



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Like Him, or The Doctrine of Glorification – II”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the opportunity of the study of this hour tonight. And we pray that through the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, we may be strengthened in the word and that the things that we learn may not only benefit us intellectually but also may benefit us spiritually and make a difference in our daily lives. We commit this last hour of study to Thee for Thy blessing upon us.

In Jesus name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight as conclude our subject “Like Him, or The Doctrine of Glorification” I want to read two passages one in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 beginning with verse 50 and then one in 1 John chapter 3 beginning with verse 1. But 1 Corinthians chapter 15 in verse 50.

Now, for those of you who were here last Monday night, you will remember that we had as our Scripture readings verses 35 and following in which the apostle sets forth some facts about the resurrection body. Now, in verse 50, he has something to say to us about the time of the resurrection. And we read in verse 50.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep” that is we shall not all die physically, “but we shall all be changed.”

Now, of course, he is speaking about believers in this chapter throughout, and so we are not speaking about what shall happen to those who are not Christians, not believers, but those who are believers.

“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So in this corruptible shall I put on incorruption, and this mortal shall I put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

Now, you can see from this passage that Paul has written about the time of glorification and he has also given us some information about the process of it as well.

Let’s turn now to our second passage 1 John chapter 3 in verses 1 through 3, 1 John 3 verse 1 through verse 3. And here John the apostle writes,

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

Now, there is a very interesting reading in the Greek text in verse 1 and I’m going to reread it inserting the words which are found in many of our manuscripts, and I think you will see that it makes a very emphatic statement out of the fact that we are the sons of God. This is the way it reads in many of our ancient Greek manuscripts.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: and so we are or and we are” the Revised Standard Version says and so we are as if to stress the fact that we are the children of God. “Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is and every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure.”

Now, this is the conclusion of our study in the doctrine of glorification. And remember in our last study we learned these things. First of all, that glorification was the consummation of soteriology or the doctrine of salvation personally. It centers in the resurrection of the body, the necessary completion of the redemption of the cross. The cross would not be complete in its effects were we have to possess ultimately a resurrection body. For redemption not only touches our inner man but it also touches our outer man as well. And so not only does our spirit participate in the redemption through Jesus Christ but our body does as well.

And Christianity has always proclaimed the doctrine of the resurrection but resurrection of the body that is the distinctive Christian doctrine. As Paul has put it in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 55 through 57 “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Or as Paul says in Romans chapter 8 in verse 23 writing again about the redemption of the body “And not

only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

And so the redemption of our body is the resurrection of our body.

Now, we also learned this that the denial of the bodily resurrection is a pagan doctrine. In Acts chapter 17 when Paul preached the doctrine of the resurrection in the city of Athens, he received three different types of response. For example, we read that some mocked, after in verse 32 after Paul had preached, we read “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.” And then some claimed that they would give Paul a second chance. They would reconsider at a later time. And others said “We will here thee again of this matter.” “Howbeit” Luke adds “Certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.” So when Paul preached the doctrine of the resurrection some mocked, some said we’ll hear thee again, but some believed.

Further, it is striking that men have had different answers to the question of what happens to us when we die. I guess if we were to take all of these answers and lump them together and try to make some system out of them, we would come up with this that probably there are four primary answers to the question of the afterlife. The first answer is when we die that’s the end. When we die, it’s just like our dogs dying. That is, our bodies begin to decay. We put them in the grave, and that’s all there is to life. When we die, we die. And there is no life beyond the grave.

Then there are those, particularly, those like the Greeks, and we are responsible probably to Plato and to Aristotle for this, the Greeks believed, at least was popular among many of the leading Greeks, that the soul did survive death, but the soul was in a body which is to the Greeks like a corpse. And, consequently, resurrection was not very pleasant to the Greeks because it meant the resurrecting of that which had been like a prison to the soul, and so they welcome death thinking that the soul was completely free. I quoted the proverb that the Greeks had “The body is a tomb. I am a poor soul shackled

to a corpse.” This is the view of Plato, and it has been very popular. As a matter of fact, there are many people who think it is the Christian doctrine. That is that the body is placed in the grave, the soul is liberated from the body, and there is an afterlife and an afterlife by which we live in our soulless spirit and that’s all there is to the afterlife. And the idea of a bodily resurrection is not even considered but let me assure you that is not Christian doctrine. That is the doctrine of Greek philosophy.

