

## LESSON 6

April 5, 2026

# Unit II: Fulfilling Our Obligations to Family and Community

## Thoughts on Life and Death

DEVOTIONAL READING: Luke 24:1-12

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 12:26-27; Luke 24:1-12;  
John 14:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-20, 50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 22:1-5

PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 15:13-20, 51-58

### KEY VERSE

Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.  
(1 Corinthians 15:20, KJV)

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Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen  
asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:20, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Defend, as Paul does, the belief in God's promised resurrection life, grounded in the resurrection of Christ.
- Take comfort and not lose heart in the face of worldly suffering.
- Encourage others with the assurance that injustice in this life is not God's final word.

### \*Key Terms

**Dead** (verse 16)—Greek: *nekros* (nek-ros'): deceased; lifeless.

**Faith** (verse 14)—Greek: *pistis* (pis'-tis): trust; belief; confidence; fidelity.

**Hope** (verse 19)—Greek: *elpizó* (el-pid'-zo): to wait or expect with joy and confidence.

**Raised** (verse 13)—Greek: *egeiró* (eg-i'-ro): lifted up; awakened; aroused; "risen" (KJV).

**Resurrection** (verse 13)—Greek: *anastasis* (anas'-tas-is): a rising again from death to life.

**Testified** (verse 15)—Greek: *martureó* (martoo-reh'-o): affirmed based on experience; bore witness.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



### The Biblical Context

One of the challenges for the early church was how to teach and affirm the resurrection of Jesus. Although there were several post-Resurrection appearances—the sightings by the disciples, the testimony of more than 500 witnesses, the Upper Room encounter, and even the dramatic calling of Saul—it remained an issue of debate. The followers of “the Way” (as they were known before being called Christians) faced intense opposition. Roman soldiers had reported the Resurrection, but they were bribed to remain silent (Matthew 27). Jewish leaders resisted the testimony because if Jesus had risen from the dead, then their argument that He was not the Messiah collapsed.

An even greater challenge emerged as Christians themselves began to die. The community of faith needed to know what to believe about life beyond the grave. In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul addressed this concern directly. He sought to reassure believers about their own resurrection and its connection to Jesus’ resurrection. Paul explained how this would occur, the events of the last days, and—most importantly—that life for the believer continues beyond the grave.

## Introduction

Two old friends had recently attended the funeral service of their dear companion. After leaving the church where the service was held, the pair decided to continue their conversation. A nearby coffee shop provided the perfect spot, and the pleasant weather drew them to the outdoor seating. As they talked, memories of the service surfaced—the minister’s empathy, the beauty of the setting, the moving music, and the heartfelt tributes. Their companion, they agreed, had lived an eventful life, filled with excitement for himself, his family, and those who were closest to him.

During their reflections, one of them raised an intriguing question. “I know that as Christians, we are supposed to believe in the Resurrection, but do you think it’s true? And if it is true, will it be like the biblical images—streets of gold, pearly gates, angels, and the whole picture?”

The other friend responded, “Well, I certainly believe that life will go on. Experience or not, we will have to wait and see. Still, I’m hoping it will resemble the vision the old preacher used to talk about—where the Sabbath never ends! I could hear my favorite preachers and singers time and time again. We will have to trust God and find out.”

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### The Point of Preaching (*1 Corinthians 15:13-20*)

#### KJV

**13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:**

**14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.**

**15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.**

- 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:  
17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.  
18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.  
19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.  
20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.**

### **NIV**

- 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.  
14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.  
15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised.  
16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.  
17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.  
18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.  
19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.  
20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

The apostle Paul points to the resurrection of the dead as the central focus of the Christian faith. This is because to do so means that God can do anything . . . including overcoming death. A God who super rules the law of the universe has the divine capabilities to do anything. Paul notes that there are those who denied bodily resurrection. However, he makes it clear that since this is a primary aim of preaching, then this claim cannot and should not be repudiated.

He starts by looking at the importance of the resurrection of Christ. Since Paul himself had met this crucified carpenter (albeit on the Damascus Road after His cross experience), he knew the veracity of the contention. This was not conjecture or supposition; Paul met the same One that he sought to vilify and persecute. Paul could preach the Good News because he knew it to be absolutely true. If God could raise Jesus—which He did—then all else was possible in this life and the next. However, it was equally true that resurrection was not just for the Redeemer but also for the redeemed. Jesus is referred to as the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (verse 20, NIV). The idea of being planted is an intriguing notion because something is planted or placed in the ground with the idea that it will indeed blossom. Jesus’ death blossomed into an eternal reality for other believers.

