

Series: A Missional Church for a Pagan Culture

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

1 Corinthians 15:58

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“How Our Future Resurrection Affects Our Present Lives”

INTRO

In my most recent blog—I talk about a sports psychologist named H.A. Dorfman
-who has studied great pitchers
-and what they have in common—like all great athletes—is FOCUS

As Dorfman has watched men go to the mound—he has found that the great ones have only three things on their minds—

1. the selection of their pitch
2. the catcher's glove
3. and the strike zone

And it is here they attack—with relentless aggression
-they don't nibble on the corners—pitch around hitters
-in fact—batters barely exist in their universe
-they are “vague abstractions”
-all that matters is where the ball is placed

Reading Paul's letters—you get the impression he expects the same focus, the same single minded devotion
-which he writes about in 15:58 (read)

-these are summation words—as underscored by the “therefore”
-a summary call to action

The reality of the resurrection prompts these words

-the theme of this whole chapter
-it's here Paul tells us that when Jesus rose from the grave—everything changed
-the kingdom of God arrived—the new age broke in

-the resurrection means everything is now under His feet—including death—verse 27
-it also means our resurrection is guaranteed
-one day we in Christ will also rise from our own graves
-to new life—receiving bodies fit for life in God's future kingdom—bodies glorious, imperishable—verse 42

- no longer will lives be cut short by illness—no longer will summer reach its height and give way to bleak and barren days
- and in all of this—we can live victorious lives—no longer weighed down, defeated by sin, by death—verse 57

So what does all of this mean for the present?

- according to verse 58—it means you cannot live this truth in neutral
- you can't treat it as some interesting bit of theology

- the resurrection has radical implications for life

1. LIVE LIVES THAT COUNT

- “give yourselves fully”—abound, excel, overflow--all are implied in the language
- the word is the antithesis of lives that merely exist—lives that are barren, empty, poor
- the resurrection has changed all of this—why?
- there are two important reasons

a. GOD HAS BROUGHT SOMETHING OF THE FUTURE INTO THE PRESENT

- when Christ arose—His new world broke into the present
- something of His future kingdom entered into the here and now
- and those of us who have given our lives to Jesus and follow Him live at this intersection of present and future

- we live in the already and not yet tension
- we *have been raised* to new life—made alive—Ephesians 2:5; Colossians 3:1
- we *will be raised* to new life—I Corinthians 15

What does this mean?

- it means *we are no longer earth bound*
 - we have risen to live different lives—Christ like lives
 - we have authority over sin and its corrupting influence
 - we are no longer bound to elemental forces—we are free from sin's demands
 - no longer bound to give consent to idolatry and self-centeredness
- it means we can, should *anticipate something of the supernatural* in the present
 - for the resurrection enables us to experience a dynamic, supernatural faith
 - a living, ascended, victorious savior
 - who intends to impact the world through us

-call us to a life that cannot be accomplished except in the power of life from above

-but too much of what we call Christian is really just human-
too much of what we call church is merely just gathering

-Peter tells us we can participate in His resurrection nature now—2 Peter 1:4

-meaning that a powerful, present transformation—
something of the miraculous is possible

iii. it means that prayer should have radical power

-prayer—which cries out—Thy kingdom come!

-prayer that lays hold something of God's future kingdom

-prayer that is unwilling to accept the world as it is—Grenz

-prayer that is so formidable that there is an *in-breaking* of God's future rule, His future healing, His joy, His power, His presence

-such that we become "advance signs" of God's eventual new world in the present

-I don't think God ever intended for us to pray the kind of lame prayers that simply ask—help us to bear up with life as it is!

-when Paul says "give yourselves fully, live lives that excel, live to the brim, and overflow—it is because the resurrection implies something else—

b. GOD WILL BRING SOMETHING OF THE PRESENT INTO THE FUTURE

-we may not realize this—but it is not merely our lives that will outlast this world

-what we do in this life—the choices we make—will follow us to into eternity—and shape it

-our choices follow us—Revelation 14:13

-what is burned up are only the things that displease God—I Corinthians 3:12-15

-what will last are those things that have honored Him

-which means we can—and should pray as Moses did—make permanent the work of my hands-Ps 90:17

-maybe it is a song we compose—a book we write—a painting we paint—a chair we make—that are intended to serve God—glorify Him

-maybe it is a life we pour into

-whatever these “works of the Lord”

-give yourselves fully to them—

-for they will last into eternity

Listen to how NT Wright puts it—

“Every act of love, gratitude, and kindness; every work of art or music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of His creation; every act of care and nurture...every prayer and Spirit led teaching and every deed that spreads the gospel, builds up the church and embodies holiness and makes the name of Jesus honored—all of this will find its way, through the resurrection power of God, into the new creation that God will one day make”-NT Wright

Knowing all of this means nothing we do for God is “in vain” —verse 58

-we are not doing empty things like—

-oiling the wheels of a machine about to be rolled over a cliff

-restoring a painting that’s going to be thrown on a fire

-planting roses that are going to be dug up for a building site

-buying sun tan lotion in Oregon

-when we abound in the work of God—we take its fruit with us

What does this mean?

-it means we dare not squander the present—find a way to escape this world

-instead—we are invited in these words of Paul to run deeper into it

-see it with God’s eyes—hear it with God’s ears—feel it with God’s heart

-think about it with God’s mind

-rather than deny our bodies—glorify God with them-I Cor 6:20

-rather than give ourselves over to our body’s wants—present every member to Him-Rom 12:1-2

-for in the process—we are giving shape to our future resurrection

-but more—we become a force that God can use to impact the world, the society around us

So—give yourselves fully—but more—

2. LIVE LIVES THAT STAND THEIR GROUND

-stand firm—let nothing move you

-Paul uses two words to declare we must hold firm—not get off course

-hold your post—don't be knocked loose from your moorings

-for when a person commits to living in light of the future kingdom

-live as subversives of the status quo

-evil—which is anti-creation, anti-life, anti-resurrection

-will not stand by idly and accept the truth of life eternal—of a world turned upside down in which things are being set right—death defeated—of Christ triumphant

-give yourselves to live out love—and hatred will be threatened—
and will stir up some to violence

-give yourself to speaking truth, calling for justice

-then those forces that use hate truth and use deception and oppress with injustice will do all they can to silence, discourage

-give yourself to beauty and art

-and forces which hate beauty will do all they can to deface and ruin and destroy creation

“Evil, by whatever name it is called, will not sit idly by and allow the gospel to transform a community” —Craddock

If our lives have no such conflict—it might suggest the absence of resurrected living

CONCLUSION