

The Resurrection of the Body

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[0 : 0 0] But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening for a short while, could we turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read? 2 Corinthians 4, and if we read again at verse 16.

2 Corinthians 4, and verse 16, where Paul writes, So we do not lose heart, though our outer self, or the outer man, as it is in the AV, is wasting away, and our inner man has been renewed day by day.

For this light and momentary affliction is working for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal. Then he says, For we know that if the tent, that is, our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

When the game is over, it all goes back in the box.

[1 : 2 8] When the game is over, it all goes back in the box. That's the title of John Ortberg's best-selling Christian book. When the game is over, it all goes back in the box.

John Ortberg, he's a Christian author who has written many books, books you might have heard of their titles. If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat. That was one book.

The other book was, and he's written many other besides, Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them. And they're great titles for books, but they also have great content. Because the book, when the game is over, it all goes back into the box.

That book was inspired by something that happened when John Ortberg was a young boy. He spent the summer learning how to play Monopoly.

I'm sure that the children here, they know what Monopoly is. Maybe they've played it. When I first joined the MacVicar family, we would play Monopoly every new year.

[2 : 3 0] It was good until Alison started cheating. She didn't really. But, you know, as the game Monopoly, it's a property game. It's where you buy property, you make investments, you build houses, you then build hotels, which adds value to your property.

Then you collect debt if somebody lands on your property. You avoid going to jail if you can. You take chances, you pay fines, and you collect £200 every time you pass go.

But, you know, when John Ortberg was young, he spent one summer holiday learning how to play Monopoly. Because he was determined to beat his granny. And by the end of the summer, he did.

He played a tactical and ruthless game where he gained and he gleaned all of his granny's money. And eventually his granny was bankrupt. She was totally bankrupt.

She had no money and she had no property left. The granny was completely broke. So the game was over. But it was then that John Ortberg's godly granny reminded him about the solemn and sobering reality of life.

[3 : 37] That when the game is over, it all goes back in the box. When the game is over, it all goes back in the box. In other words, it doesn't matter how much property we own or the investments we make or even the money we possess.

It doesn't matter who we are or what we've achieved or how much we've earned or how many accolades we have. It doesn't matter whether we built houses or built hotels or took chances or paid fines or went to prison.

None of it matters because we can't take any of it with us. And then when life is over, when the game is over, it must all go back in the box.

You know, that's why the resurrection of our body is so important. Because how we are raised from our box in the grave on the last day will determine where we spend eternity.

Which obviously raises the question for you and I. Will we be raised up to the glory of heaven? Or will we be raised up to the gloomy darkness of hell?

[4 : 52] I know this is what we're thinking about this evening as we consider one of the closing statements in the Apostles' Creed. We're thinking about that statement, the resurrection of the body.

The resurrection of the body. And as you know, we're being called in the Apostles' Creed to believe it and to confess this creed. So if you have it in front of you, or if you've memorized it off by heart by now, please say it with me.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

[6 : 03] Amen. And so we're considering that third last statement, the resurrection of the body. And I'd just like us to think about this statement under two headings this evening.

Two headings. Resting in the grave and raised up in glory. Resting in the grave and raised up in glory. So first of all, resting in the grave.

Resting in the grave. Look at verse 1 of chapter 5. Paul says, We know that if the tent, that is, our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. Now, as many of you know, I love the Shorter Catechism. It's a brilliant document.

It was produced in the 17th century to clearly and even concisely teach us the doctrines that are taught from Scripture. And I'd encourage everyone to read the Shorter Catechism.

[7 : 08] And if you can, memorize it. Because like many privileged people from our communities, I was taught the Catechism from a young age in Sunday school.

Or it was present in Sunday school. I never actually got past question 31. What is effectual calling? But you know, my favorite Catechism, and it's the Catechism I often quote at the graveside of a Christian.

It's question 37. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? And you probably know the answer. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory.

And their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves until the resurrection. You know, it's a beautiful Catechism that tells us and teaches us that when a Christian dies, they fall asleep in Jesus.

They close their eyes in this world for the last time. And they open their eyes face to face with Jesus. And that was the promise of Jesus.

