

He Saw No Corruption'

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the significance of Christ's resurrection and the importance of incorruptibility, which is a reality that can be possessed by believers through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Scripture: Acts 2:31, Acts 13:36, Romans 2:7, 1 Corinthians 9:25, 1 Corinthians 15:17, 1 Corinthians 15:53, 2 Timothy 1:10, 1 Peter 1:4, 1 Peter 1:23

Topics: "Resurrection Power", "Eternal Inheritance"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the theme of incorruptibility, emphasizing the significance of Christ's resurrection as proof of His eternal incorruptibility, contrasting it with the pervasive corruption in the world due to sin. He highlights the importance of seeking incorruptibility in various aspects of life - personally, mentally, materially, morally, doctrinally, spiritually, commercially, and socially. The sermon delves into the forms of corruption and the glorious promise of believers receiving incorruptible bodies and an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven.

Transcript

Some notes relating to Incorruptibility

The apostle to the Gentiles urged this fact concerning our Lord Jesus Christ upon those who heard him at Antioch: contrasting Christ with the Psalmist he said, "David indeed having in his own generation ministered to the will of God, fell asleep and was added to his fathers and saw corruption." But He whom God raised again "saw no corruption" (Acts 13:36-37). This fact is of fundamental importance for us today, and those who deny the actual physical resurrection of Jesus are committed to the denial of the fulfillment of God's Word given in Psalm 16:9-11; also to the blasphemy that Christ saw corruption; and, as a consequence, to the foretold apostasy from the faith; for it is written, "If Christ be not raised your faith is vain" (1 Cor. 15:17).

So great was the significance attached to the truth contained in this fact that we find the apostle to the Jews also urging it with equal earnestness upon those who listened to him at Jerusalem, enforcing his argument as to the exaltation and enthroning of Jesus by saying, "Neither has He been left in hades nor His flesh seen corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, whereof all we are witnesses" (Acts 2:31-32).

So accustomed are we to the presence of both material and moral corruption in a world like this--however much we shrink from it--that the thought of a body being dead and the flesh seeing no corruption, but

contrariwise being raised from the tomb in life and incorruptibility, seems impossible; but such is the fact and such is the truth as it is in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is now in the heavens in a body which saw no corruption, in a body which is eternally incorruptible--the Firstfruits from among the dead and the pledge that the bodies of all believers will be thus raised also, though in their case they saw corruption.

By the Gospel, proclaimed in all its fullness and meaning since the ascension of Christ to God's right hand, "life and incorruptibility are brought to light" (2 Tim. 1:10). This could not have been said before. Troubled minds may have yearned for such things, especially when they saw what was so dear to them corrupt before their eyes; but now in Christ risen all is eternally secure, and life not death, incorruptibility not corruption, are before us and indeed may actually be possessed by us at any moment, "in the twinkling of an eye," at Christ's coming again. How glorious is this element of the faith of God's elect!

In Romans 2 we read of those who seek incorruptibility, to whom will be rendered eternal life in all its rich blessedness, in contrast to those who are contentious, disobedient to the truth, obeying unrighteousness and working evil, to whom will be rendered wrath, indignation, tribulation and distress. The path and the end of those who seek that which is Divine and glorious is vastly different, as we read, "In patient continuance of good works [they] seek for glory and honour and incorruptibility," and God will render to them "life eternal" (Rom. 2:7) in its fullness. This will of course embrace immortality as well as incorruptibility, when our body of humiliation shall be transformed into conformity to Christ's body of glory (Phil. 3:21), for His is both immortal and incorruptible.

Forms of Corruption

Incorruptibility involves purity, probity, perfection and perpetuity; but corruption is the opposite to this--impurity, putrescence, depravity and vileness mark it. Ever since sin entered into the world through the fall of man, its debasing defilements have been progressing. As early as Genesis 6 it is Divinely recorded, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth" (11:12). Mark, corruption had affected the earth itself, for man had also corrupted God's way. Material as well as moral corruption was present. The varied forms of their defiling developments are multitudinous. In the wake of sin corruption has prospered increasingly; and, sad to say, its willing victims, through lusts of the flesh and of the mind, hasten to spread its appalling influences, being themselves "servants of corruption" as the Scripture says (2 Peter 2:19). When the sons of God appear with our Lord Jesus Christ in glory, honour, and incorruptibility, the creature shall be "delivered from the bondage of corruption"; their set-vice will be the opposite to that of the servants of corruption, bringing the creature into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21). Meanwhile, how awful is the groaning produced by the bondage of corruption!

