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2 Scripture for Tonight

- If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Cor 15:19–26 NIV)

3 Introduction

- The apostle Paul declares in our text that Jesus' resurrection is the guarantee of our own. Because he lives, we live. But how long will we live?
- Let's put that in perspective by looking for a few moments at how long we might expect to live in these temporal bodies.
- If you live in Japan, there's a good chance you could live well past the age of 100.
- There's an old saying in Japan:
 - "Old people are everybody's treasures."
 - If that's the case, and it should be, then Japan is one of the richest countries in the world — cars and electronics notwithstanding.

4 Centenarians

- A 2008 survey has revealed that Japan has more centenarians than any other country in the world with 36,000 citizens aged 100 or older.
- That's a huge increase from 1963, the first year the country started recording the number, when there were only 153 people in the centenarian category.
- Eighty-six percent of Japan's current century-club members are women, with the oldest woman in the country being a 113-year-old from the island province of Okinawa.
- Incidentally, Okinawa has the largest concentration of centenarians in Japan, at 838 (that's 61 for every 100,000 people).

5 Centenarians

- Compared to other nations, Japan's longevity factor leaves the rest of the world looking positively sickly by comparison.
- Out of 1.3 billion people in China, for example, there are only 18,000 centenarians, while in the United States the ratio is about 10 per 100,000.

- Life expectancy in Japan is a full four years longer than in America.

6 **Living Long**

- But is living that long really a good thing?
- What is the quality of life after 100?
- After all, who wants to spend his or her golden years tarnishing in a wheelchair or nursing home?
- Here, again, is where the Japanese respect for their elders as “treasures” trumps our obsession with youth and fear of aging.
- Turns out that many of these Japanese elders are partying like it’s 1899.

7 **Japanese Centenarians**

- Take a guy named Tadashi Kozakai, for example, who’s 101. He goes dancing twice a week, exercises every day and gave up smoking 11 years ago at age 90.
- Or consider Masaaki Hatsumi, a relative youngster of 77, who’s one of the world’s grandmasters of Ninjutsu (in other words, he’s a super Ninja!).
- Then there’s Shatsui Hakoishi, who at 92 has been cutting hair for 75 years and still gives her clients a shave with a straight razor.
- “When my hands start to shake, I will have to retire,” she says. These folks aren’t exactly waiting around to die.

8 **Japanese Centenarians**

- Definitive Japanese cultural traits, good genes and a focus on social activity and family may have something to do with long life in Japan, but diet appears to have even more of an impact.
- Unlike a typical Western diet, the daily Japanese diet doesn’t contain much meat or sugar.
- In fact, an average Japanese person eats 86.2 grams of fat per day, or about half of the 155.4 grams Americans eat.

9 **Western Influences**

- As younger generations in Japan are influenced by the West, some Japanese health experts fear that Japan’s edge in longevity will continue to be nibbled away at like an oversized Twinkie.
- One expert was quoted to say,
 - “The problem is that among young people, their lifestyle and eating habits are getting just like the United States, so in the future I am not sure that Japanese people can keep living longer and longer.”

10 **Life-Style Choices**

- Now, it isn’t as if we Americans don’t know that eating too much fat can shorten one’s life span, or that spending too much time on the couch is not good.

- We've been told over and over that just four things are needed to live a basic healthy lifestyle:
 - Be a nonsmoker,
 - Exercise at least 30 minutes a day five or more days a week,
 - Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and
 - Maintain a healthy weight.
- Yet, a 2005 Michigan State study revealed that only three percent of Americans do all these things.

11 **Life Style Choices**

- No doubt eating fatty foods and sweets taste better than foods that don't.
- Moreover, if anyone eats very much fast food or goes out to dine at restaurants they will find high calories are just about everywhere.
- Toss in how exercise requires sweat and there is no wonder poor life-style choices can be a source of temptation for many.
- Nevertheless, with all our lack of exercise and poor eating habits, we're only 4 years behind Japan in life expectancy.
- As you may have noticed no one lives forever.

12 **Mortality of the Body**

- No matter how you take care of your body, you can't guarantee a good quality of life when you grow older.
- Weakness, infirmity, disease, and mishaps are all quite common for the elderly.
- Our bodies aren't designed to live forever.
- However, God will take our bodies one day and not only make them new again, but perfect them as well —having the ability to interact in both the spiritual and physical realms.

13 **Ancient View of the Body**

- In the ancient world, it was believed by Plato and others that the body was the enemy of the soul and that its senses and passions obscured a person's view of reality.
- For Plato, the real world was the world of eternal and universal ideas that can be seen only with the mind's eye and known by humans only after death.
- This philosophy along with the emergence of the Eastern Mystery Religions led to Gnosticism where out-of-the-body experiences were viewed as the primary source of divine knowledge.
- So much so that talk about the resurrection of the body was strange and peculiar.

14 **The Resurrection of the Body**

- According to the Apostle Paul, the resurrection of the body is anything but a step backwards.
- Our body is the temple of our spirit and is not intrinsically bad.
- When a Christian dies, his soul and spirit go to heaven and remain there until the first resurrection.
 - For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Th 4:16–17 NIV)
- At that time we will be given glorified bodies, which will never grow weak, decay, or die.

15 **The Second Resurrection**

- However, there is also a second resurrection, which is also called the Second Death.
- It will occur at the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ.
 - The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. (Rev 20:13 NIV)
 - Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:14–15 NIV)

16 **Two Resurrections**

- The First Resurrection
 - It will happen at the rapture (Blessed Hope) and will include the righteous, all believers in the Lord, and martyred saints during the Great Tribulation period.
 - We all will be given glorified bodies in which to live forever and interact in both the spiritual and physical worlds.
 - We will act as ambassadors for Christ on the earth and help represent His will and ways to the nations.
- The Second Resurrection
 - It will happen at the end of the Millennium.
 - The wicked and all those whose names are not found in the Book of Life will be resurrected and thrown in the Lake of Fire (Second Death).

17 **Evidence of Hope**

- So then, what is the proof of the First and Second Resurrection to come?
 - And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. (1 Cor 15:14–15 NIV)
 - And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; . . . we are to be pitied more than all men. (1 Cor 15:17–19 NIV)

- But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Cor 15:20 NIV)

- So then, because we know that Jesus has indeed been raised from the dead, we have hope for tomorrow.

18 Resurrection of the Dead

- Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. (1 Cor 15:51–53 NIV)

19 Victory Over Death

- One of these days, death is going to be swallowed up by exercise, drinking green tea, and eating fish and leafy vegetables. Right?
- When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:54–55 NIV)
- But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:57 NIV)
- Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Cor 15:58 NIV)

20 Summary

- Since Jesus has been raised to life, our hope for life after death is not a fantasy.
- So also our labor in the Lord is not a waste of time either, but achieving for us an eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17 NIV).
- Like people with no hope, let us not eat, drink, and be merry.
- Instead, let us, live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:12–14 NIV)

21 Conclusion

- Tonight as we partake of Communion, let us renew our profession of faith in God’s New Covenant, which is founded on better promises and a better hope—even eternal life.
- Let us also, renew our commitment and responsibly to this covenant of grace by making it our aim to be found faithful in Christ—applying His teachings and commandments to our lives.
- For we have before us a great hope, . . . the resurrection of our body and eternal life with God in heaven and on the earth.
- Because Jesus lives, I know that long life and a better life is my future destiny. Amen!

22  He Has Risen!