



Will I still be me?

February 15, 2026

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BIG IDEA – Heaven is not losing your identity, personality and character; it is finally becoming who you were meant to fully be in Christ all along.

Scripture Focus – But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control. **Philippians 3:20-21 NLT**

SLIDE 2 DIGITAL NOTES!

ME

SLIDE 3 The illustrious life of a Coffee Tree. The fruit vs the seed.



SLIDE 4 The roasted seed



SLIDE 5 From seed to tree to fruit to seed - repeat



SLIDE 7 We know how the cycle works – even in our human bodies!



From embryo to baby to child to adult to death. We don't come back here as humans, but we do arise to new.

Jesus said,

SLIDE 9



"Don't be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, and they will rise again. Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment." John 5:28-29

And the Apostle Paul wrote,

SLIDE 10

"I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." Acts 24:15 NIV



SLIDE 12 DIG DEEPER: [The Real Love of Valentine's Day](#) - James Emery White

Saturday was Valentine's Day, marked by many with romantic dates, gifts of flowers and chocolates, and expressions of love to our significant other. Many forget that it is, more accurately, Saint Valentine's Day (or the Feast of Saint Valentine). **Saint Valentine of Rome was a third-century Roman saint who is commemorated on February 14, the day he was martyred and buried. It has been honored that way since A.D. 496.**

WE

In our new series "Heaven's Here?" We talked about heaven being a real physical place, not as a destination, but a continued journey. Last week Robin spoke about heaven (the Kingdom of God is both here and coming) and how it will feel MORE normal and MORE like home than we realize.

SLIDE 14 This week we talk about – Will I still be me? Will I still be me in heaven?

I'd like to be onery and ask, "do you still want to be you?"

But my more pastoral self would ask, "what do you want to be in heaven?"

Because really, that's what this series is about!

What is our life really about here and what goes with us?

Our stuff? No.

Our personality? Yes.

Our character? Absolutely.

Our friends and family? That depends on them, not us!

As much as we want to know the details of what we will be in heaven, God gives us pictures of who we are now, what He wants to do in our lives and through our lives now and what awaits for us in the new earth and new heaven.

GOD

The promise of a NEW BODY is captivating, but it's also been exploited out of context!

Let's look at what the Bible says about our physical body and what happens when we get to heaven.



SLIDE 16 First let's talk about what happens to our body.

SLIDE 17 1) Resurrection is transformation, not replacement. This life is the "seed stage." Same you, same story, but raised imperishable, glorious, strong.

SLIDE 18 "What dies is weakness and decay, not your personhood."



SLIDE 20 Paul spends quite a bit of real estate talking about resurrection to the churches in Corinth. Why?

One, they could handle it. Two, it was critical for us to understand the facts and reality of resurrection because it was the living proof of Christ's resurrection and how important it is to our salvation.



SLIDE 22 DIG DEEPER: Corinth was the perfect place to talk about resurrection!

- People could accept the **immortality of the soul or some spiritual afterlife**, but the idea of a bodily resurrection was often seen as crude or impossible. Very similar cultural thoughts exists today!
- **They were fascinated with "spiritual" experiences and status.**
- **Their ethics were a mess, and resurrection is a body-answer.** Corinth struggles with sexual immorality, lawsuits, and using "freedom" as **cover for sin**.



SLIDE 23 Paul explains why it is important, not just to understand it, but to believe it.

1 Corinthians 5:16-18 You don't believe in resurrection? You say "**no resurrection**" Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is useless and we are still guilty of our sins.

! The Corinthians must have pressed Paul about their concern over their physical body, because Paul hits hard with his answer.

SLIDE 25 But someone may ask, "How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?" What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed. Similarly there are different kinds of flesh—one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. **1 Corinthians 15:35-39 NLT**

Paul explains that although it seems complicated to understand it's not!

It is simple because we are completely surrounded by this cycle of life and death, even down to the science of seeds!

We don't have to be **pomologists** (people who study seeds) to figure out how life works.

We plant a fruit seed, it literally dies in the ground, but comes out as fruit tree! Viola – there it is... **transformation.**

Maybe it's harder because we don't see human life as it really is – we came from just a tiny "seed" as well! Evolution has messed with our brains and blinded us from the miracle of all life who designed everything.

! Paul then spends even more time explaining what happens when our physical bodies die.

SLIDE 27 It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. **Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die**, but they will be raised to live forever. **Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but**

they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. 1 Corinthians 15:42-43 NLT

Are bodies are changed, but we are completely and totally recognizable, we don't die and then show up looking like someone else! We have no idea if your bald, you'll show up with hair or if I'm fat, I'll show up skinny. I also don't know if we all show up looking like we are all 33 years old!

