

Knowing the Resurrected Christ
Philippians 3:8–11
April 21, 2019

If we're not dying, there's no need to even care about resurrection.

Matt McCullough begins his book, *Remember Death*, with an admittedly dark image from French philosopher Blaise Pascal. Pascal imagines a number of men in chains, all under sentence of death. Each day these prisoners wake up to the knowledge that one of their fellow prisoners will suffer the dire and decisive consequence of their sentencing that day. Pascal writes, “those remaining see their own condition in that of their fellows, and looking at each other with grief and despair *await their turn*.”¹ In each death, Matt writes, each prisoner's “own is foreshadowed.”²

I told you it was dark. It's a nightmare.

And if we were reading that kind of image in a book, we might quickly turn the page. It's too much. In fact, you might be the kind of person that avoids hospitals and cemeteries and funerals so that you too might avoid that kind of morbid thinking.³

But if you're going to accuse someone of being morbid, you'll need to consider including the author of this letter as well. Paul wrote back in chapter 1:21: *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*. In chapter 2:8 he wrote about Someone that *humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*. A few verses later he referred to his potential martyrdom as him being *poured out as a drink offering* (Phil. 2:17). Then, moments later, he writes about Epaphroditus being *near to death* (Phil. 2:27). In our text today, he'll once again mention our *becoming like Him in his death* and something about our *attaining the resurrection from the dead* (3:10–11).

Every four or five sentences, it seems, Paul mentions death. This is because, for the Apostle, to minimize the reality of death would also be to minimize the promise of the gospel. If we're not dying, there's no need to even care about resurrection. Nor is there a need to know any Man that many claim rose from the dead.

Note first,

1. Knowing the Resurrected Christ

Let me begin by telling you Moisés Silva's title to his chapter on this text. He called it, “The Essence of Pauline Theology.” There, he writes, “Paul, no doubt, would have been the first to protest that the gospel he proclaimed is too rich to be reduced to a few sentences. But if such a feat could be accomplished, the passage before us would be it.”⁴

Verse 8: *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*. Paul's picking up where he left off in verse 7. If you recall, last week Paul listed his honors, both inherited and earned, one by one by one. He held up his Jewish resume, saying, *if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more* (3:4). And that wasn't an empty claim. He truly had more reason. But after detailing his accomplishments, or gains, he wrote this in verse 7: *But*

¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York: Penguin, 1966), 165.

² Matt McCullough, *Remember Death*, 32. This is probably the best book I've read this year. Though you might not assume this from the title, the essence of the book concerns that which we celebrate today: the hope of resurrection.

³ Come on, Matt, it's Easter.

⁴ Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, BECNT, 155; Pastor Phil said this text is Paul hitting a 458-foot homerun. We'll see in these three or four verses essential truths concerning our salvation, our growth as Christians, and our future hope. Or in more theological terms: simple and brief versions of Paul's teaching on justification, sanctification, and glorification.

whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Paul found out: all those gains were liabilities. Works—righteousness—attempting to work his way toward God—ended up being a scam.⁵

In verse 7, Paul described a day, most likely on a road to Damascus, when he saw all those Jewish gains as loss.⁶ In *this* verse, however, he goes further. *Indeed*, or he might say, *furthermore*, *I count everything as loss*. In verse 8, Paul’s bringing that past conclusion more explicitly into the present,⁷ and he’s expanding it, saying it’s not merely those accomplishments he counted as loss, but today he counts *everything* as loss.

You might say, “Why?” Paul writes, v. 8, *because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*. When Paul writes “knowing,” he doesn’t merely mean a body of knowledge, as if he’d memorized some New Testament textbook.⁸ It’s worth pointing out that it’s possible, especially in our day, to know facts about this or that person but not actually know the person. You might ace a test on how many kids this person has, what their favorite restaurant is, what their shopping habits are, etc. and yet they’d still have no idea who you are if you ran into them at Central BBQ. As one man points out the oddity of this, “When we study somebody without getting to know them, it’s called stalking.”⁹

On the other hand, those people you really know, while you do know facts about them—maybe their birthday, maybe their parent’s names—you also know them *as a person*. You can anticipate what they would do in this or that situation. You know what might upset them. You know *them*, not merely facts about them.

