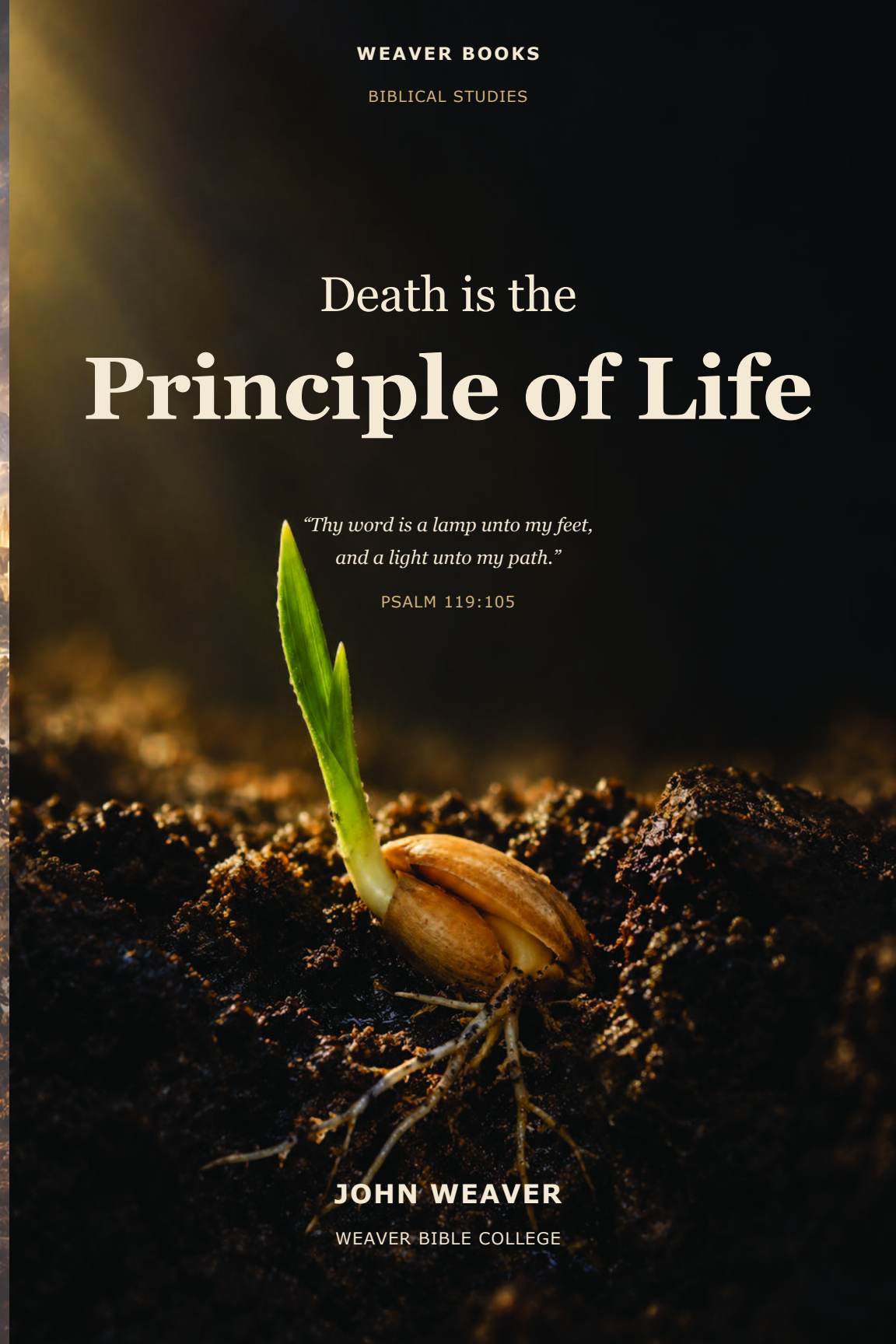
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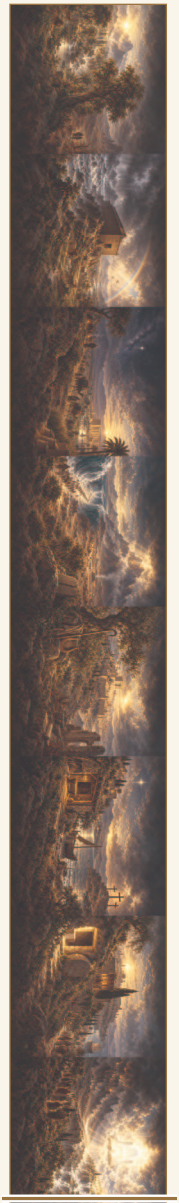
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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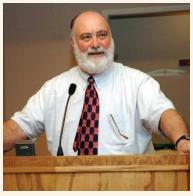
Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.

JOHN 12:24, EXCERPT

Scripture connects death with the promise of resurrection and the call to die to self. John Weaver considers Christ's death, the believer's future hope, and the practical cost of faithful service. These messages ask how an eternal perspective changes the meaning of suffering and the choices made in daily Christian life.

"We may not want to die, but we're not afraid to die."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

Death is the Principle of Life

Part One

Introduction and Reading of John 12:24-26

John chapter 12, and we're going to be reading verses 24 through 26. Let me tell you that I will finish this sermon, Lord willing, next Sunday. So it is going to be a part one and part two, and I encourage you to make sure that you are here to listen to the last half of this message. John chapter 12, look if you would please at verse 24. Our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

"He that loveth his life shall lose it. And he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me. And where I am, there also shall my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." The title of the message is "Death is the Principle of Life."

When you look at verse 24, where our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it

abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," our Lord gives us in this passage a very simple and yet, at the same time, a very complex truth: death is the principle of life.

That is true in agriculture. That is true in soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. It is also true in practical Christian living. The only thing that you and I could say to such a concept is, what an extremely odd truth, that death is the principle of life. We do not normally think in those terms. We normally think that death is the absence of life. And yet our Lord informs us it is just the opposite, that life actually springs from death. If you and I do not understand and comprehend this important truth, we are not going to grasp practical Christian living. But if we do understand and grasp this truth, it will not only change the way that we live now in practical Christian living, it will also change our view of death. We will no longer think of death as the cessation of life, but as the new beginning of life.

