

Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 (7) - Resurrection in Relation to Christian Suffering

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Date: 09 April 2023

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] in our worship this evening, singing in Psalm 75, Psalm number 75, that's in the Sing Psalms version, page 98. We're singing to Tchun Malan, verses 1 to 10, the whole of the psalm.

We give you thanks, O God, because your name is near. All speak of your majestic deeds, your voice we also hear. I choose the appointed time, I judge with justice sure, when earth and all its people quake, its pillars I secure. Psalm 75, these verses to God's praise.

We stand to sing. We give you thanks, O God, because your name is near. I choose the appointed time, I judge with justice sure, when earth and all its people quake, its pillars I secure.

O God, I tell the pride, the wicked I am rest. Do not lift up your heads with pride, or speak with thoughtiness. No one in all the earth can truly give freedom.

God is the judge. He raises one, and puts another down. The Lord's handholds are come, with one of our full end. He pours it out, and wicked ones must drink it to the end.

[3 : 09] God's words I will proclaim, and Jacob's Lord I'll praise.

The wicked strength I will destroy, the righteous I will raise.

Let's join together once again in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. O Lord our God, every part of your word reveals aspects of your being and of your works.

And we thank you that in these words we have been singing together, you are also revealed to us as the one who is sovereign over all your creation. And we thank you, Lord, that whatever your word reveals about you, your people are always concerned to believe and to act accordingly.

And we pray tonight for the help of your Holy Spirit to enable us to do so, that when you bring to us such declarations against wickedness and sin and evil, we might tremble at these threatenings.

[4 : 30] And we might also, Lord, in the same exercise of faith, come to rejoice in your promises and gather for ourselves the many promises addressed to your believing people.

O Lord, we thank you once again that we are gathered here this evening in this place of worship. We pray that as we attend to all aspects of your worship, that we may do so in reliance upon your Holy Spirit.

We thank you that your Spirit is the leader of our praise, the leader of our prayers, the leader of our thoughts, as we give our mind to the teaching of your word. Lord, we thank you, Lord, that we can look to you as the disciples long ago looked to you and as they sought that you would increase their faith.

So we pray the same, Lord, this evening. We thank you that you're the one who meets your people in all their need, that you provide for us your word that is sufficient to meet all our situations in life.

We thank you, Lord, that you took account of all our circumstances, even in this very age that we belong to, when you caused your word to be written over generations.

[5 : 43] We thank you, therefore, that your word is so relevant to our needs today, as it has always been for every generation of your church. We thank you that whatever changes do take place in the world, that your word, Lord, is always adequate to meet and instruct us in regard to these changes.

We ask then, Lord, for your blessing once again on our gathering here this evening. We pray that you would work in our minds to focus upon you and to have our minds set upon those things that are to do with your glory and your praise and with our own betterment and good.

And we give thanks, O Lord, that this is how you deal with your people, that you work in their lives, so that through their experiences and through the leadership of your Spirit, you bring them to learn from day to day and week by week those things that pertain to your kingdom, to their place in it, to this time that we have in this world and to eternity.

Bless us once again, we pray, then, as a congregation. We thank you for all that takes place in our midst. For the gospel that we have so precious, so foundational, Lord, to our congregational life.

We thank you for all else that accompanies the worship services here. And we do pray that you would bless every type of gathering and activity that seeks to bring the message of your truth into the lives of young and old alike.

[7 : 16] And we pray for your blessing, O Lord, in days to come that these further activities and meetings will be blessed. Bless our young people.

Bless our children. Bless them in our homes and families. Bless them as they attend day school. We give thanks, O Lord, for the provision that you make for us through the teaching that is received.

And we pray where teaching is now being brought to our notice and being introduced throughout our land that is contrary to your word.

May your people, Lord, help in their prayers and in their instruction of our young people. May we find, O Lord, that your own word is always adequate to counteract the pressures of the world.

We pray for our young people. We pray that they will be advanced by you in the knowledge of your truth, in holiness and righteousness of life, in conduct that is becoming of your own people.

[8 : 20] We ask, O Lord, that every effort made to teach them, both at home and in Sunday school and in church, will be blessed by you. And we thank you for the opportunities that you give us to interact with them, to assure them of our love and of our concern, to assure them that they are a valued part of our congregational life, and to assure them, Lord, that we too pray for them and remember them, for we have been where they are as we were their age at one time.

