



It makes a big difference when you know a change is coming. A few days ago you could have gone to an area grocery store and found that they were sold out of some items. There were hardly any gallons of bottled water left in Payson. Many others waited in line at the store to fill their water containers. I heard that all the generators were sold out across town right before the storm hit. As for me, I was filling up my shopping cart with half a dozen gallons of milk. Everyone knew a storm was coming and that made a difference. Others knew the storm would soon be melting. That made a difference too. Some people didn't need to go anywhere they just sat back and waited. They knew if they waited long enough their drive would soon be melted clear. "It'll melt soon enough." They knew a change was coming so they didn't fret about the fact that their car had disappeared under snow. What about one of the biggest changes you know is coming? How do you deal with something like death? You know its coming. You can't just stock-pile up to wait it out or ignore it until it goes away. Our pending death ought to affect much more than a few days or hours of our lives. It ought to affect every moment. Today we conclude our sermon series on the later portion of 1 Corinthians asking, "What does it mean to be spiritual?" It means you know a change is coming. It is a change of your very self. And knowing about this great change turns around every moment of our lives.

*The Christians in ancient Corinth had many spiritual issues.* I'm sure you've gathered that in the past six weeks. I get the feeling that Paul saved their biggest problem for the end of this letter. In chapter 15 we read about a false teaching so destructive it no doubt led to all the other false teachings. Their biggest mistake? Some of them thought death was the end, that once you died you couldn't ever change that fact.

*And in turn many were living as if death was the end.* Their lives reflected it with sexual immorality, with disregard for love, and with a goal of eating and drinking and chasing after getting the most out of this life.

*How could they every slip into such a false teaching?* The reason for this objection is the same reason for so many objections to spiritual truths. They were relying on mere observances to guide their spiritual beliefs instead of the word of God. That's the way that many false teachings take hold in the church. People take their eyes off the power and working of God revealed in his word. They then only trust in what they can see and observe. With the same type of foolish reliance on natural laws people will say, "How can there be a spiritual rebirth in baptism? I don't see any Holy Spirit working when the water is poured. How can water do such things?" Others question, "How can Christ be present with the bread and wine? I don't see it." Still others might say, "I never hear God talking when I pray. He must not hear my prayers." Sadly some conclude, "God didn't help me when I was in such distress. He must not care about me." There are many teachings in God's Word which are contrary to our observance and our limited reasoning. If we were to only use our own observance, we would have many reasons to reject God's Word and promises. "God, if I don't see it, I'm not going to believe it." That's what was happening to the Christians in ancient Corinth. They were relying on what they observed to naturally occur instead of what God promised to supernaturally bring about. They saw death. They saw their loved ones decompose. Their ancestors had all turned to dust. Death appeared to be the end.

**But Paul's response is one of the harshest he gives in all his letters.** "*Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.*" (1 Cor 15:34) How could the Corinthian Christians live as if there was no resurrection!? God's people know better! Could you imagine hearing that several feet of snow were coming but then hiding that fact from your neighbor? Or if you saw you neighbor fretting over the pending storm as if it would never end wouldn't you want to give them a heads up that it would all melt in a day or two? When a Christian knows a change such as the resurrection of the dead is coming but doesn't live like it or talk about it, aren't they sinning? Aren't they shamefully leaving those who do not know about God lost and suffering in the dark?

Brothers and sisters, **you and I may not be going around teaching that there is no resurrection of the dead. But might we begin to start living as if there wasn't one?** If a future resurrection is not in the forefront of our mind our life can get out of focus. We can become focused on obtaining the best this world has to offer. Grown Christian men who know that their bodies will not last spend a lifetime amassing a fortune for themselves. They live for this life alone. To what end? The body is perishable. It doesn't matter how many things you acquire for it. It will not last to enjoy them for long. And it doesn't matter how many friends, how much fame, how much respect you earn in life. In the end everyone finished their life with dishonor. Even a king's funeral is still a funeral. Even the most well embalmed corpse is still a corpse. That change is inevitable. Living as if this life is all there is is foolishness. That much we can see!

**But it is more than foolish to live as if this life is all there is. It is a shameful thing** when Christians live as if this life is the end all. For some, death is the only change they know! They are ignorant of God and don't have anything more to look forward to other than death. It leaves them restless as they grow older. They end up afraid and inconsolable when facing death. Like someone hoarding all the supplies from the storm as if the storm will never end they try to prepare themselves for death. But it will never be enough if death is all they have ahead. They see and observe that death is real, but the Word of God and faith in God are missing. And in turn they will miss out on the greatest change of their lives.