When Jesus showed up after his resurrection, no one said, "wow, Jesus, you look fantastic since I saw you last, love the new look...what have you done with your hair?" Jesus clearly kept his physical appearance, even his scars, his voice, and his mannerisms – [John 20:20](#)

SLIDE 29 They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies. The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. **Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man. 1 Corinthians 15:44-49 NLT**



Paul even writes that this transformation takes place in an instance!

SLIDE 31 But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! **It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.** For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. **Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"** For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. **So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work**

enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless. **1 Corinthians 15:51-58 NLT**

! Paul reminds us again in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians, a famous verse that is amazing to memorize,

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. **2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV**

The future isn't floating; it's a real, lived reality with Christ at the center of everything — worship, community, identity, and purpose. The miracle of the coming world is not make-believe; it's more real than we can even imagine.



SLIDE 33 Now let's talk about what happens to our soul!

The essence of who we really are?

SLIDE 34 2) We are already a citizen-in-training for heaven.

Paul tells us in Philippians 3 that we belong there now, and our body will be refit for it later.

That means our "heaven life" starts here as allegiance: living under Christ's rule before you see the new world in full.

SLIDE 35 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. **He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own**, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control. **Philippians 3:20-21 NLT**

Paul does not write, "we will be citizens of heaven," he writes, "we are citizens of heaven."

Paul is speaking of a place of belonging, of commitment and an allegiance.

I would say, I was born in Long Beach, and live in Santa Ana, but eventually I'll be heading back home!

Heaven is our heart homeland by adoption; resurrection is the future moment when our body will match our citizenship.

Philippi was the perfect place to understand this concept.

Philippi was a Roman colony—many people lived in Macedonia while holding Roman citizenship. Their laws, identity, benefits, and loyalty were tied to Rome even they weren't technically in Rome.

As a believer in Jesus, God has already transferred us into Christ's kingdom,

"For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son." **Colossians 1:13 NLT**

God has adopted us as his child,

"So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."" **Romans 8:15 NLT**

And our name is written in the book of life,

"But don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven." **Luke 10:20 NLT & Philippians 4:3**

It also means, as citizens of heaven now, we are on mission as ambassadors for Christ,

"So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"" **2 Corinthians 5:20 NLT**

SLIDE 37 3) Life today, here, is the ripening season; what we become now carries forward.

Our soul becomes a continuation of what we do here, what God does in us and through us here. James says it's this waiting that

produces maturity which he calls **a valuable harvest – the “precious fruit of the earth.”**

SLIDE 38 “Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord’s return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.” **James 5:7-8 NLT**

After James roasts the rich, he quickly shifts to Jesus’ return. **Asking the church to be patient. He, along with the other New Testament writers absolutely believed Jesus would return in that first century. Why? Because the world, the culture surrounding them at that time, was in total chaos!** So much was shifting, and it was all happening so fast. Every “sign of the times,” was signaling that Christ’s return was imminent. **But Jesus did not return then! And, he has not returned yet!!**

James makes such an **interesting comparison to why we must be patient. He uses a common agricultural illustration to help us understand why patience is necessary.** Because the farmer is, thus we are, **eager to see the valuable harvest to ripen.** The NLT translation really had me thinking that James was referring to the salvation of human souls when it says, “valuable harvest.” But, looking at the direct Greek translation, James isn’t writing about souls that need saving, **he’s writing about our own spiritual growth and maturity!**

James is saying that Eschatology (studying end times) should drive our ethics – our moral behaviors, not our escape plans.

Life here isn’t disposable, even though it’s brief, it should be intentional to our formation of Christ’s character. **The act of waiting patiently is active, not at all passive about our growth.**

Christian hope has never been escapism, it’s faithfulness! And suffering doesn’t become meaningless. **Suffering becomes the milieu, the soil where we grow.** Jesus’ coming is God keeping His promises of justice and completion. **It’s not the abandonment of this world, it’s the fulfillment!**

Here's a great thought not of my own, "James doesn't say, 'Hang on until you get out of here.' He says, 'Because Jesus is coming, let God grow something in you here; something worth harvesting.'"

Our own soul's development is the valuable harvest. **We feel like the "parousia," the coming of the Lord, should be seen as a rescue operation, but it's really culmination of a celebration,** like the bridegroom arriving for the wedding of his beloved.

In James' mind, we are the farmer and our character, our maturity, is the valuable harvest ripening.

US

SLIDE 39 What goes and what dies?

We do know there is no decay, no disease, no disability, and no death.

We also know the things about us that will not make it through death and resurrection to a new body and new reality:

- Sin and disordered desires don't make it through.
- Love, joy, meaningful work, service, worship, relationship, and recognition pass through the veil as simple as going down dry, under the water of baptism and rising wet, but completely changed.

