

The Wreckage and the Fire Pt 24

HOW TO LIVE AFTER THE RESURRECTION

The Practical Demands of an Empty Tomb

Series: Fire in the Wreckage | 1 Corinthians 16 | Series Finale

1 Corinthians 16:9 (NKJV) - *For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NKJV) - *Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.*

1 Corinthians 16:22 (NKJV) - *O Lord, come! - Maranatha.*

Introduction

Every great event in human history has a morning after. The morning after the armistice. The morning after the victory. The morning after the diagnosis came back clear. The morning after the wedding. The morning after the miracle.

The morning after is when the world stops looking like a movie and starts looking like Tuesday again.

The disciples had a morning after.

- They had stood at an empty tomb.
 - They had seen the risen Christ eat fish on a beach. \
 - They had watched Him ascend into heaven.
 - They had been filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
- Three thousand people saved in a single sermon.

And then Tuesday arrived. People still needed food. Widows still needed care. The offering still needed to be collected. The churches still needed to be organized. The letters still needed to be written.

Paul ends the most magnificent theological letter in the history of the church not with a poem, not with a final vision, not with fire falling from heaven. He ends it with **here is how to take the offering. Here is when I am coming. Greet Aquila and Priscilla. Watch. Stand firm. Love each other.**

The resurrection does not exempt you from Tuesday. It equips you for it.

This is the final sermon in our series. Sixteen weeks through one letter to one broken church in one broken city.

We have walked through the wreckage -- the divisions, the immorality, the confusion, the pride. We have felt the fire - the gifts, the love, the resurrection. And now Paul lands the plane. Chapter sixteen is the answer to the question chapter fifteen always raises: so now what?

How do resurrection people actually live? Three answers. One chapter. The finale of the series.

1. Stewardship - How Resurrection People Give

1 Corinthians 16:1-9 (NKJV) - *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: **On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come... **For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*****

Paul has just finished preaching the most glorious theology of resurrection in the entire New Testament. Death lost. The body will rise. We are more than conquerors. And then - immediately, first thing in chapter sixteen - he talks about the offering.

That is not a jarring transition. That is the point.

The resurrection does not make money irrelevant - The resurrection makes how you use money eternally significant

kata mian sabbatou - on the first day of every week -- Sunday, Resurrection Day

PUT ALL ON POINTS ON SAME SLIDE:

- The early church gave on Sunday because Sunday was the day death lost
- Every offering was an act of resurrection theology
- Every dollar given was a declaration: we are investing in a kingdom that cannot be defeated

tithemi - to lay by in store, to set aside systematically -- not impulsive, not emotional; deliberate and disciplined

Generosity is not a spiritual feeling. It is a theological conviction expressed in a concrete decision. Resurrection people give because they know where history is going - and they are sending their resources ahead of them.

The way you handle your money is a statement about what you actually believe about eternity.

Then verse nine - and here is the nugget nobody preaches.

***thura megale kai energeis* - a great door and effectual, active, strategic - an open door for effective work**

- "For a great and effective door has opened to me - and there are many adversaries."
- Paul does not say: a great door has opened; therefore the opposition is gone
- He says: a great door has opened AND there are many adversaries

OPEN DOORS = OPPOSITION!

The adversary does not guard closed doors. He only stations himself in front of open ones. The opposition is not the sign that you missed the door. The opposition is often the sign that you found it.

STOP TREATING RESISTANCE AS A REASON TO RETREAT.

- **IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD, RESISTANCE IS OFTEN THE CONFIRMATION THAT YOU ARE EXACTLY WHERE YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer - The Cost of Discipleship, 1937

The call to follow Christ is always a call forward through opposition, not around it. The one who waits for the path

to be clear before moving will never move. The one who moves because Christ called will find that the path clears as they walk.

2. Steadfastness - How Resurrection People Stand

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NKJV) - *Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.*

Two verses. Five commands. The entire posture of a resurrection-shaped life compressed into twelve English words.

gregoreo - be watchful, be awake, be alert -- a military command; the sentry on the wall who cannot afford to sleep

- "Watch" - not paranoia; readiness

The resurrection people are awake to what is happening around them. They are not naive. They are not surprised. They are not caught off guard. They have read the last chapter. They know how it ends.

steko en te pistei - stand firm in the faith - present imperative, continuous action; not "have stood," not "will stand" - STAND, right now, keep standing

- "Stand fast in the faith" - not in your feelings, not in your circumstances, not in what the culture is saying
- Stand in the faith - the fixed, established, non-negotiable testimony of what God has done

andrizomai - be courageous, act with warrior-courage - this word appears only once in the entire New Testament; Paul reserves it for this moment

The conclusion of the most doctrinally rich letter in the New Testament canon gets one word for how to live it all out. One word. Used nowhere else in Scripture.