And we pray that your gospel especially will be blessed to them, and that they may come to love you and to follow you all their days. We ask your blessing to be tonight with those who cannot be with us.

We know that there are many of our number, Lord, confined to their homes, confined to care homes, who are in hospital, and who have other reasons for not being able to be here this evening.

Remember them, Lord, especially those with health issues, whether physical or mental health issues. We ask, Lord, that you would bless them. Be pleased to draw near to them.

Be pleased to lay your own hand upon them. Grant to them blessing from your Word that we'll be able to meet their situations at this time. Remember all who are seriously ill, we pray for them, and ask again that you would draw near to them, Lord.

[9 : 46] And as we find from time to time reminders of eternity, and of eternity drawing near, Lord, help us all to realize that every day we live, we are a day nearer to eternity, a day nearer to meeting with you, a day nearer to give account of our time in this life.

And so we pray that you would make us all wise unto salvation. Help us to use the circumstances of life in the providence you have appointed for us, so that we may seek you in them and through them, and that we may come to deposit our lives by believing in you and trusting in you into your own hands.

We ask your blessing now to be without people in a wider sense. Bless us as a church. Bless all that is taking place, Lord. throughout the denomination.

Bless every congregation that belongs to us. Bless every minister. Bless every Kirk session. Bless everyone who helps with your cause in our midst. And we ask, O Lord, as we anticipate meetings to do with the Healthy Church Project and Healthy Church Emphasis, gracious Lord, we ask that they will be blessed as they go from place to place, those who will meet with different congregations, and we'll meet with ourselves, O Lord, by your will later in this month.

We pray that as we assess these matters that will be brought before us, that you would bless them. We pray for all those, Lord, who are in new church plants and church plants that have recently been established.

[11 : 19] We pray for them. We pray that you would encourage them. We pray that you would lead them in your own ways and guide them in your truth. We pray that they may be encouraged by seeing others, drawn to the gospel, blessed by the gospel, lives sanctified by the gospel.

And, Lord, we ask that you would give to us, as we find from time to time, things which do discourage us. We ask that you'd bless them. We pray for ministers and congregations tonight that may feel disconsolate, may have disappointments to contend with, that may feel in themselves, O Lord, that matters are not working as they would desire and have prayed for.

Continue to bless them, we pray, in all the areas of our land where this is the case. And I grant that you would come with the breath of your Spirit upon us as a people, that you would be pleased, Lord, to bless our land and to bless those who have no church connection, no church interest, whether in our own locality or wider.

O Lord, our God, bless the witness of your people. Raise up others who will be faithful witnesses to you and grant that the light of your truth might once again shine in abundance throughout all our communities.

Bless our parliament. We pray that you would bless in Edinburgh and in Westminster those, Lord, who rule over us as you require us to pray for them. We do so not out of a mere sense of duty, good though that is, but, Lord, we pray for them out of a sincere desire for your blessing for them and for their leadership to be blessed to us as a people.

[13 : 01] And so, Lord, we ask as we commend them to you that you would come to instruct them and lead them in your ways. And, Lord, we ask that you would help them to understand that you have given us your word, you have given us your laws and your precepts, not only for our individual use, but also for our use corporately and even nationally.

And so, bless those, Lord, in our parliaments who do witness for you, whose testimony, Lord, is one of faithfulness to you. And we pray for all of them and we ask that you would maintain them, Lord, in the integrity of their standing.

We pray that as they face so many pressures in this our day, that you would be pleased, Lord, to surround them with your love and with your assurance that you know their circumstances, that you are able at all times to look after them.

And so, we commend ourselves to you now, asking that you would continue to bless us here as we continue in your worship. Receive our thanks, cleanse us from our many sins, and all for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We're going to sing again to God's praise in Psalm 123. Psalm 123 from the Scottish Psalter, page 417.

[14 : 19] June, this time, is St. Kilda. A very short psalm, but one that brings to us the need to have our eyes lifted up towards the Lord.

It's a psalm that acknowledges the difficulties, the trials of living as believers in this world, and indeed, a psalm that acknowledges that they face persecution and the contempt and pride of those that stand against them and God's cause.

And so, the psalmist is looking that he and those with him who serve the Lord will continue faithfully and diligently and trustingly to look to God.

