

1Corinthians 18-12-02b

Let's resume our study now in 1st Corinthians chapter 15, and we are looking at the consequences of there being no resurrection. Paul introduced the potential vanity of Christian faith at the beginning of this chapter when he said, you are being delivered by the gospel that you received and in which you stand unless your faith was empty, futile. You can be a believer and yet it's not productive.

It doesn't produce deliverance in this life. It doesn't produce preparation for the next life. You are saved.

You are inevitably and irretrievably born again, but the belief that entered you into relationship with God through Christ isn't productive. You can become a lot of things and yet the status does not help. The status doesn't achieve its goal because you have to pursue.

You have to maintain. You have to invest. And so he's talking about what would be true.

This is sort of a second class set of conditions here, if and it's not true, in terms of whether or not there is a bodily resurrection. There have been a lot of views of what human life is like. There are religions that teach soul sleep, where your body dies and returns to the dust and your soul or spirit just kind of goes into some torpor.

Your materialists, your secular humanist super scientific types today think that you're just dead meat. Drive along out here and see a squashed possum or an armadillo in the road, well, that's you after death. You popped up for a brief moment, looked around, had cognizance, and then when your heart quit beating and your brain quit creating blips on the electroencephalogram, you just cease to be.

It's like putting a bullet through your PC, whatever program it was running has disappeared onto the ages. There's nothing that survives after death, you're just a complex calculator, and you are running a few numbers over your display, and then when the power went off, it all disappears. That's materialism.

There are religions that teach reincarnation. Thank the Lord that's not true. You really want to come back as a cockroach in some Japanese window sill or come back as a butterfly, and just about the time you look around and say, well, look, I can fly, and then a windshield comes by and you are no more.

There's been a common history of those who believe that you're absorbed into the great beyond, that there's a super consciousness. They reflected this in one, I forget which one of these Star Trek shows where there was a bucket man, he was a guy that turned to goo when he didn't choose to take a shape, and he came from a planet where everybody lived in a big ocean, and he'd been kind of dipped out of there, and he could walk around as a security officer on one or another of the Star Trek ships, but he had to get into his pail and regenerate every night

or something. But that was the idea that you, at some point, he got poured back into the big ocean from which he came, but he, I don't know, he murdered somebody and they'd never done that before, and so they kicked him out, they spat him out, and he went back.

But this is a reflection of this idea that you get absorbed, your spirit or some part of your spirit returns back to its source and goes back to the ultimate divine soup of mind or being. There's a quote from a guy named Leslie Weatherhead, would it really matter if I were lost like a drop of water in the ocean if I could be one shining particle in some glorious wave that broke in utter splendor and perfect beauty on the shores of some eternal sea? Well, it's Bucket Man. He says, what if I was just poured back into the soup? But in any of these views that you look at, reincarnation, sleep, joining the great unconscious floating in or disappearing, there is a complete loss of your personhood, of your individuality, of who you are.

Your unique experience, your unique collected set of thoughts and beliefs, it's all gone. At death, it is as though you never were. And if anything survives, it's not really you.

You've lent your cytoplasm back to the great... No, protoplasm. No, ectoplasm. Yeah, your ectoplasm has gone back to the great... Whatever plasm you have has gone back to the big plasm in the sky.

No longer unique. The particular philosophy that pertained in the days of the Corinthians was an element of Greek philosophy called dualism. And we've touched on this before where they understood that there is an invisible spiritual component and there's also a physical and mortal component, a material component.

And this was dualism. There's the spiritual and there's the material. And their philosophy said, basically, whatever partakes of the mortal and the physical is corrupt and hopelessly bad, but the spiritual is good.

So anything to do with the material is intrinsically evil. And so the reason you want to die and go to the afterlife is to escape the physical. You leave all of this mortal corruption behind and you go to the great divine realm of the gods where everything is great.

Of course, if you look at their mythology, it ain't so great with the gods. They are just humans writ large. Their passions have greater consequences, but they're just as fallible and capricious and corrupt and self-interested and unreliable as human beings.

They just have godlike powers. And by the way, you may have noticed that in the rash of recent mythology, which is called entertainment now, whether it's your vampires and werewolves, that thankfully seems to be kind of on the wane. I think everybody's sick of the latest vampire and the latest werewolf and the grim fairy tales and the rest of it.

But now it's all superheroes. And this is basically, you're back to Roman and Greek mythology. These people have superpowers, but they're still corrupt human beings.

They're fallible. They're capricious. They're bent in some way.

