

Abounding in Resurrection Certainty

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

April 8, 2018

Last weekend, it was a wonderful weekend for celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Every year, we proclaim the resurrection on Easter Sunday, and because we know that people visit our church who may not know Jesus Christ personally, we like to use that opportunity every year to make sure they get a very clear gospel presentation. That's what I endeavored to do last week.

And I have to admit that I have mixed emotions about that. On the one hand, I do love the opportunity anytime I can, to preach the Gospel, knowing that there may be people who don't know Christ visiting. The resurrection itself seals the gospel and its hope, and I love to preach that doctrine with a gospel emphasis.

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And on the other hand though, I love to think about the doctrine for the resurrection, not simply as a thought for an unbeliever needing to hear about the certainty of Christ, his message, his truth, and the resurrection. I love to think about the doctrine of resurrection as well, as an encouragement for us as believers. So this Sunday is the doctrine of the resurrection for all of us. This is for us as believers.

Rather than jumping back into Luke's Gospel, I just want to take this one more Sunday to meditate on the resurrection. It'll let the truth of the resurrection produce within us all the, the joy, the hope, the encouragement that God intended for it to produce in us, because that, after all, is the intent of that great resurrection chapter 1 Corinthians 15.

So I'd like to invite you to turn to 1 Corinthians 15 in your Bibles. And I'm going to begin this morning by looking in that chapter at where we're going to end this morning. In closing out this magnificent chapter of scripture. Paul draws his instruction on the resurrection to a close with a very poignant, a very memorable exhortation to us as believers.

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That final verse there 1 Corinthians 15:58 says this,
"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always
abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your
labor is not in vain." We really need to hear that word, don't
we? We need to know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain.
That is to say, it is not *kenos*. That's the Greek word. It's
means futile, meaningless, empty.

Our labor in the Lord is not that. We need to hear that
assurance from God's word, because sometimes we as even as
believers, can be tempted to think that our labor in the Lord is
not accomplishing anything in this modern and very perplexing
world. It's not an overstatement to say that we are living in a
time of incredible change in our country in our world, I think
we all sense the, the changing winds and the changing tides of
our world. The fact is, there is no going back to what some may
describe as better days.

In fact it is foolish to think that the former days were truly
better than these days, that we live in yesterday was just a

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different generation of fallen people navigating a fallen world in their own fallen time. It's never been better or worse. It's always been bad. It's always been fallen. What's indisputable, though, is we're never going back there. Time marches on, those days, yesterday, gone, gone forever.

And what lies ahead of us seems overwhelming. Seems daunting has the sense of inevitability about it because the future is inevitable. It's going to come. Time marches on. There's a new ascendancy of economic and military power in the east. That comes at a time when many in our own nation lack any trust or confidence in the leadership of the West. And for good reason. We all know that the West is intoxicated with its sins.

Any commitment we may have had to leadership by the persuasion of moral resolve and righteous resolve that has been replaced by leadership that lacks any moral or righteous resolve, and instead wants to lead by raw power. I think ours is to be a future of coercion. Coercing external conformity to law through penalty and judges. It's gonna be through political maneuvering and military might. We may have conveniences in our modern world

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and cool little gadgets and powerful computers that fit into our pockets. But our country is drowning in a flood of sin.

And as Christians, we probably all feel a little bit like Isaiah and like him, we cry out in our own generation in light of divine holiness. Woe is me and woe to us. For we're undone. We're ruined we're lost we're a people of unclean lips, we dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. And unclean eyes and unclean ears, and unclean hearts and minds and thoughts and motives.

When you consider the news headlines. Things that are happening every single day. When we look at the kind of laws that are passed in our land. The practices of those all around us who do whatever is right in their own eyes. They shirk all accountability, all authority. The words of Proverbs 6:16-19 indict our generation for seven things that the Lord hates.

"There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are in abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet

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that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies and one who sows discord among brothers.” We all feel sullied by these kinds of cultural evils. And particularly, maybe most markedly, most obviously in our own day, our country’s sin of tax-funded abortion. Which demonstrates a deeper commitment, a national commitment to immorality. Nationally, there is blood on our hands, and the sin in our hearts, and God is taking note.

We need to remember though, as Christians we must remember, that the only truly inevitable will, the only unstoppable power in this world, it's not the power of nations and governments and kings and political parties. It's the will and the power of the all wise and all powerful God. “Therefore my brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

Those words were written to Christians who lived in the same kind of wicked generation as we do. They sensed the same kind of cultural and social sin and powerlessness in the culture that we do. They, too, were tempted to, to give up hope to be discouraged, to think that their labor in the Lord was empty or

useless, or of no real significance or meaning. But all of that is a lie. The truth is here, the truth is in resurrection power. The truth is that our God wins.

Our conviction will grow strong and our encouragement will remain steadfast and immovable when we anchor it deeply into the reality that Paul is teaching about in 1 Corinthians 15. The powerful encouragement there in verse 58 is built on the doctrine of bodily resurrection that Paul laid earlier in the chapter as indicated by that word, therefore. Therefore. Pretty important to figure out what that word therefore points back to, because it provides an anchor for our spiritual stability and also a fountain for our spiritual productivity. Stability, productivity are all at stake right here.

