

CHAPTER 15

In this chapter the apostle treats of that great article of Christianity — the resurrection of the dead.

I. He establishes the certainty of our Saviour's resurrection (v. 1-11).

II. He, from this truth, sets himself to refute those who said, There is no resurrection of the dead (v. 12-19).

III. From our Saviour's resurrection he establishes the resurrection of the dead and confirms the Corinthians in the belief of it by some other considerations (v. 20-34).

IV. He answers an objection against this truth, and takes occasion thence to show what a vast change will be made in the bodies of believers at the resurrection (v. 35-50).

V. He informs us what a change will be made in those who shall be living at the sound of the last trumpet, and the complete conquest the just shall then obtain over death and the grave (v. 51-57). And,

VI. He sums up the argument with a very serious exhortation to Christians, to be resolved and diligent in their Lord's service, because they know they shall be so gloriously rewarded by him (v. 58).

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

It is the apostle's business in this chapter to assert and establish the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which some of the Corinthians flatly denied, v. 12. Whether they turned this doctrine into allegory, as did Hymeneus and Philetus, by saying it was already past (¹ Timothy 2:17, 18), and several of the ancient heretics, by making it mean no more than a changing of their course of life; or whether they rejected it as absurd, upon principles of reason and science; it seems they denied it in the proper sense. And they disowned a future state of recompences, by denying the

resurrection of the dead. Now that heathens and infidels should deny this truth does not seem so strange; but that Christians, who had their religion by revelation, should deny a truth so plainly discovered is surprising, especially when it is a truth of such importance. It was time for the apostle to confirm them in this truth, when the staggering of their faith in this point was likely to shake their Christianity; and they were yet in great danger of having their faith staggered. He begins with an epitome or summary of the gospel, what he had preached among them, namely, the death and resurrection of Christ. Upon this foundation the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is built. Note, Divine truths appear with greatest evidence when they are looked upon in their mutual connection. The foundation may be strengthened, that the superstructure may be secured. Now concerning the gospel observe,

I. What a stress he lays upon it (v. 1, 2): *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached to you.*

1. It was what he constantly preached. His word was not yea and nay: he always preached the same gospel, and taught the same truth. He could appeal to his hearers for this. Truth is in its own nature invariable; and the infallible teachers of divine truth could never be at variance with themselves or one another. The doctrine which Paul had heretofore taught, he still taught.

2. It was what they had received; they had been convinced of the faith, believed it in their hearts, or at least made profession of doing so with their mouths. It was no strange doctrine. It was that very gospel in which, or by which, they had hitherto stood, and must continue to stand. If they gave up this truth, they left themselves no ground to stand upon, no footing in religion. Note, The doctrine of Christ's death and resurrection is at the foundation of Christianity. Remove this foundation, and the whole fabric falls, all our hopes for eternity sink at once. And it is by holding this truth firmly that Christians are made to stand in a day of trial, and kept faithful to God.

3. It was that alone by which they could hope for salvation (v. 2), for there is *no salvation in any other name; no name given under heaven by which we may be saved, but by the name of Christ.* And there is no salvation in his name, but upon supposition of his death and resurrection. These are the saving truths of our holy religion. The crucifixion of our Redeemer and his

conquest over death are the very source of our spiritual life and hopes. Now concerning these saving truths observe,

(1.) They must be retained in mind, they must be held fast (so the word is translated, ^{<3923>}Hebrews 10:23): *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith.* Note, The saving truths of the gospel must be fixed in our mind, revolved much in our thoughts, and maintained and held fast to the end, if we would be saved. They will not save us, if we do not attend to them, and yield to their power, and continue to do so to the end. *He only that endureth to the end shall be saved,* ^{<4022>}Matthew 10:22.

(2.) We believe in vain, unless we continue and persevere in the faith of the gospel. We shall be never the better for a temporary faith; nay, we shall aggravate our guilt by relapsing into infidelity. And in vain is it to profess Christianity, or our faith in Christ, if we deny the resurrection; for this must imply and involve the denial of his resurrection; and, take away this, you make nothing of Christianity, you leave nothing for faith or hope to fix upon.

II. Observe what this gospel is, on which the apostle lays such stress. It was that doctrine which he had received, and delivered to them, *en protois* — *among the first, the principal.* It was a doctrine of the first rank, a most necessary truth, That Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and rose again: or, in other words, that *he was delivered for our offences and rose again for our justification* (^{<4025>}Romans 4:25), that he was offered in sacrifice for our sins, and rose again, to show that he had procured forgiveness for them, and was accepted of God in this offering. Note, Christ's death and resurrection are the very sum and substance of evangelical truth. Hence we derive our spiritual life now, and here we must find our hopes of everlasting life hereafter.

III. Observe how this truth is confirmed,

1. By Old-Testament predictions. He died for our sins, according to the scriptures; he was buried, and rose from the dead, according to the scriptures, according to the scripture-prophecies, and scripture-types. Such prophecies as ^{<3960>}Psalms 16:10; ^{<2504>}Isaiah 53:4-6; ^{<2095>}Daniel 9:26, 27; ^{<3662>}Hosea 6:2. Such scripture-types as Jonah (^{<4024>}Matthew 12:4), as Isaac, who is expressly said by the apostle to have been *received from the dead in a figure,* ^{<3819>}Hebrews 11:19. Note, It is a great confirmation of our faith of the gospel to see how it corresponds with ancient types and prophecies.

2. By the testimony of many eye-witnesses, who saw Christ after he had risen from the dead. He reckons up five several appearances, beside that to himself. He *was seen of Cephas, or Peter, then of the twelve*, called so, though Judas was no longer among them, because this was their usual number; then he was *seen of above five hundred brethren at once*, many of whom were living when the apostle wrote this epistle, though some had fallen asleep. This was in Galilee, ^{<418>}Matthew 28:10. After that, he was seen of James singly, and then by all the apostles when he was taken up into heaven. This was on mount Olivet, ^{<24>}Luke 24:50. Compare ^{<40>}Acts 1:2, 5-7. Note, How uncontrollably evident was Christ's resurrection from the dead, when so many eyes saw him at so many different times alive, and when he indulged the weakness of one disciple so far as to let him handle him, to put his resurrection out of doubt! And what reason have we to believe those who were so steady in maintaining this truth, though they hazarded all that was dear to them in this world, by endeavouring to assert and propagate it! Even Paul himself was last of all favoured with the sight of him. It was one of the peculiar offices of an apostle to be a witness of our Saviour's resurrection (^{<248>}Luke 24:48); and, when Paul was called to the apostolical office, he was made an evidence of this sort; the Lord Jesus appeared to him by the way to Damascus, ^{<497>}Acts 9:17. Having mentioned this favour, Paul takes occasion from it to make a humble digression concerning himself. He was highly favoured of God, but he always endeavoured to keep up a mean opinion of himself, and to express it. So he does here, by observing,

(1.) That he was *one born out of due time* (v. 8), an abortive, *ektroma*, a child dead born, and out of time. Paul resembled such a birth, in the suddenness of his new birth, in that he was not matured for the apostolic function, as the others were, who had personal converse with our Lord. He was called to the office when such conversation was not to be had, he was out of time for it. He had not known nor followed the Lord, nor been formed in his family, as the others were, for this high and honourable function. This was in Paul's account a very humbling circumstance.

