

“A Better Resurrection”  
(Hebrews 11:35)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. This morning, we looked at the importance of the resurrection.
  - a. Adam brought death.
  - b. But Christ brought life.
2. Without the resurrection, no one could be saved.
  - a. If Christ had not been raised, it would have meant the Father didn't receive His sacrifice: His words and works would not have been justified.
  - b. It would have meant that He was still in death's hold.
  - c. If He had not been restored to life, He wouldn't have life to give.
  - d. And since He is the One who takes our place in the Covenant of Grace, if He hadn't been raised, on that basis, we would not be raised, since we will only receive what He has done.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, we'll look at the other aspect of attaining to the resurrection.
  - a. We've seen what Christ has done.
  - b. But we still need to consider what we must do.
2. In the Christian life there is always the indicative and the imperative.
  - a. The indicative tells us what has been, what is, and what will be.
    - (i) In this case, Christ has lived, suffered and died, and been raised.
    - (ii) He gives life to everyone who will take it, and those who do receive eternal life.
    - (iii) And He will be faithful to keep us and not let us go, no matter what happens.
  - b. But there is also the imperative: what we must do.
    - (i) We must trust in the work Christ has done.
    - (ii) But we must also do what He calls us to do, or we won't receive eternal life. We must strive to enter the narrow gate.
      - (a) Again, this doesn't mean we must keep a certain level of works to be saved.
      - (b) But if we are saved, if we will obtain to the resurrection, certain things will be true of us.
      - (c) We will continue to press forward, through our sins, trials, difficulties, and persevere to the end.
3. This evening, I want us to consider what we must do to obtain the better resurrection.
  - a. First, let's consider what this better resurrection is.
  - b. Second, let's consider what we need to do to obtain it.
  - c. Finally, let's consider some encouragements to persevere.

## II. Sermon.

- A. First, what is the better resurrection the author to the Hebrews is talking about here?
1. Most obviously, it is the resurrection of life, rather than death.
    - a. The Bible speaks of three resurrections:
      - (i) There is the resurrection to spiritual life:
        - (a) “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (John 5:25).
        - (b) Those who hear the voice of Christ in the Gospel, and respond in faith and repentance, have been raised from spiritual death to life.
        - (c) Those who receive this resurrection have nothing to fear from the second death – the first being natural death, the second, eternal judgment (Rev. 20:6).
      - (ii) When Christ comes to raise the dead at the last trump, there will be two more resurrections: a resurrection of life and of judgment.
        - (a) “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29).
        - (b) Some will be raised to everlasting life, others to judgment, or the second death, at the same time.
          - (1) Those who did the good deeds obtain heaven.
            - (A) Not as the reward of their efforts.
            - (B) But as the evidence of their grace.
            - (C) These received the first resurrection that led to this.
          - (2) Those who did the evil deeds will be punished in hell.
            - (A) As their reward of their works.
            - (B) As the evidence of their not having grace.
      - b. Which of these do you believe is the better resurrection?
        - (i) Those who participate in the first resurrection and consequently, the resurrection of life.
        - (ii) The author to the Hebrews speaks of those who were “tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection” (v. 35).
          - (a) They were willing to suffer, to do anything necessary, not to deny their Lord, but to be faithful to the end to receive the crown of life.
          - (b) Obviously, it’s worth any price we must pay to obtain the resurrection of life.
    2. Less obviously, the better resurrection refers to the better rewards we hope to receive at the resurrection.
      - a. What we do in life will make a difference in the degree of reward we receive.
        - (i) Paul writes, “Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man

can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:8-15).

- (ii) Even as there are degrees of punishment in hell for the faithless, so there are degrees of reward in heaven for the faithful.
- b. Jesus tells us that those who endure through suffering for doing what is right will receive the greater reward.
  - (i) "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5:10-12).
  - (ii) The more we labor for Him here below, the better will be the resurrection we attain to.

#### B. Second, what must we do to obtain this better resurrection?

1. First, we must turn from our sins and trust in Christ.
  - a. His resurrection is the only one that will save us.
  - b. We must trust in His completed work.
  - c. This is the beginning and the end: apart from this, we won't be able to do what follows: this is the first resurrection.
2. Second, we must be willing to follow Him no matter where He leads us.
  - a. Sometimes following Jesus means victory for the kingdom, as it did in the lives of those in the hall of faith.
  - b. But other times it meant suffering and death, as we see in our text.
    - (i) We must be willing to follow Jesus wherever He leads and not turn back.
    - (ii) We must do so even if it crosses our will. Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matt. 16:24-25).
3. Third, we must continue to press forward no matter what opposition we meet.
  - a. This is implied in the previous point.
  - b. Very often we will endure persecution:
    - (i) Paul wrote to Timothy, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12).
    - (ii) Jesus told His disciples, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not

greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me” (John 15:18-21).