We will not lose "personhood," but we will lose whatever in us that was formerly meshed & tangled with sin, insecurity, compulsion, vanity, pride, rivalry, meanness and unforgiveness.

Will I be a blank-slate, floating soul? **No.**
Will I be exactly the same as now? **Also no.**

The Bible promises us the **continuity of our identity** along with a **total healing transformation of everything broken.**

In other words, you will be the same you, resurrected with **no loss of self, only the loss of the curse!**

SLIDE 40 REFLECTIONS

- We are citizens of another kingdom **now**, not just someday.

- What we do **now** matters more than we realize, who we are becoming **now** is who we will be in heaven.

Because, where we go, Jesus shows up to shine through us – even in the darkest, miserable experiences of what life has dished out.

SLIDE 41 APPLICATION

“Heaven’s Here?” Will I still be me?

In heaven we do not disappear, we become our truest self in a resurrected body, fully alive in Christ.

Why it counts on a corruptible earth!

- **The enemy is not just after our church attendance. He is after the kind of person we become forever.**
- **God is forming us as sons and daughters** who will reign with Christ in a real Kingdom.
- **The choices we make NOW** are part of that battle.
- Our habits, our holiness, our obedience, and our suffering, **All of it shapes who we will be on the New Earth.**
- **“We are not just racing to eternity.” We are becoming the kind of person who will either love heaven or hate it.**
- **The battle is over who we will be, not just where we will go.**

ME

- **Corporate prayer for God to check us before we wreck us.**
 - “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.” **Psalm 139:23-24 NKJV**
- **Reciting the Lord’s Prayer together:**
 - “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” **Matthew 6:9-13 ESV**

SCRIPTURES

John 5:28-29 NLT ON SCREEN

Don't be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, and they will rise again. **Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment.**

Acts 24:15 NIV ON SCREEN

I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

1 Corinthians 5:16-18 ON SCREEN

You don't believe in resurrection? You say "**no resurrection**" Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is useless and we are still guilty of our sins.

1 Corinthians 15:35-39 NLT ON SCREEN

But someone may ask, "How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?" What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed. Similarly there are different kinds of flesh—one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.

1 Corinthians 15:42-43 NLT ON SCREEN

It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength.

1 Corinthians 15:44-49 NLT ON SCREEN

They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies. The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.

2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Luke 9:28-36 NLT

About eight days later Jesus took Peter, John, and James up on a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly, two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared and began talking with Jesus. They were glorious to see. And they

were speaking about his exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem. Peter and the others had fallen asleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with him. **As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave, Peter, not even knowing what he was saying, blurted out, "Master, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."** But even as he was saying this, a cloud overshadowed them, and terror gripped them as the cloud covered them. Then a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him." When the voice finished, Jesus was there alone. They didn't tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 NLT ON SCREEN

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. **For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.** Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

Philippians 3:20-21 NLT ON SCREEN

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

James 5:7-8 NLT – A Valuable Harvest ON SCREEN

Dear brothers and sisters, **be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen.** You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.

Psalms 139:23-24 NKJV

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DIG DEEPER NOTES



[The Real Love of Valentine's Day](#) - James Emery White

Saturday was Valentine's Day, marked by many with romantic dates, gifts of flowers and chocolates, and expressions of love to our significant other. Many forget that it is, more accurately, Saint Valentine's Day (or the Feast of Saint Valentine). **Saint Valentine of Rome was a third-century Roman saint who is commemorated on February 14, the day he was martyred and buried. It has been honored that way since A.D. 496.**

So why do we associate his day with love?

The answer is surprisingly shallow. It has nothing to do with his life; no great story of unrequited love or blessings he gave on some young couple. As the New Catholic Encyclopedia notes, the "late medieval custom of sending love notes on Saint Valentine's Day stems probably from the belief that it marked the mating season of birds." And we've been using his commemoration in similar fashion ever since.

Not exactly fodder for a Hallmark Channel movie.

Yet we should honor the day. **Valentine became a saint due to his ministry to persecuted Christians in Rome. He's honored not simply by Catholics, but also Anglicans, Lutherans and even the Eastern Orthodox Church (though for the latter, his day lands on July 6). He should be honored by all Christ followers.**

Though clearly in the camp of hagiography [biography of a saint], I still love the story associated with Valentine who, while under house arrest, was asked about the validity of Jesus. **A judge decided to test Valentine and his faith by bringing the saint to the judge's adopted blind daughter. If Valentine could restore the girl's sight, the judge would release him. Valentine laid his hands on the girl's eyes, and instantly her sight was restored.**

The judge, stunned and amazed, asked what he should do now. Valentine told him to destroy all of his idols, fast for three days and then be baptized. Not only did the judge follow this prescription, but he also freed all the imprisoned Christians under his jurisdiction.

