

Physical Death is not the End
1 Corinthians 15:20-34

Good morning,

John Piper wrote “***Don’t Waste Your life***” with this description

The American dream beckons people to spend their lives on trivial diversions, slipping through life caught up with seeking success, comfort, and pleasure above all else.

But God designed people for far more than this.

Piper makes a passionate plea to avoid the dangers of a wasted life, calling us to take risks and sacrifices that matter for eternity

...with a single, soul-satisfying passion for the glory of God that seeks to make much of Him in every sphere of our lives.

Please open your Bibles to two places this morning; first turn to ***John 5***, place a book mark there, and turn to ***1 Corinthians 15***.

Last time in ***1 Corinthians***, Paul said he was ***the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle***”. He was humble at the thought the Lord would use him in the ministry.

Paul had a healthy amount of repentance along with memory of past sin; mixed with a healthy amount of **thankfulness** towards the Lord for His grace and the call to ministry in Paul’s life.

So Paul communicated that it is Grace that made him worthy. The Grace of God that saves us will also change us.

Then Paul said **Jesus is the proof of a bodily Resurrection.**

Jesus' Resurrection is the proof that He is who He said He is and we can have forgiveness of sin and eternal life with Him.

We receive salvation through Christ, who is our real hope!

We touched on this last week, but today, Paul will teach on the effects of Christ's resurrection for Christians who physically die.

I. Jesus is the firstfruits.

Read *1 Corinthians 15:20*

The idea of *firstfruits* literally translates as "*promise to come.*"

God told the Israelites that if they brought their *firstfruits* to Him, He would bless all their crops and work that came later.

Leviticus 23:9 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Leviticus 23:10 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. NKJV

The Lord's people were told to bring a sheaf of grain to the priest, who would wave it before the Lord as an offering.

The idea of giving to the Lord first from all their increase, was established from this passage; the people were thankful and realized all they **possessed** came from the Lord.

firstfruits is also used symbolically seven times in the NT.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

James 1:18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Similar to the sheaf of grain that was to be set apart for the Lord in *Leviticus 23*, so we as believers are set apart for God's glory.

Jesus was the first resurrected man, showing Christ followers what our promised resurrection and future will be like.

Romans 6:5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

Romans 6:6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. NKJV

John Trapp said, "As in the firstfruits offered to God, the Jews were assured of God's blessing on the whole harvest; so by the resurrection of Christ, our resurrection is **insured**."

The Feast of *firstfruits* was celebrated the day after the Sabbath following Passover. Jesus rose from the dead on the same day they celebrated Firstfruits, the day after Sabbath; after Passover.

Just as the Lord asked us to give of our *firstfruits* as an offering, so He gave Jesus as the *firstfruits* of the Resurrection.

David Guzik said, *“In the Septuagint, this word is used for the offering of firstfruits and in secular usage the word was used for an entrance fee.*

*“The resurrection of Jesus is also the firstfruits of our resurrection in the sense that He is our “entrance fee” to resurrection. Jesus paid our **admission** to the resurrection!”*

II. Death came by man.

Read *1 Corinthians 15:21-23*

Adam became the head of mankind when the Lord created him as the first person of the human race. As the head of mankind, once Adam sinned, all **mankind** was brought under death.

Jesus Christ is referred to as the second Adam and the first **born-again** man.

So by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus promises resurrection to all who place themselves “under” His headship.

Romans 5:17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) NKJV

Turn to **John 5**

As we discuss the statement and question, *“**In Christ, all shall be made alive**” Does this mean everyone is resurrected?*

Read *John 5:24-30*

Every person will be resurrected, but not all will receive the resurrection to eternal life.

The word “*order*” in *vs. 23* means something that has been arranged, thing placed in order; similar to a group of soldiers.

Jesus, as our commander, rose from the dead first and then when He returns, His people will be raised with **glorified** bodies.

Believers will be raised with new bodies and *Revelation says* the unsaved will rise to go to the Great White Throne Judgment.

Jesus speaking to Martha about the death of Lazarus in...*John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*

John 11:26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" NKJV

III. Death is defeated.

Read *1 Corinthians 15:24-28*

1 Corinthians 15:24 “*Then comes the end*”

Ephesians 1:9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

Ephesians 1:10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him.