The Preface: 'Verily, Verily' (Amen, Amen)

So I want you to look at verse 24. First of all today, I want you to see the preface to this truth. The preface. Notice he says in verse 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Do you realize that the word "verily, verily" is translated in our Bibles as "truly, truly," and "amen, amen"? The word is actually "amen." Actually what he says in verse 24 is, "Amen, Amen, I say unto you." Now, what I want to do very quickly is ask that you hold John 12, but turn in your Bibles, first of all, to Numbers chapter 5. I want to just show you a couple of times that this word occurs in the Old Testament. Then we're going to look at a few times it occurs in the New Testament. If you'll look at Numbers chapter 5 and verse 22, you will read this: "And this water that causeth the curse shall go into the bowels, to make thy belly swell, and thy thigh to rot, and the woman shall say, Amen, Amen." Now the interesting thing is, without turning to all these other passages, you will find in the Old Testament the word "Amen" occurring in Nehemiah 8 in verse 6, Psalm 41:13, Psalm 72:19, and Psalm 89 in verse 52. Now turn to the New Testament and look, if you would please, at Romans chapter 9 and verse 5. An interesting thing, because in John chapter 12, "Amen, Amen" was at the beginning. If you noticed in Numbers chapter 5, it was at the end. So

now in Romans 9 and verse 5, referring to Christ, we read, "...whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever, Amen." And then in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 21, you're going to see the word "Amen" again: "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." It occurs very frequently in the book of John. You will also find the word "Amen" in John 1:51, John 3:3, John 3:5, and John 5:24 and 25.

The word “Amen” is indeed a remarkable word. It was transliterated from Hebrew into Greek, Latin, and English. When I say transliterated, that is not translated. For instance, our English word “deacon” means servant; the Greek word means servant as well. But “deacon” in the New Testament was transliterated. The D from the Greek became a D in English, and the E became an E. In other words, it is spelled in English basically as in Greek, brought letter for letter rather than translated.

“Amen” is handled exactly the same way, making it practically universal. You could say “Amen” in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, or English essentially the same way. It has been called the best-known word in human speech.

I suppose it is close to “hallelujah,” because “hallelujah” is basically the same in any language as well. But “Amen” is closely related to the Hebrew word “aman,” A-M-A-N, translated “believe” or “faithful.” Thus it came to mean “surely” or “truly,” as an expression of absolute trust and confidence.

Whenever you see “truly, truly” or “Amen, Amen” at the beginning of a discourse, it means, Sit up, pay attention, because what follows is not only emphasized; it is extremely important. At the end of a discourse, “Amen, Amen” literally means, “So be it,” or “May it be fulfilled.” That is why it was at the end in Romans 9:5 and Ephesians 3:21: May it be fulfilled. So be it.

In Revelation chapter 3, we learn something else about the word “Amen.” This may surprise you: in verse 14, “Amen” is actually a name of Jesus Christ. “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true

witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Jesus Christ is called "the Amen, the faithful and true witness."

Thus, when we say "Amen," we are not only saying "truly, truly" or "verily, verily," nor only "so be it" or "may it be fulfilled." We are also calling Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness, to testify that whatever has been said is absolute truth. "Amen" is appropriate at the reading of Scripture or the declaration of Christian truth. But remember, it is the name of Christ, and you are calling Christ to testify that what has just been said is indeed the truth.

Our Lord, in John chapter 12, begins this discourse with "Amen, Amen," translated "Truly, Truly." He calls your attention to what He is about to say and tells you that it is extremely important that you grasp and understand this truth. In verse 24 He says, "Verily, verily, or amen, amen, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone."

The Principle: Death Produces Life

It does not matter what type of grain you discuss, nor its greatness or beauty. If it is not planted in the ground and allowed to die, it remains alone. A grain could be preserved in a granary for up to a thousand years, but it is absolutely useless there: it cannot die or reproduce.

Alice had given her, a number of years ago, several ears of Indian corn. She has them in a basket; they are various colors, very beautiful, delightful to look at, and a wonderful conversation piece. That is all they are good for, because until planted in the ground and dying, they abide alone. Here is the principle: life comes from death. Why did our Lord enunciate this principle? Look at the context.

SCRIPTURE READING - John 12:20-33 (KJV)

John 12:20-33:

> "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. And the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew. And again, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

> “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it. And he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me. And where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my father honor. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.
>
> “The people therefore that stood by and heard it said that it thundered. Others said an angel spake to him. Jesus said unto them, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.
>
> “Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” This, he said, signifying what death he should die.
>
> Our Lord is talking about this principle: life comes out of death. In John chapter 12 and verse 23, this is the first recorded place in scripture where our Lord acknowledges that His hour had come: “Then said Jesus unto them, the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.”

The Hour of Christ's Death

There are many things in the Bible about the hour of Christ. At the wedding of Cana of Galilee, our Lord's mother came to Him and said, "they have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." It was not His time to die; He could take care of this problem. Again, John 7:30 says, "They sought to take him, but no man laid hands upon him, because his hour was not yet come." John 8:20 says, "these words spake Jesus in the temple, in the treasury, as He was teaching in the temple. And no man laid hands upon Him, for His hour was not yet come."

But in John 12:23 He says, "My hour is come." John 13:1 acknowledges it again: "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of

this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

Very obviously, "my hour has come" referred to His death. The Greeks came, saying, "sir, we would see Jesus." Our Lord explained to His disciples, "my hour has come, and the corn of wheat has to fall into the ground and die." It was the hour of His death, predestined by God the Father. First Peter 1:20 says concerning Christ, "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." He was manifested only in the last times, but foreordained, or predestined, before the foundation of the world.

Acts 4:26-28 says, "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against the Christ."

"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Everything concerning our Lord's death was foreordained. Everything happened according to the predestination of God the Father. No one could take our Lord's life before His hour was come.

