



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Corinthians 15: 12-19

1 Corinthians

"Christ is Risen Indeed"

TRANSCRIPT

We are in an interesting portion of the book of 1 Corinthians. It's a new section that we began last week and kind of at an interesting time since this is the season of the year that we celebrate the resurrection, and that's what this chapter is about. It's the definitive chapter in the Bible on the resurrection, and we are in verse 12 of chapter 15. We'll look at verses 12 through 19 this morning.

"Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You for this time together. It's a blessing. It's really a privilege for us to gather together for believers in Jesus Christ to meet with others, and particularly on this day of the week, which the church has, according to Your guidance, chosen as the day of the week when we should meet, on a Sunday, which is a time in which we remember the resurrection of our Savior, who was raised on the

first day of the week. And so, we do so in honor of that. But of course, the great blessing that we will study today, the blessing of the resurrection is something that we celebrate every day. We should. It should govern our lives. That's something that we should see from the texts we've read and what we'll consider. And so I pray that our time will be one of edification in which we're built up in the faith, we're reminded of the absolute security we have in Christ because He conquered death. And we in Him have conquered death. And while that is what Paul will later call in this book "the last enemy," it is a defeated enemy. We have nothing to fear.

We who are in Christ, we who have believed in Him have triumphed over the grave already. And the day will come when, though these bodies may turn to dust, they will be raised incorruptible. That's our hope. That's what we study this morning. We pray You'd bless it to our minds that we would be affected by it, we would draw the proper implications from it, we would live in light of it, not forget it. It's so easy to forget the great truths of Your word, and these are fundamental things, things like the atonement and the resurrection. But we are to be grounded in an understanding of those things. And so to that end, Lord, we pray that You'd bless us, that we would be grounded in that, that we would be reminded of some things today that are important for us to know, and they would have an effect upon us.

We have every reason to be confident in this life and to be joyful. And yet, the reality is: life's difficult. We get weighed down by experiences in life, and circumstances that seem to overwhelm us, and sometimes even crush us. We're frail. We're just dust. That's what Abraham testified. It's true of all of us. We're just dust. We're weak. And yet, nevertheless, these truths that we will study this morning are that: truths upon which our lives are based in Christ, and we have every reason for hope in the present and for the future because our past has been dealt with. It has been fixed. It's been cleaned up by the cross of Christ, and we give You praise for that.

But, for the trials of life, the crushing experiences of life for just the hard things that go on in life, we pray for those who are in particular difficulty. We can look at our list of requests and see that there are many people who are recovering from illness or surgery. We pray for them, that You'd give encouragement, that You'd give strength. We pray that You would help them in the midst of this time of difficulty to look to Christ, to reflect upon Him on what He's done and who He is, and

to think of the Godhead, the Triune God that loves these individuals, loves all of His people, and we have every reason to rejoice because though these are trials that we go through, we all must go through some difficulties in life. Some go through difficulties.

But nevertheless, You're in control of them, and we can rely upon You and rely upon the promises You give to us and be encouraged by them. And so, I pray that You'd encourage Your people with the promises You give, and the assurance that lies behind all of them: that You're a sovereign God, a loving God, a God whose love and whose power and whose wisdom can't be measured because it's infinite. And You'll take care of them, and You'll take care of us. Some of us are not experiencing physical hardship. We're not experiencing financial stress. We're not undergoing difficulties and pressure at work. Things seem good. But that's Your gift to us. It all comes from a good and faithful God, whether they're trials, or whether they're what we could consider blessings. It's all ultimately a blessing because it's Your way of shaping us and confirming us to Your image, and You never forsake us. That's Your promise. You never will leave us.

So, may we be reminded of all of that as we study this great subject this morning and in the weeks to come. Bless us and encourage us, and give us a good time of learning and worship this morning. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] In the past, it was a tradition among many Christians to greet one another on Easter morning with the words, "Christ is risen," and receive the response, "He is risen, indeed." That greeting isn't heard much anymore, if at all. But if it were, someone has said the reply to "Christ is risen" is likely to be, "So what?" And while we might agree that's a cynical response, still, it's a good question, and it's one that Christians ought to ask themselves. Christ is risen.

