

Born to Win

Resurrection

by Ronald L. Dart

We were all saddened this week by the loss of a sister in the faith, Alma Lewis, who passed away of cancer; and our thoughts are very much with Barney and his family at this time. Most of the people who will ultimately hear this sermon will not have known Alma, but they will still know how we feel; because they, too, have lost someone near and dear to them at one time or another. It's a part of life, you know. Life has a beginning, and life has an ending; and it is something that we learn relatively early in life to get along with. Most of us can remember probably even from childhood having attended a funeral, or having gone to visitation at a funeral home, and seeing someone lying in a coffin, dead, whom we had known and loved; or someone whose lap we had sat in, as it were, and who had given us hugs and kisses and that we had come to appreciate very much. Life begins, and life ends, and life goes on.

And it was this way for the Thessalonians, who had apparently lost *a lot* of their loved ones in the time—just the very few weeks between the time Paul had been there and the church in Thessalonica had begun—just in a few weeks, as Paul writes back to them, there have been a lot of people in that church, for some reason or another, that have perished. Reading between the lines of Thessalonians, you come to the conclusion that religious persecution had a great deal to do with it. And Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in chapter 4, verse 13, and said this:

1 Thessalonians 4

KJ2000

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope.

And it's hard for me to imagine, for all my life—as long as I can ever remember, from the first time I understood what death was, even from then—I have known that death was not the end of life. As I've mentioned before, even though I was not well-acquainted with the Bible, even though in my very earliest years I wasn't in church very much, my father was a gospel singer; and so I was in schoolhouses listening to him sing. And those old gospel hymns had *much* to say about life after death, about the resurrection, and about future life. And it's hard for me to imagine someone who loses loved ones, who has no hope, who does not believe, who doesn't believe in God, doesn't believe in the resurrection, who believes that all there is is right here and now—that we are the product of blind evolution, and when we're gone, there will be nothing. Paul says,

1 Thessalonians 4

KJ2000

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them who are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the

archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

And of course, as a minister, it has often been my duty to comfort people with these words; for I don't think I have *ever* done a funeral where I have not read this passage of scripture to consider, and to comfort people with the realization that the time *will* come when Jesus Christ *will* return. He *will* descend with a shout of the archangel, and a great trumpet will be blown. And it is at that trumpet, at that *last* trumpet, that the dead are raised, and we then can *see* these loved ones that we have known before. And it figures that this would be true. And when I say "it figures", when Paul wrote to the Romans, he said in chapter 1 of Romans, in verse 18,

Romans 1

AKJV

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it to them.

There is no reason why people who live in this world should not know that God is. And once you have come to the logical conclusion that God is, a whole lot of things can follow on the heels of this. He said,

Romans 1

AKJV

²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Now, what Paul says here (and I want you to understand this)...what Paul does here is to legitimize *reason* as a way of coming to know about God. He is saying that once you come face to face with certain things in this world, once you come face to face with the evidence, there is a logical sequence of concepts, of ideas, that follow on the heels of that; so that there is *no man* who has any excuse for not knowing that God is, and for understanding what God is doing, and even beyond that, from grasping that there is more to it than meets the eye—that there is something *beyond* death. The world, and *all* of its suffering, in fact, makes *no sense at all*, unless something else lies beyond it, and lies beyond this life.

There's another passage of Scripture that we commonly use in funerals that I think is really important, and it shows *how long ago* Man had come to this conclusion. You can start turning to it if you like; it's in Job, the 14th chapter. There's a lot of conversation that people say, "Well, you know, Man of old did not know about the resurrection of the dead. In the Old Testament, they didn't have that concept—that the Old Testament faith was really a faith that had to do with *this* life, that the Old Covenant had no promises of eternal life. The Old Covenant only had to do with what's here and what's now, and how you live in the here and now." You might have heard something like that somewhere along the line. But the problem with that is: it just doesn't work when one comes up against *life*. Because when one comes up against *life*, and one begins to experience *life*, and grows old in the process of *life*—experiencing life in all of its ways, in all of its events—and when one does know that God is (and it's inescapable that God is, that he is there)...Once you come to these things, there are certain conclusions that Man came to *long, long, long ago*. And the mere fact that maybe you can't find some revelation of it in the

Scripture where it says, “Thus saith the Lord...”, and lines it all out for you, does not mean that men did not know it. That’s Paul’s point. There are some things that we *shouldn’t have to be told*. Job, writing in his 14th chapter, says,

Job 14

AKJV

¹ Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.