To Paul, Christ is more than the amalgamation of his attributes. He’s a person. To know. That’s what Paul’s referring to here. Peter O’Brien writes that this knowledge signifies, “living in a close relationship with something or somebody, such a relationship as to cause what may be called communion.”¹⁰ I’m a bit put-off by that terminology because as a young Christian, “having a personal relationship with Jesus” was the goal of a lot of folks seemingly uninterested in thoughtfully studying the Scriptures. But for those of us with a cerebral wiring, we need to comprehend what Paul’s talking about here. His theology of Christ’s person was intensely personal.

Paul highlights this by writing, v. 8, *knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*. This is the only place in all of Paul’s writings where he chooses to say, in the singular, *my Lord*.¹¹ He actually uses the plural phrase “our Lord” 53 times in his letters. In this pulpit, you’re often hearing Pastor Phil, Chris, or myself emphasizing those corporate realities. And that’s because Paul uses those plural phrases 53 of the 54 times. But that emphasis doesn’t mean that *this verse* shouldn’t be read in the most personal of terms. Here, Paul doesn’t call the Christ, “my church’s Lord,” or “Peter’s Lord,” or “Lydia’s Lord”; no, instead, it’s *my Lord*.

And Who is this Lord? We’d do a disservice to the context of the letter if we didn’t mention this is the same one to Whom every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, *Jesus is Lord* (Phil. 2:10–11). That highly exalted One, the reigning Ruler and King, has drawn near to Paul as *his Lord*. This made me think of the lyrics, “I praise the God of grace. I trust His truth and might. He calls me His; I call Him mine. My God, my joy, my light.”¹²

Paul continues talking about what it means to know Christ. Verse 8b: *For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things*. One of the reasons Paul treasures and prizes Christ as his own is because

⁵ See “Paul’s Resumé” here: <http://www.southwoodsbc.org/sermons/pauls-resume/>

⁶ That realization continued to have effect on the present day. (Greek perfect tense)

⁷ Using a present tense verb for count, rather than the perfect.

⁸ Gordon Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 317n20.

⁹ Though I don’t know much about the guy, I believe Bob Goff said this.

¹⁰ Peter O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 388; This is likely with OT ideas of knowledge in mind.

¹¹ Joseph Hellerman, *Philippians*, EGGNT, 183; O’Brien, 388.

¹² Horatius Bonar, “Not What My Hands Have Done.”

he's lost so much for His sake. We had a few of our members share the gospel with Iranians overseas just a few weeks ago. As it was relayed to me, many of the ones that believed had no idea what to expect if they confessed Christ on return to Iran. It could be as bad as you might imagine. And it certainly wouldn't be the response you'd get in Germantown.

Consider Paul's resumé we covered last week. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, he was a Pharisee. He'd zealously persecuted the church. But keep in mind that Paul didn't do any of these things alone. These Pharisees and those persecutors were Paul's colleagues, friends, and family. And many, if not all, of them hated the Christ. So, in believing, Paul lost all kinds of things, likely being disinherited by family, alienated from friends, and certainly losing status as a Jew, those things that constituted much of his identity prior.¹³ Friends, family, religion, culture, career, gone. This former giant in that world now sat in chains.

But Paul had no regrets.¹⁴ Verse 8b: *For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.* This word for rubbish is only used here in the New Testament. J. I. Packer calls it a "coarse, ugly, violent word."¹⁵ Though I wish he hadn't, Peter O'Brien writes this, "It is inappropriate to weaken its meaning because of embarrassment."¹⁶ The reason O'Brien writes that is because this is not something Christian commentators or pastors are often comfortable writing or saying. The word is, most likely, actually worse—more coarse—than rubbish or trash.¹⁷ What's more revolting than garbage? Manure, excrement,¹⁸ or what the KJV translated this word, "dung."¹⁹

Paul's using one of the coarsest words he can think of to make his point. Note the progression of these two verses. In verse 7, he counts his Jewish qualifications as *loss*. In verse 8, not just his resumé, but *everything is loss*. Then he continues, saying, *I have suffered the loss of all things*. The progression leads to this point: all those things I lost are worse than trash.²⁰

Why would those things be given that low an evaluation? Paul writes, v. 8b, *and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ*. We saw this word "gain," an accounting term, last week in the plural. Paul had gain after gain after gain, *of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin*, etc. But all those gains added up to one singular great loss. All those assets were a liability.

