

# Instant Immortality

*1 Corinthians*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

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If you would please turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and we are going to read verses 50 through 58.

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass 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, and 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 brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.<sup>1</sup>

Before we pray together, can you hear me ok in the back or does this sound faint? Because brother Mark sounded faint to me. It is good? All right.

Let's bow together for prayer.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

*Father in heaven, we gather here tonight, Lord, and our very presence together is a confession on our part, if we are here for the right reason and with the right heart, Lord, it is our confession that you are our God and we are your people. We come together to encourage each other and all the more as we see the day of our Savior approaching. We come together to give you worship in song and we come together to receive the encouragement of the Scriptures. Lord, we come together to be instructed by you where we need it tonight, Lord, to be corrected by you. And, Lord, we also come to be equipped and fortified so that we can live lives by your grace and by your Spirit that would bring you glory and would tell the truth about your Son and the truth about the gospel, the truth about your saving work in the lives of sinners. We thank you for the life that we have in Christ, Lord. We thank you for the forgiveness that we know because of the death of our Savior. We thank you for the right standing before you that we have because he has been raised from the dead and his righteousness has been given to us as a gift from you. We rejoice, Lord, in being your people and we thank you for what you have designed for this next hour of study. We pray that you would speak to our hearts, that you would change our lives, Lord, as a result of what we hear. We will thank you for your work in this place in our lives. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

Well, tonight we come to the end of Paul's instruction about the future resurrection of believers and if you have been with us in this 15<sup>th</sup> chapter then you know that we have, so far, looked at the necessity of the resurrection of the saints. We have looked at the certainty of it. It is not only necessary, it is going to come to pass. We have looked on as Paul gave us various analogies to help us understand it. And in so doing he has dealt with any kind of skepticism toward the resurrection. He has said, in effect, just because you can't envision how it would happen doesn't mean that it won't. In fact, he says, "Just look at seed when it is sown into the ground how it dies and from it comes the same life, but now with a different form, the same life, but now with a different body."

In some way the resurrection can be compared to that.

So we have seen the necessity of it, the certainty of it, somewhat of a description of it. And now tonight in verses 50 through 58 he declares the mystery of it. He declares a mystery, verse 51.

"Behold! I tell you a mystery."<sup>2</sup>

There is a sense in which the resurrection, the future resurrection of God's people is a mystery. And as he declares that mystery he really answers a final question for us. What about those people who will be alive when Jesus comes for his Church?

I know for us sitting here tonight that may not be something that we have not heard about before. In fact, I would venture to say that most of us are very familiar with the idea of what happens to believers when Jesus returns, but you have to remember, that when Paul writes this to the Corinthians, to them it was something they really lacked understanding of. In fact, it may be something they hadn't heard much about at all.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51.

And so I would encourage us tonight to hear this with fresh ears. I mean, I would also venture to say we probably don't think about the resurrection as much as we should. We don't live our lives each day in light of our future as much as we should.

And so tonight as we look at this mystery in verses 50 through 58, let's think about our future. We haven't seen it yet. We don't know all together what it is going to be like, but we know this, that when we see Jesus we are going to be like him.

What does Paul tell us here? What does the Holy Spirit tell us through Paul about our future?

The first thing I want you to see with me is this. We can describe it this way, the bedrock truth or just sort of the bottom line truth that he is going to get at in all eight of these verses. But he states it up front in verse 50.

“I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”<sup>3</sup>

That is the bedrock truth that he is declaring here, something that the Corinthians need to understand. Remember, as we have studied this letter one of the things they suffer from is what you could refer to as an over realized eschatology which is to say they don't really get that tension between the now, but the not yet. Their emphasis was really on the now. We are wise now. We are spiritual now. We have everything we could ever want now. And what they were under estimating is the fact that though we are truly redeemed, truly have been set free, have all that are ours in Christ Jesus, there is a glorious future awaiting us and there is a whole lot of growth that is to take place between now and our future. We are not yet like our Savior in every way.