[8 : 22] That was the promise of Jesus to the thief on the cross. You remember where Jesus turned to him and said, Today, today you will be with me in paradise. That was the promise of Paul to the church in Corinth.

He said to them that although we see now through a glass darkly, yet one day we shall see him face to face. And even as John, the apostle, he assured the early church, he said, When we see him, when we see him, we shall be like him and see him even as he is.

And you know, what's remarkable is that a thousand years before John and Jesus and Paul, we have David. King David was praying, praying about the resurrection of the body.

He was praying about it in Psalm 17, the psalm we were just singing. And what did he say at the end of that psalm? He said, But as for me, I thine own face in righteousness will see.

And with thy likeness when I wake, I satisfied shall be. You know, my friends, Scripture repeatedly reminds us and reaffirms to us that the death of a Christian is a beautiful moment.

[9 : 37] And I know that some of you, you have been present at the death of a Christian and you find that it is a beautiful moment. And in many ways, that's what Paul is assuring us here when he says, We do not lose heart.

For we know, in verse 1, we know that if the tent, that is our earthly home, if it is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Now, yesterday, the boys in our house, they put up a tent in the garden, probably a bit too early before the summer. But they put it up. And as you might guess, it's an army tent. It's a tent that David got for Christmas.

He wants everything army. So in our back garden at the manse, we have a military defense camp, Camp Barbas. So don't come too close.

It's well protected. But you know, what's interesting is that prior to his preaching ministry, and this is for the children, prior to his preaching ministry, the apostle Paul was a tent maker to trade.

[10 : 42] And here in verse 1 and verse 2, Paul uses this very vivid image and illustration of our bodies as a tent. He calls it an tent, an outer shell that houses our soul.

But because of sin, he says, our outer shell is wasting away. It's perishing. The outward man, he says there in verse 16, the outward man is wasting away.

It's perishing. But Paul assures us that even if our earthly tent dies and is destroyed and returns to the dust, Paul assures us that even if that happens, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, a house that is eternal in the heavens.

And you know, is that not what Jesus assured the disciples in the upper room? When they were devastated and distraught at the thought of Jesus leaving them. And Jesus speaks to his disciples in John 14, and he gives to them, he assures them that they have a building not made with hands, but it's eternal in the heavens and it's been prepared for them.

Jesus said to his disciples, he said, let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me, in my father's house and many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you, but I go to prepare a place for you.

[12 : 05] And if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also. And you know, my friend, when you hear those words from the lips of Jesus, do they not remind you just about the glory of our gospel?

That Jesus Christ was raised. He has been resurrected. He has been highly exalted. As we were singing earlier in Psalm 68, Thou hast, O Lord most glorious, ascended up on high, and in triumph victorious led.

Captive captivity. Jesus has ascended to the right hand of his Father, not only to intercede for us, but also to prepare a place for us.

That's his promise. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, I will come again for you. And I will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

And so, you know, the wonder is that Jesus is preparing a place for us. And while we are here, we are being prepared for that place.

[13 : 19] He's begun that good work in us. He promises to bring it on to completion. And it will be completed when we are with him in glory in our resurrected bodies.

But as Paul says here, in our preparation, right here, right now, he says, in our preparation for the Father's house, we groan.

He says in verse 2, Verse 4, My friend, we groan in our earthly tent when we experience and we encounter the sin.

And the stresses and the stresses and the sicknesses and the sufferings and the sorrows of this life. We groan in our earthly tent when we continue to decline and deteriorate and decay.

We groan as the outer shell for our soul struggles. It struggles with the agonies and the ailments of life. We groan when we are confronted with the painful reality and finality of death.

[14 : 47] And, you know, that's why Jesus groaned at the grave of Lazarus. We're told that he groaned in his spirit. He groaned and he wept at what death is and what death does.

Jesus groaned and Jesus wept. And, you know, people will tell us today that death is the most natural thing in the world. Death is the most natural thing in the world.

But that's a lie. That's a lie. Jesus groaned at the grave of Lazarus because death is unnatural. Jesus didn't create us to die.

He created us to live. He created us to live life and to enjoy life by glorifying and enjoying God. So, death is not a natural process.