So what difference does that make? If He had not risen, if His tomb had become a shrine for pilgrims, would it make a difference? How would you answer that? You know the resurrection is important, but how important? Does it really make a difference?

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tells us, and he answers the question, "So what?" with "So everything." The difference that the resurrection makes is the difference

between life and death. It's the difference between hope and despair. It is the ground of the gospel and eternal life. Paul has already given a lot of evidence that supports the resurrection and demonstrates that it's not some fable, but an historical fact, and that is a point that needs to be underlined: Christianity is an historical faith. That is, it's grounded in history. It's not stories and legends that have accumulated over the years. It goes back to the events themselves that were real that are historical. And he's proven that. He's proven that in two different ways. First of all, he proved it from Scripture. The resurrection is the fulfillment of prophecy. He said that in verse 4. And was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. According to the New Testament Scriptures of course, but also the Old Testament Scriptures. Last week, we referred to Psalm 16 as the one that the apostles frequently quoted, and it looked forward to that day when God's Holy One would not suffer decay.

But then, he supplemented that. He confirmed all of that in verses 5 through 8 with the testimony of eyewitnesses. Many people had seen the resurrected Christ, and the Corinthians believed it. Paul wrote that in verse 11. You believed. But, there was a problem. There was a fly in the ointment in Corinth. While they accepted the resurrection of Christ, some there in the church denied the resurrection of the dead. In other words, they believed in Christ's physical resurrection, but they denied their own future physical resurrection. That wasn't going to happen, they were saying. It was a contradictory position. It's a position that divided the church, and it was one that was destructive of the gospel. Paul doesn't identify the people behind this strange doctrine. He doesn't tell us what kind of people they were, but it's likely that they were Greek converts who retained some of their old beliefs. And that's not all that uncommon to do. We come into the faith, and we bring a lot of baggage with us, and it takes time to get our minds completely straight. We spend the rest of our lives really dealing with issues that may be false. Even the great Augustin wrote a book at the end of his life titled "Retractions." Went back and retracted some of the things that he had taught 20 years earlier.

And that happens, and that may be part of the problem here. They had brought some false beliefs into the faith with them, and they were believing them still and needed correction. What they held to was a common idea of the Greeks that matter was evil and spirit good. Among some, the body, some of the Greeks, the body was

considered to be a tomb of the soul that imprisoned it, and only at death was the soul set free. So that's what they look forward to. Getting rid of this prison house of the body and the soul being completely free.

So, the idea of reuniting the soul with the body was unthinkable among some Greeks. Why would I want to do that? I want to get rid of this thing. It's weighing me down. When Greeks and the Romans would cremate their dead, it was, in their minds, the conclusion of the material existence. The body was finished, even though the soul would live on. You remember Paul's experience on Mars Hill, recorded in Acts chapter 17 when he spoke to the intellectuals of Athens. He speaks to them and they listen to him with a mild interest as he told them about God. But when he said that God raised Christ from the dead, they quickly lost interest in everything that he had to say. And some, Luke writes, began to sneer. What a foolish idea that is. Resurrected from the dead? Bringing the body back? That's what we want to get rid of.

Well, Corinth wasn't far from Athens, and the attitude of the Athenians was present among some there in Corinth. So that they dismissed the idea of the believer's resurrection, the bodily resurrection, and dismissed it as something that was completely absurd. Well, it was a serious error, because as Paul shows, the very argument against the doctrine of a general resurrection of men weighs equally against the resurrection of Christ. He is the Godman. And in His human body human nature, body and soul, He was raised as a man. But if men don't rise, then He didn't rise. And if Christ has not been raised, then we are lost.

So, it was a serious issue and Paul takes it up to show the Corinthians just where their error leads, and show them how it cannot be true. He does that in a logical way, explaining that if the dead don't rise, then Christ didn't rise, and if Christ did not rise, the Christian faith is empty. There's no hope. That's only logical, and that's Paul's initial statement in verses 12 and 13. "If there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised." But there is a whole series of implications that necessarily follow if Christ has not been raised.