And so they needed to realize something. No, there is something out there in front of us that is glorious and necessary and you are not there yet. And the way you are right now—and this is what he is declaring—the way we are right now, that is what he means by flesh and blood, our natural existence right now, the way we are right now is not fit for our future existence.

When you think about our heavenly state, when you think about our future condition, when you think about inheriting the kingdom of God, realize this. Flesh and blood cannot inherit it. The way we are right now is not fit for our forever future.

He puts it this way.

“... nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:50.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Everything about this existence right now in this fallen world, the nature we have inherited from Adam since the fall there is nothing about this that is forever. This is all perishable in terms of the physical nature that we have. It is dying. Death is at work in these bodies. We are subject to aging. We are subject to disease. We are subject to weakness and we are subject to death.

But the future that God has destined for us is not subject to any of that. It is going to be an imperishable existence, something we can't even fathom, something we can't even relate to, a world in which nothing is dying, a world in which there is nothing that is decaying, there is nothing subject to death. This is our future. And the way we are now isn't fit for that.

So what will this mean? Well, here is the mystery. That is the bedrock truth. Now he gets to the mystery in this truth.

Verse 51.

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.<sup>5</sup>

Paul, you say we are not fit for our forever future.

That is right.

Well, how is God going to make us fit for it?

Well, he is going to change us. He is going to change us.

And, by the way, he is going to change all of us. Those who die before the Lord Jesus returns they are going to be changed. That is what he says in verse 52.

“For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable.”<sup>6</sup>

But not only—and this is the mystery—not only will those who have been put their body has been put in the grave, not only will there be this resurrection of dead ones, but also those who are alive when this last trumpet sounds, they will be changed, too. I

“I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:52.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51.

That is we are not going to all die, Paul says. Not every believer will die before Jesus returns.

“But we shall all be changed.”<sup>8</sup>

Well, how will the living be changed?

Verse 52.

“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 shall be changed.”<sup>9</sup>

Living and dead alike changed in a moment, in an instant.

When he says “the last trumpet” it is going to happen. He tells us when it is going to happen, doesn’t he, verse 52, “at the last trumpet”?

He doesn’t give any explanation for that here in 1 Corinthians, but we do have explanation for it somewhere else. Look over to 1 Thessalonians chapter four. And he describes this miracle there, 1 Thessalonians chapter four and look at verse 15.

We will actually begin reading at verse 13.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.<sup>10</sup>

When is this last trumpet?

Look back at 1 Corinthians 15. When is this last trumpet? It is when Jesus comes again for his Church.

And when Christ comes again for us, that is when this transformation is going to take place. That is when the dead in Christ will be raised from the grave and those who are

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:52.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

alive and believers will be caught up in the air to meet the Lord and we will be changed in that instant and forever be with the Lord. It is called the rapture. That is what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 15.

Notice he does emphasize the fact that this change will be instantaneous.

Verse 52 he says:

“In a moment.”<sup>11</sup>

And that particular Greek word literally means uncut. If you think about boiling something down to its smallest possible element so you can't cut it, uncut or you could say in our way of speaking a split second. In a split second.

He goes on to say:

“In the twinkling of an eye.”<sup>12</sup>

And that particular word just spoke of any rapid movement, lights, your eyes moving rapidly. In the blink of an eye, we could say, in a split second, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet there will be this change.

He tells us not only it will be when Christ returns, comparing it with 1 Thessalonians four and it will be instantaneous. He also tells us it is going to be profound. A profound change will occur, because he tells us in verse 53 what is going to happen is this perishable body will become imperishable. This mortal body, as though we are putting on a new set of clothes, this mortal body will, in an instant, become immortal.

That which now is subject to, as we have said, weakness and sickness and all of the rest, weariness and death, these bodies will be changed in that instant into bodies that are, as we read earlier in 1 Corinthians 15, that are strong, that are not subject to weakness and illness and death. Immortal, imperishable, physically. This is what we are going to become.

