

Effects of the Resurrection

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[0 : 01] Let's turn for a little to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and looking at the last verse, verse 58. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 58.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Now, as we read part of this chapter, we can see very clearly that this is a chapter that focuses so much upon the resurrection of the dead.

And one of the reasons, indeed if not the primary reason, that Paul spends so much of his time arguing and teaching or defending this great truth in or in this epistle to the Corinthians is that Corinth, of course, as we know, was a Greek city.

And the Greeks did not believe largely in the resurrection of the dead. You remember, you can read about it in the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul was teaching in Athens that people were really enthralled.

[1 : 20] They were caught up in his message and they found it fascinating as he was teaching about Christ. But when he came to the resurrection of the dead, they burst out laughing. They just thought it was hilarious because this was a concept that was foreign to them.

A lot of the Greek philosophy looked on the body as a kind of person. And that when a person died, that person was released from the person.

So the last thing they wanted was that body to rise up again. So a lot of the Greek philosophy not only ignored the resurrection but did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

And unfortunately, as often happens, what is happening in the age, what is happening in society, often works its way into the church.

It happens here this day. It happens just now. And it has always been the case. And that's what had happened in Corinth. That some of the philosophy, some of the ways, some of the influences of the day begin to affect the church.

[2 : 32] And that's why Paul, he says back, for instance, there in verse 12, Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Paul is here speaking to the church. So you see, the Greek philosophy was affecting the life of the church. So that they were taking this on board as well.

And we've always got to be careful that we don't get sucked in to the influences of the world. Of course we live in the world and we're involved in the world.

But we've always got to make clear what the word of God is. And that's what we're going to come to look at in a moment. And how important it is that we are fixed in the truth.

Because if we really know the truth, it will have a great impact upon our life. It will give us a strength. It will give us a courage in society. For we're not going to be moved about flapping this way and that way.

[3 : 31] As all the different outside influences, they do touch us. So that we begin to maybe think in a different way. And say, well maybe that's not really what the Bible is saying.

You see, there's a great temptation to water down the truth. And to try and blend the truth in to where society is at the moment.

Now of course, that is not saying that the church isn't to become contemporary. Of course it is. The church has always got to be where people are at. But at the same time, the church is not to compromise its message and compromise the word.

And that's why it's so important that we know where the word is and what the word is saying. And that's what Paul was at pains to teach the church in Corinth.

Look, he says, this philosophy that is infiltrating the church is completely wrong. And that is why he's emphasizing the importance of the resurrection of the dead.

[4 : 33] And Paul's argument here about the resurrection of Christ and subsequently the resurrection of all is rooted in history. It's rooted in logic.

It's rooted in theology. And it's rooted in experience. And we know today that there are many people who will deny the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

And there are people even within, and we use it in its widest sense, within the Christian church, who will deny the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Paul is showing that if there is no resurrection, if Christ did not rise from the dead, then everything that went before, all that Christ did, was really of no avail.

That really, he's really kind of saying that Christ wasted his time and that we are wasting our time in believing. Because that's what Paul is saying.

[5 : 38] Paul is saying if Christ didn't rise from the dead, you and I were still in our sins. So you see how vital, how essential the doctrine of the resurrection is.

If Christ didn't rise from the dead, we're still in our sins. Of all people on the whole face of this planet earth who would be most deceived and who would have most to lose, it would be the Christian.

If Christ did not rise from the dead. Because your faith, Paul argues, this is what he's saying. Your faith is vain. Your hope is vain. You've got nothing.

You've been deceived. But of course, Paul then shows how Christ did rise from the dead. And this is at the very center of our hope.

And millions in this world, and an amazing number in glory, are rooted not to a corpse, but to a living, glorious Savior, who is seated at the right hand, who is Lord over all.

[6 : 51] And this is what is the great hope. That just as Jesus Christ rose from the dead. As our Savior. As our mediator.

We will rise with him. Just as he rose, we will rise also. That is a guarantee. And that's part of what makes the Christian faith so thrilling.

That is part of what gives us this great hope. Because there are a lot of people who don't believe. And of course, you see, it's all by faith.

Because people will say, right, do you really believe in these things that you can't see? Do you really believe in this fact?

Or in this, and people, what they might not say a fact. Is this how you're living your life? You're trusting in somebody that you can't see. You're believing that you're going to go to somewhere you've never seen.

[7 : 55] You believe that this body which will go into the grave is going to rise again. And there are an awful lot of people who just say, well, look, sorry. That's too much for me.

