

Your Savior Is Not in the Grave

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Don't you just love Easter? I *love* Easter. It's a little [bit of a] challenge to find a different passage every Easter to preach on, but it's a lot better than Christmas because there are a lot of passages on the resurrection. For this morning, we're going to be turning to Psalm 16, where we are going to learn that your Savior is not in the grave.

I think most of us realize that we live in a world that is infested with evils. There are all sorts of dangers, trials, and miseries. The world is speeding up at a frantic pace, technology is increasing, and we can't even figure out how to keep up with our new cell phone. It's ramping up [at] this frantic pace, and so is evil along with it. People are so busy trying to keep up that they're not thinking about reality. Sin is on the rise. Fornication, adultery, divorce, broken relationships, slavery to drugs, alcohol, pornography, [and] homosexuality are destroying the country [and] the world.

People are exercising less and less self-control. They're losing the battle of morality, of biblical ethics. They run to the doctor because they're feeling anxious, or angry, or depressed. The doctor says, "Oh, I don't see anything wrong with you." So [they] go to the psychiatrist, and he gives [them] drugs. The drugs just mask the symptoms, they don't deal with the problem. The problem is still there, [the people are] just drugged now.

People are out there all cloaked with psychotropic medications, and they have no purpose, they have no reason to exist. Try it sometime—go up to somebody on the street, and say, “Why do you exist?”

He’ll look at you like, “What?” People don’t think about why they exist, they just want to have lunch. They’re hiding from reality in TV, video games, hobbies, food, and pleasures. They don’t want to think about it. They just want to work [and] make money so [that] they can have pleasure [and] so they don’t have to think about why they exist. They check out because they don’t want to take a serious look at their lives. The whole world is on this train, and that train is headed for a chasm filled with eternal fire. No one even wants to look ahead to see where it’s headed. Satan is more than obliging to keep them distracted, to keep their minds off of reality, [saying], “Watch some TV, play this game, do this entertainment, have fun.”

Yet consider the result of this kind of behavior, when we check out, when we don’t want to get involved, when we don’t want to take a stand on the truth. Read the paper sometime, or the CNN Website. Read it, and ask yourself, “How many good, wholesome, wonderful things are [in] here?” Sometimes there are none.

The world is an evil place, and if you stand up for the truth, if you stand up, and say, “The Word of God says this,” then instantly [people say], “You are intolerant. You’re unloving. You’re divisive. You’re a hater.” The only good citizen is the citizen that tolerates every kind of evil there is. That makes you a “loving, acceptable, tolerant citizen.” This is fine until the murderer shows up at your house in the middle of the night, until the rapist rapes your daughter, or the pedophile defiles your child, or the corrupt politician spends your tax money on some wicked thing. Then you’re outraged, but you’re not outraged because the Creator of heaven and earth is not being glorified. That’s where the outrage should be.

We have a God who created us, and He created us for a purpose. The purpose is not just to check out with the pleasures of this world until we fall into hell. He saved us so that we might glorify Him and enjoy Him

forever. This God is a perfect God, He is a holy God, He is a just God, and He must punish sin. This is bad because we're not just talking about axe murderers and serial killers, we're talking about anybody who deviates from the perfect, holy standard of God's Word in thought or deed *to any degree*. Because God is perfect, He has a perfect standard, and none of us match up to it. The Scriptures say, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" [Romans 3:23]. We're all guilty. We have all sinned. The Bible speaks of God's wrath abiding on unbelievers like this huge, razor-sharp guillotine that's hanging over their heads. At any time God can just hit the lever, and down it would fall on you, and that would be the end of you. You would then launch into eternal pain and suffering [see John 3:36]. Like it or not, the grim reaper of death is coming, and he will harvest you. You will not escape; you will die.

You hear people say things like, "Oh, [poor] so-and-so. It's so terrible [that he has] a terminal illness." How many of you are not terminal? I want to know. The death rate is still holding at 100 percent. All of us are going to die.

Now, you may be sitting out there, thinking, "Oh, no! It's Easter Sunday. I don't come to church that often and now I came and the pastor's making me feel bad. This isn't going to be one of those downer sermons, is it? This isn't going to be one of those times I come in here and he preaches a bunch of wrath on me and then I leave feeling miserable, [is it]?" No. No, I'm not trying to make you feel depressed. In fact, I have the opposite agenda, but before you can feel the joy that God wants you to feel, and to have that gladness and that comfort, you need to realize [that] you're in danger if you don't know Jesus. You are in danger. You need to look ahead and see what's going to happen when you die and know what's going to happen when you die. You need to put aside all the distractions that Satan and this world offer, and you need to look up, and say, "Oh! That's where I'm headed!" and see the flames if you don't know Jesus.