Then there is the view largely of the eastern religion such as Buddhism and Hinduism that the soul goes through different reincarnations. In other words, when we die we may come back to life again as a horse or as a mouse or as some other animal or some other person.

Now, with all due respect to the Hindus and those who believe doctrine like this, they did not think that was a good idea. They thought that it would be much better if the soul might be dissolved or united to the great after soul or other soul like a drop of water in an ocean and be submerged in non entity as a special person in the great over soul. That is in God himself, but they did believe in reincarnation.

But the Christians have always believed that there is to be a resurrection of the body and not only for Christians, but a resurrection of the body for those who are unbelievers too. And while the Christians shall be given a body like Jesus Christ’s body, as we learned last time, those who are not Christians shall be given a body but a body in which they suffer the pangs of eternal torment. That is the teaching of the Bible.

We also discussed the physical side of the nature of resurrection last time. And we said that generally speaking a resurrection, our resurrection body, is like Christ’s body. Now, that is specifically stated. You will notice that it says here that we shall see him, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And in Philippians speaking specifically of the body, Paul says that “We look for the savior who shall change our vile body or our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto the body of Christ own glory.” So we shall have a glorious body such as the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, specifically when we turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, we discovered that while the Apostle Paul said that at least seven things about the resurrection body, he did not really tell us what it was going to be like so that we could put it down on a piece of paper and say our resurrection body is to have these capacities. It is to look like this, and from this description we should be able to recognize it when we see it. Paul told us some very general things about it. I gave you seven of them. And, I think, that we could sum it up by saying this that Paul said that “There was to be a continuity with our present body.” In other words, the body we shall have in resurrection is the body that is continuous with the body we have now, though it may be place in the grave like a seed is sown in the earth, it is still the same body. So there is continuity and there is also identity.

As Paul puts it in verse 38 “But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” So that we have our own body. Now, I do not have your body in the resurrection. That would be a very discouraging thing and you do not have mine. I’m sorry to destroy your hope [laughter] but, nevertheless, we do not have each other’s body. We have our own body. So there is continuity and there is identity and yet there is diversity. Paul states that just as in his illustration, just as in the terrestrial bodies there are differences and just as in the celestial bodies there are differences, so there are differences in the resurrection body. And he seems to imply that if we may make some implication from an illustration in verse 41 “For one star differeth from another star in glory.” That there are certain ways by which Christians shall be rewarded in their resurrection body.

Now, I would not want to argue that point and if someone asked me a question about it I would say there it is. You could make out of it what you like. But at any rate, I think, we can say this that Paul says “The resurrection body is like Christ generally. Specifically, there will be continuity with our present body. There will be identity with

our present body, but yet my body will not be your body even though we both shall be like Christ.”

A. A. Hodge, one of our fine Presbyterian theologians, said “The body of the resurrection will be as strictly identical with the body of death, as the body of death is with the body of birth.” Now, let me read it again. I think it’s very instructive. “The body of the resurrection will be as strictly identical with the body of death, as the body of death is with the body of birth.”

And by means of this citation and quotation, I am able to bring up the subject of my granddaughter again. [Laughter] But my granddaughter is still at my house. She was in California over the weekend and she’s back now. She couldn’t resist her grandfather, and so she had to come back and see him before she goes back to New Jersey. But now her body, at this stage ten or eleven weeks old, that body is going to be quite a bit different from the body of a young child a few years from now. We probably shall be able to see some continuity perhaps even if there were birth marks, some birth marks that may remain, but when she becomes a young lady the body will be a great deal different.

And when she becomes a young woman, it will be considerably more different and as she begins to get old, if Jesus Christ does not come then there will be other and greater differences. And the time will come when it would be impossible to recognize the baby from the grown aging adult. And if she should live out a normal life and should be old and die, there would be practically no relationship between the infant of eleven weeks old and the aged person of seventy-five. And so just as, however, it is the same body and there is continuity and identity so in the resurrection body, what we have now is the same, it has continuity with our resurrection body but oh what a difference it will be from the present. I like that citation because it helps to understand the fact that we can have continuity and identity and yet great differences.