I'm living here and now, in the here and now. This is my life. I'm going to get on with it. And I'm not going to start going down that road thinking about all these things. There's lots of people who live their life like that.

It's in the here and the now, end of story. But you know, if that's all that you have for this life, is this life, there's no wonder there's so much despair, so much unhappiness.

Because this world is difficult. It's full of many great blessings. Don't get me wrong. And every one of us is able to look back and say, well, we've had many great things. Yes, sore things, difficult things.

But many great things. But of all that we had and have is what this world gives. Then, is that it?

Because you know, when you go to a grave and you look back over a life and you say, well, is that it?

[9 : 05] It's at the end. But the Bible shows us, no, it's not. And it all comes down to faith. And if today you don't have the faith to believe.

And I actually think if you're here today that you have an element of faith. That you have an element of belief. You certainly, I don't think you'd be here if you did not believe in the word at all.

But it's not enough simply just to believe within the mind. We've got to come to know and to believe within our heart. And you know, it's a wonderful thing.

When you come to know Jesus Christ, you know it's a reality. God is a reality to you. This is not just something that you're going along with at other people.

If today you have the opportunity to walk out that door and say, I'm never coming back to church. I'm closing my Bible. I'm finished with all these things. I'm going to make that choice.

[10:07] No, if you love the Lord, you couldn't do it. If you went to another country where you didn't know anybody. And you have the opportunity to live any way you want for the rest of your days.

You would come back to this because this is your life. You have discovered, you know the reality of this person. You love him.

He has influenced your life. He's affected your life. He's changed your life. He's given you a new direction, a new impetus, a new hope. And that's what Paul is talking about here.

And then Paul, from verse 35, again, he addresses two questions. How is the resurrection achieved and what is the nature of the resurrection body? And Paul is kind of likening it to the seed time and harvest time.

And in a sense, while both are real, neither are fully understood. But he's kind of showing it in this way, that here you have a plant.

[11:10] This plant that's here in front of you sprouted from a little seed that was put into the ground. That seed had to die.

And what came from it, while it is directly linked to it, is completely different from it. So that there is continuity, but there's a glorious difference.

There's the seed. You put it down into the ground. The seed dies. But this comes up, this beautiful plant. The plant comes from the seed.

It's directly linked to it. In a sense, the seed has turned into this plant, but it is through this wonderful process of death and life.

And he's using that as a kind of example of what happens. It's almost like our body is, as it were, almost planted into the ground. It's died.

[12:15] But from it, come the resurrection, will come this glorious body. Different, but still there's continuity, a direct link.

So that it will be our body that will rise, but it will rise glorious in the resurrection. And so Paul, as he's talking about all these things, is showing that this is all part of the salvation that is in Jesus. When we think about salvation, we often think about just coming to faith in Jesus Christ. The salvation in Christ affects us entirely.

Not just our soul, but also our body, also our future inheritance. It affects everything. Salvation is complete.

It's a whole future of an endless eternity. It's caught up in what Jesus Christ has won for us. And so it's in light of this teaching that Paul then goes on, and this is kind of the framework, and this is the platform.

[13:27] And he's saying, look, it's a life of hope. It's a life that is so thrilling and so dynamic. It's a life where even the sting of death and all its trauma and all its pain has been taken away.

We think of, say, for instance, a snake. Some snakes have really poisonous stings. Now, you might be a snake lover.

Unfortunately, I have a real problem in loving snakes. It's just the way I am. A lot of things, spiders, all these things don't bother me. Snakes do. So if I was put in a room full of snakes, I would find that really difficult.

But if I was told that the poison was taken out of the snake, I would still not be happy at all. I would still be feeling pretty traumatic.

But it wouldn't be nearly so bad as if I was put into a room of poisonous snakes and their sting was still in them. That poison was still there.

[14:40] And in a sense, that's kind of what it's like for us with death. Death is not something that we're saying, oh, I'm really looking forward to.

There is something about death that we recoil from. And death leaves in its wake trauma and pain and sorrow. But its sting, that which ultimately kills and destroys, has been removed.

And death actually turns right round. And death is really the doorway to glory for the Lord's people. And Paul is showing us all these things.

And that's why he says death is swallowed up in victory. Oh, death, where's your victory? Ah, you've lost it. The victory has been won by Jesus. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God who gives us a victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Victory over death. Victory over the grave. Victory over sin. Therefore, he says, because of all that, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

[15 : 51] My beloved brothers, he says. And this is an expression of real love. And that's how Paul is looking at all those who are united to Jesus Christ. And remember, he's talking to the church in Corinth.

