

Studies in 1 Corinthians-13 1 Cor 15

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald discusses the significance of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, emphasizing the hope and nature of the resurrection body amidst persecution.

Duration: 45:43

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:29-33, 1 Corinthians 15:35, 1 Corinthians 15:58

Topics: "Resurrection", "Eternal Life"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses various topics related to the preaching of the word of God. It emphasizes the importance of laboring for the Lord and the assurance that no labor for Him is risky or in vain. The sermon also mentions the upcoming chapters to be covered and invites questions for further clarification. It concludes with a song and a call for Tom to close the meeting. The sermon also touches on the resurrection, the nature of the resurrection body, and the triumph over death.

Transcript

Okay, we're going to try another little chorus today that has harmony to it. Maybe we could have some help in passing these out. All right.

It's known as the Maori chorus, and we sing it to the words, Search me, O God, and try my heart today. But these are words by A.P. Gibbs that are very, very good also. And I was in New Zealand a few years ago.

The Maoris are aborigines in New Zealand, and I asked them if they'd sing the Maori chorus for me, and they did. It was beautiful, harmonized like this. So I'm going to ask Carolyn to play the soprano and first tenor part.

That is just the soprano, but maybe the first tenors can sing it. That means Don and Dennis. Okay.

So would you play that, and then we'll have the sisters sing that part. This is the harmony. You can do it.

Maybe just a little slower so that we can get on to it. I wish I could get up there myself to help you. Try it, sisters.

Ready? Okay, then the men, we'll sing that first verse, what is really the melody, but it's shown as the L code here. Ready? Though all have sinned, our guilty loss condemned. Yes, God in love his own dear son

did send, who on the cross that he might seek and save, bore all our sins, for us his life he gave.

Okay, now, and we'll stand, and we'll put the two together and get the most beautiful harmony in the world. Ready? And the sisters will really have to sing out on this. I know it's new to you, but it will be beautiful if you sing out.

Ready? Everybody. God in his grace, now offers full and free, pardons and peace and life and liberty, to who so e'er believe. And Christ is his own saviour, Lord Jesus Christ, redeemer, saviour, friend.

On thine own words and word I now depend. Teach me to show the world. Very, very good.

You may be seated. I'm proud of you. You know, I learned that hymn as a young man, and that third verse has stuck with me all down through the years.

The words of that third verse go through my mind all the time. Lord Jesus Christ, redeemer, saviour, friend. On thine own word and work I now depend.

And those last lines, teach me to show the world. I'm not my own, but wholly thine, to live for thee alone. Says a lot, doesn't it? Okay.

Thank you very much, Carolyn. All your labor was well rewarded. First Corinthians chapter 15.

I'm going to begin reading in verse 29 and read a section, and then we're going to pass out some outlines for those who do not have them. Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead do not rise at all, why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm by the boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus, our Lord, I die daily. If in the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me if the dead do not rise? Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

Do not be deceived. Evil company corrupts good habits. Awake to righteousness and do not sin, for some do not have the knowledge of God.

I speak this to your shame. But someone will say, who are the dead raised up and with what body do they come? Foolish one. What you sow is not made alive unless it dies.

What you sow, you do not sow the body that shall be, but mere grain, perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as he pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there's one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fish, and another of birds.

There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies, but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There's one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.

The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in corruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. I'm going to stop there and we'll pass out some outlines, if I can have a little help here.

Some of you have the first page of the outline of 1 Corinthians 15. Maybe if you don't have that first page, just raise your hand and Charlie will see that you get it, and then we need help in passing out the second page of 1 Corinthians 15, and also it has 1 Corinthians 16 on it, so everybody gets one of these. Did everybody get page number one so far? Raise your hand if you did not get the first page.

All right, Kathy and John. Now, did everybody get page two? It has 1 Corinthians 16 at the bottom of it. Okay, very good.

Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you. Remember last week I mentioned that there were some people who had come into the assembly in Corinth who denied the possibility of a bodily resurrection.

They said it's just foolish to think that the body that goes to the grave and returns to dust will be raised once again, and we saw last week that if that's true, then Christ didn't rise from the dead. And if Christ didn't rise from the dead, our faith is empty, and we're of all men most pitiable, and our bodies won't be raised from the grave either if we go home by the way of death. But, Paul exclaimed triumphantly, now is Christ raised from the dead and become the first fruits of those that slept.

And, as the meeting closed last week, we noticed that there was a certain order in resurrection. The Lord Jesus first. He's the first one ever to rise from the dead to die no more.

