

Attaining Immortality

by Robert B. Thompson

The sermon explores the significance of resurrection and the pursuit of immortality as the ultimate goal for believers, shifting away from traditional views of heaven.

Duration: 1:08:25

Scripture: 1 Samuel 28:11, 1 Corinthians 15:12-26

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Holy Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the unusual and tragic events happening in the year 2000, emphasizing that God is pruning his orchard and working in mysterious ways. The speaker highlights the importance of obedience and how it leads to experiencing God's goodness and joy. The sermon emphasizes the pursuit of eternal life and immortality, and the need to overcome worldly desires and self-will through following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The speaker also emphasizes the significance of surrendering one's life to Jesus and making him the Lord of one's ambitions and dreams.

Transcript

Lord, through many dangers, toils and snares, we have already come, but you have blessed us, and we appreciate it, Lord. We appreciate it. Thank you that Emily continues to improve, Lord.

Appreciate that. We pray you'll bless every home represented here, Lord, with your presence, that your will be done in each household. Bless those in the children's church and in the nursery, Lord, those that are helping them.

And as we continue, Lord, we need to know what you are saying. We thank you for what you have already said to us this morning, and for your good presence among us. We pray you will continue now, in Jesus' name, amen.

You may be seated. And we will read 1 Corinthians 15, verses 12 through 26. It's a little longer than our usual passage, but it just came to me rather strongly as I was praying this morning.

1 Corinthians 15, verses 12 through 26. And here we go. But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless, and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead, but He did not raise Him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead, so as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive, but each in his own turn, Christ the firstfruits, then when He comes, those who belong to Him, then the end will come when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after He has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power, for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Now, we read in Hebrews in the sixth chapter, it mentions, this is Hebrews 6, 1 and 2, but we'll be mostly on this passage that's up there. It mentions several doctrines, and it refers to these as being elementary doctrines.

I don't know if it's up there or not, but anyway, it's in Hebrews 6, and it mentions water baptism, laying on of hands, and then it comes to two doctrines in Hebrews 6, verses 1 and 2 in it, and we're not familiar with them. In the process of restoration, as God has been restoring doctrine, we got as far as the baptism with the Spirit in this century, but the last two doctrines are, you see, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment, and I want to emphasize that we've spoken a lot about eternal judgment in this church, but I want to talk about the resurrection, if you'll be so kind. So, we're talking about a doctrine now that is being restored to the Christian church, the doctrine of the resurrection.

So, we'll go back now to 1 Corinthians 15. This whole chapter is about the resurrection, and it shows how important it is. Not many doctrines in the Bible have a whole chapter devoted to them.

Now, when I talk about the resurrection, I necessarily have to try to switch your thinking over from heaven. Now, let me explain that carefully, because the concept that we are saved to go to heaven is so venerable, it's so established, that one does not say things lightly, nor do we have any intention of removing the old landmarks. So, our basis for discussion this morning is the Bible, is the Bible.

Whatever it says, from Genesis through Revelation 22, is our doctrine. And when we go against the Bible, then you come and tell me and I'll get myself straightened out. But our final court of appeals is the Bible.

Now you say, why are you stressing that? We all believe that. Because tradition affects our perception, and we can't see what we're looking at. We can't see what we're looking at.

We read this, and I dare say that it was so many words, we all believe Christ rose from the dead, and that someday we'll be resurrected somehow, somewhere, and that's about it. We probably didn't get much past that. So, when I talk about changing our hope, from going to live forever in heaven, to having the resurrection of our body, or as Timothy, Paul and Timothy refers to in Romans as immortality, it may seem like you're losing something, but you are not.

And I'll explain why. When you and I hope to die and go to heaven, what we want is not heaven. It's two things.

We want to be close to Jesus, and we want to be in paradise. We want to be close to Jesus, and we want to be in the paradise that was lost when man sinned. You can't understand, and I'm not going to go into a discussion of the way the term heaven is used in the Hebrew and the Greek, but it is nowhere as pat as we use it.

Neither in the Hebrew nor in the Greek is there a word for sky. Only the word heaven is used. Or, most commonly in the Greek, the heavens.

