

Our Resurrection from the Dead

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening everyone. Good evening anyone. Keep your Bibles open to that passage and we're going to have a look at that passage tonight.

We're actually looking at a doctrinal sort of theological topic here, the resurrection of our bodies. And hopefully you'll be aware of the last two lines of the Apostles' Creed which talk about this where we say that we believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

We believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. And so we're going to look at that doctrine tonight of the resurrection body. And I realise that already maybe your eyes might be glazing over, that sounds a bit dry, esoteric, looking at a doctrinal topic and you might be thinking, well that's all very well but what does a topic of doctrine have to do with real life?

Well, I think the doctrine always has very much application to real life now and I want us to look at what the application is tonight of the doctrine of our resurrection body.

What should change in your life as a result of knowing that you'll be raised from the dead? So let's have a look, let's dive into the passage. Paul starts with this objection from the Corinthians.

[1 : 25] The Corinthians didn't believe in physical resurrection at all, they thought it was a ridiculous idea and he starts there with their objection, how can a physical body be raised from the dead?

How can a dead corpse in the ground come back to life? It's ridiculous. It's a little bit like a Halloween episode from The Simpsons where zombies come up from the grave with flesh dripping off them and the Corinthians are thinking like that and thinking what an absurd idea.

Paul says, but someone will ask, how are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?

The Corinthians are thinking, yeah, dead corpses raised to life? What's that going to look like?

It's ridiculous. Well, Paul says that we will be raised from the dead in this passage and he begins by showing that it's not such a ridiculous or crazy idea and that our resurrection from the dead in verses 36 to 44, he shows that it's a reasonable idea in fact.

And he does that by looking at nature around us and he's arguing here that nature around us has examples of resurrected bodies and the example he takes of a resurrected body is planting a tree.

[2 : 34] And he says here, when you plant a tree, you don't take the final product normally and plant the tree in the ground with its trunk and branches and leaves and so on, but you take a little seed and plant that in the ground.

So, you plant a dead seed in the ground and God raises it up as a living tree with this new, if you like, resurrected body. So, verse 36, Paul says there, Fool, what you sow doesn't come to life unless it dies.

And as for what you sow, you don't sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain, but God gives it a body as he has chosen.

So, God takes that dead seed in the ground and gives it a new body as he's chosen. So, Paul's point here is it's not so unreasonable or crazy to think that a dead body could be raised up again with a new body.

And in fact, not only a new body, but a different body. And Paul goes on to show how there are examples in nature of different types of bodies. Again, at verse 38, he says, God gives it a body as he has chosen and to each kind of seed its own body.

[3 : 49] Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing and that of the earthly is another.

There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars. Indeed, star differs from star in glory. So, he's saying here there's different types of bodies in nature.

Fish exist in water. We don't. Stars exist in space. God gives different types of flesh to different types of bodies depending on where they exist.

And so, just as there are different types of bodies in nature and just as dead bodies are sown in the ground and new living bodies that are different are raised up from them, so he's saying we will be sown in the ground as dead bodies, seeds and we will be raised up to life again with new and different bodies that God chooses to give us.

And these will be our new resurrection bodies fitted out for heaven. So, here's Paul's punchline for this section. He says, verse 42, So, it is with the resurrection of the dead.

[5 : 02] What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a physical body.

It is raised a spiritual body. So, he's saying our physical bodies are sown like seeds in the ground, dead, perishable in dishonour, in weakness, but they're raised up as new and different bodies, imperishable in glory and in power, as new spiritual resurrection bodies.

So, Paul's point here is that just from looking at nature around you even, you can see that the idea of a resurrected body is not so crazy or unreasonable.

The idea that a dead body sown in the ground could be raised up again as a new and different body is actually a reasonable idea. So, it's a reasonable idea that we'll be raised from the dead.

Although now he goes on to say it's not just a reasonable idea, it's actually certain that we'll be raised from the dead. And it's certain because of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

[6 : 09] So, we celebrated at Easter a few weeks ago, Jesus' resurrection. Paul is now saying that guarantees our resurrection. And in verse 44, he talks here about two different bodies.

