

Prospects of eternal life in current difficulties

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[0 : 00] The word of the Lord that has been on my mind to bring to you this morning, you will find in the first epistle of the Corinthians, chapter 15, and the 58th verse, the last verse in that chapter.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

For as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. We have so much precious truth from the pen of the Apostle Paul.

He does not in any wise seek to cover what he was when he was Saul of Tarsus.

His energies were expended in the absolute contrary direction.

[1 : 20] He was a persecutor of the Church of God. He used his energies in furthering their imprisonment and, in certain instances, their death.

He carried to the grave, I believe, a personal sense of accountability in the stoning of Stephen because there was in his heart at that particular time a sympathy with those that were doing that terrible act that brought that great man of God, Stephen, into the very presence of the Lord himself.

And, my friends, we have there a very clear illustration of the insufficiency of evil to gain over good.

Always. Good triumphs in the issue. Good triumphs in the world.

Good triumphs in the world.

[3 : 26] Good triumphs in the world. Good triumphs in the world. Good triumphs in the world. By the grace of God he lived for eternity, knowing that eternity is far more important than time.

Time is a certain length of years. Eternity is forever. The one that lived the longest, we can say from the scripture, Methuselah, who lived longer than anyone else recorded.

Yet he found time was nothing to eternity because he's been in eternity many, many years from the record of Scripture in the Old Testament as the time and when he lived.

But my friends, he's proving that eternity is vast. And whatever length of time life has for us, it's but a moment compared with eternity.

The Apostle Paul had that conviction in his heart and he brings to our minds in this particular context the resurrection of the dead.

[4 : 40] That is when the complete being will be united and raised to dwell with God in glory as the subject of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ.

Now, I've read the chapter. I hope you followed it. There were bodies celestial and there were bodies terrestrial.

I said celestial is heavenly, terrestrial is earthly. And we all know what the prospects concerning us are recorded as being.

I wonder, as God sees your heart, whether you're living for time without any particular thought or regard for the hereafter.

or whether the reality of comparison to which I've sought to direct your thoughts for a few moments is with you that brings into perspective the truth that we're not as the creatures of the earth.

[6 : 22] We're not as the beasts that perish. God has breathed into us a soul that must live forever. Although when we die physically in this present life as we all must at God's appointed time there will be the rising of the soul to God who gave it but there will be the laying of the body in all practical expectations somewhere down here below.

Some buried at sea others are buried in the land in various parts of the earth but God is all sufficient it's no hindrance to God in His resurrecting power whatever may be done and whatever means may be used to the waiting of the body before the resurrection of God.

Men try and escape the reality of eternity by having cremated bodies after they pass away and think well now that's the end but that's a carnal limitation imposed on the very character of God because God can do everything and nothing ever thwarts Him He's never thwarted He's never prevented from accomplishing His purpose although men do great things in hope of escaping His notice and His power they never can succeed it's a wonderful truth to have well laid in our minds and in our hearts that our God is all sufficient to do everything He designs shall be done I say that particularly to our young people our young friends here oh my friends think of a God over all and you'll be then on the right track but if you start thinking that God can do this and He can't do that well then you're certainly wide of the mark now the Apostle

Paul he was here concerned about these Corinthians and he loved them and you know there is that element in the heart of a true preacher or minister there is in the heart an affection and I like this word in the Apostle to the Corinthians here before us therefore my beloved brethren now it is an expression of affection toward the Corinthians I'm not suggesting that all of the Corinthian church was a saved body but that doesn't prevent us having an affectionate desire for the well-being of all of all and my friends if my desire was fulfilled there wouldn't be one lost soul in the congregation this morning we've got to bow to God's sovereignty oh do awake to the truth awake to the solemnity of life awake to the solemnity of death and awake to the solemnity of eternity because as much as you're born in the flesh you'll face eternity one day inescapably it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment well now affection unites unites with welfare doesn't it we have a very particular affection for those that are blood relations we love them why do we love them well we're intimately related to them and they are the subjects of our love and that's a wonderful thing naturally speaking to be loved but it's a greater blessing to be loved of God to be loved of God and that's the penultimate of affection the love of God to fallen man the cost of that affection has been beyond our comprehension but I hope may not be beyond our experience both in life and in death and in a never ending eternity well now therefore my beloved brethren and in the context of his affection he was concerned that they should consider the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead

