

47b ACTS

We are picking up our study in Acts chapter 26 with Paul standing before Agrippa claiming that for the hope of the resurrection he is accused by the Jews. It is the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers for which he stands and is judged. And then he begins to recount his encounter with a dead man.

It is well known at this time, even two decades or three decades later, that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified and was claimed to have been raised. Paul assumes Agrippa's knowledge of this in his opening statement, declares that Agrippa knows all about this, this thing was not done in a corner. But it is all about the hope of the resurrection.

Let me just give you a quick sampling of statements made by the Apostle Paul regarding resurrection. If you just go to a concordance and look in Paul's epistles for the word resurrection, not even any of the word forms, just resurrection as a noun, you find Romans chapter 1 and verse 4 talking about Jesus Christ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the spirit of holiness. It is the impregnation of God on Jesus Christ that he is the Son of God, the resurrection.

The resurrection is what declares him to be the Son of God. How many times have you seen people defending the deity of Christ and establishing it on the basis of the miracles, on the basis of what manner of man is this, the wind and seas obey him. Well, the wind and seas have obeyed others.

There have been weather controlling prophets in the past. There have been miracles greater than these, Jesus said, that you all will do, talking to his disciples. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

Romans 1, 4. Romans 6, 5. What is the point of positional truth? We talk a lot about the different categories of things that are communicated to us in the Bible and some of it we call positional truth. We have a status before God because of our being in Christ, because we have been judicially declared to be. This reminds me a lot of what happens to a woman when she marries a man.

And in the traditional world that I grew up in, when a woman marries a man, her last name changes. And it doesn't just get a hyphen, it changes. She becomes, she was one thing and she becomes another.

Patty married me, she was a bower, she became a hull. She is now and forever more Patricia Hull. And that is a change.

And she has been entered into a family of which before she met me she knew nothing. And vice versa. There is a change and a status that comes from this relationship.

Romans 6, 5 says, If we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, that is

positional truth. We didn't actually go to the cross. We didn't actually receive the imputation of our sins and the penalty for our sins and so on.

The Lord Jesus did. But we are united with him. We are declared to be in Christ, with Christ, and receive the benefits of Christ's work.

We have been united with him in the likeness of his death. Certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. What does it mean? This is all past tense.

People tend to look at this verse and say, Well, we have been united with him in the cross, so when he comes back we are going to be united with him in the resurrected future. This is all looking at the past. We are united with him at his death.

And we receive the benefits of that. Now looking historically at the resurrection, He was physically dead. He was in the heart of the earth three days, three nights.

And the power of God raised him from the dead. There is a program that we watched hosted by the Gillian Anderson gal, the X-Files lady. And the whole substance of this hour long episode of whatever the name of this thing was, was all about science trying to overcome the problem of aging and death.

The whole program, everything from cryogenics to genetic research to better living through vegetables, and all the different things that they have going to extend life. They've got societies that have been formed where people say, I refuse to grow old. I'm doing this, that, and the other.

They find that people who eat less live longer. So it's like longevity by minimal intake. They collect the DNA from long-lived families.

And they are cross-checking the DNA to see is there a gene associated with long life or hardiness and immunity to cancer or whatever. Anyway, the whole thing. And then you have all of these optimists and these prognosticators and people who say, oh, the science fiction mindset that someday we're going to double and triple.

Science will make death at the age of 60 or 70 a thing of the past. We're going to live a minimum of 300 or 400 years and possibly longer. And we'll eventually transplant our brains into machines and we'll live forever.

A guy saying, oh, with the advances in computing technology, mankind through science will eventually create a computer powerful enough to run a simulation of the entire world. And that simulation is going to be so detailed and so accurate that it is going to include us. And when that simulation is created, it is going to be an exact copy.

And the man says, in science, an exact copy is no longer a copy. It's the real thing. Dolly the sheep is not just a copy of a sheep.