This “first fruit” of Jesus would demonstrate God’s love and commitment to humanity. Thus, this is the heart of preaching . . . not self-help or prosperity, but that “He died and was raised.” All believers will do this.

### **🔍 WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Some in today’s generation wonder why the old preachers would “go to the**

cross” every Sunday. Is it possible to have solid preaching without mentioning the Resurrection?

## The Mystery of Faith (*1 Corinthians 15:51-53*)

### KJV

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,  
52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.  
53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

### NIV

51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—  
52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.  
53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

Paul notes that the Christian faith is a mystery. This terminology was striking in the Greco-Roman world, where “mystery religions” were shrouded in secrecy and hidden from outsiders. In contrast, the Christian faith seeks to open the eyes of believers to the things of God. It is preached openly so that all can hear and believe. It is not for a select few; the hope is that all may be saved.

The mystery is that there will be a transformation for all followers of the faith. The change is the refashioning of mortality. The human body, mind, and spirit are remarkable, yet humanity is subject to decay and not designed to live forever. Thus, for believers to live eternally, there must be a retooling of the self. This transformation does not happen through human effort but is a gift from God. Belief and confession in Jesus are essential, but it is God who completes the work. How this occurs is wondrous yet mysterious. He has all eternity to accomplish it, yet it happens instantly—in the twinkling of an eye. How fast is that? A millisecond? A nanosecond? Only God knows.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Are there mysteries you would like to discuss with God when you reach glory? What is on your list?

## It Pays to Serve Jesus (*1 Corinthians 15:54-58*)

### KJV

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have

put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

### **NIV**

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

55 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

As Christians faced death and hardships, some wondered if belonging to this new faith was worthwhile. Thus, Paul closed with an exhortation, “be firm, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord” (verse 58, NASB). To be steadfast—firm and confident in belief—was crucial, especially in Corinth, where immorality abounded. To be unmovable was equally important, for competing philosophies continually tried to shift believers away from their faith. To abound in the work of the Lord was essential, even though some argued it was unnecessary. Yet, Paul insisted—it does take all of that.

For many, the more serious concern was whether such sacrifice was worth it. Families were being divided by loyalty to this preacher who wrote and visited from time to time. Paul’s conviction is echoed in the words of Rev. Willie Morganfield’s song “Serving the Lord”:

*Just keep working every day*

*Whatever is right, God said He would pay; . . .*

*Serving the Lord, it will pay off after while.*

### **Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**When serving the Lord feels exhausting or unrecognized, what keeps you motivated to remain steadfast and unmovable in your faith and ministry?**

### **A Closing Thought**

Although Christianity may seem complex, it is actually simple. God loves humanity and allows that love to be proclaimed. Jesus was killed, but by His power, God raised Jesus from

death to redeem humanity. While that seems mysterious, Jesus gave His life as payment for human sin, so that we could receive the gift of eternal life instead of condemnation. Those who accept Jesus by faith may live in ways that demonstrate trust in His work and belief in His promised return.

## Your Life

As you share your faith, is looking for resurrection an active and essential part of your personal hope? Or is it merely an ancient idea you prefer not to consider? If Jesus were to return soon, would you be prepared?

## Your World!

How do you explain resurrection to others? If speaking to a child, how would you explain the truth and importance of the Resurrection? Is the Easter story enough, or can Paul's words help you to explain it so clearly that even a child can grasp it?

## Closing Prayer

O Lord, thank You for giving us faith to guide us from earth to glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Conclusion

### (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Think about who is really in charge. In preparation for next week's lesson, read Mark 12:17; Romans 13:1, 6-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17.

### Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, April 6	"Safety in Wise and Righteous Counsel"	(Proverbs 11:3-6, 8-11, 14)
TUESDAY, April 7	"Our Ultimate Allegiance Is to God"	(Acts 5:26-32)
WEDNESDAY, April 8	"Godly Leaders Will Give an Account"	(Hebrews 13:16-20)
THURSDAY, April 9	"Just Rulers Fear God"	(2 Samuel 23:1-7)
FRIDAY, April 10	"The Ways of a Godly King"	(Deuteronomy 17:14-20)
SATURDAY, April 11	"The Things that Belong to God"	(Mark 12:13-17)
SUNDAY, April 12	"Show Honor, Love, and Righteousness"	(1 Peter 2:13-17)

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