O thou that dwellest in the heavens, I lift mine eyes to thee. Behold, a servant's eyes do look their master's hand to see. So the whole psalm to the tune, St. Kilda, to God's praise.

O thou that dwellest in the heavens, I lift mine eyes to thee.

[15 : 32] I lift mine eyes to thee. The whole psalm to the tune, O thou that dwellest in the heavens, O thou that dwellest in the heavens, I lift mine eyes to thee.

Their master's hand to see. The hand of the Lord, O thou that dwellest in the heavens, I lift mine eyes to thee.

He ■■■en ■■■ sends ■ for strengthen me that dwellest in them, So do the night says who have loved it.

The heaven and shalloth our nextal O Lord, be gracious to us, unto us gracious being, Because we plenish with content exceedingly are we.

Our soul is still with scorn of those that have there be some high, And with the insolent content of those that dwell in pride.

[17 : 39] Let's turn now to read God's Word again. You'll find it reading this evening in the New Testament, Paul's second letter to the Corinthians in chapter 11. 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and we're beginning reading at verse 12.

So we'll read from verse 12 onwards of 2 Corinthians chapter 11. What I do, I will continue to do in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

So it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

I repeat, let no one think me foolish, but even if you do accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not with the Lord's authority, but as a fool.

[19 : 00] Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves. For you bear it if somebody makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.

To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that. But whatever anyone else dares to boast of, I am speaking as a fool, I also dare to boast of that.

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ?

I am a better one. I am talking like a madman, with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes, less one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. For a night and a day I was adrift at sea, on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, 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, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

[20 : 34] And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak? And I am not weak. Who is made to fall?

And I am not indignant. If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

At Damascus, the governor under King Aratas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me. But I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

And we pray that God will bless to us again that reading of his own word. We'll sing once more. This time we'll sing it from Psalm 37.

Psalm 37 on page 255. That's in the Scottish Psalter. Verses 34 to 40. Wait on the Lord and keep his way.

[21 : 44] And thee exalt shall he the earth to inherit. When cut off the wicked thou shalt see. I saw the wicked, great in power, spread like a green bay tree.

He passed, yea, was not. Him I sought, but found he could not be. Mark thou the perfect, and behold the man of uprightness. Because that surely of this man the latter end is peace.

We're singing to the tune Stracathro, verses 34 on to verse 40 at the end of the psalm. Wait on the Lord. Wait on the Lord. Amen.

Amen.

When the dawn The wicked Thou shalt see I saw The wicked Ridden fire Spread my Thou shalt Thou shalt The wicked The past It was Not Him I Sought But found He could Not be Mark Thou The perfect and behold the man of uprightness,

[23 : 55] Because not surely of this man the latter ends his peace.

But those named the transgressors are, Shall be destroyed together.

The larger end of wicked men Shall be cut off forever.

But the salvation of the just Is from the Lord above.

He in the tide of their distress, Their sting and strength of fruit.

[25 : 29] The Lord shall help and then deliver, He shall them free and save.

From wicked men, because in him, Because in him, their confidence they have.

I'd like you to turn now to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. The first letter of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 15. And we'll read at verse 29.

As we've been going through chapter 15, Last time we looked at the passage up to verse 28, Which dealt with the way in which Christ returns at the end of the age.

And all things then are put in subjection under God. And we pick that up at verse 29. Now, otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead?

[26 : 49] If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? Why am I in danger every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day.

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. Do not be deceived.

Bad company ruins good morals. 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. Well, one of the benefits of doing a series of studies, whether it's going through a whole book, or like we're doing here, just going through 1 Corinthians 15, one of the benefits is that you need to deal with passages that are challenging and difficult.

And even tonight, as we'll see in this passage, you come across things that we don't just quite fully understand what exactly Paul meant. But that is part of the study of the Bible.

[28 : 03] You come across passages in the Bible that are either very difficult, or sometimes even, as this one, parts of it impossible to understand exactly what Paul was getting at, what he meant by some of the terms and descriptions there.

So, I have to confess that the thought did strike me as I was preparing earlier in the week for this particular study. The thought did strike me.

Well, can't you just skip this bit and go on to the next one? Because it's a lot clearer from verse 35 onwards. But then that would really defeat the purpose of doing a study in any case of this kind, where you're taking the difficult parts as well as the easier ones, if you like.