And it's just the modern version of the comic books in the ancient world. So to the Greeks, a resurrected body was just anathema. You don't want a body coming back because the material and the fleshly is what you're trying to get away from.

Only the spirit is, and you remember this eventually came out with the Gnostics where they said, with my mind I serve the law of God and if my body serves the law of sin, who cares? Paul says in Romans, no, it's a big deal. I need to be delivered from the body of this death into a better body, not into an invisible spiritual nothingness. So the Greeks thought your body was kind of a prison and you were being held against your will and forced into corruption and so they didn't want to take their body with them.

They wanted to be liberated and be freed from the prison of flesh. And you remember in Acts 17 when Paul was preaching at the Areopagus and he says, he talks about the resurrection and when the philosophers there who had gathered to hear what he had to say, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, they began to sneer. Paul preached the resurrection.

It's the heart of the gospel, right? So when he's up on the Areopagus, he preaches the resurrection. And they said, well, who is Anastasis? Is this a female consort for this Jesus you're talking about? And when Paul said, no, I'm talking about Jesus Christ died and conquered death and those who believe in him are going to be resurrected and going to go to the kingdom of God, they began to mock and sneer. It was against all of their presuppositions, all of their philosophical underpinnings.

Now remember at the beginning of the first session this morning, I mentioned how important it is for us to be willing to analyze our objectivity. I was looking earlier this week and it's one of those things you run across when you're not looking for it. One of these little teasers that comes up.

I do a lot of research on the web for my job and these little things come up all the time and I think, oh, that looks interesting and I click it. Well, this was an article and I think it's a few years old, but it was on cognitive fallacies, different things that cause us to not be objective and it is very difficult to escape things of this nature, but we have a supernatural ability to do so. If you're just working in your own strength to try to be objective, it's kind of like, well, I'm going to walk north even though my compass is broken.

Anytime it points to what I think is north, I'm going to walk that direction, but it's broken. And a broken compass isn't going to lead you in the right direction no matter how dedicated you are to trying to find that direction. We have been given a supernatural objective source of truth, something to check ourselves against.

We used to do this in the artillery. You have an aiming circle and it's got a magnet. Well, they did then.

I'm sure that's all primitive and now everything's GPS, but in our day, you had an actual. It's not that different than the compass on a ship, but this was mounted on a tripod and used to ensure that an artillery battery or any set of guns were oriented to a true direction. And so we had maps that were regularly updated with the divergence between magnetic north and true north.

And so you set up your aiming circle and whatever it says is magnetic north, you correct that to true north and that makes sure that your artillery shells are going to impact where you want them to. But we had to check the aiming circles and check the declination constant and check to be sure that they were in fact oriented toward magnetic north. And you can do this with the stars and use Polaris-Kolchab calculations and so on.

Mariners for centuries, if not millennia, have guided themselves by the stars. It's a fixed reference. Well, the human mind is clouded over.

You can't see the fixed references in the flesh. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It can't understand the things of God.

They're spiritually discerned. We have the gift of the Spirit. We have the presence and power of the Word of God, which is alive and powerful.

Cuts to the very center of our thoughts and intents and lays open the heart. It's the gift. It's the bequest.

It is the treasure that the Lord Jesus has given us and left us. He went away and sent us another Comforter to lead us into the truth. And the truth is here.

And the combination of the Word of God and the Spirit of God gives us a solid, true reference. Why? Do I want that reference just so that I can try to have a happy life and get as much money as possible and live in as much comfort as possible and avoid as much pain and difficulty as possible? Is that my goal? Well, you might as well be Clint Eastwood and Tully Savalas and Donald Sutherland and Kelly's Heroes and use everything the government provides you with to rob a bank. Get gold for yourself.

That's the whole plot of that particular movie. One of the few that I've gone out and bought for myself, because it's such a wonderful parable of everything that can go wrong with us as believers, take all of the resources and all of the gifts that God has given us and then use them for a selfish, self-centered, short-sighted, stupid purpose. And treat that as fun along the way.

To me, the whole premise is just shocking. And yet it's offered as something to smile at and enjoy. And that's what happens with a lot of Christian life.

We smile at and enjoy a lot of things that don't contribute to winning the war, winning the battles that will win the war, that will achieve the objective of overcoming evil and establishing good and righteousness, which is what the kingdom is all about. So, dualism said, well, don't worry about the things in this life. Just wait until you can escape.