You know, we break it down for the purpose of studying it. Remember, they just read it as a letter. So read what we have just read in light of what he says beginning with verse 42. He says:

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 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.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:52.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:42-44.

That doesn't mean immaterial. It means a body fit for our new spiritual existence, a new realm, a new existence.

Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.<sup>14</sup>

And then he gives us this word of assurance.

"Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."<sup>15</sup>

So even though we can't fully conceive of it, if you want to know what your new body is going to be like, just look at Jesus post resurrection and you get some idea.

He was recognizable, but ten at times he wasn't so recognizable. He could appear in a room without walking through a door. He wasn't subject to the same kinds of limitations we are now. Yet his body was so real he said, "Reach out your hands, touch, feel. Give me some food. I will eat it right in front of you."

He was able to eat and drink. He was able to be touched and felt. His body was real, but it was different. Human and yet fit for everlasting life.

That is what our body is going to be like and it is going to happen when Jesus comes and it is going to happen in an instant.

Notice what else this represents.

Verse 54 down to verse 57 we have seen the bedrock truth. We have seen the mystery of it that he has just declared. The thing that we notice is the finality and the victory of the truth that he is describing. This truth represents something final. And it represents something glorious, beautiful, a final victory.

Verse 54.

"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying."<sup>16</sup>

I love that. He saying all of Bible history has been looking forward to the day we are talking about. There are promises we find in the Old Testament that still have not been

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:45-48.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:49.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:54.

fulfilled so that when this day arrives that we are talking about here, he says, “Then it will come to pass It will have been fulfilled what is written.”

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”<sup>17</sup>

Stop right there. That is Isaiah chapter 25 verse eight. Isaiah 25:8 says this.

“He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.”<sup>18</sup>

It is going to happen. God says so.

And Paul says here, “When this day occurs that will have come to pass. What God promised will have been fulfilled.”

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”<sup>19</sup>

We could even say it this way in light of the context here. Death is swallowed up by resurrection. Death is done away with by virtue of resurrection, resurrection power that even transforms those who are alive at the time that Jesus comes.

Next statement.

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”<sup>20</sup>

Do you know what that is? That is a taunt. That is a taunt. He says, “In that day we are going to be able to taunt death.:

Where is your victory, death? Right? It is a great enemy, isn't it? It is the last enemy to be conquered.

And when that day comes we will be able to taunt that enemy that has brought so much heartache, so many tears, so much sadness, so much sense of loss. And in that day, the day of the resurrection, the day of the transformation of believer's bodies we will be able to say, “Where is your victory, death?”

Notice:

“Where is your sting?”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Isaiah 25:8.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:54.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



Where is he quoting from? Hosea chapter 13 verse 14. But here is something very interesting, because when you read Hosea—and we will get there, you know, soon—when you read Hosea 13:14 in its context it doesn't mean what Paul is saying there.

The Holy Spirit takes the words of Hosea 13:14 and in this context transforms their meaning for us.

Listen to Hosea 13:14. God says this.

“Shall I ransom them from the power of Shell? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.”<sup>22</sup>

What is God doing in Hosea 13:14? He is calling forth death. He is saying, “Where are your thorns? Where is your sting? I have no compassion for you. Judge them.”

That is what he is saying in Hosea 13:14. But God is saying that on this day it is not going to be a day of judgment. It is going to be the day where his deliverance of us is demonstrated and there we will be able to taunt death.

“Death where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?”<sup>23</sup>

You don't have anything for us anymore.

You want to know why? Because that judgment that is being called down by God in Hosea 13:14 has already been experienced by someone on our behalf, hasn't it? The Lord Jesus took our judgment upon himself on the cross, on the tree. There is none left for us. There is no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus. So that what is going to be demonstrated on this day is the fact that the Lord has delivered us. Death has no victory in our case. It has no sting.