So, when you come to a passage like this, it's in many ways, you know, a test of our faith when you read the Bible and you come across things which are very difficult to understand, or even sometimes difficult even to accept.

It's a test of our faith whether we're prepared to say, well, let God be God. He knows what is meant. He knows that this is not a mistake on his part in giving us this part of his word, this aspect of his word, this particular element of truth.

[29 : 19] And so, we commit ourselves to God. And let's pray that the Holy Spirit tonight will actually bring this challenging passage to us in a way that would help us to understand at least the main points of what Paul is getting at.

Because Paul is here resuming, as we've seen previously in a chapter, he's been dealing with up to, really, in verses 12 to 19, he's been dealing with the consequences of not believing in the resurrection.

Both the resurrection of Christ and the final resurrection that takes place at the coming of Christ at the end of the age. Now, he should be dealing with a series of points, consequences, implications if that's the case, if there is no such thing as a resurrection, then these things follow.

And then he took a theological, he took a kind of theological detour in verses 20 to 28, where we saw a reference particularly to Jesus himself and his exaltation and so on.

Now he's coming back here at verse 29, having taken the detour, he's coming back onto the same track he had before, dealing with the implications or the consequences of not believing, as some obviously in Corinth were not believing in the reality of the truth of the resurrection.

[30 : 44] And so, he comes back onto that same track here, but gives us things which are rather difficult to follow. But it's still the same emphasis, here are the consequences of not believing or not accepting the reality of resurrection as a fact, as something that is important and foundational in the Christian faith.

First of all, he says in verse 29, if that's the case, he says, otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? The dead are not raised at all, why are people being baptized on their behalf?

And that's the first point we need to reckon with. It won't take us long because it's really difficult to know what exactly Paul was dealing with. The Corinthians obviously understood this was something that was happening or had happened in the Corinthian church, but which over the course of the centuries we've actually lost track of what exactly in detail Paul meant by people being baptized for the dead or on behalf of the dead.

There are many, many views, there are probably over 40 or 50 views, actually, in total, of what Paul could have meant by this. And some of them you can discount quite easily, others it's difficult to choose between them.

But one of the views, and it's one I think that's very acceptable to us to go along with, one of the views is that for people who had died without being baptized, some Christians in Corinth were being baptized on their behalf, as if in some way it was trying to make sure that they had some part in the coming of Christ again when he came, or in the kingdom or whatever at the end of the age.

[32 : 38] So, what do people mean by being baptized? What are they doing, literally is what it says, by being baptized on behalf of the dead? So, we're not sure exactly what Paul meant by that, what was the practice?

But there was something to do with being baptized on behalf of those who had died with a view to what would be the case at the end of the course of history.

And in actual fact, it doesn't really matter that we don't know exactly what Paul meant on this specific point. It's not foundationally important that we would be actually able to understand or appreciate or know what exactly this point was that Paul was making, because the general thrust of his argument is still intact.

Whatever he says they were doing on behalf of those who are dead, if the dead are not raised at all, why are people being baptized on their behalf? What he's really saying is, why go through with this practice whatever exactly it was that Corinthians themselves knew, but what's the point of it if there's no resurrection?

If the dead are not raised, it's a waste of time. If the dead are not raised, it's not relevant. It doesn't have any meaning, it doesn't have any place, it doesn't have any value to go through with such actions, if indeed the case is that there is no such thing as the resurrection of the dead.

[34 : 06] So, he's really presenting the same point to us as in the previous part of the chapter, if there's no resurrection, why is this being done is what he's saying here.

Now, it reminds us that to deny the resurrection or to think of it not being real or something that's going to be factually carried out, carried through, that's always got implications on our present way of thinking, on our present life indeed.

And that's bringing us to our next point, which is to do with Christian suffering. And what he's really saying in effect in verses 30 to 33 is, if there is no resurrection, if there is no such thing as resurrection, why do Christians willingly go through such sufferings?

Why do they accept from the hand of God in providence the things which God has designed for them when they are bitter and difficult and challenging and when they are even the deepest adversities?

Let's look at what he's saying there. If the dead are not raised at all, then why, in verse 30, why am I in danger every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day.

[35 : 29] 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. And then he goes on, do not be deceived.

So verses 30 to 33, let me cast your mind back to what we read there in 2 Corinthians 11. Remember there that passage that dealt with a whole list of adversities and difficulties that Paul says he himself had experienced and was experiencing.