You will be judged according to His perfect standard, and there is only one way you can escape. That is what Easter is all about, and that's what

I'm going to tell you about this morning. God is holy, yes. He is just, yes. He must punish sin, yes, but He's also loving, He's also compassionate, and He's also very gracious. That doesn't mean He can just ignore sin. He still has to punish all sin, but He has devised a way so that those who can't save themselves can get to heaven because of what God does for them, not what they do for God.

So, turn in your Bibles, if you haven't already, to Psalm 16. If you didn't bring a Bible, I would encourage you to get one in the pewback in front of you and open it up because you'll want to actually see the words in the text, to see what God says to you from these passages because they're very encouraging. If you don't know where [Psalm 16] is, open to the middle of your Bible, you should be in Psalms, and then find the one that says "16."

David, [who writes this psalm, was] the king of Israel. David [started out as] a shepherd boy. He was the youngest of eight sons, and he was fine just shepherding the sheep, [but] God called him to be the next king of Israel because the present king, King Saul, was wicked and evil. David was anointed, which is kind of a neat thing, when God calls you to be king. The problem was [that] Saul was jealous and he wanted to kill David. He kept trying to kill David. So, all during David's earlier years, he was running from this maniac king [see 1 Samuel 18:7– 2 Samuel 1:17].

It would be like me saying, "OK, I just want you to know that after the service you've got an hour, and after that there are going to be seven CIA assassins who are going to chase you around and try [to] kill you. You can't leave Southern California, and it's only going to go on for fifteen years." That would be kind of "stress[full]," wouldn't it, to think that every moment of every day someone could stab you, kill you, or blow you up? It would be this incredible burden. You would fear for your life because, man, they're after you.

This is the exact situation [in which] we find David in Psalm 16. He's being chased [and] hunted by this maniac king who wants to kill him, and yet, in the middle of this psalm, he is able to have this incredible joy, peace, and comfort. That's what we're going to learn about this morning as we

look at Psalm 16:10. Let me read the whole psalm to you, then we'll survey most of it, and zero in on one verse. Look at verse 1 of Psalm 16 and follow along as I read. David says:

Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You. I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good besides You." As for the saints who are in the earth, They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, Nor will I take their names upon my lips. The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me. I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.

I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

This psalm has a lot of cool things in it. I wish we could spend six months in there, but we're just going to look at verse 10 this morning, where you're going to see that there are two reasons every believer can have hope and be encouraged no matter what the circumstances, knowing they are going to die, and knowing they are going to be thrust into eternity before a holy God. That way, you can have hope.

If you've ever flown in an airplane, a big commercial airliner, [you know that] you're [flying] way up there [at] 30–35,000 feet. If it's clear [out] and you look down, you can see the earth, but you can [only] see mountain

ranges, and maybe little, tiny squares which are farmer's fields, and tiny, little roads, but that's about it. You can't really get any details. Well, that's what we're going to do with most of this psalm here. We're going to fly over at 30,000 feet, and then we're going to circle [and] land on verse 10. So here's the 30,000-foot survey.

Look at verse 1. David asks God to preserve him, which means "to keep watch over, or protect, or to keep from harm." He says, "Preserve me." I raised chickens when I was growing up, and every spring there would be these little hens that would get the nesting instinct. They'd be clucking, and they'd try and call other hens to come and lay eggs in their nests, and soon they would get this little brood of eggs. We would let a couple [of] hens [sit] on some eggs. Twenty-one days later, these cute, little, fuzzy peepers would come out. They were so cool. They just looked like little fuzz balls with legs. They would go around and scratch in the dirt and copy [their] mom. They were really fun to watch.

What's interesting, though, is [that] the mother hen would always keep her eye kind of tilted up, looking for hawks. If a hawk ever came within eyesight, she would make this clucking noise, and all those little chicks would run underneath her and disappear under her wings and body. They would just disappear. It was really cool. She hunkered down, and that was it—[the chicks would] just all disappear. Well, this is the exact kind of thing that David is asking the Lord for when he says, "Preserve me." As a matter of fact, in another, similar psalm, which has the same theme of preservation, Psalm 57:1, David says, "O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by." Well, that is the long way of saying, "Preserve me, O God." So that is the theme of the whole psalm. It's about David looking for preservation, salvation, deliverance, protection from the Lord.

