



Snatching Life from Death

1 Cor. 15 (selected verses)

It's Easter Sunday and I'm going to take a risk. I'm going to begin the Easter Message with a "death joke." If it bombs, we're off to a really bad start.

Three friends die in a car accident, and upon their arrival to the afterlife, they are all asked, "When you are in your casket and friends and family are mourning upon you, what would you like to hear them say about you?"

- The first guy says, "I would like to hear them say that I was a great doctor, and a great family man."
- The second guy says, "I would like to hear them say that I was a wonderful husband and school teacher that made a difference in our children of tomorrow."
- The last guy replies, "I would like to hear them say "LOOK, HE'S MOVING!!!"

Let's face it, if we thought it was a possibility, we'd all have that request too. Since that's not possible, then my question to you this morning is: "Is it possible to snatch life out of death?" Or...

I. IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

That reminds me of that ancient question that Job asked thousands of years ago: "*if a man dies, will he live again?*" (Job. 14:14) That is absolutely the most important question that we could ask, because life is our most precious possession.

- How much would a dying millionaire give up for one more year of life? Probably *Everything!*
- Some of you put yourselves through strenuous exercise and strict diets everyday in the hopes that you'll be able to extend your life a few years.
- And we've all heard of all kinds of weird ideas that people try to stay alive on this earth.
 - fountain of youth
 - Cryogenics
 - Special K

If it's really possible to live forever *after* we die here, — then there is no more relevant issue than this: *if a man dies, shall he live again?* And, may I add something else? It's not until we have confidence that we will live beyond the grave that this life takes on ultimate meaning and enjoyment.

The Bible says, "*If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men*" (1 Cor. 15:19, NIV). The more you live, the more you realize that life is coming to a dead end and it is futile if there is not hope beyond the grave.

In **1 Corinthians 15** [p.815] the apostle Paul deals with this question in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Listen how he begins. "*I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word that we preached to you*" 1 Cor. 15:1-2a, NIV). Now the word *gospel* means good news, and the good news is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides positive answers to the three most important questions about life after death.

Is There Life After Death? The answer is yes, Jesus' resurrection proved it. Verses 3-4 contain the essence of the Christian's belief. Old Testament Scripture had predicted that the Messiah was going to die. It said that he would be led like a sheep to the slaughter. So Jesus' death was not the accidental death of a martyr; it was the deliberate death of a person who offered His life as a sacrifice. God laid on Him all of our sins. He became our substitute on the cross. And He died and was buried.

And three days later, on Easter Sunday, He was raised from the dead! Old Testament Scripture predicted that God would not allow the Holy One to undergo decay. Jesus was laid in a *borrowed tomb*; if you borrow something you are just going to use it temporarily.

Some people you'll hear, will say this rising from the dead was a hoax, or a mistake. That's something your going to have to decide for yourself.

A woman wrote J. Vernon McGee. "Our preacher said that on Easter, Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?" McGee replied, "Dear sister, beat your preacher with a leather whip with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross, hang him in the sun for six hours, run a spear through his heart, put him in an airless tomb for three days. and see what happens!"

On that first Easter morning Jesus Christ strolled out of that tomb very much alive. When the women went to the tomb to anoint His body, they discovered the tomb was empty and the angel said, *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen, just the way He said that He would!”* (Lk. 24:5)

Now Paul said emphatically in vv. 5-8, *“We know Jesus is alive, because we have seen Him!”* Peter saw Him alive; he ate breakfast with Him and had discussions with Him. The ten disciples saw Him alive. They were in the upper room when suddenly Jesus appeared and said, *“See the nail prints in my hands.”*

Thomas, who couldn't initially believe it, when he finally saw Jesus in the flesh, fell to his knees and declared, *“My Lord and my God!”*

Jesus appeared to 500 people at once. The apostle James was beheaded for the belief that He was alive. And Paul, last of all He appeared to him too.

v.9 Paul said, *“I was not a believer; I was determined to obliterate Christianity from the face of the earth: but Jesus appeared to me on the road to Damascus and knocked me down. And I had to admit I was dead wrong. He was alive, and my life did a 180-degree reversal.”*

When I was in grade school we used to have questions and discussions about whether man would ever make it to the moon. But then on July 20, 1969, Neal Armstrong hopped across the surface of the moon, and we don't ask that question any more, because the demonstration eliminates the discussion.

Jesus Christ demonstrated that there is life after death. And, in verse 12 Paul seems a little perplexed why people even ask the question. *“If it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?”*

But, that's a conclusion you can only ultimately answer for yourself. You can consider the evidence.

Jesus didn't come physically and preach from our pulpit so that you see Him visibly, but there is ample evidence to believe. We have the eyewitness testimony in Scripture, testimony in the people who died for that conviction that He was alive. We have the testimony of millions of people whose lives have been changed by Christ over the centuries. We have the calendar and the church and we have the Holy Spirit convicting us in our hearts today that He is alive, and you have the option to examine the evidence and believe it or to examine the evidence and choose to disbelieve it.

Winston Churchill chose to believe. In fact, he arranged his own funeral. There were hymns in St. Paul's Cathedral and an impressive liturgy. When they said the benediction, he

had arranged for a bugler high in the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral on one side to play “Taps,” the universal signal that the day is over. But when that was finished, there was a long pause and then a bugler on the other side played “Reveille,” the signal of a new day beginning. It was Churchill's way of communicating that while we say “Good night” here, it's “Good morning” up there!