He talks there about receiving forty lashes less one, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, adrift at sea, frequently in danger on his journeys from rivers, from robbers, and so on.

All the way through that list as you go through it, along with all that, he says that the anxiety of the churches, the pressure of caring for all the churches with whom I've had some foundational connection, all of that pressing in upon me, he says, if there's no resurrection, why go through with it?

There's no meaningful sense to it all. And that's why he says here in verses 30 to 31, why am I putting my life in danger?

[36 : 48] Why am I willing to do this? Why am I willing to go through with this? Why do people actually subject themselves willingly or accept this at the hand of God? If there is no resurrection at the end of it all, if there's nothing like that, if it's just this world and then everything is gone, what is the point to this?

What is the meaning to this? Is there any value to this? And of course, you know very well that all the way through the Bible, you have an emphasis on the value of Christian sufferings, that they have a very significant value in the experience of God's people, not just with a view to the present, but also with a view to the future and eternity in heaven.

And when he speaks here about fighting with beasts, having said he's in danger every hour, he dies daily. In other words, he's putting his life at risk as he continues to serve the Lord in such dangerous circumstances as he goes into virtually every day.

And again, he says, if humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus. Again, it's difficult to be absolutely dogmatic about what that meant, but when you go back to Acts chapter 19 and verse 16 and the verses from 23 onwards, you'll find the situation in Ephesus then was complete upheaval through evil powers.

And the gospel was challenging these evil powers through Paul and others who were preaching the gospel. The kingdom of darkness was being assaulted and it was hitting back.

[38 : 29] And I think that's what Paul meant here with, why did I, humanly speaking, why I fought with beasts at Ephesus, I think he's talking there about occult forces, the forces of darkness, that had come to invade people's lives and take over people's lives so that they were virtually the same as beasts.

And that's what Paul faced. Many of them going to lose their way of life because they served the powers of darkness. And if the gospel was going to be blessed and take over people's lives, then those people who actually made artifacts for the great shrine that was in Ephesus, well, they were going to lose their vocation, they were going to lose their work, they were going to have to look for something else to do.

If they were converted, they couldn't go back to serving idols. And so they fought against the gospel and Satan stirred up the minds and the activities of the people there in Ephesus at the time of Paul's time there so that he could describe them really here as acting like beasts, just depraved and led by the powers of darkness.

Why, he said, why would I put myself through that? Why would I willingly say, well, this is part of my task as an apostle and as a preacher of the gospel. If there's no resurrection, what is the point to it?

I would have been better just turning my back on that and living a comfortable life. If there's no resurrection, there's no meaning to such sufferings as we go through in this life for the sake of Christ.

[40 : 08] And you know, the Bible, as you know, emphasizes, as we said, the benefits of suffering very frequently. You only have to go to the book of Psalms and, you know, the book of Psalms, as we keep saying, is such a great source, such a great book for our Christian experience, both in the heights and in the depths of Christian experience.

And the teaching it gives on the suffering of the Christian believing life is really without parallel, I think you could say, even throughout the Bible. Because again and again, you come across the likes of Psalm 34, for example, verses 19.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked, and all those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

The Lord redeems the life of his servants. None of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. And all the way through other Psalms, you find Psalm 119, for example, verse 67.

It has been good for me, the Psalmist saying, that I was afflicted. Why on earth would he say, it's good for me that I was afflicted? How can that be a good thing?

[41 : 22] Well, he said, so that I might learn through it your precepts. That I might gain knowledge of the ways of God, of the handlings of God of my life is what he meant.

You see, there's the meaning and the purpose to suffering in the lives of God's people, when God himself blesses that and blesses them under it. You go to 2 Corinthians 12.

Remember that great passage where Paul is dealing with him going on in weakness and yet trusting in the Lord. As he puts it there, verses 7 to 10 of chapter 12 of 2 Corinthians.

So, to keep me from being too elated by the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

[42 : 30] So, Paul says, therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.

He says, for when I am weak, then I am strong. He was convinced that the weakness that he had was a weakness that God gave grace to actually match and to meet and to overcome.

My grace is sufficient for you. So, for Paul, suffering as a Christian, suffering as an apostle, suffering as a preacher of the gospel, was meaningful suffering.