Our Lord was not only ordained to die at a certain time; He was also ordained to die in a certain way. Jesus Christ was not murdered, although, in the strictest sense of the term, those who crucified Him are rightfully accused of murdering Him. Theologically speaking, He was not murdered, and He was not even martyred. Why? Because He willingly gave His life. In John 10, verses 17 and 18, our Lord said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself, I have power to lay it down, I have power to take it again."

Literally, no one took our Lord's life. Although He was crucified, and although those who took His life were murderers in that sense of the word and were in rebellion against God, the truth is that He willingly laid down His life.

In John 12:27, He makes this exceedingly clear: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but

for this cause came I unto this hour." Our Lord came to die. He is giving us this principle: life comes out of death.

Arthur W. Pink said that in John 10, the Lord Jesus is before us as a shepherd, leading God's elect out of Judaism and bringing them into the place of liberty. To do this, He lays down His life that He may possess His sheep. In John 11, He is seen as the resurrection and the life, the conqueror of death, with power in Himself to raise His own—a decided advance on the subject of the previous chapter. But in John 12, He speaks of Himself as the corn of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, that it may bear much fruit. This speaks of both union and communion, blessedly illustrated in the first section of the chapter, where we have the happy gathering at Bethany supping with Him.

Union and Communion through Christ's Death

In John chapter 12, the corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, and it speaks of union and communion. Think about this. I can take one grain of corn and plant it in the ground. When it dies, the germ springs into life, and up comes a corn stalk that will sometimes have two or three ears of corn, with multiple hundreds of grains on each ear. Thus, you have union and communion, in the sense that each one of those ears and each one of those grains is drawing its nourishment and sustenance from the root and from that which died.

This analogy that our Lord gives us wonderfully expresses His death. When He died, He also was raised to newness of life. Now, because there is life out of His death, there is union and communion.

Let me give you one warning about the analogy used here. Whenever an analogy is used in Scripture, it represents a principle of truth; you cannot press every detail of an analogy. For instance, that grain of corn falls into the ground and dies. It rots. The germ springs up, and that little bit of rotted material gives the first nourishment and sustenance to the new life springing up.

It is true that our Lord was planted in the ground. The Bible says in Romans 6:5, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” It is

true that He was planted in the ground, but it is not true that His body saw corruption, that His body rotted. You cannot press every analogy. For in Psalm 16:10, He said, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

The Potential in Reach

When Peter was preaching in Acts chapter 2 and verse 27, he quoted Psalm 16 and verse 10, proving again that the body of Jesus Christ did not see corruption. You cannot press every aspect of the analogy, but what our Lord is teaching here is this principle: death is the principle of life, and He has to die in order that we may live.

Notice, secondly, in verse 24, the potential in reach—not just the principle, but the potential in reach. He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” “If it die” speaks of the necessity of our Lord’s death in order to produce fruit. He must die just like a grain of wheat. The death of the seed has the beneficial effect of quickening it, that it may yield fruit. Our Lord compares Himself to this grain of wheat. The grain is sown; the grain decomposes. Our Lord did not. From it springs the newness of life.

This is what our Lord is talking about. Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,” and then, “and gave himself for it.” Why did He give Himself for it? “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with a washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might present it to Himself a glorious church.

Our Lord’s death certainly was not in vain. He said, “But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Look what happened: “But God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace are you saved, and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.”

The Scripture teaches that we died with Christ, were buried with Christ, were raised from the dead with Christ, and ascended into heaven with Christ. Everything that He did was that He might bring forth much fruit. He redeemed His people, delivered us from sin and Satan, became our substitute, and died in our stead. He carried us from the grave into life, seating us at the right hand of God. Thus, in our Lord's death, there came newness of life.

In accomplishing this, our Lord became the head of a new race and the head of a new people. First Corinthians 15 says, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul, and the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual. The first man, that is Adam, is of the earth earthy, and the second man, that is Christ, is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy. And as the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

In Jesus Christ, when He died, there came newness of life, and with Him union and communion, so that He became the head of a new race and a new people. He is the resurrected grain of wheat. According to Romans 8:29, He is the firstborn among many brethren. Isaiah 53:10-11 says, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him. He hath put him to grief. Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. He shall see his seed. He shall prolong his days. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied."

"If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The fruit for which our Lord died is the church: His bride, His elect, His children, and His sons. The reason you and I have life is because of His death.

John 12:24 applies directly to Jesus Christ, and it is a principle of life: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except the corn of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." I want you to see the practical application of this truth. But verses 25 and 26 give a very practical application that affects each one of us: "He that loveth his life shall lose it. And he that hated his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me,

let him follow me. And where I am there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honor."

Practical Application: Loving and Hating Life

This truth is enunciated in all four Gospels. We need to look in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, because our Lord repeats this, and sometimes there is a little difference in wording, which needs to be explained. In Matthew 10:39, our Lord says, "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." That is pretty much the same. Mark 8:35 says, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it. But whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save him." That is essentially the same.

But Luke 14:26 is just a little different: "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." What? "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"?

How in the world do we explain these verses in light of the principle and the potential that our Lord taught us in John 12:24? We have to understand what it means to save a life and to lose a life. We have to understand what it means to love a life and to hate a life.

Our Lord said very plainly, "if any man come to me and hate not his father and his mother and his wife, and his children, and his brethren, and his sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Obviously, Jesus Christ is not contradicting Scripture or going against the very law that He commanded.

The Word of God commands husbands to love their wives. We are commanded to honor our fathers and our mothers and to love our children. Ephesians chapter 5 even says, "no man ever yet hated his own self."

What, then, does our Lord mean when He says, "if you don't hate your father and your mother and your wife and your sister and your brother and your own life, you cannot even be my disciple"? Our Lord is speaking comparatively. We have been commanded to love our wives, our fathers and mothers, our children, and our own life as

well. But according to the love that we have for Him, comparatively speaking, the love that we have for our fleshly family and ourselves would be considered hatred. We should love Him so much more than our father and mother, our brothers and sisters, our wife, and our own life as well.

What is the first commandment? “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” What do most people do? They put their families—their husband or wife, their children, or themselves—ahead of and before God; thus they become idolaters. In other words, our Lord is telling us that we have to love Him preeminently. We have to love Him more than anything and more than anyone else. Period. Whether we like it or not, that is what it means.