Now, in this study, we want to conclude our investigation of the doctrine and we’re going to look at the moral side as you can tell. Last time we began with Roman 1 -

The nature of glorification and we considered capital A - The physical side. And remember I gave you point one, two, and three under capital A. But since I didn’t have space to put it on the board, I have omitted it tonight and we’re going on to capital B - The moral side of the resurrection body or of the resurrection our glorification. And I want to look at two passages in order to stress the moral side of our glorification.

And so will you turn with me now first of all to Romans chapter 8 in verse 29. And while you’re finding Romans 8:29, I think I shall just read verse 28. I think every time you get anywhere near Romans 8:28, you should read it. And so here it is. “And we know that all things work together for good.” Now, it does not say all things are good but, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Love God is the human side. Called according to his purpose is the divine side. And the divine side is the cause for the human side. Because we are the called according to his purpose, we love him. He is the one who has produced this love.

Now, what is his purpose? Well, he states “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” And so this great goal of the purpose of God is that through these procedures, which are described here in verse 29 and 30, we should ultimately be conformed to the image of God’s Son. Notice that 29th verse “For whom he did foreknow, he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son.” In the Greek text, it’s very instructive. It is “Conformed one’s of the image.” And the words that are used, one an adjective and the other a noun, are words that refer not to outward likeness but to inner likeness. They are words that refer to likeness of attribute. For example, Jesus Christ is love. Jesus Christ is righteous. Jesus Christ is holy. Jesus Christ, of course, is omnipotent. He is omniscient. He has great attributes of knowledge, of holiness, of righteousness, of justice, of love, of

mercy. These are the things that make up the form of the Son of God; for that is a word that refers to the inner likeness “Who being in the form of God” Paul said in Philippians chapter 2. He meant he possessed all of the essential attributes of deity.

Now, he says here that we are to be conformed ones of the image of his Son. Now, he will say that he’s going to be the first born among many brethren, and so we must not presume from this that we’re going to have the completeness of divine nature so it could be said of us that we are gods. But even Peter says that “We are partakers of the divine nature” and by that he means that we possess in measure the attributes of the Son of God himself. And so the purity, the holiness, the righteousness, the justice, all of these things characterize the individual who has been redeemed and who has experienced glorification. It’s what Paul means when he says in verse 18 “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” “The glory which shall be revealed in us.” So when we say that we are to be like Christ in resurrection, now we are not to think that it’s simply an outward body that we have, but our body, while it is like Christ’s, is the reflection of a nature that has become like Christ’s. The sin nature has been eradicated and only then and we possess these attributes that make up the attributes of the Son of God himself. Now, isn’t that a wonderful thing to think about? That we are to have a likeness that is inner. By the way, notice that he says that “We are to be conformed once to the image of his Son.”

Now, that too is a philosophical term which refers to the possession of essential attributes. For example, when Jesus called by Paul in Colossians “The image of the invisible God,” he means that he possess all of deity that the Father possesses. He is just as much God as the Father is God. And so when we read that “We shall be conformed to the image of the Son,” Paul is talking about an inner likeness. What our best theologians have called a likeness of body, of soul, and of spirit. So there is to be a moral side to our glorification. It’s just not the matter of getting a body like Christ’s body, but our whole being is one to be transformed. When the Lord Jesus was on the Mount of

Transfiguration, you’ll remember countenance became other. But other of the gospel writers describe it as a transformation using the same root word that is used of conformed once of the image. In other words, when Jesus on the Mount underwent the experience transfiguration, it was not simply an outward thing, but it was a fore view of the inner transformation of the resurrection for him. And that is the kind of experience that we are going to have. It is going to be tremendous to experience that. You know, I am so glad that I am a Christian.

Now, let’s look at 1 John 3:1 through 3:3. I’m very tempted to start preaching here, but I have to remember this is a systematic theology class. First John chapter 3, verses 1 through 3. Now, here we have a beautiful summary of the Christian life. You will notice the three tenses; past, present, and future. As my friend in Houston likes to say “Phase one, phase two, and phase three.” They are all here. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” That’s phase one. That’s the love that was bestowed upon us in the cross, which we received when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God (and so we are): therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” The world looks at you and it doesn’t say my goodness what a great person you are, a Christian. No, they just shoulder you off the streets, or they do not really care because they don’t know. They don’t know what they’re doing.