When He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power

In ***Revelation 5***, John saw a scroll and an angel asked the question, “***Who is worthy to open the scroll?***”

In ***Revelation 5***, John weeps because **no one** was found in all creation who is worthy; until the Lion of Judah is revealed.

Most commentators believe this scroll is the ***title deed*** to the earth; when God created the earth, He gave control and dominion to man. (Figuratively the title deed)

In ***Genesis 1:28*** God said to Adam and Eve to “***Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over every living thing that moves on the earth.***”

In ***Genesis 2:16*** And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “***Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;***

Genesis 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” NKJV

Satan tempted Eve; she gave the fruit to Adam and he also ate.

At that very moment they forfeited their right and the title deed to the earth, over to Satan.

Jesus came to redeem the world back to God; and the cost of redeeming the earth back was His **shed blood** on the cross.

Jesus defeated all the enemies of God by dying on the cross and then rising again.

Paul is communicating, a time is coming when all things will be finalized and presented by Jesus to God the Father, giving glory to Him who authored this eternal plan to redeem man.

“He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet”

This refers to the 1000 year reign of Christ in ***Revelation 20***.

After a thousand years have passed, Satan will be loosed for a time and there will be one final rebellion, before Jesus finally places all His enemies under His feet.

Notice ***vs. 26 “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death”***

Death will be summoned to the Great White Throne Judgment and then death will be forever abolished as the last enemy

For the Christian, death is a defeated enemy because of what Jesus did on the cross. We get a glimpse of **death’s defeat** in

Matthew 27:50 Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

Matthew 27: 51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,

Matthew 27: 52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;

Matthew 27: 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. NKJV

C.H. Spurgeon said, “*When at the Redeemer’s resurrection many of the saints arose and came out of their graves into the holy city then was the crucified Lord proclaimed to be victorious over death and the grave...*

“*These (Matthew 27: 52-53) were but preliminary skirmishes and mere foreshadowing’s of the grand victory by which death was overthrown.*” (Spurgeon)

Some cults try to use the words from ***vs. 28, “the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all”***, as proof that Jesus is less than God.

Matthew Poole “*The Son’s subjection to His Father, does not prove His inequality of essence or power with His Father;*

...it only signifies what was spoken before, that Christ, as mediator, should deliver up His kingdom, to His Father.”

We believe in One God revealed in three distinct persons; the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God!

IV. Effects of denying the Resurrection.

Read ***1 Corinthians 15:29-34***

With this passage; some cult members get baptized for the dead.

*What is Paul talking about, being **baptized for the dead**?*

There are many interpretations for this passage, but it is not too difficult to figure out using a proper context to interpret it.

The plain meaning of ***baptized for the dead*** according to Leon Morris and other commentators; is that some people had a pagan practice of being baptized on behalf of those who had died.

Paul was not condoning the pagan practice of ***baptism for the dead***; he was logically arguing using their non-biblical practice.

If there is no resurrection, what is the point of hoping the dead can be saved?

Then Paul asked, “***And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I die daily...***”

Paul was beaten, imprisoned, and sought to be killed by the Jews, because as *chapter 1* says, he ***preached Christ crucified***

Paul was going to continue to preach Jesus’ resurrection as the only hope for all mankind, no matter what those in charge had to say; but, there was a cost to standing up for the resurrection.

Paul could have also been fed to the lions under the Roman rule for his Christian faith. Today, those of us in America have never known this kind of risk for standing up for our belief in Christ.

*But we can ask, how can we **die daily** to self?*

Spurgeon gave 7 steps in a sermon he gave, titled Dying Daily.

1. Every day carefully consider the certainty of death.
2. By faith put your soul through the whole process of death.
3. Hold this world with a loose hand.
4. Every day seriously test your hope and experience.
5. Come every day, just as you did at conversion, to the cross of Jesus, as a poor guilty sinner.
6. Live in such a manner that you would not be ashamed to die at any moment.
7. Have all your affairs in order so that you are ready to die.

Then Paul said, ***“If the dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”***

MC Gee said, *“If Christ is not risen and if the dead are not resurrected, then we might adopt the hedonistic **philosophy** of Greeks who say, **“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”**”*

So Paul gives us some practical application...in

Re-read ***1 Corinthians 15:33-34***

There were Jews and pagans alike who were trying to convince these believers to **compromise** their belief in a bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Compromise in the life of a Christian often begins by the company we keep. We are called to be **in the world** as witnesses for Christ; but not **of the world's** beliefs and practices.

