

1Corinthians 18-12-02a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is Sunday, December the 2nd and we continue our study in 1st Corinthians resuming in chapter 15. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and we will dive right in.

Father, it's a wonderful privilege to spend this time together and to focus this morning on the truth of the resurrection, this wonderful fact of the gospel that has secured our salvation, that demonstrates Your power and Your grace and Your love for us. We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for the hope that resides in Him for us as He sits at Your right hand awaiting the day when the assignment will be to come and collect us and take us to Himself and present us before Your throne.

We pray that as we look at this portion of Your word together this morning that Your Holy Spirit will minister to each heart in a way that is motivating and encouraging and comforting, that will strengthen us and sustain us as we invest the time that remains to us in this life hoping to live in a way that pleases You, that brings glory to the Lord Jesus and that vindicates Your decision to save us and to raise us and to prepare us for the life that is to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

As we have seen in 1st Corinthians, Paul provides us here the largest, most extensive section of Scripture in the Bible on resurrection. It is the most detailed, it is the most lengthy, and it is the most central. This is a purely doctrinal chapter after 14 chapters of practical instruction and correction and rebuke for the Corinthians.

And you ask yourself, in the light of the destination and what we know about the Corinthian church, why does Paul present this particular section here? We could ask ourselves the same question. Many of us have been saved for a long time, years, decades even, and do we really need to revisit the truth of the resurrection? We take it for granted. We are ready to accept the evidence, as I presented it last time, that has been offered for the fact of the resurrection of Christ.

And Paul presents a very compelling case here. So what's the point of going over this? Obviously, if you have a truth from the Word of God and you're a believer, this would be something that you hope has application, that it makes a difference in the way we live day to day. Well, how many times as you face a challenge, it's a health challenge, it's a financial challenge, it's a circumstantial uphill battle, it's controversies, as the British like to say, with people.

I don't know why those people can't learn to talk better, but we have interactions with people that can be very difficult, and it's something of a puzzle how it is that we can be so sure that we are right. We trust our inner compass, that it's pointing directly at magnetic north, and that what little biases we have, we can account for and compensate for, and that we are objectively

right. We just pretty much make that assumption, and if we feel right, and the arguments in our head tell us we're right, then anybody that disagrees with us can't be right.

They've got to be right. And it takes maturity, and it takes experience, and the humbling demonstration that many times we're not right, to give us a bit more caution, and the willingness to revisit our assumptions, and the case that we have built in any particular situation, believing that we're right. Sometimes new facts come to light.

Sometimes we realize that a part of our mental machinations was emotional and was defensive. We felt wounded, and we've got a little bit of a lashing out going on. There can be many things that tip the balance of our reason in one direction or another, and simply being convinced that we're right doesn't make us right.

And the wonderful thing about God's Word is that it is an absolute. It is unchanging. It is divine in its source.

It is righteous at its very core and foundation, and comparing our thoughts and our mental processes to those standards, and in that light, the light of the supernatural Word of God is a wonderful corrective. It brings us out of darkness and out of subjectivity into light and into objectivity. So back to the resurrection.

How does this help us if we're simply trying to navigate the rocks and shoals of daily life, trying not to run aground and make ourselves and others miserable? Well, Paul is going to make that case to the Corinthians. Now remember who he's talking to here. This is a group that initially responded to the gospel message as Paul preached it.

He reminds them of that at the beginning of this chapter 15. And yet in his absence, and with the proliferation of viewpoints and speakers and the inevitable creep of Greek philosophy back into their spiritual discernment and their spiritual calculations, there has begun to be divergence in their view. It's kind of like you fight the British to establish a new country here in the United States, and even the enemies of my enemy are my friends.

But then once the threat is gone and you begin to actually sort out how are we going to live together, differences emerge and you wind up having the Whigs and the roots of the Democrat and Republican parties, and people begin to divide when they are no longer united against a common threat. And the same sort of thing happens often in our social life, in our professional life, in our personal life. The inevitable differences that distinguish us as individuals and as people who are products of experience and of education and of family conditioning, we begin to see differences.