But that's not where Paul leaves this accounting terminology, or the reader. *Those gains were loss*. But, in the end, He'd actually gained. *I count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ*. In this transaction, he'd come out ahead, because of what he'd written earlier, v. 8, *because of the surpassing worth*. He'd found a superior affection.

We're always ascribing worth to this or that. I'll do *this* rather than *that* because *this* is worth my time. I'll invest in *this* rather than *that* because it's more worthy of my resources. I'll go here rather than there because I think it's more worthy. Thomas Chalmers makes the application, "There are two ways in which one may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world—either by a demonstration of the world's vanity, . . . or, *by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy* of its attachment, so that the heart shall be prevailed upon not to resign an old affection, . . . but to exchange an old affection for a new one. The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one."²¹

¹³ Hellerman, 184.

¹⁴ O'Brien, 390.

¹⁵ NIDNTT 1.480.

¹⁶ O'Brien, 390.

¹⁷ Silva, 157.

¹⁸ Hellerman, 184.

¹⁹ Dung "is both appropriate and probable." Silva, 157. Death and dung on Easter, Matt?

²⁰ Silva notes this progression, 156.

²¹ Thomas Chalmers, "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection."

Paul's superior affection was *knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*. And it more than compensated for the loss of everything else. The rest was trash. *This Man*, knowing Him, is surpassing worth. What does it mean to know and gain Christ? Verses 9 and 10 will tell us.

2. Knowing the Resurrected Christ's Righteousness (for us)

Verse 9: *and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law.*

What is this *righteousness of my own that comes from the law*? Alec Motyer calls this a "do-it-yourself righteousness."²² It's confidence in self's ability to live according to the law of God. I found helpful a few thoughts from Motyer this week on this kind of pseudo-righteousness. He wrote, "Even if we ever did attain such an unbroken record, we have still to maintain it until the judgment day."²³ Further, he writes, "We could never be certain that our prejudiced and partial self-knowledge was as penetrating as his holy scrutiny."²⁴ In other words, there's no way we could know whether we were skewing the evidence in our favor. And even if we weren't, we'd have to be sure not to take a single misstep, or exhibit one shred of bias, until the day of judgment.

Works-righteousness is not only a scam, as I mentioned last week, it's terrifying. Rightly seen, the standard is too high.²⁵ Paul says that being *found in Him* is characterized by *not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law*.

The righteousness he speaks of in v. 9 is a mutually exclusive righteousness, *but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith*.

Paul writes that this righteousness *comes through faith*²⁶ and *depends on faith*. Paul wrote, just moments prior, that the true people of God put no confidence in the flesh and glory in Another (Phil. 3:3). This righteousness depends on faith in Someone else.

But we know that faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed. So, Paul writes, v. 9, *but that which comes through faith in Christ*. I won't speak for you, but while we've spent the last year and a half or so in the Gospel of Luke, I've not thought one single time, "This Gospel reads sort of like my biography. These are the things I would naturally do in this or that situation." No, reading about the Christ is to read about everything you wish you'd done. Faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed. This righteousness isn't about what you've accomplished; it's about what Someone else has.

I read an article on Gregg Popovich this week.²⁷ If you don't know him, he's the winningest basketball coach in NBA history. But the article wasn't about basketball, it was about his love for fine restaurants. And his love for building his team's culture by enjoying extravagant meals together at these fine restaurants. Now, Coach Pop makes about 11 million a year. His players make a good bit of money too. So, he and the Spurs have built quite the reputation throughout NBA cities for these lavish meals, course after course, wine after wine, at the finest restaurants in town. When the Spurs are in town, restaurant managers sit by the phone. The article actually said, and I don't know

²² Alec Motyer, *Philippians*, BST, 163.

²³ *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁵ One theologian wrote, "... the harlot, the liar, and the murderer are short of it (God's glory) but so are you. Perhaps they stand at the bottom of a mine, and you are on the crest of an Alp; but you are as little able to touch the stars as they." Bishop Handley Moule, quoted in Grant Osborne, *Romans*, 95. I had to move this from the body to a footnote because Harlem Wilbanks jumped in line Friday. What gall!