If I have to make a choice between my family and Jesus Christ, it is Jesus Christ. If I have to make a choice between my wife and Jesus Christ, it is Jesus Christ. Hopefully, most of us never have to make choices like that. But that is what He is saying: He is to be preeminent. Luke 14:26 has to be understood comparatively speaking.

When you talk about the other passages in Matthew 10 and Mark 8, concerning saving life and losing life, there are obviously many applications. Let me make just a few. First of all, loving one’s life and saving one’s life pertain to this world and to fleshly living, which is condemned in the Scripture. Look in your Bibles at Romans 8:6–8. This is essentially what it means to love one’s life or to save one’s life: “To be carnally minded or to be fleshly minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Why? Because the carnal mind, the fleshly mind is enmity against God. For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Saving one’s life and loving one’s life means that you are living for yourself, for your flesh, and for this present temporal world.

This is also explained in Romans 13:14, where we are commanded, “Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” That is loving your life. John Gill, the Baptist commentator, said that whoever is so in love with this present temporal life that he anxiously cares for it, takes every precaution to secure it, and, rather than expose it to danger, chooses to deny the faith of Christ and

desert His cause and interest, will neither long enjoy this life nor receive eternal life.

In other words, loving and saving one's life means refusing to suffer for Christ or do anything that causes displeasure, while doing only whatever pleases oneself. It is making provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts. That is what most people do and how most people live. They live for drunkenness, fornication, wickedness, and whatever pleases the flesh or titillates its desires. They do not understand that, in saving their life, they are losing it.

Martyrdom and Eternal Perspective

Secondly, this phrase could apply to the choice between martyrdom and apostasy. If you really want to understand what the early Christians endured, read Foxe's Book of Martyrs. We have not recently been exposed to martyrdom. I know Christians have been martyred, and Christians are being persecuted and wrongfully imprisoned now—not in China, but in this country.

We have not seen anyone burned at the stake or lined up before a firing squad and shot. Yet the fact that we have not seen this in the last hundred years or so does not mean it will not return. During the Reformation, especially in England and throughout Europe, including the Spanish Inquisition, many Christians chose martyrdom rather than deny their faith.

Consider Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was greatly used during the Protestant Reformation in England. He was a scholar and a gentleman. Without recounting his entire story, he was condemned to be burned at the stake for refusing to submit to Roman Catholicism under Bloody Mary. She hated him because she believed he had a part in what happened concerning her mother, Catherine of Aragon, and Henry VIII. Henry, the king of England, divorced Catherine, and when Mary came to the throne, she had Cranmer imprisoned for three years.

If you have ever seen the Tower of London, you know that it is beautiful on the outside and exciting to tour on the inside. But if you are locked in one of those damp, dark dungeons, it is not too pleasant. Thomas Cranmer was thrown into the Tower for three

years. After three years, he broke and signed a confession that he was wrong and the Roman Catholic Church was right.

That was still not sufficient for Mary, because she wanted him burned at the stake. He was condemned to be burned and was to publicly proclaim his recantation: that he was wrong and the Roman Catholic Church was right. But unbelievably, when it came time for him to speak, instead of proclaiming his recantation, he recanted his recantation. He said that the Pope was wicked, ungodly, and a reprobate; that the Roman Catholic Church was wrong; that Christ was right; and that the Bible was right. He was willing to die for Christ, and he was willing for his right hand—the hand that had signed that wicked recantation—to be burned first.

Thomas Cranmer literally took our Lord's words to heart: it is better to lose a hand, an eye, or a foot than to be cast into hell. When he was being burned at the stake and the fire licked up high enough, he purposefully and deliberately extended his right arm and held his right hand into the flame. He kept proclaiming, "This unworthy right hand, this unworthy right hand, it should be burned first, this unworthy right hand," and held it there until his right hand had literally burned from his arm.

When the flames licked up around him, he began to pray as Stephen: "Lord Jesus, into Thy hands I commit my spirit. Oh, this unworthy right hand, this unworthy right hand." In the midst of the flames, he gave up the ghost. It is better to die a martyr for Christ than to deny the faith.

Third, we must understand that losing our physical and temporal life is not the worst thing that could happen to us. I will tell you a little secret: we are going to die anyhow. Look in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and look at what the Apostle Paul said in verses 17 and 18. By the way, the Apostle Paul went through far more than you and I could ever dream of.

Beaten with forty stripes a number of times, a night and a day in the deep, stoned, and left for dead—look what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:17–18: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things

which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Isn't that amazing? He called being stoned, left for dead, and beaten with forty stripes a number of times "this light affliction." Why? Everything we see is temporal.

The Apostle Paul also wrote in Romans 8:18, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed with us." There is nothing in this present life to be compared with the glory of the next life. Think for a moment what our Lord is telling us.

You lose what is worthless, what is already under death, and what is already forfeited, that you might find life, joy, and happiness in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only one worthy of our affection. We find life in Christ. He is our sustenance and nourishment. Christ, who had a perfect life, gave it up that we might live. Truthfully, we have a worthless life, and most are not even willing to give it up. How can someone not give up that which they are already going to lose, to gain that which they can only have by giving it up?

Conclusion: Dying to Self to Bear Fruit

Romans 6:11 is one of my favorite verses: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." When sin comes knocking, you do not answer it because you are dead. We are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Our Lord gave His life and found eternal exaltation.

The grain that died lives and produces hundreds and hundreds more than you and I could ever imagine. By way of application, we must learn that it is absolutely necessary to face humiliation and death in this life if we are going to prosper in the work of Jesus Christ. You cannot trust the world or worldlings—those who shouted loud hosannas in John 12, saying, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!"

To the Son of David, four days later were shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" The only praise and adulation that counts is that which comes from God. Our Lord said in John 15, "Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater

than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they've kept my saying, they'll keep yours also."