This happened in the Corinthian church, and so there were wars and divisions among them, and they began to divide up into factions. Paul says you can't do that as a believer. We are united in Christ.

In Him we are one, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. And the

central truth, as Paul turns doctrinal in his presentation here, he doesn't say you are all cleansed of your sins. He doesn't say you have all been redeemed by the blood.

He doesn't say you are all going to wear white robes and look alike and have sort of a uniform of righteousness. He doesn't say you have all been distinguished and separated and sanctified. He says the unifying feature.

Remember now, 14 chapters of practical exhortation, and this is how you ought to do in the church. But what is the doctrine that is going to purify them and unite them and motivate them to love and good works? What is the doctrine He is going to give them? In Ephesus it was, which is actually the Laodicean letter, walk in love, right? He says *peri pateo*, walk about in love, redeeming the time and so on. Come to the standard of a mature man.

The body is gifted in many ways, and that which every joint supplies unifies it and makes it whole. He doesn't give that dissertation here to a troubled and divided church and one that is self-interested and in some cases selfish, elbowing each other out of the way at their communal meals. And Paul compares that meal to the meal that the Lord had in the upper room.

And he says, was that selfish or selfless? You likewise should be selfless. But the doctrinal core of this letter that we find in Corinthians 15 is the resurrection. So my question to you is, how in our daily walk before the Lord do we implement the truth of the resurrection that He gives here? Well, Paul is going to do that for us, and I'm so glad he did because I don't have to figure it out.

He's going to make it clear to the Corinthians why this doctrine is so important. We saw last time that he reviews that this is the gospel that formed them into a group. This has always been the heart of the gospel.

If you go back and look at how the church got started, Paul says this is the truth that began everything. So it is easy to review for them what he first delivered to them. And this goes back to Pentecost.

As we saw in Acts 2, this was the heart of the first two sermons that were given when the church age began. You look at Acts 2-3-4, the first two recorded sermons in the church age center on the resurrection. We saw that last time.

Paul says, according to the Scriptures, part of the case that was made because the first generation of the church was Jewish was made from their own Old Testament Scriptures. They say this Jesus Messiah notion is an innovation and a change, and it's overthrowing the traditions of the elders and the law of Moses. Well, the apostles, trained by the Lord Jesus, like the two on the road to Emmaus where Jesus showed them from the Scriptures how these things had to be, he said, haven't you seen from the beginning that this is what the Scriptures foretold? Well, this is the case that has been made.

That road to Emmaus notion, of course, is in Luke 24, 25-27. Jesus speaks to them and says, O

foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

We've seen this in the prophetic books as we went through kings and prophets. We're seeing it in the Psalms. You look at Psalm 16 and Psalm 22, manifestly foreshadowing the career of the Messiah and his suffering.

Isaiah 53, Paul meets the resurrected Lord and becomes an apostle and eventually finds himself in Acts 26 standing before Agrippa. And in Acts 26, 22, and 23, he says, Having obtained help from God, I, Paul, stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the prophets and Moses said was going to take place. That the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of his resurrection from the dead, he should be the first to proclaim light, both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.

Acts 26, 22, and 23, the heart of the gospel is the resurrected Christ. It proclaims who he is. And whether you look at Jesus, whether you look at Peter, whether you look at Paul, you find them quoting or referring to the Old Testament passages over and over again.

They refer back to Abraham offering Isaac on the mount in Genesis 22. Abraham tells Isaac, my son, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering. 22, 8 of Genesis.

A few verses later in 14, Abraham called the name of the place, the Lord will provide. As it is said to this day, in the mount of the Lord, it shall be provided. The lamb would be provided.

In prospect, we've seen Psalm 16 in our recent Psalm study. We're going to see Psalm 22 very soon, which the first verse sounds a bit familiar. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Psalm 22, 1. Why are you so far from helping me and from the words of my groaning? Isaiah 53, the suffering servant, to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed, he shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground.

