



RESURRECTION

— PATHWAY TO EDEN —

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A COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY DEVELOPED,
AND DESIGNED FOR UNION POINT CHURCH.

WRITTEN BY: AARON GOLDEN
EDITED BY: KATIE ANDERSEN

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INTRODUCTION

Resurrection : Act of being raised from the dead; brought to new life

RESURRECTION; it is quite a timely word for the Easter season when many gather to celebrate this spectacular reality within the whole of Christendom. Yet for most, the idea of RESURRECTION is met with a host of thoughts and concepts inherently inconsistent with what is proclaimed by the Gospel. Like the Corinthians, many of us entertain ideas about the “afterlife” which carry little mooring in the root of traditional first century Christianity.

In Jesus’ day the RESURRECTION was a hot topic. In Israelite understanding, they never saw the consummation of the coming kingdom brought by the Messiah as a time in a future heaven. Rather, they saw the way to God’s ultimate fulfilled plan as a place of restoration. This is why the Israelites were/are looking for the coming Messiah to usher in the kingdom. At Jesus’ time, the hope of RESURRECTION had taken on both prominence and debate as the ultimate way to fulfillment. We see this in Martha’s response to Jesus as he arrived after Lazarus’ passing, “23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha said to him, “I know that he will **rise again in the resurrection on the last day**” (John 11:23-24 ESV). If anything, the hope of the RESURRECTION was not a new idea with Jesus. It was common place in Judaism and fully embraced as the eternal perspective within the early church.

“The early Christian belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead was not that he had ‘gone to heaven’, or that he had been ‘exalted’, or was ‘divine’; they believed all those as well, but each could have been expressed without mention of resurrection. Only the bodily resurrection of Jesus explains the rise of the early church, particularly its belief in Jesus’ messiahship (which his crucifixion would have called into question). We need to be clear about what the word ‘resurrection’

itself meant for Paul and his hearers. It didn't mean 'life after death'. It was never a general term for any and every belief about what might happen to people after they die. It meant, very specifically, that people already dead would be given new bodies, would return to an embodied life not completely unlike the one they had had before" (Wright, N T. (2004). Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians).

At its core, the RESURRECTION is the very connection of God's ultimate consummated plan for His created world. In Jesus' RESURRECTION, we are brought into the reality of a coming new world, and into the already, but not yet, of God's kingdom reign. In many ways the bodily RESURRECTION is the pavement that lines the Pathway to Eden. What God had intended from the beginning was never given up on, and the gospel of Jesus, as Paul presents within 1 Corinthians 15, was the proclamation that this dream and reign of God had not been lost.

"Christianity, you see, isn't a set of ideas. It isn't a path of spirituality. It isn't a rule of life. It isn't a political agenda. It includes, and indeed gives energy to, all those things; but at its very heart it is something different. It is good news about an event which has happened in the world, an event because of which the world can never be the same again. And those who believe it, and live by it, will (thank God!) never be the same again either. That's what 1 Corinthians 15 is all about" (Wright, N.T. (2004). Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians).

The hope of the RESURRECTION is not solely one for a future happening when those who are in Christ Jesus are met awakened to new life. A part of this equation is the entirety of the RESURRECTION's implications and impact. The RESURRECTION of Jesus gives hope for a coming future, but as well brings our current place under its reign and rule. Unlike many of our modern beliefs on "heaven", "the afterlife" and all things eternal, we have traded the bodily resurrection for a more gnostic approach. We spiritualize our future existence and in doing so forfeit God's desired affects for us in the present.

If the RESURRECTION is the Pathway to Eden, Jesus' invitation for us to engage on this journey was not one solely of futuristic intent. Rather, His RESURRECTION power was to propel us onto this Pathway in the here and now. Living lives in light of the coming day of Jesus' full return and kingdom consummation is to fuel our thoughts, actions and lives as we currently live. To live in light of the RESURRECTION is to embrace Jesus' call to a new way of living. A way that encompasses every facet of our existence. The RESURRECTION is a grander reality than an eternal ether of bodiless existence. The RESURRECTION, at its core, is to find restoration on the Pathway to Eden. This Pathway is not solely to be seen as one propelling us into a future place but one that brings Eden right into our current reality. What if Eden's place of flourishing can be brought into your current place of despair? The RESURRECTION is the pathway to Eden's good reign and delight. Won't you take the journey into seeing how this pathway opens up into your life?



CHAPTER I

Gospel Core

RESURRECTION

— PATHWAY TO EDEN —

CHAPTER 1

Gospel Core

PASSAGE

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

1 Corinthians 15:1–11 (ESV)

BEING SAVED

The Gospel has become one of the most thrown away words within Christianity. Within our current context, the Gospel can be used to mean a whole host of things by which it was never intended to encompass. Now in chapter 15 of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we are experiencing the great climax of all that Paul has laid out in the prior chapters. What has been previously discussed, addressed and handled only matters if the way of access is fundamentally built on a proper understanding of what is the Gospel.

Like the Corinthians, many of us can be, or possibly have been, persuaded about other "truths" that seem to accompany a level of "maturity" within the faith. However, this can easily become a means by which we are pulled away from fully embracing all that the Gospel

means for us and how it translates into all of our lives. Paul starts out this chapter by recapping what the Gospel was as presented by him to the Corinthians. Verse 3 delivers all the details of what that message was. ***"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep."***

This was important for the Corinthians to refocus on. Why? Paul explains why. It is the very way by which they are BEING SAVED. The GOSPEL CORE is about pronouncing the arrival of the INVERTED kingdom of God. But even more poignant, it is both ushered in and extended to us who would believe through the RESURRECTION of Jesus. In a day and age, much like our own, where gnosticism and spiritualistic pagan/pantheistic belief consumed towns like Corinth, the church was met with a style of philosophy that could easily persuade them to compromise on the solidarity of the Gospel.

Nothing else within our grasp brings salvation. We are BEING SAVED by no other way but the Gospel. Having a GOSPEL CORE that is squarely and solidly fixed in the RESURRECTION is sure to keep us from swerving into error. From accepting false dichotomy's and seeing the kingdom disappear from our lives. We will further see this importance as we continue to journey through the importance and power that is the RESURRECTION.

