

Introduction

Praise the Lord, everybody. I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into Houston Northwest Church and preach the Good News. Amen? I want to thank God for your pastor, Pastor Steve Bezner and his family. It has been a joy getting an opportunity to meet him. I don't know if you know how great of a baseball player your pastor is... he might not have told you. He is a real humble guy. Two years ago at our Mannafest conference, we had a good friend of his, Matt Chandler, come in to share at our men's conference. Matt's plane was delayed due to an ice storm, so they called us to come in and pinch hit before Matt could get there on time. I hit a single, I think... maybe got on base. Then Steve came right in behind me; he was not scheduled to preach but preached. He brought me on home with a homerun out of the park, just on the spot. (Clapping) I want to thank God for your able and ready pastor... (Clapping) ...a great brother. We had him come back this year, and so he said, "Last year I just hit it over the fence. This year I'm going to hit it out of the park." He hit it out of the park this year, so I'm just going to try to bunt the ball down the first-base line. (Laughter) Hopefully my speed can get me in... Amen.

I do want to thank God for the Crossover and Houston Northwest partnership. I want to share with you how I get an opportunity to see what God is doing in your ministry, watching the series that you're preaching... like #WeLoveHOU... and then now seeing the actions of that love in the relief effort of what recently happened in our community together, with the flood efforts. I just want to thank God for your love and your commitment to put your faith to work and to show the love of Christ to this community as we rebuild and serve the Lord together. Amen? I also want to just quickly introduce... I have my mother-in-law here with me, my wife, my son, and some friends from the church. But also, I want to share with you... my wife who is here with me, she has an earned PhD from the University of Houston, so whenever you're married to a doctor, that's real cool... (Laughter) In December of 2006 my wife was finishing with her PhD from the University of Houston; I said, "I like that... I think I'll call you 'doctor'... Dr. Ronique Wilson." I was finishing with my Master's degree from Dallas Seminary in May 2007. I said, "I've got it... I've got it. I'll call you 'Doctor', you call me 'Master' and we'll be all good." Amen? (Laughter) I'm glad to have her with me. That's how you do it. (Laughter)

If you don't mind, turn with me in your Bible to Acts 13:26-39... whether you have your Bible or a device, I pray that you would tune in because we're going to be talking in your series "Make Believe"... is this thing a fairy tale, a fable, or is it the truth? When it comes down to what we believe as it relates to the doctrine of the Resurrection, it is the essentials that are necessarily. You've already talked about the essentials of the believability of the Bible and the truth of the Bible. You've talked about Jesus Christ being the only way, and a couple of other things. I want to talk today about why, in order, you have to believe the Bible before you can ever get to the Resurrection. Amen? You have to believe in the person and the work of Christ before you can ever believe in the Resurrection. So, in Acts 13:26-39, I'm going to pick up in the middle of Paul's sermon here in Acts chapter 13 where Luke the physician is writing. The Bible reads this word; I'm reading out of the New American Standard Version, so it may read differently than yours... Let me read real quick... Acts 13:26... *"Brethren, sons of Abraham's family and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. 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.' Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'You will not allow your Holy One to undergo decay'. For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him 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."

Let's pray. "Heavenly Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be holy and acceptable in Your sight, for You are my rock, my strength, and my Redeemer. Lord, I pray that You and You alone would open up our eyes, and we would behold wonderful things in your Law. Open up our minds so that we might understand the Scriptures. May our hearts grow within us as the Holy Spirit speaks to us along the road. We pray most of all, God, that we would be doers of Your Word and not simply hearers. For it is in the doing of the Word of God that we are blessed. Lord, we pray that You would strengthen us by grace and grant us the ability to teach, hear, understand, and live out the Scriptures to the glory of the Lord. It's in Your Name that we pray. Amen and thank God."