He's the first one to rise from the dead in a glorified body. And so, he spoke it up as the first fruit, and the resurrection of Christ is the pledge of our resurrection, the guarantee of our resurrection. That's kind of wonderful.

I just sit here this morning to think about it. Maybe that God's going to call me to go home by the way of death, if the rapture doesn't take place in the meantime. And my body will be placed in a grave, and just as sure as I'm standing here, it's going to be raised.

How do you know? Because Christ was raised, that's how I know. And it speaks of him as the first fruit. Then it says, they that are Christ at his coming.

Now, his coming there has two stages. First of all, the rapture. There will be a resurrection at the rapture.

The dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So shall we ever be with the Lord. But then at the end of the tribulation period, when Christ comes to reign, there's got to be a resurrection then too.

Those who died during the tribulation with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they'll be raised, and that's all included in that expression. They that are Christ at his coming. And then it says, then cometh the end.

And there will be a resurrection at the end of the millennium, the end of the thousand year reign of Christ. And that's the resurrection of the wicked dead. And all unbelievers down through the centuries, from Cain on, will be raised at that time.

And they'll stand before the judgment of the great white throne. You read about that in Revelation chapter 20. So if you look on your outline, under Roman numeral four, page one of your outline, under Roman numeral four, see the order of the resurrection.

Christ the first fruits, two, those who are Christ at his coming, three, the final state, then cometh the end. The kingdom will be delivered to the Father, when does that take place? At the end of the millennium. All

other governments will end, principalities and powers.

All enemies will be conquered under his feet. Death will be destroyed, praise God. Everything will be brought into subjection to Christ, and Christ will be subordinate to God the Father, in subjection to God the Father for all eternity.

Now, that brings us to a very difficult portion, and one that has been the despair of commentators down through the years. And that's this whole subject of baptism from the dead, which is found in verses 29 through 34, right? Baptism for the dead. And you know that the Mormons have taken that expression, baptism for the dead, baptized for the dead.

And they built a very elaborate doctrine on it, and you can go to their genealogical tables, and you can find your mother's great cousin, and you can go and be baptized for her. Now, whatever the sense of that is, I don't know. But anyway, they've done that, and that's one of the reasons they keep all these genealogical tables back there in Salt Lake City, and you can contact it by computer from here in the Temple of Jerusalem in Oakland.

So, I want to look at this passage with you and see what it really is saying. And the first thing I want you to notice is that whatever the right interpretation is, it must fit in with the context. That's one of the great rules of interpretation of the Scripture.

Don't take a verse out of its context. It has to fit with the context. But I want you to look at those verses carefully, verses 29 and 34, and see if you can tell me in a single word what the context is.

Anybody? Pardon? Yes, it has to do with the resurrection, yes. Well, I'm still fishing for a word, as I have a habit of doing. In a word, what is he talking about in that passage? Ah, persecution.

Is that what it says? Why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I die daily, verse 31. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me if the dead do not rise? Persecution. Now, whatever the right interpretation of baptism for the dead is, it has to fit in with that whole context of persecution.

It has to, because that's what the surrounding verses are all about. Paul is saying that baptism for the dead would be foolish if there was no resurrection of the dead. That's what he's saying.

I haven't explained to you what baptism for the dead is, but he's saying that baptism for the dead would be foolish if there is no resurrection. Follow me? A better philosophy, if there is no resurrection, a better philosophy rather than expose yourself to suffering and persecution and martyrdom would be eat and drink for tomorrow we die. That's what he's saying.

Okay, well, what does it mean to be baptized for the dead? Well, think back to the early days. Baptism doesn't have this meaning with us today. But in the days in which Paul lived, a person would trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

And maybe not many people would know about it. But then he would go out and be baptized publicly before the world. Then what would happen? Ah, persecution.

And martyrdom. And that's still true, like in Muslim cultures today. It's okay in many cases for a Muslim to trust Jesus Christ as his Savior.

But when he gets baptized, I tell you, in many cases, that's the end of the story. North Africa, when Muslims get saved, their wives feed them ground glass in their food. They die.

It takes six months, but in their mind they die. And today, in many places, not here in the United States, in many places, baptism is the signal for persecution and death. So what happens? Did that stop people from being baptized in Paul's day? No, it didn't.

Here's a rank that goes forward, and they're all baptized today, and they die tomorrow. Some other people get saved, and they just move right forward and get baptized in the place of the dead. They get baptized to fill up the ranks of those who have been martyred.

That's what Paul is talking about here. And Paul is saying, they'd be foolish to do that if there was no such a thing as resurrection of the dead. Be foolish to expose themselves to danger and to death.