REFLECTION

What has been your perspective of the Gospel? What has been GOSPEL CORE to you?

If you were to describe what believing in the GOSPEL does for a person, how would you describe it?

Is your perspective of Salvation a future one? Does it solely hinge on that day when you will “be in heaven”? Or does the Gospel impact how you experience life in the here and now?

What are some of the things you have believed about the “afterlife” that have informed the way you currently live?

EVIDENCE

Ever had a friend who always told the best stories? Like stories so unbelievable you had doubts of their validity unless accompanied by EVIDENCE? For many, this would be the perspective held while hearing of someone being RESURRECTED from the dead.

Paul understood how many could easily dismiss the very GOSPEL CORE of the RESURRECTION simply because it seems to be such an unbelievable tale. We can easily get down with a poetic allegorical story that points us to some great discernible wisdom presented within Jesus' RESURRECTION. But to claim a dead man came alive? After being three days dead? Come on. It's a little hard not to be skeptical. Just ask a few around your town. They will likely meet you with such a response.

In reminding the Corinthians of the GOSPEL's CORE, one of which they had placed their hope/belief in, Paul hones in on the RESURRECTION's centrality. Interestingly enough, Paul does not parlay only the RESURRECTION's importance, but provides both scriptural and fleshly EVIDENCE of its occurrence. In verses 5-8 we see these EVIDENCE's of the RESURRECTION. *"He was raised in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."* This is quite the laundry list of EVIDENCE.

Now, even in the face of this EVIDENCE, many will have to either accept these claims or deny. Paul does not remove this reality, but amazingly enough he gives them the greatest piece of EVIDENCE they could see beyond their own personal experience. It is found in the last line of verse 8, ***"Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me"***. The Corinthians had everything they needed for EVIDENCE standing right in front of them. It was that of a transformed life in Paul.

Over 500 witness accounts is amazing. It would be an open and shut case if over 500 witnesses came forth with a verifiable testimony to the same event. Hard to deny the EVIDENCE. Yet many still do, and even many inadvertently do within the church. However, something even more amazing than this insurmountable number is

the EVIDENCE of a transformed life. The Corinthians knew Paul. They knew his story. Out of anyone, with a past such as his, to fully embrace the one whom you sought to persecute people for, is quite the testimonial EVIDENCE. Paul's GOSPEL CORE was centered in the RESURRECTION because the RESURRECTION brought EDEN alive within him. His life was changed because of the Spirit of the living God bringing the delight of EDEN into the wreck of his life.

Living on the pathway to Eden is to fully embrace the GOSPEL CORE of the RESURRECTION. It is to EVIDENCE its truth in the way that Jesus brings EDEN alive within us. Living in light of the RESURRECTION is to live in light of the coming new age, to embrace the way of a future kingdom that is alive and present right in our here and now. How are you EVIDENCE of the RESURRECTION?

REFLECTION

How was the GOSPEL CORE of the RESURRECTION EVIDENCED to you?

Have you ever been fully saturated in the EVIDENCE Paul brings forward to the church at Corinth about Jesus' Resurrection? Have you yourself experienced doubts of its truthfulness?

How has your life been EVIDENCE of the RESURRECTION?

THREE DAYS DEAD

In Hebrew culture the number three carried with it a sense of finality. Upon one's death, it was believed the spirit hovered around the body for a certain period of time. Many believe this to be a period of three days. If a person laid lifeless for three days it was presumed the death was final and the Spirit had fully removed it's attachment. Simply stated within Corinthian culture, like our own, when one was dead they were perceived just as such, dead. So, in light of the RESURRECTION and its thrust as the GOSPEL CORE, other than tying us back to Scripture, what is the importance of THREE DAYS DEAD?

For many in the day of Corinth, the philosophy of Athens ruled the day. And in this movement there was a leaning towards a more Gnostic approach to life. So, maybe you are wondering "what is Gnosticism?". Glad you asked. *Gnosticism is : the thought and practice especially of various cults of late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through gnosis. The Gnosis is: esoteric knowledge of spiritual truth held by the ancient Gnostics to be essential to salvation. (Bakers Biblical Encyclopedia)*

Much like today, the church at Corinth had been challenged to accept many of these beliefs, thereby informing how they viewed both the Gospel, and the "afterlife". For a Gnostic, salvation was achieved through death finally releasing the natural world of its material chains. Simply put, once you die and are released from your body, it is there you find the greatest freedom. Freedom that fills your existence in the afterlife, and you are freed to do anything you may desire. In the church, this thought was debated, and it eventually found itself influencing the view of what the RESURRECTION really meant. Was it really bodily? Did it need to be? Did Jesus just experience a spiritual RESURRECTION and is no longer constrained by a body but is alive inside of each believer? Good questions right? They may sound a bit familiar.

The importance being THREE DAYS DEAD has on the GOSPEL CORE of the RESURRECTION is imperative. It is imperative in that, if the RESURRECTION were merely a spiritual one, why THREE DAYS? Couldn't the SPIRIT just immediately awaken into the ethereal blue yonder? THREE DAYS DEAD coincided with a bodily death. It signified that Jesus' body was raised into a new and restored state. In some ways a spiritual approach can be seen in the accounts of Jesus revealing Himself to the disciples. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus seems to appear from nowhere (Lk 24:36) like he just floated through a wall unexpected. Yet, just a few verses later, Jesus is making much of His body to the disciples. "Look at my hands and feet" (Lk 24:39). Also even more incredible, Jesus asks the disciples for something to eat, and He proceeds to eat a piece of broiled fish right in front of them (Lk 24:41). Jesus was THREE DAYS DEAD, and in so, it was back to a renewed bodily form that He was RESURRECTED.

You may still be asking, "Why is this so important?". Well, to be honest, we will continue to find this out as we walk forward into the rest of Paul's letter. However, let's just agree on this point. Our existence, as created by God, was for bodily form, in EDEN, working, eating, and simply being human. Jesus came to free us from sin and death, not bodily existence. If anything, Jesus' THREE DAYS DEAD proves to us Jesus' full intent to restore our story back with God's ultimate plan since the beginning.. His THREE DAYS DEAD paved our pathway back towards Eden.