(2.) By owning himself inferior to the other apostles: *Not meet to be called an apostle*. The least, because the last of them; called latest to the office, and not worthy to be called an apostle, to have either the office or the title, because he had been *a persecutor of the church of God*, v. 9. Indeed, he tells us elsewhere that he was *not a whit behind the very chief apostles* (^{<415>}2 Corinthians 11:5) — for gifts, graces, service, and sufferings,

inferior to none of them. Yet some circumstances in his case made him think more meanly of himself than of any of them. Note, A humble spirit, in the midst of high attainments, is a great ornament to any man; it sets his good qualities off to much greater advantage. What kept Paul low in an especial manner was the remembrance of his former wickedness, his raging and destructive zeal against Christ and his members. Note, How easily God can bring a good out of the greatest evil! When sinners are by divine grace turned into saints, he makes the remembrance of their former sins very serviceable, to make them humble, and diligent, and faithful.

(3.) By ascribing all that was valuable in him to divine grace: *But by the grace of God I am what I am*, v. 10. It is God's prerogative to say, *I am that I am*; it is our privilege to be able to say, "By God's grace we are what we are." We are nothing but what God makes us, nothing in religion but what his grace makes us. All that is good in us is a stream from this fountain. Paul was sensible of this, and kept humble and thankful by this conviction; so should we. Nay, though he was conscious of his own diligence, and zeal, and service, so that he could say of himself, *the grace of God was not given him in vain, but he laboured more abundantly than they all*: he thought himself so much more the debtor to divine grace. *Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*. Note, Those who have the grace of God bestowed on them should take care that it be not in vain. They should cherish, and exercise, and exert, this heavenly principle. So did Paul, and therefore laboured with so much heart and so much success. And yet the more he laboured, and the more good he did, the more humble he was in his opinion of himself, and the more disposed to own and magnify the favour of God towards him, his free and unmerited favour. Note, A humble spirit will be very apt to own and magnify the grace of God. A humble spirit is commonly a gracious one. Where pride is subdued there it is reasonable to believe grace reigns.

After this digression, the apostle returns to his argument, and tells them (v. 11) that he not only preached the same gospel himself at all times, and in all places, but that all the apostles preached the same: *Whether it were they or I, so we preached, and so you believed*. Whether Peter, or Paul, or any other apostle, had converted them to Christianity, all maintained the same truth, told the same story, preached the same doctrine, and confirmed it by the same evidence. All agreed in this that Jesus Christ, and him crucified and slain, and then rising from the dead, was the very sum and substance of Christianity; and this all true Christians believe. All the apostles agreed

in this testimony; all Christians agree in the belief of it. By this faith they live. In this faith they die.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Having confirmed the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, the apostle goes on to refute those among the Corinthians who said there would be none: *If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* v. 12. It seems from this passage, and the course of the argument, there were some among the Corinthians who thought the resurrection an impossibility. This was a common sentiment among the heathens. But against this the apostle produces an incontestable fact, namely, the resurrection of Christ; and he goes on to argue against them from the absurdities that must follow from their principle. As,

I. *If there be (can be) no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not risen* (v. 13); and again, *"If the dead rise not, cannot be raised or recovered to life, then is Christ not raised,* v. 16. And yet it was foretold in ancient prophecies that he should rise; and it has been proved by multitudes of eye-witnesses that he had risen. And will you say, will any among you dare to say, that is not, cannot be, which God long ago said should be, and which is now undoubted matter of fact?"

II. It would follow hereupon that the preaching and faith of the gospel would be vain: *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith vain,* v. 14. This supposition admitted, would destroy the principal evidence of Christianity; and so,

1. Make preaching vain. *"We apostles should be found false witnesses of God; we pretend to be God's witnesses for truth, and to work miracles by his power in confirmation of it, and are all the while deceivers, liars for God, if in his name, and by power received from him, we go forth, and publish and assert a thing false in fact, and impossible to be true. And does not this make us the vainest men in the world, and our office and ministry the vainest and most useless thing in the world? What end could we propose to ourselves in undertaking this hard and hazardous service, if we*

knew our religion stood on no better foundation, nay, if we were not well assured of the contrary? What should we preach for? Would not our labour be wholly in vain? We can have no very favourable expectations in this life; and we could have none beyond it. If Christ be not raised, the gospel is a jest; it is chaff and emptiness.”

2. This supposition would make the faith of Christians vain, as well as the labours of ministers: *If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins* (v. 17), yet under the guilt and condemnation of sin, because it is through his death and sacrifice for sin alone that forgiveness is to be had. *We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,* Ephesians 1:7. No remission of sins is to be had but through the shedding of his blood. And had his blood been shed, and his life taken away, without ever being restored, what evidence could we have had that through him we should have justification and eternal life? Had he remained under the power of death, how could he have delivered us from its power? And how vain a thing is faith in him, upon this supposition! He must rise for our justification who was delivered for our sins, or in vain we look for any such benefit by him. There had been no justification nor salvation if Christ had not risen. And must not faith in Christ be vain, and of no signification, if he be still among the dead?

III. Another absurdity following from this supposition is that *those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished*. if there be no resurrection, they cannot rise, and therefore are lost, even those who have died in the Christian faith, and for it. It is plain from this that those among the Corinthians who denied the resurrection meant thereby a state of future retribution, and not merely the revival of the flesh; they took death to be the destruction and extinction of the man, and not merely of the bodily life; for otherwise the apostle could not infer the utter loss of those who slept in Jesus, from the supposition that they would never rise more or that they had no hopes in Christ after life; for they might have hope of happiness for their minds if these survived their bodies, and this would prevent the limiting of their hopes in Christ to this life only. “Upon supposition there is no resurrection in your sense, no after-state and life, then dead Christians are quite lost. How vain a thing were our faith and religion upon this supposition!” And this,

IV. Would infer that Christ's ministers and servants were *of all men most miserable*, as having *hope in him in this life only* (v. 19), which is another

absurdity that would follow from asserting no resurrection. Their condition who hope in Christ would be worse than that of other men. *Who hope in Christ.* Note, All who believe in Christ have hope in him; all who believe in him as a Redeemer hope for redemption and salvation by him; but if there be no resurrection, or state of future recompence (which was intended by those who denied the resurrection at Corinth), their hope in him must be limited to this life: and, if all their hopes in Christ lie within the compass of this life, they are in a much worse condition than the rest of mankind, especially at that time, and under those circumstances, in which the apostles wrote; for then they had no countenance nor protection from the rulers of the world, but were hated and persecuted by all men. Preachers and private Christians therefore had a hard lot if in this life only they had hope in Christ. Better be any thing than a Christian upon these terms; for in this world they are hated, and hunted, and abused, stripped of all worldly comforts and exposed to all manner of sufferings: they fare much harder than other men in this life, and yet have no further nor better hopes. And is it not absurd for one who believes in Christ to admit a principle that involves so absurd an inference? Can that man have faith in Christ who can believe concerning him that he will leave his faithful servants, whether ministers or others, in a worse state than his enemies? Note, It were a gross absurdity in a Christian to admit the supposition of no resurrection or future state. It would leave no hope beyond this world, and would frequently make his condition the worst in the world. Indeed, the Christian is by his religion crucified to this world, and taught to live upon the hope of another. Carnal pleasures are insipid to him in a great degree; and spiritual and heavenly pleasures are those which he affects and pants after. How sad is his case indeed, if he must be dead to worldly pleasures and yet never hope for any better!

