

## The First Resurrection is the Better Resurrection

(Go To Meeting)

Durrell Brown—November 4, 2022

It certainly is a matchless privilege for me to be alive and well enough to address you this evening. God has been awfully merciful to me for the last month and a half I've been terribly ill and barely functional, but God in His mercy has seen me to this point in time.

I was sick for nearly two months and they couldn't determine what was wrong. I finally forced myself to go the hospital after Byron had anointed me and given me the Corona test and all of that, but I kept getting weaker and weaker. It turned out to be low blood pressure.

As I lay sick in bed I came to the realization that this could be my last time. I began to examine myself to see if I could take the attitude that the Apostle Paul had, that I had 'fought a good fight and kept the faith and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.'

Honestly, I didn't come to that conclusion about myself based on my evaluation. I realize that God has left me for some great reason because I'm coming up on age 86 in a couple of days. So, God has left me here for some reason. I thank God for His mercy and goodness, for the long life that He's given me, and for the blessing have served in the ministry for over 50 years. God has been a great and merciful God.

What I want to teach on and bring to your attention is the fact that the first resurrection is a better resurrection. I don't know if we fully understand the magnitude of who we are as a Body of Christ at this time, having been called at this time to be the firstfruits of His creatures.

We must qualify under a firstfruit standard. I don't know if we've given a lot of attention to the fact that we who have been called at this time must qualify under this firstfruits standard.

Jesus Christ the First of the firstfruits. He came as a human being and set the example for us. That it is possible to live just as He lived, following His example, with His mind in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That we can set an example as He did and qualify to be in the first resurrection, which is the best and better resurrection!

We see that we must strive against the world, the flesh and the devil! We are qualifying under a much higher standard than the rest who follow us will have to undergo. We saw as we

observed the Feast of Tabernacles, God's gracious and merciful plan, and how He is on time with it.

Under the Old Covenant they were responsible and held in charge for sinning under the letter of the Law. We are under the Spirit of the Law; we have a higher calling because we're qualifying for a higher responsibility in the Kingdom of God.

We're having to strive against a world of flesh and the devil! We learned during the Feast of Tabernacles that the Millennium is going to be such wonderful time. The devil will be bound for a thousand years and during that time those people will qualify under a standard that is a quite a bit easier than what we have.

We're having to overcome not only our flesh, but the world and the devil. So, we'll see this evening at some who have finished their course, and the Apostle Paul is one. We have learned so much from him as to how to hang in there.

I began to think as he thought during his sojourn, that this is awfully tough and hard, but he had the assurance that he qualified for the first resurrection, which is a better resurrection. I thought I am not as certain as the Apostle Paul was. That prompted me to do an in-depth study as to just what is required of us to be cleaned up and washed and close enough to the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ that we can qualify to be in that first resurrection. The standard is set awfully high.

- ***IF*** we haven't measured up fully to the fullness of the stature of Christ
- ***IF*** we haven't grown sufficiently in this calling, which we have accepted

Christ came and set us an example. In the calling we understand how God works; He has seven angels who searching and looking for potential sons of God who can be called and qualify for this first resurrection.

Once the angels recognize us and senses someone who may be eligible, he checks with the Father and the Father says He will open this one's mind and call him. *Many are called!* God in His mercy does not choose everyone, because He knows how tough it's going to be to measure up to a firstfruit standard. Greater promises, greater responsibility. We are in training to take the highest

responsibilities in the Kingdom of God for all eternity future.

That's a serious responsibility, a serious charge! Christ has set us an example and we're look at others and especially the Apostle Paul who had the assurance that he would be in that first resurrection.

Let's look at some of the requirements and standards that we as those who have been called, our minds were opened and we accepted the call. We repented sufficiently that we were able to be baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit.

The empowerment of the Spirit gives us the power and the understanding to grow sufficiently in grace and knowledge, *that we can grow to the fullness of the stature of the measure of Christ!* That is the standard that we must be attempting to reach until we finish this physical life.

The seriousness of who we are at this time should force us to really examine ourselves as we did during the days of Unleavened Bread and put the sin out. It's amazing how God in His wisdom as the Father and the Son planned what we are experiencing, this tremendous calling!

God knew just what we would be up against. Adam and Eve, the first two humans He placed on the earth, we don't know how long it took them to fail. Most of the first beings during that Adamic Covenant failed greatly. We see under the Old Covenant they had a little better opportunity, but they failed greatly.

So, here we are the firstfruits, qualifying for the firstfruits of those who have the Holy Spirit available to us in full measure. We've been called to do our part to grow to the point of the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ.