You and I cannot shrink from persecution or humiliation. We must remain steadfast and obedient. Our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Can you even begin to think of the fruit that you and I would be enabled to produce by the grace of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit if we just died to ourself and our sin? If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

That is true agriculturally, soteriologically, and practically: death is the principle of life. And we shall see that, Lord willing, next week, even in the resurrection.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, Your love, and Your truth. Lord, enable us to apply these principles to our lives. Make us holy and godly; mortify our members which are upon this earth, subdue our iniquities, and conform us to the image of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Death is the Principle of Life

Part Two of Two

Introduction and Review

All right, let's open our Bibles to John chapter 12 today. And Lord willing, we'll pick up where we left off last week. John 12 verses 24 through 26. John 12, beginning there with verse 24. You remember, I began a message last week, which I entitled "Death is the Principle of Life." And we want to continue with that message this week. John 12 verse 24, our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." You remember last week I covered several points from this passage. First, the prelude. And I dealt with when our Lord said, "verily, verily," in verse 24, literally, it's "amen, amen." And I showed you how that word is used in the beginning of a discourse, where it

would mean "truly, truly." And when it's at the end of a discourse, it would mean "so be it, so be it," or "may it be fulfilled." And then I showed you how that "amen" is also a name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So when we say "amen" to something, we're also calling Jesus Christ, who is the faithful and true witness, to testify that what has been said is indeed the truth.

Then we looked at the principle where our Lord said, "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." And then we looked thirdly at the potential where He said, "But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." So it has to die in order to bring forth much fruit. And then we looked at the practical application in verse 25 and other passages as well, and we understand, of course, that our Lord is teaching first and foremost concerning His death in verse 24, but the principle is also this: that we have to die to ourselves in order to serve, in order to live, and it is a practical application to the ministry as well. So let's begin talking today again about "Death is the Principle of Life." I suppose I could accurately say when it comes to death, no one really wants to die. And that would probably be a pretty well accurate statement.

The Natural Fear of Death and the Christian's Deliverance

I have known people in times past who committed suicide. One I am thinking of particularly took poison. Yet when the young girl was found and her stomach was being pumped out, and she was conscious, she was crying and begging to live. Yet she did not live. Here she was, just struggling for life. I have watched Christians die who knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that they were saved, and they wanted to be with Christ. But when it came time for them to die, their bodies fought with everything within them to live.

You have to understand that self-preservation is natural. In self-preservation, the body fights against death. Many are fearful of death. In fact, we hardly ever discuss death in our conversations. Even when you go to a funeral, not many people want to talk about death. They will talk about anything and everything else. We try to shun the subject almost as though it were taboo. Yet the Bible says in

Hebrews 9:27, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” We know for a fact that we are going to die.

But let me point out something that is vitally important. As Christians, we should not fear death. I want you to hold John 12, but look in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 2, verses 14 and 15. This is a very important passage, and I have quoted it in times past, but I want you to see the impact on what I am trying to give you by way of introduction. The Bible says, “Forasmuch then as the children”—that is, we who are in Christ—“are partakers of flesh and blood, he”—that is, Christ—“also himself likewise took part of the same.” Now one of the reasons that Christ came is given here: “That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” And verse 15 says, “And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

He not only delivered us from the power of the evil one; He destroyed Satan's works. The Bible also tells us that He delivered us from the fear of death. It is fear that brings one into bondage. As children of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, we are delivered from that fear. We may not want to die, but we're not afraid to die. There's a big difference.

Death as the Principle of Life in Christ and Believers

I want to give you a perspective on death that perhaps you have never considered. You must remember that the title of this message is "Death is the Principle of Life." We have already seen how that principle was true in the life of our Lord. We looked at that last week. We also saw last week how it is true in reference to ourselves and our Christian ministries. The truth of the matter is, if we are going to serve Christ, we must die to self.

John 3 gives us a wonderful illustration of this simple truth. Notice what John the Baptist said. It is very important. "And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." They were telling John the Baptist that the man he had baptized was now preaching and teaching, and all men came to Him. John said in verse 27, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye

yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him."

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom"—that's John—"which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." Here it is: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

What was John saying? I am nothing. I'll die to myself. I'll die to the praise and glory of man. I'll die to the recognition of man. It doesn't matter. Christ is everything. He must increase; I must decrease.

That has to be our principle if we're going to serve Him. We must die to self in order to live unto Christ. So today, I want you to do this. I want you to think with me. Do not view death as death; view death as the principle of life. Dying is not simply a part of living for the child of God.

Dying is entrance into life. Our Lord stated it very clearly in John 12:24: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” The seed only sprouts after it is dead. It must die in order to live. The same is true with Christians and physical death. Death, so far from preventing quickening, is necessary. Our Lord said it is the prelude. As the seed is not quickened except it die, so when it dies there is a new sprout and a new life.

Christ, by His death, did not relieve or reprieve us from the necessity of dying. He did not do that. He allows the law of nature, that which He created, to continue and to act as it normally does. We who were given life continue to die until we actually die and experience death. But what our Lord has done is turn that death around into absolutely newness of life. It is imperative that we understand that death is not the end. Death is the beginning. Death is not cessation of life for the child of God. Death is the beginning of life.

Look in your Bibles to Luke chapter 24. This is the story of those individuals on the Emmaus road. They were downcast, downtrodden, and discouraged because Christ had been crucified.

They had hoped that He was the one, but He was crucified; and besides all this, now was the third day. In Luke 24:25-26, our Lord told these men, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”

The Resurrection Affirmed and Defended (1 Corinthians 15:1-34)

Our Lord is telling us plainly that we are not to be so foolish as to disbelieve the Scriptures. We are not even to be slow in believing them. Whatever the Scriptures say is true. This was spoken in the very context of our Lord’s resurrection—and, in the light of His resurrection, our resurrection as well.

The Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, the Apostle Paul succinctly teaches that corruption, or death, is actually the commencement of life and the cause of production. I will not have time to read all of 1 Corinthians chapter 15. As many of you know, there are fifty-eight verses in this chapter. But I will give you a breakdown of the chapter and then examine the specific verses that relate to this principle: death is the principle of life.