He says, if there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. He doesn't actually mean two different bodies, he means one body. He's saying the physical body is raised from the dead as a spiritual body, but it's the same body.

So, Jesus was raised from the dead with his wounds still visible, a real physical body. But the same body is fitted out for two different spheres of existence.

So, just as one type of body can exist in water like a fish or on land or in air, so this one body will exist in two different spheres. Now it exists on this earth as a natural body, but it will exist in heaven in the age to come as a spiritual resurrection body.

And by spiritual, by the way, we don't mean non-physical. So, that's usually, I realise, what we mean when we say spiritual. We mean there's physical and spiritual. Spiritual meaning non-physical.

[7 : 25] But here he means by spiritual, fitted out for the age to come, a body that is fitted out for heaven. So, there's our present age now where we are formed from the dust of the earth like Adam.

And that's the body we have now. But there's also a resurrection body which is for the age to come that God will give us. And the man of heaven, Jesus, was raised from the dead with his spiritual body.

But it was physical. So, if you remember when he was raised from the dead at the end of the Gospels, he said, touch me and see that I'm not a ghost. He ate fish in front of the disciples. His wounds, as I said, were still visible.

It's a real physical body. And yet, the 11 apostles were locked in a room for fear of the Jews and the Romans. And Jesus could just appear in the room with them.

So, it's a physical body, but it's different, new and different. A spiritual body that is physical and continuous with the dead body that was sown in the ground, but also new and different and fitted out for the age to come.

[8 : 28] And just as we now have our earthly body, so we will have a new spiritual resurrection body like Jesus's. So, look at verse 44, where Paul says this.

He says, If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, The first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

But it isn't the spiritual that's first, but the physical and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, the man of dust. The second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are off the dust.

And as is the man of heaven, so are those who are off heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

So, Paul is saying, not only is it reasonable, if you look at the world around you, that we could be raised from the dead, but it's certain we'll be raised from the dead because of Jesus's resurrection. [9 : 32] Because Jesus was raised from the dead with his new spiritual body fitted out for heaven. So, we will be like him and we will be raised from the dead.

Final point is that not only is our resurrection reasonable and certain, but it's essential. Paul goes on to say, it's essential that you be raised from the dead to enter heaven.

You can't enter heaven, the kingdom of God, without this new spiritual resurrection body. He says in verse 50, what I'm saying, brothers and sisters, is this, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

And he says the same thing positively in verse 53. He says, for this perishable body must put on imperishability and this mortal body must put on immortality.

And in between, in verses 51 and 52, he talks about how we all must get this new resurrection body to go to heaven. And he says, when Jesus returns, some of us actually won't die, we'll still be alive when Jesus returns.

[10 : 43] He says, verse 51, listen, I'll tell you a mystery, we will not all die, but we will all be transformed and changed to have this new spiritual body.

He says, but we will 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 will be changed.

And so Paul is saying here, we must be changed to enter the kingdom of God. We must receive our new spiritual resurrection body to enter heaven.

So it's a reasonable idea, just looking at the world around you, that we could be raised from the dead. It's certain we will be because of Jesus' resurrection and in fact, it's essential that we be raised from the dead in order to enter heaven.

Now we need to pause for a moment, I guess, there and sort of step back from the passage and let it hit you of what we're actually talking about because what we're talking about here is massive.

[11 : 48] This is the message that we preach as Christians that changes everything in this world if this is true. This is the greatest claim that has ever been made in the history of mankind.

What this is saying is that death has been defeated. That death is defeated. I think we don't like thinking about death.

We're scared, we're horrified by it, we don't want to think about it, we don't want to talk about it, we take people who are dying and we put them behind closed doors and brick walls so that they're out of sight and mind from polite society.

We don't like facing death. We don't want to know about it or think about it. I wonder how many people have actually seen a dead body. I'd imagine, I won't ask you to put your hand up, but I'd imagine many people here have not seen a dead body.