When our influence is diminished, because of others we spend too much time with; we should spend more time with the Lord.

Some of these Corinthian Christians were spending too much time with people who denied the bodily resurrection Christ and it caused a fall into a slow fade and luke-warmness in their faith.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Paul was saying, “*Because of all the mercies God has given us, we should give ourselves fully to Him as a living sacrifice!*”

For those who claim to follow Jesus, a “***Living Sacrifice***” is someone who willingly places themselves on the Altar, to actively do the work and will of God.

Notice Paul says, “***Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God.***”

To resist the Lord's process of **transformation** by renewing our minds is to ***neglect the knowledge of God*** and also remaining willfully ignorant of the truth: is sin.

V. Conclusion. (The believer's promise)

In 1971, John Lennon released a song entitled, “*Imagine*”.

“Imagine there's no heaven, it's easy if you try, no hell below us, above us only sky.

Imagine all the people living for today.”

What a grim outlook on the afterlife this song promoted, because **without the reality of heaven there is no hope.**

If there were no God, and no reality of His eternal reward, who would help mankind recognize good, or the ability to do good?

Ephesians 2:12 you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. NKJV

Without the Lord there is nothing but evil and darkness in the world; no way of forgiveness or way to find fulfillment in life.

Life would not be worth living without the reality of Jesus Christ and the hope of heaven.

Guzik *“The resurrection of Jesus is also the firstfruits of our resurrection in the sense that He is our “entrance fee” to resurrection. Jesus paid our **admission** to the resurrection!”*

1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." NKJV

The relationships in heaven will be so much better than anything we can imagine here on earth. **Some attributes of Heaven:**

1. No more **chaos**.

The old order of a sinful world is gone, sin is wiped out forever.

2. **No more curse.**

Revelation 22:3 there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. NKJV

The curse brought on by Adam and Eve is forever removed.

3. Heaven will be the place where the **Glory** of God lives.

Revelation 21:23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. NKJV

Moses met with God on the mountain to receive the two tablets of the Law. When He came down his face shone so bright he had to veil his face for Israel to be able to look at him.

Just imagine how bright heaven will be when God's glory lives there with us and His glory lights up the city.

a. Heaven will be a place of **joy**.

Psalms 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

b. Heaven will be a place of surpassing beauty.

Revelation 21:19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones NKJV

c. Heaven will be a place of **revelation** of God.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. NKJV

d. Heaven will be a place where suffering ends.

Revelation 21:4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." NKJV

e. Heaven will be a place where we forget the past **failures**.

Isaiah 65:17" For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

If you are in Christ, you can imagine a place where there's no sin, it's easy if you try; because in heaven there will be no sin.

- No financial worries, no sickness or pain, no fighting, No cancer, disease or death

But heaven would not be heaven if Jesus Christ were not there.

John Piper asked, *“If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had and all the food you ever liked, and, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ were not there?”*

Jesus said in ***John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. NKJV***

Eternal life is not just about escaping eternal punishment and receiving an eternal home;

Eternal life is about knowing the lover of our soul and resting in His love and care for all eternity.

Matthew Poole said, *“If you knew the power of God, you would know that God is able to raise the dead...If you knew the Scriptures, you would know that God will raise the dead.”*

Imagine there is a heaven, because we are all eternal beings and the only question is, *“Where will you spend that eternity?”*

John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. NKJV

Simply put, if Jesus is not the only way to God, then there is not **any way** to God.

If there are many roads to God, then Jesus is not one of them. He said there was only one road to God, and He was the way

If you do not have forgiveness of sin granted through Faith in Jesus Christ, you cannot enter heaven.

Heaven is a perfect place, so you have to be completely washed of your sin in order to gain heaven. Heaven is where Jesus lives and reigns; if you do not want Jesus, *why do you want Heaven?*

Death is defeated and for the believer heaven is our hope!

The resurrection of **Jesus** is the *firstfruits* of our resurrection; He is our “entrance fee” to be resurrected, because Jesus paid our admission to eternal life in Heaven

Trust and receive His free gift of salvation, through the Cross!