

1Corinthians 19-01-06a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It's great to see everyone here in the new year, 2019. Only got one more year to have a second decade of the new millennium year, which I can't wrap my mind around at this point, but today is the 6th of January, 2019, and we continue our study in the book of 1 Corinthians in chapter 15.

We have been examining this very fascinating revelation concerning the resurrection that began in the Lord Jesus Christ and continues in us. We'll be resuming this morning in verse 35. We've covered a portion of this.

We'll move rapidly from 35 down to verse 50 and pick up there with the part we've not yet covered. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and then we'll begin. Father, we are humbled as we approach Your throne and recognize that we have nothing to recommend us, we have nothing to bring before You except that which You have given to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank You for Him and for the grace that was expressed in His coming, the love that was fulfilled in His sacrifice on our behalf, both living and dying, and being raised again in our interest and to fulfill Your plan and purpose. We're excited about the opportunities that are ours now in Him and the potential that we have as we continue in this life to redeem the time and to try to convert it from earthly capital into heavenly. We trust that as we look at this portion of Your Word this morning, Your Holy Spirit will guide us and lead us into the truth, both objectively as we see what the means and subjectively as we look at its pertinence and applicability for our own lives.

And I pray that it will be motivating, that it will be clear that Your purpose in bringing it to our hearts will be fulfilled for each one of us as we await the day when the Lord Jesus does transform us and prepare us for service and function and future existence in Your kingdom. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, of course, this subject is of intensest interest to us as those who see death all around us. We experience it. We anticipate it.

It will, barring the return of the Lord Jesus in our lifetime, it will come to us all. And you have to think about, I think in order to fully appreciate the way Paul presents this in 1 Corinthians 15, you have to think about the experience of death as it was observed in ancient Corinth. We have many sort of antiseptic areas of our lives today.

We don't see how the sausage is made. We don't see what goes on in the butcher shop. We don't see the labors that bring our food to the supermarket shelves.

Did a little shopping yesterday and I was, as always, it's like anything else, looking out the

airplane window. But as you wander up and down the shelves in this country, the prosperity and the plenitude that is reflected there is just awe-inspiring. I remember, and I've mentioned this before, but when I was in high school, I found a book called *Russia, the People and the Power* written by, I believe he was a Washington Post writer that had spent something like 15 years in Russia covering politics and developments in that country on the international desk for that newspaper.

And he wrote this book about his experience. And chapter after chapter, he talked about the impoverishment and going to the store and waiting in line anytime there was a delivery of bread. So many of the shelves were empty.

You walk around in some of our big box, open the crate and buy it in bulk stores. And there's just mind-boggling amounts of goods available to us. You can go to town today, even on a Sunday, and there's very little that you can think of that you can't go somewhere and procure.

And so our experience is far different than that of people that lived here even just 100, 150 years ago, where you had to scratch your living out of the ground and you had to raise the animals that you might soon be eating and trying to preserve. And you didn't have electric refrigeration. You didn't have canning such as we have it today, where you buy canned goods in car loads, boxed goods that are preserved and will last for weeks.

It was a completely different experience. Well, that is not a blinding insight. I think everybody's familiar with that.

But we don't always remember when you read some of the New Testament epistles, the vast difference in life experience that people had in that day. And this morning, what I want to bring to the fore is their experience of death, because that is what prompts a large part of what Paul covers here. Today, someone passes away, and you know the drill.

The hearse will come, or the ambulance will come, or somebody has passed away in the hospital, and soon you are out of sight and out of mind as preparations are made by professionals, and it is largely out of sight. Often the next time you see the loved one, they've already been in the hands of the undertaker, and they are dressed and quaffed and ready for presentation, for viewing, for those who have an open casket funeral and such. But a lot of that takes place out of sight.

Not so in the ancient day. Not so, again, in those years even 100 and 150 years ago. People often died at home, and there was a protracted exposure to the remains of the departed, and you didn't have a lot of the modern treatment that we have today.

Well, think about back in Corinth, and with the common experience of not just humans passing away, but animals that were prepared. We had in earlier chapters here the meals that were offered at the temple and so on. People had an intimate contact with and experience of mortality and what happens to flesh once life leaves it.

They were intimately aware of corruption, how difficult was it to preserve anything in the ancient day. You didn't take a week to alert everybody around the country to have a funeral. You grabbed some flowers, arranged them around the departed, had a quick service, and got them into the ground because you can't really wait in a Mediterranean environment such as that.