Why, just think of that. When you walk down the street and somebody jostles you, what kind of response do you think we would get if you turned to him look at now you just jostled the Son of a King? [Laughter] Well, you might wind up in the funny farm if you did that too often. “Therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” That’s phase three. That is we shall be like him when we see him in his manifestation. Now, there is three “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.” That’s

phase two. That’s the present life. “Purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” So this is a great passage. It has the past, the present, and the future Christian life.

But the thing we want to look at is but we know that when we shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is. Now, I have seen many wonderful sights and you have seen many wonderful sights. We have seen the Grand Canyon last summer for the first time. I saw the Tetons in Wyoming. That was a magnificent sight. Those mountains are the greatest mountains I think I ever seen including the ones in Switzerland. They just rise up out of nothing with a tremendous panorama and I was just greatly impressed with them. I went all through Canada and I didn’t see anything like the Tetons. Please tell the Canadians friends that they’ve got more mountains then we have up there. They’ve got high mountains and they have more of them. They have mountains everywhere but we have the Grand Tetons. And it is a tremendous sight. I saw Yellowstone and we’ve seen Yosemite and Niagara Falls. We’ve seen the oceans and some of us have seen the Eiffel tower and we’ve seen the Jungfrau and the Mont Blanc and the Roman forum and Loch Lomond in Scotland. And we’ve seen the greatest miracle of all, I guess, Magnolia gardens in Charleston South Carolina. [Laughter] But this, [Laughter] the visitors won’t understand that, but this is the greatest sight of all “We shall be like him for we shall him as he is.” Isn’t that going to be wonderful? It is going to be great to be like him, but it is going to be even more wonderful to see him as he is.

And now John says “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” Now, it would seem to be that because John says in verse 3 “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” That it is our sight of our Lord in his holiness that is prominent in this passage. It is not so much the glory of his outward appearance as it is the purity and holiness of his being that impresses us. “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure, and we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” What? Pure. So it is the purity, the glory of our Lord’s holiness that is prominent in 1 John chapter 3.

Now, what happens if we do not purify ourselves while we’re here on the earth? What happens if we do not respond to the word of God and grow in holiness? What happens if we do not respond to the presence of the Holy Spirit within and grow in holiness? Well, verse 28 of chapter 2 said “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” Now, that expression in the Greek text has the idea of the averted face, “Ashamed before him at his coming,” as if there is an aversion of the face of God because of our failure.

Well, we must hasten on. Roman II - The time of glorification.

Now, I could have given you lots of passages, I have five or six in my notes, on the time of glorification. I just put the 1 Corinthians 15:50 passage there because it tells the same story that the others do. All of the texts that bear on this subject unite in saying that the glorification is to take place at the coming of Christ for the church. So as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 50.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Now, there it is stated that it shall occur at the last trump. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 13 through verse 18, the apostle states that “The resurrection shall take place when Jesus Christ comes.” Will you turn over there for just a moment, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 in verse 13 through verse 18? This is really a parallel passage with 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 50, and following. And here Paul writes

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede” is a better translation of that Greek word “them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

And so the resurrection takes place at the time of the coming of Jesus Christ.

Roman III - The process of the glorification. Let’s turn back to 1 Corinthians 15 again and our passage beginning at verse 50. Remember that last Monday night when we were looking at 1 Corinthians 15, verse 35, and following I said that the apostle had us listen to two questions in verse 35. Some men will say “How are the dead raised up?” And the second question “And with what body do they come?”

Now, Paul answered the first question in verse 36. He said “Fool” he didn’t hesitate to call somebody a fool. He said “Fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.” So how are the dead raised up? Well, they are raised up through death. Men die, and the resurrection is a resurrection of a body that has died. So that question was answered. But someone might have said to Paul in the question session afterwards “But now Paul, what happens to those who do not die? You say that the resurrection is the means whereby the dead are raised up, but what happens if they do not die?” So Paul wants to answer the question what happens to those who do not die, and answers that question in these last verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

In 1 Thessalonians the question is, what happens to those who do die? Do they miss out on the rapture of the church, and we’ll talk about that in a moment. But the question here is, what happens to those who do not die? And he, first of all, tells us or shows us the principle verse 50 “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” So we cannot go to heaven as we are now. What happens to those who do not die? Well, something’s got to happen, if they do not die they have to be changed because you cannot go to heaven as you are now.