In Acts 13:26-39, I would simply like to focus our sermonic spotlight on believing in the Resurrection... "Believe in the Resurrection." As you and I look at the Christian faith, there is something that we have to look at in reality, and that is that every person that you and I know who have died, who have passed away... we've gone to a funeral, and we have seen them either cremated or we have seen them laid in a box, placed in the ground, and then never to get back up. We've never seen anybody get back up from the dead. But yet, throughout the Bible, there are instances where Jesus Christ gives us spotlights of people who have been raised from the dead. It gives you and I biblical hope. There was a widow's son at Nain in Luke chapter 7. It was her only son; at that funeral, Jesus was passing by and He touches the coffin and tells the young man to rise and he gets up. It's in John chapter 11 that Jesus raises up that famous Lazarus from the dead. He tells Lazarus to rise. His sisters are concerned that it's been four days, and his body is already stinking. In other words, he's undergoing decay. And Jesus comes to the tomb and says, "Lazarus... get up." In an African American tradition, we would simply say it like this: If He would not have said Lazarus's name specifically and if He would have just said, "Get up", all of the bodies of all history would have gotten up by the power of Name of Jesus Christ. Because when He speaks, things happen. Here it is, right here in Acts 13:26-39: The Apostle Paul is a man who once was an enemy of the Church, a man who tried to destroy the Church. He was a persecutor, a violent aggressor, a blasphemer against the Church. And yet one day on a road to Damascus, the Lord meets him, and when He meets him He says, "Saul, Saul... why are you persecuting Me?" Who is it that I am persecuting?" "It's Me, the Christ." And Jesus Christ speaks to Saul right there. He calls Saul and He says, "Saul, don't worry about it. I'm going to save you, and I'm going to give you a journey. I'm going to put you out on a journey; I'm going to have a role for you, a plan for you to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and also to Jewish leaders but mainly to Gentiles." And He had saved this man's life. In one second, here's a man who was going to destroy the Church who now becomes the greatest proclaimer of the Gospel in the New Testament, taking the Gospel farther beyond even the original eleven Apostles. He is the one who takes the Gospel to the ends of the earth... the reason why the Gentile Church is in existence to this day. So here it is, in Acts 13:26... the Apostle Paul has been ordained by that early Church there in Acts 13, along with Barnabus, to go on a missionary journey. It's his first missionary journey, and when he gets to go out, the first thing he's going to begin to do is preach the Gospel. He finds himself in a synagogue. Notice this in verse 26... in verse 26 it

says, *"Brethren, sons of Abraham's family and those among you who fear God, to us the message of salvation has been sent. For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath..."* Now, notice this. He says in the Scripture that he calls them "brethren and those who fear God... sons of Abraham" Talking about the Jewish nation. I'm preaching to the Jewish nation also. Then he says, "And to those of you who fear God." In Acts chapter 10, Cornelius was a God-fearer; in other words, the Gentiles, those of you outside of the Jewish ethnic race. I'm preaching this Gospel message to everybody. It is a message of salvation, not just to the Jew but to the whole world. So let me show you something about this that is essential that you need to understand about the Resurrection.

1. Those Who Do Not Believe In The Resurrection, Lack Spiritual And Scriptural Insight.

In verses 26 and 27, if you want to write this point down, it will be on the screen. It says, "Those who do not believe in the Resurrection lack spiritual and scriptural insight. Those who do not believe in the Resurrection, in Acts 13:26-27, lack spiritual and scriptural insight. Check out the text. It says in verse 27, *"For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him."* Notice that it says that they did not recognize who Jesus was. The text says that they did not recognize Jesus; they lacked spiritual insight into the person and the work of Christ. Now here is Jesus Christ who has lived among them, who has raised the dead, who has healed lepers, who has cast out demons, opened up the ears of mute people, allowed the deaf to hear and the lame to rise and walk. He has done all of these things, and yet they do not recognize Him. They actually called Him the son of Beelzebub. They do not recognize who Jesus Christ is. They lacked spiritual insight. When a person does not believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, even with all the evidence that has been presented about the work of Christ and the person of Christ, they still deny who Jesus is. But here's the amazing thing about it. It says that although it's read every Sabbath day... not only do they lack spiritual insight into the identity of Christ, but they lacked scriptural insight into the person of Christ and His work. It has been proclaimed throughout all the Bible about this work that is coming of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, Isaiah 52 and 53 talked to us about the suffering servant, talked about Jesus Christ who was going to die on a cross, a Messiah who was going to be bludgeoned on your behalf and mine. In Psalm 22, he is going to talk about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In other words, throughout all of the Scriptures from the Old Testament, it has been talked about the fact that there is going to be a Messiah who's going to come and die. And yet the Messiah is read about every single Sabbath day, and they still don't understand. In other words, it's been written in the Word of God, and although you are religious you're not righteous. You have religious practice, but you don't have the imputed righteousness and recognition of who Jesus Christ is as a person.