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-34

THE RESURRECTION OF SAINTS

In this passage the apostle establishes the truth of the resurrection of the dead, the holy dead, the dead in Christ,

I. On the resurrection of Christ.

1. Because he is indeed *the first-fruits of those that slept*, v. 20. He has truly risen himself, and he has risen in this very quality and character, as the first-fruits of those who sleep in him. As he has assuredly risen, so in his resurrection there is as much an earnest given that the dead in him shall rise as there was that the Jewish harvest in general should be accepted and blessed by the offering and acceptance of the first-fruits. The whole lump was made holy by the consecration of the first-fruits (⁵¹¹⁶Romans 11:16), and the whole body of Christ, all that are by faith united to him, are by his resurrection assured of their own. As he has risen, they shall rise; just as the lump is holy because the first fruits are so. He has not risen merely for himself, but as head of the body, the church; and *those that sleep in him God will bring with him*, ⁵⁰⁴⁴1 Thessalonians 4:14. Note, Christ's resurrection is a pledge and earnest of ours, if we are true believers in him; because he has risen, we shall rise. We are a part of the consecrated lump, and shall partake of the acceptance and favour vouchsafed the first-fruits. This is the first argument used by the apostle in confirmation of the truth; and it is,

2. Illustrated by a parallel between the first and second Adam. For, since by man came death, it was every way proper that by man should come deliverance from it, or, which is all one, a resurrection, v. 21. And so, *as in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive*; as through the sin of the first Adam all men became mortal, because all derived from him the same sinful nature, so through the merit and resurrection of Christ shall all who are made to partake of the Spirit, and the spiritual nature, revive, and become immortal. All who die die through the sin of Adam; all who are raised, in the sense of the apostle, rise through the merit and power of Christ. But the meaning is not that, as all men died in Adam, so all men, without exception, shall be made alive in Christ; for the scope of the apostle's argument restrains the general meaning. Christ rose as the first-fruits; therefore *those that are Christ's* (v. 23) shall rise too. Hence it will not follow that all men without exception shall rise too; but it will fitly follow that all who thus rise, rise in virtue of Christ's resurrection, and so that their revival is owing to the man Christ Jesus, as the mortality of all mankind was owing to the first man; and so, as by man came death, by man came deliverance. Thus it seemed fit to the divine wisdom that, as the first Adam ruined his posterity by sin, the second Adam should raise his seed to a glorious immortality.

3. Before he leaves the argument he states that there will be an order observed in their resurrection. What that precisely will be we are nowhere told, but in the general only here that there will be order observed. Possibly those may rise first who have held the highest rank, and done the most eminent service, or suffered the most grievous evils, or cruel deaths, for Christ's sake. It is only here said that the first-fruits are supposed to rise first, and afterwards all who are Christ's, when he shall come again. Not that Christ's resurrection must in fact go before the resurrection of any of his, but it must be laid as the foundation: as it was not necessary that those who lived remote from Jerusalem must go thither and offer the first-fruits before they could account the lump holy, yet they must be set apart for this purpose, till they could be offered, which might be done at any time from pentecost till the feast of dedication. See Bishop Patrick on ^{<481D>}Numbers 24:2. The offering of the first-fruits was what made the lump holy; and the lump was made holy by this offering, though it was not made before the harvest was gathered in, so it were set apart for that end, and duly offered afterwards. So Christ's resurrection must, in order of nature, precede that of his saints, though some of these might rise in order of time before him. It is because he has risen that they rise. Note, Those that are Christ's must rise, because of their relation to him.

II. He argues from the continuance of the mediatorial kingdom till all Christ's enemies are destroyed, the last of which is death, v. 24-26. He has risen, and, upon his resurrection, was invested with sovereign empire, *had all power in heaven and earth put into his hands* (^{<418S>}Matthew 28:18), *had a name given him above every name, that every knee might bow to him, and every tongue confess him Lord.* ^{<5169>}Philippians 2:9-11. And the administration of this kingdom must continue in his hands till all opposing *power, and rule, and authority, be put down* (v. 24), *till all enemies are put under his feet* (v. 25), and *till the last enemy is destroyed*, which is death, v. 26.

1. This argument implies in it all these particulars: —

(1.) That our Saviour rose from the dead to have all power put into his hands, and have and administer a kingdom, as Mediator: *For this end he died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living,* ^{<5149>}Romans 14:9.

(2.) That this mediatorial kingdom is to have an end, at least as far as it is concerned in bringing his people safely to glory, and subduing all his and their enemies: *Then cometh the end*, v. 24.

(3.) That it is not to have an end till all opposing power be put down, and all enemies brought to his feet, v. 24, 25.

(4.) That, among other enemies, death must be destroyed (v. 26) or abolished; its powers over its members must be disannulled. Thus far the apostle is express; but he leaves us to make the inference that therefore the saints must rise, else death and the grave would have power over them, nor would our Saviour's kingly power prevail against the last enemy of his people and annul its power. When saints shall live again, and die no more, then, and not till then, will death be abolished, which must be brought about before our Saviour's mediatorial kingdom is delivered up, which yet must be in due time. The saints therefore shall live again and die no more. This is the scope of the argument; but,

2. The apostle drops several hints in the course of it which it will be proper to notice: as,

(1.) That our Saviour, as man and mediator between God and man, has a delegated royalty, a kingdom given: *All things are put under him, he excepted that did put all things under him*, v. 27. As man, all his authority must be delegated. And, though his mediation supposes his divine nature, yet as Mediator he does not so explicitly sustain the character of God, but a middle person between God and man, partaking of both natures, human and divine, as he was to reconcile both parties, God and man, and receiving commission and authority from God the Father to act in this office. The Father appears, in this whole dispensation, in the majesty and with the authority of God: the Son, made man, appears as the minister of the Father, though he is God as well as the Father. Nor is this passage to be understood of the eternal dominion over all his creatures which belongs to him as God, but of a kingdom committed to him as Mediator and God-man, and that chiefly after his resurrection, when, having overcome, he sat down with his Father on his throne, ^{<4121>}Revelation 3:21. Then was the prediction verified, *I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion* (^{<4116>}Psalms 2:6), placed him on his throne. This is meant by the phrase so frequent in the writings of the New Testament, of *sitting at the right hand of God* (^{<4169>}Mark 16:19; ^{<4134>}Romans 8:34; ^{<5011>}Colossians 3:1 etc.), *on the right hand of power* (^{<4142>}Mark 14:62; ^{<4226>}Luke 22:69), *on the right hand of the*