REFLECTION

Have you ever considered the implications of THREE DAYS DEAD in its part of the RESURRECTION?

What has been the importance of the bodily RESURRECTION from your view of the Gospel? Has it been at the core?

How do you view the "afterlife?" If honest with yourself, have you held to more of a form of Gnosticism?

Have you held less of a priority in the bodily RESURRECTION of Jesus? If so, explain.

APPLICATION

-REFLECT: How have you viewed the RESURRECTION? What is your take on Jesus' rising from the dead? In your definition of the Gospel, where do you place the RESURRECTION? Is it at its core?

-READ: Read Luke 24. Examine how Jesus interacted with the disciples.

-WRITE: Journal the ways that God had challenged you in the way you have viewed the RESURRECTION. Write down some of the things you are challenged by and want to consider more.

-PRAY: *Lord, our hope is summed up in Jesus' RESURRECTION. Help me to see the RESURRECTION as the pathway to experience the delight of Eden in my life. Help me to embrace the transformation that accompanies the future promise in my here and now.*



CHAPTER 2

THE CRUX

RESURRECTION

— PATHWAY TO EDEN —

CHAPTER 2

The Crux

PASSAGE

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 1 Corinthians 15:12–19 (ESV)

IN VAIN

Having the feeling of doing something IN VAIN is the worst. This never fails when washing your car. You have great plans to detail your ride like brand new. After getting all the gear ready and picking the perfect day to clean, you begin the endeavor. And this is no ordinary, run of the mill, zip through the local slop shop. You take the time, make the effort, wax the paint, shine the wheels and tires. It has been a labor, but one with the goal in sight. You are going to cruise the town in that fresh ride. In a moment's excitement you hop in and take it for a little show off spin around town. All of a sudden you begin to notice darkness. "Wait, is that the apocalypse coming?" "Is it jumbo jet flying over?" Before you get your bearings, it happens. The heavens open, and the flood gates break; it's Noah and the ark 2.0. Your car is ruined, and so is your dream. You return home to hear your wife say, "Boy was that in vain!"

Although not entirely the most encapsulating example, this is the sentiment Paul is getting at in reference to the RESURRECTION. Many within the Corinthian church have been swayed by the mind of

the day. This Gnostic belief has caused them grief and has lead them away from standing firm in the reality of the RESURRECTION. Refusing to believe in the bodily RESURRECTION of Jesus was to deny THE CRUX of how they were made a part of God's kingdom and new creation. By sliding the least bit in holding fast to the RESURRECTION, the Corinthians were making the faith powerless and merely another "religion" in the marketplace of many.

It is staggering to think how much hinges on the RESURRECTION. It truly is THE CRUX of all that we believe as Christians. Just think, everything we do, the way we aim to live, all of this Paul says is IN VAIN if we let go even the littlest bit and move to degrade the RESURRECTION in any extent. If the RESURRECTION is not at the core, we reject the invitation into a new world, the pathway to EDEN. What is proclaimed about our Hope becomes nothing more than a religious chatter among many. Even greater, Paul says if we degrade the RESURRECTION, and its power, we not only make fools of ourselves but we also make liars of him and the APOSTLES. This, to say the least, is staggering news.

The spirit of our age is much like the day of Corinth. Religious pluralism was welcomed. All religions were seen as acceptable and encouraged. Yet, the one thing Christianity brought with it was the truth claim of the RESURRECTION. Jesus as a prophet? Totally resonate with his ideals. Jesus as a healer? Who doesn't identify and love a great fable tale of mythological happenings? Jesus as a spiritual leader whose "resurrection" opened his followers minds to a new way of living? Bring on that mystical knowledge. Jesus as a bodily risen and RESURRECTED Savior and THE CRUX of a new world? Foolishness!!

We can hear these like thoughts resounding around us today. As Paul says, the Gospel is folly to many, but the power of God to those who are being saved by it. To reject the bodily RESURRECTION of Jesus is to deny His ultimate goal for humanity. To deny THE CRUX is to reject the reign of Eden into our lives. To reject the

RESURRECTION is to live IN VAIN and with no hope amidst a dying creation.

REFLECTION

As the Resurrection is further unwound, how have some of your approaches in response to it been IN VAIN?

Possibly you know someone, or maybe it is you, who believes in Jesus in a multitude of ways other than a true Messiah, let alone actually believing in the RESURRECTION. How do you stand firm in the face of these challenges?

Before now have you ever fully embraced the idea that in the RESURRECTION is our hope? You may have just used generally the "HOPE of Jesus," but how/are you beginning to see THE CRUX as being embodied by the RESURRECTION?

HOLY MADE

One of the most well known lines spouted by the infamous MR. T was? All at once, "I pity the fool!" Pure proof it doesn't take much skill to make it in Hollywood. In exclamation Paul says, "I pity the fool," who does not believe in the full RESURRECTION of Jesus. Much like living IN VAIN, Paul begins to close out the craziness of denying the RESURRECTION. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, physically, then we are those who should be most pitied. Why? You might ask. Paul pleads this in verses 16-19, *"For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."*

Short hand here for what Paul is getting at. If there was no RESURRECTION, then we have no hope to be raised after we die. There is also no hope for those who have gone before us. As well, there has been no conquering of sin and death, therefore there is no power to overcome this enslavement. If this happens to be the case, then Paul is right, we should be of the most pitied. Being persecuted, beaten, thrown in jail and mocked all because of proclaiming the RESURRECTION of Jesus, Paul says if this is all for naught then there has to be a better way to live. The RESURRECTION is the power of God to be HOLY MADE new.

Short changing the RESURRECTION and stripping Jesus of his renewed body denies us any access to the power of God to be HOLY MADE new, in His restored image. When Jesus burst out of that tomb with new body in tow, it was the moment RESURRECTION power exploded into our lives. God's holiness was no longer a command that condemned us in our sin, but became the very means by which we could see the pathway of Eden break into our lives. What sin had denied and defaced, the RESURRECTION restored and HOLY MADE new according to God's original plan. If death is defeated the

grave will not hold us. If sin is defeated then our lives can be transformed and HOLY made to live in Eden's delight and flourishing right here and now.