So what is the foundation, you know, the foundation. The foundation is what we've mentioned last week. What Paul says here it is the doctrine of the resurrection. First, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and then the resurrection of all those who were found in Jesus Christ. That's our hope. The doctrine of the resurrection is the inevitability of the will of

God. The doctrine of the resurrection is the unstoppable power of his might.

Death cannot stop him. God has declared the end from the beginning. He's told us from ancient times, things that are still yet future to us. He says, "My counsel shall stand. I will accomplish all my purpose," and we find proof of that inevitable will and dominating power in the doctrine of the resurrection. So to show you this, I'd like to draw your attention to the very heart of the chapter there in 1 Corinthians 15:20 through 28. Look at it there and follow along as I read.

"But in fact," Paul says, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every 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. For ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, ‘all things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that he is accepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.”

That section in the middle and at the heart of Chapter 15 provides the doctrinal basis for the exhortation that comes at the end of the chapter. And that's what we want to study this morning. How the resurrection is a doctrinal foundation for our lives. The doctrine of the resurrection is a solid and a firm and an utterly sufficient foundation to support us. It is a hope to motivate us to immovable steadfastness and to continuous productivity in the Lord. That's really a picture of Christian maturity. Stability, steadfastness, productivity. That's Christian maturity.

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Those who are immovable, those who are steadfast, and those who are fruitful in life, mature Christians. One who is steadfast, who is anchored in who's deeply rooted, one who's immovable, one whose immovable remains fixed by that anchor. He's not blown about by every wind of doctrine. That sure foundation provides a platform from which he can build a fruitful and joyful Christian life.

And that is what we hope to accomplish this morning is to grasp the significance of this word of encouragement, so that we, too, can live steadfast, stable, fruitful, Christian lives. So what I want to do is show you here at the beginning, two certainties from 1 Corinthians 15:20 to 28. And then circle back to verse 58 that resultant exhortation, which is actually, turns out to be a third certainty if we follow it. If we do it, okay?

We need to start though with those two certainties first certainty these are written in your bulletin, the outline is there, first certainty, you personally, you singular, will rise bodily. If you're in Christ, you will rise from the dead. Look back at verse 20. Paul begins with that statement of fact, he

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says, "But now," or as it stands, "Christ has been raised from the dead." That just sets the principle of bodily resurrection forward as a precedent that we might embrace it as a hope.

It's an affirmation that follows after the nightmare scenario that he painted for the Corinthians. He pictured for them a world in which the resurrection is not true. Why'd he do that? Why'd he want to trouble them? Because this, as incredible as it sounds, there were some, there were some within the church in Corinth who were actually doubting the doctrine of resurrection. The reason they doubt it is because the church was tolerating people in its midst who denied the concept of bodily resurrection.

Those people who were tolerated were turning around and teaching and influencing other people. Listen, the issue of teaching and influence and discipleship and mentorship is very important, isn't it? Both for good and for evil. Says back in verse 12, "If Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" Why would anybody come into a Christian church proclaiming the

resurrection of Christ? Why would anybody come into that church and teach that?

Doesn't it seem obvious that that's going to undermine the stability of Christian hope. Especially knowing how false doctrine and, undercuts the entirety of the Christian hope, what benefit did people in this day find in spreading a lie that there is no resurrection of the dead? This starts from culture. If we think about the culture in first century, the Greco-Roman world, the prevailing worldview was a philosophical dualism. Dualism, meaning two, two views of reality or two realities made up of two things, just like today's world is dominated by the error of a really radical anti-supernatural materialism.

In that day philosophical dualism was the error embraced in the first century. It was taught in their school systems. It was assumed in all their colleges and universities. Philosophical dualism sees the world of consisting of two realities, both a material reality and an immaterial reality, which is true. But it also teaches that the immaterial side, spiritual realities, are good. Matter, material realities are evil, so material

realities like the human body, that's bad, they said. The human body is bad. You can't expect it to be good. Some would teach we need to have a harsh treatment of the body. So the Stoics, the aesthetics, they said, let's, let's deny the body any pleasure because it's evil, let's starve it.

Others, probably more prevalent view. Said no, let's, let's just, let's not do that. That's uncomfortable. Let's just say the body is going its course of evil and just feed it. Who cares? It doesn't affect my spirit. Whatever happens in the body is of the body. Let's just let it go to seed. But to the Greek mind, salvation meant escaping the prison of the physical body, that the spirit might be released into the goodness and the freedom of pure spiritual reality. They saw salvation as absorption into the immaterial existence of a disembodied spirit world. That's what they believed.

You may remember the reaction of the Athenian philosophers to Paul's Gospel in Acts 17:32, it says that when they heard the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. Because that was a, that was a doctrine they mocked because to them the concept of bodily

resurrection was, was repugnant. They didn't want to stick around this body. They were prejudiced by a philosophical precommitment to this dualism.