And ain’t it the truth? You do have to realize that even though some of us live to be old (and some of us here are a lot older than others), that the oldest among us...our lifespan is still like a hand’s breath. It’s like a watch in the night. We’re like a blade of grass that grows up, and then all of a sudden there’s not enough water; and it gets dry, and it dies, and the wind comes and blows it away, and it’s gone. In the scheme of, you know, what, 15 *billion* years that they say this universe has existed, the three score and 10 or four score or five score that some people are able to live on this planet is *less* than a watch in the night. It’s a heartbeat. It’s a snapping of the fingers. It’s a “here today, gone tomorrow”.

But we also know that life is full of trouble. That, from the day you start out in life, that there are hurts, there are disappointments, there are frustrations that we meet again and again and again. I have a series of programs on the radio called *Making Life Work*; but the truth is, if you really want to be honest, life doesn’t work real well. And one looks at it and says, “Yes, I can understand the Law of God—that if I’ll be obedient to God that my life will work better than it will if I don’t.” But *no matter what* we do, we still have failures to deal with. *No matter how well* we follow the line of God’s law, we still have pain to face. For no matter whatever else happens to us, we *will* grow old. And as we grow old, our body begins to fail. We cannot *see* as well. We cannot *hear* as well. We have *aches*. We have *pains*. Our *feet* may start breaking down. Our *joints* start getting bad. And *no matter* what happens to us, no matter *how well* we live, no matter how clean a life—sooner or later, you *are* going to die. And it is very hard to die in this world without pain. It’s very hard to get from here to there without suffering. And so we all know that suffering, pain, loss, hurt is *a part of life*. What we may not know is *why*. What does all of it mean? “Man is *few* of days and *full* of trouble.”

Job 14

AKJV

² He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down: he flees also as a shadow, and continues not. [...]

⁵ Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with you, you have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;

He comes forth like a flower and is cut down. He flees like a shadow and doesn’t stay. Seeing his days are determined, verse 5,

In other words, no matter how we live it, there is a *boundary* to your life. There is *an end* to the thing. It’s *painful*. You know, you have ailments that come along from time to time that oftentimes are a part of aging. And, you know, your skin begins to get thinner as you get older. And there are things that go wrong with your skin. And you go see the doctor, and he gives you creams and ointments to put on your skin. You go through all kinds of treatments. And all the hope is that *maybe* you can get well again, and maybe your skin will be whole again. But at some point in all the treatment process, it dawns on you: no, I will never have that 12-year-old, fresh, smooth skin ever again. It will never be perfect, because it’s *old*. And you are aware of a slow degeneration that takes place in the body. Jimmy Stewart said, you know, once you pass 70, it’s just patch, patch, patch. (In my case, it was 60.) You start patching on the body. And he looks at this and he says there is a boundary that Man can’t pass. He says,

Job 14

AKJV

- ⁶ Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.
- ⁷ For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.
- ⁸ Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground;
- ⁹ Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant.

Now, he's beginning to set us up here for a concept. And the concept is: you cut a tree down, and the stump can get old and dry, but the roots are down there. And when the rains do come, you know how it is—how *hard* it is, in fact—to get rid of a stump. You know how hard it is to get rid of roots in the ground. You will be down there. You'll think they're gone, and all of a sudden here comes something else sprouting up out of them. And they continue. And he then says, but Man is not like that.

Job 14

AKJV

- ¹⁰ But man dies, and wastes away: yes, man gives up the ghost, and where is he?

You can take and cut a limb off a tree. You can plant certain branches off of certain kinds of vines in the ground. The branch will take root and it will grow again. Man's not like that. When you die, and we plant you in the ground, we are not going to get a human being growing up out of that grave. It isn't going to happen. You can cut off a man's arm, and bury it in the ground, and it will not take root and grow a new man. And so on it goes. He is drawing the contrast. He says, "Let's just face it. I look around the world at me here, and I can see that in a plant, I cut the thing down; and the plant, the tree, or whatever it is, can transcend and live *way beyond* any man. But Man? When Man is dead, he's gone." And he said,

Job 14

AKJV

- ¹¹ As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decays and dries up:
- ¹² So man lies down, and rises not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.