They should just go and live it up if this life is all that there is to it. So I think if you can see that, baptism for the dead means baptism to fill up the ranks of those who have died. I've often used, and others have used this, not original with me, an army is marching into battle.

And of course, the front lines really take the machine gun fire, and they go down. What do the others do? They turn around and retreat? No, they just march forward, and they grab the flag, and they march forward to fill up the ranks of those who have died. That's what was happening in Paul's day.

And people kept getting baptized to fill up the ranks of those who had been martyred. So remember that when you come to this difficult passage of Scripture, the context is persecution and martyrdom. And Paul is saying that to expose yourself to that, to fill up the ranks of those who have been killed would be foolish.

To be baptized to fill up the ranks of the dead, the dead in Christ, would be foolish if there is no resurrection of the dead. So I say in the outline here, the folly of suffering and martyrdom for Christ, if there is no resurrection. Then in verse 33, it says, Do not be deceived.

Evil company corrupts good habits. Awake to righteousness and do not sin. For some do not have the knowledge of God.

I speak this to your shame. Now once again we want to read these verses in their context. Do not be deceived.

Evil company corrupts good habits. Evil company, in the context, evil company refers to these false teachers who have come into the assembly denying the resurrection. And Paul is saying here, you can't tolerate that sort of thing without it having a spreading influence.

It's like leaven, isn't it? And leaven is used in the New Testament for evil doctrine, as well as for evil morals. And Paul is saying here, you allow that sort of thing to happen in your assembly, and it's going to affect others as well. Do not be deceived.

Evil company corrupts. Of course, it's good in a wider sense too. A young fellow and he's professed to be saved, and then he goes off and he falls in with the wrong crowd.

Well, it's true there too, isn't it? Evil company corrupts good habits. It's true, but I try to see it in its context, and it's referring to false teachers who came into the assembly and were denying the possibility of bodily resurrection. And he says in verse 34, awake to righteousness and do not sin.

Some do not have the knowledge of God. That some, again, is the false teachers. Some do not have the knowledge of God.

I speak to this to your shame. In other words, there are people in your assembly, fellowship in your assembly, breaking bread and all the rest, and they don't know God. It is a shameful condition.

You should have done something about that. Now, once again, a lot of these verses are taken out of their context sometimes, and it's perfectly valid too. I've often heard that verse used in a missionary sense.

A call to world missions. Some do not have the knowledge of God. There are people throughout the world today who do not know the lovely Lord Jesus.

I speak to this to your shame. Look, good application of it. That's a good application of it, but I don't think it's the interpretation of it, do you? The interpretation of it is that they were tolerating evil teachers in their assembly and people who didn't know God.

Is that clear? But then the question comes, how are the dead raised up and with what body do they come? And so we come in Roman numeral 8 in our outline to the nature of the resurrection body. The nature of the resurrection body. And that is really a fascinating, fascinating study.

And just before we get into it and the word there, I'd like to summarize what we know about the resurrection body. First of all, it's a literal physical body made of flesh and bones, right? It's not some ethereal spiritual body floating around in the universe, invisible. No, no.

It's a visible, physical, literal body made of flesh and bones. How do you know? Because Jesus said that. He said a spirit has... He said it in his glorified body.

He said a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have. Pretty clear, isn't it? Secondly, as far as appearance is concerned, it resembles the mortal body. In other words, as far as outward appearance will be concerned, it resembles me the way I am now with some changes.

But it's recognizable as the person, as the original person. Say, how do you know? Because the disciples recognized the Lord Jesus in resurrection. You say, well, Mary didn't.

Well, it wasn't... It wasn't... The fault was that her eyes were filled with tears. But sometimes when you're going through periods of sorrow, you don't see things the way they are. And other times it was because of their faithlessness that they didn't recognize him.

The fault wasn't with his body. The fault was with the disciples. And incidentally, the Lord Jesus in his glorified body was only seen by believers.

There's no record of any unbeliever ever having seen him after his resurrection from the dead. But as far as appearance is concerned, it resembles the mortal body, but it's no longer subject to pain, sickness, suffering, sorrow, death. No longer subject to those things without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Fourth, it can consume food. That's a surprise, isn't it? How do you know? Because the Lord Jesus, he ate broiled fish and honeycomb with the disciples. Now, we don't know a lot about the physiology of the glorified body, but we know that it can consume food.

And I think there are clues that in the heavenly state, we will sit down and we'll enjoy things that are even better than potlucks. I think that's kind of thrilling. Then it has powers that our bodies don't have today.

It can transport itself from one place to another instantly. Jesus vanished out of their sight. So in our resurrection bodies, we will have powers.