Paul had that confidence that he had made the grade. He suffered terribly with all the persecution and the things he had to go through. He had physical ailments, he had Luke, the beloved physician, follow him around and help him to be healthy enough to get the work done. He was convinced at the end of his life that he had made it.

So, Paul tells us in the book of Ephesians as firstfruits just what we must do in order to finish strongly.

Ephesians 6:10: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in *the* Lord, and in the might of His strength. **Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil**" (vs 10-11).

In the Millennium, the devil will be bound for that thousand years, so it will be a great deal easier for those who are qualifying for eternal salvation.

We've taught on the "...whole armor of God..." but what it is we have to have the helmet of salvation and the faith and all of those things. We've already taught on those things, so you can go back and see what they are.

*We are being forced to*, v 11: "Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... [all of his tricks, all of his plans] ...because we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities *and* against powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual *power* of wickedness in high *places*" (vs 11-12).

We're having to qualify under the same standard that Jesus qualified under. He became a fleshly entity, God in the flesh and set us a perfect example. So, in seeing what we need to do at this juncture in our calling, *He is growing us into the fullness of the measure of His righteousness, and His obedience to the Law of God!* He set a perfect example for us.

He lived perfectly, never sinning once. He has entered into the Kingdom of God and has been received and sat down again at the right hand of the Father. He's waiting for those of us who have been called as firstfruits, as a kind of firstfruits. Christ was the First if the firstfruits. Those of us who have been called a this time are the firstfruits and we're qualifying for higher standard. *Here is what we have to do:*

Verse 13: "Therefore, take up the whole armor of God so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and **having worked out all things, to stand.**" *That's the key, putting on the whole armor of God!*

We've covered what those things are: the shield<sup>[transcriber's correction]</sup> of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, all of these things (vs 14-17).

Verse 14: "Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with Truth..."

We have the Truth in the proper translation of the Bible, and all the 300 plus articles, booklets, books expounding the Truth of God so we're without excuse.

We have no excuse now knowing what is required of us and what the standard is to measure up to the fullness of the stature of Christ. We have technology enough to now redeem the precious time

we need. Some of us are old and our sight is bad, hearing is bad and we suffer. But Fred has read basically everything and it has been recorded so we can go online or order the hard copies.

I take great pleasure in just sitting and have Fred read to me. I used to get upset when I fell asleep reading the Bible and this kind of thing. I remember years ago when my mother used to sit and read to me and I would fall asleep.

God is our Father and He loves us, so to fall asleep with the comfort of knowing that He loves us and He's telling us that He's going to save us. All we have to do is understand what He requires of us.

Fred has read everything we need to know that's been revealed to us. The cannon has been sealed. We have the message to the seven churches. Not only is that reassuring to us as to how good God is, but it also shows us that we, as firstfruits, must be so careful and make sure that we measure up to the standard and we're growing in grace and in knowledge and applying these things as we should!

We see how God calls, and how He's merciful in His calling. There are some who respond and God knows that there are circumstances under a firstfruit standard they just wouldn't make it. So, he doesn't allow them to come to understanding enough to fully repent. They will be called at a better time. We learned about that at the Feast of Tabernacles. That's at the White Throne Judgment when most of the people who cannot measure up under the firstfruits standard will be given an opportunity to be saved.

There are people who are impaired physically with their eyesight, hearing, mental ability—all of those things—who will be brought up in a resurrection healed perfectly so that they can qualify. Putting on the whole armor of God is one of the responsibilities we have as firstfruits.

Verse 14: "Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with Truth, and wearing the breastplate of righteousness, and having your feet shod with *the* preparation of the Gospel of Peace" (vs 14-15).

When I came into the Church we were getting the Work done, preaching the Gospel on every radio station we could afford to get on, that would take us. We were publishing articles in the Plain Truth, putting them out on newsstands; doing all kinds of things.

Verse 16: "Besides all *these*, take up the shield of the faith, with which you will have the power to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."

Heb. 11—the faith chapter—we see the various responses on the part of the those who were called. Some wandered in deserts destitute trusting God to deliver them. Armies killed some of the husbands of some of the people who were wandering. God in His mercy raised the men up after they had passed through.

We see how God works, and for those who are called under a firstfruits standard, how merciful God is toward us. We have the messages to the seven churches, which will help us to understand the love of God and how He deals with the various circumstances that we find ourselves in, as those who are called as firstfruits.

God would not have called us and allowed us to come to this point where we are baptized. We believed to the point of being baptized and are moving forward with the blessing of being empowered by His Holy Spirit, having experienced the empowerment of the Spirit.