²⁶ O'Brien has a different understanding of this clause, rendering it "the faithfulness of Christ," 398–399. Hellerman and Silva and many others disagree. I found Silva particularly helpful: "Ambiguous grammatical forms should be interpreted in the light of unambiguous ones," 161.

²⁷ http://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/26524600/secret-team-dinners-built-spurs-dynasty

what restaurant this was, that in 2017 Popovich left a \$5,000 tip on an \$800-dollar meal in Memphis. So, when the whole team goes—20 or more millionaires—you can imagine the size of the bill. If Pop calls Andrew Michael’s on a Friday night for a reservation, you better hope you didn’t have one.

Well, this article mentioned another guy who loved food and fine restaurants. This guy owns a winery in California. And one night, he calls one of Wolfgang Puck’s flagship restaurants in Beverly Hills, asking to change the time of his reservation. The hostess responded, “That’s going to be very difficult, but what’s your name?” Now, he’s definitely not the NBA coach, but this guy’s name happens to also be Greg²⁸ Popovich. So, he answers her question honestly, saying his name. The hostess immediately responds, “Not a problem.” Though this Greg faces the faces of disappointment when the hostess and the servers eventually figure it out, there’s no restaurant he can’t get in to at a moment’s notice. He gets the best tables, the most impeccable of service, at any place he desires.

And he’s not earned any of it.

I can affirm works—righteousness, so long as we’re talking about the works of Christ. This is what Paul means in v. 9, *to be found in Him*. This *righteousness from God* depends on faith in what He’s done. And in that righteousness being credited to our account.

Those former things might be loss. But we’ve gained. We’ve gained Christ. Motyer writes, “Gone are the exertions of law-keeping, gone the disciplines and asceticisms of legalism, gone the anxiety that having done everything we might not have done enough. We reach the goal not by the stairs but by the lift.”²⁹ Isaac Watts’ Philippians 3-inspired lyrics seem appropriate, “The best obedience of my hands dares not appear before Thy throne. But faith can answer Thy demands, by pleading what *my Lord* has done.”³⁰

This is knowing Christ. It’s knowing His righteousness in your place. This is the kind of truth that grants peace, the kind of truth that gives joy in prison, in pain, or in whatever circumstance one faces.

If I’m going to know Christ, I want to know *this*.

3. Knowing the Resurrected Christ’s Power (in us)

Gordon Fee writes, “To be ‘found in Christ’ positionally becomes the basis for ‘knowing Christ’ relationally.”³¹ What follows is the purpose of “gaining Christ” and being “found in Him.”³² Verse 10: *That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death*. While verse 9 is largely about our salvation, or justifying union with Christ, verse 10 is about our ongoing relationship with Him, or our sanctification.

Paul writes, v. 10, *that I may know him*. You might ask, “Didn’t Paul already know Christ?” Well, of course he did, in part. I’d imagine you’d never say, “I know *everything* about this or that friend, or my spouse, or even this or that subject.” Paul knew Christ. But He knew enough to know he’d not scratched the surface. F. F. Bruce notes, “He found an inexhaustible fullness of knowledge, but there was always more of Him to know.”³³ It was surpassing worth to know Him; and to know Him *more* surpassed all else.

²⁸ 2 rather than 3 “G”s.

²⁹ Motyer, 166; I nearly got saved *again* reading that sentence this week.

³⁰ Isaac Watts, “No More My God.”

³¹ Fee, 314.

³² O’Brien, 401.

³³ F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, 402.

In what ways would Paul talk about knowing Him here? He mentions two primary ways, neither of which should be separated from the other.³⁴

First, it's to know Him *and the power of his resurrection*. When Paul writes power, he means constructive or restorative power.³⁵ We've heard about this kind of power for Easter upon Easter. We sang songs about it just moments ago: "Death in vain forbids Him rise."³⁶

To grasp this power, we need to think of death in the starkest of terms. Jesus wasn't in the ICU. He was no longer breathing. On a Friday, His heart stopped beating. No pulse. Before and after that Friday, millions of people have experienced this same end.

But that's where the similarities end. Early on Sunday morning, His lungs filled with air. His heart beat; blood began pumping through His veins. He stands up. And He walks out of the tomb. It's been sung, "He took one breath, and put death to death."³⁷

Does Paul mean *this* kind of power? Absolutely. Our hearts weren't on life-support. They were dead. In the gospel, Christ breathes into us life.