As I’ve said to you several times, Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say “If a thief went to heaven as he was the first thing he would do would be to pick the usual pockets.” Dr. Barnhouse used to like to say “Listen if we went to heaven as we are we would wreck the place.” And really if Christians went to heaven, if only Christians went to heaven without any change, it wouldn’t be a perfect place then. Have you ever known of any Christian church that is a perfect church? Have you ever known of it? You can include Believers Chapel as far as I’m concerned too. There is no perfect Christian church. There never will be.

Remember the person who came to Mr. Spurgeon asking something about his church. He said “I’m looking for the perfect church. I’d like to know something about the Metropolitan Tabernacle.” He said “What about it?” Mr. Spurgeon said “Well we have a wonderful group of Christians here. We have many who’ve grown in grace. We have many who’ve not grown in grace. We have many who have fresh new immature Christians. And we have some old sour pusses too. Our church is not a perfect church, but young man I’d like to give you a little piece of advice, if you find that perfect church, don’t you dare join it.” The young fellow said “What do you mean?” He said “Why you’d spoil it.” [Laughter] So there is no perfect church. So there has to be a change.

So “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” Now, if flesh and blood cannot inherit

the kingdom of God, the body can. A resurrected body with a spirit redeemed and glorified can. What Paul means when he says flesh and blood is human existence as it is now, that cannot inherit the kingdom of God. So there has to be a change. And so in verse 51 through 57, he makes the application of this principle, he says “Behold, I shew you a secret.” A mystery, by the way, in the Bible is not something mysterious. It is something that can only be known by divine revelation. It is a secret. “We shall not all sleep.” he says, “But we shall all be changed”

Now, that’s great news. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; therefore, there must be a change and we shall be changed.” When Paul? How? “In a moment.” Now, the word that is used for moment is a very interesting word because it is the word *atomos* from which we get atom. And atom is something that cannot be cut. It is, until we split the atom, it was the thing that was indivisible. It was the smallest moment of time, *atomos*, so in a moment. And he says in the twinkling of an eye. That word for twinkling is a word that means, it’s a word that refers to the time that it takes to cast a glance or perhaps the flutter of an eyelid. So that’s a very short time, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. Paul says “For the dead shall be raised incorruptible” that is the dead bodies that have been placed in the grave and which have corrupted “they shall be raised incorruptible and we” that is we living “we shall be changed.” “For this corruptible.”

Now, for those of you that are reading a Greek text in the audience there this text right here is a little difficult, we have many manuscripts and some of them differ on some of the points but the truth back of this is not affected. So I’m just going to adhere to our English text here. He says “For this corruptible” that is this body that is in the grave “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal” this living body which has death as a principle in it. “This mortal must put on immortality.” “So when this corruptible” down here in the grave “shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal” this living person who is dying “shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is

written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” Death in the grave that brought the body to corruption, death the death principle which is in my body and which inevitably take my body to death if Jesus Christ does not come. And so he says “O death, where is thy sting? O death O dying principle in this living body. O death, where is thy sting? O grave which has taken this body to corruption. O grave, where is thy victory?”

Now, at this point we could turn to verse 57 and say “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And would be all that would be necessary for us to say, but someone might ask the question that the Thessalonians asked of Paul. What about Christians who died before the time of the Rapture are they going to lose the experience of the Rapture? And Paul answered that question specifically in 1 Thessalonians 4 in the passage that I read to you and so putting the two together this is what Paul teaches about the process of the resurrection. He says that “When the Lord Jesus comes from heaven, he is going to come with the spirits of believers.” You’ll notice that 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, says and I’ll read these words for you, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” So the Lord and the spirits of believers in the church, whose bodies have been placed in the grave, but whose spirits went to be with the Lord, when the time of the resurrection is come they shall come with our Lord. God will bring them with our Lord.