Paul lists five of them and they fall like so many dominos, one after another. The first is that the gospel is worthless, so is their faith. Gospel's worthless? That means everything you believed in is worthless. Verse 14, "Our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." The reason for that is: Christ rested the validity of all that he

claimed to be on the resurrection. He repeatedly told the disciples that He would not only die, but He would conquer death in the resurrection. You see that all through the gospels. He repeatedly told the disciples of both His death and His resurrection. In fact, He's very specific about it. He told them that He would be handed over to the Gentiles, mocked, scourged and killed. It doesn't simply say, "I'll be killed." But He says, "Who's going to do it? He identifies the gentiles, he identifies the way things would unfold. And then he says, "But He would rise on the third day." Not the second day, not the fourth day, not some day he would rise. It's the third day. It's all very specific prophecies.

So, if He did rise, then His resurrection validates all that He said about Himself. He is the Savior. But if He did not rise, then nothing He said is true. Nothing has real meaning. The gospel is empty. His promises are empty. There's no salvation in Christ, and the Corinthians had put their faith in a falsehood.

Which leads to the second consequence: if the gospel is false, then the apostles are liars. Verse 15. " Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised." So, if the resurrection is not true, then the apostles are guilty of deliberate falsehood. Paul has already incriminated himself in this chapter, in verse 8, you'll remember from last week, he said that Christ appeared to him, and last of all, as it were, to one untimely born, He appeared to me.

Well, if He didn't appear to him, that's not a mistake on the apostle's part. That's a deliberate lie on his part. And so too of the other apostles, and writers of Scripture who have done the same, because they all testify to the truth of the resurrection. John devoted chapter 20 of his gospel to the Lord's resurrection. Tales of the people Jesus appeared to, of Thomas, you remember, whom He invited to put his finger in the nail prints in His hand, and the spear mark in His side. In chapter 21, John recounts the Lord appeared on the shore of Galilee where the disciples were fishing. They came, He prepared a breakfast for them. He met with Peter personally, and Peter there confessed his love for Christ three times, which in effect, I think we're to understand it this way, in effect, erased the three denials that he was guilty of.

Matthew records the resurrection. Mark and Luke do as well. Not all of them record the Lord's birth. Matthew and Luke do. John doesn't. John, of course, speaks of the eternity of Christ, but he doesn't get into the events of Bethlehem. Neither

does Mark. Mark begins with the Lord's ministry with John the Baptist baptizing. And yet, all of them deal with the resurrection. They all talk about it. Peter, who didn't write a gospel but wrote epistles, he testified in his sermon in the Book of Acts on the day of Pentecost. He speaks of that, and says through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we have hope. Not to mention the over 500 witnesses that Paul has already referred to, that he described earlier in the chapter, all of them promising to have seen the risen Christ who was really, if the dead are not raised, still in the grave. They all testified that He was alive.

That in itself is something of a minor miracle. I think I mentioned that last week. I know I did. I spoke of it in those terms. But sort of bringing out again, the idea that over 500 people plotted a deception, and pulled it off without contradicting each other, and remained so loyal to the lie that they even died for it, as did the apostles with perhaps the exception of John, that's really beyond belief. And yet, that's what you have to believe if Christ did not rise. The apostles and hundreds of others lied, and Christianity is a colossal sham built on deception.

That leads to the third implication given in verse 17, that we are unforgiven. Your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Now, Paul is going beyond the theoretical to the personal. He's saying that if Christ is not alive, then we are still guilty. We've not been cleansed of our guilt. We're still guilty because without the resurrection, there's no forgiveness. There's no atonement. There's no sacrifice for us.

In Romans chapter 4 verse 25, Paul wrote that Christ was raised because of our justification. Now, if you have a King James version, it has "raised for our justification." That's correct, but that needs some explanation, and I think the explanation is given in the translation "because of our justification," or "on account of our justification." The meaning is: Christ was raised from the dead because justification had been completed. It had been accomplished. It had been obtained at the cross. He did everything for us at the cross. He gained salvation. He bought it for us. He bought our justification. He bought everything that leads up to it. He gained salvation for His people at the cross. He said, "It's finished," and that's the case.