throne of God (^{381D}Hebrews 12:2), on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, (^{381E}Hebrews 8:1. Sitting down in this seat is taking upon him the exercise of his mediatorial power and royalty, which was done upon his ascension into heaven, (^{416B}Mark 16:19. And it is spoken of in scripture as a recompence made him for his deep humiliation and self-abasement, in becoming man, and dying for man the accursed death of the cross, (^{317D}Philippians 2:6-12. Upon his ascension, he was made head over all things to the church, had power given him to govern and protect it against all its enemies, and in the end destroy them and complete the salvation of all that believe in him. This is not a power appertaining to Godhead as such; it is not original and unlimited power, but power given and limited to special purposes. And though he who has it is God, yet, inasmuch as he is somewhat else besides God, and in this whole dispensation acts not as God, but as Mediator, not as the offended Majesty, but as one interposing in favour of his offending creatures, and this by virtue of his consent and commission who acts and appears always in that character, he may properly be said to have this power given him; he may reign as God, with power unlimited, and yet may reign as Mediator, with a power delegated, and limited to these particular purposes.

(2.) That this delegated royalty must at length *be delivered up to the Father*, from whom it was received (v. 24); for it is a power received for particular ends and purposes, a power to govern and protect his church till all the members of it be gathered in, and the enemies of it for ever subdued and destroyed (v. 25, 26), and when these ends shall be obtained the power and authority will not need to be continued. The Redeemer must reign till his enemies be destroyed, and the salvation of his church and people accomplished; and, when this end is attained, then will he deliver up the power which he had only for this purpose, though he may continue to reign over his glorified church and body in heaven; and in this sense it may notwithstanding be said that *he shall reign for ever and ever* (^{611B}Revelation 11:15), *that he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end* (^{413B}Luke 1:33), *that his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away*, (^{217A}Daniel 7:14. See also (^{304D}Micah 4:7.

(3.) The Redeemer shall certainly reign till the last enemy of his people be destroyed, till death itself be abolished, till his saints revive and recover perfect life, never to be in fear and danger of dying any more. He shall have all power in heaven and earth till then — *he who loved us, and gave*

himself for us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood — he who is so nearly related to us, and so much concerned for us. What support should this be to his saints in every hour of distress and temptation! *He is alive who was dead, and liveth for ever*, and doth reign, and will continue to reign, till the redemption of his people be completed, and the utter ruin of their enemies effected.

(4.) When this is done, *and all things are put under his feet, then shall the Son become subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*, v. 28. The meaning of this I take to be that then the man Christ Jesus, who hath appeared in so much majesty during the whole administration of his kingdom, shall appear upon giving it up to be a subject of the Father. Things are in scripture many times said *to be* when they are *manifested* and *made to appear*; and this delivering up of the kingdom will make it manifest that he who appeared in the majesty of the sovereign king was, during this administration, a subject of God. The glorified humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all the dignity and power conferred on it, was no more than a glorious creature. This will appear when the kingdom shall be delivered up; and it will appear to the divine glory, that God may be all in all, that the accomplishment of our salvation may appear altogether divine, and God alone may have the honour of it. Note, Though the human nature must be employed in the work of our redemption, yet God was all in all in it. *It was the Lord's doing and should be marvellous in our eyes*.

III. He argues for the resurrection, from the case of those who were baptized for the dead (v. 29): *What shall those do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they baptized for the dead? What shall they do if the dead rise not? What have they done? How vain a thing hath their baptism been! Must they stand by it, or renounce it? why are they baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not? hyper ton nekron*. But what is this baptism for the dead? It is necessary to be known, that the apostle's argument may be understood; whether it be only *argumentum ad hominem*, or *ad rem*; that is, whether it conclude for the thing in dispute universally, or only against the particular persons who were baptized for the dead. But who shall interpret this very obscure passage, which, though it consists of no more than three words, besides the articles, has had more than three times three senses put on it by interpreters? It is not agreed what is meant by baptism, whether it is to be taken in a proper or figurative sense, and, if in a proper sense, whether it is to be understood or Christian

baptism properly so called, or some other ablution. And as little is it agreed who are the dead, or in what sense the preposition *hyper* is to be taken. Some understand the dead of our Saviour himself; *vide* Whitby *in loc.* Why are persons baptized in the name of a dead Saviour, a Saviour who remains among the dead, if the dead rise not? But it is, I believe, and instance perfectly singular for *hoi nekroi* to mean no more than one dead person; it is a signification which the words have nowhere else. And the *hoi baptizomenoi* (*the baptized*) seem plainly to mean some particular persons, not Christians in general, which yet must be the signification if the *hoi nekroi* (*the dead*) be understood of our Saviour. Some understand the passage of the martyrs: Why do they suffer martyrdom for their religion? This is sometimes called the baptism of blood by ancients, and, by our Saviour himself, baptism indefinitely, ^{<112>}Matthew 20:22; ^{<123>}Luke 12:50. But in what sense can those who die martyrs for their religion be said to be baptized (that is, die martyrs) for the dead? Some understand it of a custom that was observed, as some of the ancients tell us, among many who professed the Christian name in the first ages, of baptizing some in the name and stead of catechumens dying without baptism. But this savoured of such superstition that, if the custom had prevailed in the church so soon, the apostle would hardly have mentioned it without signifying a dislike of it. Some understand it of baptizing over the dead, which was a custom, they tell us, that early obtained; and this to testify their hope of the resurrection. This sense is pertinent to the apostle's argument, but it appears not that any such practice was in use in the apostle's time. Others understand it of those who have been baptized for the sake, or on occasion, of the martyrs, that is, the constancy with which they died for their religion. Some were doubtless converted to Christianity by observing this: and it would have been a vain thing for persons to have become Christians upon this motive, if the martyrs, by losing their lives for religion, became utterly extinct, and were to live no more. But the church at Corinth had not, in all probability, suffered much persecution at this time, or seem many instances of martyrdom among them, nor had many converts been made by the constancy and firmness which the martyrs discovered. Not to observe that *hoi nekroi* seems to be too general an expression to mean only the martyred dead. It is as easy an explication of the phrase as any I have met with, and as pertinent to the argument, to suppose the *hoi nekroi* to mean some among the Corinthians, who had been taken off by the hand of God. We read that *many were sickly among them, and many slept* (^{<611>}1 Corinthians 11:30), because of their disorderly

behaviour at the Lord's table. These executions might terrify some into Christianity; as the miraculous earthquake did the jailer, ~~4169~~ Acts 16:29, 30, etc. Persons baptized on such an occasion might be properly said to be baptized for the dead, that is, on their account. And the *hoi baptizomenoi* (*the baptized*) and the *hoi nekroi* (*the dead*) answer to one another; and upon this supposition the Corinthians could not mistake the apostle's meaning. "Now," says he, "what shall they do, and why were they baptized, if the dead rise not? You have a general persuasion that these men have done right, and acted wisely, and as they ought, on this occasion; but why, if the dead rise not, seeing they may perhaps hasten their death, by provoking a jealous God, and have no hopes beyond it?" But whether this be the meaning, or whatever else be, doubtless the apostle's argument was good and intelligible to the Corinthians. And his next is as plain to us.