God's Spirit will bring to our mind and attention that we are children of God. We have no excuse at this time. We have the fact that Jesus Christ has set us a perfect example. We have men like the Apostle Paul, we have all of these examples of those who have qualified, and of those who have come far, but didn't come far enough. We see the seven churches and what God says to them as to what they should be doing.

I was very sick and thinking as Paul first began to think. I don't feel like going through what we're presently going through in the world today. I'm old enough to die; maybe I should go ahead and die. Paul said that, and he realized that God had been merciful to him and saw him through so much; God was with him and that he should remain and continue to be an example of faithfulness. How God will deliver you and raise you up and use you as one of the examples of His mercy and His love. I came to see that, and God has raised me up to be able to bring this message of hope.

Verse 17<sup>[transcriber's correction]</sup>: "And put on the helmet of salvation..."

Have that locked into our mind that God will save us if we put forth the effort and not be Laodicea. God's merciful to those who are in the other Churches that had problems where Satan's headquarters was. God takes into consideration where we are and what situations we are in. He is a merciful God. All we must do is stay close to Him, keep short council with Him. Examine ourselves as we did during the days of Unleavened Bread.

Put sin out. Stand and having done all,

*stand!* The God we serve is a loving God. He will save us! Christ had entered into the presence of the Father. He wants us cleaned up as the Bride of Christ. The Father has selected us and become the kind of wife that He wants us to be, and we need to be!

Verse 18: “Praying at all times with all prayer and supplication in *the* Spirit, and in this very thing being watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

We, as a ministry, have the responsibility to do the best we can to be praying for the saints and setting a perfect example for them. It’s a tough struggle for us in the ministry. We’re human, as well. I know the pressure of the ministry. I was ordained in 1967, the second black graduate of Ambassador College. I was sent out to the field during one of the trying times for the nation.

We had the ‘Hippie’ movement going on, we had the rioting and the black unrest and all of those things. I had the responsibility to help in the southeast from Florida and Georgia all the way to the Louisiana coast. I was the only black minister down in that area to help those ministers get us through those troublous times.

God was merciful toward us in our lack of understanding of how to deal with all those problems:

- the broken marriages
- the broken homes
- the stress that so many people were under

We were all young men and having to work with older people, and basically all we knew was the Word of God. All we could do is set an example and preach them the Word of God.

I had a young family, I think I only had one child when I was sent to the field. I didn’t know anything about how to rear children, how to run a home and things of this nature. All I know was what we had been taught from God’s Word and ‘to set the example for them and point them to the Word.’

We have been called as the firstfruits of God’s creatures. To live up to the standard of Jesus Christ and model that to the world. We have been called to be the light of the world. We have the responsibility to finish as the Body of Christ what He was not able to finish because He was cut off.

We take the full charge and responsibility with His inspiration as the Body of Christ. To be Christ-like:

- in all our manner

- in our thinking
- in our serving one another
- in our loving one another

*He will empower us to do that!* To set an example to this world; the persecution that’s going to come and all of that!

We’re told as we suffer we can say these things just as the Apostle Paul did:

2-Timothy 4:6: “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.”

I know a lot of you out there are old, because our congregation tends to be old. It’s amazing how sobering this past three or four weeks have been for me. One of the men I baptized, among the first I baptized, was one of the professors at Jackson State College where I had attended, died last week. One of our long-time elders died this past week. His wife died last year. One of the first blacks in the ministry in the Detroit area. One of our former members in a number of congregations died this past week.

So, we have a lot of sobering events, and most of us have had who have known these men. How close and how short our time is.

- Have we measured up to, or are we close enough to the fullness of the stature of Christ?
- Do we have enough oil to finish the race?
- Do we have enough willingness to hang in there and not give up?

*There are some trying times yet ahead of us!*

If we have another 19-year time-cycle I may be fortunate to miss it, because I’m already 86, born in 1936. I have to sometimes look at my driver’s license to see who I am! We can be humorous about these things.

We have to strengthen these feeble knees and stand tall, putting our faith and trust in the Lord. He is keeping us here for some good reason and we should show forth His praises and thank Him for it.

Those of us who have been placed in the ministry have a fantastic responsibility to model Christ in everything we do. I’ve been in the Church long enough to know all the problems that people have. We have had the privilege of being in very close intimate relations with brethren, thousands of people.

I had files of thousands of people I had visited; I knew them personally. I knew their children and I knew their problems. It was a blessing

to know their problems. I don't want to have their problems. As a young minister I was shocked that people had certain problems. It helped me not to have that problem.

