

~ Lesson 83 ACTS ~

The Hope of the Resurrection

Acts 24:15

We left off last week as Paul was standing before Felix making a confession of his faith and defending the Gospel and his hope in God. And in this short defense, Paul says this amazing statement in verses 14-15.

Acts 24:14-15 ¹⁴ But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, (αἵρεσις-heresy) so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. ¹⁵ I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

Paul could have said any number of things that day in front of Felix, but the words that Paul stakes his life on, and the words he chooses to speak are words of the hope of the Gospel. The hope of the resurrection of the dead. This is such a powerful confession of faith because it is at the resurrection of the dead that our salvation is made complete.

Today we will be focusing on this one statement in verse 15.... **I have hope in God... that there will be a resurrection of the dead.** To truly understand the importance of the resurrection, we have to first understand the process of our salvation. I say process because there are three stages to our Salvation: **JUSTIFICATION**, **SANCTIFICATION**, and **GLORIFICATION**; past, present, and future. I was saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved. Our salvation isn't made complete until we are resurrected in glory. But you might say, I thought we were already resurrected from the dead and made alive together with Him because Paul says in Ephesians 2:5-6-⁵ *even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* Isn't that the resurrection from the dead? The fact that I was dead and now I am made alive in Christ. Yes, but this is only a spiritual resurrection. When we are born again, we are made alive spiritually and reconciled to the Father. No longer separated from the Father and we are positionally raised up with Him in heavenly places. We are justified, declared Righteous in Christ. But the resurrection of the dead is two-fold. It is not only spiritual, but also physical. Our spiritual resurrection is called **JUSTIFICATION**, and our physical resurrection is called **GLORIFICATION**; and in between these two we live the life of **SANCTIFICATION**. This is the process of Salvation, and our salvation is perfected, the finality of our redemption is made complete when we are resurrected and caught up to be with Him in glory and we receive our glorified bodies and live forever with Jesus. This event is called the rapture or the ἀρπάζω, harpazo, the catching away of the church. As we will see today, Paul writes extensively on this subject, but there are two sections of Scripture, 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, that detail this very plainly, **1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:14-18.**

So how do we get from here to there? The Bible is very specific about how we should be conducting our life now, so that we can partake in this amazing promise of being with Jesus forever in glory. A great explanation of this is in **Romans 8:23-25**. There is an eager expectation of the fulfillment of the final completion of our salvation in Christ Jesus. Paul calls this "the adoption, the redemption of our bodies." In Galatians and Ephesians he calls it "the adoption as sons". But you might ask, I thought we were already children of God now. Why do we have to eagerly wait for this adoption? Don't we have a relationship with Him now? And when we die, will we not go to be with the Lord? The answer is yes, but here in this life, our Fellowship isn't complete. We see through a mirror dimly, but then face to face, 1 Cor 13:12. And even when we die and go to heaven, we are only spirit beings with a soul. We won't have a body until the resurrection. We are mankind and we were created to have a body, so to be the fullness of who God created us to be, and the things God created us to do, and the eternal Fellowship that God wants us to have with Him, none of these things are complete until we have our eternal bodies, **1 John 3:1-2**. There is something extremely special that will take place when we see our Lord face to face in glory. When He appears and we also will appear with Him in glory, Col 3:4. This is when the redemption of the purchased possession is complete, Ephesians 1:13-14-¹³ *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the*

gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. God is just as excited about our resurrection as we are...probably even more so because God purchased us with His own blood, and it is at the resurrection that He will finally receive His purchased possession that cost Him so much, the precious blood of His Son, 1 Peter 1:18-19.

The Resurrection of the dead is the basis of our Christian faith, and it was the basis of the Jewish faith written in the Law and the Prophets. Abraham and David and the Prophets, they all believed and wrote about the resurrection of the dead, Hebrews 11:17-19; Psalm 16:9-11; Acts 13:33-35; Ezek 37:4-14; Daniel 12:1-2. And Jesus spoke extensively about the resurrection of the dead, both of His own resurrection, and the resurrection of those who would believe in Him, John 5:28-29; 6:4, 54; 10:17-18; 11:23-27; 12:30-33 Luke 12:50; 13:32; 14:14; 16:31; 20:35-38; 21:16-19; 22:69; 24:25-27, 46; Matt 16:21; 17:9, 22-23; 20:19; 22:29-32; 25:46; 26:64.

The resurrection is the central theme of our Christian faith. Without the resurrection Paul says our faith is futile and we are still dead in our sins, 1 Cor 15:17. Our hope in God, the hope of the resurrection in Christ Jesus is the earnest expectation of the final completion of our salvation in Christ Jesus. This is the hope of the resurrection of the dead that Paul confesses as he stands before Felix saying, **Believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets, I have hope in God... that there will be a resurrection of the dead.** This is the basis of Christianity... resurrection life in Christ; that Jesus was first resurrected as the firstborn from the dead, and now He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest administering resurrection life to all who believe so that one day we too will be resurrected with Him in glory forever. This is our Blessed Hope, the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ because it is at His appearing that we will be resurrected in glory, **Col 3:4.**

