

Psalm 30:3 NIV

“The hope of resurrection”

“O LORD, you brought me up from the grave;
you spared me from going down into the pit.”

In this psalm, David expressed a hope that later became reality for those in Christ—coming back from the grave.

Here’s how Paul later expressed that hope,
“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.”¹

Paul repeatedly conveyed this resurrection hope.
At Easter most Christians focus on Jesus’ resurrection.

That’s about the only time many ministers speak of the subject.

Christians talk mostly of going to heaven when they die.

When some folks delight about good fortune, they say,

“I thought I’d died and gone to heaven.”

¹ Philippians 3:10 NIV



Believers rarely speak of their resurrection. Bishop Fulton J. Sheen was scheduled to speak one evening at the town hall in Philadelphia but became lost *en route*. He approached a gang of toughs to ask directions. Asked by a gang member on what subject he was going to lecture, Sheen answered, “On how to get to heaven.” Then he added, “Do you want to come along?” “Are you kidding,” asked the tough, “You don’t even know how to get to the town hall.”

Many assume that when we die, we go straight to heaven.

Ideas we like or prefer can misleads us.

We should ask: “What does the Bible say?”

The New Testament teaches the resurrection.

As Paul declared: “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.”

We have a hard time with the idea of our bodies coming back from the grave.

1. The belief in immortality of the soul comforts folks.

Poets like Wordsworth consoled us with the idea that we don't really die.

*Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal
sea,*

*Which brought us hither, Can in a moment
travel thither,*

*And see the children sport upon the shore
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.*



To Wordsworth, other poets, and many philosophers, our souls never die.

Flesh is just a temporary thing that we shed like a lizard's old skin.

“Scholarly” works like The National Enquirer, Tattler, and those you see in grocery store aisles feature articles allegedly proving that there's life after death.

Preachers like to make us feel good by consoling us with that concept.

Folks assume that our souls are immortal.

Go to a funeral and the minister usually says, “Don't grieve, Uncle Aloysius is looking down on us right now. His soul fluttered off like a butterfly to be with God in heaven.

He's hugging Aunt Matilda.
They're both saying, “Don't cry, it's nice up here. Grandpa, grandma and all the saints get together all the time with us. So celebrate, feel good; it's like Miller time up here. You don't need antacids after meals. You don't need prunes or oatmeal either.””

Here's a popular view of what happens at death: In the cartoon, **THE FAMILY CIRCUS**, Little Billy and his father are looking at a tombstone. Billy's imagination takes over and he pictures a hole with the casket in it. He sadly says to his father, "Daddy, is Granddad still down there in that dark ol' grave?"

His father says, "Not really, Billy. The real Granddad went on to meet his old friends and family."

Once again, Billy's imagination takes over and he sees Granddad, cane and all, walking to the "Pearly Gates," with a large crowd waiting for him. Granddad hears words of welcome: "Elizabeth! Al's here!" "Look who just showed up." "Al! It's good to see you again. Come on in and join the old crowd." And Billy smiles from ear to ear!

When preachers talk about our loved ones being in heaven right now, they base it on ideas I can't find in Scripture.

Consider what the Bible does say:

To Adam, God said:

“Dust thou art and to dust you will return.”²

From the New Testament:

“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.”³

Did you notice verse 18?

**If there is no resurrection of the dead,
“those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.”**

If their souls flit off to heaven when they die, how can they be lost?

Jesus never said that we go directly to heaven.

Here’s what he promised:

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”⁴



Arlington National Cemetery

Still, resurrection perplexes us.

It’s hard to believe.

Difficult to comprehend.

If we look on resurrection with incredulous eyes, so did ancient people.

Bury a body; it shortly decomposes.

Resurrection seems impossible.

The Greeks were especially skeptical of resurrection.

Paul spoke to some prominent Greek thinkers in Athens.

Of Jesus he said, “God has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”⁵

“When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered . . .”

**The issue was: How can a body
recompose after it decays?**

Here’s how the Bible explains resurrection:

“What is sown is perishable,
what is raised is imperishable.”⁶

We don’t become immortal until the resurrection.

“For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

² Genesis 3:19

³ 1 Corinthians 15:16-18 NIV

⁴ John 5:28,29 NIV

⁵ Acts 17:31, 32 NIV

⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:42 NIV

“For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.”⁷

The Corinthians were as dubious as we are.

How are the dead raised?

With what kind of body will they come?⁸

I can't answer the questions completely, but the Apostle John gave us a partial answer.

1 John 3:2 seems to say:

“I can't tell you what this new body will be like. But it'll be like Jesus' resurrection body.”

Paul agreed: “Jesus . . . will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”⁹

Aren't we talking spiritual bodies in heaven?

In biblical terms, “Spiritual” doesn't mean that it lacks shape or form.

It means: God's Spirit controls that person.

In Scripture, a spiritual body is one that that God's Spirit completely controls.

We can't lose sight of the fact that we're talking bodies with shape and form—but **not the same kind of bodies we have now.**

“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.”¹⁰

Do you still question whether God can raise our bodies from the grave—change our form?

Think about what God already does in nature. Norma and I loved attending lectures by the Park Service naturalists at Zion National Park.

One of them emphasized the transformation that takes place in frogs from eggs to maturity.

Tadpoles

Swim

Have: Gills, Tails, & are

Vegetarian (most are).

Internal and external organs undergo change.

Caterpillars become Tent moths

In pupa stage, for a time, they're a liquid mass.

Are they caterpillars or moths at that point?

If we see changes in nature, why is it so difficult to believe that God can change us in the future?

We're not talking about a cold, impersonal process.

frogs

Hop on long hind legs

Lungs

No tail

Carnivorous



⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:52b, 53 NIV)

⁸ See 1 Cor. 15:35

⁹ Philippians 3:21 NIV

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:49 NIV

Warren Chandler lay dying. A close friend sat by his bedside. "Please tell me frankly," said his friend, "Do you dread crossing the river of death?" The old minister smiled weakly and said with conviction, "My father owns the land on both sides of the river. Why should I be afraid?"

Chandler understood that not even death can separate us from God's love.

He referred to God's care in a spatial sense. But God is also present on both sides of time—when we die, and when we're raised from death. When you were a child, your parents likely stood by you when you went to sleep and when you woke up.

One year at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, I entered a two mile run.

The elevation was 8600 feet and there were about 40 entrants; I was the eldest. I'd never run at GC.

- About half way, I was in agony.
My lungs felt like Godzilla had wrung them out.
My legs nagged at me to stop;
I told myself, "I don't know if I can do this."
Still, I hated to face Norma if I quit.**
- A few times, I had to slow to a walk.**
 - Finally, I saw that I had a few hundred yards to go and began running hard.**

At the finish, line Norma gave me a huge hug.

Remember the prodigal son coming home?

The father embraced him.

He surely wished he'd come home long before. If you are away from God—sin has put you at a distance.

God wants you to come back to him.

He awaits your return with love and patience.

Death makes it seem that God is absent from us.

But not even death separates us from God's love.

He's always there. Turn to him today.

You will find peace and joy.

And in the resurrection, immortality.

"I want to know Christ . . . and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

David,

"O LORD, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit."

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Grand Canyon North Rim two mile run (Bob with light colored cap, white t-shirt, and blue short pants).