Everybody knows that corruption sets in very quickly. Well, think about that common experience, knowledge of what death does to what was formerly a living entity, animal or human or plant, and it illuminates for us the skepticism that secular Roman Empire people, secular Greek speaking people had in the ancient day about the notion of resurrection. When you see the extreme effects of corruption and somebody says, well, the dead are raised, the dead are coming back, in the mind this is a horror movie.

And so what Paul is engaged in in this chapter is an explanation of the difference between reanimation of corpses and the transformation that God accomplishes for believers at the return specifically here of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's also going to accomplish it for the Old Testament saints, and we have a number of resurrections, Christ the first fruits and then they which are Christ's at his coming and so on. But just to put this in a little bit of cultural context, when Paul quotes someone back in verse 35, someone will say, how are the dead raised up and with what body do they come? You can understand why the question would be raised.

What is going to come back? And Hollywood has made great hay with this concept over decades, pretty much ever since the earliest days of silent film, you've had your scary presentations of what the secular mind might imagine would happen if somehow life were to reenter those that have passed away. So it explains a little bit the harshness in verse 36, because in Greek, and this has been softened in the NIV, it says, what foolishness or something like this. But in verse 36, Paul basically says, you morons.

He's addressing the person that raises this question and he says, you moron. And it's very harsh. Paul can be harsh, not just here, but in other places in his letters.

He talks about those who are trying to get people circumcised and he says, I'd like to circumcise you right out of the human race. I wish you could be cut off completely. And it's harsh.

Why is he being so harsh here? What is the purpose of this rebuke? And even in the commentaries, you know, they try to kind of sidestep around. It's like, you know, when our current president will say something and there's a lot of people that say, well, you know, you've got to take him with his personality. He says things that we wouldn't ordinarily expect from somebody, you know, occupying this august position.

Well, if you see this in Greek, he says, someone will say, well, how is this all going to happen? And how could they possibly, you know, what are you talking about bringing them back to dead? And he says, you moron. And I think, why is the inspired apostle invoking this harshness? Well, we've been through a large portion of this in detail, but stepping back and looking at it,

why does he invoke this rebuke? What is the essence of his correction here? And this is a strong correction. If a believer were to be saying, well, I don't understand how this can happen.

It just, you know, in the vernacular, it grosses me out to think that the dead are coming back. I like to think of an ethereal realm or something. They thought that the realm of the spirit would be disembodied.

And, you know, you have some of this thinking with the whole intermediate state view, that when people depart, they're in some sort of transition version of the kingdom where people are disembodied because Jesus hasn't come back and given them the resurrection body. And so they're before the throne, they're worshiping, they're getting acquainted with angels and such. But why does Paul really startle everybody with this rebuke? It's in verse 38, but God.

What have they done? They've left God out of the equation. Oh, fool. If you're worried about some natural process occurring, that's going to somehow reanimate and what are we going to do? Slowly reverse corruption so that they gradually grow back to healthy tissue and normal appearance.

You know, are you expecting some natural process? The reason he says you're a fool to be asking this question in this form is God gives things bodies. It's the power of God. And it is foolish to leave God out of this picture.

And it's the same as in the other end. When you talk about the beginning of life or how did life, how did the species originate on this planet? And people want to leave God out of that. They want natural processes to have somehow originated life and developed life and diversified life and progressively improved life with the pinnacle being naturally us.

And aren't we wonderful? We're the product of all of this evolved procession of happy accidents. God is left out. Well, we understand that you don't leave God out of how life got here and how it became so glorious in its fullness.

Well, you also cannot leave God out of the end. And Paul says, if you do, you're an idiot. You don't expect it to self-animate, which by the way, illuminates biogenesis or abiogenesis, however you want to say it.

I've never gotten a satisfactory answer from people who actually believe that there is no God and that isn't this a wonderful, happy accident. And I say, you're telling me that unknown chemical processes that you've never been able to find or demonstrate somehow began self-replicating molecules and this all began this upward climb by gradual steps to this wonderful complex pinnacle. Look, I can save you the trouble.

I'll give you a perfectly organized animal body here. It's already got the complex proteins. It's already got the neural pathways.

It's already got the respiratory system and the circulatory system. And it's already got bones

and joints and muscles and skin and hair and it's got everything. I'll give you this body right here.

I'll save you millions of years of evolution. Here it is. Make it live.