Seneca, one of the ancient philosophers, said, When the day shall come which shall part this mixture of divine and human here where I found it, I will leave my body and myself I will give back to the gods. My essence is going to go forward and what I did in this life won't really matter. And even the Jews, some Jews doubted the resurrection.

Remember the Sadducees who didn't believe in the resurrection? And they confronted Jesus, whose wife shall she be if she was married to seven guys that each died? And Jesus said, You do err, not knowing the scriptures or the power of God. The scriptures teach resurrection. The power of God guarantees resurrection.

And the Sadducees denied both. And to live as though there is no resurrection is to deny the scriptures and deny the power of God. Job knew there was a resurrection.

Job 19.26, After my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God. Not only am I going to see Him in a spiritual realm, I will have a body. Job knew this.

One of the oldest books in the Bible. Psalm 17, the one we jumped this past week. 17.15, As for me, I will see your face in righteousness.

I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness. David believed in the resurrection. That's why he understood when his first son with Bathsheba was taken in judgment.

And Shlomo was born. It's a lot like Leviticus 14. One son dies and another lives, but there is an identification and a unity there.

There is death, but there is life. And Solomon represents the king that will sit on David's throne, Laolam, unto the ages. And the first son must necessarily die for sins that he did not commit.

But the second son enjoys the benefits of the peaceable kingdom. And rules without warfare and without strife. And extends the borders of the kingdom and extends blessing and prosperity to everyone.

And those two sons of David with Bathsheba are representative. They are prophetic of the ministry and the person of the Lord Jesus. The dry bones of Ezekiel 37.

Hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the spirit of the Lord. Set me down in the midst of the valley and it was full of bones. Then he caused me to pass by them all around.

Behold, there were very many in the open valley and indeed they were very dry. They had died a long time. And he said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? I answered, O Lord God, you know.

Again he said to me, prophesy to these bones. And say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. The old gospel song.

I was just playing. I got an extended play, 45, at the antique store last week. And there's a song

on one of those.

It's a Tommy Dorsey, four songs on one 45. And one of them is one that I have on a 78. It's one of my all-time most precious 78s.

It's a first pressing of Tommy Dorsey's orchestra playing Dry Bones. It's a great instrumental arrangement of that song. Really, really well done.

But them bones, them bones, them dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. And it is the word of the Lord that raises them. It is the word of the Lord prophetically delivered that causes breath to enter into them.

And they live. I will put sinews and flesh on you, and you will stand. You will serve.

You will become an army. An army accomplishes a goal. It serves a purpose.

It responds to the orders of a general, and it gets things done. It doesn't just stand there and say, well, looky there. I used to be dry bones, and now here I'm standing.

It marches. It prevails. It does something.

That's what we are to do. Daniel 12, verse 2, Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some will awake to shame and ongoing everlasting contempt. Sobering.

Can't change it. It was established. It was determined.

It was chosen in this life. It doesn't change in the next. Do you want to awake to everlasting shame and contempt, or do you want to awake to life in its fullness, life in its fruitfulness, life in its abundance? Do you want to be a dead stick or a living branch, bearing fruit in your season? You're choosing it now.

We are determining it now. Now is the appointed time. Now is the day of deliverance, the day of salvation.

It's now. The resurrection means the kingdom. Day by day, we need to wake up thinking, How much inheritance am I going to have? How much opportunity to serve and to express my love for the Lord am I going to have? I'm going to determine that today.

What I do today, what I decide today, how I think today, how I treat other people today, what I prioritize today, why I do what I do today, is an investment, or lack thereof, in the kingdom. When I was a young lieutenant at Fort Sill, I was assigned a teaching group that included an army captain named John Gordon. Wonderful guy.

He was married to a lady army captain, and they were both posted at Fort Sill. But one of the things that impressed me about John, he was a wonderful guy. He was the first officer who

outranked me, who kept insisting that I call him by his first name.

I never could bring myself to do it. You know, that brain training was just too intense. But one of the things that was notable about him is, he and his wife had investigated investments, and IRAs, and CDs, and all of these instruments of financial investment that I knew nothing about.

And he sat down and patiently tried to explain to me, you know, you can take a portion of your pay, and the government will send it in this direction. You can take allotments and put it in. He said, my wife and I have set these things up.

And I really respected his foresight and his judgment in doing that. And people who do that at a young age just set a little bit aside, and the magic of compounding works. When they get to old age, they are comfortable.

I've had other friends that I've known since I was young that were wise in their investments. When they made money, they prudently put it somewhere that was secure, that slowly aggregated and accrued by interest and so on. And in their old age, they have no worries.