He has no form or comeliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. All of the wonderful portraits of Christ hanging on walls notwithstanding, he wasn't an attractive man in his first coming. And one of the reasons nobody could recognize him after he was raised is his inner beauty and strength now shine forth in his resurrection body.

And while we do not know what we will look like, we know that we will be like him. And your inner beauty will be external. Your inner strength, your victories, your faithfulness, your obedience will be reflected in the resurrection.

We will know each other. We will recognize each other, but not necessarily by appearance, although I think God will supernaturally give us that perception and that recognition. We'll have no difficulty recognizing each other when we look at each other, but it will be a wonderfully enhanced body like the Lord's.

But he was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We hid, as it were, our faces from him. We say, why is God hiding his face? Because of our transgressions? Well, we looked at the Lord, that first generation, and they hid their faces from him.

He was despised, and we did not esteem him. He has borne our griefs and our sorrows, and so forth. Isaiah 53.

Hosea chapter 6 verse 2, After two days he will revive us. On the third day he will raise us up, that we may live in his sight. These are scriptures the Lord Jesus knew from his youth, cycled through his soul, understood who he was, where he was, why he was, how he was.

And the scriptures guided and sustained him. He did not live by bread alone, but by every word that came from God. So, over and over again, both directly and indirectly, and especially the indirect evidence, is powerful and compelling testimony to the truth of the resurrection in prospect.

It was predicted ahead of time. It was foretold, both overtly and in subtle ways. So Paul presents that testimony of the scriptures.

He presents them, first of all, their testimony, their own testimony. They heard the preaching, and they believed it, and it formed them into the church. They collected together and collectively believed, and were united in it, and sustained by it, and motivated by it, and delivered by it, out of their pagan culture.

That itself was witness. I deliver to you what you have already believed and received, and what distinguishes you brethren. He calls them brethren.

The reason they are brethren is they heard this message and believed it. That itself is witness and testimony. The witness of the scriptures is evidence and testimony.

Eyewitnesses are called. And we looked at the eyewitness testimony last time. I'm not going to review that.

He appeared to the twelve. He appeared to the five hundred. He appeared to James.

We believe that this is James, his half-brother, and that that appearance is probably representative of perhaps to the rest of his brethren, because we find them in Acts chapter 1, verse 14, assembled with the disciples, the Lord's brethren. This would be James, and Joseph, and the others that are named in scripture as his half-brothers. And he had a sister as well.

Those of us who have a sister could speculate on the sister of the Lord Jesus. He had at least one sister. And she's just mentioned in passing, but I've had a lot of fruitful machinations in my own mind and heart.

The Lord Jesus knew what it was like to have a sister. And she knew what it was like to have Him

for a brother. And that's a whole unique window and insight when you've got both brothers and sisters in a family of any number.

There is a dynamic there that the Lord Jesus was familiar with and knew about. And many times the relationships between the genders, whether it's in marriages or in sibling relationships, the Lord Jesus didn't just observe this from heaven. He had firsthand experience with brothers and with his sister, as well as his parents.

So anytime we think that we don't have a sympathizing Savior sitting at the right hand of the Father, think again. He has seen it all. He has experienced it all.

He has walked this earth and faced the same ups and downs and challenges and vagaries of human character and experience that we have. When it says He was tested in all points like as we are, there are a lot of dimensions to that. I'm not saying that having a sister is a trial.

I just think it's an interesting fact that God chose to give Mary and Joseph a daughter to grow up in the same household with the Lord, with all of its blessings and its interesting differences from brothers. Those of us that have both know what I'm talking about. So we think this James that the Lord appeared to was the half-brother of the Lord.

There were two Jameses in the midst of the disciples. But of course, James the brother of John, the son of Zebedee, is included in the 12. And James the less is also included in the 12.

So this James being marked out and distinguished would be familiar to the Corinthians as that prominent figure in Jerusalem and in the early days of the Jerusalem church. They were originally skeptical. When you look at John 7.5, even his brothers did not believe in him.