Why isn't it alive? Suppose you just, you know, maybe it got its head stuck in something and asphyxiated. And other than stopping breathing and stopping heartbeat, it's all there. If this weird thing of evolution can somehow take dirt and turn it into people, I'll give you a complete thing already built.

All you got to do is just make it live. The molecules are there. Just, well, but, you know, after a few minutes, you shock it all you want, you know, adrenaline in the heart all you want.

It just, it won't go. Why not? Look at the DNA and the complexity. Where's the life? Why won't, I mean, if it's that organized, the thing ought to just pop alive.

You ought to not be able to kill it. Hundreds of millions of years of evolution, the thing ought to be indestructible by now. But you interrupt breathing for a few minutes and all of that organization is gone.

And it is going to immediately begin to return to the dust from whence it came, right? So people with this godless point of view say, in essence, your notions about resurrection are poppycock because I know what happens once something dies. And it is a process that goes downward, not upward. And it would be scary if the thing did come back.

So what kind of a body would it have? And Paul says, it is idiotic to go down that road and leave God out of the equation. Don't you think God, if you believe in God and you believe in Jesus Christ as the son of God, you know, I give to you as the first importance, Christ. He is God in the flesh, right? So that's the reason for the rebuke.

Any view of death and afterlife that leaves God out of it is you moron territory. Joining the great id in the sky or, you know, yin yang, you're going to come back as a cricket or any of the rest of that, reincarnation, you know, karma. I've also never gotten a satisfactory answer when people say, well, you know, it's karma and the universe works in a certain way.

And I say, so how did these rules get set up? How does this work that, you know, good karma and bad karma, who's keeping track and making sure that people who accumulate a bunch of bad karma come back as a toad and people that accumulated a bunch of good karma come back as a, I don't know, duck. It seems to me like ducks are pretty happy. They float.

They can get, you know, in whose opinion is it good karma when you come back as some particular thing? Oh, I'd like to be a butterfly. Not me. You want to live for like a day and a half and get smashed on a windshield or eaten by a bird or, you know, I've seen those things by the, you've ever seen a butterfly swarm come, you know, there's like monarchs or something and there's 10 million of them.

And pretty soon you see them, you try to help them, but they're, they're dying and I wouldn't want to be a butterfly. Anyway, the whole karma thing, where, where's the, who set this up? Bubble universes, you know, that, oh, it's the foam and we're just one of many. And who's, who set this thing up to get all these universes to generate? Where does the energy come from? What's the organizing principle? How do they keep from crashing into each other? Why hasn't this one blown up? Because some bigger bubble came over and, and popped ours.

You know, if you leave God out, you are in moron territory. Everything has to do with God. God gives it a body.

It says in verse 38, what you sow, verse 37, you do not sow the body that shall be, but mere grain. This, and we saw this last week, this idea, you sow a seed and it grows into a plant. Now there are two ideas in that.

I don't sow a carrot seed and get a radish. I don't sow okra and get potatoes. There is continuity, right? There is a firm unbreakable link between what you sow and what grows up.

It is, there is continuity. One comes from the other in a, in an uninterruptible relationship, right? You sow an oat, you're going to get an oat. You sow wheat, you're going to get wheat.

You sow corn, you're going to get corn. There's continuity. There is also transformation.

It is not a loss of life. It is a change of type of life. The life, and he's talking about spiritual life here.

Remember, it is sown a physical body, it's raised a spiritual body. He's talking about here, not so much the physicality of the resurrection, although his point is very much that Christ has been raised from the dead bodily. And in him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.

He is still embodied. What he's saying is there is in a seed a certain kind of life. It's largely potential.

They've got these seeds they dig out of old urns and things that they dig up in archeology. They'll find them inside a pyramid or whatever. And that thing has been sitting there for centuries, if not millennia.

But you put it in the ground, they germinate, they've grown ancient wheat from seeds that was just so old you can't believe it. There is a life in there, but it's a life that has potential for the future. And something has to happen before that potential is fulfilled.

It has to be sown. And the future potential that we have in the kingdom of God cannot flourish and can't come alive and can't fulfill its potential until we pass through the death stage. That's why he goes on to say that corruption does not inherit incorruption.

Verse 46, the spiritual is not first but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. It's the seed, then it's the plant. First man was of the earth, of dust.

The second man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust. As is the heavenly man, so also are those who are heavenly.