Another slice of hagiography – again one that I can't help but be attracted to – is how he died. Valentine was arrested for the (still) daring act of evangelism and was sent for trial to Claudius Gothicus, the emperor of Rome. **When Valentine attempted to evangelize even the emperor, he was told to either renounce his faith or be beaten with clubs and then beheaded.**

Valentine refused to stop making Christ known.

He was then executed on February 14.

Our Valentine's Day.

So send your expressions of love. But take a moment or two to go deeper than Post-it notes on the mirror, Godiva chocolates and candlelit dinners, and remember the love that coursed through the veins of Valentine himself that reverberates to this day.

Not the love of a man toward a woman, or even less the mating of two birds, but rather the love of a man for his God.

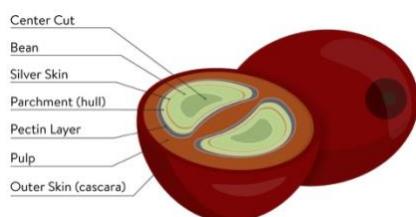


Coffee Fruit: Everything You Need to Know about Coffee Cherries

For most of us, [coffee](#) is all about the bean, but there's so much more to this beloved plant than what ends up in the cup. Coffee fruit, also known as coffee cherries, surrounds the beans we grind and brew, offering unique flavors, nutritional benefits, and sustainable uses. In this guide, we explain what coffee cherries are, discuss their uses, and share where to find quality coffee products that transcend the bean.

What are coffee cherries?

Coffee cherries are small, rounded fruits that grow on the coffee plant (genus *Coffea*), which is typically found in tropical regions worldwide, including parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These fruits start as green berries and, as they ripen, turn to vibrant shades of red, yellow, pink, or even purple, depending on the coffee variety.



Each cherry generally contains two coffee beans encased in a pulpy layer and a thin outer skin. The cherry's pulp surrounds the beans, and this is where coffee plants concentrate their sugars and nutrients, making the fruit itself a source of antioxidants, fiber, and vitamins. Coffee cherries

were traditionally discarded during processing, but recent interest in their

nutritional properties has led to a rise in their use as a sustainable, health-focused ingredient.

Can you eat coffee cherries?

Yes, coffee cherries are edible, although their taste might surprise you if you're expecting something similar to the flavor of brewed coffee. While coffee cherries are not related to traditional cherries (from the Rosaceae family, which includes fruits like plums and apricots), they belong to the Rubiaceae family, known for flowering plants. Coffee cherries are slightly sweet, with flavors often compared to watermelon or red currant. While the pulp is safe to eat, it's somewhat fibrous and less commonly consumed fresh. Instead, the cherries are typically dried or processed for different uses.

Dried coffee cherries, known as "cascara," have become popular for making cascara tea, a light, fruity beverage with a subtle sweetness and mild caffeine content. This drink is cherished in coffee-growing regions and has gained popularity internationally as both a hot and cold tea alternative. Cascara provides a unique way to experience the coffee plant's flavors beyond the roasted beans in your morning coffee.



Corinth was the perfect place to write about RESURRECTION

- **Some Corinthians were outright denying a future resurrection.** Paul says it plainly: "How can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Cor 15:12). Chapter 15 isn't abstract theology; it's a direct rebuttal.
- **Greek/Corinthian "body-negative" instincts.** In the wider Greco-Roman world, plenty of **people could accept the immortality of the soul or some spiritual afterlife, but the idea of a bodily resurrection was often seen as crude or impossible.** That cultural default would pressure Christians to "spiritualize" resurrection into something like "my spirit lives on."
- **They were fascinated with "spiritual" experiences and status.** Corinth was proud of wisdom, rhetoric, gifts, power, being impressive. That can easily drift into: "We're already living the higher life now," so a future, physical resurrection sounds unnecessary or unsophisticated. Paul keeps correcting their over-realized mindset (e.g., "already reigning," 4:8).
- **Their ethics were a mess, and resurrection is a body-answer.** Corinth struggles with sexual immorality, lawsuits, and using "freedom" as cover for sin. Paul repeatedly argues that what you do with your body matters because God made it, Christ redeemed it, and God will raise it (see the logic in chs. 6 and 15). If bodies don't have a future, bodily holiness feels optional.
- **The gospel itself was at stake.** Corinth liked "messages" that sounded wise and triumphant. Paul insists: if there's no resurrection, then Christ isn't raised, preaching is empty, faith is futile, sin still wins, and dead believers are lost (15:13–19). So he anchors them back to the core apostolic message.
- Corinth was "perfect" in the sense that it was the place where **the resurrection had to be defended on every front** at once: **doctrine, culture, spirituality, and ethics.**