For example, in the Lord's Prayer, literally in the Greek, it's our Father who are in the heavens. So, the only way you can tell whether the sky is being referred to, or the spirit heaven where God, Christ and the angels and the saints are, is by the context. And you can see that in Revelation 21 where it says, I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

And the newer translations say, I saw a new sky and a new earth. Because it is up to the translator to decide whether the context is referring to the sky, or referring to the heaven where God is. So, you cannot tell from the Greek.

And you cannot tell from the Hebrew. From the Hebrew. For example, in Genesis 1.1 it says, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

And then, a little later in the first chapter it says, And he called the firmament heaven. But then he placed the stars in the firmament, or in the heaven. Well, we know then he's talking about outer space.

So, let me bring you back to what I said. It's very important. Your goal, what you want in your heart, is first of all, to be with Jesus and God.

Isn't that true? I mean, if Jesus and God is not where we're going, we don't want to go there, whether it's heaven or where it is. Is that right? We want Jesus and God. Is that true? The second thing that we want, and we hope for, and we usually picture, is paradise.

Now, the word paradise seems to be somewhat elusive when you trace its antecedents, but it seems to mean a garden. It seems to be a Persian word meaning garden. Well, we were created in a garden.

Man was created in a garden on the earth. That's why we enjoy gardens, Freud notwithstanding. We enjoy gardens because we were created in a garden.

And when we think of heaven, we think of trees and grass and birds and nice clouds in that beautiful garden. We don't think of a metropolis ordinarily. Well, we know the holy city fits in there somewhere, but we hope at least there's parks in it.

What we want is a park. Nobody wants to be on the streets and buildings except to do business. But to enjoy ourselves, we think of nature.

We think of paradise. First, Jesus. There's an old song where Jesus is to his heaven to me, and that's true.

So, for what we're studying this morning about the resurrection, I have to clarify that in your mind. Your goal is not the spirit world. Your goal is not the spirit world.

It so happens that at the present time, God and Jesus in paradise are in the third heaven. According to Paul in 2 Corinthians, he was caught up to paradise to the third heaven. But they did not start there.

You remember God was on earth in Eden. Isn't that what it says? He walked in the garden in the cool of the day. And we find that in Genesis, God was on earth in paradise.

We find in Revelation 21 and 22 that God and the Lamb and the church come down on the new earth. So, our goal is not the spirit realm. Our goal is God and Christ and paradise, the garden, wherever they are.

Is that true? So, you can say without in any way doing violence to your fundamental hope and belief, my heart's desire is to go to paradise. You will be saying the same thing, but you then will move into the scripture. Because the scripture does not teach that heaven is our goal.

If you recall Tuesday night, I know almost everyone here was here on Tuesday night, Revelation 2 verse 7. To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Well, that's what we want. We want to get back to that garden, but above all we want to be where Jesus and God are.

We know that when the Lord comes, he's going to establish his kingdom and rule on the throne of David from Jerusalem. Well, if Jesus is here ruling from the throne of David in Jerusalem, as it says I believe in Luke when it gives the prophecies that were given by John the Baptist and Elizabeth and Mary, somewhere it says that he will give him the throne of his father David. Well, that's on the earth.

That's in the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. We know the Lord is coming and that we're going to rule the nations with a rod of iron. That's on the earth.

Well, if that happens when the Lord comes, then where we want to be is where he is. Is that right? But then we don't even have to worry about it because 1 Thessalonians 4 says when the Lord comes, so shall we ever be with the Lord. Well, now, if the Lord sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem governing the nations with a rod of iron, well, we don't want to be in the spirit realm.

We want to be where Jesus is. Right? That may be all I'm able to preach this morning. I know that is what you call a paradigm shift or a paradigm shift as you prefer.

And I like paradigm shift. It doesn't sound so effective. To think, wow, what I want is not to leave the earth and go into the spirit realm because the Bible doesn't tell us much about it.

There's a sea of glass. There's people around the throne. The sun doesn't shine on them anymore.

But the paradise that we're looking for just does not show up anywhere except on the earth in Isaiah where the wolf and the lamb lie down together and the little child can play with the poisonous snake and not be injured. That's the paradise we're looking for. And that is on the earth in Isaiah 11.

Check it out. So we have here coming as God is moving into a new year and a new century and a new millennium, God is moving us forward from what we have understood. And our guideline is what? Whoever feels a warm spot and prophecies, right? The Bible.