And because of that, He was raised. The resurrection is the proof that the Father accepted the sacrifice of His Son, that His justice has been satisfied, that His wrath has been turned away from His people, and His people have all been saved.

Christ did it at the cross. Now, it's applied in time. It's applied when the Spirit of God quickens us, gives us faith, enables us to lay hold of the cross. But everything was accomplished there at the cross, and the resurrection is the proof of that.

But, if Christ is not alive, what does that mean? What does that show? Well, just the opposite: that His death did not accomplish redemption, that His sacrifice was not accepted by the Father. What it means is we are still in our sins, and condemned. So, the logic of Paul's argument is: if the dead are not raised, Christ who died is not raised, and if there's no resurrection, then there's no atonement, there's no pardon for sin.

The Corinthians probably hadn't seen these implications, and that's often the case. Often times, people fall into an error, and they fall into it without realizing the full implications of what they've come to believe. They've embraced some doctrine without thinking it through, and seeing where it all leads. And that's the case here, and that's why Paul is enlightening them about what they've come to believe. Okay, if you think that's true, well here's where it goes. This is where you arrive, ultimately. Then he leads them through this, showing the impossibility of believing in Christ's resurrection but denying their own. Can't have it that way. If men don't rise, Christ didn't rise. And if He didn't rise, we're without hope.

Well, he said enough, you'd think, but he's not finished. Verse 18 gives the fourth consequence. All the dead in Christ are lost. "Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." How horrible. All of their loved ones. Mothers, fathers, children, wives who preceded them in death have perished eternally because without forgiveness, there's no life everlasting. And so, the hope that we will again see our family and friends in Christ, the hope of reunion that eternal life gives, that hope is gone. I can't preach that at funerals anymore. That's one of the great blessings, to be able to declare at a funeral service or memorial service or at a graveside, when you're speaking to a family of believers, that this is temporary. And so, we can look at John 14 where Jesus speaks of His Father's house, and all of the dwelling places there. And we're going to be there together. That's really the great theme that he strikes in that chapter. Reunion. But there's no resurrection. There's no reunion.

They have perished, Paul says. Not been annihilated. The Bible does not teach the annihilation of the soul. It teaches endless punishment. People want to

avoid that today. People want to figure out some way where it's not eternal. It's temporal. Maybe the souls go to a place called hell for a while, but they are extinguished eventually. It's not an eternal thing. No, the Bible teaches endless punishment. And Paul is saying that's what's happened to these loved ones of yours. They have perished along with the rest of fallen humanity, and they are cut off eternally from happiness. That's a terrible thought, but one that is inescapable if Christ was not raised from the dead.

This is not altogether a Corinthian error. This isn't something that is of historical interest to us because that's what they thought way back then, almost 2,000 years ago. It's with us today. Modern theologians still debate the resurrection. Some deny it. Others accept it, but they accept it in a rather odd way, as a spiritual resurrection, rather than a bodily resurrection. Jesus didn't rise physically from the dead; He rose spiritually. The New Testament writers describe a bodily death and a bodily resurrection. A physical death, a physical resurrection. Anything short of that is not a resurrection. Now, the Old Testament describes it that way as well. Job testified, "Even after my skin is destroyed yet from my flesh, I shall see God." Job 19 verse 26. That's the resurrection.

How else can you explain it? How can my skin, my flesh, be destroyed, go to the grave, become dust, but in my flesh I will see God? Only way that can be explained is resurrection. That was the hope of the Old Testament's saying as well. It's not a great emphasis in the Old Testament, but it's there. New Testament, Old Testament. That is a bodily resurrection. That was their hope.