We will not attempt to follow out the disastrous ramifications of this dreadful evil, but simply point out its main features so that we may the better understand the distinctive glory of incorruptibility secured for us through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and which stands in glorious contrast to the shame and degradation of the former. At least eight forms are patent to every observant eye, and of these Scripture itself speaks, showing their hatefulness in God's holy sight, being obnoxious to both His character and nature. These corruptions are personal, mental, material, moral, doctrinal, spiritual, commercial, and social.

1. Personally--It is humiliating to have to say it, but man himself (the offspring of fallen Adam, the appointed head of the earth) is personally designated in God's Word as "corruptible man" (Rom. 1:23). This is true of each person in Adam's fallen race, and though the body may be in view, specially in this Scripture, it nevertheless is true of man--spirit, soul, and body. How soon it shows itself when death claims the last part!

2. Mentally, too, he is the subject of corruption. Truly some are more affected thus than others, and Scripture singles out a certain class as "men corrupted in mind and destitute of the truth" (1 Tim. 6:5). Even true believers are warned "lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft, so your thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

3. Materially, also, corruption is evident everywhere, in the decay, decomposition, and defilement of various substances. Even the body of a saint, watched over by God in view of the resurrection, is designated as "this corruptible" (1 Cor. 15:53), though surely it shall "put on incorruptibility."

4. Morally, corruption is widespread. Deceitful lusts are so rampant that not only individuals but whole communities are often termed immoral. Lust has so gripped the whole moral state of fallen man that it is thus spoken of in Ephesians 4:22, "The old man which corrupts itself according to the deceitful lusts."

5. Doctrinally, there have been most appalling corruptions. Very early men "turned the truth of God into falsehood" (Rom. 1:25). This is common also today. Many, too, are the corrupt words and teachings which proceed out of men's mouths, but it is written, "If any one corrupt the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (or corrupt, for it is the same word, 1 Cor. 3:17).

6. Spiritually, corruption comes very near to what we have just spoken of, and we are "expressly" warned concerning "deceiving spirits and teachings of demons speaking lies" (1 Tim. 4:1).

7. Commercially, corruption abounds. It did so in Solomon's day when he said, "A bribe blindeth the eyes." It did so in our Lord's day when they made the temple even a den of merchant thieves. It does so today in the trickery of the low and in the rivalries of the high for corruptible crowns of reward.

(8). Socially, there obtain such abounding pollutions that the social evil is everywhere spoken of! The corruptions of all forms of society are heart-rending! Paul wrote of the fornication, uncleanness, and unbridled lust of the first century--of things done in secret darkness and ignorance of God which are shameful even to name--What could be said of this day? Foreseeing all, Scripture says, "Even what they understand by mere nature in these things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them!" (Jude 10). Again in 2 Peter 2:12 their end is foretold. "As natural animals without reason, made to be caught and destroyed, speaking injuriously in things they are ignorant of, shall also perish in their own corruption"! How solemn, too, is that word in the last chapter of the Bible, "The time is near! Let him that does unrighteously do unrighteously still, and let the filthy make himself filthy still."

What unbounded mercy has been granted of God in turning us away from the pathway and end of these forms of corruption to the holy Lover of our souls--to the One who died for our sins and was made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him--to our precious Saviour, our risen Lord--the One who "saw no corruption!" How elevating to the renewed mind, how cheering to the believing heart, how gladdening to our redeemed souls, to gaze upon the One who knew no sin and who did no sin: the One who ever did those things that were pleasing in God's sight, and who is now glorified in heaven, being exalted at God's right hand; knowing also, as through grace we do, that, notwithstanding our share in the

fall of man and his sinfulness, we are now taken into God's favour in His well-beloved Son; and soon, apart from the world's pollutions altogether, we shall be before Him according to His eternal purpose "holy and without blame in love" (Eph. 1:4). What a glorious manifestation that will be of the triumph of God over the corruption of sin.