The B-I-B-L-E. That's the book for. So be like those in Berea.

And just because God gives us something different, don't reject it out of hand. Read and see. And then if it's against the scripture, then reject it.

If you don't, you won't ever be open to anything God does past Pentecost. You just shut your mind. That's just like sometimes fundamentalists do with tongues.

It's not for today. Don't mind what's in the Bible. It's not for today.

Well, they just cut themselves out of divine healing and the gifts of the Spirit. So if you're going to get the goodness of God, you've got to be reading your Bible and praying. You cannot go by what you think is true or what you heard was true.

You've got to go back and see what the Bible says. Are we on the same page? Having said that, let me point out to you in this very... ...15, 12 through 26, that it gives you the apostolic viewpoint. And it is very different from our tradition.

Because the doctrine of the resurrection has been lost to us. And in its place, we have a flight to heaven. What we're after, what we want, and I hope I can persuade you of that this morning, is to get our body... Our body will die.

But it's what happens when it's raised that we're pursuing the resurrection. And yet, everyone will be raised, so that presents a problem in logic. If everyone's going to be raised, via John 5.28 and 29, and yet Paul tells us that we have to do certain things to attain the resurrection, then we have a problem in logic.

And the way that it is resolved is this. There are resurrections, and then there are resurrections. That's the way it's resolved.

And so, what you are, and I are, in the pursuit of, is not resurrection per se. Because according to John 5.28 and 29, all that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth. So, there's no attaining.

That's willy-nilly. So, we say there are resurrections, and then there are resurrections. And what we are in pursuit of is the resurrection unto life, or as it says in Romans 1 and 2 Timothy, what we are after is immortality.

That's the meaning of John 3.16. If you want to do a real interesting search on your computer, search the word perish. It's astonishing the number of times that it's used in the New Testament. It's astonishing.

And it always refers to something, your body perishing. It always refers to your body perishing. The tower of Siloam, on whom I fell, don't think that you'll get away if you sin.

So, all shall likewise perish. It's used many times in the New Testament. A term used to speak of the destruction of the body.

Master, save us. So, because of our heavy indoctrination, which originated in the early Christian era, and already, as you can tell, Paul here is saying, what's the matter with some of you? You don't even believe in the resurrection. That's back in the time of Paul.

It was already being contested, and it is the root of Antichrist teaching. Because if you remember in 1 John, he said that Antichrist was the one that does not believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. 1 John.

That's the root of the Antichrist doctrine, is to get away from the fact that Christ came in the flesh and was raised in the flesh and is going to come again in the flesh. The idea is to get the church-minded into the spirit realm. Because Satan wants the earth.

Now, that again may be a paradigm shift in your thinking. A humorous thought came to me. And that is that Satan would love to take the church as it is, with its gossiping and backbiting and all the rest of it, and rapture it up to heaven to get even with Jesus.

That's subtle. No. The first thing that Satan did when God created the earth was to come here.

You remember what it says in Jude, the angels that left their first estate. Because believe it or not, the realm, the material realm that God created is a better realm than the spirit world. And no angel has the incalculable treasure that we have in the human body.

Oh, but would they love to have a human body and be in the earth. And that's why we're so beset around with demons and things that are trying to get us to sin so that they can express themselves through our flesh and somehow gain this wonderful thing that God has created. So, the church in its ignorance of God's plan has been perfectly willing to turn this wonderful earth over to Satan just as long as we can go in the spirit realm.

And you know what Satan says to that? Amen. Get them out of here. That is a paradigm shift, isn't it? Oh, Lord.

I can see it. I can feel it. Well, check it out in the Scripture.

You'll find no emphasis in the Old Testament or the New Testament bringing people to the spirit realm as their eternal destiny. John 3.16 When the rabbi from Nazareth spoke that to people who had no tradition of going into the spirit realm to stay, when he said, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that who so believes in Him should not perish. What do you think they were thinking? What do we think today? Because of our tradition, we think that means we'll not go to hell, but we'll go to heaven in the spirit realm.

But at that time, they had no such tradition. So, they would have thought we're going to gain immortality. And that's exactly what he meant.

