

Stand Firm!
Pastor Scott Lessing
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Jesus. We come to you this morning and usually on Sundays, Lord, there's a there's crowds of people that fill stadiums to praise other people. But this morning, Lord, we're here to praise you, Jesus, to praise you for the promise that you've given us. And in the passage that we're going to read about today. And Laura, I sense it again that there's that there's brokenness there.

Well, we know there's brokenness in this world, but we see it in the Middle East. We see it all over the place. But, Lord, I sense again that there's brokenness in this room, that there's people who are hurting, there's people who are scared, there's people who are worried, living in pain. Lord, through your message this morning, may we have hope that we've never experienced before?

May the doubts be cast away and may we have confidence in what you've shared with us today? In your word, Jesus, may you receive all the glory forever and ever. Amen. Good morning. My name's Pastor Scott Lessing. You have been supporting what we've been doing out at Lorraine Correctional for two years. And I want you to know that every single time that Jonathan welcomes the guys at Learning Correctional and you guys clap.

And when we're there and we watch the video, they clap back. They are so encouraged by you. So let's do it again. Right. Welcome to the guys. Lorain Correctional.

Yeah, Yeah, that is awesome.

Well, let me just give you a little bit of an update about what God has been doing out of the correctional. We have over 50 volunteers that go out every single week. We have a whole prayer team back on this side. We have Thursday mornings. We have over 60 guys that join our services every single week. And we have 16 different ministries going on inside the prison.

We have three different ministries going on outside the prison. What else, man? There are so many things. Over 90 people have suggested Jesus this year alone, over 40 guys have been baptized this year alone. This Thursday, we'll have 11 more guys get baptized. We're going to be launching a Bible college. I'm not done, by the way, because God's not done.

We were going to be launching a Bible college out there November 15th. God's been on the move and thank you for supporting us, encouraging us, praying for us, and praying for the men and their families at Lorraine. One really cool ministry that has impacted over five communities in Northeast Ohio is our gardens. We have two big gardens that Lorain Correctional and we partnered with Olmsted with Uncle John's and Olmsted Falls this year and they donated all the plants for both of our gardens and the guys did all the farming, they did all the harvesting and they pulled out 1500 pounds of vegetables that they gave to five different food pantries throughout Northeast Ohio and that amazing. Well, let's go back to the Garden. What's the process that it takes for a seed to turn into a plant to produce all this fruit? I was going to start with this little single seed for these beautiful poinsettias. I know it's not Christmas, but we're looking towards Christmas. Right?

But these poinsettia plants, they start with this. The seeds were too small for you to see. I didn't know that when I ordered them. And I got them in the last couple days, Maureen And I've been like, Well, anyone see these? Think about the size of a pepper, like when it's cracked, right? The pepper that you put on your food, that's how small these little seeds are that turn into these enormous plants that are so beautiful.

The guys that Uncle John's, Jeff and Brad, they I sat down with them. They gave me all this information. So if you want to know more about the poinsettia plant, email me. I've got gobs of information for you to learn more about the Poinsettia plant. But this little seed to make these plants, what does it have to do?

You plan it in the ground, you to water it. The temperature has to be just right and then eventually the outer shell dies and then something miraculous happens and it turns into something completely different than what the seed looks like. My question this morning that I think

Paul would ask us is, how about for you and for me, what happens to us?

Have you ever thought about what happens to you once you die? Aren't I lucky? I get to talk about that this morning, but I think is something really important is probably one of the most important chapters in all of the New Testament that we're going to be diving into today and First Corinthians 15 as we're getting closer to wrapping up our series on Whitewater, navigating life's rapids as a church centered on Jesus, we come to this section in first Corinthians 15, verses 35 through 58, where Paul's talking about the afterlife.