The whole rest of [Psalm 16] is David rejoicing and thanking God because he has great confidence that he will be preserved, and he'll have the very preservation he hopes to have from this God of his. When you look

in [Psalm 16:]1–4, David asks God to preserve him, he acknowledges that his hope is in God because he takes refuge in God, he trusts in God, he relies upon the Lord, he delights in the righteous, he doesn't delight in the wicked. In verses 5–8, David draws hope that he will be preserved by recalling the attributes and deeds of the Lord. He says the Lord is his inheritance, it is the Lord who supports him, it is the Lord who is always at his right hand to bless him. David blesses the Lord because God is his counselor. David expresses the joy and gladness that every believer has regardless of circumstances, trials, and even inevitably death.

He says in verse 9, [where] we're going to start circling to land on verse 10: "Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely." Think about that. Keep in mind [that] he's being hunted. Several times he has barely escaped from being run through with [a spear] [see 1 Samuel 18:10–11, 19:9–10]. Armies have been chasing him. He's a fugitive in his own land, and yet he says, "My heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh," or my body, "also will dwell securely." How is *that*? Think of some of the best days you've ever had. Maybe [you're] standing in a nice, green meadow next to a trout stream full of wild trout. You've got your fly-fishing equipment, and no one's there. There are no mosquitoes that day, by chance. There are forests all around, and big, snow-covered peaks in the distance, and you just [sigh], "Ahhhh," [in pleasure]. [Or] maybe it's your wedding day, when you're looking into your honey bunny's eyes, and you're saying those vows, and you [say], "I love you." You remember that and it's just so sweet. Or maybe it's when your child was born, and that little baby came out, and you thought, "Ohhh!" You had that joy, that gladness, that rejoicing of heart. Whatever it is, just know that that's what David is talking about here. It's like the best day of his life even though his life is constantly in danger.

The word "heart," when he says, "my heart is glad," is his thoughts, his mind, his emotions—everything that is him that is not physical. Then he talks about his "glory," a word that is usually used of God. When he says, "My glory rejoices," this talks about his whole being, his whole dignity

as a man, as a creature created in the image of God, as the king of Israel. Everything about him that's good is rejoicing. He even says that his "flesh also will dwell securely." His "flesh" means "his body." He's not even worried about physical harm, about the future of his body. He says, "That's all going to dwell securely."

My question to you is: Do you have this kind of hope? Do you have this joy, and this gladness, this rejoicing of heart because you know for certain that God is going to preserve you and take care of you, and He's not going to abandon you? Or, when you think of death, does it scare you? Does it terrify you? I've seen people who [have] just even thought they might have a terminal illness and [who] were terrified because they didn't have this hope that David had. They thought, "I'm going to die! I'm going to die!" That was it: "I'm going to die!" Well, I have news for you: you're all going to die. Everybody dies. Life is terminal for everybody, and yet you don't have to be terrified at death. You could be like David. Look at [Psalm 16:]11: "You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." David is just oozing with joy because he has this incredible hope, and this [knowledge that], "Oh! I'm going to be in God's presence, and [I will] enjoy His pleasures forever!" Does that describe your feelings and your thoughts?

You might be thinking to yourself right now, "What in the world does this have to do with Easter?" Well, we're going to find out from [Psalm 16:]10. The first [thing we learn from this psalm] is: You can escape eternal death. Remember [that in] verse 9, David has just said [that] his heart, his glory, his flesh are rejoicing, they're glad, they're going to dwell securely. Why is that? He gives us two reasons [in] verse 10. The first reason is: "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol." I would imagine that if we took a little poll here, most of you have probably not used the word "Sheol" lately, unless you're in Hebrew class. It's just not a word we use a lot. It means "the grave, or the place of the dead." The New Testament equivalent is Hades. The New Testament takes the Greek equivalent of the [mythological] term that was used of the place of departed spirits [in the Old Testament] and

[uses] that as a substitute for “Sheol,” but in the Hebrew Old Testament, Sheol is just the place of the dead, the grave.