I think it would have been normal in ages past that you would have. When I was a medical student in our fourth year of medicine, we were taken on a trip to the city morgue and we thought we were hardened medical students, we'd seen dead bodies before, we'd been in the anatomy labs for a couple of years, but in the anatomy labs we were dealing with nicely preserved, nice looking bodies preserved in formula.

[13 : 11] And here at the city morgue there was just row upon row of dead bodies of people who had recently died in all different ways. And a lot of us, including me, left the city morgue that day very pale and pretty shaken.

Seeing a dead body like that was like a brick across the face. Because death is shocking. It is awful. Death is an insult.

Death mocks everything we do. You spend all your life studying hard to get better grades, working hard in your job to try and get ahead, looking after your family, trying to advance yourself, working harder and harder.

And death says, it seems, that life is futile. That it's all for nothing. Unless there is life after death. Unless death has been defeated. Unless this life is not all there is. And the claim of Christianity is that Jesus' death and resurrection has defeated death.

[14 : 21] That in Jesus' death he has taken on himself the penalty for sin, which is death. he has taken on himself the penalty of your sin and mine and died our death in our place.

And that when he rose from the dead he's shown that that penalty for sin has been paid for. Death is not the final word. In Jesus' death and resurrection death has been defeated.

And for you and I, if we trust in Jesus, we will be raised from the dead. And so now as Christians we can face death with a certain hope knowing this life is not all there is and that we will be raised to eternal life.

To come back to the passage look at verse 54. Here Paul says when this perishable body puts on imperishability and this mortal body puts on immortality then the saying that is written will be fulfilled death has been swallowed up in victory.

Now sadly I still don't know everybody here so I don't know tonight whether you are Christian or whether you're not. I hope there are people here tonight who are not yet Christian. If that is you then you need to hear this Christian message that it's saying that Jesus has died in your place and taken on himself the penalty of death that you deserve.

[15 : 49] He's giving you forgiveness of your sins with God and his resurrection means that he offers you eternal life. And I guess if you're not Christian tonight my question to you would be is there any reason why you would not accept what Jesus has done for you and give your life to him.

If that is you I hope that you will speak to me or Naomi leading the service or one of the ministers after the service. Now I realise for most of us here though we do trust in Jesus we have given our life to him and so again I want to come back to the question what does this doctrine of the resurrection body have to do with life now?

I know it's a great thing we're given forgiveness of sins eternal life but how does that actually affect our life now? What is the application of the doctrine of the resurrection body?

Well the passage actually gives you the application in this case so it's easy have a look at the last verse verse 58 here's Paul's application he says therefore my beloved be steadfast immovable always excelling in the work of the Lord because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain now there's two parts to that application the first part I'll deal with very briefly the first part he says therefore my beloved be steadfast immovable so what are we to be steadfast about?

Well if you look back in your Bibles to the beginning of chapter 15 in the previous page in verses 1 and 2 Paul tells us what we to be steadfast about he says verse 1 now I'd remind you brothers and sisters of the good news that I proclaim to you which you in turn received in which also you stand through which also you're being saved if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaim to you so he's saying we're to stand firm we're to be steadfast about the gospel no surprise that we're to be steadfast and immovable on the death and resurrection of Jesus that we're to keep trusting in Jesus and not move from the gospel we're to be immovable on that well the second part of the application then is this in verse 58 that we're to always excel in the work of the Lord because we know that in the Lord our labour is not in vain Paul's saying there we're to excel in the work of the

[18 : 28] Lord we're to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord basically we're to go for it for God what sort of work first of all does he mean what is this work of the Lord well in one sense it's any work anything that you do for God doesn't matter although in the context of 1 Corinthians 15 the context is about the gospel so it's got to be gospel work in particular that he's talking about and I don't know what that would be for you it might be a commitment to coming regularly to church on Sunday night or a commitment to coming regularly to Bible study a commitment to reading the Bible and praying yourself making sure that you spend time with friends family workmates to be in relationship with them in the hope of sharing the gospel with them but whatever it is Paul's saying whatever the work of the Lord is for you go for it in the work of the Lord but why seriously we should think about it why would you give up time that you could spend doing other things to give yourself to excel in the work of the Lord why would you give up time listening to music to watching TV to playing sports to whatever it is why would you give up even recreational time to spend time going for it for