He talks about what happens when you and I die. Now, the Apostle Paul has already proven that Jesus has been resurrected from the dead and that the resurrection of the dead was possible. He states in first Corinthians 15 that this is a fact. It's factual crisis. Indeed been resurrected. And he can say that it's true. Since Paul encountered the resurrected Jesus, He's so sure that the resurrection of the dead will happen that he says that if the resurrection of the body of Jesus did not occur, our faith is what silly He says Futile.

It's silly that you even come. It's silly to even pray. If Jesus's body did not come back to life, if he did not get a resurrected body and meet with all the people he did in this section of the chapter of First Corinthians 15, Paul continues to address some questions or arguments or even objections that were raised by the people who were denying the resurrection, the dead.

And Paul wants to speak to people who are wondering what will happen to us after we die. Now, Paul, I love this because I'm a former skeptic and sometimes I still am, especially as a Browns fan. Paul's talking to the skeptics. He's talking to the people who are, I don't know, right? It's great because in Cleveland, we understand what he's talking about.

He poses two questions for the skeptic. He says, How are the dead rays back to life? And the second question he asks is what kind of body will they have? Now, before we dive into first Corinthians 15, we have to answer a common question, which is what happens when you die? What happens when we die? Paul says in second Corinthians five eight

that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, to be absent from the body.

In other words, when we when our body dies, we are immediately in the presence of Jesus. How can we get to the point, though, that we are absolutely confident that this will be true for you and me? Romans 10:9-10 says that when you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and you believe in your heart the control center of who you are, when you believe with your heart that he was raised from the dead, that you will be saved.

But the question is saved from what? And for what saved from the consequences of our sin. Eternal separation from God and save for an eternity with the living God. And it's in this moment that you get your new spirit and your new soul. As it says in Second Corinthians 5:17, when we say yes to Jesus, were immediately changed in our soul, in our spirit right now, our bodies.

How's our new God designed soul and spirit? And once our body dies, our soul and our spirit go to be with Jesus. But until that happens, in the meantime, what are we to do while we are here on Earth? Our goal is to please the Lord with all that we think, say and do, and to love others and love God.

Well, right. We know that to be true. And when we do this, it encourages other believers in Jesus. Now that we know what happens when we die, we have to answer the next question that Paul talks about Here is what will the resurrected body look like? Aren't you curious? I know I am. And when will this happen? But let's have a little fun first, right?

If you were to tell God, I want this, this is what I want. My body look like, what would you say for me? Lord, I want to be a lot taller. I want to be like 6'6" because I'm five eight. And I if that happens, my waist gets a little smaller, right? That's awesome, too. And I'm a better golfer.

I want to shoot under par every time I play. And I would love to play basketball six to like I want to play some hoops because I can't play hoops as a 5'8" guy. But that's not what Paul talks about. That's not what it's about in. First Corinthians 15:35 through 58, Paul uses this metaphor

of dying like a seed, knowing that when Jesus returns, we'll get something different.

We're going to get a new body for our soul and our spirit. And having this understanding should encourage us to stand firm in our faith. So let's take a look. First Corinthians 15 versus 35 through 41. Our bodies are made for heaven. He says this, but someone will ask, How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they come?

How foolish. Paul says, What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be but just a seed perhaps of wheat or something else, like a poinsettia plant. But God gives it a body as He is determined. And to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

Not all flesh is the same. People have one kind of flesh, animals have another birds, another fish, another. There's also heavenly bodies and there's earthly bodies. But the splendor of the heavenly body is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly body is another. Your earthly body is going to be very different from your heavenly body, is what Paul is saying here.

Human bodies were designed to thrive on earth, and heavenly bodies will be designed to thrive in the heavenly. Paul says that a seed planted in the ground does not produce just another seed. It produces something different altogether. When our bodies die, we will not produce just another body just like ours. Today it'll be something different altogether. And that tiny little seed for the poinsettia plant, it has to die to produce this new thing.

And the only way for that to happen is for the seed to die. And the same is true for our earthly bodies. We get our new bodies, but after our current body breaks down and dies. So again, our earthly bodies were created to thrive on Earth and our heavenly bodies are created to thrive in the heavenly heavens. But we need to keep reading to see what Paul says about how the new body will be different.