Then he says in verse 15, “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.” You see they had asked about what about our friends who have died, our mother, our father, our brother who has died, will, they missed the Rapture? Oh no Paul says “As a matter of fact you shall not precede them, they shall precede you.” So those who have died have a little bit of an advantage in the resurrection. For we read in verse 16 “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” That is

those whose spirits are with the Lord but whose bodies are in the grave, they shall rise first. So their spirits apparently will leave the Lord. They shall reenter their body. God performing upon the body the work of the resurrection making it like Christ’s own body of glory, and the spirit shall rejoin the body and they shall come from the grave first, first.

Now, there was a woman that came to James McGinley, who was a great evangelist of the last generation, and she said to him after one of his messages, “Dr. McGinley.” He said she was one of those ladies who had a lorgnette. And she looked at him, he was a little short fella, she looked at him she said “Dr. McGinley” she said “You have told us about the resurrection, but if God is no respect of a persons, why do the dead in Christ arise first? And he said afterwards, he said “I didn’t know the answer to that question.” So I said “What was that question again?” Like all of us teachers do, you know, when we don’t know, we beg time so we say “I didn’t quite hear that what was that question?” She said “Dr. McGinley if there is no respect of persons with God, why do the dead in Christ arise first? And finally he said “Well I didn’t know what to say so I just said I guess it’s because they’re six feet farther down.” [Laughter] And it satisfied her. I don’t think that’s scriptural. [Laughter] But that’s an evangelist’s reply anyway.

So the dead in Christ rise first. Then we read in verse 17 “Then we which are alive” the living who are still on the face of the earth the living “then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them.” So, apparently, they with their resurrection bodies shall meet us so that we the living are caught up with them and as we are caught up we are as 1 Corinthians 15 tells us, we are changed. So we are changed, they are resurrected and given bodies like Christ. We are changed into bodies like Christ and we are caught up together so that the whole church, as the whole body and bride of Jesus Christ, meets the Lord in the air, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Now, that is the process of the resurrection. It’s very simple, it’s very plain, and it’s very wonderful. Now, finally, the certainty of the resurrection. And I’m only going to look at two testimonials and these really are put in reverse order. I should have said the

testimony of God’s word and the testimony of God’s power. So I think I will expound them in that order, the testimony of God’s word - Romans chapter 8 in verse 29 and verse 30. And since we only have ten minutes left I want to remind you of what Paul said in those verses. He said in Romans 8 verse 30 “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also shall glorified.” No, as we pointed out when we were talking about eternal security, it is “Them also hath he glorified.” He puts it in the past tense. It is so certain that those who have been called and justified, shall be glorified that he can even say though it has not come to past yet and whom he justified them he also glorified.

Now, it seems to me that that testimony of God’s word is a certain testimony that we shall be glorified. So I don’t have any worry about this. It’s going to come to pass. So sure that Paul puts it in the past tense.

Let’s turn now to a new passage that we haven’t looked at 2 Corinthians chapter 5 in verses 1 through 4. Now, Paul writes of three states of man in 2 Corinthians 5:1 through 4. He wants to be clothed upon he says but he writes of the state of being clothed, of being unclothed, and being clothed upon. Now, if I were to look at these three states from this little picture that I drew for you. By the way, I did this on a spur of the moment tonight. Did it make sense to you? I hope it did. Now, Paul says he writes about being clothed, he writes about being unclothed, he writes about being clothed upon in this passage.

Now, when he writes about being clothed, he’s talking about living believers who have a body. You are clothed not very well clothed but you are clothed. That’s your human body. I wasn’t talking about you beautiful garments ladies. [Laughter] We are clothed all of us. Now, if we die and our body is placed in the grave and our spirit wants to be with the Lord, then we are unclothed, we don’t have a body. That’s what Paul means when he says unclothed we don’t have a body. Now, if we then are with the Lord unclothed and at the resurrection Jesus Christ comes and our spirit goes to be with the

Lord, we receive clothing and we are clothed again and we meet the Lord. But if we are living, if we are living, we have clothing but we’re going to be given some other clothing. We’re going to be clothed upon. We don’t pass through the state of unclothed in. In other words, those who are living at the coming of the Lord always have a body. They’re never without a body. They have this body until the Lord comes and then they’re given another body.

