

Sermon File # 430

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:12-34

Sermon Title: *I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting* (10th and final in series on the Apostles' Creed)

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I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting

Introduction:

Today, as we conclude our series of sermons from the Apostles' Creed, we turn to 1 Corinthians 15, to consider our belief in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. The Apostle Paul established, in the first eleven verses of this chapter, the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus to the saving gospel. In these next verses he posits a hypothetical question to show that if these Corinthians really believe a bodily resurrection is impossible, then they are without any hope

As you perhaps realize, many of the Corinthians, influenced by Greek philosophy, believed that the body was essentially evil and temporary, and the soul, a separate entity, was eternal, and would alone survive the grave. To them, the idea of the body having any eternal significance, or worth being resurrected, was absurd. Paul argues that if we believers will not rise bodily, then Christ did not rise bodily. And if Christ did not rise bodily, then there is a series of unacceptable consequences for us. Our eternal salvation depends on the bodily resurrection, both Jesus' and ours.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-34.

Cardinal John Henry Newman, the 19th Century English Catholic scholar that Pope Benedict has recently beatified, has a “soul-shuddering” passage in one of his writings in which he imagines what it would be like to look out into the world and see no trace of God at all. “That would be,” he says, “just as if I were to look into a mirror and not see my face.

“Think of it—that sudden, almost terrifying suggestion—looking straight into a mirror and seeing only a blank! It is that same shudder of the soul that Paul’s words here create—if Christ be not risen” (James S Stewart, *The Gates of New Life*, pages 160ff).

The apostle Paul, in responding to the teaching of the Greeks against the possibility of a bodily resurrection, says that our Christian faith rests on the reality of Jesus’ bodily resurrection and the hope we have of our own resurrection of the body in fulfillment of God’s promises. We could even say that the credibility all nine previous statements we have affirmed from the Apostles’ Creed hinge upon the verity of this tenth assertion about the bodily resurrection and the life everlasting. As John Calvin argues in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, our entire faith rests upon our hope of the fulfillment of God’s promises to the believer, including the bodily resurrection (book III, chapter II, section 42).

As children of God we must be people of an indomitable hope that serves as a foundation for our persevering faith in God during uncertain and difficult times. The more I minister to people who grieve in the face of the death of a loved one, the more I realize as a servant leader I must have an unshakable faith that rests upon a certain hope. Our hope is in God’s promises that we are bound for an eternal City that has foundations (Hebrews 11:10).

As I understand biblical hope, it is not wishful thinking, which is seemingly the preponderant understanding the unbelieving world has of “hope.” We use the word hope to express our optimism. We hope for good weather for our family holiday. We hope our favorite football (soccer) team wins the big game. For all but the winning team’s fans, such hope is but wishful thinking. As an aspect of our witness for Christ, others need to see in us a hope that is steadfast and sure (Hebrews 6:19). There will always be some degree of fear and trepidation as we face death, our final enemy. But when all is said and done, are we people of a solid hope? Can we affirm together that we believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting?

If we are not people of a robust hope, then we are ill prepared and equipped to contend with the reality of death. Paul certainly understood this, and posited an unthinkable hypothetical situation that causes what Newman called a “shudder of soul.” “Suppose,” Paul seems to be saying, “that there were no actual bodily resurrection,” as the Greeks are suggesting. If there is no hope for a future bodily resurrection, when God’s people will inherit a body fit for immortality, then “the whole house of cards” of Christian theology, faith, and purpose comes tumbling down. The Apostles’ Creed, which has been recited for two millennia by Christ’s faithful followers, would be a misleading statement.

In our text, Paul is implying several dreadful implications if the unthinkable were true, if Christ is not raised...

Because without the resurrection we would *give up*

To the Apostle Paul, the bodily resurrection of Jesus signaled the validity and power of the gospel. If the cross, as Paul says in chapter two of this first letter to the Corinthians, is the heart of the gospel, then the empty tomb is its breath and its *sine qua non*, the absolutely essential or indispensable truth. He says that if there is no resurrection of the body, then Christ wasn't raised, and if he wasn't raised then we might as well give up. Jesus promised he would be raised following his crucifixion, and his resurrection was God's sign of his triumph over the powers of sin, death, and hell. Our faith in Jesus is futile if he is not the risen living, and triumphant Savior. And this means, not a risen spirit, but an actual, tangible person with a body. Good Friday would be tragic Friday without the reality of Jesus' resurrection. If Christ isn't raised, we might as well give up...