And in that church, there were divisions. Some people weren't getting on with others. But Paul talks to them all. And he says, despite who you are and what you are and what you're doing, he says, you are my beloved brothers.

And we've always got to have this within our heart. That all our Christian brothers and sisters, that's who they are, their family. They belong. And we've always got to remember that every believer is beloved of the Father.

Beloved of the Son. Beloved of the Holy Spirit. Beloved to such an extent that the Father gave his Son for that passion. That the Son gave his life for that passion.

And that should be a rebuke to us when we say, I don't want to love that particular person. Now, of course, when we talk about love, remember what love is.

[17 : 01] We've looked at that often enough. Love is seeking the good of another. Seeking their welfare. Seeking to do them good. To love in this particular way doesn't mean that we have to have the most wonderful emotional feeling.

For this type of love means that we are seeking the well-being, the welfare, the good of that person. And that should always be in the heart of the believer.

And so Paul addresses them as my beloved brother. And then Paul says, be steadfast immovable. Now, steadfast has the idea of being seated. And, you know, it's much harder to knock a person down if they're sitting rather than if they're standing. If somebody's standing, just give them a dent. If he's sitting, well, you need maybe more than a dent to shift him. Be steadfast immovable. Now, it's kind of the same word but with a greater intensity.

[18 : 14] And Paul is saying, look, this is how we are to be. Because just as in Paul's day, so in our day. That we're living in a time where everything goes.

And particularly when we come to the Bible, there's a temptation not always to believe what the Bible says. Because we live in a day where many people, and even people, and I talk about the Christian church in its broadest sense, there are many people who say that the word of God is contained in the Bible.

That in the Bible, that here and there you find the word of God. But that not all the Bible is the word of God. There are people who teach that. And, of course, that is absolutely wrong.

We believe that all Scripture is the word of God. And that's part of what Paul is really talking about here.

Being the steadfast immovable. That we are to be founded and grounded upon the truth. And, you know, it gives you such a...

[19 : 21] This is what gives you the stability. Remember in Ephesians, Paul says, Don't be blown about by every wind of doctrine.

Paul was looking at the church in Ephesus. And there were people who would be saying this, and people would be saying that. And one day people would be believing this, and another day they'd be believing that. And they were changing their mind all the time.

And they didn't know whether they were coming or whether they were going. And that's how it will be for people. That is why it's so important to be grounded in the truth. That's why it's so important for young Christians to be grounded in the truth.

It's so important to get a firm foundation. So that you're not going to be knocked this way and that way. It's important when the storms of life come.

That you're grounded in the truth. That you know what God's word is saying. And we are to stand for the truth. We are to defend the truth.

[20 : 19] We are to raise a flag of identifying with the truth wherever we are. We are to be steadfast and unmovable in doing God's will.

Whatever the Lord wants us to do, do it. And sometimes I know that, and I'm sure you've met people, and they're saying to you, Oh, you know, the Lord's guiding me into this or guiding me into that.

Then you meet them a wee while later. You find them in another place doing something else. And you're saying, Well, I thought this is what you were going in.

Oh, no, I've changed my fancy doing this now. And you're saying, Well, this doesn't make sense. If you are persuaded of God's will, this is the direction. It's very strange that it's something completely different.

So we've got to have this steadfastness, not moving about, not always changing our mind about this and that. There has to be a consistency, this steadfastness, this rock solid.

[21 : 27] When you look at the Lord, this is the kind of passion he is, unchanging. He is immovable. And he wants his people to be like that, certainly with regard to the word.

And then Paul says, Always abounding in the work of the Lord. This word, abounding, carries with it the idea of exceeding the requirement.

The idea of overflowing. The idea almost of overdoing. And this is a word that is used of God's lavish outpouring of his grace and goodness.

As if God was almost overdoing it. That what he has done has gone way beyond what anybody would ever expect or even think. And that is certainly true with regard to the whole scheme of salvation.

When you think of what God has done in Christ. And this is what Paul is saying. My beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable.

[22 : 34] Always exceeding in the work of the Lord. What a challenge that is to all of us.

Exceeding in the work of the Lord. Are we? In all the busyness of their day. What do we give to the Lord?

Now, here's Paul. This is what he's saying. Always abounding in the work of the Lord. Always. Now, of course, the work of the Lord can and does involve all the duties of life.