And while a spiritualizing of it, describing it as a spiritual kind of resurrection, whatever that may mean, may be more palatable to a modern worldview of naturalism in which people just don't believe in miracles. "The supernatural cannot happen. This is a closed universe. It runs on the laws and principles. Nothing from outside comes in. Resurrections don't happen. Let's face it." Well, a spiritual so-called resurrection may be more acceptable to that kind of thinking, but it comes far short of what the apostles speak of, what the Bible teaches, and it comes under the same criticism that the apostle is giving of these who are in Corinth, denying the resurrection of the believer. It's not a resurrection. It's a denial of the resurrection, and if there is no resurrection, there's no future. We believed in vain, which means there's no past. That is, no forgiveness in the past. It's an illusion. We're cut off from past

forgiveness. We're cut off from past associations from our family and friends. They have all perished.

And, if all of this is true, then we've also lost the present. We've lost forgiveness in the past. We've lost joy, and hope, and security in the present. That's the fifth implication given in verse 19. We are people to be pitied in this life. "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." The reason that we are most to be pitied is because we suffer for the faith. Christians endure persecutions. Now, this final consequence may ring a little hollow to us because the church today in America, really in the West, doesn't suffer much. In fact, we live quite well. Life is comfortable. In fact, some might think that even if there is no resurrection and no life to come, no eternal life, the Christian is happier living with false hope than the honest skeptic who has a sense of despair.

But life was different for Paul in the early church. We might be able to say that about ourselves, or at least recognize the point about ourselves. That was not true at all of Paul in the early church. It was a hard life. The early Christians suffered for their faith. Paul suffered greatly. Shipwrecks, beatings, imprisonments, hunger, thirst, loneliness. All of that. In fact, for the next 250 years after the age of the apostles, the church would live in a world very, very different from our own. We live, basically, in an indifferent age. They're not hostile to us; they just don't care. We're kind of a non-entity. Not so, then.

John Foxe, in his "Book of Martyrs," lists ten persecutions of the church under the Roman emperors. It was a time when Christians bore witness to Christ with their own blood. They understood what Paul meant by this fifth logical consequence, as multitudes of Christians down through the centuries, because much of the church has suffered for Christ.

I think it's probably fair to say we live in a very unusual time. Now, it may end. There may be great persecution. But while we don't experience a lot of that now, they certainly did in Paul's day and for many ages of the church.

So, he says, if we endure that, if we suffer bravely for the faith in this life and then come to the end of it only to find that it was all in vain, all an empty hope, "we are of all men most to be pitied." It's like a man in the desert who's very thirsty. Think of Lawrence of Arabia with his band of raiders and soldiers out there on the sands under the heat of the burning sun, and they come to a drinking hole, and he

refuses to drink out of the muddy pool of water that's been stirred up by camel's feet because he knows there's something better ahead. He can see a stream shimmering in the distance, flowing with clear, cool water. And he says, "That's what I'll drink. Not this muddy stuff that the camels have been lapping up. I'm waiting for the best." But when he finds, to his huge disappointment, that the clear stream he saw was only a mirage, he realizes that he's been deceived. There was no stream. He then knows that he's worse off than those who satisfied themselves on muddy water. At least they had something, some relief. The Christian is like that, if there is no resurrection.

In fact, Paul says in verse 32: if none of this profits us, if we deny ourselves for nothing, if the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. Join the hedonists. Drink the muddy water. Drink whatever you want. As much as you want. There's no point to any of this anyway. We have no past. We have no future. We have no present. We have no hope, if the dead are not raised.

But of course, all of this is based on the false belief that there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul knew it was false. The external evidence for Christ's resurrection is clear, the biblical evidence for the resurrection is clear, and the internal evidence is equally significant. The witness of the Holy Spirit, who teaches us that these things are true. He confirms it within us, that we have certainty of hope in the resurrection to come.

