

Resurrection Logic

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Pastor John Miller

I want to start with just one verse: 1 Corinthians 15:12. Follow with me.

Paul says, “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead...”—here is his question—“...how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”

What if Christ’s body had not risen from the dead? The believers in Corinth were beginning to believe that there was no resurrection of the dead; their bodies would not be raised. They believed that Jesus’ body was raised from the dead, but they didn’t believe their bodies would be raised from the dead.

It has been said that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is either the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoax ever fostered on the minds of men, or it is the most fantastic fact of history. I believe the Resurrection of Jesus to be the most important and fantastic fact of history. Our hope, that our bodies will go beyond the grave for all eternity, lies in one simple fact: that Jesus died, was buried and He rose bodily from the dead; the grave is empty.

Jumping down to verse 19, Paul said, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” If Jesus didn’t rise from the dead, then we have no hope beyond the grave, and we, of all people, are to be pitied and are most miserable. But in verse 20, he says, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

Someone called Christianity “a religion of resurrection.” I like that. Jesus’ Resurrection, believers’ resurrection. Yes, we are going to discover in this chapter that the bodies of everyone, every human being, will be resurrected from the dead. Those who have believed in Jesus will be resurrected to life, and those who have not believed in Jesus will be resurrected to judgment and condemnation.

There are different views about what happens when you die; none of them Biblical. But I want to mention a few. Number one is termination. There are atheists who believe that when you die, you just cease to exist. You’re no longer existing. They are materialistic, so there’s no soul or spirit. They only believe in the material side of man, so when you die, you’re gone, you’ll never be resurrected. There is no afterlife.

Then within the religious realm, there are those, under this termination heading, who believe in a doctrine called “soul sleep.” The Seventh Day Adventists teach soul sleep. It teaches that when you die, you don’t go to heaven to be with the Lord in a conscious state, but your soul sleeps, and you’re waiting to be recreated. Only the righteous will be resurrected and recreated and be in heaven. But the wicked will sleep eternally; they’re terminated. This is not what the Bible teaches, and for the next several weeks, we’re going to be seeing that very clearly—that

it's not Biblical.

The second view of what happens when you die is reincarnation. It is the idea that when you die, you kind of get recycled. If you've lived a good life, maybe you will come back in a little higher form and have a little more health and prosperity. But if you lived a bad life, you'll come back as a rat or a cat or a dog or a horse. If you haven't been a good person, you come back in another form of life. You're just recycled in reincarnation. But the Bible does not teach reincarnation.

The third view of what happens after death is absorption. So there is termination, in which you just go to sleep and die and are no longer in existence; there is reincarnation, in which you are recycled into another form of life; and there is absorption, a very common view. Absorption is tied in with what is known as "pantheism." Pantheism teaches, basically, that everything in the universe is divine. They don't believe in a monotheistic, personal, all-knowing, all-powerful God. They think that god is like a force; the divine is in the trees, in the birds, in the ocean, in the hills, in the air. When we die, we have the divine within us. We are all divine. We all are god. We have this little spark of divinity within us, but when we die, we just go back into the universe and get absorbed. Like a little spark that would go back to the sun, it just gets absorbed in the power and splendor of the sun.

I did some research, and I apologize that I watched some Oprah Winfrey shows this week. I don't recommend you do it, but I did it. All they were teaching about death and what happens after death was basically this idea of absorption: we are divine, there is the divine spark in every one of us, and when you die, you just go back to the universe. It's like a circle-of-life kind of concept; you just become one with the cosmos or one with the universe. That's not at all what the Bible teaches.

The Bible teaches that Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who lives in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." And Jesus also said it like this: "Because I live, you shall live also." So Christianity is a religion of resurrection; not termination, not reincarnation, not absorption. Christianity teaches that Jesus physically, bodily rose from the dead, so believers will be physically, bodily raised from the dead. We'll also learn that all humanity one day will be resurrected from the dead. Some will be resurrected to life, and some will be resurrected to damnation. Because of Christ's Resurrection, all humanity will be resurrected. This is what sets Christianity apart from all other religions.