So, what is he talking about? The doctrine of the resurrection that we've lost it. Another thing that Satan has done, which is a corollary actually, is to forget the resurrection and accent the ascension. And if you have a friend who has everything, and as a Christian, just say to them, do we have to be resurrected in order to be caught up in the rapture? And see what they say.

They'll say, oh, we have a body in heaven. You know what they're saying? There is no resurrection. Satan fights that, brother Smither, tooth and nail, because he perceives flesh and blood as being his inheritance.

That's how he perceives it. He knows it's much better than the life in heaven floating around there. He knows this is where the action is, and that's why he's here.

Now, I want to put some iron in your blood. I was preaching one time in Iowa. That's beautiful country.

That's corn country there. That's beautiful. And I ran and railed those people.

I said, you're willing to turn over this beautiful town to Satan? Those farmers looking at me. They just got the corn in. They came in one of the services and they're looking at each other.

And I thought, what are they talking about? Well, what the corn was in. The corn was in. Got the corn planted.

I said, you're willing to turn this over to Satan? You're willing to give this? They never think about it that way. That's how we've been snookered. We're ready to give away our body, our environment, the garden, the whole thing to go up where Satan fell from.

So we can do what? We have no idea because it isn't described in the Scripture. Oh, being on the earth is. They shall plant and the children shall be playing in the streets.

Yeah, you can read that in Isaiah. It's 65 or 66. But let's go on now.

And you can tell now that Paul had no consciousness that dying and going to heaven was desirable. In 1 Corinthians 15, 12 through 26, he had no consciousness of such a thing. See now if you can, at least for the moment, try to put yourself in the position of someone who had never heard any Christian preaching and see what you would come up with.

Never heard any Christian preach. No tradition of heaven. Anything.

There is a heaven. Don't mistake me. There is a paradise.

We know that from Paul was caught up. I'm not talking, I'm talking about the difference between the spirit realm. And let me drop something here while I am, where I am.

Let me drop something in your heart. Being resurrected and achieving immortality. Are you ready for this? This has nothing to do with paradise.

It has to do with your state of being. The inference from that is that you could be in paradise without having immortality. So our goal, you're going to get, if God, if God receives you, you're going to be in paradise.

That isn't the issue. The issue is are you going to attain? You have to attain. There is no attaining of paradise.

There is nowhere in the Bible that says we have to attain paradise. But there certainly is about the resurrection. So your goal is to get your body back filled with life.

You say, well, we can't go in our body into the spirit realm. Oh, can't we? What happened to Elijah? What happened to Jesus when he was raised and said, a spirit has not flesh and bone as you see me have. Where is he now? So once you get resurrected, you can be in the spirit realm, you can be on earth, you can be wherever you want to be.

That's what we're after. You can pick your environment. But until you attain life on your body, you cannot be on the earth because it's against the rules.

You say, how many people do you see walking around without a body? It's against the rules. But Jesus can be anywhere. I mean, he can walk through doors.

He can go, I often thought how wonderful it would be to go under the Antarctic ice cap. I know the nuclear subs go under there, but I'd just like to go under there and see what's under there. Curiosity, I guess.

You can do that in a resurrected body, but you can't do anything until you get your body back. You're stuck in the world of spirits. Before I give a lengthy exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15, according to the assured emendations of Dr. Ginsberg, let me point out to you an interesting verse that sometimes the Baptist teachers say never happened, but it did.

It's 1 Samuel 28, verse 11. They say this is a big lie. No it isn't.

It happened just like the Bible says. Remember, boys and girls, the rule is what? You got it. The B-I-B-L-E, that's the book for us.

1 Samuel 28, verse 11. Then the woman asked, Whom shall I bring up for you? She used good English there. Bring up Samuel, he said.

Bring up Samuel. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, Why have you deceived me? You think she really brought up Samuel? If she didn't, how did she find out about Saul? Oh, she did. It's just what the Bible says.

You are Saul. The king said to her, Don't be afraid. What do you see? I see a spirit coming up out of the ground.

What does he look like? An old man wearing a robe. Now that's one for the books. He didn't change.

He didn't get young. And it must have been cold there. An old man wearing a robe.

Samuel. It didn't benefit him at all. Except on one aspect.

When you get that old, you get tired. I'm four years older now than David was when he died. Can you think of that? Now, then Saul knew it was Samuel.

How did he know it was Samuel? The last time he saw him, he was an old man wearing a robe. That's how he knew. And he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.