I wouldn't want you to go away from my ministry and feel that you've only got a body to be concerned about you've only got a life to live here below that this is the boundary of your existence you relegate in your reasoning man to be a beast but man is above a beast God has made him in his own likeness God has given him faculties which excel in so many respects peace I've often thought of the peace that was in the ark of Noah everything everything was peaceable together but there was all sorts of contrary natures in that company that given freedom from the control of God they would have fought one another and killed one another if you like and the ark would have been a blood bath but it wasn't it wasn't all that went in came out you see

[13 : 23] God gives us illustrations of his overruling power to perform his purposes whatever may be suggested to the contrary well no the doctrine of the resurrection is important because it brings home to us the fact that we have a soul that must live forever and we have a body that will be changed as we've read together this morning and it's sown in corruption it will be raised in incorruption if we're going to heaven for Jesus sake it's sown a mortal body and it will be no immortality because there will be no second death in that sense and it's a very basic doctrine to the

Christian faith because it takes us into that position and condition which makes the truth concerning us a reality and I'm so thankful to believe in the resurrection I'm so thankful that the Lord Jesus Christ is the forerunner in the resurrection that he died and he rose again the third day that we've recently considered and he is alive forever more oh the one one death of Jesus Christ was the only death that was necessary to the continuation of his own existence at the right hand of the father and again it is a testimony to all those that trust their salvation in him will live through him for he said because I live ye shall live also and that's not just time he's he's talking to us there about the eternal context of him going on to live forever more having triumphed over death having triumphed over all his people's enemies and has gained the victory he's our captain of our salvation he went before and he has conquered all our adversaries we have types of deliverance

I was reading in the word the history I can't just call to mind the chapter and verse but concerning David and Saul you remember how Saul was bent on the destruction of David he neglected the kingdom to try and exterminate David because he had such a bitter feeling toward him and the jealousy concerning him but nevertheless God was David's protector and David lived and Paul and Saul died the Lord protected David and Saul was left to perish in his in the appointed way of suicide really suicide

I don't want to go into that the apostle says thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ victory over death victory over sin our great enemy sin the law we read of sin the strength of sin is the law and the law of God stands to our condemnation except we find a refuge and a deliverance in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and what a wonderful thing it is he was a brother born for adversity he conquered all his people's enemies so when they come face to face with death it's not the end it's the opening of an eternal existence in paradise with him evermore that where

I am there ye shall be also now therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast oh time is demanding isn't it this life is so uncertain the happenings in the journey change our course and there's in the passage of life there is a harmony with the changing situation under the sun and like the whole pattern in which we're living declares that it's a changing world it's a changing world you and I don't know what tomorrow will bring we certainly didn't know what today would bring yesterday did we as we thought upon the future

[20 : 01] I didn't realize I was going to find my car all smothered in snow about four inches deep when I came to open the curtains this morning I had no idea I heard the forecast there was likely to be snow in some parts but I never thought it would affect me it was a surprise life's full of surprises life's full of ingredients that make us realize what little we know of the future and how capable God is of commanding certain things which we never expected or foresaw but when he comes toward the end of this he says but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ therefore therefore the greatest change that we shall experience will be as we close our eyes upon this world and open them in the next that fact makes nature recoil from the truth of it we don't like to think about it do we and

I'm certain of this that by some very easy means the general attitude of man is let's eat drink and be merry but tomorrow we die we're not going to think about it we're not going to bother about it until it comes we have to acknowledge that all die sometime but we're not going to be worried about it well now my friends it's a wonderful thing that the apostle here brings home to us therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast be ye steadfast he was saying to the Corinthians look I put the truth to you in preaching and in an epistle don't turn from it don't ignore it don't treat it as if it's an ancient kind of doctrine that has no relevance to modern times this book is as up to date now as it has been since it was inspired