IV. He argues from the absurdity of his own conduct and that of other Christians upon this supposition,

1. It would be a foolish thing for them to run so many hazards (v. 30): "*Why stand we in jeopardy every hour? Why do we expose ourselves to continual peril — we Christians, especially we apostles?*" Every one knows that it was dangerous being a Christian, and much more a preacher and an apostle, at that time. "Now," says the apostle, "what fools are we to run these hazards, if we have no better hopes beyond death, if when we die we die wholly, and revive no more!" Note, Christianity were a foolish profession if it proposed no hopes beyond this life, at least in such hazardous times as attended the first profession of it; it required men to risk all the blessings and comforts of this life, and to face and endure all the evils of it, without any future prospects. And is this a character of his religion fit for a Christian to endure? And must he not fix this character on it if he give up his future hopes, and deny the resurrection of the dead? This argument the apostle brings home to himself: "*I protest,*" says he, "*by your rejoicing in Jesus Christ, by all the comforts of Christianity, and all the peculiar succours and supports of our holy faith, that I die daily,*" v. 31. He was in continual danger of death, and carried his life, as we say, in his hand. And why should he thus expose himself, if he had no hopes after life? To live in daily view and expectation of death, and yet have no prospect beyond it, must be very heartless and uncomfortable, and his case, upon this account, a very melancholy one. He had need be very well assured of the resurrection of the dead, or he was guilty of extreme

weakness, in hazarding all that was dear to him in this world, and his life into the bargain. He had encountered very great difficulties and fierce enemies; he had *fought with beasts at Ephesus* (v. 32), and was in danger of being pulled to pieces by an enraged multitude, stirred up by Demetrius and the other craftsmen (~~482B~~ Acts 19:24, etc.), though some understand this literally of Paul's being exposed to fight with wild beasts in the amphitheatre, at a Roman show in that city. And Nicephorus tells a formal story to this purport, and of the miraculous complaisance of the lions to him when they came near him. But so remarkable a trial and circumstance of his life, methinks, would not have been passed over by Luke, and much less by himself, when he gives us so large and particular a detail of his sufferings, ~~412A~~ 2 Corinthians 11:24, *ad fin.* When he mentioned that he was five times scourged of the Jews, thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice shipwrecked, it is strange that he should not have said that he was once exposed to fight with the beasts. I take it, therefore, that this fighting with beasts is a figurative expression, that the beasts intended were men of a fierce and ferine disposition, and that this refers to the passage above cited. "Now," says he, "what advantage have I from such contests, if the dead rise not? Why should I die daily, expose myself daily to the danger of dying by violent hands, if the dead rise not? And if *post mortem nihil* — *if I am to perish by death*, and expect nothing after it, could any thing be more weak?" Was Paul so senseless? Had he given the Corinthians any ground to entertain such a thought of him? If he had not been well assured that death would have been to his advantage, would he, in this stupid manner, have thrown away his life? Could any thing but the sure hopes of a better life after death have extinguished the love of life in him to this degree? "*What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?* What can I propose to myself?" Note, It is very lawful and fit for a Christian to propose advantage to himself by his fidelity to God. Thus did Paul. Thus did our blessed Lord himself, ~~452B~~ Hebrews 12:2. And thus we are bidden to do after his example, and have our fruit to holiness, that our end may be everlasting life. This is the very end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls (~~409B~~ 1 Peter 1:9), not only what it will issue in, but what we should aim at.

2. It would be a much wiser thing to take the comforts of this life: *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die* (v. 32); let us turn epicures. Thus this sentence means in the prophet, ~~422B~~ Isaiah 22:13. Let us even live like beasts, if we must die like them. This would be a wiser course, if there

were no resurrection, no after-life or state, than to abandon all the pleasures of life, and offer and expose ourselves to all the miseries of life, and live in continual peril of perishing by savage rage and cruelty. This passage also plainly implies, as I have hinted above, that those who denied the resurrection among the Corinthians were perfect Sadducees, of whose principles we have this account in the holy writings, that they say, *There is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit* (~~428~~Acts 23:8), that is, “Man is all body, there is nothing in him to survive the body, nor will that, when once he is dead, ever revive again.” Such Sadducees were the men against whom the apostle argued; otherwise his arguments had no force in them; for, though the body should never revive, yet, as long as the mind survived it, he might have much advantage from all the hazards he ran for Christ's sake. Nay, it is certain that the mind is to be the principal seat and subject of the heavenly glory and happiness. But, if there were no hopes after death, would not every wise man prefer an easy comfortable life before such a wretched one as the apostle led; nay, and endeavour to enjoy the comforts of life as fast as possible, because the continuance of it is short? Note, Nothing but the hopes of better things hereafter can enable a man to forego all the comforts and pleasures here, and embrace poverty, contempt, misery, and death. Thus did the apostles and primitive Christians; but how wretched was their case, and how foolish their conduct, if they deceived themselves, and abused the world with vain and false hopes!

V. The apostle closes his argument with a caution, exhortation, and reproof.

1. A caution against the dangerous conversation of bad men, men of loose lives and principles: *Be not deceived*, says he; *evil communications corrupt good manners*, v. 33. Possibly, some of those who said that there was no resurrection of the dead were men of loose lives, and endeavoured to countenance their vicious practices by so corrupt a principle; and had that speech often in their mouths *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. Now, the apostle grants that their talk was to the purpose if there was no future state. But, having confuted their principle, he now warns the Corinthians how dangerous such men's conversation must prove. He tells them that they would probably be corrupted by them, and fall in with their course of life, if they gave into their evil principles. Note, Bad company and conversation are likely to make bad men. Those who would keep their innocence must keep good company. Error and vice are infectious: and, if

we would avoid the contagion, we must keep clear of those who have taken it. *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed,* ⁽¹³⁾ Proverbs 13:20.

2. Here is an exhortation to break off their sins, and rouse themselves, and lead a more holy and righteous life (v. 34): *Awake to righteousness, or awake righteously, **eknepsate dikaios**, and sin not, or sin no more.* “Rouse yourselves, break off your sins by repentance: renounce and forsake every evil way, correct whatever is amiss, and do not, by sloth and stupidity, be led away into such conversation and principles as will sap your Christian hopes, and corrupt your practice.” The disbelief of a future state destroys all virtue and piety. But the best improvement to be made of the truth is to cease from sin, and set ourselves to the business of religion, and that in good earnest. If there will be a resurrection and a future life, we should live and act as those who believe it, and should not give into such senseless and sottish notions as will debauch our morals, and render us loose and sensual in our lives.