THE CRUX of the issue is this, Jesus' bodily RESURRECTION made available our entry into the dream of Eden. His new body was not just testimony to a future reality we will one day inhabit, but an invitation to stroll on the pathway of Eden in the midst of our current status. The RESURRECTION is like the marrying of what was once held in EDEN in the beginning with what will be one day attained in the restoration of heaven and earth. The RESURRECTION matters because if all Jesus had to bring was good words and a demonstration of a new way to live, then being HOLY MADE new is but a pipe dream. It is the preverbal carrot that ever dangles in our face, just taunting us ahead towards a dream turned nightmare.

To be HOLY MADE by the power of Jesus' RESURRECTION is the greatest invitation into the kingdom for those around us. It is the very power of God by which we are being saved. If we tear down Jesus' body and the RESURRECTION then we do it to our own demise. For if we still live in the clutches of our sin and at the damnation of death then we have no hope. I PITY THE FOOL.

REFLECTION

Seeing the connection between THE CRUX of the RESURRECTION and the power for us to be HOLY MADE new, how are you challenged to view your journey with Jesus differently?

Did you ever consider the ever tight connection between Jesus' body and ours? Maybe you thought He came to set you free from your body, but does that seem to be the case?

Let the thought that Jesus came to not rescue you from your life, but to give you a new one sink in. One day you will be as perfectly human as God intended you to be in the new Eden. Do you live for this future now? How does the RESURRECTION empower you to live this out in the Holy Spirit?

APPLICATION

-REFLECT: *Looking over your life and examining it with the coming reality of Jesus' new body, survey how you think these implications should be lived out within you.*

-READ: Romans 5:14-18. Old Adam, new Adam. Examine what Paul is saying to us though this demonstration of new life being ushered in by the RESURRECTION.

-WRITE: Looking ahead, write down the places you desire to see Jesus' RESURRECTION power break through into your life. Write down the places you are challenged by this new way of brigading THE CRUX of the RESURRECTION with the totality of life.

-PRAY: *Lord, help us to lean into the RESURRECTION power in our lives by abiding in your presence. Jesus, move in us to overcome the places the old Adam clings to us and find freedom in the new Adam of Jesus.*



CHAPTER 3

FIRST FRUIT

RESURRECTION

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CHAPTER 3

FIRST FRUIT

PASSAGE

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

1 Corinthians 15:20-28 (ESV)

RESTORE

What does it mean to RESTORE? Take for example an old, dilapidated house in your local neighborhood. It is apparent that, at one point in time, this home was beautiful; a time when it shined to the glory of the one who built it. Yet, in its current state, it is but a shadow of its former self, given way to decay and rot. Loving the house, you choose to purchase and RESTORE the home. This process does not involve completely tearing down the structure and starting from scratch. Rather, to RESTORE means you will, at completion, stand back and see the home that has always been, yet now brought back to its once intended glory, and in many ways even better than what it was before.

As the apostle Paul does so brilliantly, he points the Corinthian church towards what the Resurrection will mean for those who have passed on before them, and as well for all those in Christ

Jesus. Connecting us with the first part of the Genesis narrative, Paul echoes back to the beginning of creation. As Paul later expounds on in Romans 5:14-18, he lays the frame work from which we should properly view the “afterlife”, so to speak.

To properly see the future RESTORED world you must first go back to the beginning. Within the “First ADAM” or first man (ADAM in Aramaic simply means mankind or “the human”), we find an image of the creator, one made to rule in the authority of the Most High God. There in Eden, God places “Adam” to rule and reign with God and to take the reign of Eden into the rest of the world subduing it and bringing it in line with God’s good order. Think on that for a moment. We, humankind, were made to be rulers in God’s good world. I don’t know about you, but I am amazed at the implications of this incredible responsibility and calling.

Even in the face of this great intent, Adam becomes convinced against God’s good reign and is lured into the pursuit of ruling on his own terms. The result of this decision is sin and death entering the world. Death becomes the enemy of God’s creation and is the overthrower of Adam’s rulership. In Paul’s presentation throughout Corinthians, he has been using the Resurrection as the key calling point to engage in the now accessible INVERTED kingdom. Looking through this lens, Paul invites us to see that Jesus was not an outside presence overturning our current reality, but God taking the form of “ADAM” to RESTORE humanity into its proper place.

Through the RESURRECTION, Jesus becomes the FIRST FRUIT of a RESTORED humanity/creation. Because He has been bodily RESTORED into God’s designed place for humanity, Paul sees Jesus as the overthrower of death, and thus the second Adam that rules according, not to his own desire, but according to God’s good reign. The RESURRECTION is not to be an escape from the bodily chains of our current reality into some spiritual astral existence. Rather, through the FIRST FRUIT of Jesus, we see the RESURRECTION as God’s invitation into a RESTORED creation.

If Jesus has aligned and RESTORED our future with what our past should have been, then it is an invitation to share in these FIRST FRUITS in the here and now. The Good News of the Gospel is proclamation of another King, and His reign has come. For us, we are to embrace this RESTORED reality in the way we currently live in God's kingdom reign now. When we have a proper perspective of what Jesus' RESURRECTION means for later, it opens us to enjoy in, prepare for and taste of the RESTORED creation that has been brought into the right here and now.

REFLECTION

When you have thought of Jesus coming to overthrow sin and death in the past, what impacts did it seem to hold for you in the right now?

Have you ever given proper thought as to why Jesus "took on flesh"? Have you viewed the Resurrection as a way of escape from our bodily existence, or a RESTORATION of what was once intended?

Seeing that Jesus' Resurrection is an invitation to live in this first fruit of the coming reality, how do you view how you live right here and now?

REORDERED

During the latter part of these verses we can easily become confused as to why Jesus would be handing back the kingdom to God. Tapping back into the Creation narrative, Paul is sure to connect us with what Jesus would have been regaining for God's kingdom in the first place.

Adam was given power and dominion over creation. There in Genesis 1 and 2, we see God giving Adam rule to go out and subdue the world and every creature. To subdue simply means to bring under authority. This, by no means, is to be received as a way of dominance. Rather, this measure of subduing was meant to be carried out through a co-laborious relationship between God and man. Upon Adam's rejection to rule together according to God's good order, the "throne of rule", which was meant to be held by humanity, was left vacant. In this vacancy, death and sin invaded the voided responsibility which Adam had left.