There was a problem in Corinth. The key text is verse 12. This is the reason Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15. Many times in order to understand your Bible, you need to understand why the author said what he said in the historical setting. Notice verse 12: "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead..."—and He is preached that His body rose from the dead, so here is the question—"...how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

This is the problem: Corinth was a Greek city not far from Athens. Some of the Christians were being influenced by Greek philosophy. This philosophy that was influencing them was called “dualism.” It’s common today. Dualism teaches that all matter is evil and only spirit is good. It’s tied in with this idea that we have a spark of divinity and that we will be absorbed in the divine when we die. It’s the idea that the spirit is good, but matter is evil. So in the Greek concept, to shed the body, to be free of the body, to leave your body was all important.

But in Christianity, God sanctifies the physical body. That’s very clear because of the Incarnation; God became a man. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” God came near in the person of Jesus Christ, in an actual, physical, human body—sinless, but in an actual, physical, human body.

So some of the Corinthians were adopting this Greek philosophy of dualism, that their bodies would not rise from the dead. Here’s what they were believing: they believed that Jesus’ body did raise from the dead, but they put Him in a separate, unique category, and they didn’t believe that their bodies would be raised from the dead. (Don’t miss this, or you’ll miss everything we talk about in the next several weeks in this chapter.)

The problem was that they didn’t believe that their bodies would be resurrected like Christ’s body. They had no problem with the Resurrection—“Oh, yeah, Jesus rose from the dead.” But they separated the Resurrection of Jesus from their own resurrection. So what Paul is going to do in this chapter is to show that they are inseparable; that what happened to Jesus in His Resurrection will happen to all humanity. They are actually two sides of one coin; the Resurrection of Christ’s body cannot be separated from the resurrection of the bodies of mankind.

There is a danger that we bring our own philosophy and preconceived ideas into our understanding of who Jesus is in His person and in His work. This is so very dangerous. Do not come to an understanding of who Christ is by some worldly, secular, nonbiblical, philosophical concepts. You don’t understand who Jesus is by your own preconceived, philosophical ideas. We need to base our thinking on what the Bible says. When it comes to Jesus and His work, we need to think Biblically.

As a matter of fact, as Christians, we should have a Biblical world view; what we think about marriage, what we think about money, what we think about raising children, what we think about heaven and hell—everything in life. And everything we believe should be filtered through the lens of Scripture. We should be thinking Biblically.

So Paul shows them that their thinking is two things: number one, it is unscriptural; and number two, it is illogical. In this entire 15th chapter, Paul is telling these people that “some among you,” not all of them, were ascribing to this heretical doctrine.

By the way, this is the first point in time in 1 Corinthians that Paul deals with doctrine. Up to this point, he deals with practice. Now he goes from orthopraxy to orthodoxy; he’s dealing with what

they believe. And what we believe will determine how we behave, so it's important that we believe correctly.

Paul comes to them and says, "Some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead." They were influenced by Greek philosophy. When Paul says, "But if there is no resurrection of the dead," he's not referring to Jesus' Resurrection; he's referring to their own bodily resurrection. So they didn't believe, in their wildest imaginations, that the human body would live again.

Paul preached in Athens on Mars Hill. I've been to Mars Hill and taught the Bible there. It's an awesome experience. There on Mars Hill, Paul preached the Resurrection of Jesus. And what does the Bible say? They mocked and ridiculed the idea; that he was setting forth some strange resurrection of the dead. They didn't believe what Paul said.

So there is danger in bringing our philosophies and preconceived ideas and imposing them upon what we believe about resurrection, instead of thinking Biblically.

Notice verse 12 says, "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead..." That's verses 1-11. In verses 1-2 he says that Christ's Resurrection is necessary for our salvation. "We preached the Gospel, you received the Gospel, you stood on the Gospel and you're saved by the Gospel." Then in verses 3-4, we saw that Christ's Resurrection is a necessary part of the Gospel definition. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures... He was buried, and...He rose again...according to the Scriptures." Then in verses 5-7, Christ's Resurrection is proved by His appearances. Verses 8-11 say that Christ's Resurrection changed Paul's life.