And maybe just by a thought, we can transport ourselves to other places. And then Paul brings this out in this portion that we're going to see. The resurrection body, and this is interesting to me, it's suitable for life here on earth because Jesus lived here on earth in his resurrection body.

But it's suitable life in heaven also, which these bodies of ours wouldn't be. Even when man goes to the moon, he has to take his own atmosphere with him, doesn't he? His body, this body is not suitable for life on the moon. He has to live under earthly conditions when he's on the moon.

But our resurrection body is suitable to life here on earth, and it's suitable to life in heaven. And then the resurrection body, as I say, it has powers that we don't have now. It can enter the room when all the doors are shut.

The Lord Jesus did that, didn't he, on that Lord's Day evening. And the disciples were gathered together. He could enter the room, and they were there in fear that he entered the room and all the doors were closed.

Now, in explaining the resurrection body, Paul makes an analogy between seed and grain. The seed is not exactly the same as the grain that'll come, and yet there's an identity there because everything that that plant is going to be is all concealed right there in the seed. And that analogy holds good for the resurrection body, too.

The components are all there, but it'll be in a different condition. And then the same thing, there's a difference in flesh. He says in verse 39, all flesh is not the same flesh.

One kind of flesh of men, another of beasts, another of fish, another of birds. And he says that's the way there's a difference between this mortal body and the immortal body, between the corruptible and the incorruptible. The analogy of different kinds of flesh.

And then the analogy of different kinds of celestial bodies. Different kinds of, well, there's the sun, the moon, and the stars. And even among the heavenly bodies, there are differences in glory.

Some shine to us more brightly than others don't, I think. Basically, what Paul is saying there is that there's a similarity, and yet there's a difference between this body that we have today and the resurrection body. That's basically what he's saying.

But there is a suggestion in verse 41, there is a suggestion, I don't say this is the primary interpretation, that even in our glorified body, there will be differences of glory. For instance, there will be differing degrees of appreciation of the Lord Jesus. Differing degrees of appreciation of the glories of heaven.

We won't all be the same in heaven. Each one will be recognizable for who he is, no question about that. But there will be differences in reward.

Just as there are degrees of, in hell, there will be differing degrees of glory in heaven. And then he goes on to show the difference between a natural body and a spiritual body. And I want to pause there and

emphasize that when Paul uses the expression spiritual body, he doesn't mean a spirit body.

A natural body is a body that's adapted to life here in nature on the earth. A spiritual body is a body that's adapted to life in heaven as well. But it doesn't mean an invisible spirit being floating somewhere aimlessly in the universe.

So, let's read it. Verse 42. So also is the resurrection of the dead.

The body is sown in corruption, raised in incorruption. Body is sown, goes down into the grave, turns to dust, sown in corruption. Raised in incorruption, it never happens to that glorified body.

It never decay again, never return to dust. It's sown in dishonor, it's raised in glory. Well, it's true, isn't it? It's sown in dishonor.

I know the, I know the undertaker tries to get around it by the use of rouge and lipstick and cosmetics of all kinds. He tries to make that body look beautiful, but still a dead body. And there's nothing very honorable about it, if you know what I mean.

You know, nothing very honorable. Apart from all the cosmetics that are used, wouldn't be very beautiful. But raised in glory, just like the Savior's glorified body.

If you want to know what your glorified body's got to be like, just study the life, the body of the Lord Jesus in resurrection. That's it. Sown in weakness.

Well, what could be any weaker than a dead body? And raised in power. And I think there's more in that expression, raised in power, than any of us here in the room can understand today. You can't imagine all that's comprehended in an expression like that.

We already talked about hidden powers of transportation. Hidden powers of entering a room when the doors are shut. We have five senses.

Now, maybe we'll have 50 senses with our glorified body. Who knows? So, I come to a passage of scripture like that. It's sown in weakness.

It's raised in power. And I think there's gold in that mountain that I've never got to the bottom of. It's sown in natural bodies raised a spiritual body.

Just remember, when you come to that, the spiritual body doesn't mean it's not material. Doesn't mean it's not tangible. Does not mean it's not literal.

I must emphasize this. It means it's suitable for life in heaven as well as life on earth. There is a natural body.

There is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

In other words, Adam had life given to him. But the Lord Jesus is the fountain of life. Jesus never had life given to him.

He's the source of all life. So, our change will be from a body like the first man's to that of the last Adam. The spiritual is not first, but the natural.

After the spiritual, the first man was of the earth made of dust. Second man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust.

And as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are heavenly. As we have borne the image of the man of dust. That's good, isn't it? As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man.