But, here, Paul's asserting that this same kind of power that saved us also enables our growth as Christians. Peter O'Brien describes this as, "the life-giving power of God, the power which was manifested in raising Christ from the dead, and which he now manifests in the new life which the Christian receives from the risen Christ."³⁸ In Ephesians 1, Paul prays this same thing, that the church might know, *what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead*.

That's great news. Maybe you're saying, "I'm with you, Paul, I want to know that power." But that's not *all* Paul says. We might be tempted to skim the next phrase, or whisper it when we pray, v. 10, *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings*. The power of the resurrection *and* the sharing His sufferings cannot, and should not, be separated from one another. We can't à la carte Philippians 3. To know Christ means to know both.³⁹

So, what's Paul mean here by sharing, participating in, or fellowshiping with *His sufferings*?⁴⁰ Paul was no stranger to suffering. He currently sat in prison on Christ's account. These Christians in Philippi certainly would know about, or have heard of, Paul being flogged in Philippi in Acts 16. These sufferings he mentions might include his imprisonments, the beatings, the hardships, and even the mental anguish.⁴¹ He'd lost all things.

Now, we might not suffer to the degree Paul does, but that doesn't mean we're excluded from this.⁴² I talked with Pastor Phil this week a bit about this verse, in particular the sufferings. He and I discussed how suffering is often just the overwhelming realities of living in a fallen world. The effects of Genesis 3 are ever before us. It might not be a physical prison, but this or that circumstance feels like chains. If Paul—with his difficulties—can say knowing Christ includes *sharing his sufferings*, we too ought to consider ours in that light.

But what's interesting is the order here. Normally, the suffering comes *before* the power of the resurrection. Friday came before Sunday, one might say. But Paul's implying something different

³⁴ Regarded "as a single entity," O'Brien, 403.

³⁵ Hellerman, 190.

³⁶ Charles Wesley, "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"

³⁷ Andrew Peterson, "His Heart Beats"

³⁸ O'Brien, 404.

³⁹ Silva, 163.

⁴⁰ It's not likely that he's referring to Christ's death on the cross. O'Brien, 405.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 406.

⁴² "Believers who do not experience the perils to which Paul refers need not think they have been left out. . . . There is a sense in which they continue to bear the death of their Lord—in their spiritual disappointments and frustrations, in their struggles with the prince of darkness." Silva, 165.

here. He's connected the two inextricably. But, in ordering them this way, he's saying that the former enables endurance in the latter. Again, Peter O'Brien, "Fellowship in suffering, the ability to endure suffering for Christ's sake, becomes possible and rich in meaning *because of* the power of his resurrection."⁴³ Knowing Christ means to know the life-giving power of His resurrection *as we share* in His sufferings. It is knowing, and experiencing, the former enabling perseverance in the latter. In the midst of difficulty, God's given us resurrection power to endure.

Then, Paul details the purpose behind it all, v. 10, *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death*. This is a continuous verb,⁴⁴ meaning *becoming like him* is something ongoing in the life of the believer. And it's a passive verb, meaning that it's being done in us by Someone else. You might think of Philippians 1:6: *He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ*. Or you might think of 2:13: *For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure*. Paul's been beating this drum throughout the letter. And as he would say, *to write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you* (Phil. 3:1).

But what does this phrase mean—*becoming like Him in His death*—in regard to knowing Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the sharing of His sufferings? How is all this changing me?

If we're going to be like Christ, or know Him, this means death. It's death to self. And that's not a one-time event.⁴⁵ Jesus would call this taking up your cross daily (Lk. 9). The purpose Paul notes here is this: as we take up this cross, dying to self, sharing in Christ's sufferings, *but strengthened* by resurrection power, we're *becoming like Him*; God is making us like His Son.⁴⁶ Selfish Matt is dying; and Someone else's life is slowly, but surely, transforming me. God uses the power that raised His Son from the dead, in the midst of our suffering, for this purpose.