Because there would be no help

Paul is saying we received death through the first Adam, and the Second Adam, Christ, is the one through whom we receive life. If Christ is raised, Paul says in verse 23, he is the firstfruits of a later harvest of those of us who also will be raised from our graves. If he isn't raised, we are still hopelessly lost in our sins, have not received his forgiveness, and are in bondage to sin's power. We can't have a new nature if Christ isn't raised, so we might as well give up against the attacks of Satan.

Paul begins this fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians by reminding the church of the gospel he had preached to them, and by which we are saved. Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became a man, and who lived a sinless life and was falsely tried and punished and killed on a cruel cross. His suffering and his death were not as a helpless victim but as God's intentional sacrifice for us. Jesus suffered, died and was raised from the grave to provide for our being made right with God. By the grace of God we are given faith to believe and repent of/turn from our sin.

The suffering and death of Jesus is sufficient punishment for our sins and payment of the debt we owed to holy God. God himself paid our debt by giving his Son to suffer and die for us. When God raised his Son from the grave on Easter morning he showed that what Jesus did on the cross was according to his plan and effective for our salvation. Had Jesus not been raised and were he not alive today, we would still be lost in our sins. We would be held accountable for all our guilt for every sin we have committed. We would stand hopelessly condemned before holy God.

Without the vindication of his resurrection, Jesus would have died a defeated martyr and the victim of cruel antagonists. Instead, as Jesus promised his

disciples, he was raised on the third day, and was raised triumphant over sin, hell, and the grave. Paul reminds his readers in the opening words of this chapter that the risen Jesus was actually seen and spent time with these disciples, who were transformed by the risen Lord. No longer were they defeated, disillusioned and frightened former followers. Now they were faithful disciples and became fearless leaders of the movement called the Christian church.

Martin Luther, the great leader of the Protestant Reformation, was constantly on the front lines of spiritual warfare.

“Tell me,” said one of Luther’s enemies to him sardonically, “when the whole world turns against you—church, state, princes, people—where will you be then?” “Where shall I be then?” cried the great soul. “Why, then as now, in the hands of Almighty God!” As James Stewart, the great Scottish preacher commented, if Christ be raised from the dead, you and I can be “Luthers” too (page 164, *The Gates of New Life*). But if not, then there is no help in our spiritual and daily struggles.

As Mike Andrus noted, “If there is no resurrection, the hall of the faithful in Hebrews 11 is instead the hall of the foolish. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, David, the prophets, and all the others listed would have been faithful for nothing. They were mocked, scourged, imprisoned, stoned, afflicted, ill-treated, and put to death completely in vain. In fact,” says Andrus, “all believers of all ages have believed for nothing, and died for nothing” (www.efree.org/sermons/1_corinthians/logic_resurrection.htm).

If there is no resurrection then there is no help for eternal life. And, Paul continues hypothetically, if there were no resurrection then we would give up...

Because there would be no hope

Paul says that if Jesus were not raised and we were not to be raised, not only are we still lost in our sins, but also those who have fallen asleep in death are lost. Give up all hope, Paul is saying, if Christ isn’t raised. Apart from the resurrection of Jesus we must join the honest pagans and abandon all hope beyond the grave.

The widow of the late astronomer Carl Sagan was interviewed about 13 years ago by *Newsweek* magazine in an article that paid tribute to the scientific achievements of her famous husband. She seemed to boast about his intractable anti-supernaturalism and rejection of faith in God and hope for an afterlife. In speaking about his death she said, “There was no deathbed conversion, no appeals to God, no hope for an afterlife, no pretending that he and I, who had been inseparable for twenty years, were not saying goodbye forever” (*Newsweek*, March 31, 1997).

Paul says death is the last enemy to be destroyed (verse 26). Although death was defeated by Jesus on the cross and in his resurrection, it is still doing its heinous work of separating us from our loved ones.