In the first eleven verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 15, you have an affirmation of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That is all that you find in those first eleven verses: the truth that Jesus Christ was raised bodily from the dead. Then, in verses 12 through 19, Paul rebukes those in the Corinthian church who disputed the resurrection of Christ from the dead. There were some who were denying the resurrection, and so the Apostle Paul gives an argument against those who deny the bodily resurrection of the dead. He teaches very plainly that Christ was raised from the dead bodily, and anyone who denies that is wicked and wrong.

When you come to verses 20 through 34, Paul again reaffirms the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but at the same time he also includes and affirms our resurrection, that is, the resurrection of those who are in Jesus Christ. So, when you get to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, the theme of this passage is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Let me point out one thing, because it is important that you see it. Look back in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 at verse 3. Paul tells the Corinthians, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." I have heard men and preachers say that verses 3 and 4 are the gospel in a nutshell: Christ died and was raised from the dead according to the scriptures.

Was not Jesus Christ also born according to the Scriptures? Did He not also live according to the Scriptures? Of course He did. Everything about Jesus Christ is the gospel, for Jesus Christ is the gospel. The only reason the Apostle Paul singles out the death and resurrection of Christ in verses 3 and 4 is that some in the Corinthian church were denying them. He is saying, Christ died according to the Scriptures, and Christ was raised again according to the Scriptures.

In 1 Corinthians 15, after affirming Christ's resurrection and rebuking those who deny or denounce it, Paul says, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Paul is saying very clearly that Christ is risen from the dead and has become the first fruits of them that sleep. When he says, "For since by man came death," whom is he talking about? Adam. Romans 5:12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Death came into this world by man, the first Adam, but life is now in this world through Jesus Christ, the second, or last, Adam. Paul continues, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." If you are in the first Adam, you are going to die, because the wages of sin are death. But all who are in Christ shall be made alive. If you are in the first Adam, you are going to die; if you are in the second, or last, Adam, you are going to live.

Let me give you an illustration of how important this is. I read an article about an indoctrination meeting held in the Soviet Union before the alleged fall of communism. I said the alleged fall of communism because communism may have died in the Soviet Union, which I really doubt, but it is alive and well in the United States. The communist lecturer was addressing a large audience.

He summed up his speech by saying, "In conclusion, there is no God. Jesus Christ never existed. There is no such thing as the Holy Spirit. The church is an oppressive institution; in any way, the church is out of date. The future belongs to the state and the state is in the hands of the Communist Party."

He was about to sit down when an old Russian Orthodox priest stood up and asked, "May I say three words?" The Communist Party agent disdainfully gave him permission. The priest stood, drew himself to his full height, and shouted as loudly as he could, "Christ is risen!" There was a momentary pause of silence, and suddenly all those Russian Orthodox Christians shouted in one accord, "Christ is risen indeed." They had been acknowledging the resurrection of Christ for thousands of years. Why should they stop now?

Very obviously, the resurrection of Christ is important. It is important not only because Christ is salvation, but also because His resurrection guarantees our resurrection.

Beginning in verse 35, Paul gives his argument for the resurrection of the body. "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die."

The Resurrection Body Explained (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)

This is exactly what our Lord taught in John 12:24: it is not quickened except it die. What is Paul teaching? Death is the principle of life. We must die in order to live. As Christians, therefore, we must not view death as the cessation of life, but as the entrance of life.

Listen carefully to Romans 6:9: "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Christ died unto sin once. He conquered sin and death. Death

hath no more dominion over Him. He was raised from the dead and ascended into glory.

And now he exercises there his heavenly ministry. What the Bible is teaching is this as well: those who are in Christ likewise conquer death, and they enter into newness of life. Death will no longer have any dominion over any of us who are in Jesus Christ. So when he says in verse 36, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die," here is what he is saying: foolish, inconsiderate man.

How can you make an objection to the resurrection of the body when before you every day is the same principle that you are denying? You remember, it was an agricultural economy. They planted their corn, their wheat, their rye, and their barley, and everything had to die in order to live. The objection that you would like to make to the bodily resurrection is ridiculous because you observe it every day. You are foolish to make such an objection to the resurrection, because it cannot produce except it die. Do not be so foolish as to raise such an argument against the bodily resurrection.

Someone objects to the bodily resurrection. The next objection that would be raised is this: If there is going to be a resurrected body, what kind will it be? In verse 37, Paul answers that objection: "And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."

That which you sow is not that which is going to be. It may be like it, but it is not going to be exactly the same. Then he says in verse 38, "But God giveth it a body"—that is the resurrected body—"as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." Our resurrected bodies will be just as much governed by the sovereignty of God as our physical bodies and physical characteristics are.

How many of you decided before you were born that you were going to be born a male or a female, have a head full of hair, be slender, be handsome, or be white? How many of you made those choices? Not one.

Do you realize it was God who determined whether you'd be short or tall? It was God who determined whether you'd be handsome or not so handsome. It was God who determined whether you'd have a head full of hair or no hair. It was God who determined whether you'd be lean or chunky. It was God who determined whether you'd be black or white. You had no control. You had nothing to do with your physical body or your physical characteristics. It was the sovereignty of God that determined that.

This is exactly what Paul is arguing in verse 38. “But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” In other words, everything is under the sovereign control of God. We may not know exactly what our resurrected bodies will be like, because the scripture does not tell us exactly, but there are principles in the Bible that will reveal and give us some information concerning the resurrected body.

Let me just tell you up front, there are so many questions that could be asked concerning what I'm teaching today that it will be impossible to answer them all. I'm just trying to show you what our Lord is teaching, that death is the principle of life. So, someone is going to ask, when we are resurrected, in what kind of body do we come forth? Will our atoms be reassembled? Will the body that we know it somehow, those particles of dust that have rotted, reform to make the same body basically? Will we be male or female? Will we recognize one another? Will we be young or old? Well, those are good questions.

Hold 1 Corinthians 15, turn to Matthew chapter 17, and let me answer the first question: Will we recognize each other? Most definitely, we will recognize each other. We will not be any dumber there than we are now. If I know my wife now, I'm certainly going to know her when I'm in heaven. I'm not going to forget that I was married to her for all these years. No, I'm going to know her. That's just all there is to it.

