

The Hope of the Resurrection

A core theme in our passage today is hope. Specifically, it is the hope of the resurrection that Paul highlights in his defense before King Agrippa. The hope of the resurrection is the confident expectation that since Christ was raised bodily from the dead, those who are in Christ will also be raised bodily from the dead. In this life we are raised spiritually to a new way of life; and at the return of Christ, we will be raised bodily from the dead. Salvation through Jesus is so comprehensive that it will one day extend even to our bodies. This is the hope of the resurrection! And this is a hope that is a transforming reality in our lives.

Read Acts 26

1. As you think about Paul's speech before King Agrippa, was he primarily seeking to defend himself or to testify about Jesus? Explain.
2. As Paul begins to make his defense, what does he say is the source of his conflict with the Jewish leaders (vv. 6-7)?
3. Paul talks about a promise in verse 6. To whom was this promise made? And how does verse 8 help us understand the nature of the promise (v. 8)?
4. Paul argues that the hope of resurrection was in the Old Testament Scriptures. Read Daniel 12:1-3, Isaiah 26:19, and Hosea 6:1-2. What hints of resurrection do we see in these passages?
5. How did the truth that Jesus had actually risen from the dead become a reality for Paul on his journey to Damascus?

6. In what way was the resurrection of Jesus a transforming reality in Paul's life?

Steve said:

The hope of the resurrection is a reality. In other words, the resurrection of the dead is actually true. And it's a transforming reality; this reality actually changes us. I feel compelled to make this point explicitly because I've talked with people before who use Bible terminology, but don't see a reality behind that language. One person specifically told me, "Whether or not Jesus literally rose from the dead is beside the point. To me resurrection symbolizes new beginnings and 'life out of death' and second chances." That is NOT what Luke is describing or what Paul believed.

7. What difference does it make to you that Jesus literally rose from the dead? How does this reality actually change you?

Steve said:

Salvation through faith in the risen Christ involves three things: opening, turning, and receiving. **Opening.** First, God opens blind eyes . . . **Turning.** When your eyes are opened, you respond by turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. The entire orientation of your life is different. **Receiving** When you receive forgiveness from God, your sins are no longer a crushing debt you can never repay; no, the debt that you owed was paid by his Son on the cross Paul's experience made clear that **the hope of the resurrection is a transforming reality**, a reality that will change you forever. Think with me about this pattern of God opening blind eyes and people responding by turning/repentance and receiving from God. If this is what the risen Christ said would happen when people believe the gospel, then this is what we should expect to experience. . . if you are already a believer, let this pattern of opening, turning, receiving fuel your discipleship. At every stage of maturity we need God to open our eyes to things in our lives that need to be changed. Once we see clearly we can repent and receive from God.

8. Re-read Acts 26:18. What might it look like for you to continue to apply this pattern of asking God to open your eyes, turning, and then receiving what you need from God to fuel your discipleship?

9. What is one practical way you can live in light of the hope of the resurrection this week?