She's a sheep or was. And their idea is that this will be not just extending life, not just preserving life by transplanting it from one body to another or cybernetics or any of the rest of it, but that when this supercomputer, a thousand years in the future, runs the simulation of history and resurrects all the people of history, that that copy is going to be so exact that it will raise us from the dead and we will consciously enter into this simulation. And we won't even know that we're in a simulation.

Of course, if that's true, we could be running it now. And we wouldn't know either, would we? But the thing is, God is already running the great program of history. I mean, we are basically, all of the matter and energy around us are just dots of activity that are conforming to God's will.

He wrote the program in eternity past. That's what you call the divine decrees. He allowed for the free agency.

You can plant a random seed in a program. You don't know what it's going to be, but you allow for it and you contain it within the parameters of your program. I mean, human beings can do it.

Why can't God? There's no conflict between sovereignty and free will. Programmers do it all the time. When you plant a random seed in a program, you don't know what that number is going to come up.

You say, assign a random value to X. Well, you check X and it's going to be different every time, but you set limits. It can be yes or no. It can't be some third answer.

I mean, it's either a yes or a no. And you don't know which one it's going to be, but you allow for either contingency in your program. Sometimes it'll be yes, sometimes it'll be no.

So, anyway, what struck me is that all of the promises of God, all of the hope of the promise of God that Paul is talking about here was mentioned as being fulfilled by mankind himself. He will pull himself up by his own bootstraps through science, which has become more than just the laboratory testing of variables and solving for X. It is now a religion. It is a faith.

There is a guy, the first guy to ever be frozen cryogenically. I forget his name. You realize that guy has been in his little tank now for like 35 years.

They've got him chilled down. He died of natural causes or something, and they put him in liquid nitrogen, and he's been there 30-odd years now, waiting for his resurrection through science. And they've got untold numbers of other people that have paid umpteen hundreds of thousands of dollars to have themselves frozen.

And so they've got this tank farm of corpses in liquid nitrogen, and the estates have an

annuity or something that pays the expenses to run the electricity to keep them refrigerated. And they say, you know, we'll just keep them until we figure out a way to bring them back. Well, then you talk to biologists who say the ice crystals that form in a body that is chilled like that destroy all of the blood vessels, destroy the lens of your eye and all of that.

What are you going to do about that? Well, science has an answer. We're going to invent nanotechnology that will be little miniature robots that will go in and repair the damage. Here's my question.

Assuming you can create a nanobot, you know, this is just straight out of Star Trek. They're going to create these little swimming miniature repairmen that are going to swim down and find the damage and repair it. Okay.

I suspend my disbelief that far. But here's my difficulty. You've got, you know, Fred Smith there that you've frozen, and you say, all right, I've got a hypodermic full of nanobots here, and I'm going to stick them in there and fix all of your freezing damage.

Well, have you ever tried sticking a fork or anything into something that's frozen solid? I mean, you can't. How are they going to swim through solid ice? You have to thaw the guy out before anything can swim around, and by the time you do, he's going to turn to jelly. I mean, everything's going to mix together.

There's going to be no, you don't have time. The nanobots are going to swim around saying, where do you want me to start? I mean, it's like having a sheetrock repairman come in after your house has been demolished. You know, he's saying, well, I was just going to patch a few sheetrock holes, but you didn't tell me the house was torn down.

So anyway, it is to laugh. If we have been united with him, people have the same desires, they recognize the same needs that God meets, that God supplies, and that God accomplishes through Christ, but they're going to accomplish it through the four-footed beast images that they have carved on the wall of the temple. If we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.

This now is a universal promise. We are careful to distinguish when we look at the scriptures between those promises that apply to all believers universally. How many church-age believers have been united with Christ in the likeness of his death? Every single one.

So guess what? Every single one is going to be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection. What does that mean? Life from the dead. We physically die.

It doesn't matter if you are the worst skin-of-the-teeth, reprobate, wood-hay-instubbed believer that ever walked on God's earth from 33 A.D. to the present. You will rise when

the trumpet sounds and the voice of the archangel shouts. You will come up.

You will be united with Christ in the likeness of his resurrection. Paul is focusing on life out from the dead. That's what every church-age believer can confidently expect.