God was in it. God was in it. His relationship with God was in it. His future was connected with it, as was his past. And so, he comes here, and you can find the same.

You could carry on through to 1 Peter, for example. Virtually the whole of that book, 1 Peter, is to do with writing to people who are suffering as believers in the world, and the meaningfulness of that suffering.

[43 : 45] It's not something that they should see as without meaning or without purpose in their lives, Peter is saying to them, similar to Paul. That is there deliberately as a meaningful thing on the part of God to actually arrange this for them.

And that's why you've got here in verse 32 of our passage tonight, 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. What's he saying? He's saying the same thing as I said out in that world tonight.

He's saying the same thing as many, many thousands and millions of people are saying, who don't believe in the gospel, who don't believe in God, who don't believe in the resurrection, who don't believe any of these precious things that belong to a Christian faith.

What they're saying is, never mind all that stuff. Let me just live the way I want to live. Don't dictate to me, even if you say, this is what the Bible is saying. I don't want to hear that. Let's just eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

[44 : 47] That's an end of it. What Paul is saying, if there is no resurrection, if you discount that, if you put it aside, if you say there's no such thing, then you can do what you like.

You can please yourself, because when there's no resurrection, then there's no judgment. There's nothing but this life. Let us eat and drink, or tomorrow we die.

It's the way of the world, isn't it? Let's have a good time. Let's pack our lives with entertainment.

That will take care of all the worries, of all the difficulties and the challenges and the trials. Let's just lose ourselves in living the best we can.

And let's just eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. And that's it. The fatalism of worldliness. And what Paul is saying to them, those of you in Corinth who've come not to believe in resurrection, who now dismiss resurrection, what's the point of living as Christians or trying to live a holy life?

[46 : 00] Let's just go the way of the world. Let's just go the way of the world. Well, of course, you and I know, as Paul very well knew, and as many people in Corinth knew, that's not the Christian life.

That's not why Christ died. That's not why he rose from the dead. That's not why we have the gospel. But so that we will live lives that are pleasing to God.

Lives that look forward. Then you've got verse 33 as well, which just follows on and makes the point really again. Powerfully do not be deceived. Bad company ruins good morals.

Now, Paul is borrowing language there from one of the Greek playwrights or poets. It's a statement that was well known from this poet, a man called Menander, apparently.

This was something Paul borrowed. He did that sometimes, sayings or statements that were well known in the world of his day. He didn't necessarily put his own mark of approval on them, but he borrowed them just to make the point.

[47 : 12] And he's making the point here. Do not be deceived. Bad company ruins good morals. In other words, falling in with those who deny the resurrection leads inevitably to lax morals.

Take away the foundational truths of the gospel, and what do you put in its place? You put your own thinking in its place. You put human wisdom in its place. You put something else in its place. You put another religion in its place.

It doesn't matter what you put in its place, but it's going to take you outside of that life that lives in obedience to Christ and pleasing to God.

And it applies widely, doesn't it? Do not be deceived. He's using a word there that actually means to be seduced.

Because there were some people in Corinth, imagine having come under the teaching of an apostle, of such as the apostle Paul, and yet still there are some, he says, who don't believe in the resurrection, who don't accept such a thing as the resurrection or the resurrection of Christ, and who are dismissing that.

[48 : 22] They're actually now being seduced, they're being deceived, so that they're just falling into the ways of paganism again. They're just taking steps aside bit by bit into the ways of sin, the ways of paganism, the ways of immoral lifestyles.

And the bad company, he says, ruins good morals. That's the statement. And he's using it in this context.

And it's still relevant. And it's still relevant to you and to me as well. Remember James in his letter, chapter 4 and verse 4, where again he's very strongly saying to those he's writing to, the friendship of the world is enmity with God.

Now, you can misuse that text. It doesn't mean that if you're a Christian, you must have nothing to do with people who are not Christians. It doesn't mean you cannot have a friend who is unconverted, even if you are a confessing Christian.

It doesn't mean that at all. What James is on about is actually coming to be fully embrative of the world and the values of the world, the friendship of the world in the sense that you live a worldly life, that that is what you put first.

[49 : 40] That, he says, is enmity with God. And to be at enmity with God is a serious issue.

And Paul is saying, don't be deceived. Bad company ruins good models. Not only does it put you in a wrong relationship with God, but it actually also leads others astray as well if they're looking to you for advice or example.