As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. I say this, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. We have to change from being seeds to being plants in order to dwell in that heavenly realm.

So in essence, Paul's argument here to these who say, well, that's just grotesque thinking about reanimated corpses. He says, this is not reanimation, this is transformation. Yet in the transformation there is continuity because there are kinds that are preserved.

You sow a seed, you're going to get that particular species back. God gives it a body, verse 38, as he pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same kind of flesh.

There's one kind of men, another of animals, another of fish, another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies. Verse 38 is the key.

God assigns the body. Now what is he talking about here? Why does he mention these, you've got field animals, you've got birds and you've got fish, and you've got people? God gives fish a body for their purpose and their environment, right? They've got gills, they breathe water, they swim. God gives birds feathers and light bones and all of the accouterments to dwell in the air and in trees.

God gives beasts of the field the ability to walk around and feed themselves and be protected by their herd instinct and be managed by man. God gives each one a body according to his purpose. So this is another concept to add into the mix.

First concept is this is not a natural process, this is a God thing. It is not animation, it is transformation. And God assigned us our type of existence here and the body is used for that, this is a metonymy.

We associate the body with life, we associate breath with consciousness and so on. The breath is associated with the soul, the nefesh, and becomes a symbol of it and a metonymy for it. But God has assigned us a kind of existence for this environment.

Fish live in water, birds live in air, mankind lives in this earthly sphere, this kingdom. This is a kingdom presided over by Satan, who scripture says has the power of death. And trying to figure out exactly what that means, given that God determines the scope, it seems as though God gives permission for Satan to do certain things up to a certain point with Job, and that's about as close as we can get to understanding the relationship between the agency for death.

But Paul says clearly that Christ overcame him who had the power of death, and you have to kind of work through that. But here's the point, Paul says, look, you can't be fitted for the water because God has given you fish flesh and expect to live in the air. God is going to give things

that live in the air bird flesh.

If you are a beast of the field, you can't expect to, I mean people do, but you can't expect to come indoors and sit on the couch and wander through the, this is a human environment here, and we are fitted as humans to live in a human environment. Beasts of the field, goats and cows and such, horses, live out in the field. They're fitted for it.

They've got weatherproofing. They can survive temperatures that would do us in. They are suited to their environment.

This flesh is suited to this life and this world. To move into the incorruptible world, we have to have a change of type. This seed has to be planted and come back as something that is suitable and is fitted.

And that's his point. This is a work of God. The fact that you can plant a seed and have a crop is a work of God.

We, you know, the sower sows the seed in hope that it's going to produce a crop, 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold. We have that expectation and it's common to man, but it's common grace. God is the one that turns seeds to plants.

He set that up. It's his power that makes it happen. And it is his power in the resurrection.

This is Paul's overarching argument here. What is he preaching into? Greek, atheistic skepticism that resurrection would work. And he says, you know, if you're limiting yourself to what you've seen in nature and your observations and expectations, you're limiting and you're leaving God out of it.

But God gives it a body as he pleases. Then he talks about glory. And the reason he shifts to glory is the word soma has been used for body.

And this is the word for body. It's used for the body of Christ. The people asking for the body of Jesus after he was crucified, it's the normal word.

And it's used a lot in the New Testament. And it almost always means your physical flesh. Well, if you want to start talking about, which Paul does, he wants to talk about things that are up in the sky.

We don't talk about a star or the sun or the moon having a body. So he switches to the concept of glory. In verse 40, there are celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies, but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

We talk about heavenly bodies in the abstract, but we don't, you know, actually think the man in the moon has a face and we don't think stars have arms and legs and so on. So he switches and he says, there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars, and one star differs from another in glory. What's his point here? This has been interpreted to mean

that there's going to be degrees of capability and attainment and reflecting God's glory in the eternal future, which I think is valid.

I have done that myself. I believe that personally. His primary point here, though, is back to birds and fish and field animals and humans.

Why would there be one sun, one moon, and when you've got a bunch of stars, the stars are differentiated by their brightness. We're walking up the path last night and then the night before. Clear, cold, crystal clear night.

The cities are far away. And first thing you look up and immediately you see Orion. There is no doubt in anybody's mind, there's Orion.

It's the little dipper. There's his belt, there's his shoulders, there's his knees. It's the constellation Orion.