For them, the hope of bodily resurrection promised in the Christian Gospel, the resurrection of evil matter. Why would you want to raise that? That doesn't sound to them like good news at all. Why would anybody want to spend eternity imprisoned in a physical body? Sounded absolutely absurd. That kind of error crept into the church. That kind of thinking brought in, came into the church and was spread around.

They brought it in with their, their own habitual thinking, all the believers did, and that had to be dis-habituated overtime, new habits of formed, formed in their mind, new habits of thinking, renewed minds, so where they thought of, "No. Spirit and matter, material, and immaterial, God made both and united them together in the human body and that's good. Still, they struggled with that cultural influence.

But it wasn't just the cultural influence of Greek philosophy that made Corinthian susceptible to, really, what is a soul damning error. Many of them, as it says in verses 1 to 2, 1 Corinthians 15, many of them had embraced the principle of resurrection when they embraced the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When they believe that, they went against their culture. Even if they didn't know all the implications of that when they believed that and embrace that they rejected their culture. Working out the implications of that in their life.

That's what's going on here. Paul says, "I would remind you, brothers," verses 1 and 2, "of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the gospel I preached to you—unless you believed in vain," unless you have a false faith, unless you have a false belief.

So, setting aside the believing in vain possibility for a moment and talking about the true believers, what would upset their confidence in the concept of resurrection? What would, what would make them susceptible to a, a cultural prejudice against bodily

resurrection? What would blind them to the undermining effect of believing that kind of error? I believe they came, became concerned about those who in verse 21 Paul calls them "those who have fallen asleep." That's just a sweet metaphor that Paul uses for people who die in Christ. Because for the Christian, for the true Christian death is like sleep. The spirit goes immediately to God, but the body sleeps until it's later awakened and resurrected by Christ.

These Corinthian believers, they're the first generation of Christians. They're still living in the first century, and when they receive Paul's letter, it had been about 20 years since Christ's death, burial, resurrection, ascension. And like us, they knew the promise of the angels in Acts 1:11. "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, he's going to come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." So like us, they also were eager for his return, and they expected it very quickly.

But his return didn't happen right away. After his ascension, a year passed by and then two years and then five and then 10 and then 20. And during this time of waiting, during this time of

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expectant hope, some fellow Christians began to die off. Family members, friends, loved ones, and the Christians who remained began to wonder about the hope of bodily resurrection. Because the bodies of their loved ones, their dying loved ones, remained in the grave. Still, Christ hadn't returned.

So this combination of, of sorrow on the one hand, personal grief, which believe me folks, personal grief, can change your theology. You need to be on guard when you go through times of grief and suffering and trial that you don't alter your theology to make it more comfortable for yourself. That's what was going on here. Combination of sorrow and immaturity made them susceptible to this cultural prejudice against bodily resurrection.

They begin to listen to; they began to come under the influence of those who taught error in their midst and some succumbed to this temptation. They capitulated to the culture. They listened to a false and yet seemingly comforting bit of false doctrine. They began to doubt what they had originally believed and

embraced and hoped in. You know, obviously they didn't start out with any intention of denying Christ.

But by grasping for some immediate sense of comfort about the condition of their loved ones and the fate of their loved ones, they were, they were in danger really, of, of selling the whole shop, giving away the whole store or undermining the entire foundation of their actual hope. That's where the abandonment of the doctrine of bodily resurrection was taking them.

So Paul as a tender pastor, he needed to correct this error. He needed to demonstrate its destructiveness. He needed to reestablish them in their faith and so he repitched the gospel truth to them in verses 1 through 11. And then in verses 12 to 19, he painted a picture of a world without resurrection. Let's see what that looks like. Look at verse 13 to 19. He asks in verse 12 how can some you say there is no resurrection of the dead and then he says this, "But if there is no resurrection of the dead," hold the phone because, "not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain," empty, meaningless, futile,

nothing, of no account. Verse 15, "We're even found to be misrepresenting God."

So he says, basically take up stones to stone us. Because we testified about God, that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. "For if the dead or not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, you're still in your sins. And then those also have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." It paints this miserable picture, right? All is lost.

I don't have time really to go into the philosophical implications of denying the reality of the resurrection. I'll do that at some point in the future, but basically. All reality unravels if that's not true. But after he helps them to imagine this dark and meaningless world without the doctrine of bodily resurrection, after he, after he shows them that the very thing you're concerned about the death of your loved ones in Christ. After he shows them that they're lost. They're gonna be stuck in

the grave. There's no hope for them. He calls them back, brings them back to reality.

He gives them an emphatic affirmation in verse 20 and it really does come as a welcome relief. After that dark, ugly world, he says, "But in fact," or as it stands in reality, "Christ has been raised from the dead." And that fact is as firm and as stubborn and as irrefutable as the evidence of Christ's empty tomb. We talked about that a little bit last week, and that's really good news.

Really good news because that fact is what gives us the certainty that we, too, will rise from the dead and our dead loved ones as well. Gives us hope that our, our gospel preaching is not in vain, that it actually means something that actually is true. Take a look at verses 20 to 23 again. "In fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has also come the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ also shall all be made alive. But each in his own

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order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ.”