Now if you have ever been at a funeral service and you have heard this passage read—and I have read it and others have—the next statement always seems to sort of almost interrupt the thought. I mean, you would almost like of the passage to stop right here.

“Death, where is your victory? Death where is your sting?”<sup>24</sup>

We declare victory. It is over. End of statement.

But that is not where he stops. Verse 56. He says:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hosea 13:14.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

What does that mean?

“O death, where is your sting?”<sup>26</sup>

We tend to sometimes we psychologize the writers of Scripture and when we do that we have missed the boat. We think of the sting of death sort of as an emotional thing. It hurts.

Well, death does hurt, but that is not what he means by the sting of death.

What Paul is saying, as the next verse makes very clear, the poison that is in death is sin. That is what he means. The sting, verse 56, the sting of death is what? Sin. That is the sting of death. It is sin. That is what brought death into human existence. Sin.

In fact, the only way to get rid of death is the sin problem had to be dealt with. So that on this day he is talking about this day of glorious transformation, not only will death have been completely conquered, but that which gives it its power which brought it into existence will have been dealt with. Sin, it will be demonstrated in such a public fashion that sin has been conquered in our case.

And notice something else that will have been finally answered, verse 56.

“The power of sin is the law.”<sup>27</sup>

It is the law.

That is, what ... that which demonstrates that sin is really sinful and at the same time convicts of sin and if I could say it this way, increases sin, is the law.

Say, wait a minute. Whoa. Whoa. Wait a second, Richard. What do you mean increases sin?

Well, understand me clearly. I am going to read a passage in a moment, but understand what I am saying to you. There is nothing wrong with the law of God. The law of God is perfect. But there is something wrong with us. It is called sin. And because there is something wrong with us, the law that is good it is good, but the only power the law has because of our nature is to show us that we are sinners and—here is how it increases sin—when God tells us through his law what the standard is, how does a sinful nature respond to that? When God says, “By the way, this is wrong and don’t step across that line?” What does the sinful nature want to do?

Step across the line. And in that way it increases sinning.

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:56-57.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:56.

So that not only did sin have to be dealt with, but that which condemns sin, that which exposes sin for what it is, that which calls upon us to obey God, the law of God had to be answered to in order for us to be delivered.

Romans 7:7 Paul writes this.

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.<sup>28</sup>

What does he mean by that? He means, you know what? I felt like a living man. I felt ok with myself until I came face to face with the law of God and it slew me. It killed me. It showed me for who I really am.

Verse 12.

So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.<sup>29</sup>

Here is how we are born into this world. We are born sinners by nature. And then we are confronted with the law of God and the law of God exposes us as sinners and calls us to righteousness, but the only power it has is to condemn us. It cannot transform us. So that it actually produces in those confronted by it increased sinning. And the only way to be saved is for the condemnation of the law towards us for our sin to be answered in full that someone would take upon himself the full condemnation of the law for our sins in our stead, pay for our sins and then transform us so that now we have a new nature that delights after the law of God in our inner man.

That is what salvation is. That is what Jesus has done for us.

In fact, notice—and this is where he gets into the now but not yet—notice there is a sense in which even though we are not at the resurrection day, we have already experienced a measure of this victory.

Verse 57. Do you notice he moves into the present?

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<sup>28</sup> Romans 7:7-9.

<sup>29</sup> Romans 7:12-13.

“But thanks be to God...”<sup>30</sup>

Not who will give us, but who gives us right now.

“...the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>31</sup>

Believer, have your sins already been forgiven? What is the answer? Yes. Has the law’s condemnation upon you already been removed? Has Jesus answered the law’s claims upon us? Yes, through his death on the cross. Have we already been set free from slavery to sin and Satan? Have we been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into God’s own kingdom of darkness into God’s own kingdom spiritually already? Yes.