First Corinthians 15 Starting in verse 42, our bodies will be very different, he says. He says this So will it be with the resurrection of the dead? The body that is sown is perishable. It is raised in imperishable. It's sown to

dishonor, in dishonor, and it's raised in glory. It's sown in weakness, but it's raised in power. It is sown in natural body and it's raised a spiritual body.

If there's a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it's written. The first man, Adam, became a living being the last Adam, meaning Jesus, is a life giving spirit. The spiritual does not come first, but the natural. And after the spiritual, the first man was of the dust of the earth. The second man is of heaven, as was the earthly man.

So are those who are of the Earth, and as is the heavenly man. So are those. So also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have been born. The image of the earthly man. So shall we bear the image of the heavenly man. Our earthly bodies are in our are perishable, meaning they're going to break down.

Listen, I'm almost 50. Not yet. Almost This year I turned 50 and my body is telling me soul is breaking down. I have pain that I've never experienced before, but this is just part of the fall. We know that to be true. Earthly bodies are weak. They break down and then they die. And this is just like this.

The seed, the shell of the seed. But we have to take a step aside just for a second and talk about this. This is not easy. This is not easy for those who are experiencing it. And it's not easy for those who watch somebody experience it. It's about seven years ago. My father in law, Jack, he's so dear to our family, so dear to me.

And he had a stroke, a massive stroke, and he was changed forever after that. He lived for five years and then he passed away. And during that time, I mean, we grieved when he had a stroke, and then we grieved when he passed away. And it was not easy. It was hard. It was hard to watch it. It was hard to grieve.

But when we lose somebody that we love, we cry and we experience deep sorrow, and we need to take the time to grieve. I want to encourage you. It's good for your soul to grieve those who've impacted your life. So please do that. Now you might be struggling on the other side. You might be struggling physically. This morning, you may have

received news about a tough medical diagnosis or maybe you have a terminal illness.

I don't want to minimize your feelings and I don't want to minimize the fact that the struggle is real. But I do believe that this message from Paul will give you hope as to what will happen so that you can persevere until you meet Jesus face to face. Now, Paul says that we will get a new body at some point.

So the question that I always have is will then what will that look like, Right? Am I going to be 62? Am I going to be skinnier? Right. So our resurrected bodies will be perfectly suited for what? For the heavenly, for the resurrected planet. We read about the resurrected planet in Revelation, talking about the new heavens and the new Earth.

Now, we don't know exactly what this will look like. We don't know how it's going to work. We don't know exactly when it's going to happen. But we have hope in the fact that his followers of Jesus that we will have resurrected bodies and they will be very different from what our bodies are today. Now we get a glimpse as to what our new bodies might look like because of what we see in the scriptures.

We see that Jesus has a resurrected body and it says in verse 49 that we will bear the likeness of the man from heaven, meaning Jesus means we will have a body similar to his. And I love this in Philippians 3:20 and 21, it says that our citizenship is in heaven now and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under his control, that by that power Jesus, it says, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

That's to bring us incredible joy. That's it. That's exciting to know what will happen. We will receive a new body that will be like his resurrected body. So let's take a look as to what the resurrected body of Jesus looks like. Jesus taught people after he was resurrected, He met with over 500 people. He ate food with people, and we can praise God for that.

He cooks breakfast for Peter on the beach and Jesus is walking on the road to a mass. He's walking alongside the other disciples and we don't it doesn't even say how he got there. All of a sudden he's just there,

Poof. Right? That's cool. I don't know about you, but I can't wait to experience that loud boom. I can go from here to there.

I don't know. And the other thing is, the disciples didn't even recognize them at first. They're taught they actually start explaining what happened to him, to him. And he's like, Like, he's so patient with these guys, is he? He's like, Yeah, yeah, I know all about what happened to me. Yeah, I know that I was resurrected. And then they realize, my gosh, you're the risen Jesus.