It is true. How do you know it? Well, I know it because the Scriptures teach it, and I have good support for that. It's a rational, reasonable belief. But beyond that, and equally important is the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit and every believer that yes, it's true, and yes, you are a child of God. Paul says this is true in verse 20 where he again affirms that truth, that great truth. "But now Christ has been raised." Or as the New International version translate it, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

Paul not only shows that Christ's resurrection stands against the idea that there's no resurrection from the dead. If the dead aren't raised, then Christ wasn't raised, but Christ was raised, therefore the dead will be raised. That's his thinking. But this not only shows that; this shows that His resurrection guarantees, guarantees the believer's resurrection. He's the first fruits. His resurrection is the pledge and proof of our resurrection. And with that, all of the gloomy inferences that Paul has

listed here, all of these five inferences are erased, and we of all men, are not most miserable, not most to be pitied. We are the most blessed of this world.

In fact, all of those conclusions that Paul now denies reminds us all the more clearly, all the more directly of what we have escaped in Christ, how great our blessings are. We have hope. The world doesn't have hope. It may think it does, but it doesn't. We have hope. It's real hope. We have a glorious future. We have a secure present. We have a clean past. And the resurrection is the proof of it. The apostles are not false. The Bible is true. The promises of God are sure. They cannot fail. And most importantly, the gospel is genuine. Christ is alive, a living Savior, declared, Paul wrote at the very beginning of the Book of Romans, in Romans chapter 1 verse 4, declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. We have a Savior who's powerful and watching over us. So, what this means is that the believer has a clean past, as I said, for the believer of the past is something that's real. Forgiveness is not an illusion. Our sins are forgiven at the moment of faith, so our faith is not in vain. And that gives both hope for the future and peace in the present. We are now at peace with God.

He's not our judge; He's our Father. We are at peace with Him. We are in His family. We are His children, His sons. We have a glorious inheritance. We are spiritually clean, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, reconciled with God, fully accepted by Him. No amount of good works or religious exercise could accomplish that. Nothing we could do could erase the past. Our sins are indelible stains that would still condemn us, if it were not for Christ.

But Christ did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He washed us with His blood. He paid for all our sins. Now all is forgiven, and forgotten. That is your position in Christ, and that is well worth contemplating. You don't have to do good things in order to gain God's approval. When we believed in Him, we weren't partially accepted by Him. We weren't mostly accepted by Him and left in a position where we need to just crank it up and do more things, and get more spiritual and more active to gain His approval every day in order to gain some of His blessings. We have His full and complete approval at the moment of faith. There's nothing more you and I can do to gain God's approval than what we have at the moment of faith and the moment of salvation, because we're declared righteous in His sight and we're fully accepted by Him.

Oh, does that mean I can then sort of drift and do whatever I want because I've got this security? No, not at all. A person that does that indicates, gives strong evidence that he or she doesn't have that security, doesn't have that life at all. It's because we have that and we have this magnificent position that we want to serve Him.

So, that's our position. Now, presently, before God, forgiven and accepted by Him. What a blessing that is for the guilty conscience. The debt's been paid. Nothing more for us to do but rejoice in the gift of life that Christ has obtained for us and given us, and we've received through faith alone, and then go out and live in daily obedience. Further, because our past is really grounded in Christ's atonement, our future is certain, and it is a future beyond our present comprehension. There's no way we can explain heaven or the kingdom to come, or the world to come. It's beyond our comprehension. It's that great, that glorious. But among the blessings, there will be fellowship. We will meet again, all those who have preceded us. They have not perished. What a great fact that is, that death only separates believers for a short time. I can preach that at funerals. I can preach that at memorial services. Give that hope, which is a genuine hope, there will be a great reunion with the innumerable multitude of saints, and with Christ, and with Christ essentially.

You want to know what heaven is? It's Christ. Now, if that doesn't move you, then that says more about you than about heaven and how you need to know Him, how I need to know Him, how we need to grow closer to Him because He's our savior, and He loves you personally, and He reached down, as it were, and saved You. He went through a horrible death, not just the pain of the cross, as painful and shameful as that was. He bore hell in your behalf. It's as though you were about to go to some horrible death, burning at the stake or buried alive, and He said, "No, I'll go in your place." What would you think of a man who did that for you? Christ did something infinitely more, and we'll be able to see Him. We'll be with Him. That's heaven. That's our destiny. A future reunion and a future resurrection when we will inherit the kingdom to come and ultimately enter the new heavens and the new earth for eternity. Eternity. World without end. Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of that. It's the seal on our future life and glory.

