

The Resurrection of the Dead

Sunday, August 21st, 1988

1 Corinthians 15

I have a message for you today on the subject: “THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.” I would like for you to take your Bible and open it to First Corinthians 15. I have some interesting things to share with you.

Paul is writing to the church at Corinth in this portion of the Epistle (Chapter 15, from verses 1 all the way through the verses to 59), and is dealing with this subject, “The Resurrection.” I will try to call out the verses as I deal with them.

Evidently, there were some people and preachers in the church at Corinth who were denying the resurrection of the dead.

It seems fundamental to the Gospel of Christ that without the resurrection you have no gospel. That is how serious this matter is. Without the resurrection, you do not have any gospel. That is what Paul says in verses 16 and 17.

He says, *“If the dead rise not, then Christ is not raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain and you are yet in your sins.”* In other words, if the dead rise not, then you are without God, without Christ, and without hope in this world. You are still in your sins and your faith is vain.

You see; the resurrection is fundamental to the Gospel. That is where I am starting, in verse 1. Let’s go back to Chapter 15. There is and will be a resurrection of all the dead, no question about it. Job said, *“If a man die, shall he live again?”* Well, according to the Word of God, he shall, and according to the Scripture he shall.

Look at verses 1-4 Paul says, *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. And that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”*

That is not all. This is the Gospel. He arose again. He arose according to the Scriptures. Paul wrote in verses 5 through 8 *“that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After*

that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”

So, this being the very truth of our Gospel without which we have no Gospel, Paul says; “How is it that some among you say, there is no resurrection of the dead?” What do you mean by that? Look at verse 12: *“How say; some among you, there is no resurrection of the dead?”* This is fundamental to our Gospel.

Our Gospel is that Christ died for our sins according to all the types, patterns, and pictures in the Old Testament. He was buried, like the scapegoat of old and He rose again according to the Scriptures. *“How say some among you, there is no resurrection, especially after all these witnesses?”* He said, “Many of them are still alive and saw the Lord after He arose from the grave.”

In verses 12 through 19 in this chapter (1 Corinthians 15), Paul deals with the consequences of such foolishness of denying the resurrection of the dead. Here are the consequences, listen carefully.

First of all, *“If there is no resurrection, then Christ is not risen,”* and He lied. He said, *“Destroy this temple and in three days and I will raise it up.”* They thought He was talking about the Jewish temple. The Scripture says that He was talking about His body. He said again, *“Jonah was three days in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man shall be three days in the heart of the earth.”*

Second: *“If Christ is not risen, our preaching is in vain.”* There would be no need to preach. There would be no reason to teach your children the Word of God because your faith is in vain. If there is no resurrection, don’t bother with teaching them the Bible because it is all in vain.

Third: If Christ is not risen, then we have misrepresented God; we have falsely preached that there is a resurrection when there is not. Now, that is serious. It is very serious to misrepresent God.

Fourth: If Christ be not risen, then His body is still in the tomb, because He died. If His body is still in the tomb, then He is an imposter and He is not God. God certainly can’t be dead and can’t lie in a tomb.

Fifth: *“If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain and you shall die in your sins.”* Do you see those statements there before you in the Bible? Christ said, *“If you die in your sins, you can’t come where I am.”* Christ is seated on the throne in glory. If there is no resurrection, then there is no heaven.

Sixth: If Christ is not risen, then all who have died believing on Christ (men such as Luther, Knox, Whitfield, Spurgeon and Edward) have perished and have no hope. *“If Christ be not risen we are of all men most miserable.”*

Paul sums this whole thing up and says, *“We are of all men most miserable.”* Of all miserable creatures, we are the most miserable, because our confidence and hope is in a failure and a myth. It is something that did not happen.

Watch this in verse 20: *“But, now is Christ risen.”* The truth is Christ is risen. There is no question about that. He arose from the tomb. Here are two things that I want you to see here and they are very important; He has risen, and He has risen as our representative. This is so vital and this is so important.

Look at the next four verses (20 through 23): *“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”*

Now, this is interesting. What are the first fruits?

Over in the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 26, the first fruits were the first harvests. It didn’t matter if it was barley, wheat, corn, or whatever. The farmers planted the crops; they planted fields of barley and fields of wheat and fields of corn. Then, the first fruits that were picked (the first sheaves) were taken to the temple and offered to the Lord. This was the first fruits, and they were given unto the Lord.

What he is saying here is that Jesus Christ is the first fruits of those that shall arise from the grave. In other words, the first fruits were taken to the temple and offered unto the Lord. There will be plenty more fruits; there will more corn, more wheat and more barley. It was the first fruits, which were taken and offered unto the Lord.

Christ has become the first fruits of those who were dead, who has risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. There will be more arise just as He arose, there will be more resurrected like He was resurrected but He is the first.