And this applies to all ages, but I want to say this to our young folks especially. You're meeting so many things in the world of our day that we as young people, when we were young, didn't actually have to contend with, at least not to the same extent as you have.

And for you young people, it's so important. The company you keep in this world. That's why the church is so important. That's why the company of other Christians is so important. The company of other younger Christians is so important.

Because to go outside of that and to start actually neglecting the things you learn in the Bible or in your Sunday school or in the church, it's going to lead you away from being true to Jesus and being true to God.

[50 : 54] Remember, the company you keep as an impact on your life. If the main people in our lives are the people of the world, then we've got a problem.

If we're Christians and we have to look at ourselves and say, well, my favorite companionship is not other Christians, then I've got a problem.

If it's to do with the world and the ways of the world, it doesn't belong in the Christian life. And it will not be long before that makes itself known in our lifestyle as well.

Bad company ruins good morals. It's a wonderful privilege to have parenthood that seeks to bring up children in the ways of the Lord.

And to teach them that the company they're going to keep as they're growing up through the years and as they become adults, it's going to be so important for them.

[51 : 54] But none of us must leave it until our young folks then have gone out into the world before we start teaching them what kind of company they should keep. It begins at the earliest stage.

And bad company corrupts good manners, ruins good morals. You see what he's saying?

Wherever we actually discount any foundational truths of the gospel, it has an impact one way or the other on our manner of life. Even this one that denies the reality of the resurrection, that falls in with those who are of similar views.

Well, it has an impact practically upon our lives from day to day. And that's why he's saying here, bad company ruins good morals.

So, if we discount a resurrection, well, there's that first point, why baptism's for the dead? And we said, can't go into that too much. We really don't know too much about what Paul meant.

[53 : 00] But the main point is still the case, then why are we doing this if there's no resurrection? Second one is, why willingly take on adversity?

And you know, when you find even today, those who go to other parts of the world with the gospel as missionaries, some of them end up in very difficult, dangerous situations.

We just said farewell to Muriel last week. She's gone back to Cambodia. Her prayers and love have gone with her. I'm not saying that she's in the most dangerous place by any means for a missionary, but she's gone there.

She's left her own native place here. She's gone there. What has brought her there? What has actually made her think, well, even if I do face adversity and difficulty, that's part of what my life is about.

But if you said to her, well, if there's no resurrection, why go through it? And she would say, but of course there's a resurrection. That's what gives meaning in many ways to the life that I live, the work that I'm doing.

[54 : 01] Because I'm going to be finally meeting with God. And I hope to spend eternity with him. And all of what I'm doing has a relation with that.

But then, finally, thirdly, here's a wake-up call in verse 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." Well, sometimes we do have to be blunt with people.

And Paul wasn't averse to being blunt with people. And sometimes, as he is here, being blunt with the Corinthians is an evidence, not that he doesn't like them, it's an evidence of his love for them.

Because if they're going astray, he wants to bring them back into the way of obedience to Christ and understanding of the gospel. And this is something we have to remember ourselves.

[55 : 02] But you see, he's saying here, the knowledge of God that he speaks of here, some do not have the knowledge of God or some have no knowledge of God. In many ways, that's the key to appreciating what resurrection is about and why it's there and why it's meaningful and why it's foundational.

It's tied in with the knowledge of God. Knowledge on our part of God. And he means by that God's grace, God's transforming power, God's ultimate aim.

Some of the Corinthians had been seduced, they'd been deceived. And now what he's saying to them is, stop being like that. Put the brakes on. Look at yourselves, he's saying.

Stop being deceived. Stop going on in your sinning against God. And very often, the concept of sin, the reality of sin in the Bible is more to do with the mindset than the actions.

It's to do with the mind that leads to the actions. And that's the case with this emphasis that he's giving here to waking up from their drunken stupor, as is right.