In Matthew 17:1, we read: “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias”—or Elijah—“talking

with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

How did Peter know who Moses and Elijah were? He had never met them. They lived a mighty long time before Peter was born, yet he instantly recognized them. He knew exactly who they were and did not have to be introduced. When we get to heaven, I will know you, and you will know me. That is just that simple. Peter knew Moses and Elijah instantly. So yes, we will know each other and everybody else as well. We will not need introductions. We will know. Paul said, "we shall know even as we are known."

Would there be males and females? Obviously, there are going to be male and female in glory. Our Lord had a perfect opportunity in Matthew 22 to deny this in His answer to the Sadducees. They did not believe in the resurrection, so they came with an impossible story based on the levirate marriage law. One man had a wife and died without offspring; his brother therefore married her, then died without children. This continued until seven brothers had married the same woman. Lastly, she died. They asked, "Now whose wife shall she be in the resurrection, for they all had her?"

Very obviously, she cannot be the wife of seven husbands. But our Lord answered, "Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." First of all, they were ignorant of the Word of God.

Secondly, you don't know the power of God. "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

But note what our Lord said concerning men and women. Our Lord did not say that we would be sexless. He did not say there

would be no males and no females. All He simply said was this: there is not going to be any marriage in heaven. If our Lord wanted to say there would not be any women in heaven, He could have made it very clear right here. But no, He just said there is not going to be any marriage. So there will be male and female in heaven. It is just that simple.

I had just thought about what one man said when you read it in the book of Revelation. He said that at least he knows that at one point there would not be any women in heaven because the Bible said there was silence in heaven by the space of thirty minutes. And men are just as bad. But the truth is, yes, there will be male and there will be female in heaven.

Now, we are talking about general principles of a resurrected body. First John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” In other words, we do not know exactly what our resurrected bodies are going to be like. “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.” We will be like Christ.

Let me be honest. I have heard of some who have taken this verse and pushed it so far that they have taught that everyone will be thirty-three-year-old males in heaven. The Bible said we'd be like Him, didn't it? And what they're saying is that we will be exactly like Him—thirty-three-year-old males because He was thirty-three and is male when He died. That's pushing it a mite far, I do believe. When it says we will be like Him, another verse will clarify that later. I am simply pointing out the fact we will have a resurrected, glorified body like His, not that we would be exactly like Him in every detail. If you wanted to push that, are we going to be uniquely the only begotten Son of God, exactly like Him? The answer is no. He is the only begotten of the Father.

Paul is still answering the question, What kind of bodies are we going to have? Our resurrected body, first and foremost, is going to be under the sovereignty of God. Paul begins his argument in verse 39. After saying in verse 38, "But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body," he explains what he means: "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh

of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory."

Note what he is saying. There are different kinds of flesh, but it is flesh. There are different kinds of heavenly bodies, but they are all heavenly bodies. Different kinds of stars exist, but they are all stars.

Albert Barnes comments on verses 39 through 41: "This verse and the following are designed to answer the question in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 35." Look back at verse 35: "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" Barnes is saying that verses 39 through 41 answer that question: With what bodies do they come?

The argument is that there are many kinds of bodies that are not alike. While they are bodies, they partake of different qualities, forms, and properties. Therefore, it is not absurd to suppose that God may transform the human body into a different form and cause it to be raised with somewhat different properties in the future world. Why should this be regarded as impossible? Why should it be held that the human body may not undergo a transformation? It is not absurd to suppose that it may be different in some respects from what it is now.

Is it not a matter of fact that there is a great variety of bodies even on the earth now? The answer is yes. John Gill says, "The intent of this simile is only to show that the resurrection of the dead will be in real flesh, in their own flesh, in the selfsame flesh as the substance with which they were clothed when on earth, but that it will be as to its qualities be different, as one sort of flesh is now different from another, and that if God can, as He does, make different sorts of flesh, and yet there are all kinds of flesh, there is no difficulty in conceiving that God is able to raise the dead in their own flesh and yet it be different from what it is." It will be free from weakness, frailty, corruption, and mortality.

Here is what John Gill is saying, what Albert Barnes is saying, and what the Apostle Paul is saying: Yes, we're going to have a

resurrected body. Yes, it will be our body. Yes, it will be different. But it will be our body. I've heard Alice, and I've heard other women say when they're looking at another lady's dress or another lady's pocketbook, "I've got one just like that, except it's different."

Have you ever said that? You know what is meant by that? It's not exactly like it, but it's built like it. It may be a different color, but it's just like it, except it's different. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying. Our resurrected bodies are going to be our resurrected bodies. It will be just like the body we have, except it will be different. How will it be different? Look in verse 42. The Apostle Paul is making an application.

He says, "So also is the resurrection of the dead." He has just been talking about the different kinds of bodies and the different kinds of flesh. He says, "So also is the resurrection of the dead." Then he goes on: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; 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."

Characteristics of the Resurrected Body

He is saying, here is what our spiritual resurrected body is going to be like. First of all, it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. The characteristic of the body that shall be raised is this: it will no longer be liable to wasting sickness, disease, and the loathsome corruption that is in the grave. God can make a body like that, and here the Apostle Paul positively affirms that He shall do that. The bodies will be raised incorruptible. We will never experience corruption of any kind. I will never have to have a tooth filled again. I will never have a bad back again. I will never have sickness or disease again. Nothing can corrupt it—no virus, no bacteria, no fungus, nothing. It will be raised incorruptible.

Secondly, it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. Before we started pumping bodies full of formaldehyde and other chemicals to preserve them, usually when someone died, he was buried the same day, or just as quickly thereafter as possible. Why? Because the body began corruption right away, and no one wanted to see a corrupting body. It was offensive to look at. We take the body and bury it to get

it out of sight because, to us, a corrupting body is not only corruption; it is dishonorable. We do not want to look at it.

God says our body is going to be sown in dishonour and raised in glory. There is never going to be any more corruption, period. There is never going to be anything dishonorable about our resurrected bodies. He said, "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory." The word glory means splendor, honor, excellence, and perfection. Whatever body we have, it will be perfect, excellent, honorable, glorious, and splendid. It will have nothing to do with the dishonor that we have in our fleshly bodies today.