Remarkably enough, God's modus operandi is not to wipe the slate clean, but to carry forward His plan of redemption, all culminating in sending His Son to reclaim the vacated position of humanity. Paul points us to Jesus as being the way for the world to be renewed and REORDERED with God's edenic vision and dream.

The picture Paul paints for us is that the RESURRECTION restores the kingdom order with Jesus as the worthy human ruler. Unlike the first Adam, who took his God given authority into his own hands and desires, Jesus willingly submits to God's good reign and REORDERS humanity's allegiances with God's intended purpose and design.

This glimpse into the future of God's plan challenges us to live in accordance with his REORDERED world. God's desire is to not get us out of this world, but to bring restoration to it. Therefore, our life's progress matters in this moment. Jesus' RESURRECTION doesn't just make way for us to proclaim a new kingdom come, but is the very

connecting point by which this coming reality breaks into our current world.

REFLECTION

How does your perspective change in the way you look at the purpose for which you were made?

As it goes for Jesus being the RESTORER of humanity, do you now see more clearly what the RESURRECTION means for humanity? How?

When you see that you were created to be rulers of creation, how does that change the way God values you? How much more do you see the value of God's plan of redemption in Jesus?

APPLICATION

-REFLECT: What has been your perspective on the Resurrection? How do you see the Resurrection reordering your life?

-READ: Romans 5:14-18. How does Paul draw together this theme of the old and new Adam's?

-WRITE: Journal about the ways you have viewed your role in the kingdom of God. In light of the Resurrection, now write the ways God has intended for you to live.

-PRAY: *Lord, help us to lean into your Restored and Reordered reign. Help us to taste of Jesus, our first fruits, and to embrace His invitation into His resurrection reign.*



CHAPTER 4

PRESENT MEANING

RESURRECTION

— PATHWAY TO EDEN —

CHAPTER 4

Present Meaning

PASSAGE

29 Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?

30 Why are we in danger every hour? 31 I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! 32 What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." 33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." 34 Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

1 Corinthians 15:29-34 (ESV)

DANGER

Before we give a hard honest look at these few paragraphs, let's give a hard honest look at the elephant in the room. At the time in which Paul was writing this letter, many scholars believed that the church had adopted practices that we do not normally see in our context today. In verse 29, Paul is translated and interpreted as alluding to people being baptized on behalf of the dead. NT Wright poses two common thoughts on this highly debated topic. He writes, *"The question of 'baptism for the dead' (verse 29) has long been a puzzle. It may be that some Christians had died without being baptized, and that the practice had grown up (if so, it didn't last long) of other people undergoing baptism on their behalf as a sign and symbol that they really did belong to the Messiah. Or it may be that 'being baptized on behalf of the dead' refers to non-Christians who, after the death of close relatives or friends who were Christians, decided to become Christians themselves, undergoing baptism so that they would continue to be with their loved ones in the final*

resurrection. But, whichever conclusion we come to (and every student of Paul knows that this verse is a difficult one), the overall point is clear. Something the Corinthians knew about as a regular practice makes no sense unless there is in fact a resurrection to look forward to."

Now that we have some direction, although still some mystery left with verse 29, let's examine the greater concern within Paul's presentation in this segment. Many have come to release holding onto the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Paul is clear; this has become a great danger to the church. Why? If the RESURRECTION has not happened, Paul asks, "why are we in danger every hour?" The RESURRECTION was the very essence of the coming kingdom. By way of Jesus' overcoming death in the RESURRECTION, it became the very avenue by which He was enthroned over creation. If the church was to adopt an ethereal perspective on the RESURRECTION, it would hold no DANGER to other religious perspectives of the day, let alone the very throne of CAESAR.

Carrying this thought through, Paul begins to talk about, in verse 31, how he dies every day. What is Paul dying to? The ways of the previous life; the ways of the flesh before the coming of Jesus; the pre-RESURRECTION existence we were once slaves of but have now found the hope of the RESURRECTION. The DANGER of releasing our grasp on the RESURRECTION denies our current life of its PRESENT MEANING. If this life has no connection with the coming restoration of Eden, then we can easily fall into the trappings of the past and live according to our own way and definitions.

From Paul's perspective, and as well should be ours, the RESURRECTION was the very ushering in of the kingdom come into our lives. Because we now have a hope in being rescued from death, we lived aligned with God's whole purpose to restore us to the life He had intended for us. The DANGER of reducing or shying away from the bodily RESURRECTION of Jesus is to disconnect ourselves with the consummation of God's coming reality. As we will see in the coming verses, Paul give us reasons as to why we should embrace the

RESURRECTION as a goal for the SPIRIT'S transforming power in our lives. It becomes the very PRESENT MEANING of our now and later existence.

REFLECTION

Have you slipped into DANGER with the way you have viewed the RESURRECTION?

What are some of the ways you can see the RESURRECTION giving your life PRESENT MEANING?

How do you live with the ending in mind? Reflecting on your perspective of the RESURRECTION, how has this been used to change your life?

AWAKENED LIFE

It is commonly thought that Paul is penning this letter from the city of Ephesus. Most of this derives from Paul's employment of the gladiatorial games as an example of how he had battled "wild beast", as he calls them. In Acts 19, Paul has seen the Gospel proclaimed with life transforming power. People have embraced the AWAKENED LIFE of the RESURRECTION of Jesus and are turning away from lesser gods and idol worship. This causes an uproar in the market place due to many being employed by the smith trade to hammer out idols to gods. Long story short, Paul equates the ruckus which arose against him in Ephesus a kin to a beast of the coliseum coming against him because of Jesus' RESURRECTION. Turning to the philosophical mind and pagan belief of the day, Paul says if the RESURRECTION isn't true then we should all just cast off care, eat drink and be merry for death is the end.

Earlier in this chapter Paul discussed how if the RESURRECTION isn't true then we are to be the most pitied. Living an AWAKENED LIFE is living fueled by the RESURRECTION itself. Because Jesus has overcome sin and death, and has put on a new body, we will share in this coming promise. It is this that gives our lives PRESENT MEANING and is in stark contrast to the philosophical mind of the day. To have knowledge of God is to have been filled with the presence of God. The way to being filled by the presence of God was only made possible by and through the RESURRECTION of Jesus. And the only way we have the hope of PRESENT MEANING in this life is by way of Jesus' restoration of our position within God's edenic dream that finds restoration in the new heaven and new earth.