God if you do give up those things to go for it for God it is a bit like you're missing out on life do you have to be so sort of serious about God and miss out on some fun things like that well what I want us to think about is this what is the connection between knowing you will be raised from the dead and going for it for God why should knowing that you'll be raised from the dead make you go for it in the work of the gospel well I think it all hangs on whether this life is all there is it hangs on whether this life is all there is see to the average non Christian if you give up the things of this world for God if you give up your recreational time if you give up listening to music or watching TV or whatever it was you were doing to go to church and so on if you give up the promotion at work because you say you're going to go part time and give a day or two a week to helping out at church if you give up your career and leave that to go into full time ministry to the average non

Christian if you start doing those things you're throwing your life away and if this life is all you've got then they are correct so if you give up that promotion if you give up your recreational time if you give up your career to go into ministry and you get to the end of this life and you die and that's it then Paul says we're to be pitied more than all people now I don't know have you ever had doubts or even maybe a small doubt that perhaps you're doing all this God stuff church stuff ministry stuff if that's you for nothing that maybe this life is all there is I remember the first year I was doing the ministry training scheme which Matt Schaefer is in his second year off and I'd left medicine and I was doing MTS I was full time doing uni ministry absolutely going for it run off my feet trying to share the gospel with people doing

Bible studies so on and I got to about Easter of that year and it really hit me I realised if I've given up medicine and I'm doing all this stuff and running off my feet doing ministry and the gospel isn't true then I have flushed my life down the toilet which is true so let me play devil's advocate just for a little bit if you had any doubts about whether this life really is all there is if you did have any doubts wouldn't it be wise perhaps to cover all your bases you know just in case to make sure so you know you could study hard you could work hard in your job make sure you get ahead make sure you do get that promotion have a nice house have a nice car go on good holidays but you could also do a lot of things at church and be well respected there and so really you can have everything that a non-Christian has in this life and be Christian as well but if you decide to go part-time with your work and give a day or two a week to help out at church if you gave up your career and go into ministry well that's going to be hard it's going to cost it's a bit like dangling yourself over the edge of a cliff so have you or have I been holding back from going for it for God because you've got to have a life because you're hanging on to this life does giving up your career to go into ministry seem like an extreme thing to do to you would you be willing to give up your career to go into full-time ministry let me ask it in a different way do you believe that you'll be raised from the dead do you believe that this life is not all there is or are you perhaps having an each way bet holding back perhaps not excelling in the work of the Lord giving yourself fully going for it for God because you fear that it may well be in vain well I'd want to say if you are having an each way bet if you're still clinging to this life if you're trying to have everything a non-Christian has and adding being a

Christian to it then you need to repent please you need to repent tonight to believe the gospel to believe in Jesus death and resurrection to believe that you will be raised from the dead and that this life isn't all there is in other words to live in light of the resurrection so let the word of God I hope encourage you tonight that God says here that you and I will be raised from the dead that this life is not all there is that our work of the gospel what we do for God is not in vain and that therefore we should excel in the work of the Lord we should go for it for God and be motivated to give ourselves fully to the work of God because our labour in the Lord is not in vain let me pray we thank you heavenly father so much for the death and resurrection of Jesus for us we thank you for the promise that we will be raised bodily physically from the dead to have our new spiritual resurrection bodies fitted out for the age to come for heaven please help us to trust in your word to believe the gospel to believe this doctrine of the resurrection body forgive us we pray where we hang on to this life please change us so that we would not do that but would excel in the work of the Lord and go for it for you and we ask you this in Jesus name

[26 : 38] Amen