Poor Saul. He's a perfect example of trying to be a Christian and keeping your own will. I am as Samuel said to Saul.

Now this is very indicative. Why have you disturbed me? Now, several places in the Old Testament it talks about rest. Daniel, in the last chapter, it says you'll enter rest.

And what was I reading about David? I think it says you'll rest with your fathers. The idea of death in the Old Testament is rest. Now, the scholarly tradition says that when Christ rose from the dead and then ascended, when he ascended, he led this world here, Sheol, at least the paradise part of it.

This is sometimes referred to as paradise. There was evidently two divisions of Sheol. One was where Samuel and Abraham would be and the other one was where the wicked were.

Sheol. There is a scholarly tradition that when Christ ascended, he took the inhabitants of the righteous aspect of Sheol up with him. Now, it's based on a saying that originated in Psalm 68 and is repeated in Ephesians 4. He led captivity captive.

And so I'm not going to say that isn't true. We see Moses and Elijah with Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration. And whether that was special or not, I don't know because there's confusion in the Bible

about where Moses was buried.

We know Elijah was never buried. So, whether they were special or not, I do not know. But one thing I do know, in Matthew 27.52, there is something astonishing.

Matthew 27.52. Something astonishing. It's enough to make you really be astonished. Are you ready to be astonished? Pretty near.

Any of the boys ready to be astonished? Some of them look stunned. They're ready to be astonished. It says, the tombs broke open and the bodies... That's right, Sarah.

That's what it says. Jemima, do you believe that? Believe what? I won't do that to you. The bodies of many holy people.

Not their spirits. But their spirits to say, oh yes, we had visions of this one that died and that one that died. But the bodies.

How thrilling it must have been to those people to be back in the city of Jerusalem. I see that, and I have no Bible for this, but I see this as a kind of an honor guard to be with Jesus. It doesn't say who they were, but I doubt they were the weakest of the saints of the Old Testament.

Probably many patriarchs and Daniel and others. I don't know, but it's the bodies. That's what's so astonishing.

Then the issue comes up, then did God let them live and then die a natural death? Or did He kill them right then and put them back? Or did they ascend with Jesus? Or did they remain on the earth? The Bible doesn't tell us. But I have a hard time believing that there was anything but good for them from then on. But you do with that as you will because I have no scripture to say I just kind of think they were an honor guard.

So Jesus, who is a king, always would have a retinue with Him. And it wouldn't be angels, it would be His mighty men. So, maybe so.

Maybe so. Now, we're back to 1 Corinthians 15.12. All this is to try to get your pure mind to see the possibilities in immortality. The realm that it gives you.

All of heaven. All of the earth. All of paradise.

It gives you everything. You're alive! You're alive! Forever! Should not perish. Well, they would think He was talking about the body.

That's how the term was used in the four Gospels. Claim it! Don't give your earth and your body to the devil. Claim it! Fight for it! It's an enemy.

And all of Christ's enemies shall be put under His feet. And the last enemy is death. That's what the Gospel is about, people.

That comes out a Gideon's army. A Gideon's army brought down to 300. A Gideon's army who through Jesus Christ will live the life until Christ can put down death.

I'm not talking about now being ready to be resurrected. You have to attain it, as Paul says. Monumentally practical.

Because in the traditional teaching that salvation is something by forgiveness in which you go to the spirit realm. Then all you can do is wait and hope you don't blow the program. But if your goal is to be ready to attain the inward resurrection to prepare you for the bodily resurrection when the Lord comes, you have to attain it today, this Sunday in February.

You have to be putting to death the deeds of your body that you may attain life in your inward nature. You can't live in the flesh. Romans 8.13 If you live after the flesh, you shall die.

In Paul's thinking, that's talking about the body. Calling for the redemption of my body. My body.

That's the apostolic being led by the spirit. We're in an intermediate state. We're out from the severest of the... Lay hold... And it's talking about... I didn't take a thing away from you.

I didn't take paradise away from you. You have that. But what you want is so that you can enjoy paradise is your body.

And it is an enemy. We have to... We overcome death in our nature by following the spirit as he leads us to put to death our worldliness, our lust, and our self-will. And that has to be done every day.

There is no time to lose. We see that in this century, in this year already, how many people have died. Some of them died with no explanation.

