

Foundations 12: I Believe in ...the Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting

April 3, 2022 Sermon by Stephen Portner

1 Corinthians 15:12-28, 35-44, 50-58

We will be wrapping up our series on the Apostles' Creed. Today we focus on "**I Believe in ...the Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting.**" This is a wonderful way to wrap up our talks on the Apostles' Creed since it points to the magnificent conclusion to God's plan for salvation. This life we live now on this earth is not all there is to life. We have something much better planned for us. That news in itself should cause us to rejoice.

What happens after we die? That's a question all of us have asked, but not too many have spent the time dwelling on it. Death makes us feel uncomfortable, so we tend to avoid talking about it. But, the last I checked, the mortality rate for human beings is still hovering close to 100%. We should be curious about what happens to us after we die. Is there life after death? The topic was brought up in previous sermons and there was enough curiosity about it that we have had a Bible Study about it.

Jesus is the prototype of what happens to us after we die. Jesus is resurrected from the dead. He now has a body that can appear and disappear behind locked doors, a body that can make itself recognizable or unrecognizable as he sees fit, a body that can display nail prints and the wound in his side or one that can eat fish for breakfast. It is a body similar to the type of body we have now, but also one that so very different it is hard to comprehend to our limited minds. Jesus has promised us that if we believe in him, we also will have resurrected bodies like he has.

In other words, after we die we are not going to spend eternity as ghosts floating around. We will have tangible bodies in the same way Jesus was resurrected bodily from the dead. The people in Paul's day had questions about the resurrection of the dead. Paul addresses those questions in his first letter to the Corinthians.

Today's Scripture reading is a long reading, so I will comment on in segments. There were some who doubted that there is a resurrection of the dead. Paul deals with that in no uncertain terms.

¹² 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? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

As Paul points out, that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then we would have to say that sin was victorious. Jesus took upon himself the sin of the whole world, and if that sin kept him in the grave, then there would be no hope for us. Any preaching about "good news" would be in vain, because there would have been no good news.

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

When Paul refers to "firstfruits" he was making an analogy to a term used in agriculture. Firstfruits are the very first produce of a harvest. Jesus is the first one to be resurrected, and the only one so far to be resurrected. Paul continues:

²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he "has put everything under his feet."^(a) Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. ...

This is the promise. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead, all those who belong to Christ will also be risen from the dead. Death will no longer be the end. Death, the last enemy, will be a thing of the past. Those who live in Christ will no longer be subject to death.

Some wondered what kind of body we would have when we are risen from the dead. Paul considered such a question to be foolishness:

³⁵ But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" ³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. ³⁹ Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals

have another, birds another and fish another. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. ...

Our resurrected bodies will have some of the substance of our current bodies, but they will be bodies very different than what we have now.

Set side by side some photos of yourself. One when you were a baby. One when you were a toddler. One when you were a teenager, Maybe another from early adulthood and one of yourself right now. Do they look any different? Sure they do. Are they all of the same person? Yes. Your appearance may be different but the part of you that makes you "you" remains the same. Our resurrected bodies will be an updated version of ourselves. It will be brand new and yet it will carry enough of our current self along with it that it will still be familiar to us. Our old bodies perish, but our new bodies will not. As Paul writes:

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."¹⁰

⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"¹⁰

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Our resurrected bodies will be equipped to live the life eternal that God has prepared for us.

New creation is not a spirit-type existence where we sit endlessly on a cloud with the wings of an angel, or stand forever in a worship service that never has a benediction. Rather, all of life becomes an act of worship, and the absence of sin completely transforms the very nature of life and work.¹

According to the end of the book of Revelation, God is going to restore this earth, redeem it from the corruption that sin has caused. We will be given a new heaven and a new earth. We will be able to do all the things we enjoy doing now on this earth but without the presence of sin to stain our relationships and pollute our projects. It will be the paradise that God has always intended humanity to experience. Through Adam and Eve and the sin that we all share, paradise was lost. But we are promised, through the grace of Jesus Christ, paradise will once again be restored.

I cannot help but think of the time when we traveled through Alaska and were able to take in the beauty of God's creation. Part of the beauty of it was that it was as close to being uncorrupted by humankind that we have ever experienced. Imagine our world, as beautiful as it is now, completely restored to the beauty it was intended to have – uncorrupted, unpolluted, free from all stain. What a wonderful life everlasting it will be! And it is available to all who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Amen!

¹ Timothy Tennent, Christian Foundations, p. 58.