

Resurrection Effect

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 0 0] Good evening. Welcome. My name's Aaron. If you haven't met me, I'd love to meet you. So if you are new, come and say hi to me afterwards, would you? I'd love just to say hi to you. Right, so we are studying Paul's letter to the Corinthian church, and by any measure, this man Paul did not have an easy life. In fact, I'd say he had every excuse to give up on what he was called to do, to throw in the towel.

Now, in 2 Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul, he lists all the terrible things that have happened to him since he started planting churches, which you'd think would be a pretty good times, fun times kind of activity, right? So let me read a couple of verses from 2 Corinthians 11 here.

So this is Paul saying, here's what I've been up to since I've been planting churches. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews 40 lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A day and a night I was adrift at sea.

On frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, in danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers. In toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night and hunger and thirst, often without food and cold and exposure. And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all of the churches. So that's a fairly solid lineup of problems.

So we're currently looking at chapter 4, in the chapter 4 beginning of chapter 5, right? And he says here, despite all of this drama, despite all of this, for the second time in chapter 4, he says, we do not lose heart though, verse 16, but we do not lose heart.

[1 : 5 1] Now the right question to ask is, what is driving and empowering this man? Because whatever it is, we probably want some of that, I would think. Now I think he summarizes his fortitude fairly well, or his attitude pretty good in verse 18 there. He says, look not to things that are seen, but to things that are unseen. Look not to things that are seen, but to things that are unseen. Here's a great story I've always loved, ever since I've become a Christian in 2 Kings chapter something, I can't remember, but it's a story of Elisha. So there's a Syrian king and he's trying to kill this prophet Elisha.

So Syrian king, bad. Elisha, the prophet, good. Okay. So overnight, the Syrian king completely surrounds the city that Elisha is in, and it's like a night ops thing, nobody realizes it.

But in the morning, the servant of Elisha, his helper guy, gets up to go off and buy some milk or whatever. And he walks outside and, pick it up at verse 15 here.

When the servant of the man of God arose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army of horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, alas, my master, what shall we do? And he said, do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Then Elisha prayed and he said, oh Lord, please open his eyes that he may see. So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. So Elisha saw what the others could not, that there was this enemy, that all the enemies were surrounding the city, but those enemies were in turn surrounded by thousands of angelic beings. So they were probably going to be okay. I think like Elisha, Paul is trying to get us to focus on, to see what we don't look at, what we don't think about mostly. So what are these unseen things that Paul wants to bring into focus in our life? Things that fortify us, despite incredible opposition and hardship, because they certainly did for him. So what are these unseen things? I think there are three things in this passage that Paul is urging us to pay attention to. One, unseen things are in a renewal. That's the first unseen thing. Two, the hope of resurrection. And three, the certainty of judgment. So one, in a renewal. Two, the hope of resurrection. And three, the certainty of judgment. I know you can't wait to get to that one. So let's get into it.

Three unseen things that Paul wants us to focus on. Firstly, inner renewal. Verse 16, for we do not lose heart. Though the outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. Goodness, what a cracker of a passage, eh? So what's he saying here? So Paul's body is wasting away, like ours. And the process for him, it seems, is being sped up by ministry, by his particular ministry. This is not a model for ministry.

[5 : 10] It's just what's happening to him. I think if we could have seen Paul, if we'd have met him, we would have looked at him and thought, brother, you need some donuts and some protein bars and a dermatologist or something, you need to sort yourself out because you don't look so good.

He would have looked pretty bad considering all these things that happened to him and given the daily anxiety that he was under, given all the things that have happened to him. And the false teachers actually allude to that. They say that he wasn't much to look at, that he looked a bit rough. He didn't look very presentable, certainly not very professional.

So Paul, rather than denying he's physically going a bit sideways, he uses it to make a contrast. And he says, even though things are going sideways out here, I mean, not me, of course, but, you know, going a bit sideways, because I suck my gut in. He's saying what is unseen, what you don't see, though, is the spiritual renewal going on inside. So he didn't have a very winning sort of life. But his pain was preparing him, verse 17 says. In his persecution, his soul was advancing, his spirit was being encouraged, trusting in God's goodness, despite everything going around. This was adding to his faith. In the midst of his suffering, God was doing something inside of Paul, and God was preparing Paul to meet Jesus face to face one day when he dies. Have a look at verse 15. This is what it says here. Look, look at this.

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. That's just remarkable, isn't it? I want you to notice a couple of things about that passage. His focus is this. It's on the sheer tonnage of glory that awaits him. He's focused on the unseen future with God, his unseen eternal future with God. And that future was so impressed on his heart that he describes the beatings and the shipwreckings and the whippings as light momentary afflictions. Now hear me here. Paul is not downplaying his suffering. He is not saying it's insignificant. Remember earlier in this book, 2 Corinthians, he said that he suffered so much. He wanted to die. It just, it wasn't worth it in his mind. I mean, it wasn't, it wasn't worth it.