Because everybody isn't called to be a missionary. Everybody isn't called to work full time for the Lord. Of course not. People have all the different skills and they're involved in all different things. But, where you are in life and where the Lord has put you in life, are you still raising the flag for the Lord? Where the opportunities are given, are you prepared to give, even where you are, some of your time, your energy, your talents?

[23 : 44] Because, remember, the day of reckoning is to come for all of us, for me and for you.

What are you doing for the Lord? It's a very important question.

Always abounding, exceeding. And I hope the word will challenge us all in this very thing. Do we give of our energy, of our time?

Could we give a little more of our time, of our talents, to the work of the Lord? We live, I was reading one commenter here, John MacArthur, and he was saying that we live in a day that has often moved.

Now, again, we do live in an incredibly demanding day. And life has so changed. Even, I look back, even in my own time in the ministry.

And everybody is so aware of how short, of how little time we have. And for some, and nobody understands it, life is just going like some juggernaut that is getting faster and faster and faster.

[25 : 06] And nobody has time. We cannot in any way achieve anywhere near what we're wanting to. And all the time there is this frustration. I say, I don't have time, I don't have time, I don't have time for this.

And it is, so many people today burn out because of the incredible busyness. But then there is the other side where people are saying, well, you have to take time out.

You need time of leisure. You need time of recreation. Now, while that is important, absolutely important, we all need times of recreation and, as it were, times of leisure.

Time to recuperate. John MacArthur has something very interesting to say here. He says, leisure and recreation have become today two modern idols, which many bow down to.

He says, in proper proportion, recreation and leisure are good and can help to restore our energy and to increase our effectiveness. But they can also become an end in themselves.

[26 : 16] So that rather than being a diversion or something which is being used to help us along the way, we begin to give all our energy and our time and our thinking to them.

And he goes on to say that they demand more and more of our attention, our concern, our time and our energy. And he says, more than one believer has relaxed and hobbyed himself completely out of the Lord's work.

Very interesting comment, that. More than one believer has relaxed and hobbled himself completely out of the Lord's work. It's not a challenging thought.

There was a day when involved with the Lord, doing something for the Lord. No time now. But then you look back and if you were to analyze your day, your week, your month, is it possible that you actually do have time, but that the other things, even the recreations, the leisure, all these things, have become so much in your life that this is part of why we don't have time for the Lord.

These are just challenging thoughts that come from this. But then here's, and now, of course, the other side is that there are people who do burn out. And there has to be a happy medium.

[27 : 44] But then we see the great encouragement, knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain. Our Lord never, ever, ever despises anything that anybody does for him.

He takes note of it. And on that great day, even if you've given a cup of water to somebody in the name of the Lord, the Lord, and you weren't even aware, it's just something, you know, this is probably the most insignificant little thing you could do, is to give somebody who was in need of water, there you are, there's some water.

You've forgotten about it long ago. The Lord hasn't. He's taken note of it. It's going to be part of the reward. And glory is going to be an amazing time, because remember what the word says, our works follow.

What works? Well, all that is done to the Lord, by faith. Otherwise, all the rest is going to be burnt up. So you see, if we give our life, our time, our energy, our talents, to things that are not to the Lord, that are not by faith, where we are not seeking to live to the glory of God, wherever we are, all that gets burnt up, if it's not to and for the Lord.

And it all has a bearing upon the weight of glory, upon the reward given. So you see how important it is to be involved, because the Lord's going to say, what did you do with all the strength I gave you, the bodily strength?

[29 : 24] What did you do with the mind I gave you? What did you do with all these practical skills that I gave you? What did you do with the ability that I gave you of speaking to people?

My friend, this is a challenge to all of us. Are we using what God has given to us for his glory?

Because the reward will be great.

And nothing that you do for him will be overlooked. He'll measure it all, take note of it, and meet you with it one day.

And this will all be part of this great reward. That's what Jesus says, Behold, I am coming soon, and my reward is with me to give to every man according to what he has done.

Let us be encouraged then to work, to be abounding in the work of the Lord, to be steadfast in the truth, realizing that the day of reckoning and the day of reward is not far away.

[30 : 36] Let's pray. O Lord, our God, as we again come unto the word and are challenged by it, we pray that we may look where we are.

It is so easy to excuse ourselves and so easy to put up arguments, but we've got to remember that it is to the Lord and not to ourselves or to others.

And we pray then that we may have the right focus and that we may seek to live to the Lord and for the Lord. Bless us, we pray, and do us good.

Guide us and take us all home to our home in safety, forgiving us our sins. In Jesus' name, we ask it. Amen. Amen.