

42. Learning the Value of the Resurrection

In our last topic, we saw the order of the resurrections. We also saw that the Father and Christ will rule throughout all eternity. Today, we are going to focus on the topic of how to help our physical and spiritual children explain the value of the resurrection. As we mentioned a couple of topics earlier, there were people in Corinth that said that there was no resurrection. As a result, we saw how Paul gave the evidence for the resurrection. In this topic, we will see that he now shows the value of the resurrection.

Paul explains the value of the resurrection for others and then goes on to explain the value of the resurrection to him in his own life. 1 Corinthians 15:29-30 says, “Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?” In verses 12 through 19 of this chapter, we saw in an earlier topic that there were some who were teaching that there is no resurrection. We saw seven consequences if there is no resurrection. Then, we saw that Christ became the first to be raised with a new body. In our last topic, we saw the order of the resurrections. That is the background for our questions in these verses.

The first question is a response to those who were saying that there is no resurrection. Paul asked why people who saw the life and death of the Christians who had died would choose to place their faith in Christ and be baptized if those who had already died were not going to experience resurrection. He then asked why anyone would want to be baptized to take the place of those who had died. Paul went on to ask why he and the others who taught about Christ would be willing to place themselves in danger if there is no resurrection. Paul could clearly answer that question because of his own experience. Paul had watched and listened to what Stephen said as he died. Acts 7:60 says, “Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Paul had been the leader and held the coats of those who stoned Stephen to death. He could never forget the love shown by those final words of Stephen before he died. Paul saw the love that controlled the life of Stephen through the hope he had in Christ because of the resurrection.

Then, Paul speaks of his own life in the next verses. 1 Corinthians 15:31-32 says, “I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage *is it* to me? If *the* dead do not rise, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!’” Throughout his ministry, Paul had been beaten, thrown in prison, and had to leave town in the middle of the night to escape being killed. His life was in danger daily. Paul asked why he would be willing to risk his life every day if there was no resurrection. Then, he mentioned how he had fought with beasts in the city of Ephesus. This may mean that he was forced to fight wild animals in the arena or it may mean the way his life was placed in danger by the mob that wanted to kill him as recorded in Acts 19:23-34. Either way, his life was in great danger. Here, Paul reminded the Corinthians that he was willing to die for his faith in Christ. That was due to the fact that he looked forward to the resurrection.

Then, Paul reminded them of what earlier Jews who could not look forward to the resurrection had

said. In his day, Isaiah had called for the people of Judah to repent. Instead of listening to Isaiah, the people responded in Isaiah 22:13, “But instead, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating meat and drinking wine: ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!’” The people in the day of Isaiah did not repent. Instead, they said that they would live to satisfy themselves with sin. Here, we see that Paul said that if there is no resurrection he might as well choose the same response as the people had chosen in the time of Isaiah.

Paul gives his response to that attitude in the next two verses. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34 says, “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’ Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.” Paul warned the Corinthians not to be deceived by these false teachers and their teaching that there is no resurrection. He said that bad company destroyed good habits. He realized that false teachers try to get people to live for the moment and please themselves. The people in the time of Isaiah had chosen to live to please themselves because they had no hope of the resurrection. Paul was concerned that the same thing would happen to the Corinthians.

Paul told the Corinthian Christians to wake up. Paul wanted them to realize that there is a resurrection. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that there are two different ways to live. Those who choose to live for today will corrupt and destroy themselves. In contrast, those who look to the future will have a purpose for life on this earth and hope for the future. That is why Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians to practice righteousness. He reminded them that there were many people who had not yet learned about the death and resurrection of Christ. Here, we see that the message of the resurrection will cause us to want others to hear that message also so that they can place their faith in Christ and have hope for the future. As we help our children to learn to focus on what is eternal instead of what is temporary, they will also find that God gives them a purpose for their lives and hope for the future.

We also need to help our children understand that most of the people of the world have no hope for the future because they have not yet heard the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. Such people are still controlled by the fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Christ gave us the example to follow when He died to pay the penalty for sin and rose again to complete the judgment of Satan. As a result, Christ gave us a message to share with others that will release them from the fear of death, which will hold them in bondage throughout their lives unless they learn about Christ.

Paul knew that the Corinthian Christians had other questions about the resurrection. As a result, Paul mentioned two other questions that someone might ask. Those questions are in 1 Corinthians 15:35 where we read, “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’” Since there were false teachers that were teaching that there is no resurrection, Paul knew that one question that the people would have was, “How are the dead raised up?” Paul probably faced this question many times in his life and ministry. We see in Acts 26:24 that Festus accused him of being insane because of his belief in the resurrection. That verse says, “Now as he

thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, ‘Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!’” The statement of Festus was a result of the answer that Paul had given in answer to the question he asked in Acts 26:8, “Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?” Paul had again mentioned the resurrection in verse 23 and Festus did not even want to hear about the resurrection.

Paul also gave a second question that Paul had probably been asked many times. That question is, “And with what body do they come?” When people refuse to accept the resurrection, they often try to raise questions that show that they do not believe in the resurrection. One illustration where this happened to Paul is given in Acts 17:32 where we read, “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this *matter*.’” Here, we see that some people mocked when they heard of the resurrection. The other apostles had also faced this same rejection of the message of the resurrection. Acts 4:1-2 says, “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” Here, we see that the Sadducees were very upset that the apostles taught the people about the resurrection of Christ. Paul gives the answer to both of these questions in the remaining verses of 1 Corinthians 15.

Paul gives four illustrations to illustrate the fact of the resurrection. The first is given in 1 Corinthians 15:36-38 where we read, “Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain--perhaps wheat or some other *grain*. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.” Here, we see that Paul uses the seed of a plant as his first illustration of the resurrection. When a seed of grain is planted, that seed actually dies and the plant that develops comes from the inner part of the seed. Christ said in John 12:24, “‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.’” Here, we see that the seed or a grain of wheat has to die in order to produce the plant that produces much grain. That small kernel of grain is much different than the plant that is produced from it.

Paul said in his illustration that you do not plant the plant that will eventually develop. Instead, you just plant a kernel of wheat or other grain. God is the One who gives that kernel that is planted a new body. The new body that God gives to that kernel of grain is given by God as He pleases. In this first illustration of the fact of resurrection, Paul points out the fact that the new body of the grain is different than the grain that was planted. In the same way, he goes on to show later in this chapter that as Christians we will be given a new body at our resurrection. This new body will not be like the body that we presently have. Instead, this new body will be a body that can never be destroyed. It will be a body that will last for all eternity. This physical body must be replaced with that new body in order for it to be eternal. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to explain the value of the resurrection.