"Joyful then the wide creation

Rests in undisturbed repose,

Blest in Jesu's full salvation,

Sorrow now nor thralldom knows."

Incorruptibility

Let us therefore take full advantage of the infinite mercy of God, and see to it that His rich grace toward us is not in vain, but by having definitely before our minds the positive realities of our faith, as they are revealed to us in Christ Jesus our Lord, make advance in those things that are incorruptible and therefore eternal. Thus we shall outdistance the things that once held us in bondage, and progress in the ways that are pleasing to our God and Father.

In contrast to the downgrade pursuits of the world, the apostle tells us we were called at the very start "by glory and virtue"; and to those thus called are given the greatest and most precious promises, that through these we might "become partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). We are consequently exhorted not to be negligent now we have escaped, "but for this very reason also, using therewith all diligence, in your faith have also virtue," and those incorruptible things that are according to the Divine nature, for how can we express the excellencies or virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light unless they are first made ours? Unto us who believe belongs the preciousness of Christ--the Stone rejected by Israel's builders and cast away as worthless. His worth is ours. It is incorruptible, and we are to possess this in Him. We have been redeemed by His precious blood from bondage so that we might enter into the abiding riches given to us by grace.

We have said that incorruptibility has come into manifestation since the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that incorruptibility, speaking generally, involves purity, probity, perfection, and perpetuity; for, as we shall see, there is moral as well as material incorruptibility, just as there were both in the opposite, as we have pointed out. The Holy Spirit Himself mentions incorruptibility in the Scriptures in nine different connections. May He who has inspired the writing of these abiding riches enable us to make them our own through faith, so that what He has given to us in the Word may have an abiding place in our hearts.

First of all there is the (1) "incorruptible Seed" (1 Peter 1:23). The perpetuity and durability of this seed is such that it "lives and abides for ever," because it is nothing less than the Word of God. These facts are of great comfort to those who believe, for we are assured that the Word of God which has rooted itself in our hearts is unlike seed which may corrupt: it abides as well as lives for eternity. Moreover, we are distinctly bid, "This is the Word which in the Gospel is preached to you" (v. 24). The very first Divine implantation in our souls is in its very nature living, abiding, and incorruptible. No wonder the Son of God said of those who received Him, "They shall never perish." How can they? Such are born of incorruptible Seed! They

are born of God!

Secondly, we are told in 1 Peter 3:4, what this seed produces. It is some thing which in God's sight is of great price, namely, (2) "the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." In contrast to outward adorning, this beautiful and enduring grace is to enrich "the hidden man of the heart" Those who believe are born of water and of Spirit. The Word of God is operative in such, and "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," we are told. This lovely and eternal ornament results--the meek and quiet spirit which is of such value to God.

Next we have what is of great importance to those who are born again, (3) incorruptible doctrine (Titus 2:7): this is necessary to the spiritual growth and prosperity of those who have been saved by the grace of God. It is essential also to direct our steps aright, and to guide us in those "good works" which we are told to maintain as we walk through this world which has rejected our Lord Jesus Christ, as we follow Him who saw no corruption, and press onward to the glory where He is enthroned.

Then there is that which is true of all those who truly know the Saviour, (4) incorruptible love (Eph. 6:24). The apostle wrote, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption." Just as the incorruptible seed produces the right fruit, so the Word which makes known Divine love produces this also in the hearts of those who believe. It is written, "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Of such it said, "We have known and have believed the love which God has to us." That love has been expressed to us in Christ upon Calvary's tree, and it is commended toward us "in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The incorruptible love for our Lord Jesus Christ which marks all saints is begotten in their hearts by the knowledge of Divine love manifested in Him. Soon He will take the assembly, which He loved and gave Himself for, to be with Him in the Father's house, to share eternal joys in that home of eternal love.

"Then we shall behold His glory and grace,

And heaven shall be found in the light of His face."