They're fine going to bed, and in the morning they're dead in their bed. I mean, crazy things are happening in January and February of 2000. Crazy things.

Things we haven't seen. We've been here 24 years. We haven't seen anything like it.

What is God doing? He's pruning His orchard. He's getting it through. And those that are ready to come up like Brian, He takes them, and others that He knows will never be ready and have no intention of being ready, He takes them too, and they go.

And if God has privileged you to live in this most interesting and exciting of all periods of time, it is so you will move past Pentecost and pray, hallelujah, while I says amen. Now, see, they weren't saying there was no blood atonement. They weren't speaking in tongues.

They were saying there is no resurrection. Because that is what the Gospel is. And not as a spirit.

Jesus said a spirit has not flesh and bone that you see Me have. It's the flesh and bone that we are after. The blood will go because the blood is corrupt.

But it's the flesh and bone is what you are. The blood is just the life. And God's going to give you a better kind of life.

Thank God. Thank God for that. Now, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

See, that's what Satan was after. It was all spiritual. See, that's what Gnosticism teaches, that it was all spiritual.

His resurrection was spiritual. Everything was spiritual. Spiritual.

And if Christ has, and there isn't a person in this house, if they portrayed it on the television, what you want to see is what works with your body. Everything is on the bod. Think about it.

When you drive home today, think how much you worry about your spirit. You worry about whether your mother is going to buy you a cheeseburger or not. You're not worried about your spirit.

Bobby, are you sitting there worried about your spirit? No. If He wanted us to be spirits, we would have been created angels. Spend the rest of our time in heaven and wishing we were on the earth where the people are having a wonderful time with the Lord.

Alright, now, if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. Everything hinges on the resurrection. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God.

For we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead, but He did not raise Him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.

You are still in your sins. So, Calvary wasn't enough. It had to be the blood atonement plus the resurrection to save us.

Capisce? Yeah. I said that for Bob. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

You see, there's no... Paul would never think of don't worry because all your friends are in heaven. The idea is the whole thing is the kingdom. It's coming to the earth.

It is the resurrection. That is his viewpoint. See, this whole chapter is about the resurrection.

You're lost. If there's no resurrection, you're lost. Talk about flapping around with the angels.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. Well, we could say that that means that yes, if we don't go to heaven when we die, and there is no heaven, then we're to be pitied. But that's not what the chapter is talking about.

It's not talking about living in heaven. What Paul is saying, if we don't have a hope of immortality, and all we've got is just this life, and then we die, we perish, then it's ungood. We are to be pitied.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. The first fruits. That tells us that our resurrection will be patterned after His.

Now, you can find it. I think it's at the end of John or the end of Luke somewhere. They looked and there was the Lord on the beach.

Oh, I love that. Oh, Lord. And there's the ocean.

The Lord was on the beach cooking fish. How unspiritual. That's tremendously unspiritual.

All he could think about was his stomach. Goodness. That's all he could think about was just getting some fish.

He wanted some fish. What did Peter do when he saw that? The usual heedless thing. He jumped into the water and started to swim.

That's Peter's personality. And there was Jesus there just as calm as you could be. He says, you don't have to cook breakfast.

It's already cooked for you. I tell you, you serve the Lord. A lot of times you find out that you don't have to do so much.

He's already done it for you. Not always. Sometimes you have to work like mad.

But there's other times that He does it for you. So He came and says, will you look at me? Of course, you can imagine how they felt. You know, it was like some weird movie at 11.30 at night.

What is this? It's me. He said, He showed them His hands and feet. Not very spiritual.

Why did He do that? Why did He do that? Wasn't the talk enough? Why did He show them His hands and feet? Because there were nail prints in them. The old man with the robe. Some things don't change.

There were nail prints in them. Those who've seen them say they're still there. Only they shine like precious jewels.

They'll always be known as the reason we were able to attain immortality. Bless His name. Oh, Jesus.

You know, if He hadn't done what He did, we would perish. This life, at the end of it, you go into oblivion. Back into the dust.

But because of those jewels in His feet and His hands, you and I have a shot at immortality. We don't have to be afraid of death. You say, Thank you, Lord.

Hallelujah. That was a young man, too, that went through that. 33 years of age.