God knew the end from the beginning he knew what would take place in the hearts and minds of men he knew what social changes should exercise society he knows everything and the apostle pleads with these Corinthians that they won't just stumble on through the changing checkered scene of life they realise man is born unto trouble and they're sorry and sad about the troubles that overtake them and they feel sometimes bitter against God that he's allowed this to happen and that to happen and the other to happen knowing that in some faint way that there is a control but oh they're full of rebellion when things adverse overtake them how sad how sad how sad but the apostle says therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast through much tribulation but you'll enter a kingdom if you're in the right way you'll enter a kingdom what you suffer here is nothing to compare with what sinners suffer in the hereafter if they live and die strangers to the way of

God in salvation this is why it's so important to be a Christian why it's so promising to have have our eyes open to the fact that we need washing we need clothing we need all that Jesus Christ came in this earth to accomplish to make us right with God blessed are the dead that die in the Lord they've got the advantage they go to paradise there's never a change there's nothing to be sorry about there's nothing to wish different it's all exactly as God sees it it's exactly fitted to to please to please there's not such a thing as displeasure in heaven everything conspires together to promote happiness you say well look at the world look at the portion of infidels look at the portion of the people of God if you like the two elements that we can set one over against the other those living without

God and without any sort of eternity and those who by God's grace have been brought to a realisation of their future what a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian what a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian you can and the apostle says look God has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ therefore my brethren be ye steadfast look your sorrows your trials your unhappiness the source of your unhappiness it's temporary it's only for a little while comparatively time is short life is fleeting I'm trying to bring you to the comparison between time and eternity and oh my friends to pass through time and be a lost soul it's got a worse prospect when sinners die out of

[27 : 23] Christ their prospect is worse than it ever was in time but those that are in Christ it's better than it ever could have been in time if their highest wishes had been accomplished and they'd become prosperous in every way and they'd been healthy all their days and they'd never known bereavement and they'd never known frustrations and sicknesses and illnesses you know the positive side causes the apostle to say look be steadfast hold on to that which is eternal in eternal good in an incomprehensible degree eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him the secret of the

Lord that is with them that fear him fear him enriches that person above the most rich and most wealthy person that ever lived upon the face of the earth you know the hymn writer has it when he says to know my Jesus crucified by far excels all things beside all earthly good I count but lost and triumph in my saviour's cross now that's what I've been trying to say that's what I've been trying to say and the apostle says be ye steadfast be ye steadfast unmovable look your foundation we've had it in our hymn my pleased my brother to know that I'd got the 329 on my paper before

I left home and then the last hymn we're going to sing seemed to take priority as I came along so I gave him 242 to finish but 329 was much on my heart before in relative to this a foundation the foundation of a real saving religion there's none other foundation given under heaven among men but Jesus Christ for Jesus Christ oh my friends what a wonderful thing to feel that the last enemy will be the best friend in that sense it will liberate us from all the adversities that associate with the fall of man and take and transport us into the very immediate presence of the perfection of love and appointment whatever is waiting for us when we arrive home to glory and the apostle says look don't let the things of this life hold you down as in a fearsome prospect of adversity trial everything as it were grinding you almost to misery oh no keep your eye on the prize keep your eye on the prize he says and I turn to this and I'll turn to it again the apostle he says this know ye not that they which run in a race run all but one receiveth the prize you know what's happening today in London sad as it is to me it's a an awful blight on our national character that such things should exist on the Lord's day but nevertheless he uses the simile you remember you remember he was conversant with the games and he uses them as a means to illustrate his points symbolize as it were the teaching he said know ye not that they which run in a race run all but one receiveth the prize so run that ye may obtain look it's you to get the prize that really matters isn't it it's you that gets the prize and every man that striveth for the mastery is intemperate in all things now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown but we an incorruptible