Notice what he says here: “You will not *abandon* my soul to Sheol” [emphasis added]. What does this word “abandon” mean? Most of us have those little, plastic containers under our sink, [and] we throw trash in there. When it gets full, we, or hopefully our kids, will take it out, after several reminders. They take it out, and they throw it into the bigger trashcan [and then the sanitation workers pick it up and bring it to the dump]. Do you ever think, “I wonder how my trash is doing now at the dump with all those big pieces of equipment rolling over it, and crunching it into the big trenches”? Do you ever think that? Not unless you accidentally threw away your diamond ring.

This is the whole idea here [in Psalm 16:10]. David says, “I don’t have to worry about the Lord trashing me, dumping me, forgetting about me. I don’t have to think about that. I know He’s not going to abandon me,” he says. He uses the word “soul” here. You might think this word “soul” is talking about the heart, the non-physical part of you, but actually, this is the same word that appears in Genesis 2:7 when God creates man, forms him out of the dust, breathes into his nostrils the breath of life, and man becomes a living being. The Hebrew word is “nephesh,” [which] means “a total person, both physical and immaterial, everything you are.” David says, “God is not going to abandon everything that I am to the grave. He’s not going to forget about me and then turn His back.” David has full confidence of this. The question is: Do *you* have full confidence in this about *your* future? Do you know for certain that God will not abandon you?

I think most of us probably know about C.S. Lewis and his series *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The first book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, was recently made into a movie. The climax of [that] book is this huge battle scene. In the battle, there are the forces of the White Witch, who are fighting against the good forces of the Lion King Aslan. There’s this huge, terrible battle. Leading the forces of Aslan against the forces of the evil White Witch are Peter, Edmund, Lucy, and Susan, these four children

who entered into Narnia through the wardrobe. Earlier they had all received special gifts from Father Christmas, and the littlest one, Lucy, received this little bottle of serum that kind of looked like blood. She's told by Father Christmas, "You need to save this because if you take even the smallest amount and put it on the lips of anybody who is hurt to any degree, they will be healed instantly and restored to perfect health."

Think about that. Wouldn't it be cool to have a person who is always with you to make sure that if you ever got hurt they could give you some magic serum? Well, guess what? There is somebody like that. William Cowper talked about it in his famous hymn:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.¹

Isn't that great? There is a serum—it's the blood of Christ, and when it is applied to the guilty who deserve to suffer eternal death, it heals them completely and forevermore. John Calvin, commenting on this psalm said: "No one truly trusts in God but he who takes such a hold of the salvation which God has promised him as to despise death."

You're in an alley, [and] some thug comes with a gun, and says, "Give me your money!"

[You say], "Oh, please, kill me! Do me a favor! I can't wait to get to heaven!"

So many of the martyrs in Church history went boldly to the stake to be burned because they thought, "Oh, they're going to do me a favor, they're

¹From "There Is a Fountain" by William Cowper, 1731–1800.

going to send me into the presence of my Savior, where I am going to experience eternal joys!”

We read about Fanny Crosby, the hymn writer, who, when she was sick, asked the doctor [in a hopeful voice], “Am I going to die?” She was so excited at the prospect of death [that] she couldn’t wait.

When [the doctor] said, “No, not quite yet,” she was depressed. Why? [It is] because she had the same hope that David had. She knew where she was going after she died.

John Calvin continues, saying: “How empty a consolation would it be to obtain some brief respite, and to take breath for a short time, until death, coming at last, should terminate the course of life, and swallow us up without any hope of deliverance.” So what [if] you get delivered from some temporary thing, so what [if] you get healed from some momentary sickness? What about eternity?

It is pitiful and heart wrenching when I have to do a funeral or a memorial service for someone who didn’t know Christ and a family that doesn’t know Christ. There I am, trying to give them hope, and what hope is there? There’s none for the person who died. The family is weeping uncontrollably because they’ve lost this person and they will never see him again. They’re in agony. I talk about death, and I can see the looks on some of their faces. The death in the family has confronted them with death, and they can’t escape it—they’re at a funeral. When I mention death, some of them look like terrified animals, [as though they are thinking], “I’ve got to get out of here. I don’t want to think of death.” Well, that’s not the solution. Death is still coming to everyone. The solution isn’t to check out, and [say], “I don’t want to talk about it.”

