’t think that this is coming as a result of your hard work. It’s coming as a blessing from Me, a gift from Me. Secondly, I want you to remember that I have promised to give you the fullness of the Harvest. So when you bring the first fruit, you’re recognizing that there’s more fruit that is going to come that I am going to give you. I’m a generous God.” So the first fruit shows that God is going to be faithful to bring in the second, third, fourth fruits, and so on. He’s not going to leave them empty.

The timing of this feast is very important to the story of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. The people of Israel would first celebrate the Passover feast and then three days later on the first day of the week, they would celebrate the Feast of First Fruits. So that’s the timing. So, in Jesus’ death on the Passover, Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb of the Passover. He’s the Lamb whose blood was spilt and when His blood is applied to the doorposts of our heart, each one of us who have personally appropriated or applied the blood of Jesus as the Passover Lamb upon our hearts, will be safe from death on the Day of Judgment when the Angel of Death, the judgment comes upon us.Paul made this point earlier in this very letter to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 5:7 when he says, “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”

So, Paul is rooting this Gospel in God’s Old Testament revelation. And in Jesus’ resurrection then, it comes on the day of the Feast of First Fruits. And by that, Jesus is saying, “I am the firstfruits. I’m the Passover Lamb, but I’m also the firstfruits. And My resurrection is the firtsfruits of the resurrection, of the future for My people. So that every person who is in Me then, can see My resurrection and recognize that there’s going to be a resurrection in the future yet for them. They can trust God for that.”

Now when we step back from this, some people might ask the question: But was Jesus really the first fruits? In other words, was He the first to rise from the dead?What about Lazarus? What about Jairus’ daughter? What about the widow of Nain’s son and a number of others in the Bible who were raised to life? Here, there is a very important difference between Jesus’ resurrection and everyone else who was raised from the dead. Jesus was the first to rise with a resurrection body. The others, like Lazarus for instance, had been resuscitated back to life. But the body that they were resuscitated to was still a dying, decaying body. So they eventually experienced death again. They didn’t give a resurrection that conquered death. They were given a resurrection unto a body that was going to suffer and die again.

The effect of Jesus’ resurrection, however, was to raise the body in a state that is incorruptible, to truly conquer death once and for all. In this way, He is the first fruits of the resurrection. He is the promise of God that all those who are in Christ will conquer death completely through a resurrection of a body. It is a body that now in that resurrection, is incorruptible. It is fit for heaven. It will never grow weak. It will never get sick. It will never die. His resurrection is a permanent resurrection. And so it is the promise of a permanent resurrection for all those who are united to Him through faith. Before we leave this part of the passage, I want you to take note of how death is described. We see that again in verse 20.

*…the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

The Bible clearly teaches that the moment a believer dies he or she is immediately transported into the presence of God. 2 Corinthians 5 for instance, says:

**2 Corinthians 5:8** Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

So the moment a believer is away from the body, at that very precise moment, we are at home with the Lord. This is why dying is immediate gain for the Christian. “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Yet the security of our soul is not our only hope. That body which remains dead also will experience the power of salvation through Jesus Christ. The future resurrection is the reason that Paul refers to death as “falling asleep.” It is the body that is at rest. The soul is alive. It is the body that appears to be sleeping and that one day will awaken to new life! At the death of a loved one we often say things like, “He breathed his last.” Or, “She closed her eyes for the last time.” Beloved, those things aren’t true! Our bodies will open our eyes again and we will see the Lord and see our loved ones who are in Christ. Our bodies will breathe again unto life. Sleep is not the end. That’s why he calls it “sleep.” Sleep is only a temporary state.

Charles Spurgeon poetically writes, “The winter of the grave shall soon give way to the spring of the resurrection and the summer of glory. Blessed is death, since it answers all the ends of medicine to this mortal frame, and through the divine power disrobes us of the leprous rags of flesh, to clothe us with the wedding garment of incorruption.”