When is all of this going to be publicly, gloriously, unmistakably accounted, declared and demonstrated? At the day when Jesus come and all the dead in Christ are raised incorruptible and all those live go from mortal to immortal in an instant.

Which gets to something else we see here in verse 57. What is going to happen on that day is our present freedom will be joined to ultimate freedom.

What we know now in the spiritual realm, we will know in every realm, in the physical realm. Right now we know what it is to be free in terms of forgiveness and free in terms of a new nature and free in terms of a desire to please God. But don’t we have to struggle with the flesh every day? And don’t we still know what indwelling sin is? And don’t we still know what it is to stumble in so many ways and to fail and to fall in so many ways?

But I give you good news tonight. There is a glorious day coming when your physical nature will match your spiritual nature. And the struggle will be over. Not only will death have been swallowed up, but so will have been sin and the law.

Freedom, ultimate freedom. It is a God given victory. It is a christocentric victory. Never forget that, verse 57. God gives us the victory, but how does he do it? Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us live in such a way that we always magnify our Savior. It is only in Christ Jesus that we have this victory. And, church, something that we have to be increasingly clear about in the day and age we are living in is we don’t just believe in God generic, do we?

We believe in the one true and living God who can only be known through his Son Jesus Christ. And the only way to know God, the only way to come to God, is through his Son Jesus Christ. He is the only way, the only truth, the only life. If you don’t know Christ, you don’t know God. And the victory that is being declared here is a victory that is only known through the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is our victory.

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<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:57.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

You notice he emphasizes that in verse 57.

“...who gives us the victory...”<sup>32</sup>

And there is a sense in which it is already being demonstrated in the lives of the children of God as we are living lives that bring glory to God, as we are progressively being transformed into the image of Jesus. The victory is already, in a sense, being declared in our case, but then on the resurrection day it will be ultimately declared and made plain.

So the bedrock truth is you can't go into heaven like you are. The mystery of it is on the day when the dead are raised there will be living people who are transformed at the same time. It is going to be instantaneous. It is going to be profound. And what is going to happen is an ultimate victory is going to be declared and freedom is going to be experienced in a way never experienced before. And he wraps up this section by telling us that all of those truths present to us the Church a mandate to stop and ask tonight: Do you realize that this presents you with a mandate? That what we have just seen imparts to us a responsibility that we can't just cast off.

Paul always does this. We must always do this. Listen. Theology always finds expression in life choices. If what you say you believe doesn't change the way you live, you need to change the way you believe. In other words, you are not really believing.

And Paul has just finished this doctrinal section, but he doesn't stop and say, “There it is. Close your notebooks. Go home.”

He says, “Now, let me tell you how this matters.”

Next verse. Verse 58.

“Therefore, my beloved brothers...”<sup>33</sup>

What must we be? What should we be?

“...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”<sup>34</sup>

Three things he tells us to do. Remain firm in the gospel. I think that is what he means when he says to be steadfast and immovable. I think he is talking about what he has been declaring throughout this entire chapter. They are being presented with false doctrine. Some of them have actually said they don't believe in a future resurrection of believers. And Paul is correcting them here and then he is saying, “Look. Don't be moved away.”

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:58.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Away from what?

Away from the truth, away from the gospel.

As we have said many times, I will say it again tonight. We live our lives out of the gospel. We never move away from the gospel. The Christian life is the application of gospel reality. And he is saying, "You stay firm there. You remain steadfast. Don't let anyone move you away from the truth you have been presented with."

But you don't just stand still in something. You stand firm in the gospel, but at the same time there is this abounding thing that is to be going on. It represents growth and increase and overflow.

What are you to be abounding in? He says, "Always, always, always." Not seasonally... Not seasonally, but always abounding in the work of the Lord.

You believe in the resurrection? What does your work say you believe in?

You see, here is the mandate. If you believe that this is perishable and what we are headed for is imperishable, then you and I ought to be overflowing with works that say we are living in light of heaven.

Does our life say that? Then I am not living for the now.