That's Paul's pastoral answer to the problem of those who've died in Christ, those who have fallen asleep prior to Christ's return. So single answer that it's got a twofold reason. Basically, the answer is this though. Wait on the Lord. Wait, keep waiting. God will accomplish his will. That's Psalm 27:14, right? Wait for the Lord. Be strong. Let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord.

Beloved, when there's something we don't understand. When there's something that troubles us, when there's something that hurts, a pain that doesn't make sense, we need to look expectantly and confident, trusting hope. We need to settle our heart. What God takes, whatever time he wants to take to accomplish his will. Our confident hope, our waiting on the Lord, it will never be disappointed. It will never be ashamed. If we're waiting on his revealed will because, as it says in Isaiah 40, 46:8, “Remember this and stand firm.” Remember what?

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Don't be moved or persuaded against the truth that you know, because in Isaiah 46:9, very next verse, he says, "Remember the former things of old; I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my good purpose." That's the kind of confidence that the sure word of God gives us.

Let's not look at the problems around us. Let's look here in black and white what God revealed. It's a confidence in the sure word of God that informs Paul's answer to the Corinthians verses 20 to 23. "Wait on the Lord," Paul says, "because number one of the principle of the first fruits. And number two, the principle of imputation." Both are there and verses 20 to 23.

He mentions the principle of the first fruits. And bolsters that principle with the principle of imputation. Then he returns to the order of resurrection according to that principle of the first fruit. So let's talk first about the first fruits, the principle of the first fruits. It demonstrates that principle

demonstrates the organic connection between Christ and Christians. Christ and Christians.

Such a beautiful picture of resurrection there, taken from an agricultural world, but also from the practice of Israel in the Old Testament by law. It gives us such great encouragement that we will indeed rise from the dead, just as Bi, the Bible proclaims. Paul calls Christ the first fruits that takes us back to the first fruits offering that was described in Leviticus 23:9 to 21. Just jot down Leviticus 23 and look at it later, but God required there the Israelites to bring the first portion of their harvest to the Lord at kind of like a thanksgiving offering for his provision, an acknowledgement that he is God. He is the giver of all good things.

That first fruits offering could come from the harvest in its raw state like grains or fruits. Or it could come from prepared foods like wine, oil, flour, dough. But here's how they basically did it at the time of the first fruits offering at the beginning of the barley harvest, all the inhabitants of the village would gather their offerings together in a cart and they

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would put them in the cart and some of the men would travel together as representatives of that village, making their way up in ascending the heights. Up to Jerusalem, the city perhaps singing one of the Psalms of Ascent that are found in Psalms 120 to 134, as they made their journey.

When they were getting close to the city of Jerusalem, that party would send a messenger ahead to announce their arrival to the officiating priest, to let him know the offerings are coming. They would all enter into Jerusalem with singing, and once they entered into the temple, the priests would take some of those offerings and they would wave a representative sample before the Lord. And then together recite the story of Jacob's sojourn to Egypt, and their deliverance from Egypt.

After spending a night in joyful celebration in Jerusalem, the worshipers returned to their homes. Return to their fields. Return to harvest the rest of the crop. They gathered the food together in a spirit of thanksgiving because they knew in their hearts they'd acknowledged God first. They're mindful of how

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gracious God had been to provide for them, provide for their families.

The whole field belonged to God, right? The whole crop belonged to God. They acknowledged that they acknowledge that their whole life belongs to God. Even the energy that they have, the intellect that they have the, the sowing, the reaping and all the rest. They sowed seed, that God provided for them. They cultivated a field which God created, which God watered and caused to grow. Then they harvested the crop which God brought to maturity. So the first fruits offering, it's just an acknowledgment of all that, that the whole crop, along with the whole world and they themselves belong to God. God did it all. And they eat of his bounty.

The first fruits and the rest of the harvest represents there an organic connection. Because the first fruits and the rest of the harvest are the same kind and the same substance, they're of the same quality. They come from the same field as the rest of the harvest. No doubt whatsoever that the rest of the harvest is going to be gathered, just as the first fruits were.

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So if Christ is the first fruits of an offering unto God, what are we as believers? We're the harvest. Who's doing the harvesting? God himself. He brought Christ to himself. He's going to bring the rest of us as well. He's interested in that. It's an organic connection. We're of the same kind and substance as Christ. We're of the same quality of the same field. By God's will, and we're of the same seed were cultivated by the same Holy Spirit, which God watered and caused to grow. We're harvested when were brought into maturity by the same God and brought into glory.

But the Holy Spirit deepens our assurance of our future resurrection because it's not here, just the organic connection that guarantees our future resurrection. Christ the first fruits organically connected to the rest of the harvest, us. If the one is harvested, so is the other. There's also here a legal connection that guarantees our resurrection. How do we know that we will share in his resurrection? What assurance do we have that after the first fruits offering the rest of the harvest is actually going to happen? Because God considers it a matter of justice. Justice.

