

Resurrection of the Dead

By Zin Yi

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. (1 Corinthians 15:13-20)

The truth of the future bodily resurrection of His sheep, even *glorification*, is an awe-inspiring doctrine of the Scriptures, the fulfillment of which begins with the glorious resurrection of the soul. It fits perfectly the Biblical mold, as set forth by the Lord Jesus, of the hope-laden outlook of the Christian as he lives his life to the glory of God, denying himself, taking up his cross, following the “forerunner” of his faith, even Jesus.

It is crucial for the Christian to realize that whatever hope he is to have in the resurrection of the last day is absolutely related to the hope that he is to have in the salvation of his soul. In other words, if God, in His perfect wisdom, had somehow decreed that our salvation would only involve the quickening of our spirit essence, this would not mean that the Christian would have any less hope for the new, eternal life that is to become an actuality. It just so happens, as the Bible declares, that man was created both body and soul (cf. Eph. 2:3), and that both parts constitute us as who we are, albeit fallen sinners. Since this union, this relationship between our soul and body is integral to our makeup as His creation, for us to be redeemed in our souls must also necessitate that we are redeemed in our bodies - *but* without the former, there is no latter.

Thus the glory that many associate with the resurrection of the last day is not undue, or even unbiblical, but sadly many such do not properly view the amazing, pure grace and glory innate in the *first resurrection*: “...This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:5b, 6). This is the very translation of their souls from “death unto life” (1 John 3:14). This is the reason for vs. 17 of 1 Co. 15: “...if Christ be not raised...ye are yet in your sins.” Notice that the apostle does not say that without Christ’s resurrection, we *will not be raised* on the last day. Rather, his focus is, in the first instance, on the first resurrection, on the fact that Christ’s resurrection is the clear *proof* of the incomprehensible fact that **already**, at the cross, with the last utterances of the Savior, our atonement *is* complete. Romans 4:25 speaks directly to this issue: “Who [Christ] was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” The word “for,” *dia*, can be rendered, “through” or “because.” That is, His resurrection could take place only *because* His mission as the atoning Lamb was successfully accomplished, and was, truly, “**finished**.” He had, in actuality, secured the eternal justification of His elect, upon whose souls, in their individual lifetimes, would be applied this completed work of redemption. Just as God’s eternal decree of election guaranteed propitiation through the

atonement at the cross, so too, the bible teaches, atonement completed ensures regeneration.

That the assurance of eternity with our King gives us peace which “passeth all understanding” is certain. That this hope is an “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6:19), Paul echoes in 1 Co. 15:58: “Therefore...be ye steadfast, unmovable....” Why? Because we can know that our “labor is not in vain in the Lord.” God is assuring us, here in the concluding verse of 1 Corinthians, that to the child of God, his “days” and his “recompence” are *not* “vanity” (cf. Job 7:16, 15:31). The particle “Therefore” (*hoste*), meaning “so that,” emphasizes the cause and effect relationship between future hope (the prominent theme of 1 Co. 15) and present way of life. What indeed are to be ways in which this hope is practically manifest in this life? How, in other words, should the sure knowledge of the future resurrection impact our walk as the beneficiaries of the promise? We need look no farther than the life of converted Paul (to be sure, we do not idolize the *man*. Rather, we are exhorted that we be “followers [i.e., imitators] of [Paul]” - 1 Co. 4:16 - as Paul was a “follower...of Christ” - 1 Co. 11:1. This is akin to the exhortation found in Hebrews 6:12, that we “be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” – the promises of the New Heaven and the New Earth, and yes, the resurrection. God concludes for us: “Be ye therefore **followers of God**, as dear children” - Eph. 5:1). As a follower of Christ, Paul labored with fervor unmatched; for the gospel and the name of Christ was ruthlessly beaten, imprisoned, and indeed, died “daily” (2 Co. 11:23-33). All things pertaining to the flesh, he “counted loss for Christ,” “for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,” *that* he “may win Christ” (Phi. 3:7b, 8). What does it mean to “win,” to “gain” Christ? According to the use of a related word in Phi. 1:21, we learn that it is to be *with* Christ (“...to die is gain”). That is, the resurrected soul, upon departure from this life, will “be with Christ,” a “far better” situation for any Christian: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phi. 1:21-23). This hope, this faith is that by which Paul walked, constantly “willing rather to be absent from the body...” (2 Co. 5:8a). Because of the very fact that his physical body was a part of the perishing world, he was literally able to throw himself in the line of fire – the fiery darts of the devil, and the vicious persecution by the unsaved within the corporate church of the day. Truly, his unwavering hope was to “**know Him, and the power of the resurrection,**” that he might “**attain unto the resurrection of the dead**” (Phi. 3:10a, 11).

Do we thus present our bodies “a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1) through this hope? The answer would depend on whether we have been made partakers in the “renewing of...mind” (Rom. 12:2). What a time to examine ourselves, for the New Heaven and the New Earth are not for the “old” man, neither for “flesh and blood” (1 Co. 15:50).

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