Their financial portfolio sustains them. They don't have to work. They don't have to worry.

They can take trips. They can do vacations and all of that. Why? Looking ahead to the future and investing in it in the present.

Everybody knows this. Watch these PBS shows where Susie Orman or anybody else talks about investing. Young people who do it thank themselves a thousand times over later on.

If you don't do it, if you're like the grasshopper playing your fiddle in the summertime while the ants are storing it all away, when the wintertime comes, you're knocking at the ants' door saying, Hey, you know, you got a place where I can warm up? I got nothing here except my broken fiddle. Well, how much more important is it to invest in the eternal future? Because it's unchangeable. Some will awake to shame and everlasting contempt.

The contempt and the shame is as lasting as the life. It's not just, well, when I get there, I'll have to play catch up. You're never going to catch up.

Now is the time. Why is the resurrection a practical doctrine? Because it guides every investment we make in time, in faith, in obedience, in perseverance. Perseverance of hope.

God is not unrighteous to forget what? Your work of faith, your labor of love, and the patience of your hope. The perseverance of your hope. God doesn't forget it.

It's an investment in the kingdom. It's an investment post-resurrection. Now, what did Jesus say? Calvinists like to talk about John 6, 44, where he says, No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

No one can come to me except the Father draws him. What's the rest of the verse? Do you

remember it? No one can come to me except the Father draws him. And what? I will raise him up at the last day.

Why do we forget the last part? I will raise him up at the last day. Jesus Christ says, when the Father draws, Jesus said, when I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. The Father accomplishes that drawing through the Holy Spirit.

But all three members of the Trinity are involved in the drawing. There is a universal call. Who will respond? Well, whoever is successfully drawn, whoever exercises the option to be drawn, to respond to the drawing, to respond to the call, what does Jesus say? I will forgive him of his sins.

I will cleanse him. I will redeem him. I will reconcile him.

I will enter him into my body. What does he say? I will raise him up at the last day. What's the purpose of salvation? To be raised at the last day, to enter into the kingdom, to serve God eternally.

That's the heart of the gospel, and it ought to make a difference in doing what we do heartily, as unto the Lord, every issue, every circumstance, every thought. John 6.44, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. How does the Father draw? Sent the Lord Jesus.

Lifted him up like the serpent in the wilderness. Look and live. Respond and be saved.

Why will you die? What did he say on the day that he raised Lazarus? Talking to Martha. I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me shall live even if he dies.

I am the resurrection. If you believe in Jesus, you believe in the resurrection. If you don't believe in the resurrection, you don't believe in Jesus.

And it's not a matter of verbal assent or a token agreement. Does your life reflect belief in the resurrection? Do you live like somebody who's coming back? Or not? It is the foundation of the gospel. It is the foundation of New Testament teaching.

It is the foundation of the epistles. You go to Acts chapter 4 verses 1 and 2. Peter and John are preaching in Jerusalem. Pentecost happened in Acts chapter 2. Acts chapter 4, Peter and John spoke to the people.

The priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people, and preached in Jesus, what? The resurrection from the dead. The resurrection from the dead. What disturbed the chief priests and elders and the Sadducees? Peter and John are preaching the resurrection.

Jesus came back. There is life after death. Even before this book of 1 Corinthians was written, this letter, Paul had already written the Thessalonians, we believe.

And what does he say in 1 Thessalonians 4? The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. The last Trump, I was just listening to President Trump earlier this morning. Trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

No doubt he taught the Corinthians this same thing. And he is going to review it in his 2 Corinthians letter, when you get to 4.14 of 2 Corinthians. He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will present us with you.

I think there is an underappreciated emphasis on the resurrection in the New Testament. We don't give it enough thought. We don't give it enough underscoring.

Now, if Christ has not been raised, then everybody who attests it is a liar. Luke 24, verse 39 and following, Jesus appears to His disciples and says, Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. It's interesting that there is no direct reference to Jesus being nailed to the cross in the crucifixion accounts.

We get the knowledge of His hands and especially His feet being nailed to the cross from the resurrection appearance. When Thomas says, unless I put My finger in the print of the nails, it is such an understated account in the crucifixion. But you go back and read it, it doesn't talk about what you see in the Mel Gibson movie with the pounding blows and the nails going in.

It isn't mentioned until the resurrection appearances. But Jesus says, look at My hands and My feet. This is how we know that His feet were nailed to the cross and not just tied.