David had a hope. He had a hope in the face of death, a glad hope, a rejoicing hope, a praising God hope because he knew that he was going to be in the presence of God and enjoy God’s pleasures forever. “But how?” you ask. How can *you* have this hope? How can *you* know for certain what is going to happen to you when you die? If you look out the train window and you see you’re going into hell, how do you get off the train? That’s

what we learn in [Psalm 16:]10, the second half: Your Savior is not in the grave. Look there. David gives the second reason: “Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” Notice [that] David refers to someone who, after dying, would not undergo decay. He calls this person the “Holy One,” God’s Holy One.

We all know that in the last centuries and the last millennia, everybody who has died has undergone decay, except for one. You see, David wasn’t talking about himself. First Kings 2:10 says David died, was buried, and laid in a tomb in the city of David—Jerusalem. His body rotted, and his body decayed. But this whole hope of joy, the whole hope of gladness, all of his rejoicing, hinges upon this second half of verse 10. He’s able to rejoice, and then everything he says in verse 11, all of this incredible pleasure and rejoicing is because of the second half of verse 10: God’s not going to allow His Holy One to undergo decay.

Who could this be? I think we all know, but let’s let Peter tell us. Turn to Acts 2. It’s the day of Pentecost, [which] is one of the pilgrim feasts where Jews from all around the Mediterranean Basin would come to worship the Lord in Zion. It’s the birth of the Church, the Holy Spirit is being poured out. What’s interesting is [that] the twelve apostles are given this miraculous ability to speak in languages other than those that they know. Then all of these people, speaking all of these different dialects from all over the Mediterranean Basin, have come, and each one is hearing the gospel being preached in his own native tongue by a miracle of God. Some, who were looking on, heard all of these different languages, and thought [that] the [disciples were] drunk [see Acts 2:13]. Peter says, “No, we’re not drunk. It’s the Holy Spirit.” He says, “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” [see 2:21].

Look at Acts 2:22 and follow along. Peter’s still preaching:

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you

yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, [2:22–25]

“David says of” whom? Jesus. David says of Jesus, and then guess what Peter quotes? Psalm 16:8–11.

“I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.” [2:25–28]

Did you see that? David was speaking of Jesus when he was talking about that Holy One who would not undergo decay. Look at [Acts 2:]29[-32]:

Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

Now you know how Easter fits into Psalm 16. I mean, it is the Easter psalm. The entire psalm, the whole business of hope, and joy, and rejoicing in the face of death hinges upon the second half of [Psalm 16:]10, that God had this Holy One that He would not allow to undergo decay.

[You may be] thinking, “Well, are you sure that’s what David was talking about?” Let’s see what Paul says. Turn over to Acts 13. If Peter’s testimony, [inspired by the Holy Spirit], isn’t enough, let’s look at Acts 13. Paul is on his first missionary journey. He’s in Pisidian Antioch. It is the Sabbath day. In verse 16, he begins to preach, reminding [people] that the prophets predicted the Messiah’s coming, His death, burial, and resurrection. He says the Jewish leaders refused to believe this, they refused to acknowledge their own Scriptures, and instead they crucified their own Messiah, just as God, in prophecy, predicted they would. Look at Acts 13:32, and follow along as I read. Paul says:

And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, “YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.” As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: “I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.” [13:32–34]

What “holy and sure blessings” did David have? Well, look at what he says: “Therefore He also says in another Psalm,” he’s going to quote the holy, sure blessing of David: “YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY” [13:35]. What does [Paul] do? He quotes the text that we’re studying, [and says] that Jesus is that One. This time it is the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, who says Psalm 16:10 is speaking of Jesus. Look at [Acts 13:]36:

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and un-

derwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him [(that is, Jesus,)] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. [13:36–39]

[That is,] all [of] the curses and all [of] the judgments on those who didn't keep all the Law. So, Psalm 16:10 is *the* Easter psalm.

There's one other text [that alludes to] Psalm 16:10: 1 Corinthians 15. Turn there. This is really great. Just so you know, if you've never studied the book of Corinthians, they were messed up. Some people call it the "book of Californians." [The Corinthians] were confused about everything. They were almost doing everything [wrong] that could be done wrong. Paul got the church started, and then he left them, and they kept writing these letters, and false teachers came in, and oh, they were messed up.