In our day, it is easy to be carried away with the modern secular thought which permeates within our society. Within the church, we have become so materialistically and individually minded that we live for ourselves while cloaking it in the name of Jesus. We have no real concept as to what the RESURRECTION means for us as a

people and easily fall into the trap of perpetuating sin and propagating our own kingdoms. Living in holiness is living an AWAKENED LIFE according to the hope of the RESURRECTION. This AWAKENED LIFE is lived with PRESENT MEANING because the RESURRECTION informs us of a life that will one day be made new in the likeness of Jesus. From here, Paul will begin to help us journey through the real and applicable implications of the RESURRECTION for our present and coming life.

REFLECTION

How much have you connected your AWAKENED LIFE with the RESURRECTION of Jesus?

Have you ever viewed a life of holiness as a life living according to the way of EDEN? Living in light of the coming new creation?

If Paul commands us to stop going on sinning, do you think he would proclaim such a thing if it were impossible? If we live an AWAKENED LIFE according to the coming RESURRECTION, does sin exist?

APPLICATION

-REFLECT: *Looking over your life, how much effort have you honestly put into living AWAKENED to all the RESURRECTION MEANS?*

-READ: ACTS 19

-WRITE: *Journal how the RESURRECTION brought PRESENT MEANING into the Ephesians lives and how it was a threat to forces around them.*

-PRAY: *Jesus, help us to fully embrace and come to see the depths of what your RESURRECTION means for our lives. Lord, help us to embrace an AWAKENED LIFE that lives according to your ultimate plan and dream for your creation. Help me embrace, live out and step into a life of PRESENT MEANING.*



CHAPTER 5

IMPERISHABLE

RESURRECTION

— PATHWAY TO EDEN —

CHAPTER 5

Imperishable

PASSAGE

35 But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" 36 You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. 39 For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. 40 There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. 42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:35-49 (ESV)

BODILY BUILT

Do you sense the common question of the day? Paul poses it right at the beginning, "How are the dead raised?". If this whole RESURRECTION thing is true then just how is the body brought back to life? And if brought back to life, "with what kind of body do they come?" These are similar questions asked in our day. As we have stated before, the common gnostic perspective was of a spiritual

existence being released from the chains of bodily form. We can see residue in our culture and in the church today. So many believe that Jesus came to save us from our bodily existence when in fact we were BODILY BUILT.

In so many ways, we often look at the chaos that has befallen our world and existence with disdain for creation itself. We see death, sickness and disease and we yearn for an existence far beyond our current form. Yet, these experiences can lead us to believe it is bodily constriction which hold us back from experiencing a full existence. However, in light of this, the body has not been the limitation of our existence. But rather it is death by causation of sin and rebellion from which we have been constrained. In God's creation humanity is BODILY BUILT. As humans, we were made for the body and ,vice versa, the body made for us. It is a part of who we are. Man's rebellion brought death and death ruined the body. So in the RESURRECTION, we have Jesus raising to a new body, one of spiritual glory and presented as the coming hope for all those who place their trust in Him.

When we see that Jesus' goal was not to liberate us from our bodily existence, but to restore it according to the redemptive plan for the edenic dream, it changes the way we view our current existence. Swapping the perishable for the IMPERISHABLE is to embrace the edenic reign in the here and now. Leading up unto this point, Paul has placed high priority and value with how we treat our ourselves and our bodies. What we do matters because we are living in light of the IMPERISHABLE. We care for our BODILY BUILT existence now because it is a temple carrying the presence of God, and we are living infused with an eternal IMPERISHABLE reality.

In many ways, there is still great mystery as to what this body will look like or be built from. There are many thoughts and ideas proposed as to what taking on the glory of the spiritual body looks like. Yet, with all this swirling about we know a couple of truths that moor us to the RESURRECTION. First, it will be BODILY BUILT

resembling what we currently experience, yet renewed. Second, it will be IMPERISHABLE. What this promise does is to bring us into a glorified state, becoming the inheritance promised to Abraham which will outnumber the stars. It is this BODILY BUILT existence God created for His edenic project, and even in the face of our rebellion, He will make all things new according to this dream. A renewed IMPERISHABLE BODILY BUILT existence lived in the presence of God is the hope of the RESURRECTION. Living forever as an ambassador of the edenic reign is ours to embrace in the here and now. Walking in holiness is to live a life connected to the coming fullness we will one day experience in the new. It is to live out now what we will one day live in then. How are we living in light of the IMPERISHABLE?

REFLECTION

In what ways does the connection to an eternal bodily existence bring you a vision of the new creation?

What relief does the idea of inhabiting the IMPERISHABLE bring to mind? Are there things you yearn to be set free of which are directly associated with your current bodily state?

If the RESURRECTION is the pathway to EDEN, how important is it that we embrace this way of living now? What are some of the implications of being BODILY BUILT (built to exist in bodily form) for eternity?

IMAGER

Written into the edenic dream found with the Genesis account of the garden, we see God making humanity in His own IMAGE. Meaning, mankind was built with certain qualities and characteristics that reflected and imaged the One who created them. So, the way we look, create, process and were made to embrace the world, now partially displays the fullness of God. Literally translated, we were God's idols. Later a part of God's commands to Israel was to not make any graven image. Why? You might ask. There is no room for an image made of human hand for worship of YHWY, because he had made ones to reflect worship back towards Him with His own hands.

After the fall, pieces of this IMAGO DEI (Image of God) remained but were broken by sin and death. Like a dilapidated house, humanity in its current state was/is but a shadow of its former beauty and design. Looking back through Scripture and as well human history, we can see glimpses of beauty expressed within humanity. Glimpses of peace, joy, hope, creativity, love and mercy. All these are on display in the way we see someone invite another over for dinner, or at our admiration of a beautiful painting, or when actual forgiveness is extended and relationships are restored. All these things are blips of the edenic light piercing through our present darkness. Even in its broken state, it is moments of God's image breaking into our lives. But

what if all this could be continually embraced and lived out in the here and now?