Andrizomai: Warrior courage - not the feeling of confidence but the decision to act from conviction regardless of what you feel.

Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is the decision that something matters more than your fear.

krataioo - be strong, be strengthened from an internal source - the root is kratos, dominion and might; the strength of the One who holds all things together

- "Be strong" - not in your own reserves; in the power that raised Jesus from the dead

The same power that split the sea, raised the dead, and walked out of a sealed tomb. That power lives in you

Then verse fourteen -- and this is where Paul brings the entire letter home. "Let all that you do be done in love."

- Chapter 8: love is greater than knowledge
- Chapter 13: love is the more excellent way
- Chapter 16: let EVERYTHING you do happen in love

The letter that opened with division closes with love. The letter that named every fracture ends with the only thing that heals them. The letter that exposed every failure point to the one thing that outlasts all of them LOVE!

WATCH. STAND. BE COURAGEOUS. BE STRONG. AND LET EVERYTHING - EVERYTHING - BE DONE IN LOVE.

THAT IS THE ENTIRE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN FIVE COMMANDS.

Karl Barth - Church Dogmatics IV, 1953

The Christian life is not a life of increasing achievement but of increasing faithfulness. The one who watches, stands, acts with courage, and remains strong is not building toward some final moment of spiritual arrival. They are living every ordinary day in the truth of what God has already accomplished - and that is enough. That is everything.

3. Servanthood - How Resurrection People Serve

1 Corinthians 16:15-16, 22 (NKJV) - *I urge you, brethren - you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints - that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us... O Lord, come! - Maranatha.*

- Stephanas. The name most people skip past in verse fifteen. Paul stops to honor him specifically - and what he honors is not a title or a platform or a dramatic gift.

tasso - to arrange, to appoint, to devote oneself - **they submitted themselves to this work; not assigned by a committee but chosen by love**

- "They have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints"
- The household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia

The first to believe became the first to serve. They did not wait for a program. They did not wait for a title. They saw the need and arranged themselves toward it.

The first converts became the first servants. That is what resurrection does to a person.

IT DOES NOT MAKE YOU IMPORTANT. IT MAKES YOU AVAILABLE.

- "Submit to such people" (v.16) - this is not institutional authority
- This is servant authority - the right to lead earned by the choice to serve
- The person who has already been doing the work has already earned the room's respect

Leadership in the kingdom is never taken. It is given to the one who served even if no one was watching!

The resurrection does not produce people who demand to be served. It produces people who cannot stop serving - because they have seen what love costs and they know it is worth it.

Then Paul closes his letter with one of the most ancient, most loaded, most prophetic words in the entire Christian vocabulary.

Maranatha - Our Lord, come - Aramaic; one of only two Aramaic phrases preserved in the Greek New Testament, alongside Abba Father

- Paul writes in Greek to a Greek-speaking congregation
- He does not translate this phrase. He preserves it in Aramaic.

Why did he do this -> Because this cry was so ancient, so foundational, so embedded in the earliest worship of the church that translating it would have diminished it

- This was the war cry of the first believers before they had a single line of the New Testament

It is not a farewell. It is not a closing benediction. It is a declaration of war against every power that believes this story is finished. It is the church saying: our Lord is coming. And when He comes - everything changes.

Maranatha is the resurrection applied to the future. Chapter 15 said death lost. Chapter 16 says: and we are still expecting the One who defeated death to come back and finish what He started.

THE CHURCH DOES NOT CLOSE A LETTER WITH MARANATHA BECAUSE IT IS DEFEATED. IT CLOSSES WITH MARANATHA BECAUSE IT KNOWS WHO IS COMING AND IT CANNOT WAIT.

The resurrection is not the end of the story - it is the beginning of the new one. Every act of justice, beauty, love, and service done in the name of Jesus is not lost. It is taken up into the life of the new creation that God has promised. Maranatha is not wishful thinking. It is the most historically grounded hope available to a human being.

Conclusion:

Sixteen weeks. One letter. One broken church. One broken city.

- We started in Acts 18 with Paul arriving in Corinth.
- A city of commerce and corruption.

- A port city where every vice had a temple and every god had a market.
- An unlikely place for the church of Jesus Christ to take root.
- **And then God showed up.**

God has never needed a perfect church. He just needs a yielded one.

The Corinthians were not a model church. They were a mirror - reflecting to every generation of believers the exact same tensions, the exact same failures, the exact same temptations that live in every congregation that has ever tried to carry the fire of God in vessels of clay.

- **Give like resurrection people.**
- **Stand like resurrection people.**
- **Serve like resurrection people.**
- **Love like resurrection people.**
- **And wait - watchfully, courageously, expectantly - like people who know He is coming.**