I fondly remember creeping into my boys’ room and watching them sleep. I just loved to see their precious little selves resting peacefully with their eyes closed and that breathing pattern that was rhythmic. And I’d pray over them. It was sweet and beautiful. And it was sweet and beautiful because I believed that in the morning I’d see them once again running around, jumping in my lap, laughing, getting involved in all kinds of shenanigans. In the death of the saints, as we look upon that body, we have the same confidence that a mom and dad has as they look at their children sleeping. In fact, we have more confidence because it’s possible that a child might die in its sleep. But it is absolutely not possible for a believer who is in Christ, for that body to not waken unto new life on the day that Jesus returns.

**Reality #2: Jesus is the last Adam.**

***21*** *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.* ***22*** *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Adam’s disobedience to God was more than a personal act of disobedience for which he endured judgment. His disobedience impacted not only his own life, not only his own marriage, but his disobedience impacted every person that would flow from him. And that’s all humanity. Adam is our representative and his sin brought sin and brought death and hardship and brokenness to every one of his race.

Just by way of illustration, imagine that you are a member of a high school championship football team. Your coach violates the rules by betting on his team and shaving points during that tournament game. When he is found out, please understand, his guilt sticks to every member of the team. His judgment passes down to the whole. He and you as a member of the team, lose trophies. You lose applause. You lose honor. You lose the championship because the representative head messed up. And that’s what we are in Adam. Adam messed up and so all of us who are in Adam are subject to the judgment and death of sin. Now, we’re participants as well. That’s where the illustration breaks down. We are people who continue to sin. But it is our representative that first brought death and sin to us.

Paul’s point is that Adam doesn’t have to define us, though. There now is another option to switch representative heads. We are invited to believe in Jesus as our Savior and Lord, and have Him become our representative. If we are in Christ we should know then that all the blessings that are Christs’ become ours. Just as all the cursings that are part of Adam become ours, now all the blessings that are Christ’s become ours. While our humanity means that we are born united to Adam in his sin and death, the Gospel of God offers us an opportunity to be united to Jesus. It is only in Christ that we will be made alive. Everyone, all who are in Christ are made alive. If a person is outside of Christ, then you’re not going to be made alive. You’re still in Adam. Sin and death is your future.

The truth is, to enjoy the blessing of Jesus’ resurrection, you and I must personally receive Him in faith. Our union with Christ is our guarantee of all the blessings that God places upon Christ Jesus. It’s a wonder that when we are in Christ all the blessings that the Father places upon His Son and that His Son deserves by merit, become ours even though we don’t deserve them by our merit. Think with me about some of the blessings that God places upon His Son and that now become ours.

In Christ, we are declared completely righteous by God the Father. That’s a declaration that the Father makes upon His Son because His Son is righteous. But now He makes it upon us because we’re in Christ. In Christ, we are free from sin’s guilt and shame. There’s no condemnation for us because there’s no condemnation upon Christ.

In Christ, we are liberated from the power of sin’s enslaving force. We don’t have to be victims of sin’s power anymore because Christ is not a victim of sin’s power. He’s conqueror! In Christ, we have been given a rich inheritance in heaven. It’s secured for us because that blessing has been secured by Christ. If we’re in Christ, it’s secured for us.

In Christ, we have been given a place of high honor by God the Father. Jesus Christ has been given a place of high honor. When we’re in Him, we share in that honor. In Christ, we are treated as beloved children. We are wholly accepted and eternally loved. We’ll never be separated from that love. Why is that? Because Christ will be never separated from the love of the Father. And if we’re in Christ, we will never be separated from the love of the Father.

In Christ, we are resurrected. Our body will not undergo decay because Jesus Himself was resurrected. Jesus is the first fruits, guaranteeing our future resurrection. Jesus is the last Adam, placing us under a new living representative head.

**Reality #3: Jesus must reign over all creation.**

***23*** *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*

So Jesus rises first. Then at His coming, those who belong to Him will experience this bodily resurrection. This resurrection is described in some detail in 1 Thessalonians 4. I want to take some time to read it. Oftentimes, this passage is only read at funerals. But I think it’s such a precious one that we ought to be mindful of it consistently, week by week. Paul writes:

**1 Thessalonians 4:13** But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep…

There he uses that word again. It’s a bodily sleep that means death.

…that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

In other words, there’s other people that when they set a body in the grave they don’t have any anticipation that anything will happen in the future with that body. That’s not us!