Now, that sounds rather final, doesn't it? And what Job is saying is: in the natural course of events, this is true. There is *hope* of a tree if you cut it down. There is *no hope*, in the natural course of events, for a man if you cut the man down. And Job then says,

Job 14

AKJV

- ¹³ O that you would hide me in the grave, that you would keep me secret, until your wrath be past, [...]

Now, *that* I can easily understand. Because at this particular point in his life, Job was going through *absolute hell*. He had lost his family, he'd lost his possessions, he'd lost his home. His wife had told him to curse God and die, and he had three friends that nobody needs sitting around telling him what was wrong with him, to be sure he fully understood it. And he was sitting in ashes and scraping on his boils, and he just says, "I just wish that you would hide me in the grave. If I could just be somewhere in secret until you are no longer mad at me and then I could come back. Because the anger of God is just more", Job said, "than I can possibly handle."

Job 14

AKJV

¹³ O that you would hide me in the grave, that you would keep me secret, until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!

And then he asked the burning question:

Job 14

AKJV

¹⁴ If a man die, shall he live again? [...]

And that's what we want to know. Alma has passed away this last week; will she live again? Are we finished with her? Will we never see her again? Is God done with her, he has no interest in ever seeing her again? And he says this,

Job 14

AKJV

¹⁴ If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

¹⁵ You shall call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire to the work of your hands.

Now, I don't know if you really grasp what Job has gotten hold of here. Job has finally in his life come to realize, "I *know* that God is. I *know* that since God is, and is the designer and the creator of all I see, I *know* that God has a plan. *Nothing* can make any sense if this is not true. No pattern of logic, no system of logic, means *anything* if there is not God, and if God does not have a plan, and if God is not working that plan. Why would all the suffering that I am going through be allowed to be meaningless and to go to nothing? *Why* should the experience that I am gaining, *why* should the wisdom that is slowly beginning to take root in my heart, *why* should all that be buried in the earth, and rot away, and never live again and never exist again and be of no value to anybody ever again?" Why would God let us go through the hell that we sometimes go through on this planet? Why does God, once he finds a saint on this earth, once Jesus forgives us of our sin, once we have been baptized, our sins are forgiven, we're bound for the promised land...why don't we go *now*? Why are Christians left here to hurt, to suffer, to go through not merely death, but oftentimes an *agonizing* death and go through the tortures of the damned in a hospital where they're trying to make them well? *Why* do we have to go through all these things? *Why* doesn't God take his own *now*? And *why* doesn't he immediately heal them? Why doesn't he, if he's not going to heal them, why doesn't he take their life quickly without pain? Why does this happen?

Well Job had, through suffering at least, come to the conclusion: God is rational. God is not doing this with no purpose in mind. And for the suffering and the level of suffering that God permits to exist in this world, there is *no purpose* in this world that can be seen that is adequate to justify what Man has to go through on this planet. There is no divine purpose that is visible in this life that could justify allowing the Holocaust to take place. There is no purpose in this life, in the things that we go through in this life, that could actually be seen to justify the child abuse that is allowed to take place, the beatings, the murders, and the muggings, and the rapes that are allowed to happen, the accidents where a busload of children are allowed to be killed horribly—all of these things that happen where people stand by and say, "Why does God let this happen?" They're asking a legitimate question. Why, indeed, does God allow suffering to take place in this earth if there is nothing beyond what you and I can see? *Nothing, nothing* makes any sense at all. Job said,

Job 14

AKJV

¹⁴ [...] all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

¹⁵ You shall call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire to the work of your hands.

What he saw is that God, as he looks upon those of us who are here living in this life, he sees us as a work in progress. That's how Job saw himself. And that work in progress involved the development of knowledge, of experience, of wisdom, of the ability to respond to life and to respond to other people based upon the experiences, the wisdom that you have developed, the judgment that you have acquired, and all these things that we go through. And he realized that there is absolutely nothing in this world, in this life, that can *in any way* explain what I have gone through, *therefore there must be more*. For God *is*, and God does not do these things to no purpose at all.