This is why we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as some are, so that we can help one another, pray for one another and love one another and know what's going on, because our problems are different. Yet, they're the same in so many ways.

God has called us as the firstfruits of His creatures to qualify for the top offices, so that when the Millennium starts we will know how to deal mercifully and lovingly and kindly with those people, through the experiences we're having with one another.

- that's why we have to hang in here as the firstfruits
- that's why we've been called to be the firstfruits

It reminds me of the various branches of the military. Each branch has its deep forces, the first to go in. They have to go through this training mentally and physically to be strong and fearless, and set the example.

That's who we are and have been called to become, the first to overcome sin, and the first to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil! Adam and Eve, our first parents, failed. We don't hear much about them, where they will stand in the resurrection.

Scriptures warns us that there will be those who are first will be last, and those who will be last will be first. We are called to be firstfruits, where do we stand? We have the example of the seven Churches to see if you are not measuring up as quickly as you can, and as zealously as you can, in all areas of righteousness.

- things that we must put on
- things that we must put off
- are we doing that?
- is God's Spirit testifying to our spirit that truly we are sons of God?

Christ suffered horribly, was brutalized, rejected and died for us. He has entered into the Holy of Holies carrying His own blood and obtained eternal salvation for us!

- Are we going to let Him down?
- Are we going to fail Him?
- He's willing to help us

- He's willing to save us
- He's going to present us to the Father as the firstfruits

Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight..."

We have members in the Church—that are becoming fewer and fewer and that's disturbing—who have done this. It's a scary thing to see what is happening to the Church.

When I came into the Church everybody was thinking like it was true that the age was closing, Christ was coming and we had better make ourselves ready. The Bride has made herself ready!

My mother-in-law and her sister were evangelists and their church failed. Their husbands left them and God called them into the Church. My mother-in-law was on a 30-day fast and God called her. They were both powerful speakers and women of power and dominance, and could talk. They were zealous in what they were doing, which was wrong. God called both of them into the Church.

I remember at my mother-in-law's funeral her sister came in white. Traditionally, everybody wears black to funeral. She came in white and she explained it. 'I'm planning to be in that first resurrection and I'm going to have my white robe on now, because my sister just passed.'

- Have we cleaned ourselves up? *'The Bride has made herself ready' the Scripture tells us!*
- Have you made yourself ready?
- Have you cleaned your mind and your under areas and all of that?

I remember my dad lecturing me. I was going to go to some event and he had to adjust my tie. He said, 'My goodness, you haven't brushed your teeth.' *I said no!* He says:

We're not raising you that way, you're going to be out there amongst the public and up in these little girl's faces. You're going to set a bad example and embarrass yourself. Not only will you be an embarrassment to yourself, but to your family of origin. We're not raising you that way. So, when you get up in the morning, the first thing you do is pass copious amounts of hot soapy water all over your stinking carcass. Make sure that you give special attention to all of your under areas. Make sure they are right before you present yourself out there in the public. Otherwise you'll be an embarrassment not only to yourself but your

family of origin, and we're not raising you that way!

So, we don't want to be an embarrassment to our Father and elder Brother. So, we need to get cleaned up and put on that white robe and make sure that our mind is clean, the under areas and all of those are right. Otherwise we won't have on the wedding garment.

Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses; let us lay aside every weight..."

Verse 2: "Having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith..."

He's the Bridegroom; He wants to make sure that He's getting a virgin, that He's getting someone who has been cleaned up.

"...Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross..." (v 2).

We've read about and seen the movies on how brutal that was!

"...*although* He despised *the* shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the Throne of God" (v 2).

He is watching those of us and working with those of us who have been called as firstfruits to be His Bride.

Our weddings today, and the Jewish weddings today, are different from the model of the weddings that were taking place in the Jewish community at the time that Paul and others lived. But the bridesmaids in Jewish times—I understand—mainly assisted in the getting of the bride read for the marriage.

Everyone who is invited to the wedding feast is considered a firstfruit. If you're not cleaned up with your white garment and proof that you've been invited to that wedding feast, then you'll be thrown out.

We have to all be cleaned up and ready. Frankly, those of us who are my age and those younger may not have enough time if you're not clean now. You may not have enough time to get clean enough to attend the wedding feast. You may not have enough of the spiritual growth, and you may have to go and get oil, do the work of being filled with the spirit. We need to think these things through as we grow.

Verse 2: "Having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith..."