But again, as I say, by the time you get to Acts 1, they are assembled with their mother and the disciples. So this evidently happened somewhere between the record of John 7. And evidently, at least for James, included a resurrection appearance of the Lord. He appeared over a period of 40 days.

And this Acts 1.3, he presented himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during 40 days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. This is one of the most overlooked phrases, both at the beginning of Acts and at the end of Acts. You look at Acts 1.3, Jesus, back from the dead, there have been songs written about this.

I heard a guy when I was a kid come to our church in Chelsea and sing a song about Lazarus and how when he died, he went to heaven and he comes back and he's telling all of the people what he saw. He saw Moses and he saw Elijah and he saw Daniel and he goes on a great length about what he saw when he was in heaven. And he comes back and he's just, well, the Lord Jesus has died and has returned from the dead.

What is he talking about? He's not talking about heaven. He's not describing what he saw in the great beyond or who he met or how many angels were there. What is he talking about?

Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Now, this may be a bit tautologous. It may be a bit self-evident. That's the only time this week you're going to hear that word by the way.

But think about this. We're saying what's the importance of the resurrection? Why is it a practical doctrine to think of in your daily life and walk? What does Jesus talk about resurrected in his resurrection appearances? When he talks to James, when he talks to Peter, when he talks to the others assembled in groups large and small, what does he talk about? The kingdom of God. If there's no resurrection, there's no kingdom.

Because there is a resurrection, there will be a kingdom. Our lives here are preparation for the kingdom. You are going to come back.

If we're, praise God, in the rapture generation, we won't even have to come back. Those who are alive and remain caught up together with the Lord in the air to meet those who are sleeping in Jesus. But one way or another, we're going to the kingdom.

Why is the doctrine of the resurrection important? Jesus tells us in Acts 1.3, because it's all about the kingdom of God. Are you ready to live in the kingdom? What does it take to become a citizen here? You've got the caravan marching up from South America and everybody's talking about immigration and citizenship and illegality and legality and what do they call them now, undocumented aliens. But then they said, well, alien is pejorative.

So they're, I don't know what they call them now, welcome visitors of an undocumented nature or whatever. But people that come to this country, if you want to come here and live here and stay here and be a citizen, what do you have to do? You and I could not pass the citizenship test on the first go. I promise you.

All of the questions I might've been able to when I was in grade school and they first taught me how many representatives and the branches of government and what does the constitution say in the various articles and the amendments, history. People who study for the citizenship exam know a lot more than we do being native born. Why? Because in the wisdom of times past, we thought if you're to this country, you ought to know about it.

You ought to understand its laws and its government so that you can function effectively and productively here. You can be a useful, contributing citizen. A useful and contributing citizen.

Well, guess what? This Bible that you have before you is the material for the citizenship exam in the kingdom. Are you going to be a fruitful and contributing and productive citizen of the kingdom? Would you like some practice and some reinforcement in those principles of the kingdom? Well, that's what you get every day. The resurrection is important because the kingdom of God is coming and you're in it.

Our citizenship, Paul says, palatuma, it's a hop-hox, the only time it's ever used in the New

Testament. Palatuma is citizenship. Our citizenship is in heaven.

Our citizenship is in the coming kingdom. Well, could you pass the driving exam in the kingdom? Do you know what modifications you're allowed to your house in the kingdom? What the code is? Do you know how to govern if you are given the responsibility to oversee and to implement and to guide and to lead and to serve the Lord God in the kingdom? How are you going to do that? What's it going to be like? Well, that's what we learn. Resurrection and the kingdom are inextricably linked.

That's why Jesus, during the 40 days presenting himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. It's all about the kingdom. Keep your finger in Corinthians and turn back to the end of Acts.