You may say, "But Lazarus was raised from the grave." Lazarus died again. The widow's son was raised, but he died again. Everybody who was raised died again. See what I am saying? Christ was the first to rise from the dead to die no more. He has risen from the tomb to die no more. He has risen with an incorruptible, immortal body that cannot die. He is the first One. "He is the first fruits of many, many, and many that shall be raised again.

Go to verses 20 and 21: "*But now, Christ is risen from the grave and He has become the first fruits of them that slept: For, since by man came death.*" What is that talking about when it says, "By man came death?" It came by Adam, "*In Adam we died. Wherefore, by one man and sin entered this world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men.*"

Adam was a representative of the whole human race. You see; God never created but one man. He created Adam and every human being came from Adam. "*He hath made of one blood all nations.*" He made all the different nationalities and different colors. There was one race and it came from Adam; everybody did.

God then confounded their language and sent them off in different directions, but Adam was the only man that God ever created. Everyone comes from Adam. That's right! "*For since by man came death, by man came the resurrection of the dead.*"

There are two men talked about here. The first man is Adam. His very name means man. His name means red earth. Man was created from the red earth. He represented all who were in Him, all who came from Him. All that came from his loins were represented by him in the fall. "*By man came death.*"

When Adam was created, we were created. When Adam stood, we stood. When Adam fell, we fell. When Adam sinned, we sinned. When Adam died, we died. The whole human race was in Adam.

"*By man came also the resurrection.*" There is another man. There is a second Adam. "*The first Adam is of the earth, earthy; the second Adam is the Lord from heaven.*" We are going to see that in a minute. "*So by man came death, by man came the resurrection of the dead. For in Adam, all died, even so in Christ, (all who are in Christ) shall be made alive.*"

All who were in Adam died. All who were represented by Adam died. All who came from Adam died. They died spiritually and they died physically. There is not a living

human being that isn't going to die. We are born sinners. We are born painted, polluted, and corrupted by Adam's sin. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh."*

There is a second Adam; *there* is a second man, the Lord from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Son came down here in the likeness of sinful flesh, made of a woman, made under the law. But, He was made without a human father. Therefore, He didn't partake or wasn't in Adam. He was in the bosom of the Heavenly Father. He didn't come from Adam, He wasn't in Adam, He wasn't represented by Adam, and He wasn't identified with Adam.

The first Adam represents all of us. The second Adam *"Is the Lord from heaven."* He came down here to represent a people in Him, given to Him by the Father. In Adam we lost spiritual life and died physically. In Christ, life is restored and we will live forever. By Adam's sin we were made sinners; by Christ's obedience we were made righteous.

All who are in Adam die; that is every human being and all who are in Christ shall live. Who is that? That is every believer who is in Christ. If you are not in Christ, then this promise does not apply to you. If you are not in Christ by faith, the promise doesn't apply to you. All who are in Christ shall live. *"As in Adam all die; even so in Christ shall be made alive."*

By Adam's fall, we received an evil nature and fell under the curse of the law. By Christ's obedience and Christ's death, we were delivered from the curse of the law. *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us."* He restored us to God's fellowship.

You see, like Adam we die. We die physically and we are buried. That is all Adam can do. Christ can take us beyond the tomb. By His resurrection we live. He said, *"Because I live; you live."* His resurrection from the dead as our Saviour and Representative, His resurrection is proof that God accepted what He did on our behalf and what He did for us and what He did as our representative. It is the proof that His atonement was effectual!

Listen to this; it is proof that God the Father accepted His offering on our behalf. In Acts 17:31, listen very carefully; *"God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness and true holiness."* This is not to profess holiness and put on holiness, like a veneer. This is true righteousness *"By that man whom He hath ordained Jesus Christ. Whereof, He hath given assurance unto all men that He raised Jesus Christ from the dead."*

This is our assurance that God will face all men in judgment. This is our assurance that all who are in Christ shall be delivered. This is our assurance that all that are not in Christ, and don't have His righteousness, shall be condemned.

When God raised Him from the dead, God said; "I accept Him; I accept His work and I accept His sacrifice. I accept all who are represented by Him and all who believe Him and all who are in Him and no one else. I accept Him. He is going to judge the world by that man.

Do you see that? Now, is Christ risen and become the first fruits of many fruits of them that slept. For, since by man came death, that representative man, that federal-head, Adam, in whom we all lived and from who we all came. Even so, in Christ, all who are in Christ, shall be made alive.

All right, look at verse 35. This is a mystery; there is no question about it; what a mystery! Someone will say, "*How are the dead raised, with what body shall they come?*" Do you see that in verse 35? How is a dead body raised from the earth that has been dead so long? It has undergone thousand of changes. It has gone back to the dust; it is corrupted and decayed. The worms have devoured it. With what body does it come?

He illustrates and it starts out this way in verse 36; "*Thou fool,*" you are foolish to doubt the power of God. You don't ask God how He does something. "*How are the dead raised? Is anything too hard for God?*"

Is God not able to raise the dead, who created Adam out of the dust? He created Adam out of the dust of the ground. He breathed into his body the breath of life. He became a living soul. What is to prevent Him from raising someone that is dead and gone back to the dust?