I am slowly, as I've gone on past 50 and now past 60 and headed toward 65, begun to realize what a... quantum is too large a word, but a large leap in understanding has taken place in recent years. And the understanding which starts coming in much more rapidly, you know, as you go past 50 and then as you go past 60; and the development of wisdom that comes along with it because of the combination of experience with the Bible, with God's word, with life; and you begin to put two and two together and say, "Ah! Oh! Why couldn't I have seen that years ago? Why could not I have grasped this so long ago?" And what is astonishing about all this is that we reach the peak of wisdom, knowledge, and depth of understanding *right at the very end* of our strength in life. What's wrong with this picture? Well, there's nothing wrong with it if you understand that the end of this life is not the end. As Job said, there *is more*.

Are there lessons that you and I are learning? Are there experiences that you and I are going through that are *never* to be used ever again? Well, the apostle Paul had to tackle this question with the Corinthians, and the passage in question is the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians. It's probably pretty familiar to you, but try to take a fresh look at it. Paul says in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians,

1 Corinthians 15

KJ2000

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and in which you stand;

² By which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.

³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

⁵ And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

⁶ After that, he was seen of over five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep.

(That is, a few of them have died.) Now, you're not looking back very far when this epistle was written. You're looking back, from the time that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, of *less* than 25 years—not long at all. 25 years. We go back, what, to 1972? Is that what it is? We're in 1997, we go back to 1972; we go back that far. Where were you in 1972? Who do you know that can tell you all about what was going on back in 1972? I mean, living memory, all over the place. You know *all kinds* of people who were alive and voted in the elections back about the early 1970s, right—and who heard all the political campaigns, and who know all about Tricky Dick Nixon and all the people that lived back there? That's not very far back, is it? Now, you have to understand this. When Paul wrote this epistle, talking about the resurrected Christ, there had been some 500 people

—most of which were still wandering around the Middle East somewhere—who said, “Yeah, I saw him. Yes, I did. I touched him.” “Yes, I stood and looked at him. I stared at him.” “Yes, I actually saw when he went up into the cloud and was received, and I heard the angel’s voice.” There were people wandering around who knew all that, and had seen all that.

What’s important about this is that, when you read the New Testament, and you work your way through the four Gospels, by the time you get through those four Gospels, you have finished the depositions of four witnesses—actually, three eyeball witnesses, and one competent historian, who had talked to dozens of witnesses, and then compiled the story (his name is Luke)—who tell us that Jesus lived, that he worked, that he healed the sick, that he actually did all sorts of miracles in his lifetime; who tell us that he died, that he was buried, and he was in the grave for three days and three nights, and that he was seen alive again after his resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is probably the best attested event of the ancient world. And all you’ve got to do is read it and decide that you believe it. And if you believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead...and, of course, there was no reason for the Corinthians to deny it. Not only did they have Paul’s word, there had been others through there before who said, “Oh yes, I was there. Oh yes, I saw it. I saw his miracles. I was there. I saw him heal the withered hand. I was in the synagogue on that day. I actually saw him then again on the road to Emmaus.” Those two disciples were wandering around somewhere. So the resurrection of Christ was well attested to. This is Paul’s point. So Jesus was raised from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁷ After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

⁸ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain [*He didn’t do that pointlessly.*]; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

¹¹ Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so you believed.

He said, “I’ve told you all that to ask you this question”:

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

¹² Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Well, you know, that was a very common belief. I mean, to this day, I think many Jews will tell you that there is no resurrection of the dead—that the afterlife is not what Judaism is all about. So the idea [is] that there might have been a broad people who believed in the general message of Jesus the rabbi, who would say that they do not believe in the resurrection of the dead—for old ideas die hard, and they *still* do not believe that there is one. But he then comes through and says,

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

¹³ But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

¹⁴ And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

A simple exercise in logic, which is irrefutable. Paul says, “What’s the point of this? I mean, why are you even in church? Why do you call yourself a Christian, and you don’t believe there’s a resurrection from the dead? Don’t you understand that that’s what it’s all about?” You can’t say, “Well, I think that Jesus was a good teacher. I think that the apostles were *good men*.” No, no! If Christ was not raised from the dead, they were not good men, they were *liars*. They were not *pious* frauds, they were *frauds*. There is no middle ground, folks. Jesus either was raised from the dead, or Paul, James, Peter, John, and all the rest of them were a pack of liars, and built the world’s greatest religion on a pack of lies. And *you* have to decide, when you read the Gospel accounts, and the Book of Acts, and the Epistles, “Is that what I believe?”