Now I am not denying the reality of the now and we have to live in the now, but I am living in the now in light of the forever future that God has promised me so that there is work that is abounding in our lives that reflects that we will not be moved away from the gospel.

If you are really engaged in the right works, realize it is going to be rooted in the gospel. See, you are unmoved there, but you are moving in another realm. You are working for the Lord.

And then he says there is a third thing that ought to result from this belief. You ought to know something. You ought to know something. You have got to have a firm faith in something.

Here is what you are to know, that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. Your work, this a bounding work, rooted in the gospel, brethren, it is not fruitless. It is not wasted. It is not vain. It is not empty. But to get what he is saying, don't forget those powerful three words in the Lord. Knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

I say to you tonight, your labor will not always look fruitful in the human realm. It won't. This is why we get discouraged. This is why we have to be exhorted not to grow weary in well doing.

Why do you even need that exhortation? Because you get weary and because sometimes... why would he give an exhortation like this? Because sometimes it seems fruitless. It seems vain. You warn. No one listens. You exhort. No one listens. You teach. No one applies it. You try to help. Won't let you help them.

Why do I do this? We do it for the Lord's sake, don't we? We do it for the Lord's sake. And do you know what? In the Lord it is never wasted. And I will tell you something else. It is not wasted in human lives either.

There is a lot more going on than we are ever aware of. I want to encourage our Bible study teachers tonight, especially those working with little children. You may wonder. What is really being accomplished in this third grade class or second grade class.

Friend, you don't know yet what those seeds are going to produce. You have no idea. Working with teenagers, you know, the wonderful thing about teenagers it always seems like they are listening, right? I mean, teenagers are the most responsive people on the face of the earth.

Well, are you wasting your labor? No. I guarantee you on the authority of Scripture it is not wasted. It is not wasted.

Do you have a family member who has gone astray? You tell him the truth. A son or a daughter, brother, sister, maybe even a mom or dad. And for the Lord's sake with the right motive and the right way, you just continue to tell them the truth, but it seems like it is making no impact. I say to you, on the authority of God's Word, brother or sister, don't grow weary. Your labor is not in vain. Not in the Lord.

You see, if you believe in the resurrection it changes your life. That is what he is saying.

The question is: Do we believe it?

Why are these exhortations needed? Because we are tempted not to live according to the gospel. We are tempted not to give ourselves to the work of the Lord. Tempted to believe.

We have an enemy, in fact, trying to convince us that all of this is fruitless. But it is not.

You know, one final thought and then I am going to pray, but I will just give you one practical example of this.

Have you noticed how this world is obsessed with these bodies? How much time, how much energy, how much money is spent in the idea of preserving our youthfulness or our beauty? Have you noticed that?

Do we realize, you know, just think about it in the financial realm for a moment. Isn't it true that it is a foolish thing to make unlimited investment in something that has a limited

lifespan. That is just not good stewardship. And isn't it amazing how people are, in effect, trying to make some kind of unlimited investment in what will have a limited lifespan?

Oh, no doubt, there is a responsibility given to us with these bodies. There is value in exercise. There is value in eating right. But we still need to stop and remind ourselves these are perishable. They are mortal. And I ask you. How much time do you spend on your soul? How many people in a gym, working out two hours a day haven't cracked their Bible all this week?

What all these passages do is they call upon us to get our value system straight. Amen?

Let's bow together for prayer.

*Father in heaven, thank you for the good news that is ours in your Son. Thank you, Lord for the future that is ours not because of anything we have done, certainly not anything we deserve, but just because you have loved us and saved us. I pray that, Lord, you would grant us the wisdom we need to live our lives in light of the resurrection and I pray that our lives would demonstrate our faith in you and the future that you have promised us. And I pray for anyone here tonight who doesn't know you, Lord. They have not trusted in your Son. I pray that even this night they would look to Christ and him alone for a right standing with you. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for our Savior, our King and our Shepherd. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*