If star did not differ from star in glory, you know how difficult it would be to navigate or to pick out the patterns? If it was just a Jackson Pollock painting up there and it was just a spray of equally bright stars, how could you use them? There is a purpose. Hear me now. There is a purpose in star differing from star in glory.

It accomplishes something. It communicates something. It makes a potential.

Because there are navigational stars and constellations that have been picked out and taught from generation to generation, that's how humans navigated on land and sea for millennia. God accomplished a purpose and a blessing for man in having star differ from star in glory. All angels are not the same.

There are seraphim, there are cherubim, there are messenger angels, there are worker angels, there are angels assigned to children and who report regularly to the father. They're constantly beholding the face of the father. What does that mean? It means they're tracking the children to whom they are assigned, little ones both in physical terms and probably in faith terms, and they are beholding the face of the father.

Why would you be watching a child and then looking at the face of the father? This is obviously a communication function. And God does not just sit there on his throne absorbing data. God uses his angelic servants.

His angels are ministers. The flames of fire go out and do their work. They accomplish their purpose.

God delegates. God involves angels in his purpose and in his work in many different areas. He involves us in his purposes and in his work.

Couldn't God just plant the gospel in every mind? Why does he use us? And consistently in Scripture, you look in the New Testament, nobody ever gets the gospel of Christ from an angel.

They get it from another person, whether it is Cornelius, whether it is the Pharisee Saul. Go on to town.

God already has contacted a guy that is going to evangelize Paul in that sense. He's going to give him an update on the information. But God uses people.

God uses this glory. God has a purpose for the sun and a purpose for the moon. Should the moon say, well, how come I'm not as bright as the sun? I don't like this difference in glory.

That is not a demotion. It's not a penalty. It's not a punishment.

It is necessary to have a softer light at night and have a brighter light in the day. Otherwise, you'd never get any sleep. Or you couldn't move around at night if you needed to.

So they differ in glory. This is God's work. God assigns the body.

God assigns the glory. God assigns the function. God assigns the position.

It is all of God. And it is foolish to entertain any scenario where God is not the planner and the perpetrator. He has a plan, He has a purpose, and He makes it happen.

So this variation in glory is reflected in the resurrection, verse 42. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.

It is sown as something that was designed and fitted for a corrupt and fallen world. It is raised as something that is fitted for an incorrupt and perfect kingdom. It has to change.

It has to be elevated. It has to have a new quality. So it is sown in dishonor.

It is raised in glory. You look at the Lord Jesus. He's the Son of God.

How much glory was He assigned by His generation? He was put in the ground in an inglorious fashion. He was executed in an inglorious fashion. But He was raised in glory.

His body was sown in weakness. He was bruised and beaten and pierced for us. But He was raised in power.

His body, as ours is, is sown a natural body, but is raised a spiritual body. There's various ways of understanding this. We know that it's not the material of which the body is made.

The natural is sort of a psuche idea, and the spiritual is a pneuma idea. But one translator said, it is sown as a body that houses the soul. It is raised as a body that houses the spirit.

And without getting too involved in tripartite or body, soul, and spirit, what is your soul and what is your spirit? The idea is that you have a body that functions in this life and moves our essential self around. In the resurrection, we have a body that is moving us, our identity, our self around in the spiritual realm. So what is the point of all of this? So it is written, the first

Adam became a living being, a living soul.

You remember this? God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living nefesh, a breathing thing. The last Adam is a life-giving spirit. He says, God gave the first Adam life.

The last Adam gives life. It's a beautiful little chiasm idea here. God breathes into the first Adam, and he becomes alive in a body suited for this life.

The Lord Jesus is going to essentially breathe the Holy Spirit into our resurrection body, and we are going to be fitted for that existence. However, the spiritual is not first but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth.

We're back to the fish and the birds and the beasts of the field. The first man is of dust, for a world of dust, made of dust. We're on a ball of dirt here.

The second is of heaven, as was the man of dust, so also are those made of dust. So what he's essentially saying is, you know the corruption that you see when a body of dust is returned to the earth? Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. That is not a problem for the resurrection, because that is simply the sowing of a seed that is going to come back as a body suited for transformation.

Their concern is, well, once it has died and started to corrupt, how can it come back and live in this world? You're looking at the wrong world. It is the world to come that counts. Those who are heavenly are like the heavenly man.

As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. And so there is going to be a representation in Adam all die, in Christ are all made alive. Now this I say, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

Now that's the summary. This makes sense. Corruption doesn't inherit incorruption.