Now, wouldn’t you like to be that way? Would you rather be that way? Of course you would rather be that way if you are Pauline in your theology. If you’re not Pauline in your theology then you wouldn’t but then you’d better be Pauline in your theology. Now, listen to what he says. That’s what he is talking about here. He says, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved” he using the language of attempt. Men you who are fisherman and hunters really he’s saying we know that if this earthly house of this tabernacle were dismantled “we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Our resurrection body.

“For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon” that is we are looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus while we are alive. We want to be clothed upon. “Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon” I wish I had time to expound the Greek text for you and I wish all of you could read the Greek text because Paul use of words is very careful here. Verse 3 “If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.” Now, those who have died whose bodies are in the grave whose spirits are with the Lord they are in perfect bliss mind you, but it is incomplete bliss. They are in Paul’s language naked. They do not have a body.

Now, you see a human being is designed to have a body. We are not complete human beings when we are only in spirit form. God intended you should have a body, and we are not complete until then. So you see the Christian faith lays a great deal of stress upon resurrection of the body. So Paul says verse 3 “He didn’t want to be naked.” That is a spirit with the Lord without his body. That’s incomplete. It doesn’t mean he’s

not happy. He said he would depart and be with Christ, which is far better. If he had to make a choice, it’s better to be with the Lord then to be here in this old tabernacle but there’s something better than both. That’s to be with the Lord and have a body like unto our Lord’s own glorious body.

So we read in verse 4 “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed (not burdened to be unclothed), but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” In other words, we who are living long for the coming of Jesus Christ, which is the Rapture of the church, so that we are caught up to be with him and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Do you long for the coming of Jesus Christ? Do you really long for the coming of Jesus Christ? Would you be happy if he came right now? Well every Christian should be long for his coming right now. Now, that means right now not wait a little while longer I have a few things I’d like to, do but right now. I must confess that often times when I’m not too happy to think about the Lord’s coming because of the failures. The many things that I feel I should do should have done I’d like some done but that’s the wrong attitude. That’s not the Pauline attitude.

Well now I said the testimony of God’s power too. Will you turn to Philippians chapter 3? Can God do it? Can it be done? Well, of course, it can be done because he is God but let’s listen to the words of Paul in Philippians 3:20 and 21. He says verse 20 of Philippians chapter 3 “For our conversation is in heaven (our citizenship is in heaven); from whence also we look for the (he doesn’t say the king he says the) Saviour (because he’s thinking about the deliverance of the body), the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his body of glory.” Can he do it? Why the text says “According to the working, whereby, he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” There’s no question, but that he can do it. Our humiliation, his glory how vast the gulf between the body of humiliation and the body of glory, but grace has bridged it and we’re going to cross it by the power of God.

Now, the question of verse 35 of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 has now been answered. The resurrection is not only possible, it is expected. The body is to be like the Lord’s but the likeness goes much deeper. We shall have a body and a nature suitable for the spiritual conditions of heaven. Now, will you participate? Men have scoffed at death and resurrection but listen to their deaf dead cries. One of the greatest of unbelievers was the Frenchman Voltaire. It is reported that Voltaire said at his end “I am abandoned by God and man. I shall go to hell. Oh Christ. Oh Jesus Christ.” Tom Paine noted infidel and unbeliever “I would give worlds if I had them if at the age of reason had never been published oh Lord help me. Christ help me. Stay with me. It is hell to be left alone.” On the other hand, David Brainerd, one of the godliest of Christians saints, said “I’m going into eternity and it is sweet to me to think of eternity. The endlessness makes it sweet, but oh what shall I say to the eternity of the wicked. The thought of it is too dreadful.”

And Paul “For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day and not to be only but unto all them also that love his appearing, but we can sing when he shall come with trumpet sound oh then shall in him be found. Dressed in his righteousness alone faultless to stand before the throne on Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand.”

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the wonderful hope of the resurrection body. And we know, Lord, that we are not complete until that glorious day, and we pray that if

it should be within Thy will that though will hasten it. And Father if there should be one
in our midst who has not yet believed you will give them no rest or peace until they rest
in him

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.