I don't like what death does to take from us those we love. Paul says that we naturally grieve when we are separated from loved ones by death (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Almost all of us have lost close loved ones in recent months and years. We all must face the enemy of death, and if Jesus isn't raised, we're in trouble. Death is a big bully; much bigger than we are.

Paul says that in Jesus death has been defeated, and for that reason we don't grieve as do those who have no hope (1 Thes. 4:13). Jesus faced and defeated death when he suffered, died, and rose again. By faith in Jesus, we too can face death with a certain hope. Death for us then loses its sting and victory. We realize the bodies of loved ones are asleep in Jesus, and decayed though they certainly will be, they will be raised as glorious immortal bodies.

The soul is not asleep, as some teach. There is for departed loved ones, an awareness and a continuity of life, as they await the resurrection of their bodies when Jesus returns to earth. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul seems to refer to a temporary heavenly body we will have until the resurrection of the body entered into the earth (2 Corinthians 5:1-5). In Romans 8, Paul says not even death itself can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (verse 38-39). In fact, death for the believer is gain, because rather than separating us from Christ, death conveys us immediately into the glorious presence of God (Philippians 1:21-23). For the believer, says Paul, death is defeated and then changed from being an enemy to being an ally, which seems to be Paul's sentiment in Philippians 1:21: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

I recall a number of years ago, when a team from my previous pastorate was on a mission trip to Romania. My brother, Phil, who at the time was living in Romania, met us in Budapest, Hungary, and assisted us across the border. At a border crossing, we were given passage because the government official was an acquaintance of my brother. In a similar way, for the believer, Christ has for us made a friend out of death. Instead of being our enemy who robs us of life, death becomes a friend who takes us across "the border" between mortal and everlasting life.

Our hope is not in a vacuous sort of ephemeral existence touted by New Age gurus, whose views are similar to these confused and deluded Corinthians Paul is addressing. Nor do we have to go "out on a limb" with Shirley McLain and hold to the reincarnation of our spirit into some other creature. The heavenly realm is a real existence, and Jesus will reign with us on this to-be-redeemed earth. Then he will restore and transform the universe he has made (Romans 8:18-25). The New Heaven and Earth will be our eternal habitation where we will serve and live for him, and relate to each other in an ineffable life without end. We will be all he intended us to be from before the creation of the world.

But, Paul says, if Christ isn't raised, we might as well forget all this. You might as well give up on help for forgiveness and on hope for heaven. If there is no resurrection, go tell all those "duped" believers who are being persecuted for their stand for Christ. It was reported a few years ago that there are at least 42 countries where Christians are facing overt persecution, and that more Christians were killed for their faith in the 20th Century than were martyred in all the previous centuries of Christian history. In the year 2009 an estimated 171,000 followers of Jesus were martyred for their faith in Jesus (<http://christianity.about.com/od/denominations/p/christiantoday.htm>). If Christ isn't raised, we should tell Christians throughout the world who are being tortured for their refusal to renounce faith in Christ. If there is no resurrection, please tell them to give up. It isn't worth it. They're suffering for a lie, Paul would suggest, if Christ is not raised.

We believe, along with the apostle Paul, in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting...

Because without the resurrection we would *give in*

Paul says hypothetically that if Christ weren't raised, we would give up. And, instead of living for Christ and resisting selfish and hedonistic impulses, we would give in...

To Selfish Choices

Paul is saying that if Christ isn't raised we might as well indulge the appetites of the flesh the way we want to, without any thought of others or of God, just as the Epicureans in the Greco-Roman world of Corinth (verse 32). In fact, he says that without the reality of the resurrection, confirmed and made possible by Christ's resurrection, we are of all people most to be pitied. We are deceived fools. *The Message* gives verse 19 this paraphrase: "If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot."

I have heard it said that it would be better to live a Christian life even if there were no heaven. I suppose this would be true, in terms of all of society being a more congenial place, but we would be congenial fools, and our thoughts of being forgiven and having fellowship with God would be deception and we would be deceivers of others. If there is no resurrection, Paul says by implication, then the one whom we thought was the Truth is really a deceiver. So as long as we have this brief mortal life, let's be honest, and just follow natural instincts and desires for selfish pleasure, as did the Epicureans. In the first century culture, it would have been unthinkable to live an upright, unselfish life if it didn't make a difference for eternity. These Christians were called upon to suffer, and were constantly under pressure to renounce their faith. What fools they would have been to pay such a price for a deceiving or fictitious god!