So, far from being most miserable, we are most blessed and should be most joyful. The resurrection should affect the way we live each day, and give us courage

in this life to face all of the challenges of life, and to serve Christ faithful in the midst of them. Whatever kind of challenges they are.

Men have gone into difficult places and undertaken great challenges with far less reason for courage, and far less incentive than we have. They have risked their lives for mere temporal gain and adventure. In the 19th century, the British explorer, John Franklin, disappeared, leading an expedition into the Arctic. Search parties were sent out to find him and the group, and they never found him or any of them. What they did find was one plate, in that whole, bleak expanse of the Arctic region. They found one plate. And on that plate was his Latin motto, inscribed, which translated is: "Difficulties do not terrify." I don't know what the source of Franklin's courage was, but of all men, that should be our motto. "Difficulties do not terrify," because Christ has already entered the bleakest expanse of all, the grave, and returned victorious. And so, we too are victorious. We're in Christ. The victory that He won is our victory. He won it for us. We've already triumphed over death.

Paul speaks of that at the end of the chapter with the question: "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" It's been removed by Christ. Death for us is an enemy without a weapon, and we need never fear it. That's motivation to live a brave life, a faithful life, a joyful life. Paul did. In difficult circumstances. He traveled the ancient world preaching the gospel, suffering for Christ's sake. And when he landed in prison, he was able to rejoice. He was able to sing in that Philippian jail. He and Silas, till midnight.

The Christian life is not without difficulties. I don't want to seem to be suggesting that. There are crushing experiences in life, and for the Christian as well. We suffer sickness, and it can be chronic. We suffer sorrow, the loss of friends and loved ones. We go through all kinds of hardships in this life, and some of them shake us to the very foundation. But we don't suffer any of them without hope.

So, does the resurrection matter? It matters a great deal. It's the guarantee that we have a past, a present, and a future. It's the guarantee that our past is fixed, that our present is secure, and that our future is certain. It gives the assurance. It is the proof that we are not of all men most to be pitied. That's how Paul answers the response of "so what" to the declaration that Christ is risen. Everything is based on it.

But, the answer to the question that began our study leads to another question, on which we will end. It was a question asked in a conversation that Mr. Spurgeon

recounted between an unbeliever and a Christian. An unbeliever once said to a Christian: "What will become of you, supposing there is no heaven?" The Christian answered, "Well, I like to have two strings to my bow. If there's no hereafter, I am as well off as you are. If there be a hereafter, I am infinitely better off. But where are you?" Where are you? And that's the question on which we close. Where are you? Where are you in relation to eternity? Where are you in relation to Jesus Christ? Do you believe in Him as God's Son, the eternal Son of God who left the glory of heaven, became a man, dwelt among us, and offered Himself up on the cross, was crucified according to the Scriptures, buried and raised on the third day according to the Scriptures? Do you believe in the one who is alive, the resurrected Christ? If you do, you have Him as the savior. He's yours. You're His. You have hope for all eternity. But if you have not believed in Him, then you are without hope. That's what Paul tells us.

Without Christ, without hope, that need not be. Realize that you're a sinner in need of the Savior. Trust in Jesus Christ. He receives all who do. He opens wide His arms all day long to the sinner. Come to Him. He'll receive you, give you new life, give you forgiveness, and the hope of eternal life, the hope of the resurrection to come. May God bless you with that, and each of us with an understanding of what we as believers have and the hope that's ours now and forever. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us, and we thank You for this great test of Scripture in which Paul methodically leads these Corinthians through their error, and shows them the terrible implications of that false idea. No doubt, we have false ideas too, that we're not completely correct in everything that we believe. Show us the error and correct us. But Lord, this is not an error, to believe in the resurrection. This is not an error to hope in our own resurrection someday. It is certain. It's what the Scriptures teach. It's a reasonable belief, one supported through the testimonial of many people. Most importantly, through the confirming testimony of the Holy Spirit –