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Look at verses 21 to 22 right there in the center, "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." That right there is the principle of imputation. It's the principle of a, a legal connection between Christ, the first fruits, and then the rest of the harvest. Our resurrection rests on this unshakable foundation established by the principle of divine justice.

Paul describes, if you just jot down in your bibles, Romans 5 :12 to, 12 to 21. He describes imputation in more detail there, but we find here in verses 18 and 19, a two-verse summary. Or, or I should say not here in 1 Corinthians 15, in Romans 5:18 to 19, there's a two-verse summary of this. "Therefore, as one trespass lead to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

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By Adam's disobedience, his transgression of the clear command of God, he led the entire human race into sin. Resulting in all of us being made sinners resulting in our sinfulness, resulting in our condemnation. Adam was our representative head. He is our legal representative and he failed. By a man came death. Death in principle, and all men die, not just in principle, but practically in reality.

The converse , though, is true as well. By Christ's obedience, his life of general obedience to all that God commanded, and his unique and special obedience to what God commanded him in particular, that is to die on the cross for the sins of his people. By Christ's obedience, the many will be made righteous. They're justified by God, which is evident in the fact that they are being sanctified by God and those who have been justified who are being sanctified, they will one day be glorified by God. Remember that from Romans 8:29 to 30.

So Jesus Christ, the last Adam, the representative head of all those who believe, he is our legal representative and he obeyed God. He pleased God and he was rewarded by God. So by a man came

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the resurrection from the dead, by a man came the principle of life. And those who are in Christ will all be made alive in reality. Adam and Christ, they stand as representative heads of two races of humanity. Two races, the race of humanity in Adam, will all follow its representative head into death. The race of humanity in Christ will follow its representative heading to resurrection and eternal life.

So if you're in Christ, justified by God through faith, being sanctified by the spirit in the, in the faith of obedience, you'll one day be glorified with Christ. This is an issue of legal connection. This is an issue of divine justice. So by organic connection, by legal connection, the principle of the first fruits and the principle of imputation, Paul gives us absolute certainty of our connection to Christ in verses 20 to 22. That guarantees our bodily resurrection.

If you are in Christ, your resurrection will happen because he has risen, you too will rise. In Christ shall all be made alive, but each in his own order. The word order refers to a rank or a formation like the ranks of military troops. So just as you see,

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the ranks of troops marching together in formation, here's the formation: Christ, the first fruits at the head, all those who are, are there at his coming. Those who belong to Christ, they're in formation following him.

Notice how Paul expanded, "those who are asleep in Christ, verse 20, to "those who are Christ's at his coming" here in verse 23. So it's not just the dead in Christ who are going to rise with Christ at his coming. All Christians, every single one without exception, will rise together at his coming. That's found expanded a bit in 1 Thessalonians, 4:16 to 17, "The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, the voice of an archangel, with the sound of the trumpet of God and," what? "the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together," *harpazo*, be raptured, caught up together, "with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."

Well, that's the first certainty in this text. If you are in Christ, you will rise from the dead, bodily just like Christ did. And beloved, that fact that certainty, gives us great hope,

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doesn't it? We need to stop and just think about what that means for each of us individually. People are worried, anxious about their bodies, their sicknesses and diseases, the potential of sickness and disease. What happens when you get some kind of a feeling you're not familiar with? If you don't go to the doctor, you Google, right? You type and you say, what is this thing? Cancer. And you know, you don't know. People are worried.

Listen until God destroys this current world, creates a new heavens and a new earth, sickness and disease are going to continue. We do what we can to mitigate the curse, to lessen pain and suffering. We're grateful to God for the progress of medical options for us. Sometimes we do find that the cure is worse than the disease, don't we? We need to realize, though, in all that striving and all that concern, all that anxiety, no amount of vitamins, exercise, good dieting, pharmaceuticals, doctors, nurses, advancement of medicine, all the rest can stave off the reality of death.

As Christians, our hope is not found in beating sickness. It's not found in us having power over disease. It's not in finding

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the fountain of youth. It's not in cryogenic freezing, putting our brain on ice until medical science catches up and fixes our bodies. Our hope is in bodily resurrection. And here we find a firm and certain hope, as Paul says in verse 42 to 44. I'm so thankful whatever is sown perishable. Uh, no, I am perishable. Are you not?

"What is sown perishable, is raised imperishable. If it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, but it's raised in power. It's sown a natural body, but it's raised a spiritual body." There in verse 49, "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust," that's Adam, "we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven," who is Jesus Christ.

Well, that's the first certainty. We will rise from the dead. We need to let that sink in. We need to let that hope just wash over our minds and transform the way we think. Not only the way we think, but the way we act, even the way we Google or let me just suggest this, don't Google. Just don't do it.

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Let's consider the second certainty here. And consider the final conquering of the greatest boogeyman ever, right, death itself. Second Certainty, God is going to reign triumphantly. God will reign triumphantly. The first point has to do about our personal, our personal participation in bodily resurrection. But Paul, he didn't stop and just there in giving us hope. He wants us to be encouraged by a hope that's outside of what happens to us personally.