"*Thou fool,*" I'll explain it to you, He said; "That which is planted, that which you sow or plant as a farmer in the garden does not come up, unless it dies." Do you understand that? When you go out and plant a garden, it stays there several days before it comes up. What is it doing in the ground? There is rain on it and sun shining on it. It is germinating and rotting in the ground and then it comes up.

You can't keep it on a saucer; it won't live; it won't bear fruit. It won't grow anything; you have to put it in the ground. That which you sow does not come up unless it dies. When you plant it, listen to this verse 37; "*That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain.*" You only plant a seed, you don't plant the full stalk.

The farmer doesn't go out into the field, dig a trench, and put out a six-foot stalk of corn with a half a dozen luscious ears on it. That is not what you do. You get a seed, a withered, hard, old seed of corn. It doesn't look like much; it is just a little old single seed of corn that is withered.

You take that little grain of corn out, you dig a hole, and you put it in the ground. That is what you do. What comes up? Why, a great, big, tall stalk of corn, full of moisture. That little seed didn't have any moisture in it. The stalk has moisture and three to five ears of corn and hundreds of grains of corn on each ear along with the silk and the tassel.

You stand back and say, "I didn't plant that." No; you planted the seed. This is what He says here, "You only plant a seed, and the full stalk comes from the seed." Even so, when men die, the body is dead. The body is old and wrinkled, hard and has no moisture. The body is buried dead and goes back to the dust.

God will raise it up someday, just like He makes that seed of corn to grown into a beautiful brand new beautiful stalk. You don't plant what you resurrect. You don't plant what you grow, you plant the bare seed. What comes from it is a miracle of God; it is a miracle of transformation.

So, read verses 42-43: "*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.*" We will be buried in corruption, in sickness, in old age and decay. We will be raised in incorruption. We will be buried in dishonor, shame, and sinful bodies. We will be raised in perfect holiness and honor.

Compare that seed to what you have out in the field in about six weeks or 75 days. Why, there is no comparison! We are buried in weakness, frailty, and flesh. We will be raised in strength and power. We are buried a natural body and we will be raised a spiritual body. Do you see what He is saying?

Compare a grain of corn that you plant to the fruitful stock that comes up and you will have a picture of the resurrection. It is infinitely more glorious and more mysterious. The same God does it. There is life in that seed!

Look at verses 47 through 49; "*The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the*

heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Those who believe in Christ shall be raised from the dead in the image of Christ. We are made in the image of Adam. We are fleshly, sinful, corrupted, and decayed. There is fear, guilt and all of these things. We shall bear the image someday of the heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly.

Now, take time sometime if you will, to study the appearances of our Lord after the resurrection. After our Lord arose from the tomb, He appeared to His disciples. If you will listen to His Words and observe Him, and read carefully in Luke Chapter 24, you will find first of all that they knew Him.

People say, "Well, will we know each other in heaven?" Of course we will; we will be who we are. Our Lord Jesus Christ was buried, rose again and He was the same Jesus that was crucified. They knew Him and they talked to Him. They called Him, "*Their Master.*" They talked to Him and He talked to them.

They touched Him. He said, "*Reach out and touch My hand.*" They thought they had seen a ghost. They had never seen a dead man talk to them before. He said, "*A ghost doesn't have flesh and bones like you see Me have; touch Me.*"

He ate with them. He ascended to heaven in the same body. The Bible says, "*This same Jesus which is taken up from you, shall come in like manner as you see Him go.*" That is what our bodies will be like. They are going to be like Christ. We shall be perfect and conformed to His image. As we have borne the image of the earthy, the first man, we are going to bear the image of the heavenly.

In verse 50, it says; "*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*" This flesh and blood as we know it, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. This flesh and blood can't survive in the Kingdom of God. It can't survive in the glory of it, in the beauty of it, or in the holiness of it.

This flesh, this dwelling place of evil has got to be changed. That is what the change is when we bury this old flesh, bury it in corruption and it is raised in incorruption. This flesh is buried in shame, raised in honor, buried in weakness, and raised in power. This flesh is buried a fleshly, natural body and raised with the moisture of holiness, and the moisture of everlasting life, and the moisture of righteousness, and the life of God that can never die, never, never die.

What if you are living when Christ comes? Well, if you are alive, you shall be changed. I show you a mystery. Look at verses 51 and 52: *“I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye at the last trump, for the trump shall sound and the dead in Christ shall rise and then we shall all be changed.”*

We shall all be changed from corruption to incorruption. *“This mortal must put on immortality.”* When this takes place, then shall be brought to pass the saying, *“Death is swallowed up in victory; O death where is thy sting; O grave where is thy victory?”*

Here is the key in verse 57; *“Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* The victory is over sin, the victory is over death, and then there is the victory over the grave.

Thanks be unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ for He is our Righteousness; He is our Sin-Offering; He is our life and He is our resurrection. He said, *“Because I live; you shall live also.”*