Thirdly, he says, "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." It is amazing how weak and feeble one gets. Our bodies are not only liable to decay; they are also liable to loss of power and ability. I cannot do some things that I used to do.

Brother Ernie cannot outrun Marilyn like he used to; she catches him too quickly. But think about this: it is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power. Here we try to worship the Lord, pray, and read our Bibles. You may decide, “I’m going to get up early every morning and pray for 30 minutes.” You kneel down, put your head on the bed, and start praying; next thing you know, you are waking up 45 minutes later. Or you sit down on the couch to read your Bible, and before you know it, you are asleep. The older you get, the worse it gets. But our bodies will be raised in power. There will be no weariness, no languor, and nothing to tire us out. We will have all the energy, strength, and power we need to serve and worship our glorious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, he says, “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” Look at verse 44: “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” Then he says, “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” Understand that the opposition in this verse is not between physical and spirit. Just as there is a real physical body, there is a real spiritual body. We will not be ghosts floating around somewhere in the universe. It may be a spiritual body, but it will be a real, genuine spiritual body.

Look at how the Apostle Paul explains it in verse 45: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam

was made a quickening spirit." Did Jesus Christ have a real body? Yes, He did. Did Adam have a real body? Yes, he did. Were there differences between them? Yes, there were.

In verse 47, he says, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

If you are in the first Adam, you are going to have a body like the first Adam. It will be weak, sinful, corrupt, and subject to decay. If you are in the last Adam, you are going to have a resurrected, glorified body. Just as you bore the image of your first Adam, you also are going to bear the image of the second Adam. We will be like Him.

Very plainly, the Bible teaches this. Do you know what the goal is? Let me explain the goal of redemption. Romans 8:29 says, "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." We will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 15:51, he says, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." The word changed is the Greek word from which we get our English word metamorphosis. Literally, he says, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep. We shall all be metamorphosized. We shall be changed."

The body will then be imperishable, immortal, glorious, powerful, and spiritual, but it will still be a body and will have some continuity with our old body. The Bible says in Romans 6:5, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Did Christ have a real, literal, physical body that was crucified? Yes! When Christ was raised from the dead, did He have a real, literal body? The answer is yes!

Philippians 3:21 shows what our resurrected bodies will be like, giving the same contrast Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 15. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

He says, "For our conversation"—or our conduct—"is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." So what is He going to do? He is going to change our vile body like unto His glorious body.

Now let me quote 1 John 3:2. John wrote, "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." How will we be like Him? He will change our vile bodies like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

Christ's Post-Resurrection Appearances as Proof

Since we know that we are going to have a body like Christ, turn in your Bibles to Luke 24, beginning with verse 33. "And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

“But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?”

Now look what our Lord said: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.”

Here is the resurrected, glorified body of Christ. He appeared unto them; He did not open the door, or at least the Scripture does not say that He did. He was simply there, and they thought He was a ghost. He said, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”

He invited them to feel His hand and body. It was real; it was Him. And He was hungry. He asked for broiled fish and honeycomb, and He ate. That is a real body. He was able to eat food.

You say, “But wait a minute, Brother Weaver. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:50, ‘Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’” Yes, Paul said that. But Christ did not say He was flesh and blood, did He? He said, “I’m flesh and bone.” We do not need blood in heaven—flesh and bone.

In John 21, Peter and the rest of the disciples had gone fishing. Our Lord appeared on the bank of the Sea of Tiberias, or the Sea of Galilee: “Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.” He continued, “And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.”

"As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine."

"And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead."

Our Lord had a real body. It was a spiritual body, but it was a real body. In John 21, no one had to guess who it was. Everyone recognized Christ.

The resurrected glorified body evidently needs a lot of fish. I am thankful that fish is my favorite food, because I do love fresh fish.

Scripture does not give us a detailed, exact account of what our glorified bodies are going to be like, but it does tell us they will be real bodies. Christ ate fish and bread in His resurrected glorified body, and that sounds good to me.

Applications and Conclusion

We will be flesh and bone. Our bodies will be similar, yet different—just like we have now, except different. There will be no more pain, sickness, or sorrow. The Bible emphasizes two things: first, we will be like Christ, and that should be sufficient for any child of God; second, we will have an immensely pleasurable, enjoyable, glorious life. For the Scripture says in Psalm 16, "at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Jesus Christ was made flesh for the purpose of redeeming all things. God has not abandoned His physical world, and He has not abandoned our physical bodies. The Bible teaches us in Romans chapter 8 that the creation itself will be released from the bondage of corruption when we, the saints of God, are also released from ours—that is, when we receive, as the Scripture says, the redemption of the body.

"We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." The Bible says that in this we groan for the redemption of our body. We have to remember what the Apostle Paul said: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Then he said, "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

Yes, we will know each other. Yes, we will recognize each other. Yes, our bodies will be the same, but our bodies will be different.

Why should a child of God ever fear death if he understands and believes that death is the principle of life? Life does not begin at forty. It begins at death for the child of God. Why should we fear death? The Apostle Paul said, "we shall all be changed," and I told you the Greek word was metamorphosis. We shall all be metamorphosized.

Have you ever wondered, does a caterpillar fear metamorphosis? Does a caterpillar fear becoming a beautiful, glorious butterfly? Do you think a child in the womb fears being born? Why should a child of God fear that which will bring him into the glorious liberty and the wonderful presence of Jesus Christ? For in Christ, and in Christ alone, we have life. Death for the child of God is not the end; it is the beginning. Death for the child of God is not cessation of life. That is when life really begins. Death is the principle of life.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for this glorious truth, and we are thankful, Father, that You have delivered us from the fear of death. In Thee, Lord, we have life—glorious life. Give us, Lord, Thy grace and Thy mercy, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Lord, may we look forward to our death, not necessarily wishing it needlessly or unnecessarily, but understanding that we have nothing to fear. Thou dost walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death. Thou art our life, and in Thee we never, ever die. Help us to believe; help us to trust. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

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