So it's amazing that one day, in John chapter 3, verse 1 through about 16... Jesus gets into a conversation with a man by the name of Nicodemus. And in that conversation, Nicodemus simply says this in John 3, verses 1 through 16... Nicodemus says, "Teacher, we know that You are a great man, having come from God, for no man could do these things unless God is with Him." He says, "Rabbi"; he calls Him, "Rabbi." And then Jesus immediately transitions the conversation into, "You must be born again." Now here's Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, and yet Jesus Christ begins to talk to the teacher of Israel about salvation and being born again. Notice what Nicodemus does. He says, "Rabbi, we know that God must be with You because no man could do these amazing works unless God was with Him." And then Jesus says, "You must be born again." Why does Jesus do that? ...Because Nicodemus missed step one. Nicodemus started talking to Jesus Christ and addressing Jesus Christ as step two. He called Him, "Rabbi." If you would go back to John 1:35-42, there's a man by the name of John the Baptist. John the Baptist had some of his

disciples with him that day. He says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who has come to take away the sins of the world." The next day, he says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world." His disciples walk off and follow Jesus... two of them. And when they turn to follow Jesus, Jesus turns around and says, "What do you want?" They say, "Rabbi, where are You staying?" He says, "Come and you will see." But notice what they did. They believed Him as the Lamb of God first before they called Him "Rabbi." In other words, Jesus has to be your Savior before He can be your teacher. So when Nicodemus starts by calling Him "Rabbi" in John chapter 3, He said, "Hold on, boy. We've got to go back to step one. You missed step one. In order for you to be saved, you've got to believe Me as the Lamb." So He talks to him about salvation. And then He says to Nicodemus in that conversation, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?" So here is the religious teacher of Israel, Nicodemus, who knows the Word of God and is teaching the Word of God but does not know the person of God. He knows the Word of God, knows how to teach the Word of God, and yet does not know the person of God... religious but not righteous. And here it is, in Acts 13, Paul is preaching and he says, "You did not recognize Him nor when He is read about every Sabbath day in the Scriptures."

So here it is. Those who do not believe in the Resurrection, they lack spiritual and scriptural insight. Check out verse 28... notice what it does at the end of verse 27. It says, *"They fulfilled these things by condemning Him."* Now, I used to ask myself the question, when Jesus was on the cross... even as a young kid I'd ask myself this question... "How in the world, Jesus... because I've heard that You know everything... I heard You're omniscient... How in the world are they beating You to death, and You say, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.' How in the world, Jesus, can You say something like that when they're beating You?" This verse right here... It says that they did not recognize Him nor Him in the Scriptures. If you were reading 1 Corinthians chapter 2, Paul writes this: Paul simply says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, "The rulers of this age did not recognize Him; for had they recognized Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." In other words, if they would have known that the One that they were putting on the cross... mocking, beating and scourging... was the Lord, they would not have done it. They had no insight into who He was. So in order to believe the Resurrection, there has to be a personal revelation of the person of Jesus Christ and the work of Christ through the Scriptures.

Now let me just share one more thing with you that is amazing. In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus, our Christ, is having a conversation. He's telling a parable about the rich man and Lazarus. He says, "The rich man dies and goes to hell. This other man," He says, "Is taken away and carried away to the bosom of Abraham. Then all of a sudden, the rich man begins to ask questions from Hades. He wants to get out. 'Can you have him dip his finger and put it on my tongue and cool me off?' 'No, no, no... can't get any water... no Gatorade, boys. You're in hell.' He says, 'Well have him go tell my brothers that they do not want to come to a place like this.'" Now all of a sudden the rich man wants to be an evangelist from hell. (Laughter) Evangelism is done while on earth, not from hell... and he denies him and says, "No." Notice this... if they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they won't even believe if somebody is raised from the dead. In other words, you've got to have scriptural insight. In other words, this is the living Word of God, and if the living Word of God does not reveal to you the death, burial, and the resurrection of Christ, you'll never get it.