Think about what happens to the glory of God. He wants us to be encouraged by what the resurrection represents, namely the full, the final triumph of God over all hostile forces in the universe. "In Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits and then at his coming those who belong to Christ." And verse 24 says, "Then comes the end." Then comes the end. It's an ordering of future events here. First, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is now past tense to us. Secondly, the resurrection of believers. We're waiting for that patiently, and then third, then comes the end. That's the ordering of these events.

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And then the rest of verses 24 to 28 are really an expansion of, an elaboration of those two little words, "the end." Quite a bit of head, ahead of us. It's going to usher in the *eschaton*, the last things quite a bit ahead of us, which is going to bring to final fulfillment all that will culminate and redound to the full glory of God. What Paul calls the end is when Christ hands over the rule, the reign of the universe to his father.

But before he's ready to do that, Christ still has some work to do. First, verses 24 to 25, Christ is going to abolish every challenge to God sovereign rule. I cannot wait for that to culminate. "Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power, for he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet."

The messianic reign of Christ is a reign of conflict. It's a reign of conflict. His ministry on earth was a time of conflict ending in his death at the hands of sinners. His death on the cross, that didn't end his messianic mission though. He has more to do. He has more to accomplish in the fulfillment of all God's

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promises to Israel. All his promises to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. All his promises to David and to the redeemed of Israel in the New Covenant.

Christ is coming back. When he does, he will come, again in conflict, judgment. Judgment will fall. He's coming ruling in the power of his sovereign authority. The word, abolish, there can mean wipe out or set aside or bring to an end, and that's exactly what he's gonna do with all rule and authority and power. Those terms rule, authority, power, all often used to speak of hostile spiritual forces. Demons that are set into opposition to God. The word rule is the word *arche*. It's a command of a superior over inferior.

The word authority is *exousia*. And there's an emphasis there on legal recognition of authority and power. The word for power is the word *dynamis*, which is the ability to project authority, to exercise rule and to dominate. So if it helps, think of this versus involving the three branches of American government. You got the rule referring to the Judicial Branch, Authority, referring to the legislative branch, and power refers to the

executive branch. All three of those aspects of government. Legislature, judiciary, executive aspect, all those are present in any type of human dominion, whether there's a monarchy, a democracy, totalitarian dictatorship, that kind of organization doesn't just exist on a human level, it exists in a spiritual level as well.

"We know," Ephesians 2:2 "the prince of the power of the air is at work in the sons of disobedience." Satan and his demonic subjects are all at work to influence and govern the rule the authority of power and, and all that in the human realm as well. All of this is a giant satanic conspiracy against the Lord of Hosts. And as Paul says, when Christ returns, he puts an end to everything; all of it. He ends all the opposition, opposition of every hostile force. When he comes, he takes over, he says, I'm in charge.

According to Psalm 2:9, Christ is going to break them all with a rod of iron. He will dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. He must reign verses, verse 25, 1 Corinthians 15, "until he's put all his enemies under his feet." The word, enemy, there

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refers to the, the, it's a, it's a word actually related to the word for enmity or hatred. All God's enemies are marked by an inner hatred of God that is manifest in outward opposition.

Whether it's active hostility against him or passive resistance, he's put all in his enemies under his feet, an allusion to Psalm 110:1, "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Every enemy from the hostile rebel to the passive resistor, every enemy, whether, immaterial or material, every enemy whether demonic or human: footstool for Christ's feet.

Beloved, do you, like me, you tire of hearing people blasphemed your Lord and savior? Do you feel indignation when your God is mocked and rejected and defied? Rest assured, God sits above it unaffected by any of that rebellion. He's not concerned, he's not wringing his hands. In fact, he laughs, Psalm 2, he laughs at those who defy him because he knows he will soon put the world to rights. He will call everyone to account. Christ will use the most powerful men of the world. The most powerful in the demonic realm as his footstool.

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At once, all his enemies will be under his feet. They'll be defeated and subdued, and abolished, just like Joshua grabbed the Canaanite kings and said, men come over here, put your feet on their necks, stand on them and show them you dominate. Christ is gonna do that. No more necessity after that for him to reign. He fulfills his mission as the Messianic king. He fulfills and accomplishes his task.

I know, like you, I rejoice to see that day. I, I rejoice to see every knee bow before the power and authority of the glorified Christ. There's even a better news here though, after abolishing every rebel force, second, look at verse 26, Christ is going to abolish death itself. The last enemy to be destroyed is death, "for God has put all things in his subjection under his feet." The last of Christ's enemies is death, which Paul personifies here.

Why does death remain as the last enemy? Why does it have to stick around? Why do we have to suffer under death? Because, beloved, death remains as the wages of sin and as long as

sinners remain, as long as hostile forces remain opposed to God's will, death must remain. Christ actually uses death like a tool for the judgment of the wicked. And when the judgment is finished. He's gonna put that tool away. He's gonna destroy death itself.