Otherwise, why would He invite observation? When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet, while they still did not believe for joy. It was too good to be true, literally. And they marveled.

It's so counter, even though He had told them over and over again, the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, crucified, He will rise the third day. He told them over and over, it just didn't register. How many times have we told a thing and it doesn't make a difference in our thinking? Let's do better than the disciples.

This ought to make a difference in our thinking. Make it make a difference. Choose for it to make a difference.

So Jesus said, do you have any food here? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb, and He took it and ate it in their presence. If they all looked around after He left and said, was that a group hallucination? Well, where'd the fish go? Where'd the honeycomb go? He ate it. He was here.

The food is gone. It's Luke 24, 39-43. How many times? We've already talked about on Pentecost, Peter preaching in Acts 2, 22 and 23.

Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know. You're eyewitnesses of these things.

Him being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death, but God has raised Him. Acts 2, 31 and 32. He foreseeing this, David, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. They're not just talking about it. Look at them standing fearlessly in the presence of the Jewish authorities that crucified Christ a few days before, a few weeks before.

And Peter and John and the other apostles are standing there fearlessly. On the day of Pentecost, the assembled group of a couple of hundred are not running away. They're not furtive.

They're not hiding in an upper room behind a locked door. They are proclaiming the resurrected Christ. We are witnesses.

Ask us. Ask anybody. It's reflected in their life.

So my question is, are we witnesses of the resurrection? We ought to be. We're not eyewitnesses, but our life should be our witness. A good man put that in the words of a song.

Your life will be your witness. The Scriptures show the way. We have the testimony of Scripture.

And our life ought to witness, ought to testify, just as the apostles, just as the 500 who saw Him. Our life should be our witness. That is the gospel.

Romans 1, 1 through 4. Remember Romans 1, 16? Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God for deliverance to those who believe. I'm not ashamed of it.

It isn't background noise. It's not an incidental. It's not something that's low-key and behind the curtain.

Romans 1, 1 through 4. Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. By the resurrection from the dead. Declared to be the Son of God by the Holy Spirit.

One of the final appearances of the Lord Jesus recorded in the New Testament is Revelation chapter 1, verses 17 and 18. John says, When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. No wasted words in Scripture.

John sees Him, falls at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last.

I am He who lives and was dead. And behold, I am alive forevermore. The resurrected, glorified Lord Jesus identifies Himself as the one who lived an earthly life, died, and is alive forevermore.

And I have the keys of hell and of death. Revelation 1, verses 17 and 18. John the Apostle warned believers in 2 John of the dangers.

Many deceivers have gone out in the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. If He came in the flesh, died in the flesh, and is raised, declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection, denying that He came is one of the ways to attack resurrection.

Well, He wasn't here to begin with. He was an apparition. He was a vision.

He was a concept. That makes preaching vain. That makes faith in Christ vain, worthless, kenos, empty.

Sort of the equivalent of hevel in the Old Testament. It's a vapor. It's ephemeral.

And Paul says, moreover, we are found to be false witnesses if we say He was raised from the dead and He's not raised. Verse 15. If the dead do not rise, Christ is not risen.

Your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins. Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

You have the reference here of death as sleep. And you know my personal view on this, that in the same way that you fell asleep last night and were unaware of the passing of time and you woke up this morning, it's sort of like a resurrection. You come back to consciousness and you're forward in time.

You had no observation or consciousness of the intervening passage. And this is the sense in which the New Testament, and even the Old, routinely refers to believers who have passed away as sleeping. They are asleep.

They fell asleep. Stephen fell asleep. Daniel says in 12.2, those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake.

We don't believe in a disembodied state. Paul says we don't look for resurrection as unclothed, but to be clothed upon, to be overclothed. Our bodies are transformed.

They are upgraded, if you will, not floating around without them. But to have hope in this life only, well, Christianity is just a wonderful philosophy. It helps you through the bad times.

The materialists would be right. We would be believing in Jesus as a crutch, as a sort of useless

way to cope, but without any reality. The only thing that makes sense of our lives is the resurrection.

And in verse 20, now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who are asleep. The firstfruits of those who are asleep. Jesus himself was asleep.

Since by man came death, by man also came resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be made alive. Physical birth is in Adam.

Everyone who has a normal, mortal, physical birth and life is going to die. In Adam, all die. We're headed for the grave as soon as we're born.

There's no way to prolong life. You can't download yourself into a machine or any of the other fantasies people have about living forever. There is no fountain of youth.