2. Their Lack Of Spiritual And Scriptural Insight Led To The Crucifixion Of Christ.

So in Acts 13:28, he simply says, *"And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. When they carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb."* Now notice this: The lack of spiritual and scriptural insight led to

the crucifixion of Christ. When you don't take the evidence about the person and work of Christ, and you lack spiritual and scriptural insight, they condemned Christ and put Him on the cross. Now that's back then. But you and I, when we lack the ability or we do not believe in what we have been told about Christ's death, burial, and resurrection... then what we are doing is saying, "Nah... we don't believe and we are rejecting the work of Christ." And when you reject the work of Christ, it's like putting Him on the cross all over again. You're saying that what He did was not worthy. That's the real response... what God receives when we do not respond to it. It said, "They condemned Him." Now notice what they did. It says that they asked Pilate. It says in verse 28, *"And they found no ground for putting Him to death. They asked Pilate that He be executed."* In John 18:38-40, (write this down in your notes) Jesus is having a conversation with Pilate. Pilate says, "What is truth?" Then Jesus tells him about truth. And then Pilate says, "I find no guilt in Him. He has done nothing wrong." He says, "You all have a little law that would allow me to release Him." And notice what they say, "No... crucify Jesus. Give us Barabbas... Give us Barabbas." You asked for a murderer, a robber, and a thief instead of Jesus, the Christ. But isn't it ironic how God writes the Scriptures? They said, "We want Barabbas."

Now some of you are familiar with the Bible and the story of Bartimaeus... blind Bartimaeus. If you're familiar with it, you realize that Bartimaeus is not his name. "Bar" is a surname... just like Jesus' disciples were the Bar-Jonahs... Sons of John. "Bar-Timaeus" is the son of Timaeus. So when they say, "Give us Barabbas..." They are saying, "Give us the son of Abba." You all have heard it before. "Abba, Father" is what we pray... "Give us the Son of the Father." I don't think you all caught that. I'm going to repeat it one more time. (Laughter) "Bartimaeus," is not Bartimaeus' name; it is "Son of Timaeus." Bar-Jonahs is not named John, it's "Son of John." "Bar-Abbas" is the Son of the Father. That is what his name meant. And they hollered out... God ironically had a man who was going to die right next to His Son, by the name of Barabbas... and they released the other Barabbas, but they got the "Barabbas" that they didn't even know that they needed. (Clapping) "Give us Barabbas." So it says that Pilate found no ground for accusing Him. When he found no ground for accusing Him, they executed Him... and when they executed Him, they took Him down and they laid Him in a tomb.

When you read Isaiah chapter 53, the Bible will tell you that He was buried among the rich men. He was buried in a tomb of Joseph of Arimathea... Jesus Christ. In other words, you have to search the Scriptures in order to recognize the work of Christ. This is not a fairy tale... this is the Word of God. From Genesis chapter 1 to Revelation chapter 22, God has revealed Himself. God has told the story. I tell people at Crossover Bible Fellowship, so I won't say it here... but I tell people at Crossover, "God doesn't like ignorant Christians." You see, I'm giving y'all a peek into our conversation at Crossover... not y'all's. God doesn't like dumb Christians who don't know how to get into the Book. And if you have any questions... people are asking questions about, "Well, tell me about the dinosaurs." Y'all... this isn't "Jurassic Park." (Laughter) We don't care about the dinosaurs... tell me about what's been written in here. Talk to me about what has already been revealed. And if you doubt the work of Christ, why don't you read it for a while? Why don't you begin to read it? I know some friends who were saved reading the Gospel of Matthew. I say, "How did you get saved?" He said, "Man, I didn't believe in God... I picked up the Book and started reading. I read from Matthew chapter 1 to Matthew 28... I got saved."