It was like, it was too much. So he's not saying you have problems, get over it. He's not saying bodily pain doesn't matter. Emotional pain doesn't matter. No, he's not saying that. He's simply, he's talking about the present world contrasted with the future world. And that future is so good.

[7 : 56] It is so glorious and so wonderful that its glory overwhelms and completely outshines the darkest things that can happen to him now. So Paul in summary, Paul's focus was on the unseen, the eternal, and that was transforming him.

Look, when your life is, when your focus in this life is just on this life, what you can touch, what you can buy, when this life is your entire horizon, your sources for joy and your resources for endurance shrink about this big. So what's Paul trying to get us to do? He wants to the eternal to invade the temporary, the future to invade the now. He wants the unseen, this future eternity with God, to work its way into our material world and he wants us to lift our eyes beyond what we see to this future hope because that renews the inner self. That fortifies us for the journey ahead. I remember talking to somebody in the office a while ago and they were having a bit of drama in their life and they summarized what their attitude was about it sort of in a really very real way. They said, look, even if my wife, even if my life goes horrendously poorly from now on until I die, you know, Christianity is still a pretty good deal because of what awaits.

Okay, that's, that's point one. Paul does not lose heart in the midst of suffering and opposition because he's being inwardly renewed now by this focus on this glorious future.

Point two, Paul is encouraged because of the hope of resurrection. That's what verses one to nine about in the beginning of chapter five there. Have a look at, have a look at verse five. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made from hands, eternal in the heavens. So you can see this is closely related to the first point, but here his hope, his eternal hope is something quite specific that he's talking about. In summary, Paul, here's what he's saying. He's going, I'm really encouraged in this life because even though my body is decaying, he will be resurrected when he dies. I'll be resurrected when I die with a new body. That's most basic interpretation there, but there's more to say there. At the time of Paul's writing, that was a great contrast to what people sort of believed, what was popularly thought. The Greeks held this idea that the material, you know, the material, it was, it was bad and only the spiritual was truly good. And for them, the goal of humanity was to escape the body, to exist as spirits sort of eternally.

They thought of this body as this throwaway, you know, troublesome container that must be discarded. The technical term, that's Gnosticism. This is not what Christians believe. We don't believe this.

[10 : 56] We are embodied people now. Embodied. Embodied people now. Our future, we will be embodied. That is a good, it's a good thing. That's how God wants it. That's how we designed it.

Our body now, Paul describes as a tent. Now, Paul was a tent maker, you notice? So he knew about tents. He knew that tents fell apart. That's how we kind of, you know, he probably made a bit of money on the side repairing old tents. Tents sag and they get ripped and they lose pegs. So verse 1 says this, now we're tents. What we've got happening here, it's tents, a tent. Fragile, a fragile thing. But in the future, we will have a building. What is that saying? That means that will go from a fragile thing to a solid, permanent thing. A solid, permanent structure. Verse 2, though, is an interesting qualifier, I think. It says that we put on our heavenly dwelling. You know what the image is? It's putting on a coat. So the new body is not, the future is not like destroy the old body, brand new body. It's like it's a restoration. It's a renewal of what you actually have now, which says something about the value of our bodies now, actually, and how we should care for them. So Paul actually longs for this body. Verse 4, it says he groans for, he goes,

I groan for that. I want that. I want that restored body in the future. The word there, the groaning word, it's like eager anticipation. It's like a little kid on tippy toes looking into a cake store window. Like, I really, really, really, really want that. It's a wonderful picture. Now, why is all this important? Because tied up in this idea of a new body, new body, is the idea of new life, is the idea of new creation. One of the great promises of heaven is restoration. So that new body, that will be the body you always wanted. It will be the body that God always wanted you to have. So it's not just life after death, right? That's being promised here. It's the life you always wanted, but perhaps didn't get to experience here. And do you see what this means? How does it relate to us now?

Well, it means now, you know, you don't actually have to be the coolest guy around. You don't have to ever see Paris in your lifetime, get a graduate degree, be fantastic at sports, or fear that you're missing out on a good life somehow because of something that happened.

All the true goodness of life that you think you missed out on, it's all coming down the pipeline. It's all coming in the future. Paul's hope was not in something vague. It was something that Christ promised. Resurrection, a restoration of your body, and the life that God always wanted you to have. I don't know exactly what that will look like, but it will be unimaginably wonderful.

[14:10] And you see, that hope, that hope, that allows Paul to live confidently and courageously with great conviction and clarity. Because it's not just, my life stinks, but I'll get to hang out, you know, I'll kind of just hang out until resurrection and then it's going to be okay. No.