It may not be glorious. It may not be exciting. You may awake with a lot of disgrace, with a lot of fear.

You may run the other way when you see the Lord, but you're going to be there to run. You're going to be resurrected. 1 Corinthians 15 is the great chapter where Paul addresses the whole issue of resurrection.

If Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how does someone among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? To Paul, this is the antithesis of Christianity. How can you not expect the resurrection? If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ is not risen. If Christ is not risen, our preaching is empty and your faith is futile.

Now listen to this. If Christ is not raised, this is bodily resurrection. This is resurrection.

He says, you see that I have flesh and bones, not like a spirit. It's not a spiritual resurrection. It's not a phantasm.

It's not joining the great consciousness in the sky. This is bodily, physical resurrection. Same memories, same person reactivated in an enhanced body.

All the things science dreams about doing some long distant day in the future, the Lord has already done 2,000 years ago. But Paul doesn't say if the Bible is not true, your faith is in vain. Paul doesn't say if Moses didn't really climb Sinai.

He doesn't pick any other episode except the resurrection. He doesn't say if Christ didn't die on the cross. He says if Christ is not raised, our preaching is empty, your faith is also empty.

Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead do not rise. For the dead do not rise, and then Christ is not risen. If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile.

You are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, this is 1 Corinthians 15, 19.

It is a verse worth remembering. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pathetic, most pitiable. If all you're looking for in your Christianity is how to get through this life, it's pathetic.

Paul says it's a waste of time. Our preaching is empty, your faith is empty, and you're

pathetic. It is not this life that we focus on.

Paul the Apostle tells us about it, 1 Corinthians 15. He goes on to talk later in that same chapter about the nature of the resurrection. He says, Become sober-minded.

Do not be deceived. Bad company corrupts good morals. Stop sinning.

Some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame. Somebody will say, how are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? Rough words.

He says, you fool. That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

But God gives it a body just as he wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. Notice, in talking about the planting of dead saints, he says there are different kinds of seeds that are going to grow into different kinds of plants. We are not all the same kind of seed when we die.

But notice, whatever kind of seed we are, that's what we are when we die. Now how can there be variations of seeds among the same group of believers? How come we're not all wheat seeds in this illustration? Because if we were planting all wheat seeds, you'd get identical wheat plants growing up in the resurrection, right? Paul says, listen to the introduction. I've read these first verses on purpose.

In 1 Corinthians 15, you begin at verse 32. If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink. For tomorrow we die.

Do not be deceived. Bad company corrupts good morals. Become sober-minded as you ought to be.

Stop sinning. Some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

Someone will say, how are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? You fool, that which you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. Now he's making a comparison of saints dying, and he says, you may be wheat or you might be something else.

God gives it a body just as he wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh. There is one flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another flesh of birds, and another of fish.

There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. Some of the humblest-looking seeds turn into

some of the greatest-looking plants. Some of the greatest-looking seeds turn into some of the crummiest-looking plants.

You can't tell what the plant is going to look like by looking at the seed, can you? When you look at an acorn, you do not see an oak tree. When you look at a pumpkin seed, you do not see a pumpkin. When you look at a sunflower seed, you do not see a sunflower.

When you look at a seed out of an apple or an orange, just looking at that seed, if you handed that to an Aborigine in Australia someplace and said, look at this seed, what do you think that will turn into? He has no earthly idea. He can't tell. We, when we die, look like a lot of different kinds of seeds, and you can't always tell by looking at the seed what is going to grow up in the resurrection.

That's his point here. You'll never hear it anyplace. I don't care how many places you go and get an analysis of this, you're going to get stuff about, oh, there's a difference between men and animals, men have souls and animals do not, and then they just move on.

I am telling you here from the Word of God, this is talking about believers, and the fact that the life we lead here determines what we're going to grow into when that seed is planted and it sprouts and grows up, what kind of plant you're going to be. Are you going to be a dandelion or are you going to be a mighty oak? It is determined by what kind of seed gets planted now. That's why he prefaces this by saying, watch out what you're doing.