I was raised by mom and dad in a Christian home. I saw my mom and dad pray often. They took us to church. My mom will tell you, "I married your father when I was a virgin; I never had been with another man in my life." She was the good kid in the family with all of the responsibility... the executor of the estate... all of the family responsibility falls on my mom. She is the good kid. She raised us well, taught us well; did not spare the rod... (Laughter) She didn't believe in "time out." She believed in the Bible. She beat

us. (Laughter) But here's the thing. My mom will tell you that she got involved in BSF... Bible Study Fellowship. And at 62, my mom will tell you, she got saved. I said, "What, Mom?" She said, "Blake, it was the first time I realized that I was guilty before a Holy God. I had always been the good kid. I never realized I was guilty until I got in BSF." Her entire life has been changed as she read about the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, (Clapping) ...if you're going to know what God is up to, you have to take some time to spend in the Book. Now watch this... Now, Paul is going to transition to a conversation from those that he's saying, "You've got a message of salvation but you killed Him." But here's the good news... check it out. "...although you killed Him, let's deal with His Resurrection." Verse 30... *"But God raised Him from the dead..."* That's Good News right there. If you haven't heard any good news yet, that's Good News. *"But God..."* Now here's why *"But God..."* is good news. ...Because "but" is a conjunction in English. It's an adversative conjunction. That simply means that what is behind the "but" is greater than what's before the "but." (Laughter) That's the simple way to put that. "But God raised Him from the dead. You killed Him..." *"But God raised Him from the dead."* In other words, what you did to Him couldn't stop what God was going to do for Him. (Clapping) *"But God raised Him from the dead..."* (Clapping) *"...and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones of who are now His witnesses to the people."*

3. The Evidence Of The Resurrection.

In Act 1:8, Jesus says, after He has risen from the dead, *"But you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria and even to the ends of the earth."* Jesus Christ puts the label of witnesses on them. But notice what the text says... "That He had appeared to them many days and in many ways." Christ Jesus comes and talks to our friend in the resurrected body... to doubting Thomas. He comes to talk to doubting Thomas. The Bible says that when He has been raised from the dead, he asked for Peter, the one who had denied Him. The Bible says in John 20:18-21 that He comes and cooks breakfast for them. He appears to them. Paul says He appeared to his very own brother James... "James, the Lord's half-brother does not believe in Him." Now let me tell you this. If you don't believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you're in the same place that Jesus' half-brother was. Jesus' half-brother... he sees his brother. You know it's tough for Jesus to be your brother. It's tough: "What did you do today, Jesus?" "I walked on water." (Laughter) "What did you do today, Jesus?" "Well, I told a storm to be still." "Jesus... what did you do?" "A leper came up and I touched him." "You're going to get sick." "No... I'm not sick." It's tough being Jesus' brother. But Jesus is performing all these miracles... listen to me very carefully... and in John chapter 7, the Bible says "And His brothers did not believe in Him." They were witnessing, seeing Him come home, interacting with Him, and His brothers didn't believe. Can I give you this piece of insight? No one gets a "buddy pass" on believing who Jesus is. You don't get a "brother hook-up"... you don't get any of that. If you read John chapter 1, even John the Baptist said he didn't recognize Him until the Spirit of God showed him that that was Him. His cousin didn't know it until God showed Him to him. In other words, you have to have spiritual and scriptural insight that's given from God to make you believe in Christ.

Now, here it is... He says, in Acts 13:30... *"But God raised Him from the dead, and for many days, He appeared to those who came up from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now witnesses to the people. 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..."* (now watch this) *"...written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.'"* Talking about when David wrote the Psalm... and this is an interesting Psalm because it's not just talking about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It's talking about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and His ascension to the throne. In

Psalms 2:7 because it was written about a Messianic fulfillment to where Jesus Christ has not only been raised from the dead but also been raised to the throne. Now, David was the king who had been raised up. He said, *"This day I have begotten You."* In essence, "When I raised Jesus Christ from the dead, it was proof that My Holy Son was the One that I had talked about in the Scripture." Can I make a plan like this?