**1 Thessalonians 4:14-18** For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left…

We who are alive when that event takes place. We who have not fallen asleep yet, but who are now still living in these bodies, we too, our bodies will be changed. We

…will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

What an encouraging word!

Paul is describing Jesus’ return in the air. This does not describe Jesus’ return to the earth, but rather the coming of the Lord in the clouds and the bodily resurrection of the saints. I believe this is the next event in God’s prophetic calendar. When will this take place? Sometimes referred to as the Rapture of the church, when does this take place? Well skip down with me in 1 Corinthians 15.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all 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 shall be changed.

There are some that are going to be alive and remain at the time of the coming of the Lord. We’re not all going to sleep, but we will all be changed. We’ll all have a resurrected body. It doesn’t give us a date, but it tells us that it’s going to happen suddenly, like the twinkling of an eye. It will be faster than a wink, faster than a blink. What a glorious future is ours!

Sometime after this event, when we meet the Lord in the air, Jesus will come and fulfill His promise to set His feet upon this earth, to establish an earthly kingdom. Revelation 20 teaches us that this earthly kingdom is going to last for 1,000 years. And that during these 1,000 years, the resurrected saints who met the Lord in the air will return with Jesus in their new bodies, and they will reign with Jesus on the earth. This is amazing!

**Revelation 20:6** Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

This is a call and an intention that all of us would share in this resurrection. There’s nothing keeping us from sharing in this blessing of the first resurrection except our own willfulness and refusal to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and our need for Him. During this millennial kingdom we’ll reign with Jesus for 1,000 years. What a glorious future is ours! There’s one more final chapter in God’s kingdom plan. Let’s continue reading from Revelation 20.

**Revelation 20:7-10** And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

So at the beginning of that 1,000 years when Jesus rules and reigns with the resurrected saints on the earth, Satan is bound. At the end of the 1,000 years here, God is describing that Satan is going to be released and he’s going to deceive the nations because there’s going to still be nations when Jesus is ruling on the earth. He’ll gather them for battle against Jesus. Jesus will put an end to this last battle in an instant. So at this moment, Jesus finally puts Satan and sin to an utter end. At that point, there will no more ever be any sin, any brokenness, any condemnation after that last battle and that final judgment. Sin is put to an ultimate, absolute end. That connects us with 1 Corinthians 15:23-26.

***23*** *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* ***24*** *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.* ***25*** *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* ***26*** *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

The end begins with His coming in the air and then upon the earth. He delivers the kingdom to God the Father in the millennial reign with rebellious people. But He does this ultimately when Satan is released and he gathers the nations once again to rise up against God. At that point, that’s when Jesus destroys every rule, every authority, and every power. And notice this. Please underline it. It says, “For He must reign….” That’s the beauty! Glory and power, dominion, majesty, blessing and honor be unto Him. He must reign! And He will reign until He has put all His enemies under his feet. Death will have its final day, and it will be no more.

Now there is much disagreement among Godly people about the order and specifics of these events related to God’s prophetic future. But the major truth is that Jesus will return. And when He returns, He will put an end to sin and rebellion and He will reign over all kingdoms. And He will put an end to death. And all who are in Christ will be raised in Christ and will reign with Him forever and ever. The truth here instructed to us is that Jesus must reign, because the Father decrees from eternity past that the Son would have authority over all creation. This was set before God said, “Let there be light.” (Genesis 1:3) No one is able to thwart God’s plan for His Son to be given honor, glory, riches and power over all.

When God created this world, He created it with a view that His Son, in counsel with Himself, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The plan that was set and decreed was that the Son would die a sacrificial death for man’s sin. The Father would receive the Son’s sacrifice and bring a resurrection to His Son, a bodily resurrection. The Son then would rule as a resurrected King. This King would have subjects, people who would come to believe in Him, and bow their knee to Him and be changed as a result of Him. The Son’s authority and glory would be in all and over all. No enemy would survive continuing to rebel against Him, against His righteousness and against His truth. Every enemy would be put under His feet. And that’s why that sweet little phrase is so precious. He must reign!