This was such an important topic that Paul taught this everywhere he went. In Paul's very first recorded sermon in the Bible, the resurrection of the dead was his main topic, Acts 13:29-39. When Paul taught on top of the Areopagus in Athens, he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, Acts 17:30-32. And when Paul came to Jerusalem after his 3rd journey, he proclaimed the resurrection of the dead among the Jewish leaders, Acts 23:6. And when Paul first went to Thessalonica, within those three short weeks, Paul taught on our resurrection and the coming of our Lord. In 2 Thessalonians he reminds them saying, "Do you not remember when I was still with you I told you these things?" Speaking of Jesus' coming, and our being gathered together with Him, 2 Thess 2:1-5. Not only did he preach this everywhere he traveled, but this is the main topic in all of his epistles, Resurrection Life in Jesus Christ forever. This is a main thread throughout all 14 of his epistles. Paul had an eternal life mindset. His hope was set on Jesus that he would one day be resurrected with Him in glory. The resurrection is the basis of his teachings, and we see this all through his epistles. We don't have time to touch on every scripture Paul wrote about this, but there are a few that bring the importance of the resurrection of the dead to light.

The Resurrection of Jesus is essential to our faith. Paul says in Romans 10:9- "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that **God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**" Without the Resurrection of Jesus, there is no salvation, **1 Cor 15:12-17.** The resurrected Man, Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest administering the blood of the covenant to all who believe, Acts 2:32-33; Phil 2:9-10; Hebrews 5:5-10; 6:19-20; 7:16-25, 28; 9:12, 15. Jesus received His inheritance when He was raised from the dead. But it doesn't stop there. In His grace, Jesus has promised to share His inheritance with all who believe in Him. Dividing His inheritance with us, Isaiah 53:12; Col 3:24. Jesus was raised up in glory and we too will share with Him in that glory when we are raised up physically with Him forever, **1 Cor 15:18-23.** Jesus is the firstfruit, the firstborn from the dead. The first of many who would share in His resurrection, Col 1:18.

Notice verse 19 again... there is that word “hope.” Paul says, I have hope in God. A hope for the resurrection of the dead. This hope of the resurrection is our Blessed Hope, Titus 2:13- *looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*. Titus 3:7- *having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life*.

Notice that it is not a hope in this life, but the hope of eternal life. It is our hope beyond the veil anchoring us to Jesus, Heb 6:19. Our hope is Jesus. It is the earnest expectation of the final completion of our salvation in Christ Jesus. It’s not a hope of having your best life now. Paul says, if that’s your hope, you are the most pitiable. Putting your hope in this life will only lead to apostasy and wavering from the faith.

This brings us to the next point... our hope is essential to persevering through this life, and it is essential to leading us to our complete Salvation, our glorification in Him. There is a distinct connection between our Sanctification and our Glorification, **Col 1:21-23; 27-28; Heb 3:6, 14; Matt 10:22**; Rev 2:10; 2:13; 2:25. Sanctification is not doing good works to try and earn your way to holiness. We can’t sanctify ourselves. It is His Word and His Spirit that sanctifies us, John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:22-23; Romans 8:13. Paul tells us to *“fight the good fight of faith and lay hold of eternal life.”* 1 Tim 6:12. Sanctification is putting your entire trust in Jesus and abiding in Him. And if we abide in Him and walk every day in complete and total reliance on Him, He will separate us from evil and bring us closer to Him and His Christlikeness. There is a distinct connection between our eager expectation which works in us Sanctification which leads us to our glorification in Christ because our hope gives us the strength and endurance to persevere to the end. And through this process our hope purifies and sanctifies us, preparing us for His glory, 1 John 3:3- *And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure*. Jesus wants us earnestly desiring His appearing. Paul says in Hebrews 9:28- *“To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”* There is an earnest expectation to be with Him in glory as His bride, Matt 22:1-14; 24:42-47; 25:1-13; Luke 12: 35-40; 19:11-27; 21:36. This is the walk of Sanctification and our Sanctification is directly tied to the glory that is to come, namely the resurrection of our bodies in glory. Jesus is coming back for a bride that is earnestly seeking and desiring Him. Not someone who is playing the harlot with the world, Rev 19:7-8; Eph 5:27; 2 Cor 11:2; Rom 7:4. Paul has so much to say about this. We already read Romans 8:23 and the adoption as sons and how we should be eagerly waiting for it with perseverance, now read just before this in **Romans 8:16-18; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:16-18**. This process of Sanctification; persevering and enduring this life with an expectation of the glory that is to come is so vital to our Christian walk and even attaining to the resurrection of the dead, **Phil 3:7-14; 20-21**; 1 Cor 9:27; Luke 20:35; 21:36.

So when is this going to happen? When is Jesus coming back for His faithful Bride? I believe in the imminent return of Jesus, that Jesus can come back at any moment. And it’s clear that Paul believed this too. Notice Paul’s wording in 1 Thessalonians 4:17- *“Then **WE** who are alive and remain shall be caught up...”* There is nothing on God’s agenda that has to take place before Jesus catches us away. Paul alludes to this imminent return in his defense to Felix in verse 15, but you can’t see it in the English translations because they don’t translate one word, μέλλειν, “about to.” So a better translation would be... **I have hope in God... that there is about to be a resurrection of the dead...**

Jesus is coming soon, He can come at any moment. So, the question, is are you ready? Are you eagerly expecting His glorious return? So that we too might be resurrected in glory with Him. This is the hope of the resurrection of the dead, but notice that Paul says a resurrection of the dead for the just and the unjust. We just learned about the resurrection of the just, but what does he mean that there will be a resurrection of the unjust? That’s what we will talk about next time...