3. Here is a reproof, and a sharp one, to some at least among them: *Some of you have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame.* Note, It is a shame in Christians not to have the knowledge of God. The Christian religion gives the best information that can be had about God, his nature, and grace, and government. Those who profess this religion reproach themselves, by remaining without the knowledge of God; for it must be owing to their own sloth, and slight of God, that they are ignorant of him. And is it not a horrid shame for a Christian to slight God, and be so wretchedly ignorant in matters that so nearly and highly concern him? Note, also, It must be ignorance of God that leads men into the disbelief of a resurrection and future life. Those who know God know that he will not abandon his faithful servants, nor leave them exposed to such hardships and sufferings without any recompence or reward. They know he is not unfaithful nor unkind, to forget their labour and patience, their faithful services and cheerful sufferings, or let their *labour be in vain*. But I am apt to think that the expression has a much stronger meaning; that there were atheistical people among them who hardly owned a God, or one who had any concern with or took cognizance of human affairs. These were indeed a scandal and shame to any Christian church. Note, Real atheism lies at the bottom of men's disbelief of a future state. Those who own a God and a providence, and observe how unequal the distributions of the present life

are, and how frequently the best men fare worst, can hardly doubt an after state, where every thing will be set to rights.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-50

THE RESURRECTION OF SAINTS

The apostle comes now to answer a plausible and principal objection against the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, concerning which observe the proposal of the objection: *Some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?* v. 35. The objection is plainly two-fold. *How are they raised up?* that is, “By what means? How can they be raised? What power is equal to this effect?” It was an opinion that prevailed much among the heathens, and the Sadducees seem to have been in the same sentiment, that it was not within the compass of divine power, *mortales aeternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos* — *to make mortal men immortal, or revive and restore the dead*. Such sort of men those seem to have been who among the Corinthians denied the resurrection of the dead, and object here, “How are they raised? How should they be raised? Is it not utterly impossible?” The other part of the objection is about the quality of their bodies, who shall rise: “*With what body will they come?* Will it be with the same body, with like shape, and form, and stature, and members, and qualities, or various?” The former objection is that of those who opposed the doctrine, the latter the enquiry of curious doubters.

I. To the former the apostle replies by telling them this was to be brought about by divine power, that very power which they had all observed to do something very like it, year after year, in the death and revival of the corn; and therefore it was an argument of great weakness and stupidity to doubt whether the resurrection of the dead might not be effected by the same power: *Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die*, v. 36. It must first corrupt, before it will quicken and spring up. It not only sprouts after it is dead, but it must die that it may live. And why should any be so foolish as to imagine that the man once dead cannot be made to live again, by the same power which every year brings the dead grain to life? This is the substance of the apostle's answer to the first question.

Note, It is a foolish thing to question the divine power to raise the dead, when we see it every day quickening and reviving things that are dead.

II. But he is longer in replying to the second enquiry.

1. He begins by observing that there is a change made in the grain that is sown: It is *not that body which shall be* that is sown, but *bare grain*, of wheat or barley, etc.; but God gives it such a body as he will, and in such way as he will, only so as to distinguish the kinds from each other. Every seed sown has its *proper body*, is constituted of such materials, and figured in such a manner, as are proper to it, proper to that kind. This is plainly in the divine power, though we no more know how it is done than we know how a dead man is raised to life again. It is certain the grain undergoes a great change, and it is intimated in this passage that so will the dead, when they rise again, and live again, in their bodies, after death.

2. He proceeds hence to observe that there is a great deal of variety among others bodies, as there is among plants: as,

(1.) In bodies of flesh: *All flesh is not the same*; that of men is of one kind, that of beasts another, another that of fishes, and that of birds another, v. 39. There is a variety in all the kinds, and somewhat peculiar in every kind, to distinguish it from the other.

(2.) In bodies celestial and terrestrial there is also a difference; and what is for the glory of one is not for the other; for the true glory of every being consists in its fitness for its rank and state. Earthly bodies are not adapted to the heavenly regions, nor heavenly bodies fitted to the condition of earthly beings. Nay,

(3.) There is a variety of glory among heavenly bodies themselves: *There is one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, and another of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory*, v. 41. All this is to intimate to us that the bodies of the dead, when they rise, will be so far changed, that they will be fitted for the heavenly regions, and that there will be a variety of glories among the bodies of the dead, when they shall be raised, as there is among the sun, and moon, and stars, nay among the stars themselves. All this carries an intimation along with it that it must be as easy to divine power to raise the dead, and recover their mouldered bodies, as out of the same materials to form so many different kinds of flesh and plants, and, for aught we know, celestial bodies as well as terrestrial ones.

The sun and stars may, for aught we know, be composed of the same materials as the earth we tread on, though as much refined and changed by the divine skill and power. And can he, out of the same materials, form such various beings, and yet not be able to raise the dead? Having thus prepared the way, he comes,

3. To speak directly to the point: *So also*, says he, *is the resurrection of the dead*; so (as the plant growing out of the putrefied grain), so as no longer to be a terrestrial but a celestial body, and varying in glory from the other dead, who are raised, as one star does from another. But he specifies some particulars: as,

(1.) *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown.*

Burying the dead is like sowing them; it is like committing the seed to the earth, that it may spring out of it again. And our bodies, which are sown, are corruptible, liable to putrefy and moulder, and crumble to dust; but, when we rise, they will be out of the power of the grave, and never more be liable to corruption.

(2.) *It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.* Ours is at present a vile body, ¹⁰¹²Philippians 3:21. Nothing is more loathsome than a dead body; it is thrown into the grave as a despised and broken vessel, in which there is no pleasure. But at the resurrection a glory will be put upon it; it will be made like the glorious body of our Saviour; it will be purged from all the dregs of earth, and refined into an ethereal substance, and shine out with a splendour resembling his.

(3.) *It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.* It is laid in the earth, a poor helpless thing, wholly in the power of death, deprived of all vital capacities and powers, of life and strength: it is utterly unable to move or stir. But when we arise our bodies will have heavenly life and vigour infused into them; they will be hale, and firm, and durable, and lively, and liable no more to any infirmity, weakness, or decay.

(4.) *It is sown a natural, or animal body, *soma psychikon*, a body fitted to the low condition and sensitive pleasures and enjoyments of this life, which are all gross in comparison of the heavenly state and enjoyments. But when we rise it will be quite otherwise; our body will rise spiritual. Not that body would be changed into spirit: this would be a contradiction in our common conceptions; it would be as much as to say, Body changed into what is not body, matter made immaterial. The expression is to be*

understood comparatively. We shall at the resurrection have bodies purified and refined to the last degree, made light and agile; and, though they are not changed into spirit, yet made fit to be perpetual associates of spirits made perfect. And why should it not be as much in the power of God to raise incorruptible, glorious, lively, spiritual bodies, out of the ruins of those vile, corruptible, lifeless, and animal ones, as first to make matter out of nothing, and then, out of the same mass of matter, produce such variety of beings, both in earth and heaven? *To God all things are possible*; and this cannot be impossible.