How many people have ever gone to Chick-Fil-A? I thought so... Now, when you're in line at Chick-Fil-A and you're ordering something... I want to show you what the Resurrection is. When you're ordering something in the line, you come and you say, "I want a Number 2 on wheat... no cheese..." (Gotta keep your cholesterol down) You order your Number 2 on wheat, lettuce and tomatoes. When you come up to the window, they want you to pay for what you just ordered. And what you just ordered is on the inside, and once you make payment for it, they'll give it to you. So, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, He said, "It's been paid for." And when you come up to the window, notice this, you give them the cash... "That will be four dollars and fifty-three cents..." When you give them cash, it's been now redeemed... that what you were trying to purchase... so then all of a sudden a receipt pops up... the cash register pops up and a receipt pops up saying, "Paid For." Then they give you what's on the other side. Watch this... When Jesus Christ died on the cross, on Friday, He paid for it... On Sunday morning, God said, "I'm accepting the payment" and the receipt was that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. (Clapping) Jesus Christ popped up, and the reason why you're in church is because He ordered you 2000 years ago on the cross. (Clapping)

So He says in the Word of God, verse 34, *"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.'"* Therefore, He also says in another Psalm... (check out verse 35) *'... You will not allow your Holy One to undergo decay.' For David, after he served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay."* In Psalm 16:9-10, David writes in the Old Testament, some 500-600 years before the birth of Christ, under the unction of the Holy Spirit... he writes "The reason that I don't worry about dying and being left in the grave is because You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."

Now you and I, as Christians, we love the Psalms... Psalm 23, *"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want..."* We love Psalms. There are certain Psalms that are our favorite Psalms... Psalm 91... my mom loves it... Psalm 27... there's those certain Psalms that we just know: *"I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall..."* Certain Psalms we just know those Psalms. But no one really says, "My favorite Psalm is Psalm 16:9-10." Do you know what Peter did on the day of Pentecost? Peter had to preach. And when Peter preached out of the 150 Psalms, he turned to Psalm 16 on the day of Pentecost and pulled out Psalm 16:9-10 that David had written 500 years before the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. What David got from the Holy Spirit was, "...the reason why I don't have to worry about dying is because you're not going to allow your Holy One to see decay." Everybody knows that when you die your body decomposes. Lazarus' sisters knew that. When Peter pulled that Psalm 16:9-10 out and applied that Scripture to the person of Christ, three thousand people got saved. You don't get it because you and I don't sing the Psalms like they did. That was their hymn book; that's what they sang on a regular basis.

So notice this: The NCAA tournament just finished. I was blessed by one of our good members... (Laughter) ...one of our better members... (Laughter) ...to be invited to the final game. Now, the NCAA tournament, as I kept my ticket... could you imagine if five years ago... (everybody's bracket was jacked up this year)... But could you imagine if there was someone who loved the sport of basketball, and they began to fill out their bracket. Not only did they fill out their bracket... they filled out the scores of each game.

They filled out every upset... they filled out every win, every victory... all the way down to the finals, and they actually filled out even the statistics of how everything would go down. Then they pulled their bracket out from 2016, predicting what would happen in 2021... and you look at their bracket and you see that it happened just like they said... you would be blown away. You would say, "Genius! How in the world did this happen?" Well... it's already happened. Eight hundred years before the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, David wrote Psalm 16:9-10. He didn't predict... he prophesied that Jesus Christ would be raised from the dead. And Peter just picked it up and opened up the Bible and said, "Here it is," and three thousand believed. Now Peter preached it and then Paul preaches it. And when he preaches it, watch what happens. He says, "Here it is, just like it has been spoken of before, God raised Him up from the dead. He did not undergo decay." For Jesus Christ to not undergo decay, that means He had to be raised from the dead. But He was laid in a tomb, He actually died, but now He's sitting there, Friday night... laying there Saturday, Saturday afternoon, Saturday evening, Sunday morning... all of a sudden there's some tussling and some rumbling... and Jesus Christ is raised from the dead. He does not undergo decay. Then the Bible goes on and says something interesting in verse 38 through 39. *"Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him 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..."* Listen very carefully. The benefit of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is that all of mankind has been offered forgiveness... Benefit number one. Benefit number two: You've been freed from all things in which the Law of Moses could not free you. The Bible says, *"The Law came through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* The Law would only show you your sin and the righteousness that God demands and none of us could fulfill. But yet, what Christ came and did was died on a cross, fulfilling everything. And not only do we have forgiveness for every commandment that we have ever broken, for every area where we fell short of the glory of God... Not only do we have forgiveness from a Holy God, because we sing about a Holy God. And here's why people don't understand certain things about God... is who can stand the presence of a Holy God?