To the young person thinking of renouncing self-centered dreams and selfish ambition for the sake of living for a noble cause, you might as well give in to selfish choices if there is no resurrection. Without the reality and victory of the resurrection, follow the old American beer commercial and "grab all the gusto you can." If Christ is not raised, then all are in the bondage of sin, and even the most altruistic life that can be lived is to help others whose lives are also condemned to be self-centered. So you might as well live only for self.

Paul's argument would lead to the conclusion that if Christ is not raised then just give in to the ways of the unbelieving, hedonistic world. We would give in, Paul says, to selfish choices, and also...

To sinful character

Without the resurrection, why waste your time and energy building good character? If you are going to rot in the grave, and there is no life to come, why make the effort to be of upright moral character? The idea of moral development in Scripture is that we are building character for eternity. We have been predestined to be conformed to Christ's perfect character, so we are to become like him daily (Romans 8:18-29). Our present character building, our growth in holiness, has eternal implications.

If Christ is raised and if we have hope for our resurrection, we do well to pray with Jonathan Edwards, "Lord, stamp Eternity on my eyeballs." That is a good prayer if Christ is raised and we will be raised. Otherwise, live it up in the present.

You can see why the lost world has no real interest in morality. We Christians act surprised when unbelievers don't share our moral outrage and join in our moral-political crusades. Why should they? Really, why should they care to have good morals in television programming? If man is a temporal creature, there is no higher being to whom we must give an account at the end of all things. Let's live it up, Paul says, like the Greek Epicurean philosophers, who said,

"Let us eat and drink,
For tomorrow we die" (verse 32).

The only lasting moral character of a nation comes alone through the gospel of Christ, the risen Christ.

Paul continues to build the straw man of a "resurrection-less Christianity." He says, in effect, if Christ isn't raised, let's give in. The Apostle John exhorts us to hold out against the spirit of the antichrist, knowing that "he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). In our text Paul posits that if Christ is not raised, then there is no such higher power.

Paul says that our belief in the resurrection and our hope for the resurrection are foundational to our entire Christian faith. All that we believe and the way we behave is inextricably tied to our hope in the resurrection of Christ and our

bodily resurrection as well. We live well because we want to die well. And the more we grow in Christ the greater is our hope and confidence in both Jesus' and our resurrection. John Calvin said, "Let us...consider this settled: that no one has made progress in the school of Christ who does not joyfully await the day of death and final resurrection" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* Chapter XXV, Book III).

We believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting...

Because without the resurrection we would go home

If I thought Christ were not raised, and subsequently there will be no bodily resurrection for us, then the honest thing would be to say, "Folks, let's go home." In our churches there would be no need for a closing benediction, since we would conclude prayer also is a waste of time. The beautiful ordinance of baptism would be a meaningless ritual, even a hoax. If Christ was not raised, there is no newness of life to be symbolized by the baptized. And if there is no resurrection of Christ and for us, we should arrange for the distribution of church property, and disposal of all assets, and simply close our building down.

Paul says if there is no resurrection, let's go home, first of all...

Because there would be no message

The church has no message without the resurrection, because...

God's word would not be true

Paul says if there is no resurrection then our preaching is a waste of time, and many would regard all preaching as meaningless. However, Paul would reply, "If preaching is a waste of time, then so is your faith" (verse 14).

If the part of the Bible that asserts the fact of the resurrection was proven to be false and misleading, then none of it could be trusted. If there is no resurrection, there is no gospel. Without the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the hope of the bodily resurrection of the believer, then there is no forgiveness of sin and no hope for eternal life. Indeed, if God's promise of the resurrection is not true, then we cannot rest in the assurance of his love. If there were no resurrection his word would not be true, which means also...

God's witnesses would not be truthful

In his book, *Mere Christianity*, which presents the case for the credibility of the gospel, C. S. Lewis wrote that if Christ isn't all he said himself to be in the stupendous claims he made for himself, he was either a liar, a lunatic, or a legend. For example, if Jesus is not the way, the truth and the life, and the

only way to the Father, as he stated in John 14:6, then he was a dangerously misleading megalomaniac.