So when we come down to verse 11, Paul says, "Whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed." What do we preach? We preach the Gospel: Jesus died for our sins, Jesus was buried and Jesus rose from the dead. Without that, you don't have any good news.

Now in verses 12-19, Paul moves from the historical proof of the Resurrection to the logical implications of the Resurrection. He takes what they falsely believe and he shows how it is illogical. He uses logic in this passage.

I want to give you three logical conclusions of their denial of the resurrection of the body. The denial of bodily resurrection means that Christ is still dead. Paul says in verse 13, "But if there is no resurrection of the dead..."—that's what they were starting to believe—"...then..."—logically—"...Christ is not risen."

This is going to be like a line of dominoes. If one falls over, the next one falls over and the next and the next, and so forth. So Paul starts with the domino that there is no such thing as bodily resurrection. Then the next domino is Christ's Resurrection. If there is no bodily resurrection, then Christ's body is not risen from the dead, and on down the line it goes. So the denial of resurrection means that Christ is still dead. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the human race cannot be separated; they are two sides of the same coin.

By the way, a word of advice as you study your Bible and Bible doctrine: regarding your doctrine, you need to think about the logical implications of what you believe. Number one, it needs to be Biblical; and number two, it needs to be logical. How does that logically work out in my life, in my marriage, in my church? How does this doctrine work out logically? Scripture is not illogical. The authority is the Bible and not logic, but it does make sense that we understand the implications.

I made it very clear the last time that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person. He was born, He lived and He died a man. And He rose in His Resurrection as a man in a human body, just as one day all mankind will be resurrected. You need to understand that: Jesus was a man and God. When He died on the Cross, He died as the God-man, and He died physically. When He was buried in the tomb, He was buried physically; His body was wrapped in cloths and put in the grave. When He rose from the dead—and this is important—He rose physically. His own body metamorphosized, transformed, was glorified and was suited for eternity. Jesus Christ was the first person in human history to come back to life in an immortal, glorified, eternal body.

That's why Paul says in verse 20 that He "has become the firstfruits..."—or "the first in order" or "the prototype"—"...of those who have fallen asleep" or "died." So you can't separate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the resurrection of all humanity.

Revelation 1:18 says, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore....And I have the keys of Hades..."—or "hell"—"...and of death." He said, "I am He who is living, I am He who died, now I am alive forevermore and I hold the keys of hell and death." Jesus is in control of hell and death.

In 1 John 3:2, John says that "We shall be like Him..."—that is, "Jesus"—"...for we shall see Him as He is." So the same body that Jesus came out of the grave with—which, by the way, was the same body He had lived in for 33 years and the same body He was crucified in on the Cross—we will have for all eternity. We will be like Him, and we will see Him as He is.

In Philippians 3:21, Paul says that God "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body." So your body is going to be transformed. Your lowly, humble body of humiliation is going to be transformed by the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. So no bodily resurrection, Christ is still dead.

The denial of the Resurrection means, secondly, that Paul's message was wrong. If Jesus' body didn't rise from the dead—there was no Resurrection—and we are preaching that Jesus rose from the dead, then our message is wrong. Verses 14-16 say, "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen." So the denial of the Resurrection means that Paul's message was wrong.

Now this denial was wrong in three ways. First, it was wrong in that it was “empty” or “vain.” Verse 14 says, “If Christ is not risen, then our preaching...”—of the Gospel—“...is empty” or “vain.” The words “empty” and “vain” mean “hollow, with nothing.” It was used of a shell that had nothing inside of it. So without the Resurrection, the Gospel preaching is “empty.”

I can't imagine what liberal churches do on Easter Sunday. They talk about Easter eggs and Easter bunnies and happy thoughts. They talk about the eternal spirit of man, the spark of goodness in us and how we die and become a butterfly or go back into the universe. But without the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, what are they preaching? The Gospel necessitates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

John R. W. Stott said, “The person and work of Christ, the Rock upon which the Christian religion is built—if He is not who He said He was, if He did not do what He said He came to do, the foundation is undermined, and the whole superstructure collapses.” That's so true.