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

¹⁶ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

¹⁷ And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins.

Now, that’s an interesting thought because, generally speaking, people will tell you that they believe in Christ, they believe in his death and his burial, they believe he died for their sins, and that by accepting Christ as savior, they accept his sacrifice—that it’s his *death* that forgives their sins, it’s his *death* that cleanses them. Sorry, that’s not true. His death *in your place* takes the place of your death; but unless he is raised from the dead, and ascends and presents himself to the Father in your place, you’re still in your sins. Without a resurrection, the death of Christ is just the death of another rabbi in the first century. That’s what Paul is trying to tell people.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

¹⁸ Then they also which are fallen asleep [*died*] in Christ are perished.

They’re gone. And you’ll never see them again.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

So there was no middle ground for Paul. Now you see, I can make a very strong case in teaching the Torah that the purpose of teaching you the Torah is not to get you into God’s good graces, it’s to have you have a good life, and that you will have a better life in Torah observance and living your life that way, than you will if you don’t. I can make *that* case very strongly, and it’s not hard to make. It’s better for you to keep God’s Law in this life, with no hope of a future life, than to not do so. Because that’s what the Law is all about. It’s not a saving instrument—never has been and never will be. It simply has to do with making *this* life work.

Well, where do we go from there then? Well, you see, in order to profess Christ in the first century, you had to almost turn yourself against (or be turned against by) all men everywhere. For the *pagans* would try to kill you because you were a Christian, and the *Jews* would try to kill you because you were a Christian, and your life could be turned into an absolute *hell on earth*. For no other reason than you said, “Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ.” “Yes, I believe in Jesus. I believe he is the Savior”—that alone could cost you your life, your family, your livelihood; if not that, your chance to even earn a living, and you could be an outcast from men. Without any hope of the future, *why would you ever go through that?* ...Unless there’s more.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

- ²⁰ But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.
²¹ For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
²³ But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; [...]

He is the *first one* from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

- ²³ [...] afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
²⁴ Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.
²⁵ For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet.
²⁶ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

And how is death destroyed? Well, it's important to know.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

- ²⁷ For he has put all things under his feet. But when he said all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.
²⁸ And when all things shall be subdued to him, then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

And here comes that rather obscure and difficult verse:

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

- ²⁹ Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

And if you want to try to find a lot of information about this particular verse, you can search in vain for it; because basically all we know about it is right here in that one verse. And exactly how you're to interpret that in view of the Corinthians is obscure to say the least. Some people believe that actually there were people in Corinth practicing vicarious baptism. Others think that that's not what it's talking about at all; it's being baptized for *the hope* of the dead. It's very hard to know for sure what Paul is talking about. But when you understand the meaning of baptism, the purpose of baptism, and the symbolism of baptism, it is *unthinkable* that a person could be baptized *on behalf* of someone else; for it involves repentance and turning from *your own* sins. He goes on to say, "If Christ is not resurrected..."

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

- ³⁰ [...] why stand we in jeopardy every hour?
³¹ I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our LORD, I die daily.

He said, “What am I going through this stuff for, if there’s no resurrection from the dead? *Why* do I have to face death every day of my life? If it’s just a merely a matter of *this* world and...”

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

³² If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantages it me, if the dead rise not? [...]

“Why am I going through this?”