The reason that Jesus’ reign is significant to the argument of a future resurrection is that our resurrection is part of Jesus’ glory, the honor that the Father is going to bestow upon His Son. What kind of kingdom would a king have if there were no subjects? And that’s why the church is God’s gift to His Son. That’s the reason why we’re saved in the first place. It’s for the glory of God Himself. And Jesus’ reign is such a great encouragement to us who believe.

Sometimes we experience the brokenness of this world and wonder who is on the throne. Sometimes it seems as though the wrong that comes against us is often so strong. And we wonder who is ruling this world when the wrongs are so visible and so powerful and so forceful. And we get discouraged and we feel defeated. And sometimes we are tempted to just simply give up. At this point, we grab on to God’s Word and we say with the Apostle Paul, “Jesus must reign!” He will! I’m not going to give up. I’m going to wait upon the Lord who gives strength in the midst of my own weariness. He will display His own power and glory at the end. And every enemy will be set under His feet and will be utterly defeated.

Let me ask you: Where do you stand in relationship to Jesus’ authority? Have you bowed your knee to this King and said, “I yield my heart to You? You are my King. Please grant me Your favor. Make me a part of your kingdom.” That’s the call of the Gospel upon our lives. Receive life from Him even today.

Now there are three applications for the believer that I want us to observe. They are printed in the text of 1 Corinthians 15.

**Applications:**

**1. Let us boldly proclaim the Good News of Jesus!**

God intends for us to be His witnesses, to be people who are messengers of this good news. The world is broken and without this good news this world has no hope for the future, no hope of the resurrection. The best this world has is “Let’s eat, drink, and be merry because tomorrow we’re going to die. Let’s make the best of it.” But there is a better word that we have as recipients of the Gospel message.

Now the verse here is very difficult to understand. Time is closing. I’m going to try to do the best I can. I know that it’s likely that I won’t be very satisfying to you at this point on verse 29. Verse 29 is the hardest verse in 1 Corinthians. It might be the hardest verse in all the New Testament to understand. There are good Bible scholars, and among them there are about 30 or 40 different interpretations. Now, today you are blessed because I’m going to give you *the* interpretation. (Laughter!) I’m being very facetious, for those who don’t know me. Don’t think that I’m serious about that. I will give you the one that I think is correct. But again, really good people disagree with this.

***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?*

Let’s take this apart. “Baptized on behalf of the dead…” That’s the phrase that is troublesome. The word “baptized” I believe, refers to those who have become believers in Jesus. That’s why they’re being baptized. “On behalf of the dead,” and this is where there is much controversy. “On behalf of” can mean “on behalf of,” but also can be translated “because of” or “on account of.” “The dead” I believe, refers to believers who lived a life to the glory of God. They received the Gospel. They lived to the glory of God. They died in hope, but they’re now fallen asleep. So it’s the dead in Christ. So people are being baptized, in other words, they’re giving their own testimony of their faith in Jesus because of people who at one time were alive and had given a testimony of God’s goodness and truthfulness and grace.

So if you can imagine, to personalize it, imagine that you have a grandma who loved the Lord all her life, and all her life, you resisted. You heard her. You heard her prayers. You heard her testimony and she lived that before you. And then she died. You went to her funeral and at the funeral again, you hear her testimony of her hope in the Gospel. You still resisted, but at some point, God got a hold of you. At some point you said, “What my grandma said was true. I’m going to receive Jesus Christ. And I receive that in large measure because of how God used her testimony of her words and her life to demonstrate to me to not forget what this is all about. And eventually, it took me a long time, but eventually I got there.” And at your baptism, you say “I am being baptized because of a dead person, my grandma.” So that’s what I think it means. It is speaking of people who are saying, “I’m being baptized now because of people who are already now with the Lord. Because of their testimony, that’s the reason why I’ve come to faith in Jesus Christ.”

So how this connects to Paul’s argument is, if there is no resurrection, then this person who died, their testimony would actually weaken after they die, because they are no more. It’s only in view of the resurrection that their testimony continues to have power. “My grandma is in heaven and one day, she’ll be resurrected. And because I can’t get that out of my mind, the Holy Spirit uses it to change my heart. I’m being baptized because of a dead person.” And it would make no sense that anyone would ever say that, if there is no resurrection. So, what I believe the application for this is let’s be like that grandma. Let’s not be weary in proclaiming the Gospel to family and friends. Because God will use that for His power and His glory.