Let this mind be in you, which was also in

Christ Jesus. We have to make sure that we are keeping clean spiritually and physically. The standard is a higher one for us, because we are to become the firstfruits and always be with Him. ***He's the Beginner and the Finisher of the faith!***

"...Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame..." (v 2).

We can despise the shame of suffering, the aggravation, misunderstandings and all of the put-downs and children disrespecting us. The persecution that is yet to come.

Verse 4: "You have not yet resisted to the point of *losing* blood in your struggle against sin." *That's the extent to which we must be willing to go in order to qualify as a firstfruit!*

It's easy to the extent we yield ourselves to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5: "And you have already forgotten the admonition that He addresses to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise *the* chastening of *the* Lord..."

God allows these things in life to chasten us. Quite often we set ourselves up for some of the problems that we have.

"...nor grow weary of being reproved by Him" (v 5).

We get tired of being corrected, preached at and failing. You want to go off and say 'the hell with it,' but God is a merciful, loving and patient God!

Verse 6: "For whom *the* Lord loves He chastens..." *We have to get a spanking from time to time!*

One of the worse ones I got, I was a teenager and my mom was going to spank me for something. I don't remember what it was. I said, 'I'm thirteen and almost grown in high school. If I have a problem you can talk to me.' My mom said, 'That did you say?' We got whipped with an iron cord.' My mom went berserk! She found the iron cord and I took it away from her. I was a tall as she was then. She lost it! She just was so disturbed and upset that I would take the strap from her that she did one of the ultimate takedowns (what wrestlers do) and charged me and got me down on the floor. She got her strap back and was whipping me. She had her foot on my head.

I got her foot off my head and I got back up and threw the strap away and that's when she lost it. She got one of the fireplace tool, which was one of

the rectangular things that you clean the soot out of the chimneys. It has a handle on and she started breathing me with that.

I was down on the floor writhing and bleeding from the back and everything. The floor was turning red and that's what stopped her. I resisted unto blood! She realized that she was killing me and stopped.

Have you resisted unto blood striving against sin! God will allow us to be chastened severely and sometimes unto death.

Verse 6: "...for whom *the* Lord loves He chastens, **and He severely disciplines** every son whom He receives."

We've heard all the warnings to the seven churches. They all had problems and we know what their problems were. We must examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith. Laodiceans were just riding along because they didn't have a lot of problems so they weren't growing. Called to be firstfruits, but not growing.

God is a merciful God. The church where Satan was dwelling. God takes all of that under consideration. Where you are and what problems and troubles you have, and to what extent Satan the devil to hinder you in your growth and development.

But the Laodiceans receive great condemnation because they have left their first love and time has wound down. If you're in your 80s and 90s or in your 70s; we don't have a long time to play catch up and grow sufficiently in grace and in knowledge so that we have on the white suit of righteousness and be at that wedding feast.

Verse 8: "But if you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons."

I went through how our mothers and fathers chastened us, so should we all be willing to be subject **to the Father and live forever!** That first resurrection is a better resurrection, better promises. We're qualifying for the top jobs for all eternity.

As a black elder in the Church, that's good news! Qualifying for the top jobs as a Gentile, former Gentile; now I'm a spiritual Israelite!

Verse 8: "But if you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons."

- in the first case they chasten us for a few days in whatever way seemed good to them
- in the second case God chastens us for our own benefit

Some of us are self-righteous like Job was. He went way out of his way to be righteous. God blessed Job, but he—once he was corrected—knew that his Redeemer lives and would lead him into the Kingdom of God.

- Do we have that kind of faith and certainty?
- Do we have the faith that the Apostle Paul had?

Paul had finished his course and knew that was laid up for him a crown of righteousness.

- Do we have that assurance that when we pass from this life that we will be standing in that first resurrection?

That's what we should be concentrating on at this time. It is a better resurrection in every way. We are striving against the world, the flesh and the devil. The rest who are coming will have an easier time of it. I hope and trust that this will help us to see what we personally must do, and consider:

- how short the time is
- how busy we ought to be working
- praying
- fasting
- asking God to show what we need to do

Once we pass this life, we must have completed coming to the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ. Those responsibilities that we will hold in the Kingdom of God throughout future ***eternity rests on whether we endure to the end measuring up to fullness of the stature and measure of Jesus Christ!***

*It is close to becoming a reality!* We want to be able to be standing ready to be transported up to the Sea of Glass and part of that first resurrection.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Ephesians 6:10-18
- 2) 2 Timothy 4:6
- 3) Hebrews 12:1-2, 4=6, 8

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Hebrews 11

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