Beautifully, Paul demonstrates for us how these blips of Eden will one day become an ever fully experienced reality. Pointing to the past Adam, Paul reminds us of the result of sin by directing us to the Genesis account once more, *"for you are dust and you shall return to dust."* (Gen. 3:19) If we deny the RESURRECTION, the bodily RESURRECTION of Jesus, then our future is but dust. What a dismal thought to entertain. However, Paul invites us into understanding that what Jesus did on our behalf was to overcome death and provide a pathway to Eden. By overcoming sin and death, Jesus took what had become perishable, but dust, and traded it for the IMPERISHABLE.

After Jesus' RESURRECTION, the disciples saw Him, touched Him, ate with Him and saw a body of glory. They knew it was Jesus, but He had been made completely new. In the most incredible way, Jesus had become the perfect human IMAGER of the Most High God, YHWY. He had restored humanity's fallen state and reconnected them with the dream of EDEN. Like the dilapidated house, Jesus restored what had been torn down by sin and death, and completely gave new life to old bones. In every way possible, by putting on the IMPERISHABLE, Jesus aligned the fullness of the IMAGO DEI with humanity's original design. Incredible to say the least.

At Jesus' "ascension" he tells the disciples, and us, that He is sending another, the Helper, the Spirit of God, who will come and fill them. At the disciples behest, Jesus reassures them this is for their benefit. What is so great about this you may ask? Being filled with the Spirit. Isn't this just something kind of weird? Interestingly enough, Jesus refers to this as a "deposit" placed within us. Deposit for what, you might ask? Hope? Yes; Salvation? Yes; Power to live in the presence of God? Getting warmer. Yes, and amen to all of these things, but what if we haven't fully embraced all that Jesus meant?

Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. He is there, in a new BODILY BUILT existence as the perfect IMAGER of God. And because

of this, we are not only aligned with this hope in the future, but as well the present. In referring to the deposit, Jesus is talking about us being filled with the foretaste of Eden's fullness. The Holy Spirit will fill us and bring our lives in line with His current reality. It will be by the Holy Spirit's indwelling that we will become a people aligned with our future promise, able to live out the reign of EDEN in our current world. This is what holiness is all about. Living in holiness is to live in the fullness of the RESURRECTION. Because Jesus is there as our representative reconnecting us with the coming promise of Eden, the Holy Spirit is given to bring our life into alignment with this coming hope. You are being remade into the IMAGER God desired for you since the beginning. Have you fully embrace all of what this means for you now?

REFLECTION

What are your thoughts on being God's idols? How does this affect the way you see your life?

What are some of the blips of Eden that you experience and see happen in your world? What hope do they provide for the coming future?

Seeing the Holy Spirit as the deposit of new creation, how do you now view holiness and how Jesus desires you to live? Does it give you better clarity than just "being good" so he will get off your back?

APPLICATION

-REFLECT: *How has your perspective on the imperishable changed the way you see your life now? How has your view of the future impacted the way you view how Jesus is desiring you live?*

-READ: Romans 8

-WRITE: *Journal how Paul's words take deeper meaning now, on this side of better seeing the Resurrection's implications on your life.*

-PRAY: *Jesus, help us to fully embrace what your Resurrection means for our lives. As imagers of your glory, lead us into your fullness by way of your Holy Spirit. God help us to walk this life as pathway into your coming Eden . To live a life compounded by continual blips of your coming Hope. Fill us with your Spirit and give us courage to walk in your IMPERISHABLE way of Eden.*



CHAPTER 6

INHERITANCE

RESURRECTION

— PATHWAY TO EDEN —

CHAPTER 6

Inheritance

PASSAGE

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (ESV)

CHANGED

Finally, Paul begins wrapping up his words on the RESURRECTION. This last portion of chapter 15, and as well the entire letter, has drawn us to this very moment. As if he is channeling his inner William Wallace, Paul draws in one last breathe and gives a big Braveheart yell of, “VICTORY!”. In this victorious proclamation, Paul lays out for us how the RESURRECTION is the way to our INHERITANCE. Because of Jesus putting on the IMPERISHABLE, we too, have access to this INHERITANCE of EDEN.

Paul begins to paint the picture of this coming day, when Jesus will return in triumphant victory, and will call forward those who have passed away. For those in the Corinthian church who have great

concerns for their passed loved ones, these words are undoubtedly a soothing salve. In this moment, all will be raised and forever CHANGED. This, Paul refers to as a great mystery. There will be believers alive on that day, and amazingly enough, they will be CHANGED, transformed from the current state and into the coming IMPERISHABLE. How this happens, we do not know. But what we are excitedly pointed to is the Hope of what the RESURRECTION means. It is reassurance of what we are living for. It is our INHERITANCE.

In saying “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom”, Paul is not communicating that we have no INHERITANCE there, nor is he saying that bodily existence is evil. Rather he, by using the word “flesh”, is simply calling out to the fallen state and condition we are currently enslaved to. To fully become a part of this INHERITANCE is to see that which sin and death has enslaved, liberated and set free. This is why Paul exclaims, “oh death where is your victory?” There, in Jesus’ tomb, Babylon, Egypt, Syria, Assyria, the representations of death were swallowed up and the RESURRECTION brought liberation to the people. VICTORY!

In Paul’s mind, he sees the RESURRECTION as the culminating event, tying the hope of Israel’s liberation to the hope of Jesus’ RESURRECTION. The thing the Israelites longed for, was not of an earthly overthrow of powers in the present but a Messianic liberation of their enslaved existence, ushering in the intended EDENIC reign. This INHERITANCE was what Israel was promised, and it is this INHERITANCE that Jesus made available and possible for those who believe. The RESURRECTION was the pathway through the desert of death leading us into the INHERITANCE of Eden.

As Paul says, what the RESURRECTION will bring into reality on that day, is wrapped in much mystery. However, we should be ever solidified in the Hope of sharing in this INHERITANCE. Just think, Paul gives us an amazing picture of what is to come. Victory is our cry, and death is defeated. On that day we will be forever CHANGED, and liberation to be all that God intended will envelope our very existence.