4. He illustrates this by a comparison of the first and second Adam: *There is an animal body*, says he, *and there is a spiritual body*; and then goes into the comparison in several instances.

(1.) As we have our natural body, the animal body we have in this world, from the first Adam, we expect our spiritual body from the second. This is implied in the whole comparison.

(2.) This is but consonant to the different characters these two persons bear: *The first Adam was made a living soul*, such a being as ourselves, and with a power of propagating such beings as himself, and conveying to them a nature and animal body like his own, but none other, nor better. *The second Adam is a quickening Spirit*; he is the resurrection and the life, ^{<B125>}John 11:25. He hath life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will, ^{<B126>}John 5:20, 21. *The first man was of the earth*, made out of the earth, and was earthy; his body was fitted to the region of his abode: *but the second Adam is the Lord from heaven*; he who came down from heaven, and giveth life to the world (^{<B127>}John 6:33); he who came down from heaven and was in heaven at the same time (^{<B128>}John 3:13); the Lord of heaven and earth. If the first Adam could communicate to us natural and animal bodies, cannot the second Adam make our bodies spiritual ones? If the deputed lord of this lower creation could do the one, cannot the Lord from heaven, the Lord of heaven and earth, do the other?

(3.) We must first have natural bodies from the first Adam before we can have spiritual bodies from the second (v. 49); *we must bear the image of the earthy before we can bear the image of the heavenly*. Such is the established order of Providence. We must have weak, frail, mortal bodies by descent from the first Adam, before we can have lively, spiritual, and immortal ones by the quickening power of the second. We must die before we can live to die no more.

(4.) Yet if we are Christ's, true believers in him (for this whole discourse relates to the resurrection of the saints), it is as certain that we shall have spiritual bodies as it is now that we have natural or animal ones. By these we are as the first Adam, earthy, we bear his image; by those we shall be as the second Adam, have bodies like his own, heavenly, and so bear his image. And we are as certainly intended to bear the one as we have borne the other. As surely therefore as we have had natural bodies, we shall have spiritual ones. The dead in Christ shall not only rise, but shall rise thus gloriously changed.

5. He sums up this argument by assigning the reason of this change (v. 50): *Now this I say that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor doth corruption inherit incorruption.* The natural body is flesh and blood, consisting of bones, muscles, nerves, veins, arteries, and their several fluids; and, as such, it is of a corruptible frame and form, liable to dissolution, to rot and moulder. But no such thing shall inherit the heavenly regions; for this were for corruption to inherit incorruption, which is little better than a contradiction in terms. The heavenly inheritance is incorruptible, and never fadeth away, ~~600~~ 1 Peter 1:4. How can this be possessed by flesh and blood, which is corruptible and will fade away? It must be changed into ever-during substance, before it can be capable of possessing the heavenly inheritance. The sum is that the bodies of the saints, when they shall rise again, will be greatly changed from what they are now, and much for the better. They are now corruptible, flesh and blood; they will be then incorruptible, glorious, and spiritual bodies, fitted to the celestial world and state, where they are ever afterwards to dwell, and have their eternal inheritance.

~~655~~ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-57

THE RESURRECTION OF SAINTS

To confirm what he had said of this change,

I. He here tells them what had been concealed from or unknown to them till then — that all the saints would not die, but all would be changed. Those that are alive at our Lord's coming will be caught up into the clouds, without dying, ~~500~~ 1 Thessalonians 4:11. But it is plain from this passage that it will not be without changing from corruption to incorruption. The

frame of their living bodies shall be thus altered, as well as those that are dead; and this *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, v. 52. What cannot almighty power effect? That power that calls the dead into life can surely thus soon and suddenly change the living; for changed they must be as well as the dead, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This is the mystery which the apostle shows the Corinthians: *Behold, I show you a mystery*; or bring into open light a truth dark and unknown before. Note, There are many mysteries shown to us in the gospel; many truths that before were utterly unknown are there made known; many truths that were but dark and obscure before are there brought into open day, and plainly revealed; and many things are in part revealed that will never be fully known, nor perhaps clearly understood. The apostle here makes known a truth unknown before, which is that the saints living at our Lord's second coming will not die, but be changed, that this change will be made in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and *at the sound of the last trump*; for, as he tells us elsewhere, *the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God* (~~1~~¹ Thessalonians 4:16), so here, *the trumpet must sound*. It is the loud summons of all the living and all the dead, to come and appear at the tribunal of Christ. At this summons the graves shall open, the dead saints shall rise incorruptible, and the living saints be changed to the same incorruptible state, v. 52.

II. He assigns the reason of this change (v. 53): *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*. How otherwise could the man be a fit inhabitant of the incorruptible regions, or be fitted to possess the eternal inheritance? How can that which is corruptible and mortal enjoy what is incorruptible, permanent, and immortal? This corruptible body must be made incorruptible, this mortal body must be changed into immortal, that the man may be capable of enjoying the happiness designed for him. Note, It is this corruptible that must put on incorruption; the demolished fabric that must be reared again. What is sown must be quickened. Saints will come in their own bodies (v. 38), not in other bodies.

III. He lets us know what will follow upon this change of the living and dead in Christ: *Then shall be brought to pass that saying, Death is swallowed up in victory*; or, *He will swallow up death in victory*. ~~1~~¹ Isaiah 25:8. *For mortality shall be then swallowed up of life* (~~1~~² Corinthians

5:4), and death perfectly subdued and conquered, and saints for ever delivered from its power. Such a conquest shall be obtained over it that it shall for ever disappear in those regions to which our Lord will bear his risen saints. And therefore will the saints hereupon sing their *epinikion*, their *song of triumph*. Then, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, will death be swallowed up, for ever swallowed up, *eis nikos*. Christ hinders it from swallowing his saints when they die; but, when they rise again, death shall, as to them, be swallowed for ever. And upon this destruction of death will they break out into a song of triumph.

1. They will glory over death as a vanquished enemy, and insult this great and terrible destroyer: “*O death! where is thy sting? Where is now thy sting, thy power to hurt? What mischief hast thou done us? We are dead; but behold we live again, and shall die no more. Thou art vanquished and disarmed, and we are out of the reach of thy deadly dart. Where now is thy fatal artillery? Where are thy stores of death? We fear no further mischiefs from thee, nor heed thy weapons, but defy thy power, and despise thy wrath. And, O grave! where is thy victory? Where now is thy victory? What has become of it? Where are the spoils and trophies of it? Once we were thy prisoners, but the prison-doors are burst open, the locks and bolts have been forced to give way, our shackles are knocked off, and we are for ever released. Captivity is taken captive. The imaginary victor is conquered, and forced to resign his conquest and release his captives. Thy triumphs, grave, are at an end. The bonds of death are loosed, and we are at liberty, and are never more to be hurt by death, nor imprisoned in the grave.*” In a moment, the power of death, and the conquests and spoils of the grave, are gone; and, as to the saints, the very signs of them will not remain. Where are they? Thus will they raise themselves, when they become immortal, to the honour of their Saviour and the praise of divine grace: they shall glory over vanquished death.