So he must have looked a little different. I think for me, though, the most impactful was Thomas, I think undeservedly, we the church at large, has given Thomas the wrong name. What's the name that we've given? Thomas? Doubting Thomas. But that's not what he did at the end. This is what's amazing. His doubt now. Yes, he was. He was doubting Thomas, but his doubt and his skepticism again, I'm a former skeptic, pushed him to know the sacred things of God.

He had to touch the hands of Jesus. And when he did, his faith grew stronger than his curiosity ever was. His faith grew stronger than his curiosity ever was. Thomas His faith in the resurrection, I believe, was 100% from that day on, he never doubted again. So it's actually not doubting. Thomas is believing Thomas. They will be like Thomas for us today.

We can have faith that the resurrection is real and that is for us as well. We will have new bodies that will live eternally in our new heavenly home. We do get a glimpse, though, of our new heavenly bodies, and because of this, may our faith be stronger than our curiosity ever was. So when will we get this new body?

It's a good question. It's important for us to look at this first Corinthians 15 verses 53-57. Paul says, I declare to you it's a declaration, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in a twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound.

The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, the mortal with the

immortality. When the perishable has been clothed, with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true. Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where or death is your victory where or death is your sting.

The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. That is amazing that we don't have to worry about being separated from God forever. You see, when Jesus comes again, some people call that the Rapture when He comes again for his bride, the Church.

This trumpet is going to be declared all around the world to be heard everywhere. He says that our earthly bodies cannot enter the heavenly realm, that we need a new body. Eventually, we cannot know how it will all come together, what it will all look like, or even when we know that he says that this is a mystery.

But Paul gives us a glimpse into this by saying that once the trumpets sounds those believers who died before us, their bodies will be raised first, then we will be raised up. Meet Jesus in the Heavenly, in the clouds. And what will happen? This transformation will happen. We don't know what is, how is going to work. But man, how cool is that going to be?

He finishes this section with a victory song, you know, on November 25th this year. It's a really important day. We're going to hear the victory song. Carmen, Ohio. When Ohio State beats Michigan, right. We're going to hear that they're going to sing their victory song. They go over to the student section and they all what? I don't know.

How goes you don't want to hear me sing, but they sing. Carmen, Ohio Our victory song is even more important will be louder and more special than any college football game. More special than any college victory song. But we have one and Jesus will lead us in it. Remember, we have this victory song to celebrate Jesus victory over death and the transformation that we will experience is going to be amazing.

At the second coming of Jesus, we have to remember the cost of sin that it was a physical and a spiritual separation from God. But Jesus is death and resurrection won the battle for our eternal destination, and

that's critical. This means that we will never be separated from God. This is an eternal victory, and we have victory because of Jesus death.

That He beat death, that he beat death, and he came back to life to live eternally in a new body and soul. We So what do we do with all of this? Paul wraps up and he says this one verse 58. He says this, therefore, my brothers and sisters stand firm. Let nothing move. You always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

This word, therefore, it's a very critical transitional word. It's saying that we've discussed this big truth. And now here's why that truth matters. It's the why behind the what. Therefore you will die. Your spirit and your soul will immediately be in the presence of Jesus, and eventually you're going to receive this new body. And knowing this allows us to be confident, to stand firm in our faith.

When times get tough, he says, You need to stay calm. You need to stand firm. That's the Greek word state. Go. And this is amazing. The Greek word Steak o stand firm. It literally means to persevere while we are still here on earth. Persevere from what? Or through what? What do we persevere through? He says. Don't let anything move you from your faith.

Tough times are going to come your way. We don't know what they are. Maybe you've already been through them. But when we live this out, when we stand firm in the midst of tough times, a lot of people are encouraged. He says. This In the meantime, how you stand firm matters. So how do we do it? How do we stand firm in our faith?

