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Do You Have an Exit Strategy?

Ed Hamrick

In John Krakauer's book *"Into the Wild"* we learn of Carl McCunn, a likeable Texan with a love for the great outdoors. He moved to Alaska in the late 1970's to work on the Trans-Alaska Pipeline construction project where he made good money. In March of 1981, the thirty-five-year-old McCunn hired a bush pilot to drop him at a remote lake on the southern edge of the Brooks Range. An amateur photographer, he told friends that the primary reason for the 5-month adventure was to shoot pictures of wildlife. McCunn spent an entire year, planning for his expedition, seeking advice, checking details and purchasing supplies. With two rifles (.22 and .30-30 caliber), a shotgun, fourteen hundred pounds of provisions and five hundred rolls of film he planned to stay in the wilderness until August.

In spite of his careful preparation, Carl McCunn overlooked one important detail that would end up costing him his life. He failed to make arrangements to be picked up, a mistake he didn't realize until August. We know this because of the diary Alaska State Troopers found next to his emaciated, frozen body the following February. In it, McCunn wrote: "I think I should have used more foresight about arranging for my departure."

As we consider the Carl McCunn story we may be confident that we would never be so foolish as to overlook the most important part of such an expedition, getting out alive. Or would we?

Our Journey Will End

We can eat healthy foods, exercise regularly, refrain from alcohol and drugs, sleep eight hours each night and visit our physician annually but someday we will die.

"Death is the most democratic institution on earth. It allows no discrimination tolerates no exceptions. The mortality rate of mankind is the same the world over: one death per person." ⁽¹⁾

Jesus' half-brother James reminds us of that fact: **"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."** James 4:14

"Egerthe"

"He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said." Matthew 28:6

"Egerthe" may be only word in Greek and three words in English, **"He has risen,"** yet they represent the heart and soul of Christianity. The Resurrection is the linchpin holding the entire gospel message together.

The bodily resurrection of Jesus means everything, for if Christ did not conquer death and ascend to the Father then our prayer, bible study, and church worship are all in vain.

The Apostle Paul describes what an exercise in futility our faith would be if there was no resurrection.

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." I Corinthians 15:17-19

"If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK FOR TOMORROW WE DIE."

I Corinthians 15:32

Because Christ lives on in the flesh, not just in word and deed, death for us is not an end but a beginning. C.S. Lewis in his classic work *Miracles* says:

He is the "first fruits," the "pioneer of life." He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has opened. ⁽²⁾

Why Wouldn't We Believe?

"But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they (the women) came to the tomb"

bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." Luke 24: 1-3

Imagine the surprise of Mary Magdalene and the other women arriving at the tomb to anoint his body with spices and finding the stone rolled away and Jesus' physical body gone. As they stood in the empty tomb two angels appeared and one of them said,

"Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again?." Luke 24: 5-7

The first two witnesses of Jesus' resurrection were angels and they reminded the women of Jesus' own words. (Mark 9:31) At least four times Jesus had spoken these very words. Jesus told them what would happen, what must happen, but nobody seemed to be listening. The women closest to His ministry came to anoint His body with spices not to welcome Him back from the dead. When Jesus was arrested all the disciples abandoned Him and most were still in hiding in fear for their own lives. The authorities who had Jesus killed apparently remembered what He had said, but were more worried about His followers stealing His dead body than dealing with a risen Savior. Why wouldn't anyone believe Jesus? Perhaps, they didn't understand or weren't paying attention to the Scriptures or to what Jesus was telling them. It is just as likely, however that many were still fixated on an earthly King who would drive out the Romans and restore Israel as a sovereign nation.

"And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. Luke 24: 25-27

We have had numerous Bible studies here at the Capitol emphasizing how the entire Old Testament

points to the death and resurrection of Christ. Jesus reminds His Apostles and us of the truth of God's Word and the need to know and understand it.

"He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now."