2. The foundation for this triumph is here intimated,

(1.) In the account given whence death had its power to hurt: *The sting of death is sin*. This gives venom to his dart: this alone puts it into the power of death to hurt and kill. Sin unpardoned, and nothing else, can keep any under his power. And the *strength of sin is the law*; it is the divine threatening against the transgressors of the law, the curse there denounced, that gives power to sin. Note, Sin is the parent of death, and gives it all its

hurtful power. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,*
◀R12▶ Romans 5:12. It is its cursed progeny and offspring.

(2.) In the account given of the victory saints obtain over it through Jesus Christ, v. 56. *The sting of death is sin;* but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting. He has made atonement for sin; he has obtained remission of it. It may hiss therefore, but it cannot hurt. *The strength of sin is the law;* but the curse of the law is removed by our Redeemer's *becoming a curse for us*. So that sin is deprived of its strength and sting, through Christ, that is, by his incarnation, suffering, and death. Death may seize a believer, but cannot sting him, cannot hold him in his power. There is a day coming when the grave shall open, the bands of death be loosed, the dead saints revive, and become incorruptible and immortal, and put out of the reach of death for ever. And then will it plainly appear that, as to them, death will have lost its strength and sting; and all by the mediation of Christ, by his dying in their room. By dying, he conquered death, and spoiled the grave; and, through faith in him, believers become sharers in his conquests. They often rejoice beforehand, in the hope of this victory; and, when they arise glorious from the grave, they will boldly triumph over death. Note, It is altogether owing to the grace of God in Christ that sin is pardoned and death disarmed. The law puts arms into the hand of death, to destroy the sinner; but pardon of sin takes away this power from the law, and deprives death of its strength and sting. It is *by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that we are freely justified,*
◀R13▶ Romans 3:24. It is no wonder, therefore,

(3.) If this triumph of the saints over death should issue in thanksgiving to God: *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Christ Jesus, our Lord,* v. 57. The way to sanctify all our joy is to make it tributary to the praise of God. Then only do we enjoy our blessings and honours in a holy manner when God has his revenue of glory out of it, and we are free to pay it to him. And this really improves and exalts our satisfaction. We are conscious at once of having done our duty and enjoyed our pleasure. And what can be more joyous in itself than the saints' triumph over death, when they shall rise again? And shall they not then rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of their salvation? Shall not their souls magnify the Lord? When he shows *such wonders to the dead, shall they not arise and praise him?* ▶R14▶ Psalm 88:10. Those who remain under the power of death can have no heart to praise; but such conquests and triumphs will certainly tune the tongues of the saints to thankfulness and praise — praise for the

victory (it is great and glorious in itself), and for the means whereby it is obtained (it is given of God through Christ Jesus), a victory obtained not by our power, but the power of God; not given because we are worthy, but because Christ is so, and has by dying obtained this conquest for us. Must not this circumstance endear the victory to us, and heighten our praise to God? Note, How many springs of joy to the saints and thanksgiving to God are opened by the death and resurrection, the sufferings and conquests, of our Redeemer! With what acclamations will saints rising from the dead applaud him! How will the heaven of heavens resound his praises for ever! *Thanks be to God* will be the burden of their song; and angels will join the chorus, and declare their consent with a loud Amen, Hallelujah.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

THE OBLIGATIONS OF CHRISTIANS

In this verse we have the improvement of the whole argument, in an exhortation, enforced by a motive resulting plainly from it.

I. An exhortation, and this threefold: —

1. That they should be stedfast — *hedraioi*, firm, fixed in the faith of the gospel, that gospel which he had preached and they had received, namely, *That Christ died for our sins, and arose again the third day, according to the scriptures* (v. 3, 4), and fixed in the faith of the glorious resurrection of the dead, which, as he had shown, had so near and necessary a connection with the former. “Do not let your belief of these truths be shaken or staggered. They are most certain, and of the last importance.” Note, Christians should be stedfast believers of this great article of the resurrection of the dead. It is evidently founded on the death of Christ. *Because he lives, his servants shall live also*, ~~John~~ John 14:19. And it is of the last importance; a disbelief of a future life will open a way to all manner of licentiousness, and corrupt men's morals to the last degree. It will be easy and natural to infer hence that we may live like beasts, and eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

2. He exhorts them to be *immovable*, namely, in their expectation of this great privilege of being raised incorruptible and immortal. Christians

should not be moved away from this hope of this gospel (⁵¹²³Colossians 1:23), this glorious and blessed hope; they should not renounce nor resign their comfortable expectations. They are not vain, but solid hopes, built upon sure foundations, the purchase and power of their risen Saviour, and the promise of God, to whom it is impossible to lie — hopes that shall be their most powerful supports under all the pressures of life, the most effectual antidotes against the fears of death, and the most quickening motives to diligence and perseverance in Christian duty. Should they part with these hopes? Should they suffer them to be shaken? Note, Christians should live in the most firm expectation of a blessed resurrection. This hope should be an anchor to their souls, firm and sure, ⁵¹⁶⁹Hebrews 6:19.

3. He exhorts them *to abound in the work of the Lord*, and that *always*, in the Lord's service, in obeying the Lord's commands. They should be diligent and persevering herein, and going on towards perfection; they should be continually making advances in true piety, and ready and apt for every good work. The most cheerful duty, the greatest diligence, the most constant perseverance, become those who have such glorious hopes. Can we too much abound in zeal and diligence in the Lord's work, when we are assured of such abundant recompences in a future life? What vigour and resolution, what constancy and patience, should those hopes inspire! Note, Christians should not stint themselves as to their growth in holiness, but be always improving in sound religion, and abounding in the work of the Lord.

II. The motive resulting from the former discourse is that their *labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; nay, they know it shall not. They have the best grounds in the world to build upon: they have all the assurance that can rationally be expected: as surely as Christ is risen, they shall rise; and Christ is as surely risen as the scriptures are true, and the word of God. The apostles saw him after his death, testified this truth to the world in the face of a thousand deaths and dangers, and confirmed it by miraculous powers received from him. Is there any room to doubt a fact so well attested? Note, True Christians have undoubted evidence that their labour will not be in vain in the Lord; not their most diligent services, nor their most painful sufferings; they will not be in vain, not be vain and unprofitable. Note, The labour of Christians will not be lost labour; they may lose for God, but they will lose nothing by him; nay, there is more implied than is expressed in this phrase: it means that they shall be abundantly rewarded. He will never be found unjust to forget their labour

of love, ~~360~~ Hebrews 6:10. Nay, he will do exceedingly abundantly above what they can now ask or think. Neither the services they do for him, nor the sufferings they endure for him here, are worthy to be compared with the joy hereafter to be revealed in them, ~~488~~ Romans 8:18. Note, Those who serve God have good wages; they cannot do too much nor suffer too much for so good a Master. If they serve him now, they shall see him hereafter; if they suffer for him on earth, they shall reign with him in heaven; if they die for his sake, they shall rise again from the dead, be crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, and inherit eternal life.