- [56 : 17] He's really saying, in a spiritual sense, you're just like people who've had a really heavy night of it. Who've gotten drunk. And who are lying on their beds trying to recover.
- But it's the morning after the night before, he's saying in a spiritual sense. And he says, you've got to wake up from that. You've got to get your minds back in order. You've got to clear your minds.
- And you've got to get back to what you should be with before God. Clear your mind. Come to your senses. And he finishes by saying, I say this to your shame.
- I say this to your shame. They had been taught the things of the gospel. They had been taught by the likes of the apostle himself.
- It was a shameful thing for them to have departed from that teaching and to have the very problems that this whole epistle sets out for us that were current in Corinth in Paul's day.
- [57 : 23] I speak, he says this, to your shame. The word shame. Not a popular one, is it, today? And people would react to that, really, and say, you have no business saying things to people that might lead to them feeling ashamed of themselves.
- Pride is the thing. Be proud of what you are. Be proud of what you want to be. Be proud of what you think is best for you. Be proud of living the life you want to live.
- Don't be ashamed of it, even if the gospel and these Christian preachers say that sin is a shame. And even if there's such a thing in the Bible, as Christian preachers will tell you, the reaction of that is, shame?
- Why should I feel ashamed? I'm proud of what I am. Ah, this is the problem, isn't it? When God comes into a person's life, truly.
- When God brings up the sin that's in our hearts, when God shows us that cesspit that is in us, in every one of us as sinners, we feel ashamed.
- [58 : 40] And if we've never felt a glimmer of shame in the presence of God, we don't know what it is to be a Christian. Because coming to repent of sin, coming to seek God's forgiveness, includes, to some extent at least, the confession before God, Lord, I am ashamed of what I am.
- I am ashamed to do this to your great name. Change me. Cleanse me. Save me.
- Don't be afraid of the word shame, friends. Because it is a friend to us when God blesses the gospel.
- We're not in the business as preachers of the gospel to go out deliberately and seeking to make people feel ashamed of themselves. That's the work of God.
- What we do is present the gospel. But when we present the gospel, it's a gospel that says, Here is what you are as a sinner. Here is how God sees you. Here is what you are in relation to what you should be.
- [59 : 54] And God says, are you not ashamed of that? When you're not yet cleansed, washed, and made clean through the blood of Christ. I say this, he says, to your shame.
- Well, whenever we feel that sense of shame at our own sinfulness, let it not be something that we're sorry for.
- Let it not be something that we then hear the world's voice about and say, Well, never mind that. That's just an element of your upbringing or whatever.
- And the best thing for you is just to try and get rid of that. Well, God is saying, you have a sense of shame when I bring home your sinfulness to you.
- Not so that you'll think it's something that you can get rid of or would be better without. It's so that you'll let me deal with it. It's so that you'll let me deal with it.

[60 : 56] And that's what Christ came into the world for. That's why he died the death that he died. So that we would be delivered from the shame of our sin.

That we would come to know shame as something that really itself brings us to God. That we would not take pride in our sinfulness.

But that we would come to boast instead in Christ. In his perfection. In his holiness. In his power.

In his greatness. The resurrection of the dead. So important. So crucial to believe in.

So much of a business with us in the present day. As to how we live our life. You know this resurrection.

[61 : 59] You know that that awaits you. And you know that accordingly. And I must live a life that is obedient.

Lovingly to Christ. May God bless these thoughts on that passage for us. Let's conclude now. Our worship this evening. Singing in Psalm 124.

Paul was taking us to times of his own trials and afflictions. And the sufferings that he had as a Christian. As an apostle.

And here is a psalm of praise to God. A psalm very frequently associated with the Covenanters in Scotland. Many, many years ago. Many generations ago.

But there is plenty of evidence that this was a precious, precious psalm to them. When they were forced even out into the moors to worship God in the open fields.

[62 : 56] And came to God with the likes of this psalm to praise him for his protective care. If God the Lord had not been on our side. Let Israel say.

Had not the Lord been near when foes attacked us. Filling us with fear. And when their wrath against us reached its height. Alive we had been swallowed in their spite.

Sing to tune old 124 to God's praise. And when foes attacked us. If God the Lord had not been on our side.

If God the Lord had not been on his side. Let Israel say! Have not the Lord be near.

The Lord be here. When homes are down us, filling us with fear, and when their wrath against us reached its height, a life we have been swallowed in their spine.

[64 : 24] We would have been enveloped by the blood over our heads the torrents would have won, the waters would have had in us alone.

But praise the Lord, for he has sent us free, and has all led us to their cruelty.

We have escaped just as an absolute birth, and of the power let us be set free.

Thus, may it stop, we have had liberty. Our help is in the name of God the Lord, who may the air and heaven die his word.

After a benediction tonight, I'll go to the door to my left here. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

[66 : 30] Amen.