**2. Let us daily give ourselves for the glory of God.**

In view of our future resurrection, let’s give ourselves daily.

***30*** *Why are we in danger every hour?* ***31*** *I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!* ***32*** *What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”*

When Paul says, “I die every day!” he is not referring to sort of a spiritual act of dying to self. He’s referring to literal, physical death. In essence to say, “Every day I put myself in physical danger.” He recalls a time when he was in Ephesus and evidently he was thrown in front of the beasts there as a result of his testimony of the Lord Jesus. And he says, “Every day I put myself in physical danger. Why would I do that? Jesus has secured my bodily resurrection. The risk of losing my physical life is not overwhelming because I know physical death will never have the last word. So, every day I get up and I think, ‘I may die today because of my commitment to Jesus Christ.’ But you know, that’s okay. For me to live is Christ. For me to die is actually gain. I will not let this threat of loss of physical life deter me from living sacrificially, fervently in service to my God.” Now, here’s his point. If there is no resurrection of the dead, if I let that false doctrine just go, then all my life is meaningless. Why would I risk my physical life every day if there’s no resurrection from the dead?

Jim Elliott, who was a young man who gave his life on the mission field famously said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” None of us can keep our physical lives. And we’re not a fool if we give up our physical life to gain what we cannot lose. It’s all through the grace of God.

I know on this end, I don’t think any of us can say with Paul, “I die daily.” In other words, “every day my life physically is threatened and I might die today because someone is going to attack me or the government is going to imprison me and put me to death.” But I think we can enter into the spirit by saying, “I live in anticipation that this might be my last day on earth. And if it is, I want to die serving Jesus Christ. I don’t want to die serving myself or serving temporal needs. I want this body to be invested in that which is eternal.” For many American Christians, the hope of retirement has replaced the hope of the resurrection as the driving motivation for our lives. The resurrection teaches us to finish well! To commit ourselves to Christ until this body dies is God’s call, not until this body reaches age 65.

**3. Let us joyfully fight for personal holiness.**

***32*** *What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”* ***33*** *Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”* ***34*** *Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.*

Paul says, “Listen! Your body was created by God. And that body that God created for you is a body you will carry with you into eternity. Yes, it will be changed, but it’s going to be the same body. There’s continuity there. You’re not going to escape your body when you die.” So don’t just think, “It doesn’t really matter what I do with my body because after I die, my body is going to be dust.” No, for the believer! That’s wrong! That’s pagan to think that way.

Consider this. I think this is the application. The hands that we use to steal and take stuff and to do wrong actions are hands that we’re going to take into eternity with us. They’re going to be there. We’re going to see it. These hands did that. The mouth that curses, the mouth that gossips, the mouth that deceives and that slanders is the mouth that we’re going to take into eternity with us. We’re not going to be separated from it. The eyes that lust after others, that view pornography, these are the eyes that we’re going to take into eternity with us. The feet that run after wrong relationships, the stomach that soaks up alcohol or drugs, the ears that listen to immoral stories or evil reports about others, these are the feet, the stomachs, and the ears that we’ll take with us into eternity. Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6. He’s making this same application.

**1 Corinthians 6:12-15** “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

And that’s why the Apostle Paul finishes this sweet section with a moral call in verse 34.

***34*** *Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right,*

A drunken stupor is one in which you’re not cognizant of what is real anymore. He says, “Wake up, Christian who is just continuing to use your body for things that are passing away and that are corrupting and that are defiling of God.” God is going to raise up these bodies. And the things that you do with these bodies, while again, there’s no condemnation, but I think there’s eternal sadness over how I use these hands, I use these eyes, I use this body that God gave me. And he says, “Wake up from your drunken stupor!” It matters what we do with our bodies.

*and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.*

That’s the only explanation. So, I ask you first and foremost, are you united to the Lord Jesus Christ? It’s our union with Him that provides us with all of His blessings. Have you placed your faith in Him as your Savior and your Lord? It is in Him that the promise of resurrected life is offered. Reach up and grab it and then let us live our lives as resurrected people.