I therefore so run not as uncertainly so fight I not as one that beateth the air but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection lest by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a cast away be steadfast he said look this prize is so valuable and the consequences of the alternative is so terrible look do apply your heart to where you stand and what you're standing upon is your standing in Christ are you standing upon that solid foundation of Christ and him crucified are you a Christian that's the question in a nutshell isn't it now be ye steadfast you've got this race to run there are difficulties there are trials the things that obtain in this life that are hard to endure and they all seem to be discouraging and threatening but look keep your eye on the prize if you're in the right way if you're in the narrow way in a short time you're going to gain the perfection of happiness according to God's knowledge of the being you shall be for eternity be steadfast unmovable unmovable oh there's some prices to be paid for maintaining a

Christian profession but look those that doing to you persecuting difficulties and sometimes bitter words and actions that are so hurtful I say press on press on be steadfast unmovable go on in the way of the Lord be ye steadfast unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord oh don't get discouraged and give up press on press on the prize is set before you those that are faithful to the Lord through his grace he crowns with a crown of victory glory in heaven eternally what a what a resurrection it will be won't it what a gathering will be when all the saints number which no man can number from every kindred tribe and tongue and they'll all be happy together and they'll all be wearing a crown and they'll all be rejoicing in the

[36 : 51] Lord and they won't be one with any hard feeling against another they'll all be at absolute peace my friends words just fail us to give the description or give any idea of what heaven shall be like because the human mind is incapable of comprehending the preparation God has made for those who he has loved from eternity and to eternity therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast you know we're looking down aren't we we're often looking down we're looking down and it does seem hard it does seem hard oh look up look up look up get things in true perspective the devil drags you down the world even with their sympathy leaves you sometimes sad but what is there in the promise of God in Christ

Jesus to make souls sad for eternity the element of righteous sadness is ever to think that our sin was so great that there never could be any possibility of our acceptance in heaven apart from the gift of God's love and the sending forth his own son into the world to live as a brother born for adversity look our experiences became the experience of the son of God he tasted of the same cup and he tasted it the drink that he drank was not as it were a sip of the cup it was to the full measure what he endured no tongue can tell to save our souls from death and hell but he he went to the end of the law for righteousness he paid the price he died in the place of his people that they may live forever more

Paul here is commending with affection the Christian faith to the Corinthians I hope that's what I'm doing that's what I'm striving to do to say well you know some young people and I had an inclination toward it when I was young these people don't enjoy these old folk they don't seem to have that my friends they have a happiness if they're doing what Paul here advises they have a happiness which the world know nothing about there's a happiness in the Christian faith that's never known by the world never known by the world and the happiness of the Christian faith is a sip of the stream of heaven a sip of the river of heaven river of God's love there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of

God the holy place of the tabernacles of the most high and my friends that's happiness that's happiness yes therefore my beloved beast always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord the Lord will own and honor his people oh they seem struggling sometimes they seem to be heavy laden they seem to be everything seems to be going wrong but my friends it's the appointed way through much tribulation you shall enter the kingdom we learn we learn the comparative blessing of a religion that reaches beyond time beyond time into eternity that death is referred to as the last enemy but in one context it can be a friend you see somebody who's been sick for years and has all sorts of pains and sufferings to endure and then

I remember an old lady down in Kent I can't just call the name there's a book published about she was so infirm she couldn't only move her eyes and they had to put a birdbath within her vision so that she could watch the birds feeding and bathing without having to move her head at all because she couldn't move her head she was as it were fixed but the testimony of the dear soul gives you absolute assurance when God said come she went to heaven what a wonderful deliverance what a wonderful escape what a wonderful change the portion of the saints that die in Christ have riches eternally eternally nothing can take it from them and nothing can make a change regarding it for them it is the bliss and blessedness of God promised through

[43 : 35] Jesus Christ to all that have brought to trust their salvation in his all wise and all sufficient hands amen