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

³² [...] let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

³³ Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

³⁴ Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

³⁵ But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

Now, because of the way Paul answers this question, I am not very apt to want to ask a lot of questions about details about the resurrection; because Paul comes back and says, “You fool”. He *really* seems to consider this a foolish question, but it does trouble us. We wonder, “Well, if I lost an arm in this life, in the resurrection will I have one arm or two?” Questions like this are really common. But I think, probably, the most important question to people...(and I have never fully understood the question, I will confess, to start with) but it’s important to people. I know this because it is asked *so often*. What they want to know is: In the resurrection, *will we know one another?* Will we know one another? Now, remember, I’ve already told you that if you believe that God *is*...God has given you a mind with a rational system, you know, a system of logic for thinking. You should be able to sit there and think your way through this without too much difficulty, without even having Paul *tell you* what’s going on. Because the fact is that if you have no identity the whole exercise is meaningless. I mean, the first and most important question in the resurrection is: Will *you* know who you are? Not will you know anybody else, or will they know you; will *you* know who you are? Will you have an identity? For there are those people who believe that somehow or other we are merged with the great cosmic consciousness—that we are merged with God, and we are submerged in him, and we no longer have any separate identity; in which case, we wouldn’t even know who we are; in which case, none of it makes any difference anyway. To you and I that makes *no difference* to us if, at the end of this thing, you and I don’t exist, right? So if *I* exist, and *I* know who I am, and *you* exist, and *you* know who you are, how hard is it going to be for us to communicate with one another and find out who we are? I mean, the logic of it, it seems to me, to be utter simplicity. *Of course* we will know who we are.

And there’s something else I think you ought to know. I don’t know about this question of arms missing and all that kind of stuff, but I will tell you this—that the scars that we acquire in this life are a part of us. They are a part of what has made us what we are. The hurts that we have suffered, the losses that we have gone through, the things that have been taken away from us, the nights that we have cried, the nights that we have lain awake and worried and fretted and stewed—all the things that we have been through (including the missing arm, including the great scar across the face, including the body organs that are missing because of a great accident that we had some time ago)—all of this goes to make us what we are; because it is out of the sufferings of this life that *character* comes into existence, that we learn from experience, that we become greater than we are. Some of the greatest reading I’ve ever done is from the people who, in this life, have faced *terrible* hardships in their life, and have overcome them, and have become great in the process. I don’t think people become *great* in this world without facing adversity. I don’t think you will *ever* find a great man or a great woman who had it easy all the way through their life, and everything was just like it ought to be. Don’t think so. Most of the time...in fact,

all the occasions you will read of people—people like Marie Curie, even a great man like Winston Churchill...I mean, to read about his childhood will bring tears to your eyes. But all that *made him* what he was. All that prepared him for a moment in history, and made him the great man that he was. Paul says,

Galatians 6

AKJV

¹⁷ [...] I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Paul had whip marks across his back. Frankly, I think that in the resurrection, when you see and you find Paul, you will be able to get him to turn around and they will still be there—that he will bear in his body those marks; because Paul wore them as a badge of courage and a badge of honor for the sake of Jesus Christ. Jesus, when he appeared to his disciples, said [**John 20**], “Look, here are my hands. Put your finger in there. Here’s my side. Stick your hand into it.” The hole was still there. And so the missing limbs, or the wounds, or the scars, or the hurts that we went through are no longer disfigurements. They are *beauty marks*. They are *character marks*. They are the things that *make us* what we are, and they give us the *strength* to be what we are; and actually, once we have been *empowered* by God, will give us a character and an ability to do things, in a spirit world, that we would not have, had we not had the experience, the background, the failures, the frustrations. You see, he has made us for a little while lower than the angels [**Psalms 8:5**]. He has made us flesh, because in the flesh we are able to suffer in ways that angels could never suffer. And as a consequence, *character* can be developed in us that angelic beings would never know, never experience, and never understand. So, yeah, we *will* know one another. But the knowing of one another also includes the wrinkles, the scars, the marks, and all those things that we have picked up in this life that have made us into the character we are. Paul says,

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

³⁶ You fool, that which you sow is not quickened, except it die:

³⁷ And that which you sow, you sow not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

³⁸ But God gives it a body as it has pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

³⁹ All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

⁴⁰ There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory.

He’s reaching out for analogies to help us understand. The moon is a terrestrial body. It has reflected light. The sun is a celestial body. It *generates* light. And the implication is that in the flesh we can reflect light; in the spirit we will *generate* light. And we are not now what we will be. Now, that is fair enough—that what you would look like in the resurrection from the dead is not what you look like now. And to be sure, probably, as a human being, looking at you as a spirit being, I would not know who you are. But that doesn’t mean that you are not knowable.