So we need to understand that if there is no bodily resurrection, Jesus didn't rise from the dead and our preaching of the Gospel is vain or empty. Then he says in verse 14, “Your faith is also empty.” If the Gospel is empty, then your faith is vain, because your faith is in the Gospel.

Here's the principle: faith is only as good as the object it is placed in. We all exercise faith. You're driving out on a country road and you come to an old, rickety, country bridge, and maybe it has the weight load on the side of it. But you don't know how much your car weighs. I always laugh when I see those weight loads. Am I supposed to measure my car's weight right then? Get the family out and make them walk across the bridge while I drive the car across? When you drive a car over a bridge, the most important thing is the bridge; not whether you're driving a Ford or a Chevy. Can you imagine a sign saying, “Only Chevrolets can pass over this bridge”? And the color of your car doesn't matter. The air conditioning or the seats or the interior doesn't matter. What matters is that the bridge is strong enough to hold the weight.

So we need to understand about the object of our faith. When you are flying in an airplane, your faith is in that airplane and the pilot flying that airplane. Make sure he's a good pilot. Make sure it's a good plane. That's the object of your faith.

What is the object of your faith regarding what happens after you die? Is it Oprah? You believe Oprah? No. It should be in the Bible, the Word of God. It shouldn't be in your experience; you died, went to heaven, came back and wrote a book about it. I don't want human speculation. I want divine revelation when it comes to death.

Some people say, “Well, after you die, you'll find out.” It's too late then. It will be too late to find out you were wrong. Too late to find out that life after death is real, heaven is real and hell is real.

Are you prepared to die? Do you know where you'll go when you die? Wherein lies your faith? Is it your feelings? Your emotions? Just what you want to believe? Your philosophy? Your world view? Or is it what the Bible teaches? Faith is only as good as the object of your faith.

So I challenge you: what is the object of your faith for all eternity?

Notice also that this denial of bodily resurrection was wrong, because the Apostles would then be false witnesses. Look at verse 15. He said, "Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God." The Apostles were claiming that the Gospel they preached—that Jesus died, He was buried and rose from the dead—was given to them by revelation from God. If that wasn't true—that Jesus didn't really die for our sins and His body raised from the dead—that would make them false witnesses. They said "because we have testified of God, that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise." So Paul says that our preaching is vain, your faith is vain and we are liars, if there is no resurrection of the body.

Can you imagine that? Paul, the Apostle, a liar! Peter, the Apostle, a liar. John, the Apostle, lied. Agustin lied in church history. Aquinas lied. Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, was a liar. John Calvin, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, Billy Graham—and on down the list. Lies, lies, lies. All of these preachers are telling you fairy tales. Then to add to that, Jesus would have lied, because He said that He would be crucified, buried and rise from the dead.

Jesus said in John 2, "Destroy this temple..."—or His "body"—"...and in three days I will raise it up." If Jesus didn't raise His body up from the dead, then He is a liar, and then nothing He said can be believed.

In Romans 1:4, the Bible says that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

There is a third logical conclusion for those who falsely don't believe in resurrection of the body, verses 17-19. Thirdly, the denial of bodily resurrection means that we have lost our loved ones without hope; we are lost, and there is no hope. "If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

Why is it that we have no hope and our loved ones are lost? Because if Jesus' body didn't rise from the dead, then our sins haven't been forgiven. Verse 17, "If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"

The Bible says in Romans 4:25 that Jesus "was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification." When Jesus died on the Cross, He cried out, "it is finished" or "paid in full." He bowed His head, dismissed His spirit and died. He was buried and God the Father said, "Amen" to the work of God the Son on the Cross, so He raised Jesus from the dead.

By the way, the Bible teaches that God the Father raised God the Son, that Jesus raised Himself and He was also raised by the Holy Spirit. All three persons—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit—were actively involved in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Christ's Resurrection is proof that our sins can be forgiven. How can we be sure that when we ask Jesus to forgive our sins that we are truly forgiven? The answer: He rose from the dead. He's alive. Did you know that a dead Savior can't save anybody? If you're swimming along a deserted beach, you start to drown and look up on the beach for help and cry, "Help!" but there is only one person on the beach and he's dead, how much hope do you have? You can yell as loud as you want, but that person on the beach can't help you. A dead Jesus can save no one.