Become sober minded. Do not be deceived. You need to have the knowledge of God, and if you don't have it, I speak this to your shame.

Because we're determining now what kind of seed is going to get planted in the ground, and that's going to determine what gets sprouted up in the resurrection. There are, verse 40, heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. The glory of the heavenly is one thing, the glory of the earthly is another.

You may have a lot of glory as a seed, and you're going to come up as a very common kind of a plant in the next life. So there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. For star differs from star in glory.

There are bright things in the sky and there are dim things in the sky. Of course, the stars always hark back, if you have any Old Testament knowledge at all, to the angels. And Paul is basically saying, you know, in the resurrection we're going to be rubbing elbows with the angels.

They are not all the same. They differ from one another in glory. How did that happen? Well, I don't know.

There's a lot of angelic prehistory that we will learn from and find out about later. We'll have a whole other companion volume to our earthly Bible that may be the angelic testament, and it will fill in the gaps of our knowledge about what has taken place in the angelic civilization. How did Gabriel and Michael get to be where they are in God's service? Were they just created ex nihilo as archangels, or did they arrive at that place because there was something going on in the earlier history of angels to which we are currently not privy? We'll know when our seeds get planted and we sprout.

Stars differ from star in glory. There are bright bodies in the heavens and there are dim bulbs. We're determining now whether we're going to be a bright light or a dim bulb.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body. It is raised an imperishable body.

This is temporary. That is permanent. This is temporary.

That is permanent. What we do in the temporary determines the nature of the permanent. It is sown in dishonor.

It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. And people say, Now see, Jesus is just a spiritual resurrection.

It's a spiritual thing. Jesus said, Look at me. Touch me.

Handle me. I've got flesh and bone. By the way, I saw somebody make an interesting point about that statement of the Lord.

What do we say when we're talking about somebody? We say, He's not a ghost. He is what? Flesh and blood. We say flesh and blood.

Merle Travis, Some people say man's made out of mud. Poor man's made out of what? Muscle and blood. Jesus said, Handle me.

I have flesh and bone. Why doesn't He say blood? Well, somebody went way off on a tangent. Well, you know, The blood of the cross is the one thing He offered to the Father and all that nonsense.

Hopefully, when you touch somebody, You don't wind up with blood as an issue. You're not coming away with your hands bloody. You don't see blood.

The person is not bleeding profusely. What do you feel? The texture, The sensation of

touch that you get, Is that there is flesh, And under the flesh there is bone. That's what you feel when you touch something.

And that's what the Lord is saying. Look, I've got structure. I have substance.

I have flesh and bone. Don't let anybody make some kind of a mincemeat out of, He didn't say flesh and blood, That you think you're going to squeeze His hand, And suddenly blood is an issue. People just don't think.

The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. What is it talking about? He is not saying he is a ghost. He is a sprite.

He is an effervescent, evanescent, Some sort of a, What do they call that stuff that ghosts are made out of? Whatever it is, that's not it. He says, Oh, you know, Ectoplasm. Verse 46, The spiritual is not first, But the natural, Then the spiritual.

There is cause and effect. There is the seed, And there is the plant. The natural is first, Then the spiritual.

The first man is from the earth, Earthy. The second man is from heaven. He took on the earthy, But he is from heaven, And he has returned to heaven.

The Lord Jesus is like a parabola. If you ever took geometry, You have a thing that starts high, It comes low, And then it goes back up high. Well, He picks us up on that swoop.

We are down at the bottom. We are at the apogee there, The lowest point. And He picks us up and takes us up To where He arrives.

If any man wants to come after me, Arrive where I'm going to be, Let him deny himself, And take up his cross, And follow me. We have to learn to think like the Lord Jesus, And disconnect ourselves from the earthy, And the temporal, And the treasures where thieves break in and steal, And moths and rust corrupt. Our treasure is in heaven.