It's unnatural. We were created to live. Death is an enemy. And that's what Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15. Death is the last enemy. But the glory of the gospel is that death is a defeated enemy.

[15 : 56] Death is a destroyed enemy. And death has been defeated and destroyed by the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul says, behold, I tell you a mystery.

He says this in 1 Corinthians 15. Behold, I tell you a mystery. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, the dead will rise, will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. And when that happens, says Paul, when that happens, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

Paul then asks, O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Thanks be to God, he says. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Death is a defeated enemy. Death is a destroyed enemy. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And you know, it was the English Puritan, Edmund Barker.

[17 : 11] He said, everyone has two great works to do in this world. To live well and to die well. Everyone has two great works to do in this world.

To live well and to die well. And we were sharing about this with the office bearers on Tuesday evening when we were studying the book Faithful Leaders.

And I was saying to them that I believe that my role and my responsibility as your minister, besides many other things, I believe that my role and my responsibility is to encourage you and even to try and enable you to live well and to die well.

And so if you're my unconverted or uncommitted friend, whether you're here or at home, I want you to live well and to die well by confessing Jesus as your Lord and your Savior.

And if you're my Christian friend, I want you to live well by looking to Jesus and loving Jesus and leaning upon Jesus. And I want you to die well by being confident in Jesus, committed to Jesus and convinced that you belong to Jesus.

[18 : 39] I want you to live well and to die well. My friend, my love for you and my longing for you is that you will fall asleep in Jesus and immediately pass into glory.

My love for you and my love for you is that you will fall asleep in Jesus and pass into glory. And your body, says the catechism, your body, still being united to Christ, will rest in your grave until that great resurrection morning.

And at the resurrection, you will be raised up in glory, which is what I'd like us to consider secondly. Raised up in glory.

So resting in the grave and then raised up in glory. Raised up in glory. Look at verse 4. Paul says, For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord.

[19 : 56] For we walk by faith and not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage. And we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. Now I mentioned earlier that my favorite catechism is question 37.

What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? But it's question 38 that asks, What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

And we're told that at the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted on the day of judgment. They will be made perfectly blessed and go into the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

You know, they're wonderful catechisms because they not only assure us that when a Christian falls asleep in Jesus, that their body, which has gone back into the box and returns to the ground to decay into the dust from where it came from.

But more than that, more than that, and this is what I find so comforting about the death of a Christian. Their grave belongs to Jesus. Their grave belongs to Jesus.

[21 : 07] They are united to Christ. They are in union with Christ. Their grave belongs to Christ. You know, which obviously raises the question, for me and for you, when you die, not if you die, but when you die, will you die well?

Will you die in Christ? Will you fall asleep in Jesus? Will your grave belong to Jesus? Will your grave belong to Jesus?

Because the thing is, when Jesus redeems you by his precious blood, he redeems you both soul and body. And that even in death, you're still united to Christ.

You're still in union with Christ. Even when you face the last enemy, death. Romans 8 assures us, I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other creature, is able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So not even death is able to sever and separate you from Jesus. You are still united to Christ in the grave. Your body, still being united to Christ, as the catechism says, will rest in the grave until the resurrection.

[22 : 33] Then, says the next catechism, at that resurrection. On that great and glorious resurrection morning, when the trumpet sounds, and Jesus descends from heaven, do you know the wonder is, he'll stand over all the graves, just like he stood over Jairus' daughter.

And he will say, Talitha humi. It's time to get up. It's time to get up. And you know, in that moment, all the graves will be opened.

Paul tells us in another letter, that the dead in Christ will rise first. And the Lord will make all things new. You know, like he did in the old creation, in Genesis 1.

In the new creation, in what will be in the new world, the Lord will form and fashion our glorious resurrection bodies from the dust of the ground.

And what was perishable will be made imperishable. It cannot die. What was mortal, that was governed by time, will put on immortality.

[23 : 49] It will dwell in the realm of eternity. Now, I don't know what a resurrected body will look like. And I'm not going to speculate. The longing is that we'll all have one.

A glorious resurrected body. But you know, Paul sought to encourage the early church by reminding them of this great and glorious day.