Remember the incident when the disciples were walking down the road to Emmaus; and Jesus, resurrected Jesus, joined himself to two of them and walked along the road with them, and they did not recognize him? But it was him. The identity was there. And it was not until *he left them* that they realized who it was and they said,

Luke 24

AKJV

³² [...] Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

“Didn’t we *know* that there was something special about him?” And only when he left them did they really realize who he was. Will we look differently? Oh, yeah. Will we be recognizable? Ah, yes.

You know, it’s funny: after a long absence, we can walk right by an old friend and not recognize him. But when we stop, and when we look, we know who we’re seeing. The character, the eyes, the mouth—*it’s there*. It happened to me up here this weekend. There were people that, if I had not looked twice... people I had not seen in probably 10, 15 years, I would not have known who they were; *except* that I stopped and looked. And to a very large extent, I was *looking for them*, because I knew they would be there. If I hadn’t known they were going to be there, I might very well have not known who they were, until they said, “Hey, I’m so-and-so.” So, we will know one another, but there will be certainly differences. Paul says in verse 42,

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

It’s not how you look, folks, in the resurrection that’s going to make the difference. In the resurrection, it’s the *power* that makes the difference.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Now, you may want to ask me, “What’s the difference between the two of them?” And I have a real quick answer to that: I don’t know. I wouldn’t even know there *was* a difference if it hadn’t been for the fact that Paul told me, *or* that I’d sat down and realized there *had to be*.

1 Corinthians 15

KJ2000

⁴⁵ And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving spirit.

⁴⁶ But that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

Paul is telling us something here. He’s telling us you can’t start out with a spirit being like an angel and get what God is after. To get what God is after, you must first start with what is *natural*; and you go from the natural to the spiritual, because it is *in the natural* that the character is developed that God is looking for.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁴⁷ The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.

⁴⁸ As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also

that are heavenly.

⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

And then he says something interesting. He said,

1 Corinthians 15

KJ2000

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

We can't *handle* the kingdom of God as we are right now. The kingdom of God is not what the Israelites thought it was going to be. It was not a messiah coming in to throw out the Romans and establish an earthly kingdom. No, no. Flesh and blood cannot inherit this kingdom.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁵¹ Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, [...]

That is, all of us will not necessarily die.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁵¹ [...] but we shall all be changed,

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, [...]

And it's going to happen at a particular time:

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁵¹ [...] at the last trump: [...]

I mean, one minute I could be standing here looking at you, and blink my eyes; and when I reopen my eyes, I am now looking at a different being. It's that fast. It's not a slow, developing process. It isn't something like, "Beam me up, Scotty", with beams coming down from heaven in a slow change. You blink your eyes, and one minute it's there, and the next minute the person is different—is a spirit being.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁵² [...] for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, [...]

I understand that. My body is *very* corruptible. I have to face that every day. But I have to *put on* incorruption. I don't *have* it. It's like a garment; I have to be changed.

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁵³ [...] and this mortal must put on immortality.

Now, it's very hard for me to read that and imagine how anyone could think that *Paul thought* that Man was an immortal being; because Paul says "this mortal". "Mortal" means you can die, right? That's what the word means, by definition. "This mortal must *put on* immortality." We must move from a state where we are *capable* of dying to a state where we are *not* capable of dying. There's *no way* that the apostle Paul believed in the immortality of the soul. He then continues to say,

1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Death *finally loses*. When is death finally defeated, that last enemy? At the moment of the resurrection from the dead. In 1 John 3, in verse 1, John says this:

1 John 3

AKJV

¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God: [...]

² [...] and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

³ And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure.

To have that hope—the hope of being *like God*, of being *different* from what we are now, being *transformed* into something greater—should, if a person has the vision, if he has the wit to see it, if he has the desire for it, *should* begin to conduct his life in such a way that he will be there. And that conduct of the life—that comprehension of what God is doing with us—helps us to face the trials, and the troubles, and the pain, and the anguish, and the woe, and the loss in the *full realization* that every pain creates changes in us and makes us *more*. It makes us *better*. It makes us more like God. If they are *not* doing that to us, they are *slowly destroying us*. If we can just comprehend what God is doing, and what his goal is for us, it can *change* our lives.

Transcript of a
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