Set your mind on things in heaven, Where our citizenship is, Where our Lord is, Where the heavenly things are. When He says, The second man is from heaven, The second man is of the Spirit, He's not talking about the distinction Between the soul and the flesh. He's talking about the difference Between earth and heaven.

Heaven is the place of spiritual life. We will have resurrection bodies, And they will have substance, But they are of the realm of Spirit, God's Holy Spirit. As is the earthly, So are those who are earthly.

What is the earthly like? Read Ecclesiastes. Better yet, Get the Ecclesiastes tapes, And then think about Ecclesiastes. And as is the heavenly, So are those who are heavenly.

What's the difference Between the earthly and the heavenly When you go back to

Ecclesiastes? Even in our King James version Of Ecclesiastes chapter 1. Things rise and they fall. It's cyclical. It's here today, gone tomorrow.

Now you see it, now you don't. It's a vapor. Hevel, hevel, all is hevel, Says the preacher.

Now you see it, now you don't. As is the earthly, So are those who are earthly. As is the heavenly, So are those who are heavenly.

What do we know about heaven? What about the essence of God? No shadow of turning. It doesn't change. It's eternal.

It lasts forever. It's permanent. It's lasting.

It has quality. It has intrinsic value. People who are looking into the heavenly Begin to have that as a part of their nature.

Our qualities, our steadiness, Our virtue is permanent and eternal. Not temporary and vanishing. We are not fickle.

We are not unstable. We are not unpredictable. We are not your best friend today And your worst enemy tomorrow.

Steadiness, predictability, Steadfastness, permanence. So are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, We will also bear the image of the heavenly.

You'll notice that earthly and heavenly And earthly and spirit are set in parallel All the way through this passage, Which tells you that spiritual and heavenly are synonymous. The mystery of the resurrection, verse 50, Now I say this, brethren, Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, Nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Notice he has cleverly shifted his ground a little bit here From just the fact of resurrection To the possibilities in the resurrection.

Because it's not enough to just get there, You want to inherit. You want to inherit these things that are imperishable. I say this, brethren, Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, Nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Behold, I tell you a mystery, We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, At the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, And the dead will be raised imperishable, And we will be changed. Notice even in verse 52, he's making a distinction.

He is saying we are the ones who are alive. He says the dead will be raised imperishable, And we will be changed. And it's sort of a sequence.

The dead will be raised. Let's say, for the sake of argument, That we are in the rapture

generation, as they call it. We are going to be alive at the coming of the Lord.

He says the dead will be raised imperishable. That is going to take place, And we will see it for some short span of time Before we ourselves are changed. The dead will be raised imperishable, We will be changed.

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, And this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, When this mortal will have put on immortality, Then will come about the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, The power of sin is the law, But thanks be to God who gives us the victory Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, If you want to fulfill the potential, If you want to inherit the imperishable, Verse 58, Be steadfast, be immovable, Be abounding in the work of the Lord always, Knowing your toil is not in vain in the Lord. Steadfast, immovable, abounding, These are heavenly qualities. They reach into the resurrection And pull those things down into our souls.

Well, that's 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Philippians chapter 3, verse 10 and 11. This is a fascinating statement by the Apostle Paul.

Let me back up just a little bit. Paul talks about the same things he's talking about In front of Agrippa in the first few verses Of Philippians chapter 3. He says, I myself might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind To put their confidence in the flesh, I have far more.

I was circumcised the eighth day. I am of the nation of Israel. I am of the tribe of Benjamin, A Hebrew of the Hebrews.

As to the law, a Pharisee. If you want to talk about law, Talk Pharisees. Who talks to Pharisees when it comes to the law? Nobody.

As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. As to the righteousness which is in the law? Found blameless. But whatever things were gained to me, Those things I have counted as loss For the sake of Christ.

And if that's not a euphemistic translation, I don't know what is. Because the word loss there In Philippians chapter 3, verse 7. Let me read it to you right out of my Greek text here. I think it is the word Zemias.

Zemias is the word for damage, disadvantage, loss, or forfeit. It's going to be used upcoming in Acts 27.10. Men, I perceive the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, Not only of the cargo and ship, but also of our lives. Paul is predicting this great wreck is going to take place.