Anybody in here 33? Nobody. He's wonderful. This Lord of ours.

But He's the firstfruits. He says, Come on, guys. Follow Me.

He's the firstfruits. A spirit has not flesh and bone as you see. Feel Me.

Look at Me. Here. Eat the honeycomb.

Eat the fish. I'm alive. I'm alive! Can you imagine what that meant to them? They were so despondent.

They had gone back fishing. A big pile. 152 great fish.

They must have stunk to high heaven. And He looks at Peter. He looks at the fish.

He said, Do you love Me more than you do these? Not referring to the other disciples. Christ doesn't set us one against the other. That's hard sometimes to give up your trade to love Jesus, isn't it? Do you really love Me more than you do your vocation? Oh, they couldn't hardly think for Jesus was alive.

I don't think they realized at that time that they someday would be in that position. They would be standing on the shore in immortality. You know, you can be, once you attain immortality, you can be as young as

you want to be.

But you can never be older than you are. There's wonderful things about immortality. It's something to be desired.

Even when you're young. I know the kids all think they'll live forever. You know that I was your age one time.

I know that's incredible. I wasn't nearly as smart or as good looking as most of you. Not nearly.

For since by man, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. And that word is used so much. That's how the Lord... See, that's not... We know that that asleep is not talking about our spirit and soul.

We do not believe in soul sleep. We believe that your spirit and your soul go somewhere to wait for the day of resurrection. But you see, asleep is talking about what? Your body.

Your body. Why do you make this a do and weep? The maid is not dead. Dead is asleep.

Those asleep will God bring with Him. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. Hallelujah! The resurrection, immortality.

For as in Adam, all die. And that's talking about the body. That's what was lost.

That's what they lost. They lost access to the tree of life. If they had eaten that, they'd still be alive in their body.

But each in his own turn. Christ the firstfruits. Then when He comes, those who belong to Him.

So, you can see right there that although we have eternal life in our spirit now, in Bible terms, or in Paul's thinking, we will not be alive until Christ comes. Paradigm shift. Remember, you go by the Bible.

By the Bible. So, let it happen. Mentally.

Where have we been for 2,000 years? Then the end will come when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed, that is that Christ will destroy, is death.

And He's talking here, of course, in the context, physical death. Now, when we skip down in the same chapter to verse 50. 49.

1 Corinthians 15. 49. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

Now, in the context of the chapter, that's talking about today. And the model is easy to understand. If you hope to have the outer likeness, you must first attain the inner likeness.

So what is happening today through the problems and pains of life is God is transforming our inward nature. Because you can't put old wine in new bottles. You can't take a rebellious, self-centered, lustful, inward nature and house it in a body like the Lord Jesus.

How many can see the logic of that? You can't do it. The inward kingdom, the kingdom of God is within you. The inward kingdom has to be established first.

That's why Jesus said in Revelation 2.7, speaking to the church, He spoke then to individuals, He who overcomes. Not the church. He who overcomes.

Will I give the authority to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Now, until you overcome worldliness, that is, finding your security and your life in the world, which mostly is centered on money, until God overcomes that idol, and you find your security and life in Jesus, and until you overcome the passions that terror at you in your flesh and soul, the lust, the jealousy, the rage, the anger, the lying and the gossip and slander and the other things that proceed out of our inward nature, as Jesus said, the things that defile a man, until those are overcome through Him, we do not have authority to eat of the tree of life. And see, eating of the tree of life means that you gain immortality.

That's what it is. That's what was lost. And then the greatest problem of all that has to be overcome, and it's peculiar to now because discipleship coming out of the world and holiness have been preached, but the greatest problem of all is something that we sang about this morning, is turning your life over to Jesus.

See, I mean, we've said it so much that we don't hear it and we don't do it. But it's especially important for religious people, for saved people, that there's a point in your life at which you come to the Lord just like you did for forgiveness of sins and just like you did for the baptism when you come before the Lord and you say, Lord, I want You to be Lord of my life. Not Lord in the sense of the four steps of salvation where you make some kind of a ritual and then you have your ticket.

But where you come before the Lord and you say, like in our song, my hopes, my dreams, my ambitions, I give to You. And that's a step you take, just like you take a step to the forgiveness and you take a step to the baptism. You take a step, a step of faith, where you say, Lord, my hopes, my dreams, my ambitions, I give to You.