You can be lost in the woods in the forest and need help and you come upon a corpse. You can't say, "Thank God we're saved!" No; the dude's dead! There's nothing he can do to help you. He may even have a ranger suit on and have an official badge, but if he's dead, he can't help you.

Enough of this insanity of modern liberalism that we can live by the teachings of Christ and live by the Sermon on the Mount and we can follow His good example, but that we really don't have to believe that He was God or that He died for our sins or that He rose from the dead. That's not Christianity! If you take out the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the substitutionary death and the bodily Resurrection, you don't have Christianity.

The Bible says that "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." You can't be saved unless you believe in the Resurrection. You're calling out to Jesus and He's not even real?! He doesn't even exist?! Without the Resurrection, there is no salvation, and we have no assurance that our sins can be forgiven.

But the fact that Jesus' body came out of the grave indicates that God the Father accepted the work of God the Son on the Cross. The Resurrection is God the Father's divine stamp of approval on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Without that, we're still under sin's power, we still have to pay sin's penalty and God can't save us.

Notice that this denial means that Christians who have died have also perished. Verse 18 says, "Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." Basically, what he is saying there is that all the Christians of all the church age, who died believing in Jesus, are gone. It would have all been in vain, all for nothing, it's all a big joke. They didn't go to heaven. You're not going to see them again: your mom and dad, your brothers and sisters, your loved ones, your friends and family. They died, but you'll never see them again. So there is no hope. That's what Paul is saying here.

Now there are two key phrases here I want to point out to you: the phrases "fallen asleep" and "in Christ." This euphemism or metaphor, "fallen asleep in Christ," means "temporary death." There are some facts you need to understand. Number one, it's always and only used for Christians over non-Christians. Number two, it's always and only a reference to the physical body; never to the soul. The Bible does not teach the sleep of the soul. The soul doesn't need to sleep, because the soul doesn't have a body. It's the body that sleeps.

Sometimes we have to take a nap. Why? Because we have a body. I've heard of a pastor who was going on vacation, and one of his parishioners asked, "Why would you go on vacation? The devil doesn't take vacations." The pastor said, "The devil doesn't have a body. I do. I need rest."

Your spirit doesn't have a body, so it doesn't need sleep. It doesn't go to sleep. It doesn't get resurrected, either, because it goes to heaven to be with Jesus immediately upon your death. So we understand that this verse is not talking about soul sleep; it's the sleep of the body.

Then this is the third and most important point: sleep is a temporary state. When you take a nap, you do so with the expectation that you're going to wake up. You don't say, "Honey, I'm going to take a nap. It's been nice knowing you." Kiss your wife goodbye and kiss the kids goodbye. Make out a will and last testament. "I'm going to take a nap, and I'm never going to wake up." When you go to sleep at night, what do you say? You say, "Good night. I'll see you in the morning."

Remember that, so when you go to a cemetery and lay your loved ones in their resting places, if they have died "in Christ"—an important phrase—they're only "sleeping." You know what the word "cemetery" means? It means "resting place." They will be awakened. Their bodies will be resurrected. What hope that is!

When Paul wrote to the believers in 1 Thessalonians 4 starting at verse 13, he said, "I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren..."—that's the largest Christian denomination in America, "ignorant brethren"—"...concerning those who have fallen asleep..."—there's our term—"...lest you sorrow as others who have no hope."

That's the reason I'm teaching from 1 Corinthians 15; I don't want you to be the "ignorant brethren." I want you to be wise about what happens when a person dies. So Paul says, "I do not want you to be ignorant...concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." So Christians do sorrow, but it's not a hopeless sorrow, because we're not ignorant about what happens to our Christian loved ones who have died.