Paul writes four letters to them—two of which appear here [in the Bible], and he alludes to the other ones. What's interesting is that a false teacher had gotten in there, and said, "There is no resurrection." Paul, the apostle, is like, "Ah!" because the resurrection is one of those doctrines you have to believe. It's not one of those things [where you can say], "Well, you can believe in the resurrection but I don't have to." You don't have to, but if you don't, you don't get to go to heaven. It is a *necessary* doctrine. You *have* to believe if you're ever going to be saved from your sins.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:1. Paul embarks on the longest chapter in the book, trying to make sure [the Corinthians] understand [that] the resurrection is true. [He] gives all these arguments for it. He says: "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel," which means "good news," "which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."

You [may] think, “What?” Let me summarize. One: There is a message of good news called the gospel. Two: That message is to be preached, or proclaimed, to people. Three: It is a message to be personally received and believed in. Four: You must stand upon, rely upon, trust upon this message. Lip service doesn’t cut it. Saying, “Oh, I believe,” and giving intellectual assent to the facts [won’t] cut it. You must stand on, rely on, trust on, put your full weight on these truths that are contained in this thing, this good message, called the gospel. Five: If you hear, receive, and stand on the truth of the gospel message, you will be saved. That is, you will be saved, delivered, preserved from eternal death, you will not go to hell, you will go to heaven where you will experience joys and pleasures in the presence of God forever.

The question is: What is the gospel? Well, [Paul] just happens to tell us. Look at [1 Corinthians 15:]3. Paul says: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” That’s the first part of the gospel—Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins. That is, He took your sins upon Himself, and He died in your place as a substitute for you. The Scriptures Paul refers to here are the Old Testament Scriptures. Psalm 16:10 does imply the death of the Messiah, but other texts make it perfectly clear, [such as] Isaiah 53, where it talks about the Messiah being led like a lamb to the slaughter [see Isaiah 53:7], who would receive stripes for our healing [see 53:5], who would be crushed for our iniquities [see 53:5] so that He could offer Himself up as a guilt offering to God so that we could go free [see 53:10].

Look at [1 Corinthians 15:]4. The rest of the gospel is: “And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day,” and here it is, “*according to the Scriptures*” [emphasis added]. What Scripture is that? [In] what Scripture does it say that Jesus would be raised from the dead? Psalm 16:10. That’s the only one. If you don’t believe that message, you aren’t a Christian, [and] you aren’t going to heaven.

Paul said this in Romans 10:9, “That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead,

you will be saved.” You *will* be saved, not “you might be” saved, you *will* be saved. Then you will have joy, you will have gladness, you will have pleasures forever in the presence of God.

There are a lot of doors in this room. Look at them all. The fire marshals give us problems when building buildings, [making us put in lots of doors]. You can all escape out of here in thirty seconds. What if through each one of these doorways two terrorists came in with machine guns and just started shooting everybody—men, women, children—just killing us all. That would be pretty desperate because there would be nowhere to flee, right? All the doors [would be] blocked. You [would] just have to sit there in terror, waiting for the bullet to pass through your head or your heart and take you out.

You [might] think, “That’s not a very good thought. That’s kind of frightening.” Well, I want you to know that if you don’t know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you’re in a lot worse situation than the one I just described. God is a loving God, and when He opens the door, and says, “This is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through Me” [see John 14:6], and you won’t take that door, there is nothing to hope for but death. The great thing is [that] the door is there. It’s wide open, and God says, “Believe and you will be saved.” He commands you to believe. The Scriptures say [that] God is commanding all men everywhere to repent because there is coming a day when He will judge the living and the dead [see Acts 17:30–31]. This is what Easter is all about: God had Christ come to earth to die and to be raised again.

Don’t give me this, “I’m too great of a sinner.” No, you’re not. “Well, you don’t know what I’ve done.” I know what God knows about you. I know that God knows all your sins, and I know that while you were yet [a] sinner, Christ died for you [see Romans 5:10]. Your sin is not greater than God’s grace. He will save you no matter how much you’ve sinned, and no matter how long you’ve sinned. If you’re sitting out there, and you’re thinking to yourself, “Oh, yes, but, you know, I don’t want to get all religious right now. I’m enjoying my sin, and I haven’t picked my spouse yet, and I kind

of want to have control for now, and then later, after I've lived my life for myself, when I'm on my deathbed, and they've got that air hose down my throat, and the doctor says, 'It's only a matter of hours,' I'll say, 'OK, God, You can save me.'"