If our lives and every moment are **not shaped by knowledge and hope in the resurrection, then we are not spiritually-minded. Then we are worldly-minded.** If we give even the impression that sports, hobbies, careers, and the like are all most important thing in life than to our shame we've joined the Corinthians in a shameful sin. Perhaps we've not joined in saying there is no resurrection, but we have at times in living as if there is no resurrection. To my own shame I must admit that at times my life has followed the same path. I've lived at times in ways that only gave the message I care about this life, not the next. What about you? Do you wake up everyday thinking, "I can't wait until the resurrection?" Or do you wake up thinking about what you can do simply to enjoy this life before you perish, face the dishonor of the reek of death, and in weakness breath your last breath? What witness does your daily schedule, your checking account, your use of your time give? Does it say there's a resurrection or does it look very similar to those who have no hope? How can we ever live as if there is no resurrection!? When a Christian knows a change like the resurrection of the dead is coming but doesn't live like it or talk about it, aren't they sinning? Aren't they shamefully leaving those who do not know about God lost and suffering in the dark?

**But our God is a God who changes everything.** And that changes the spiritually minded. For three of Jesus' disciples that change in attitude came when they saw something contrary to all observances. On the mountain they saw the man Jesus change in appearance. Moments before he had appeared like any other man, destined to die along with all the other sons of Adam. But not that day on the mountain. They saw his appearance transform. And as the color left his face, he didn't have the look of death but of glory shining bright. In glory on the mountain they saw who he really was, true God. Later on, when Jesus hung on the cross they knew the greatest change in history was when God took on human flesh and humbled himself. In faith they understood he was carrying out God's plan to change death forever. He faced what we deserved. To do this he hid his glory as he hung on the cross. He did this to bring about the greatest transformation the world has ever known: death was undone. God died. God was buried. And Jesus, true God, rose again from his grave with a new and glorious body. And you can be sure when he showed himself living and glorious to his disciples, they understood: his life changes everything!

Brothers and sisters who trust in Jesus, **everything has changed! Jesus lives. So will you!** The resurrection of the dead is one of those clear teachings of the Scripture that supersedes all expectations and natural observances. It is compared here to a seed. When the seed is tossed into the soil it is buried. If you didn't know that seeds completely changed you would never expect to see the end results. The seed is bare and looks totally different from what rises out of the ground. The new life it produces can only amaze us. That's how it is with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is placed in the ground looks nothing like what will result at the resurrection. You can expect there to be an entirely different body raised to life.

It is a change beyond all expectation! **Jesus lives with a glorious changed body. So will you!** Paul gives us examples of the various types of bodies we can observe in nature. One creature has a different body from another. Some creatures even morph into new bodies in ways which can only lead us to marvel at a God's design. When a caterpillar forms its cocoon it appears as good as dead. You don't see any movement or life. But what emerges is a form of life totally different from what was covered and appeared dead. Paul mentions things we observe in the sky have differing degrees of light. The moon merely reflects the light of the sun. As different as the sun is from the moon so will our bodies be different at the resurrection. The change will be totally beyond all expectations.

**We are familiar with what is sown.** If the body were compared to a seed in the ground it wouldn't be impressive at all. Paul describes the body we see as perishable. "What is sown is perishable." That's what we observe. It's what happened to Adam when God declared to him "dust you are and to dust you will return." Because of the curse of sin our bodies don't last. "It is sown in dishonor." It doesn't matter how much fanfare you have for your funeral, it is still a funeral. There's nothing less honorable than facing the disgrace of death that comes to all because of sin. **But we are not familiar with what is rises from the grave.** It will be a change unlike any we've ever witnessed. It will be glorious! He describes our body's as being changed to something "imperishable, glorious, and powerful."

This changes everything! Our end goal in life is not to eat, drink, and be merry. It is to follow Christ in faith, hope, and love. Our end goal is not to serve self and strive for selfish gain. It is to obtain the free gift through faith in Jesus. And our purpose in life is now to live for him who changes everything. Our hobbies, our interest, the way we invest our time is living for the next one. And instead of living with sin as master, we live in repentance. "Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility." (St. Augustine) We turn to God with faith he will do the most unexpected: remove our sins and take us out of our graves.

What does it mean to be spiritual? It means you know that the biggest change coming isn't death. It is resurrection to a new life. Instead of foolish living like those who do not know God we live in a way that points to the hope we have in the greatest change ever. Instead of pride now there is humility under God. Instead of living for this life and clinging to sin as our master we live for Christ and gladly serve him as our Lord. Instead of refusing to repent and trying to negotiate with our God, we fall on our knees knowing through repentance and faith in him we will one day rise. And we will be changed. Why? You know that a change is coming. And I don't just mean death. I mean a glorious new life. That new life begins today.