He always encouraged the church to look forward to that day. The day of resurrection. The day of resurrection when Jesus will open all the graves. That's what he's doing here in 2 Corinthians.

It's what he does in 1 Corinthians. It's what he does in Philippians. And 1 Thessalonians. And in 2 Timothy. He's encouraging the church to look forward to that resurrection morning.

But you know, the reason Paul did this was not only to encourage the early church, but also to explain to them the teaching of the Bible. Because at the time, Paul was accused.

[24 : 53] Paul was being accused of being a false teacher. That's why he wrote 2 Corinthians. There were many false teachers who were infecting and infiltrating the church.

And their false teaching wasn't based upon the Bible. It was actually, it was based upon the influence and the impact of the Greek culture that surrounded them.

A Greek culture which claimed and even confessed that anything physical is evil. Anything physical is evil.

So, the Greeks, they said, the body, the body, your body is evil. And death is a good thing. Death is a good thing because death releases your soul from your evil physical body.

And so for Greeks and the Greek culture, the idea of a resurrection body was anathema. And that infected and infiltrated into the early church.

[25 : 57] That's what affected all these false teachers. They were influencing the early church with their false teaching. And you know, like the Sadducees in Jesus' day who didn't believe in the resurrection, they were inevitably influenced by the Greek culture that was around them.

And there were many false teachers in the early church who came to deny the resurrection of the body at the last day. They saw the resurrection at the last day as anathema. But Paul names them.

Paul calls them out. He names all these false teachers in his letter to Timothy. He names some of them anyway. He says that there's one called Hymenaeus and Philetus and Alexander.

And he tells Timothy and the church in Ephesus, he tells them, they have made shipwreck of their faith because they denied the resurrection. In fact, they preached and proclaimed that the resurrection had already taken place when Jesus rose from the grave.

Therefore, due to the influence and the impact of this Greek culture that surrounded them, it had huge impact upon them, these false teachers, they insisted that there wouldn't be a bodily resurrection for the church.

[27 : 11] But as you know, that's not what Jesus said. And what Jesus says matters. What Jesus says always matters.

Because when Jesus groaned at the grave of Lazarus, Jesus gave Mary and Martha a guarantee of the grave. When Jesus groaned at the grave of Lazarus, He gave Mary and Martha the guarantee of the grave.

And the guarantee of the grave was that there would be a resurrection. There would be a resurrection of the body. That's why Jesus said to her, to them, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whosoever believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. So Jesus is speaking about body and soul.

Whosoever believes in Me, though they die physically, yet they shall live. And whosoever lives and believes in Me in their soul shall never die. Now despite the impact and the influence that Greek thought had had on some in Israel, Mary and Martha believed that their brother Lazarus would be raised up in glory at the last day.

[28 : 32] That's what Martha said to Jesus. I believe that my brother will be raised up at the last day. But what they didn't realize, and this is the amazing thing, what they didn't realize was that it would be Jesus that was raising him from the grave.

They never thought for a moment that it would be Jesus raising Lazarus from the grave. which is why Jesus then goes to the grave of Lazarus and reveals to them and reassures Mary and Martha that He and He alone is the resurrection and the life.

And Jesus did so, you remember, He did so by declaring and demonstrating His promise of redemption and His power of resurrection. Because as you know, Jesus, He groaned at the grave of Lazarus and then He gave the guarantee of the grave where He called and even commanded Lazarus to come out of His grave.

He said, Lazarus, come forth. Imagine hearing those words. Lazarus, come forth. You know, it's often said that if Jesus hadn't called Lazarus by name, all the graves in Bethany would have opened at the same time.

Because that's His power of resurrection. He's the Christ. He's the Son of God. He's the Savior of sinners. He's the resurrection and the life.

[29 : 57] And He has all authority in heaven and on earth. And you know, that's the question that Jesus left with Mary and Martha. He declared to them, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whosoever believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. He declared to them that He's the resurrection and the life.

He demonstrated to them that He's the resurrection and the life. And then Jesus asks that all-important question. Do you believe this? Do you believe this?

Do you believe that I am the resurrection and the life? Do you believe that I have the promise of redemption and the power of resurrection? Do you believe this?