And you really lay them at the Master's feet. And then you let Him do that. You make that commitment.

Then He does that. He begins to call for the idols in your life. Things that you think you can't live without.

Let me tell you there's only one thing you can't live without, and that's Jesus. And I've been through it. I'm not talking about something I read in a book in my Walnut Line study out of Adam Clark.

I've lived it. And many of you have too, or are beginning to. Where the Lord calls for those things, it seems like they're your very heart, your very life, without which there's no purpose in living.

Those are idols. Because the only thing that you need to live is Jesus. He is your God.

The Father has made Him your Lord, your God. And you're to worship Him. He is thy Lord.

Psalms 45. He is thy Lord. Worship Him.

And these things, whether they're a vocation or a relationship, or what they are that we think we can't live without, are idols. We don't realize it. But they are.

So you don't have to go looking for them. You don't have to go saying, living in fear and dread that any moment now the Lord's going to ask you to fast seven days a week. The Lord doesn't want you all

depressed and gloomy and woe be gone and wringing your hands.

That's not His idea of love, joy, and peace. Okay? But once you make that verbal commitment and you say, My Lord, I'm going to do what the Psalm says. All my hopes and plans and ambitions I lay at Your feet.

Once you do that, the Lord will take you up on that, but not all at once. So rest easy. And as some of them are hard to let go of, the Lord will work it around until you're willing to let go of them.

And let me tell you, He has ways of doing that. He has ways of doing that. And as He does that, Martha, guess what? You're free.

See, I didn't realize that, but that was because I was clinging to that, Satan had access to me. He could frighten me because I was holding in my subconscious the fear that that would be taken from me. And Satan reads your subconscious like a book.

And he gets after that and he brings that up just, Oh, we're going to lose this. God's going to take this. And so you live in fear.

God doesn't want you living in fear. When you're in the place where the Lord has it all, then guess what? You're free and you have all that the Lord has. Because when you can say all that are mine are yours, and all that is His are yours.

So the Lord isn't leading you toward gloom and doom and taking away all that you ever wanted to live for. That isn't what is happening. He sees your bondages.

And He's very gently, and it may take the next 30, 40 years, so don't get in a sweat that it's going to happen next week, okay? You're not ready, but some are. Some are. And as the Lord begins to call for these things, do yourself a favor.

Be free. Because you cannot eat of the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God until you conquer all the things that come against you. Through Christ, not in yourself.

Through Christ. Make sense? Scriptural? Shall we stand? Father, Father, Father, Father in Heaven. Oh Lord, You're so good.

And Lord, we discover Your goodness when we are obedient. Because we eat the good of the land. And we realize, Lord, what You took from us was causing us to live in dread and fear.

And in Your kindness and Your love, You very gently and graciously remove from us these things that are keeping us from perfect joy. And Lord, we know from the Scripture that we're in the pursuit of life. We're laying hold on life.

We're following the Spirit to attain immortality so that we can live before God and get back this body, this wondrous body that You've given us, but no longer bound with sin, no longer corrupt with blood, but alive forevermore by the Spirit of God as Jesus, the firstfruits of our redemption. Oh Lord, what a goal! What a promise! We don't have to fear death anymore. Not a hair of our head shall perish, but it shall all be raised at the resurrection of the righteous.

And we'll enter into life and be like You, and we shall see You as You are. Hallelujah! What a hope! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Death has no more sting for us. Death has no victory.

Grave, where is your victory? He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to life through the Gospel. We shall not perish. We shall live for us.

Hallelujah! And You're going to get rid of the old enemy and drive him out away from us. Hallelujah! At Your glorious coming. Hallelujah! Blessed be Your name, Lord.

Blessed be Your name. What a hope You have given us through the Gospel. Blessed be Your name, Lord.

Shall not perish. Oh, what a hope, what a hope, what a hope. Blessed be Your name.

And that's why, Lord, as some have pointed out already today, You're leading us into these things that are painful and demanding to us. And why are You doing that? Because You are creating life in the inner man. Praise Your name so that we'll be ready for life in the outer man.

Blessed be Your holy name. Blessed be Your holy name. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! There may be some here this morning and God has spoken to you through the prophecies or however, and you feel maybe that...

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