If there is no bodily resurrection, we who witness of his word and his saving grace would be simply perpetrating Jesus' outlandish claims, or those egregious lies, or those far-fetched legends. We who witness to our salvation believe Jesus is all he claims to be as the way, the truth and the life, and the resurrection and the life. We believe that he who was raised on that first Easter morning is the one who said he and the Father are one, and that no one can come to the Father except through him (John 10:30; 14:6). Without the bodily resurrection we would be false witnesses guilty of perjury (see Andrus, above).

Paul says if there is no resurrection, we would go home...

Because there would be no mission

If there is no resurrection there is no mission for the church. There is no reason for commitment to Christ, and to telling a lost world about Jesus.

Paul refers to the unbiblical, superstitious practice of some of the Corinthians, being baptized by proxy for the dead, as being even more absurd if there is no resurrection. (Many interpretations are given for verse 29, besides the one adopted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which certainly denies the overall witness of Scripture concerning salvation and final judgment, such as expressed in Hebrews 9:27. A more credible practice than proxy baptism might have been the baptism of someone in behalf of a fellow believer who died before the opportunity to declare his or her faith through baptism. This posthumous baptism could have occurred frequently in the first century church, which saw many of its members martyred. Another interpretation is the possible practice of baptism by a believer "in the place of the dead." This could refer to the baptism of a new believer who answered the call to take the place of a believer who died a martyr's death. The dead martyr had been baptized, but now another believer is also being baptized and is dedicated to taking the place of the departed martyr, thereby continuing a succession of faithful witnessing, even unto death. For this discussion, see Gordon D Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT). Paul says that without the resurrection, it would be foolish to risk one's life by being so baptized and becoming a potential martyr.)

The Apostle Paul is implying that apart from the bodily resurrection, even his biblically based ministry of risking his life in order to preach the gospel and plant churches is a waste of time. In verse 32 Paul says if there were no resurrection it would be absurd to fight wild beasts, perhaps a euphemism for his human opponents. These "wild beasts" may have been those he refers to in chapter 16, verse 9, who always opposed his efforts. Paul would say, "If the gospel of the cross and the empty tomb, and the resurrection of all believers isn't true, it isn't worth it. I just don't need this!" In contrast with Paul, I have little experience or even an idea what it's like to severely suffer

for Christ. But I *do* know the feeling also that leads me to say at times, “I don’t need this!”

If there is no resurrection, why do we have missionaries living in difficult places, renouncing worldly comforts? Why should we send missionaries into harm’s way, in places where they might be kidnapped and held hostage? Why should we send missionaries to places in the world where those they evangelize and disciple will be ostracized from their families and perhaps suffer overt persecution or even martyrdom? Why risk anything? If Christ isn’t raised, then call all the missionaries home.

If there is no resurrection, then let’s go home. Even at my advanced age, I should have the integrity to seek gainful employment and an honest job. If there is no resurrection then my preaching and teaching and ministry are all a hoax. If I thought there were no resurrection the honest thing would be to cease and desist from deception and misrepresentation of the facts. I don’t want to deceive people, and give false hopes, and waste people’s time.

Henri Nouwen relates the story of a seminary student named John who failed to minister to Mr. Harrison, a dying man who was desperately reaching out for hope on the eve of a dangerous operation that proved fatal. John, who was being schooled in non-directive counseling at the seminary, remained silent when this patient he was visiting in the hospital desperately reached out to him for some word of hope in the face of his possible death. Nouwen writes that John failed to “recognize in Mr. Harrison’s condition the agony of all men: man’s desperate cry for a human response from his brother,” and that, as believers, our response to that cry is “a matter of life and death” (page 62-63, *The Wounded Healer*).

Conclusion:

Praise God, there is a resurrection! Christ has been raised! The evidence is convincing and conclusive and irrefutable. We have the evidence of Scripture, the empty tomb, the transformed disciples, 2000 years of church history, and the millions living today whose lives are being changed by the risen Christ.