This hope clarifies his life. It gives his life purpose, it gives it moral acumen, and it gives some courage. Why don't you open your Bible still to 1 Corinthians 15. It can't be that hard to find.

They're just a few pages back. 1 Corinthians 15. That whole chapter, chapter 15, that whole thing is about the resurrection of Christ and our bodily resurrection. This is just to affirm all the stuff I've been saying here. Okay. So it's 57 verses. It's a good chunk of change. It's a lot of verses.

57 verses. Oh, sorry, it's 58 verses. But 57 verses sort of unpack this idea. And you'll recognize some of it. You would have heard some of these verses before. Oh, death, where is your victory? Oh, death, where is your sting? So 57 verses explaining resurrection. One verse of application.

Verse 58. 57 verses talking about resurrection, what's going to happen to us to Christ, right? One verse of application. Verse 58. Let me read that to you. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast. Therefore, because of all the stuff I've told you about resurrection, new life, new bodies. Therefore, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. When you trust in this promise of resurrection, it will fortify your soul and you will know a courage that you have never experienced before.

[16:15] So this is the other reason Paul says we do not lose heart from the beginning of the sermon. We do not lose heart. And in verse 6, he says, be of good courage. Why? A second reason is because of the hope of resurrection. So Paul's fortitude comes from, one, God inwardly renewing him even though his body's fallen apart. And two, the hope of the bodily resurrection. Lastly, point three and quickly.

Look at verses 9 and 10. This is our third reason that Paul is courageous, that Paul's life is so focused. Verse 9. So whether we're at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. My daughter's just started school, so she's learning lots of things. They had like a Terry Fox presentation the other day. Do you guys know who Terry Fox is? Right. And so she came home and she said, Dad, Dad, Sherry Fox. Dad, listen to me, listen to me, listen to me. Sherry Fox cut off his own leg, became a robot, and ran around the whole world.

Folks, sometimes the message is fantastic and it gets muddled in reception, right? It gets a bit muddled in reception. This passage is a good example of that. Let me read verse 10 to you again.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Particularly in the medieval church, this was really interpreted in some pretty funky ways. So what Paul is talking about here, it is not justification, okay? It's not talking about justification. If you trust in Jesus, you believe he died for you on the cross, you are right with God and you will be with God eternally.

[18 : 30] Bear. Paul is not talking about that in this passage here. But he is talking about judgment. He's talking about a divine assessment of our, it's hard to describe our services to God, like what we do in God's name, how we've lived our life. And the fact also that there are rewards for faithful service to God. I want to read, just so you don't think this is kind of like some wacky verse that has no support anywhere else. Let me read 1 Corinthians, something from 1 Corinthians chapter 3 to you. It's kind of the flip side of what Paul is saying here. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now, if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, this is instead of Jesus, right? With gold and silver and precious stones, wood, hay straw, each one's work will become manifest for the day, that's judgment day, for the day will disclose it. Because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. But if anyone's work is burnt up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. So it's not about salvation. This judgment is not about salvation. But it does say, if you live a frivolous Christian life, you will experience some kind of loss. Now, the flip side of that, our verse that we're reading right now and studying, if you live a life in service to God with gospel priorities, there is reward. Now, I'll say this as simply as I can. Christians will face Christ when we die.

We will face Christ when we die. Our lives will be judged, and there will be loss, and there will be reward. Not in terms of salvation. Now, what those losses and rewards look like exactly, it is unknown, and it's not helpful to speculate. But later in the book of Revelation, when it talks about life eternal with God, it does talk about, in terms of like feasting and privilege and crowning and ruling, but that's about as much as we've got to go on. So Paul believes, and we believe as Christians, in the judgment of Christians, Paul believes this. And so he invests his life wholeheartedly into God's work, and he urges us to do the same. And I think, knowing that when we die, it's not we go to the pearly gates and get our ticket stamped and ruined. Knowing that all Christians stand before Jesus, and all that we've done will be made visible, I think that invokes a healthy fear of God. And it should cause us to think about how we use our time, and it should cause us to think about how we use our resources and our decisions, and how we use the abilities that God has given us. And I think that's a really good thing.

It's a wonderful thing. Let me wrap up here. Paul has had a hard, hard life. But he could stay the course. His life was focused on the mission of God, because one, he was being inwardly renewed, even though his body was winding down.

Two, the hope of new creation. His life was difficult. He sacrificed a lot. His body was scarred. But all these things were going to be remade, including him. And that hope outshone all the pain that he had to go through and planning his churches. And lastly, Paul knew that his life would be on display before God when he died.

[22 : 40] And he knew that everything would be assessed. And like any child, he wanted to please his father. Amen. Amen.