"Make that make sense, Pastor Blake." I'm glad you asked... "Blake?" "Yes, mom..." "I'm leaving... don't touch anything in that cookie jar... nothing. I'm coming home, dinner will be prepared, and you can eat afterwards. You're on your own." (Laughter) Now these aren't regular cookies; these are mom's cookies. And she said, "Don't touch the cookie jar." And so now, "How many are in there? ...one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen... fourteen. She won't know it's fourteen, will she?" (Laughter) (Making chewing sounds) Mom comes home. "Blake... did you touch the cookie jar?" "Mom... go look and see for yourself. I don't know how many are in there." In other words... guilty. Guilty. (Laughter) But you know how when you're guilty you kind of shrink back and you don't tell the truth? ...Because you can't even stand in front of the presence of your mom when you've been in the cookie jar, much less stand in the presence of a Holy God when it comes down to His Commandments. (Clapping) He says, "You have been forgiven and freed from all things."

Listen to me very carefully. When I was in the fifth grade, I remember my dad driving up to the school, Sacred Heart Elementary in Austin, Texas... and my uncle. It was strange when I saw my dad and my uncle drive up to the school during the hour in which they don't normally come. School wasn't out. They walked up slowly, talked to my teacher... Sister Mary Jean... and they said, "Blake... you should go with your dad; get all your things." I found out that my grandfather had died that day. About four years later, I found out that my grandmother had died of pancreatic cancer. I loved my grandfather and my grandmother. I know there are some people that you love that have died and passed away. There's an amazing verse of Scripture that we often read at funerals, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, where it talks about the so-called

rapture of Jesus Christ and Him coming back for us. There's an interesting statement in there; if you don't mind, turn with me in your Bible to it real quick. I just want to just turn you to this one verse of Scripture and let you read this real quick. How many of y'all believe that Jesus is coming back? (Clapping) "Yes." Listen to this and then I'm done. 1 Thessalonians 4:13... *"But we don't want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."* In other words, if you believe that Jesus Christ is coming back, you have to first believe in the Resurrection. You see, I'm not here to debate your eschatological views, but when it comes down to the rapture of Jesus Christ, it says the reason why you can trust the Rapture is because you first trust the Resurrection. If we believe that God raised Him from the dead, then you can trust... here's another benefit of the Resurrection... you're going to see your family again. Not only are you forgiven, not only are you freed from all things which the Law could have never done but just keep you in bondage... but you're going to see your family members again. I don't have to worry like those that don't have hope because if I'm still here and Christ comes back and cracks the sky...I'm going to not only see Jesus Christ, but I'm going to also see my grandmother. I'm going to also see my grandfather. There are some family members of yours that you're hoping to see again, but you can't see them again unless you believe in the Resurrection. The Resurrection hinges all of eternal life.

My brothers and sisters across the audience today, I don't know where you are with the Lord, but my question is today, "How will you respond to the Resurrection?" How will you respond? Will you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and then raised from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures? In other words, based on the authority of this Book, God is going to do exactly what He said He is going to do. By believing in Him, you're going to see thirty people get baptized in just a few seconds... because they believed in Him. What if you're thirty-one? What if God calls you to be thirty-two today? What if God calls you to be thirty-three? The witness of these thirty is a witness that God has raised Jesus Christ from dead.

Let's pray... "Father God, we thank you right now in the name of Jesus, take the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart and make them holy and acceptable... plant them in the lives of your people. It's in Jesus' Name that we pray. Amen and thank God."