I Corinthians 15: 5, 6

It's obvious from the many eyewitness accounts that Jesus wasn't shy after his resurrection.

He walked and talked, he broke bread with His disciples even cooking and sharing a meal of fish with them. He allowed a doubting Thomas to examine His wounds. He assured the Disciples that **"It is I myself"** and invited them to **"touch and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have"** Luke 24: 39

What the Apostles saw and wrote about was not a ghost but Jesus in the flesh.

"To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God." Acts 1:3

This study is not intended to be an apologetic defense of the resurrection, but if you need convincing proofs they abound in scripture. There is the empty tomb, the witness of angels, the prophetic words of Jesus himself, the truth of the Scriptures and the eyewitness accounts of the Apostles.

So why did He die and rise from the grave and why is it so important to us?

Christ suffered and died on the Cross for our sin that we may be reconciled to a righteous, Holy God. He lived a perfect life so He could be the perfect sacrifice for us. II Corinthians 5:21.

Christ's resurrection is the promise and guarantee to believers of eternal life. The resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers is inseparable. John 20:31

The same power that raised Jesus from the grave is always available to every believer to use in our own lives from the moment of salvation. Ephesians 1:19-20

An Exit Strategy to Believe In

Let us return to the Carl McCunn story and what may be the understatement of the century: *"I think I should have used more foresight in arranging for my departure."*

Suffering from severe frost bite and starvation he made another final diary entry worth noting: *"This is sure a slow and agonizing way to die."*⁽³⁾ Alone and dying with no hope for rescue, it surely would be.

All of us will depart from this earth someday. Do you have a plan of departure, an exit strategy? Or are you so wrapped up in the journey and the trappings of this world that you have forgotten to consider what your final destination may be?

College football players today make an extreme commitment when they accept their 4-year scholarship. There are the physical demands of summer and winter conditioning, spring and fall practice and the mental demands of film study, team meetings, and academic success in the classroom. To be a successful college football player is truly a 24/7, 365 day a year commitment.

The average play from the snap of the ball to the whistle lasts only 4 to 6 seconds. An entire football game has approximately 160 plays (80 on defense and 80 on offense). If you do the math we find that college players only spend an average of 6.67 minutes in actual on the field combat. With a twelve-game schedule that works out to less than one and one half hours of actual playing time per season. To put it into perspective, one practice session is longer than the actual time you will play in an entire season. Interesting information, but what is the point? The Apostle Paul tells us that, **"Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."** I Corinthians 9:25

We have used the illustration of a football player seeking glory on the field of play but we could just as easily have been talking about a businessman building and growing a private company to greatness or even an elected public official obtaining and maintaining public office. All of these endeavors take discipline, sacrifice and commitment and there is nothing wrong with that. But are we also seeking the wreath (crown) that really matters, running to win that race that really counts?

In the Gospel of John story of Lazarus of Bethany, Jesus tells Martha and all of us, **"I am the**

resurrection and the life: he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die." Do you believe this?
John 11: 25-26

This is the most important question we will ever answer in our lives and the key to life beyond this world.

Jesus had an exit strategy that had a very real purpose for all of us. He told us about it many times. Because of Him we don't need to prepare an exit strategy, He has already prepared one for us. *Jesus is our exit strategy.*

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

I Thessalonians 4:14

We can have hope and peace knowing that someday He will come for us, **"...In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH WHERE IS YOUR STING?"** I Corinthians 15: 52-55⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾Kuehner, Fred Carl. *Fundamentals of the Faith*.

⁽²⁾Lewis, C.S. *Miracles*. Harper-Collins.

⁽³⁾Krakauer, John. *Into the Wild*. Random House.

⁽⁴⁾Parts of this study were adapted from *More to Your Story* by Max Lucado and *Jesus is Risen Indeed* by P.G. Matthew.

BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays

8:00 McManus Conf. Room (M252 by House Minority Ofcs.)
12:00 Noon Treasurer's Conference Room (EB54)