And we have to look at the disciples. Mark Chapter four is one of my favorite sections to remind us of how to stand firm. Mark Chapter four. We see Jesus in the boat with the disciples There on the Sea of Galilee. It's about seven miles wide and they're on. They were on one side and they want to go to the other side.

They did a lot of ministry. They need a break. They jump in the boat. Jesus grabs a pillow, by the way, because he knows he's going to take naps, he's going to take a nap. And I think that that means that it's okay to take naps, by the way, naps are good, but what does Jesus do? He's

sleeping and this big storm comes up and it says that the water is starting to come over the sides of the boat.

Now, I would be freaking out. I know that the disciples are freaking out. I'm sure that they were starting to bail water out. Right. And in the midst of that, they're probably thinking I might die, right? The boat's probably starting to sink a little bit. So what are they do They turn to Jesus and they say, Jesus, don't you care?

Don't you care that we're going to die? He wakes up and he immediately just calms the storm in their life. The waves stop, the wind stops, and now they're sitting in the lake and it's a calm lake. Maybe the sun came out, I don't know. Probably got super humid and sticky and they're like, Man, we have to get to the other side.

So and all the scripture says in this section is that in verse chapter five, verse one, it says, They got to the other side. My question is, what happens in the meantime? They found themselves. In the meantime, they weren't where they used to be, and they're not where they want to be there. In the meantime, what do they do?

How do they stand firm in their newfound faith in Jesus? This is what they did. They stayed in the boat. They didn't jump out. They didn't self-sabotage. They didn't go diving for lobsters. They stayed in the boat. They don't let the storms of their life move them or shake them. Doesn't mean that it's hard. Of course it is.

But they leaned into Jesus. They spent time with him, they sat with Jesus. They looked at him in the face. They asked him lots of questions. I would imagine they listened really well. They probably talked about what happens about life. They probably talked about end of life. They probably talked about heaven, and they asked more questions. They listened and they got to the the other side.

Now, you might be thinking, wait a minute, Scott. I thought we were talking about new bodies, the resurrection, right? The end of Chapter 15. Paul says that all of these things are really important. Your faith depends on it. Now, the reality of it for all of us is that we will have storms in our in our lives that rise up.

And when the storm rises, what do we do? When they got to the other side after they spent time with Jesus, after the storm in their life, they got involved in the work of Jesus. They go to the other side and they do all kinds of miracles. They heal people, they feed people, They hang out with the poor, it says.

Paul says, Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor is not in vain. They did the work of the Lord. The resurrection is what gives us hope to continue to do the work of the Lord. When we stand firm in our faith as we're making disciples while we live life. It's not always easy, but it's fruitful.

And then it. Paul says that we are an encouragement to the other believers in the body of Christ when we do so. So I want to encourage you this morning to stay in the boat, learn about Jesus, your Savior. Praise God, even during the trials, even during the difficult times, spend time with Jesus, Paul says it until our spirit leaves our bodies.

In the meantime, our goal is to please the Lord. With all that we think, all that we do and all that we say, then when we get to the other side that we're to get involved in the ministry that Jesus has called us to do. Then when the trumpet sounds, you will get that new body. When Jesus comes for his bride, the Church, Let's pray.

Jesus, Thank you for the confidence that we have, the confidence that we have that we will receive new bodies that will be like your resurrected body. Thank you for that, Jesus. And thank you, Lord, that that hope, the truth that we know that you beat us, that same hope that we have is what carries us through the storms in our lives.

Jesus may may we be able to lean into you and spend time with you during the storms. Lord, we come to you today and we thank you that even in the middle of the storm that you haven't forgotten about us, just like with with the fellows in the boat, Lord, you calm the storm in the life, in their lives, and you spent time with them in the midst of it.

And Lord, we thank you for that. And we look forward to spending more and more time with you and getting to know you at a deeper level so that we can then go and make disciples when we get to the other side. We pray all this in your name, Jesus. Amen.