That was Acts 1-4. You don't get five verses into Acts before you have the Lord Jesus himself in these precious resurrection appearances talking about the kingdom of God. What is Paul doing in his house arrest at the end of Acts? Acts 28, verse 30, Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house in Rome, received all who came to him, doing what? Verse 31, last verse of Acts, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Acts begins with Jesus preaching the kingdom. Acts ends with Paul preaching the kingdom. Why is the resurrection important? One word, kingdom.

We're going there. It's the destination. It's going to happen.

You may be in the far, God forbid, that we're off in a far distant dark corner of the kingdom, waiting for the wagon of leaves of the tree of life to roll our direction. We want to be ready. We want to be useful.

We want to be central. We want to be citizens not only of the kingdom but of the New Jerusalem. We want to have that card key pass that gets us into one of the gates.

We want to have property in the kingdom. We want to be close to the Lord, the Lamb, who is the light. We want to be deserving and worthy.

Wouldn't you love to be a Daniel or a Benaiah or a Joshua, a Job, an Apostle Paul, a Simon Peter, a Priscilla or an Aquila? Don't want to be an Ananias or a Sapphira. Their names popped into my mind. I think, well, maybe not.

That's going to be at the borders. But we can be ready. And that's what this life is about.

We think so much of life is just mundane things. It's chores. It's tasks.

It's things we need to cross off the list and get done. How is this contributing to the kingdom? Think resurrection. Think future.

This is practice. These are story problems. It isn't what I do.

It's why I do it. It's how I do it. It's with what viewpoint and what attitude and what anticipation I do it.

My dad's favorite verse, whatsoever you do, out of Philippians, do it heartily as unto the Lord. Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. I'm washing these dishes because the Lord has asked me to.

It's a task for Him. I'm enduring this difficulty. I'm putting up with this insult or this issue or this hardship.

I'm grinding through a difficult time or a difficult period or a difficult relationship. Why? God has asked me to. And I'm doing this as unto the Lord and not half-heartedly, not reluctantly, not insipidly or weakly or inconsistently.

I do it heartily. I do it aggressively. I do it proactively.

This is what God has asked me to do. He hasn't asked me to climb Mount Everest. He hasn't asked me to ford every stream and follow every rainbow.

He hasn't asked me to go to a foreign field and eat bugs. He hasn't asked me to live in some God-forsaken corner of the world and be wretched and diseased. He hasn't put me in a godless place where I'm surrounded by hostility and potential death.

What has God asked me to do? Fill in your situation here. Why should you persevere? Why should you look at this not as a glass nearly empty, but as a glass that's somewhat full? There's something in my glass. My cup's not empty, and the more I think about it, my cup runs over.

Goodness and mercy are going to follow David all the days of his life. Why? How does Psalm 23 end? I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. I'm coming back.

It's the kingdom. Resurrection is the heart of the gospel because the kingdom is the heart of the gospel. Life before God in service and in fruitfulness and in reflecting His glory is why we're saved.

It's why Jesus came to deliver us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love. It's kingdoms. Now there's a lot of misapprehension going on about kingdoms and bringing people to the kingdom and so on.

This is the biblical view of the kingdom. It is the kingdom of the resurrection. God's not building a kingdom in this fallen, mortal, corrupted world.

The kingdom is coming. The kingdom comes from heaven. It doesn't come to us.

We go to it. Kind of like David with the son he had with Bathsheba. He can't return to me.

I'm going to him. Well, that's what the kingdom is. You don't build a kingdom here.

We prepare ourselves for the kingdom here. We're in training. That's why it's important.

So, these proofs that Paul offers, the existence of the Corinthian church itself and all other believers, brethren, you are brethren because you heard this gospel, received it, and you stand in it. And you're being saved by it unless you believe to no purpose. This resurrection is a fact because it was foretold in the scriptures.

This resurrection is a fact because Jesus Himself proclaimed it and because there are eyewitnesses who saw Him raised from the dead. And He was seen last of all by me. Whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believe.

So now, beginning at verse 12, if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how does some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? Now, you don't have to be somebody who is verbally denying the resurrection. You know how you can deny the resurrection? Don't live in the light of the coming kingdom. Don't look at your life as preparation for resurrection.