He says, you remember later on, They are going to throw all the cargo overboard And the whole economic aspect of that voyage is going to be a total loss. They are going to lose the ship and everything in it. And that's what Zemias means.

So he says, What things were gained to me, Being a Pharisee, all of these attainments, I count them as a total loss. This is what happens when they total your car. It's gone.

For the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss In view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ. And unfortunately, in this verse, He uses the word Zemias again.

He says, I count all things to be loss When I compare it to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, For whom I have suffered the loss of all things And count them but rubbish, so that I may gain Christ. And the word rubbish there is skubalon. S-K-U-B-A-L-O-N Which is the word for organic waste, shall we say.

So that I may gain Christ. So that I may gain Christ. He has to count them that in order to gain Christ.

You cannot hang on to things in the world and gain Christ. You can't hold them both. We have one pair of hands.

They're either going to be on the plow, Or we're going to turn around and go back to the dead things of this life. Jesus said, the man having once put his hand to the plow, And turning back, cannot be my disciple. He said, you cannot love father and mother more than me, And be my disciple.

You cannot hang on to the things of this earth. The rich young ruler is a classic example. Jesus says, give up everything you have and follow me.

And the man couldn't do it. Paul says, I have given up all of these things. Paul was from a wealthy family.

You don't get to be a disciple of Gamaliel. You don't get the education and the Pharisaic background that Saul has, Coming from a poor family. He has wealth.

He has social standing. And he says, I have consigned all of that to the garbage, So that I may gain Christ. So that I may gain Christ.

There is a reason. And there is a purpose. And it is an absolute either or.

You either hang on to things in this life, Or you pursue Christ. The odd thing is, that when you pursue Christ, You find that things end up dropping on you, That you thought you had turned loose of, And that you left behind, And thought, well, I'll just have to forego that example of happiness. A very simple example.

And I'm not setting myself as any kind of a sacrifice. But I made up my mind that I was just going to not date. I was going to be a young man of purpose.

I was going to go to seminary, And focus all of my energy and all of my attention on learning the Word of God. I single-mindedly cleared all of my future schedule and said, Alright, here is my Bible. Here is all of my seminary books.

Signed up for 16 hours of seminary. Here I go. And then within three months, I was married.

I'd been looking for 10 years, And hadn't met anybody I wanted to marry. And then at the point that I consigned it all away, It just dropped on my head out of nowhere. So that I may gain Christ, And may be found in Him.

This is the important part. Verse 9 of Philippians 3. I count these things a total loss, So that I may gain Christ, And so that I may be found in Him, Not having a righteousness of my own, Derived from the law. But that which is through faith in Christ.

The righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. This is the theme of the book of Romans. This is why Romans chapter 4 is right in the center of that whole argument.

Romans 1 through 8. Right in the middle of that great structure is Abraham. Declared righteous by faith. Paul says, I can't hang on to these things.

I can't look to them for my validation, Or my credibility, Or my acceptance, Or my self-actualization. I need to gain Christ. I need to be found in Him.

Not having my own righteousness, But the righteousness that is assigned to me by God on the basis of faith. So that, verse 10, I may know Him and the power of His resurrection. And the fellowship of His sufferings.

Being conformed to His death. What's the nature of being united with Christ in His death? When you die, your slate is cleared. Your possessions are given to others.

Your body is taken away. All of the things that pertain to this life are separated from you. And you're no longer in them.

You're no longer of them. This is the tragedy of people who think that dead believers are kind of hovering around, Looking over our shoulder, guiding us, And influencing things for good. You might as well be a Catholic and pray to the saints.

When you die, you leave this life. You're not connected to this life in any way, shape, or form. You are not connected to your relatives.

I'm sorry, I don't want to hurt your feelings, But your dead mother is not looking over

your shoulder. Grandma is not getting Jesus to do things for you. It doesn't happen.