The saints will have risen from the dead. Death no longer will have any victims. Death will be forever abolished. Beginning in verse 27 is a reference to what we read earlier from Psalm 8 in verse 6. That beautiful reflection on man's place in God's creation. And in that Psalm, David, as you heard, rejoices in the fact that God has crowned mankind with glory and honor. He's "given him dominion over the work of his hands," God, "has put all things under his feet."

And Paul uses that text here in 1 Corinthians 15:27 as a reminder that all things are not yet under man's feet. So when we see loved ones die in Christ and not yet raised from the dead, we get it. It's all part of the plan. We don't need to worry. Death remains because it subdues, has a stranglehold on the entire human race, and it's a continual reminder of Adam's

failure to fulfill God's original purpose. It's a reminder of our sin. It's a reminder of our need for salvation.

Actually, death is the great equalizer and we all fear it. It's actually useful in evangelism to point to the fact that you are not going to live forever. One day you are going to stand before a holy God to give an account. You're gonna die. We look to Christ, though, as believers. He is the last Adam and he succeeds where the first Adam failed. That's the point.

As we said earlier of the author of Hebrews, who also quotes from Psalm 8:6. And then he writes this in verses 8 to 9 in Hebrews 2, "Now in putting everything in subjection to mankind, God has left nothing outside his control. But at present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. We do see him, Jesus, who is for a little while, made lower than the angels, and he's crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

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Grace

But then this a little later, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." God put everything under the feet of mankind. But mankind failed in Adam.

Only Christ could fulfill all God's intention for mankind. The devil, his weapon of death, is a vanquished foe. It remains as a tool, but Christ, once he completes his work, once he subdues all enemies, he'll subdue and abolish death itself and forever. That's God's plan.

So first, Christ is going to end every opposition to God's rule. Second, God is going to abolish death itself and then finally, when every foe is vanquished, when death itself is vanquished, when it's no longer needful, Christ is going to hand the authority that he received from God back to God. Look at the verses, verse 27 middle of the verse to verse 28.

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When it says, "all things are put in subjection," it's plain that God has accepted who put all things in subjection under Christ. "When all things are subjected to him, then the," son of him," son himself will also be subjected to God, who put all things in subjection under Christ, that God may be all in all." In other words. The God who originally put all things in subjection under Christ, he clearly retains his place of authority over Christ. He sits above the messianic rule of Christ on Earth and God is all in all.

Once Christ has vanquished his enemies, when he was abolished, all Rule, authority, and power when he's abolished all death, he will be raining without opposition. And when that task on Earth is finished, it's accomplished be nothing left to do but to hand back to his father the rule and authority he was given to restore the universe to its proper order. Sin, the Devil, death, run amok in the world right now but God created for his glory, for the good of his people, God sent his Christ with authority to sort everything out and sort he has done.

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He has conquered death in the very beginning with his death on the cross and rising from the dead. And he is now working in his people. He will one day vanquish all rule, all authority. He will vanquish the devil. He will destroy death itself. It's the death of death and the death of Christ, as John Owens' title to a famous work. His work was finished at the cross. The cleanup is going on right now, taking in place in earnest between the second coming and the final judgments.

Once Christ is finished cleaning up, he'll hand that authority he's been given back to his father verse 28, "so that God," and that's a purpose clause there, "so that God will be all in all." Our great God and savior in all his Trinitarian glory will be all that he is in all his fullness, without impediment without resistance no rival to his glory.

Listen, if you're in Christ. You're gonna rise from the dead, personally, that's a personal reflection on the reality of resurrection. But if you're in Christ also, you will rejoice. You'll be there to rejoice at the end of the age when God is all in all. When his triumph over all things, through the power that

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raised Christ from the dead, when his triumph is manifest. Does that encourage you? I know that we still deal in the here and now. We're in a world of sorrow and sin and death and a blasphemous culture.

But doesn't it give you strength to know that you will rise from the dead when Christ returns, that you know the story of the end of the ages? God wins. Upon those two certainties, you will rise bodily, God will reign triumphantly. Paul sets this exhortation at the end of this magnificent chapter. Our final point for this morning, you can go to back to 1 Corinthians 15:58. It's a therefore, therefore abound in resurrection certainty. That's the point in your outline abound in resurrection certainty, but it does become for us a third certainty in the text.

"Therefore, my beloved brothers be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." Just a quick overview of that verse.

First, be steadfast. The word *hedraios*, which is stand firm.

It's firmly established. Paul uses a related word *hedraioma* in 1 Timothy 3:15, where it's translated as foundation, as buttress.

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The idea is to remain fixed, steadfast, established, anchored deeply into a rock solid foundation. What foundation? Look at the, therefore, and go back to those verses in the chapter you will rise from the dead? God triumphs, resurrection certainty.

Next word be immovable. That's the word, *ametakinetos*, which the last part of that word is the root word in the word kinetic refers to something that's always in motion, motion, kinetic. So *meta*, with, *kinetos*, which is, motion; with motion. But then there's a, an alpha privative on the front of the word. It's a prefix that makes that whole thought negative, not in motion. Not with a bunch of motion, not moving around all the time. Related verb *metakineo* refers to something that's in swift motion, constantly changing. Paul says, here, don't be like that. Don't be constantly changing, don't be in constant flux and change, be immovable.