Speaking to believers today, we bear the image of the man of dust. We're made of dust. We return to dust if the Lord doesn't come prior to that.

But we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man. What a wonderful salvation God has provided, huh? He could have just saved us from going to hell and that would be the end of it. You could put a period at the end of that sentence, but he didn't.

The Lord is for the body, the body is for the Lord. God is interested in these bodies of ours. God is going to see them home to heaven glorified like the body of his beloved son.

And so he goes on to emphasize, to describe the resurrection of dead believers and the change of living ones. As I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. See, there's something about the physiology of the glorified body.

It will not have blood. It will have flesh and bones, but not have blood. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

In other words, this body of mine could never go to heaven and be subject to decay. Behold, I tell you a mystery. A mystery is a truth never hitherto known.

You never get this truth in the Old Testament. A truth that man could never figure out by his own intellect. But a truth that has now been revealed by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament period.

Mystery. What's the mystery? We shall not all die. Nobody ever knew that before.

I mean, it's so familiar to us. We think, sure, what else is new? But it wasn't familiar. It was the first time that man ever knew we shall not all die, but we shall be changed.

We shall all be changed. What's going to happen in a moment in the twinkling of an eye? Just imagine it. Twinkle your eyes.

Blink your eyes. All over. It's in that twinkling of an eye.

In a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last thump. At the last thump for the church, not the last thump for Israel. This is not the same as the seventh thump that you get in the book of Revelation.

That's completely different. This is the last thump for the church. In a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last thump for the trumpet will sound.

The dead will be raised incorruptible. We shall all be changed. Of course, we have to be changed if we're living at the time of the rapture.

Can't go to heaven in these bodies. So that change, that glorification has to take place, and it will take place just in that instant of time. What happens? Well, this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this

mortal must put on immortality.

Mortal there means subject to death. That's what it means. This body here is mortal.

It's subject to death. It has to put on immortality in the sense that it has to come to that place where it's no longer subject to death. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and then this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass to say death is swallowed up in victory.

Um, I noticed in the outline I have under Roman numeral nine, letter E, the triumph over death. What a wonderful thing. Is it death? You think of the way death has held sway over man since sin entered into the world.

Think of all the heartaches, of all the partings, of all the funeral homes, of all the castes, of all the shattered dreams. So there's a day coming when death will be swallowed up in victory. And then I have here in the outline, verse 55, the taunt song of participants.

And that's what I think is going to happen, that as the dead are raised from the grave and the living are changed and caught up. Kind of verse 14 song. And, uh, those who are living at the time of the rapture are going to, you know what they're going to think? Oh, death, where is your sting? You never even sung us.

These people go to heaven without dying. What about those that are raised from the grave? Well, they're going to sing, oh, Hades, where is your victory? You had us, but you couldn't hold us. What a taunt song, if you ask me.

Or maybe your Bible says, oh, death, where is your victory? But the thought there is still the same. You had us, but you couldn't hold on to us. The Lord Jesus come and snatch your power and released us.

And we go up to meet him in the air. Pretty kind of thrilling, isn't it? When you think about it. Awesome.

Then Paul goes on to say, uh, the final victory over the lost power and death sting. The sting of death is sin. What does that mean? The sting of death is sin.

Why does death have a sting for people? Well, I would suggest to you that the word sin there means sins unconfessed and unforgiven. That's what gives death a sting, to die in sin that has never been washed away. Oh, death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

It's the law that backs that up. You know, it's the law that gives strength to sin. The law says thou shall not do it.

The day you do it, you will die. But Paul says, thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. And what a wonderful victory it is.

It's a victory over sin and death and hell. And then he closes the chapter with an exhortation to sound doctrine and faithful service. Notice that, sound doctrine.

They had men in there who were denying the resurrection. He says, therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable. That is, know what you believe.

Get yourself grounded in the great truths of the word of God and be steadfast in those truths. Immovable. Don't be tossed around with every wave of doctrine.

And then it says, always abounding in the work of the Lord's service. Why? Because your labor is not in vain with the Lord. That's why.

No labor for the Lord is risky to invest in. And nothing will make up should his well done be missed. Now, I know we've gone over this rather rapidly, but if you have any questions, feel free to come and ask them afterwards.

We'll try to go over it more carefully with you. Next week, Lord willing, we'll pick up chapter 16. I think in closing, we'd like to sing our song once again.

You don't have to stand just in your seats. Salvation song, though all have sinned, their guilty loss condemned. Then we'll call on Tom to come up and close the meeting.

Just do as good as you did last time, sisters, and I'll be fine. Ready? Oh, the world. I'm not my own, but only mine to live for thee.

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