Jesus Christ said, “I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

II. IF THERE IS LIFE AFTER DEATH, WHAT IS IT LIKE?

(mention Second Coming _ Joan's Song)

In v. 20 Paul *“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep”* (NIV). Now that word “first fruits” means an *example of that which is to come*. The Bible says, *“We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”* (John 3:2, NIV). In other words, if you want to know what it's like for a Christian to die and live again, look at the experience of Jesus.

First, there was a separation of the body. Just before Jesus died He said, *“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”* Jesus' body died and was buried in a tomb, but His Spirit went to be with the Father. He said to the thief on the cross, *“This day you are going to be with me in paradise.”* So, when we die our spirits go immediately to be with God while our bodies go to the grave. [The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:8, *“We are confident... to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”*]

Just as it is the *hand* that animates the *glove*, so it is the spirit that energizes a body. When the spirit departs the body, it's like a lifeless glove is put aside. So we don't return to re-inhabit a number of other bodies like reincarnation, and we don't go to a place where we are purged of our sin for years; we go directly to be with God when we die.

So there is a departure of the spirit from the body, **then there is a resurrection of the body.** After three days Jesus came back into the tomb to re-inhabit the same body. The grave clothes were left behind, He showed them the nail scars in His hands and feet. The Bible teaches there is going to be a resurrection of our bodies, too. In John 5:28, Jesus said, *“Now don't be amazed at this, but the time is coming when all that are in the grave will hear His voice and come out”* (my paraphrase).

If God has the power to make matter out of energy, if He has the power to make Adam out of the dust of the ground, then He has the power to resurrect our bodies.

Long ago believers used to insist on being buried in the cemetery facing the East, because they believed that Jesus

Christ was going to return in the Eastern sky and when they came up out of the grave they wanted to be facing Jesus.

Today, with our carnal minds we want an airtight crypt and a watertight casket.

Me? I want one with a flip-top box; I just want to come out of there as fast as I can!

It is no more difficult for God to raise the dead than it is to create life in a birth. Our resurrected body will be a physical body.

In [Luke 24:38](#) and following, Jesus appeared in the upper room with the disciples and they thought He was a ghost. *“He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence”* (NIV).

One more thing. We know that Jesus ate after He rose from the dead (Lk. 24:38). I never thought about it, but in heaven we’ll be able to eat. *I like eating.* That’s going to be a fun thing! It will be a perfect life. The Bible talks about sitting down at “the marriage supper of the lamb.” And you won’t have to worry about fat grams, high blood pressure or cholesterol. Jenny Craig will be out of business in heaven!

III. HOW CAN WE ATTAIN ETERNAL LIFE?

If life after death were for sale, how much would you pay for it? If this were a legitimate offer, if you knew life after death is better than this life, *you would pay everything for it!*

The problem is, **YOU CAN’T AFFORD IT!**

You can’t afford eternal life. Heaven is the dwelling place of God, a place of perfection, and we have forfeited our right to be there because of our sin. The only purchase price is the blood of a perfect person, and you and I don’t qualify. So we can’t earn it and we don’t deserve it, but the good news is that Jesus Christ stepped in to pay the debt for us. [First Corinthians 15:56](#) (NIV) says, *“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* **So you can’t earn it. You have to receive it.** YOU have to BELIEVE. Really believe - that Jesus Christ is your Redeemer and your Lord.

Now, I can only think of two reasons why you would refuse such a fantastic offer.

One is LOVE FOR SIN. There is a sense in which eternal life doesn’t cost you anything, and there is another sense in which it costs you everything. The Bible says that we are to repent of our sins, put our trust in Christ, confess Him, and we are to be baptized into Him as a line of demarcation saying, “I’m leaving the old world behind and I’m going to a new life with Christ.” But you may be so in love with the materialistic values or the party activities of this world that you can’t give them up. You may rationalize and make excuses, but the bottom line is you are too in love with this world to really receive the hope of eternal life. And for you death will be “Taps.” It won’t be “Reveille.”

The second reason people reject the offer of Christ is because of PERSONAL PRIDE. Maybe you have a keen mind and your greatest asset is your greatest liability. There is plenty of good evidence to verify the resurrection of Jesus, but it can’t be proven and you have to accept it like a humble child. For 2,000 years [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) has been true: *“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not of works, so that nobody can boast”* .

Professional Golfer Paul Azinger was diagnosed with cancer during his career. He got sick, had to leave the game. Eventually he recovered from chemotherapy and returned to the PGA tour, and in fact did pretty well.

But more than all his success and notoriety, that bout with cancer deepened his perspective. He wrote, *“I’ve made a lot of money since I’ve been on the tour and I’ve won a lot of tournaments, but I discovered that happiness is always temporary. Since cancer, I’m not saying that nothing ever bothers me and I don’t have problems, but I feel like I’ve found the answer to the six-foot hole. The only way you will ever have true contentment is in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I know I’ll spend eternity with God and I have a promise that as a child of God He’ll help me deal with anything. He promises to offer me contentment regardless of what life brings, even cancer.”*

If a man dies, will he live again? Yes. Jesus proved it. Jesus demonstrated it, and Jesus Christ purchased it for you. **It’s up to you to receive it.**

It’s your decision, but it’s one that you’ll have to live with.

PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

Lord Jesus I need you. I realize that I’m a sinner and I can’t save myself. I believe that you died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. I repent of my sins and put my faith in you alone as my Savior. Take control of my life and help me to follow you in obedience. In Jesus’ name. Amen .