Final word here be abounding. From a steadfast immovable foundation, we stand on a platform from which we can and must abound in the work of the Lord. The word abounding is the word *perisseuo*. It's a, it's a really energetic word in it indicates

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a richness, a super abundance and continuous progress in that richness and super abundance. And the continuous idea is found in the, in the first modifier too, always abounding. But the abounding here is not without direction.

It's not aimless, abounding, it's not whimsical abounding, it's not dissipated energy, it's not abounding according to your own thinking according to, like, well, God gave me a ministry and I kinda have to do my own thing going. It's not that. It's abounding in a specific direction. It's abounding in a very particular way. We must abound in what? The work of the Lord. The work of the Lord.

Since we're interested in the Lord's work, then we need to look to the Lord and his word to find out how the, do the Lord's work in the Lord's way. We need to line up our life goals with the Lord's goals, so that we can attain those goals by doing his work in his way. And that is why, beloved, it is so important for us to stay anchored so deeply in God's word, so we're steadfast, immovable, never questioning what the Lord wants us to do at any given time. There's no abounding growth in someone

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who's not deeply anchored into Christian doctrine. There's no abounding growth for people who are light in truth and superficial in thinking. There's no abounding growth for those who wander from thing to thing, who flit and flutter like a hummingbird, always finding the best nectar.

We have to remain steadfast, immovable, abounding in the work the Lord prescribes and to do the work in the manner he circumscribes. What is the Lord's work? Not a big mystery. We find that in our Lord's Great Commission we could point to a lot of passages, but Matthew 28, "Go therefore make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

One command: make disciples. That's the specific direction. Several modifying participles, go, baptizing, teaching. That's a particular way we are to fulfill the Lord's specific command. The church is not an organization that is to provide avenues for social welfare. It's not a social justice organization. Church

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is not just a, a community group where lonely people can come and make friends and do things together.

Church is not a youth organization catering to those who are either youth by chronology or youth by maturity. Church is not an entertainment center providing religiously themed content to distract our itching ears. Church isn't a counseling center providing therapy to salve the religiously discomfoted. The church is, in the words of the apostle Paul, the household of God. Which is the Church of the Living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

The way the church supports and defends the truth, the way it protects the truth is by constantly preaching the truth and teaching the truth. We hold onto it and we guard it by giving it away. We go out, we make disciples and when we find a true disciples regenerated by the Holy Spirit, confessing that faith once for all delivered to the saints, we recognize the sovereign work of God by baptizing that person into the Trinitarian faith.

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Interesting, the baptism candidates here begin with this rudimentary knowledge of the very profoundness of all mysteries, that of the Holy Trinity and the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Assumes some instruction here, profound doctrinal element in this endeavor, called the work of the Lord, isn't there? Which is why making disciples begins with baptizing them into the church with Trinitarian theology, and it continues with teaching these disciples for the rest of their lives.

We don't just teach facts, we teach behavior. We prescribe what the Lord prescribes, and we expect disciples to hear the voice of the Chief Shepherd and to follow the Chief Shepherd where he commands them to go, to live as he commands them to live and to do what he commands them to do. We do that together beloved, for the rest of our lives in this local church. That's the joy of abounding in the work of the Lord, which springs forth from resurrection certainty.

And that's how the res, exhortation of verse 58 becomes a third certainty. Because when we do the Lord's work in the Lord's way, our work in the Lord is not in vain. That's a certainty. It's

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Greeley

not *kenos*, meaningless, empty; rather it's filled with meaning, it's filled with eternal significance because all our work in the Lord, in contrast to everything else we do, all our work in the Lord will last forever. When we do that in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, which is growing more evil by the day, we shine like lights in the world.

I know Easter Sunday has passed. I just wanted to preach the resurrection to you one more time and today for the saints. Those two resurrection certainties that you will rise bodily and God will reign triumphantly. Those certainties mean you have every reason to eagerly obey Paul's exhortation here to abound in the work of the Lord. When you obey that exhortation, you find a third certainty comes into fruition, becomes visible to you, becomes the hope that you, you rest in. Your work for the Lord and in the Lord remains forever. I hope that's an encouragement to you all this morning. Let's bow together for word of prayer.

Our God, thank you for raising Christ from the dead. We see in the resurrection of Jesus Christ the inevitability of your declared will. We're thankful for that that your decree has come

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to pass in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also see in the resurrection of Christ your immutable power, unchanging, forever unchanging. And we know that that same power is at work for our good, for those of us who are in Christ. We have firm confidence that we too, like Christ, will rise from the dead. That's your promise.

You fulfilled your promise to Christ and now you will fulfill your promise to each one of us who trust in Christ. We pray that that would be a great joy and encouragement for us and a hope for us, as we never lose heart, never growing weary and doing what is good. For in due season we will reap if we faint not. Let us work hard until the coming of Christ or until we're taken to be with him. For your glory, Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.