And you're denying the resurrection. If you don't live it, if you don't, in your waking hours, remember that all of this is temporary and it's all going to be rolled up like a scroll and the elements are going to melt with a fervent heat and there's going to be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Remember the psalm that we just studied where David says, who is qualified to dwell on God's holy hill? Who is qualified to be a visitor in His tent? That's future.

How do you get qualified? You think about it now. So how does some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? You can say that with your life. If you're invested in this life and outcomes on this earth and in the short term, if you measure success by how things turn out here, you're denying the resurrection.

You're not treating the kingdom as a reality. And you go back to what Paul said at the beginning of this chapter. If you, by your life and by your thought pattern and by your personal investment of energy and attention and thought, deny the resurrection, you believe to no purpose.

Your faith is vain. If you're not living for the resurrection and if you're not living in anticipation of the kingdom and getting yourself ready, your faith is wasted. The work of Christ on your behalf is wasted because that's why He came.

That we could have life and have it abundantly when and where? In the kingdom. That's where the abundant life is. That's where the citizenship is.

That's where the hope and the future are. There are seven bad consequences of denying the resurrection. I'll give them to you here in order and then we'll look at them in detail.

1. If there is no resurrection, then Christ is not risen. However you want to explain the appearances and the testimony and the predictions and the fulfillments, if there is no resurrection, then Christ Himself is not raised. That makes the preaching of the gospel meaningless.

2. If there is no resurrection from the dead, Christ is not raised, the gospel is meaningless, faith in Christ is useless and kind of stupid. Believing in Him as a wonderful teacher, as a guy that had a lot of nice little sayings, if there's no resurrection, faith in Christ is useless. 3. For everybody that claims to have been a witness to the resurrection, everyone who preaches it, everyone who believes it to be true, they're all liars.

They are all purveyors of falsehood. They're either active or passive liars. All witnesses, everyone who says they saw the resurrected Christ, they're all liars.

The apostle Paul is a liar. Jesus Himself is a liar and a lie. 4. It leaves everyone still in the grip of corruption.

There is no victory over sin. There is no deliverance from sin. There is no release and rising above the corruption and the fallenness of our nature.

We are still in our sins and there is no escape. There is no objectivity. There is no rising above.

There is no salvation. 6. Everyone that's ever died is dead forevermore. The materialists are right.

Once your brain quits, it's like switching off a computer that can never be turned on again. All the programming and RAM just vanishes. All of your aspirations, all of your skills, all of your hopes, all of your memories, all of your relationships, all of your accomplishments, everything you ever did or were or thought has all perished and is inevitably and irretrievably gone.

The dead have eternally perished. 7. Christians are the most pathetic people on earth if there is no resurrection. These are the seven things Paul lists.

Christ is not risen. Gospel is meaningless. Faith is worthless.

Everybody who believes it and preaches it is a liar. Everybody is still in the grip of corruption and is still in sin. Everybody that's ever died is dead forevermore and we're pathetic.

Seven inevitable consequences. Now, that's very negative and very downcast, but the good thing is there are seven concomitant opposites. There are seven positives if the resurrection is true, and they are the opposite of those things.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back we're going to look at this. We're going to push through and get to the end of 1 Corinthians 15 in our next session and we're going to see what Paul does with these observations because he makes a pretty compelling case against himself here.

But based on what he started with and based on what he finishes with, we have powerful applicational truth for our daily lives because resurrection means kingdom and that means motivation. That means direction. That means goals and values and priorities that we can fulfill on a minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour, day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month basis in the time that God has allotted us, the time that remains to us in this life, can be redeemed, can be invested.

And not only are we citizens in the coming kingdom, but we will have inheritance and possession and opportunity in that kingdom. And that's a powerful lighthouse to guide us in our path even through stormy seas. Stormy or calm, we've got something to guide us, something to point us in the right direction, something to reference in everything we do.

We'll see that when we come back.