No. You don't know when you're going to die. The only people who know when they're going to die are people who are on death row, and their death is scheduled, and sometimes they die before that. You could die of a heart attack right now. You could die of a brain aneurism. I had a cousin [who was] twenty-six years old, [a] triathlon athlete. [As she was] putting ornaments on the Christmas tree, she just said, "Oh!" and fell down dead. That could be you. *That could be you.* You can't wait. *Today* is the day of salvation [see 2 Corinthians 6:2]. *Today* is [the day] to run to Christ.

This is what Easter is all about. You see, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then what hope would we have? God says, "Oh, by the way, you're going to die, yes. They're going to put your body in the grave, yes. It's going to decay, yes. But I want you to know, you'll be raised up."

[Without Christ's death and resurrection, you would be] thinking, "Sure, sure I will. That happens all the time, that the dead live again." You would just have to believe this incredible thing that never happened before, based off of what?

What God did, to be gracious to you, is He made sure [that] Christ was crucified publicly, killed publicly, stuck in a solid-rock tomb, [and] wrapped up with a lot of linens and spice. [There was] a very large stone rolled [in front of the tomb, and Jesus was] dead [for] three days—just to make sure—before [God raised] Him from the dead so that you would know, [and you could say], "I don't care what happens to me in this life. Yes, I'm going to die. Yes, I'm going to go in the grave, but there's going to be a day when 'the trumpet of God and the voice of an archangel, and the dead in Christ will rise first' [see 1 Thessalonians 4:16], and our bodies will be reassembled and glorified into the same kind of body Christ had, reunited with our spirits, and we will enjoy the presence of God forever and ever because of what Jesus did, because He overcame death."

If you've never repented of your sins, if you've never received Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, you need to do it, man. What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for a better day? This is the day! I mean, we got you all primed up with songs. This is a good text, here. Hear what God is saying to you: He will save you now; He will change your life; He will forgive you and make you so [that] you can go through any circumstance, and say, "Listen, go ahead and kill me. I'm going to be in the presence of God, I'm going to have joy, I'm going to have gladness. It's unshakeable and you can't take it from me."

Sometime in the early 1930s, there was a man named Alfred Ackley, an evangelistic preacher. He was approached by a student after one of his evangelistic sermons. The student came up to him, and defiantly said, "So, tell me, why should I be worshipping a dead Jew?"

When [the student] said that, Ackley had this moment of passion, this moment of clarity, and he said, "He lives! I tell you, He is not dead, but lives here and now. Jesus Christ is more alive than ever before! I can prove it by my own experience and the testimony of thousands!" He was so distraught that he had been preaching and preaching and there were people out there who weren't clear that Jesus was alive, that he then decided to preach a sermon called "He Lives," and so that's what he did. Then after he preached that sermon, he thought, "This isn't good enough. I have to make this clear," and so he sat down and he wrote this hymn. As I read the words, notice that [Ackley] expresses the same joy and gladness that David expresses in Psalm 16. These are the words:

I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today.
I know that He is living, whatever men may say.
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer.
And just the time I need Him He's always near.

In all the world around me I see His loving care,
And though my heart grows weary, I never will despair.
I know that He is leading through all the stormy blast.

The day of His appearing will come at last.

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!

The hope of all who seek Him, the help of all who find.
None other is so loving, so good and kind.

And then the chorus:

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!

He walks with me and talks with me

Along life's narrow way.

He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!

You ask me how I know He lives?

He lives within my heart.²

I hope that today, before you leave here, you can say that: "I know He lives in my heart." God wants to give you joy, peace, and gladness, even in the face of death because He is risen! He is risen indeed! Let's pray.

Father, we are so grateful. We are so grateful for Your goodness to us. Thank You for this psalm and, Father, just a [few] New Testament texts [that] help us understand it a little better. Father, we are so grateful that we serve a risen Savior, that He's in the world today. That, Father, any sinner can be plunged beneath the fountain of His blood and come out clean. There is that magic serum, which is the blood of Christ, and when we come by faith, believing He will save us, He changes us. Father, I pray for anyone here who is fearful of death, who doesn't have perfect confidence and peace about the future, that You would save him or her and give him or her that confidence. Make him or her have joy. Help this Easter to be the greatest Easter he or she has ever had because it was the Easter he or she came to Christ, received Him, and was saved. For the rest of us, may we spend

²Taken from "He Lives" by Alfred H. Ackley, 1887-1960.

today, this next week, and all eternity rejoicing and glad because we serve a risen Savior. He is not in the grave, but He is risen indeed. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

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