And you know, you bring it back to the Apostles' Creed. And the question Jesus asked Mary and Martha is the same question the Apostles' Creed is asking us this evening.

[31 : 01] Do you believe this? Because we're called in the Apostles' Creed to believe it and to confess it. We're called to believe and confess I believe in the resurrection of the body because Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life.

I believe in the resurrection of the body because I believe that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life. And you know, for Paul writing this letter, believing and confessing Jesus as the resurrection and believing and confessing the resurrection of the body was so important.

It was so important because as he says in verse 10, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that we may receive what is due for what we have done in the body. The body must be raised.

The soul and body must be reunited in order to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And as you know, my friend, it doesn't matter how much property we own in this life or the investments we make or the money we possess.

[32 : 35] It doesn't matter who we are, what we've achieved, how much we've earned, how many accolades we have. It doesn't matter like the Monopoly game, how many houses we have built, how many hotels we have on old Kent Road or how many chances we took or how many fines we've paid or even if we went to prison.

None of these things matter because when the game is over, it all goes back in the box. When the game is over, it all goes back in the box, which is why the resurrection of our body is so important because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of the body.

The body, how we're raised from our box on the grave on the last day will determine how we spend eternity. Therefore, the question is, will you be raised up in glory or raised up from your grave to go to the gloom of darkness in hell?

My friend, you know, make sure, make sure that before the game is over, make sure that before your life is over, you have Jesus' guarantee, this glorious guarantee of resting in the grave and then being raised up in glory.

You make sure you have Jesus' guarantee of the grave because when the game is over, it all goes back in the box.

[34 : 16] may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for the hope of the gospel that we are saved and being saved and one day we will be saved and that when the end comes, when Jesus stands over our grave and calls us to rise, help us, Lord, we pray, to know that we are rising and being raised up in glory.

O Lord, we pray that we would all be ready for that glorious day to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account. It will be a great day, a day where we stand before Jesus and see Him in all His beauty and all His glory.

O Lord, our prayer is that none of us will hear those terrifying words, depart from me, for I never knew you, or that we would all be welcomed in by the Lord and by the Lamb, that we would all know Him for time and for eternity.

Lord, bless Thy truth to us, we plead, that we would seek the Lord, that we would continue to seek Him even as Thy people, that we would walk with Him daily, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.

Go before us then, we pray, lead us and guide us into another week, a week that is unknown to any of us, but known only to Thee. Help us then, we pray, to trust Thee with all our heart, to lean not upon our own understanding, but in all our ways to acknowledge Thee, for the Lord, one who shall direct our path.

[36 : 01] Do us good then, we pray, go before us, taking away our iniquity, receiving us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we shall bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing in Psalm 16.

Psalm 16, it's in the Sing Psalms version, on page 17, Psalm 16, and we're singing from verse 8 down to the end of the psalm.

Psalm 16 is the psalm of the empty tomb. It's quoted in the New Testament often in relation to the resurrection of Jesus, particularly verse 10, where he will not leave your holy one to see the tombs decay, speaking about the resurrection.

So, Psalm 16 and verse 8, before me constantly, I set the Lord alone, because he is at my right hand, I'll not be overthrown. And then down to the end of the psalm, you have made known to me the path of life divine, bliss shall I know at your right hand, joy from your face will shine.

These verses to God's praise. Before me constantly I set the Lord alone, because he is at my right hand, and all be overgrown.

[37 : 54] Therefore my heart is glad, my tongue with joy will sing, my body and all will rest secure in hope and wavering.

for you for you will not allow my soul in debt to stay.

nor will nor will you leave your holy one to see the truth decay.

you you have made know to me the path of life divine.

divine. This shall I know that your right hand joy from your faith will shine.

[39 : 34] the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more.

Amen. So do you have answers for me? Do you have answers? Yeah? Yep?

Okay. Question one. What is the name of John Ortberg's book? Well done.

When the game is over, it all goes back in the box. Question two. What did Paul do before he was an apostle? He was a tent maker.

Yeah. Do you like to be a tent maker? No. Okay. Question three. What are the headings for the sermon? Well done.

[40 : 38] Resting in the grave and raised up in glory. Well done. You did great. I hope the adults got that too. Thank you.