Then Paul goes on to say in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus" or "in Christ." He says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

When Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica, they were worried, because their Christian friends had died, but the Lord hadn't returned yet. So Paul said, "You don't need to worry. The Lord's going to come." They'll be a shout. Going to wake them up. The voice of the archangel. The trumpet of God. And where he says there that "The dead in Christ will rise first," he is referring to their body. That's what he is talking about. Their soul and spirit is already with the

Lord. The Bible says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." So their physical bodies will be resurrected. Then the bodies of those who are alive will be translated, and there is going to be a meeting in the air.

And the fact that Jesus Christ came out of the grave with the same body, bearing the scars—He's unique in that—all eternity will see Him, who was pierced, who died for our sins, and we'll worship our Redeemer. But Jesus Christ was recognized. He ate with His disciples, He talked with them, they touched Him, they felt Him.

We will see our loved ones again in heaven. What a hope that is! You will know them and recognize them and hug them and kiss them and talk to them.

"When we've been there ten thousand years...

We've no less days to sing God's praise

Than when we'd first begun."

All of life's pains, sorrows and hardships will pale in light of the joys that await us in eternity. Yes, someone you loved, who has died and gone to heaven, you'll see again. You'll know them again. People ask, "Pastor John, when we get to heaven, will we know each other?" My answer is, "Are you going to be dumber than you are here?" Certainly you'll know each other.

Only Christianity offers this hope. Only Christ offers this hope. And it is a historical fact that Jesus died, was buried and rose from the dead. And it's a logical implication that if Christ's body rose, ours will be resurrected, as well. Sins can be forgiven. Our loved ones haven't died without hope; we'll see them again.

Then notice, lastly, in verse 19, if there is no bodily resurrection, we Christians are to be pitied. That's the implication. Paul is trying to show the Corinthians that their ideas were illogical and not Scriptural. If this is the only life there is, this is it—this is how most people live—then give it the gusto, live it to the hilt. If our only hope in Christ is in this life, then "We are of all men the most pitiable." In other words, if Christianity isn't real and there is no hope beyond the grave, then why be a Christian? Why pray? Why read your Bible? Why go to church on Sunday morning? Why sacrifice? Why give? Why be ostracized and persecuted and mocked? Why go through trouble and trial for your faith? Think of what Paul went through for the sake of the Gospel. Think of men and women who have died for the sake of the Gospel. If there is no hope beyond the grave, then it is all in vain. It's all a big joke.

If there is no bodily resurrection, if Christ's body did not raise from the dead so we're still in our sins, if our loved ones aren't in heaven and this is the only life we have, then we might as well become an epicurean; "eat, drink and be merry," for tomorrow we die. Live like a hog, die like a dog. Why not? Party. Go to Vegas a lot. Buy things. Eat. Drink. Be merry. Have a great time. Do everything in life to avoid pain, suffering and sorrow. Because this is all you've got. You only go 'round once. I hear that all day: "You only go 'round once." How do you know

that? Do you see what lies beyond the bars of the grave?

So if Christ is not risen, we only have hope in this life. But that's not what Paul believed, and it's not what the Bible teaches. In Romans 8:18, Paul says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

You say, "Well, Pastor John, that's just 'pie in the sky in the sweet by and by.'" You bet it is! And the pie is amazing!

One of the things that struck me this week as I was preparing to teach on this passage was that in this world we have sorrow, pain, woe, bereavement, loss, disappointments, we get old. The older I get, the more I look to heaven. I can't bend over and tie my shoes anymore. The aches and pains, the sorrows, the cancer, the strokes, the heart attacks, the sorrow and suffering—Paul says that all of these things "are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." What a glorious prospect we have as Christians!

We don't have to worry about getting old. It means we're only getting closer to heaven. And we're going to get a new body, and in that new body, we can bend over and tie our shoes. No more pain, no more suffering, no more sin, no more sorrow, no more wheelchairs, no more crutches, no more insulin, no more bars on people's windows, no more death. All our tears will be wiped from our eyes. It will be eternal day. What a glorious prospect! And it all rests on one fact of history: that Jesus rose from the dead.

And we can live in the power of that Resurrection. Our preaching is not in vain, the Gospel is true, our sins can be forgiven, we will be reunited with our loved ones in heaven. What a glorious hope is ours.

Let's pray.