

The Commonwealth of the Resurrected – *1 Cor 15:20-26, Phil 3:20-4:1*

Introduction – The Christian hope is not that we believe in the immortality of the soul, but in the resurrection of the body from the dead. The Christian hope also is not anchored in the truth that one day you will die and then you will go to heaven, but rather in the truth that the kingdom of God has come and that heaven and earth have been reconciled in Jesus Christ. But in our enlightened culture, we often sway to the former statements which are far less threatening to that culture than the potent truth of the gospel of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Firstfruits (1 Cor 15:20-26) – The promise of the resurrection is the promise of our bodily resurrection one day “*at His coming*” referring to His final coming. This will take place after He has “*put all enemies under His feet*” and the last enemy will then be destroyed, “*death*.” To understand in what way Jesus is the firstfruits, we have to understand the whole gospel story.

First Death/First Resurrection – The only reason we have need for this good news is, of course, because of the bad news. “*For in Adam all die*” v22 must be believed in order for “*even so in Christ all shall be made alive*.” Adam and his people all experienced the first death because of his fall as our covenant head. We are conceived in a state of sin. By nature, we hate God and His supreme and absolute authority over every aspect of our being. In the cross, this first death is reversed, and in the resurrection of Jesus we who are in Christ experience the first resurrection (Eph 2:4-10). But also, in the cross and because of the cross, all who are in Christ will not taste or experience the second death, “*for He is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*” (v20). The way to understand this is to understand death as that separation from God unto misery, wrath, and judgment. But those who die in the Lord do not every experience that death – for to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).

Biblical Hope – Jesus, however, really, physically rose from the dead, and we will be resurrected as well at the final day. But what His resurrection teaches us is not that we will one day go to heaven; rather it teaches us that heaven (and resurrection life) has invaded this sorry, fallen world. While Jesus has returned to heaven for now, He is coming back here at the resurrection where we will be with Him in the final consummation of all things. His reign now from heaven is over all heaven and earth and He intends to put all of His enemies down from that place of authority through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the church discipling the nations. Jesus is the firstfruits of resurrection life here and now.

A Colony Established Here (Phil 3:20-21) – Paul uses another picture for us in this passage. We are the commonwealth of the resurrected because “*our citizenship is in heaven from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...*” and then he goes on to describe the hope of our resurrected bodies. We are eagerly awaiting the Savior to come *here*, not for us to go to heaven. This is because we are to understand that while we are citizens of heaven (we have no ultimate loyalties to any other ruler), we are establishing His kingdom by colonizing the earth – or by making disciples of all nations. How are we doing this? “*...according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself*” (v21).

Heavenly Hope Established Here – We are not supposed to be simply hoping to hang on until we die and then go to heaven. Jesus promised that the meek shall inherit the earth (Matt 5:5) and He has taught us to pray that His glorious kingdom and perfect will would be established upon this earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10). Our bodies groan with creation and even with the Spirit, not to die, but to be fully transformed (Rom 8:22-25). Our hope is likened to waiting for the birth in the midst of the birth pangs.

The Commonwealth of the Resurrected – Paul would continue in Phil 4:1, “*Therefore...my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved*.” And at the end of the chapter on the resurrection in 1 Cor 15:58, he would conclude, “*Therefore...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*.” Let’s break that down simply –

Be Steadfast, Immovable – The bedrock foundation for resurrection life is this: Christ died for sinners, it is all of grace, and His victory will be manifest over all the earth. If you hear His voice, today is the day of salvation. Never leave this Truth.

Always Abounding in the Work of the Lord – We should abound here in the work of the Lord because it is here that we are spreading forth resurrection life. We are like the breath of Aslan blowing over the stones and transforming a place of death into a place of life.

Your Labor is Not in Vain – Because of the resurrection, no work done in the Lord can be put to death. They tried it with Jesus and enemies will try it with us. But resurrection life comes out of everyone walking in that resurrection life, no matter how mundane, no matter how unnoticed, no matter how thwarted it might appear at the moment. In Christ, nothing is wasted, nothing is lost, and nothing goes unblessed.