When you die, you are completely and totally disconnected. And it is an essential truth to understand, Because when Jesus died, He was completely separated from this world. All of the sin, all of the corruption, All of the petty, tin pot, two-bit, temporary, Leaf of grass, here today, gone tomorrow, achievements of this life.

When He died, He was separated from all of that. He went to the Father. Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.

If your spirit is in the hands of the Father, You're not looking over your shoulder like Lot's wife. You're looking ahead. When we are united with Christ in His death, This is the attitude we have toward this life.

We do not invest ourselves. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. We do not invest.

Our happiness does not depend on our circumstance, Or our possession, or our attainment, Or our recognition, or our achievement, Or what this person thinks, or what that person says. We unite with Christ in His death, And that union separates us. It frees us from that corruption, From that temporary nature.

The seed gets planted, And the new thing begins to grow. That's what it means to be united with Christ, In the likeness of His death. It gives us the power to disconnect From everything that drives people Who are too much in this world.

We do not have the power to extricate ourselves, But God can plant that seed And create a new life in it That is completely of a different nature. Paul says, I count these things as loss and rubbish So that I can gain Christ, So that I can be found in Him, So that I can know Him And the power of His resurrection, So that I can be conformed to His death, In order that I may attain To the resurrection from the dead. Paul is an apostle, For crying out loud, Look at what the man has been through.

He bears in his body The marks of the Lord Jesus. You would think, Billy Graham is in, The Apostle Paul is in, Ten times over. Anybody that we know, Anybody that we have seen, Who's going to be up there Standing next to Christ? Who's going to be In the first five seats around him? Well, surely the Apostle Paul.

And he says, Look, I look at the stuff around in my life, Being a Pharisee, Being a big law student and all that, The righteousness, I count it as dung, So that I can attain To the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have already obtained it, Or have already become perfect. I press on, So that I may lay hold of that, For which also I was lay hold of, By Christ Jesus.

Paul says, I am in this process just like you are. He says, I die daily at the beginning of

this. We have to die daily.

We have to look at Christ on the cross, See His physical death, See His separation from the things of this life, Remember that we are united with Him In the likeness of His death, So that we can be united with Him In the likeness of His resurrection. So that we can begin to lay claim To inheritance in the future, And not be looking over our shoulder, Back at Sodom, Oh, but my house, my plants, What's going to happen with the fire and brimstone? What about the wonderful porch That Lot built last week? All of these things that we had, Our home, we've lived there so long, Our friends, Lot's wife, Why did she look back? She was invested in her life in Sodom. There were things about it that she loved, And that she could not bear to part with.

And when God said, Look forward, She couldn't help but look back. And that was the end of her opportunities. It's over for her At the point that she looks back.

Paul says, I die daily. We need to have that same attitude. We die daily.

We look at things and we say, I am managing things. I am a servant who is a steward Over things that belong to the master. The money I have, The house I have, The opportunities I have, The struggles I have, The issues I have, I am a servant in the service of my master.

I am managing these things for him as best I can. But the good thing about a servant is, He doesn't invest himself in the master's possessions. They're not his.

It's a business transaction. He has a job to do. Many of us have worked for clients.

And we go out and we do our best to do right by it. But it's not my server. I didn't buy it.

I didn't make the decisions. I didn't create a lot of this. I am in here to do a job for you.

I'll do the very best I can. But I don't get over-invested in it Because it doesn't belong to me. I've got my own problems.

Not that I have already obtained it, Have already become perfect. I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. This is why the essence of Paul's argument before Agrippa is resurrection.

This is why it has to be at the center of our hope and at the center of our thinking. Nothing matters in this life unless it hooks into the resurrection. How is it going to look when I'm standing in the kingdom looking back? Is it important or is it not? That's the basis for judging.

Well, let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for giving us such a clear communication of truth through the Apostle Paul and through his trials. We thank you for the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ who has made our life and our hope possible.

We pray that we can be united with him not only in the likeness of his death, but also in the likeness of his resurrection. We look forward to the day when we are able to serve and reflect your glory both in his kingdom and in yours. We ask your blessing on us as we go our way.

In Jesus' name, amen.