To see Him as He is it is necessary for us to be like Him. We are therefore told that the saints will possess in the resurrection (5) incorruptible bodies (1 Cor. 15:53). We have seen that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ saw no corruption, even as Psalm 16 foretold, and as Peter and Paul preached. When our Saviour returns from heaven He will transform our bodies of weakness and humiliation, and fashion them like unto His own body of glory. In immortality and incorruptibility we shall then appear, for when Christ who is our life shall be manifested, then we also shall be manifested with Him in glory. It is indeed a wonderful and stimulating fact--each saint shall possess an incorruptible body, which is also spiritual, immortal, powerful, glorious, heavenly and like Christ's (1 Cor. 15)!

The effect of this marvellous fact will be to energize us to strive for what the apostle called (6) an incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:25). The honoured entrants who contended in the Corinthian games for an earthly prize only had a corruptible crown to win after all: those who have been called by grace into the heavenly race have the high honour of contending for a crown that never fades away, for the Divine approval which will remain for eternity. This may entail much present self denial, endurance, and suffering as the runner urges towards the goal where Christ is; but the Spirit of God and of glory strengthens him, and he can sing on the way--

"What a day that will be when the Saviour appears!

How welcome to those who have shared in His cross!

A crown incorruptible then will be theirs,

A rich compensation for suffering and loss."

When that glorious day appears it will reveal the One who is the true potentate called (7) "The King eternal, incorruptible" (1 Tim. 1:17). To Him who is infinitely worthy is ascribed "honour and glory to the ages of ages." In Him all that is due to Divine majesty and sovereignty shall be for ever maintained. Painful corruptions have been witnessed in this world in regard to kingship; how encouraging and energizing it is when the Spirit fills our gaze with the abiding excellencies of the King who is incorruptible in every sense. Many diadems, shall be honoured with a place upon His royal brow, and all shall be worn in untarnished perfection.

And then how blessed it is to our rejoicing hearts to be reminded by the Holy Spirit that the One whom we worship is (8) "The incorruptible God" (Rom. 1:23). In accord with His own eternally glorious Being He surrounds Himself with those who partake of that which is pure and perfect. He has counselled this in His love and wisdom, and made known to us the immutability of His purpose in Christ as well as the immutability of His confirmatory oath, that by two unchangeable things we might have strong consolation (Heb. 6:18). His word, His promise, His glory, yea, Himself abide incorruptible, and shall result in scenes of eternal splendour and holy love.

Finally, that which the heirs of God shall possess, when they are glorified as Christ's co-heirs, is spoken of by the Spirit as (9) "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). We may well bless our God and Father who has Opened out for us such a bright and blessed hope through the One who saw no corruption, the One He raised from among the dead in life and incorruptibility. Because of this the Spirit speaks of it as "a living hope." All is secured livingly in the Firstborn from among the dead, the pre-eminent One whose glory shall radiate throughout the breadth, length, depth, and height of that heavenly inheritance. Israel's inheritance in the land of promise might be corrupted and defiled, but not this. It is kept for us and we are kept for it by the power of God through faith, but our Lord Jesus Christ shall shine in supreme splendour where all subsists in vitality and incorruptibility, where hosts unnumbered sing the praises of Him who redeemed us by His blood, triumphing over death and the grave; and amidst those glorified myriads He shall be enthroned as they celebrate His worthiness in their unfading and incorruptible inheritance, while they rejoice in the glorious fact still that "He saw no corruption."

"O day, too bright for mortal eyes!

When all the ransomed saints shall rise

To sing His praise in yonder skies--

Called up with Christ to reign."

What a blessed fruition is this resulting from the implanting of God's Word in the hearts of sinners in this world of corruption, the precious outcome of the sowing of the incorruptible seed in the soul; the abiding fruit in the heavenly land of eternal love, where the incorruptible God is all in all, and the Son who became Man is the crown and glory of those who share the riches of that inheritance, still characterized for ever by the ornament, teaching, love, features, and approval which are eternally incorruptible, as they reign for

ever and ever with Him who is the King eternal, incorruptible.

May those who sow the seed today take heart. Their labour is not in vain "in the Lord." A rich, golden harvest for eternity is sure.

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