So if you're busy looking at the corruption, these Greeks who had that close personal experience of death and decay, he says, you're looking at the wrong thing. That's not going to come back and inherit anything. There is a transformational, heavenly existence that is coming.

But there is also continuity. And I assure you that there is no difficulty in individuality. Individuals here are individuals there.

And my firm belief is that the closer you are to someone, the quicker you're going to be able to be reunited with them and enjoy their presence again. The people who love Jesus were the first to be close to him after he was raised. And I have every expectation that it's the same for us.

And I think after the resurrection of Jesus, and he was still making his post-resurrection appearances during that 40 days, it says there were some who doubted. It doesn't say Peter

doubted, or James, or John. Those who were closest to the Lord never have any doubts.

John believed when he saw the napkin folded in the tomb. And when the Lord Jesus appeared in the upper room, those guys had no trouble. I think that love and familiarity solves that problem altogether.

Who would have doubted? If you weren't that close to the Lord to begin with, you could be easily distracted, or swayed, or have trouble. If you didn't know him too well before, how would you know him too well after? Haven't we talked about this time and again, that if you don't love the Lord now, being in his presence is going to make you love him more? If you're not faithful now, if you're not interested now, if you don't want to fulfill the plans and purposes of God now, just being in his presence isn't going to change that. The new of that is going to wear off very quickly.

And have you noticed how everybody wants the next new thing? I was listening to country radio on my way somewhere the other day, or on my way back, and some of the guys from the past were singing. But you think about guys that were recently famous, but have kind of scrolled off the map, and they're a star from five years ago or ten years ago. They put them on the signs.

Now they're playing the casino thing, and I don't mean to name names, but Toby Keith is on the top ten. He's playing out his string. The people that went to Branson, they're not selling records anymore.

They're selling concert tickets and nostalgia of days gone by. Well, that's because everybody wants a new thing, because you quickly become accustomed to what is new. And after you're accustomed, Miley Cyrus was a big thing for little girls for a while, and she was some traveling kid on Disney, and then she had a recording career.

But now, to stay in the papers, she's marrying some guy. She's marrying an actor. Because her arc has completed, and pretty soon she's going to be a footnote like so many that have gone before her.

Because in this life, the humanity on this ball of dirt, wearing dust, is quickly accustomed to what is new, and wants something else new. All believers are going to be dazzled when the Lord Jesus returns, but if you have not developed the habit and the quality of love and appreciation and humility and a desire to serve, the appearance of the Lord Jesus is going to momentarily dazzle, but those people are going to revert right back to that same attitude. Now is when we determine what the future is going to be, and how much glory will we reflect, how much opportunity for service, how much potential for future walking with Christ and reigning with Him, sitting with Him on His throne, walking with Him in white, partaking of the hidden manna.

Well, how much of that are we doing now? The resurrection is whatever kind of seed we are now, and we have some say in how healthy we are in this life. Well, you plant a healthy seed,

you're going to get healthy plants. You plant a vigorous seed, you're going to get a vigorous plant.

If you've got a weak, anemic seed, you're going to get a weak, anemic plant. And Paul's point here is, when you're thinking about the resurrection, that transformation is in God's hands, but flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. How much corruption do we put off now? How much of the incorruption that is already available to us in the Word and through the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, how much of that incorruption are we internalizing now? How spiritual are we now in preparation for the spiritual life that is to come? That's really the point of looking at the resurrection.

Why is the resurrection the heart of the gospel? It's all about what's coming. It isn't just getting there, it's what happens there. Who are you there? How are you there? Of what use will you be to the Lord there? Resurrected life, new life in Christ, is the central feature of the gospel.

If Christ is not raised, nobody else is raised, you're yet in your sins, Paul says, but now Christ is raised, and he is the firstfruits. It's a continuous thing, just like the seed is continuous with what comes from the seed. The firstfruits is all part of the same harvest.

So Christ first, then they which are Christ, it's all one harvest, it's all one thing. There's continuity between Christ and us, and Paul is pointing out this continuity across the grave. So if that is true, now what? If the little needle in the groove of the record is going to make big sound in the later on, what kind of music do you want to be making? How clean do you want to get that record here for the magnified reproduction that's in the future? Behold, I tell you a mystery.

We're going to save the mystery for after the break, but this revelation has been central to the hope of the church ever since Paul put pen to paper here, and it's a fascinating thing to look at, and we'll see it when we come back.