REFLECTION

The day that Paul speaks of, how have you viewed in the past? Was it with great anticipation or dread?

Living with some clarity of what this inheritance brings, how does this move you towards a posture of hope?

When seeing how all will be transformed on that day, how are you brought to appreciate the transformation God is currently working out in your life now?

ABOUNDING

Here we are. Paul has brought us into square view of the RESURRECTION'S victory. In unison we shout with an exclamation of joy over our coming INHERITANCE! But, what now? How does that INHERITANCE affect our current place in this life? Paul doubles down, yet again, drawing on everything that has previously been fleshed out, to call us to partake in this coming hope. To live in this INHERITANCE now. *"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."* ABOUND in the work of the Lord. This is Paul's challenge for us.

I know what you're thinking. *"Work? All this new body talk and the best answer you have is work? You mean I have to become a preacher?"* Before you blow your engine, cool your jets just a minute. Let's reflect back on the way of Eden. Genesis says this about Eden, *"15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."* (Genesis 2:15). God worked. He created the world and all that was in it. As His IMAGER, you were created and given authority in your work. Work is not the enemy to a full life. Toil and sweat are the enemy. Think on this. Work in Eden was given as a part of our call to be ambassadors. God gave all the resources to provide for our flourishing. Humanity was to engage in this kingdom reign as rulers of creation. They were to go out and work in the world, subduing it, making it into the image of Eden. After the fall this became but a broken dream. Man began to subdue, through toil and hardship, and made the world in his image not God's. For Paul, this was ever connected to the RESURRECTION.

At the fall, we rejected the idea and dream of Eden. We refused the good reign of God to define our lives. In doing so, everything we embarked on, from that point forward, became at best a shadow of what could have been. Our work was, as Paul says, in vain because it was defined by us and not God. In Jesus' RESURRECTION,

Paul saw all of our life as being redeemed, set right and reconnected with the Edenic restoration to come. We see this captured by Paul's command to be steadfast, always abounding in our work. Why? Because our labor is not in vain. How so? If our work here is done in light of the RESURRECTION, Eden's good reign, then it brings delight into this world and will only be continued into the next. To put it short, the RESURRECTION means our work here matters later in the there.

So, take a quick breathe. Paul is not telling you to be a pastor any more than he is saying only what "pastors" do, (that phrase really gets me) matters. Everything you do matters. This is what Paul meant in his letter to the Colossians, as he said, *"in everything you do, do it to the glory of God."* This isn't exclusively for professional athletes, although it applies, but is for the janitor, the carpenter, plumber, accountant, chiropractor, dentist, teacher, government worker, sales clerk, waitress, and yes, even pastor. What Paul means is if The RESURRECTION is the pathway to EDEN, and Eden is your INHERITANCE, then by the Holy Spirit's power your life should be ABOUNDING with Eden's delight.

Paul has taken the enormity of the RESURRECTION and boiled it down to its most potent form. Because Jesus has established our role as ambassadors/rulers in God's kingdom, then our lives should abound in His good reign. If we look at our work, our lives, all that we do, can we honestly say it brings delight? In my job, can my employer or fellow employees look at how I work and say, *"they and their work bring value and delight?"* How about my family? Does the way I live with them add value to their lives? Does it bring delight? Now in our western/secular/individualistic/workaholic environment, Paul is not confusing ABOUNDING with "work till your dead." In our society, maybe what people need to see is a person who fully embraces a life of rest, reliance and Sabbath. That is as well a way of RESURRECTION. One we do not have any time left for here, I am afraid.

However you slice it, the RESURRECTION as our pathway to EDEN, our INHERITANCE, is a delight that should impact every way we see, experience and interact within our world. It is not a one day, far off, INHERITANCE which requires painfully awaiting. Rather, an INHERITANCE of which we are called to ABOUND in right here and now. How are you ABOUNDING in the life to come right now? Can others look at your life and find a way of delight? Does your life point others to the RESURRECTION? To the pathway to Eden?

REFLECTION

How have you viewed the way you approach your work/life?

Would you consider everything you do being done in a way of delight? What are some ways you could move to improve your quality and function at work?

Knowing your work matters in the future, how does this make you more inclined to see Eden come alive now?

APPLICATION

-REFLECT: *Have you ever been a recipient of an inheritance? Knowing that God has given you an inheritance of which the RESURRECTION makes possible later and today, how does this encourage you to live?*

-READ: Colossians 3

-WRITE: *Journal how putting on the new self now has greater meaning in light of the RESURRECTION and the reign of EDEN.*

-PRAY: *God, thank you for the inheritance we did not deserve. Lord, help us to be a people ABOUNDING in all we do. Make our life's work a delight for all those around us. And help our way of life bring others to know your son and journey with us on the pathway to Eden.*

CONCLUSION

Resurrection : Act of being raised from the dead; brought to new life.

Well, it has been quite a journey. For many of us, this may be the first time we have really been challenged to wrestle with all the RESURRECTION means for us. For others, it may simply be a rehashing of what has always been believed. Regardless the two, it has been our hope for us to fully embrace all the RESURRECTION means for those who believe.

Embarking on this pathway to Eden brings us to engage in life with deeper purpose and further conviction of the hope we have in Jesus. In so many ways the church has become stagnate, solely due to our poor perspective on what our later life will look like and how it should affect us now. Quite possibly, if we give fair assessment of our lives and find complacency, laziness, and little delight, we are not on the pathway to Eden.

Jesus' RESURRECTION was so much more than just a one time event leading to a one time salvation, to be celebrated on one Sunday out of every year. What Jesus accomplished in the RESURRECTION was far more encompassing than we ever really give heed to. What the RESURRECTION made way for was an inheritance given to a bunch of rebels. Rulers whose refused their God given authority, re-established as co-heirs with the King's Son. The very pathway for us to once again find connection within God's intended dream. A dream of family, living in a way of delight, and pursuing beauty and creation together.

So, I hope you have found more value in the way you should see your life in light of the RESURRECTION. I hope after all of this, in the days to come, you will begin to see this way of Eden make inroads of delight into everything you do. My ultimate prayer is that the RESURRECTION will become a very real and active reality in your life,

and because of your embrace of it others around you will come to join this journey on the pathway to Eden.