There is no ability to sustain yourself across the ages. There have been many conceits about people who have lived for centuries. And it seems to me that in all the stories I've seen, even those guys end up dying.

And for a lot of them, it's a welcome relief. But in Adam, all die. In Christ, all shall be made alive.

Now, it doesn't mean that in Christ all that are in Adam shall be made alive. This is not universalism. But if you have physical birth in Adam, you are going to have physical death.

If you have spiritual birth in Christ, you are going to have resurrection in Christ. All in Christ shall be made alive, just as all in Adam die. Those who are not in Christ, this does not pertain.

They're not going to be made alive, except for a short judgmental period, and then cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. It's not the second life.

It's not a tortured life. It is the second death. Scripture says, cast into the lake of fire is death, not life.

Not eternal conscious torment. It's death. And you tell me how death is life, when Scripture says, you died once and you were gone.

You're brought back for the judgment. Cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

It's like the first death. You're gone. You are no more.

In Christ all shall be made alive, but each in his own order. And this is what we're going to look at next time. What is this order? How do we understand it? Christ is the first fruits.

You know that in the Scriptures, in the Old Testament, in Leviticus, there was a command that when the harvest began, to bring the first fruits before the Lord. And present it. And the first fruits were sanctified, and that sanctified the whole harvest.

Well, that's similar here. And because the Lord Jesus is presentable, we who are still in the field, who will be harvested a bit later, are also acceptable, sanctified. The first fruits are accepted, the whole harvest is accepted.

But Christ is the first fruits. So Christ the first fruits, then those who are Christ's at his coming. Then comes the end, when he delivers up the kingdom to God the Father.

Paul is summarizing here very summarily, very large overview. He's not detailing the rapture, and seven years later the resurrection of Israel, and the millennial kingdom, and the Gog-Magog rebellion, and the great white throne resurrections, where death and the sea and grave give up the dead that is in them. This is summary.

Why? He's focusing on Christ. Some say there's no resurrection, then Christ is not raised. But Christ is raised.

And those who are in Christ will be raised, and we're headed for the kingdom. Do you see why he skips all of that intervening detail? You can't go here and say, well see it's only one coming, and only one resurrection, and Paul says so. Paul is driving toward a point.

And you don't include extraneous detail when you're trying to make a point. You focus on the essentials. Christ is the first fruits.

Those who are Christ's are going to be raised and accepted, just as he was raised and accepted. Presented before God the Father. And after that will be the end, where Jesus takes his kingdom and presents it to God.

When all rule and authority and power have been abolished. There will be no need for those things. He must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.

The last enemy that will be abolished is death. There's going to continue to be death, and you've got to continue to believe in the resurrection. As long as there is death, you have to have faith that there is life after death.

Once death is abolished, the need for faith is obviated. It's no longer necessary. So, we'll take a look at this 20 through 28 next time.

But, do we see how important this central truth of resurrection is? Not just to saving faith, but to living faith. To motivate us to patience of hope. To do what we do heartily as unto the Lord, knowing that we will receive the reward.

Knowing that we will stand at the judgment. Knowing that there will be wood, hay and stubble going up in flames. Knowing that there is gold, silver and precious stones.

What kind of investment are we making? Are we building up a barn full of hay? Or are we filling a jewelry box with treasure? What you do with the rest of this day is optional. How you do it, why you do it, with what anticipation and intent you do it, the goal you hope to accomplish, the

motivation with which you do it, determines the future. It alters what happens in the kingdom.

It is unalterable once we die and are raised. It is completely potential and possible right now. If you're hearing the sound of my voice, you are still alive.

As my pastor from years gone by used to say, if you're still alive, God still has a plan for your life. And you still have the potential to make a difference in the coming kingdom. That's what the resurrection means.

We'll pick up here in verse 20 and following next time. Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus who has secured for us this wonderfully great gift of hope, of life eternal, of the potential to live and to serve in your presence that invests our lives here with meaning and purpose and definition. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on each of our hearts in a powerful way that the fire of judgment will burn us fresh and clean and purify us now rather than in the judgment to come. That we can purify ourselves and dedicate ourselves as zealous of good works, zealous of those things that reflect your glory now and in the ages to come.

We pray that those who are facing challenges and difficulties on this day and in these days to come will find these truths to be motivating and encouraging and to invest all of our souls with the power of truth, the power of the Holy Spirit, the power that the Lord Jesus so fully illustrated and exemplified in his own life. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.