- (iii) Paul said to the believers in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).
- (iv) Consider our text.
- (v) We must be willing to press forward and not turn back.
- (vi) Paul wrote regarding his own experience, “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the Law*, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:8-12).
- (vii) We must press forward through all opposition.

#### C. Finally, how can we continue to press forward and obtain this better resurrection?

1. First, we must consider what Jesus has done for us and strive to love Him in return with our whole heart. Listen to what Thomas Watson tells us about the power of love:
  - a. “Love made Christ suffer for us; love was the chain that fastened Him to the cross; so, if we love God, we shall be willing to suffer for Him. Love has a strange quality, it is the least suffering grace, and yet it is the most suffering grace. It is the least suffering grace in one sense; it will not suffer known sin to lie in the soul unrepented of, it will not suffer abuses and dishonours done to God; thus it is the least suffering grace. Yet it is the most suffering grace; it will suffer reproaches, bonds, and imprisonments for Christ’s sake. . . .
  - b. “Love will carry men out above their own strength. Tertullian observes how much the heathen suffered for love to their country. If the spring-head of nature rises so high, surely grace will rise higher. If love to their country will make men suffer, much more should love to Christ. ‘Love endureth all things.’ Basil speaks of a virgin condemned to the fire, who having her life and estate offered her if she would fall down to the idol, answered, ‘Let life and money go, welcome Christ.’
  - c. “It was a noble and zealous speech of Ignatius, ‘Let me be ground with the teeth of wild beasts, if I may be God’s pure wheat.’
  - d. “How did divine affection carry the early saints above the love of life, and the fear of death! St. Stephen was stoned, St. Luke hanged on an olive tree, St. Peter crucified with his head downward. These divine heroes were willing to suffer, rather than by their cowardice to make the name of God suffer. How did St. Paul prize his chain that he wore for Christ! He glorified in it as a woman that is proud of her jewels, says Chrysostom. And holy Ignatius wore his fetters as a bracelet of diamonds. ‘Not accepting deliverance’ (Heb. 11:35). They refused to come out of prison on sinful

- terms, they preferred their innocence before their liberty” (Thomas Watson, *A Divine Cordial*, pp. 62-3.)
- e. Strive to love Jesus Christ with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.
2. Second, we must serve Him with all that is in us. Listen to John Flavel’s exhortation to use our abilities to honor the Lord:
- a. “Christ and His resurrection have such a potent influence upon the resurrection of the saints. But it is the duty, and will be the wisdom of the people of God, so to govern, dispose, and employ their bodies, as becomes those that understand what glory is prepared for them at the resurrection of the just. . . .
  - b. “Be not fondly tender of them, but employ them for God. How many good duties are lost and spoiled by sinful indulgence to our bodies. Alas, we are generally more solicitous to live long than to live usefully. How many Christians have active, vigorous bodies, yet God has little service for them. If your bodies were animated by some other souls that love God more than you do, and burn with holy zeal in His service, more work would be done for God in a day, than is now done in a month. To have an able, healthy body, and not use it for God, is as if one should give you a strong and stately horse, upon condition you must not work or ride him. Wherein is the mercy of having a body, except it be employed for God? . . .
  - c. “Let not the indulgence of your bodies draw your souls into snares, and bring them under the power of temptations to sin. This is a very common case. Oh, how many thousands of precious souls perish eternally for the satisfaction of a vile body for a moment! Their souls must suffer, because their body must be indulged. It is recorded to the immortal honor of those worthies, Hebrews 11:32-35, that they accepted not deliverance, ‘that they might obtain a better resurrection.’ . . . They were made of as tender flesh as we, but such was their care of their souls, and hope of a better resurrection, that they listened not to the complaints of their bodies. Oh that we all had the same resolution” (John Flavel, *The Fountain of Life*, pp. 489-91).
3. Finally, we mustn’t fear death, but see it as the dusk of this life to be followed by the dawning of a new life. Listen to Richard Baker in his *Meditations and Disquisitions*:
- a. “What is the evening but the end of the day? And what is the evening of our life but the end of our days? And in this evening indeed there is commonly heaviness – weeping for parting of friends that have lived together; but this heaviness is removed as soon as morning comes; for what is the morning but when the sun rises again? And what is our morning but when we shall rise again? And as when this morning comes there will be a day that shall have no more evening, so when this joy comes all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and there shall be no more weeping. . . .
  - b. “And now, O my soul, why should it trouble you to have heaviness in the evening, so long as you are sure to have joy in the morning? Why should it trouble you to be weeping for a time, when you are sure of rejoicing when time shall be no more?” (349).
  - c. Let us press forward to gain what Jesus rose again to give us.
  - d. To help us, let us prepare to come to the table and receive the grace Jesus Christ has provided for us so that we might complete our journey.