My wife is 34 and a half weeks pregnant. With our first-born son, she delivered at this point: 34 weeks and a few days. He was just a bit over four pounds and therefore spent a number of days in the NICU, where the Lord both graciously provided for us and taught us much. And one of those lessons seared in my mind as a first-time father was the day the nurses struggled to get an IV in his tiny arms. At his size, his veins were nearly imperceptible. So, the nurses—who were amazing—tried a couple times in each arm, to no avail. As you might imagine, this was challenging to watch. Your heart is outside your chest in unprecedented ways.

Eventually, they had to give up on putting an IV in his arm. And they wanted my help. "Here," they said, "hold him down while we put the IV in his scalp." So, he's just met me a few days prior. All I want him to know at this point is that he can trust me and that I love him. But, in these moments, he's having to undergo this. And because I'm the one holding him down, he's glaring at me as if I've betrayed him. And my heart is rent. He's looking at me, thinking, "What are you doing?" And I'm choking it back, thinking, "I want you to live."

The lesson for me that day was this: there *was* purpose, whether or not he saw it in the moment.

Paul's not minimizing the reality of life in a fallen world. You *will* suffer. But he's also assuring: there is power for it in the present. In fact, it's the kind of power that raised Christ from the dead. Further, there is purpose. To know Him, in His death and resurrection power, is to become like Him.

⁴³ O'Brien, 404; emphasis mine.

⁴⁴ Present Passive Participle

⁴⁵ One man notes, "Union with Christ in his death is both a past event and an ongoing experience." Hellerman, 191.

⁴⁶ O'Brien, 410.

4. Knowing the Resurrected Christ's Resurrection

Paul's written about our salvation in the past, our growth in knowledge of the Lord in the present, and he won't conclude this passage without pointing to the future.

Verse 11: *that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead*. Paul's talking about death, yet again. This is literally, "out from among dead ones."⁴⁷ He's not afraid to talk about death, because of the glorious gospel promises overwhelming it. It's not merely that in this life we can experience the power of the resurrection as we face suffering; it's that one day we will be delivered from suffering itself as we come to know the resurrected Christ's resurrection. In us.

We often think of this in terms of a new body, as if finally, I'll be able to run like I used to. And that's absolutely true. We'll be delivered from the physical pains in this life, finally and forever. But it's not just that. The mind that can't seem to focus, or can't seem to think on things that are true, will be new. The affections, often lured by lesser loves, will finally be as they should be.

Then, no longer inhibited by our divided hearts or by this broken world, we won't just know Him in part. Knowing the power of His resurrection, when *we're* resurrected, will enable us to know Him fully (1 Cor. 13).

Conclusion⁴⁸

This same author, the Apostle Paul, would write in more detail about this resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. There, he wrote this, *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive* (1 Cor. 15:21). In that context, Paul employs an image of agriculture, describing Christ as the firstfruits of all who have fallen asleep, or died (15:20). Maybe that agricultural image doesn't connect with you, but the firstfruits at harvest foreshadowed the soon arrival of everything else. You observe something similar to this nearly every March, as the first blooms of spring appear. That glimpse of color anticipates what's to come. Paul writes, *Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ* (1 Cor. 15:23).

Pascal imagined the human condition as being a condemned prisoner on death row. Each day those prisoners awoke, they'd lost one of the guys on the hall. In each person's death, their own is foreshadowed. Pascal wrote of those in chains, "Those remaining see their own condition in that of their fellows, and looking at each other with grief and despair *await their turn*."⁴⁹

Matt McCullough ends his book writing this, "Think of Paul's image (in 1 Corinthians 15) as a gloriously redeemed version of Pascal's nightmare."⁵⁰ The gospel says—Philippians 3 says—that we're not merely looking at condemned prisoners awaiting their sentencing; we're looking to Christ as the one foreshadowing our future. If we've died with Him, we will also live with Him. His victory will become ours. So, I'll quote Matt one more time, "We set our eyes on Jesus. And looking at each other . . . with hope, we simply await our turn."⁵¹

If we're not dying, there's no need to even care about resurrection. But we are. So, we do more than merely care about the resurrection, we rejoice in it.

⁴⁷ O'Brien, 415.

⁴⁸ I'm obviously indebted to Matt McCullough, *Remember Death*, for much of this, 182–183.

⁴⁹ Pascal, *Pensees*, 165.

⁵⁰ McCullough, 183.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 183.