Since Christ has been raised, and since we who believe in him will also be raised, let’s hold on! We must never give up to life’s pressures nor give in to sin’s pleasures. We must hold out against the Tempter. We know it’s worth it to resist and not give in to the lusts of the flesh. These bodies of ours are wasting away, but our inner being is being renewed daily (2 Corinthians 4:16). These bodies of dying flesh will be raised immortal bodies, so let’s honor them as temples of the Holy Spirit. You can also gain victory over discouragement, as you affirm that he who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. The risen, living Lord Jesus will assure you of his presence and grace.

Let us never give up the battle, because we know we’re on the winning side. As followers of Jesus, we enter into the narrative and pattern of the cross and

the resurrection. We too are crucified with Christ. We have through faith in Jesus died with him on the cross, and are dead to the power and pull of sin and the penalty for our sin. And now we live by the power of the resurrection (Galatians 2:20). By faith we participate in Jesus' victory now. We experience daily his deliverance from the enemy and his dupes. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:37). Yes, we still have to face the final enemy, death, but we can do so knowing he is a defeated foe, and Christ has tasted death for us all. And Jesus rose triumphantly, bodily. And we too will be with Jesus in heaven, and when Jesus returns again, our bodies that lie in the grave will be raised as immortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:50-55).

Those of you who have any doubts about your conversion and life in Christ, today, right now can receive and follow Christ as Lord, because he lives. You can know you have eternal life, and will face death as a defeated foe who cannot harm you. In fact, all death can do you is good, as Paul makes clear (Romans 8:35-39; Philippians 1:21). Death will some day escort you into the presence of Jesus.

Malcolm Muggeridge wrote about the last hours in the life of the great English poet, William Blake: "(He) had said before that death to him was no more than moving from one room to another and so it proved to be. He went on singing in his bed in the same divine way until about six in the evening, and then, as he said in one of his poems, silently, invisibly, the human spirit left him, becoming part of the eternity on which his eyes had been so faithfully set during his mortal years" (page 90, *A Third Testament*, Little, Brown and Co., 1976).

Let's hold forth the glorious news of salvation. By faith and hope, let's keep our churches' doors open. Let's keep on with the sharing of the message, and fulfilling our part of the mission of the Great Commission. Realize you are serving with the risen Lord, and continuing his mission in the world (John 20:21). Nothing done with Jesus is in vain, as Paul reminds us at the close of this fifteenth chapter (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Hear the words of hope from songwriter David:

"As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake, I shall be satisfied with seeing your likeness" (Psalm 17:15, English Standard Version).

And from John: "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2, ESV).

And so, we have no fear of "looking into the mirror and seeing nothing." The shudder of the soul has been removed and replaced by a calm assurance that Jesus lives. Thus we need not fear death. Because Jesus lives we too live, and we shall be forever with him. Praise God that we can say with conviction, "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting"!

Questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:

1. How would you define biblical hope? How does Christian hope differ from the way the world uses the word “hope,” such as “I hope for a sunny day tomorrow”?
2. Why is the Christian’s hope for salvation, including the forgiveness of sins, dependent on the historical reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the future resurrection of the believer?
3. Considering especially verses 19, and 30-32, did Paul think the Christian life would be worth living if the resurrection were not true? Contrary to what Paul says, I have heard Christians say that the Christian life is worth living just for the difference we experience in this mortal life, even without any hope for the resurrection. Could it be that these Christians disagree with Paul because they have not experienced the degree of suffering that Paul endured as a follower of Jesus? Discuss your thoughts with the group.
4. How strong is your hope in the resurrection? Do you agree with John Calvin, quoted on page 8, that “No one has made progress in the school of Christ who does not joyfully await the day of death and final resurrection”? Explain your answer.
5. Because Paul knew that the resurrection of Jesus and our future bodily resurrection are true, he was willing to risk death and fight with “wild beasts” (enemies of the cross) every day. What difference does the resurrection make in your life? Are you willing to risk and to give your life to follow, wherever Jesus leads you?
6. Pray with your group for those you know who need the hope of the resurrection of Jesus. Pray for those you know who may be facing the imminence of death, that they will have the assurance of saving faith and the blessed hope of a glorious departure to be with the Lord. Praise God that Jesus lives!

