

Christ was Raised According to the Scriptures
1 Corinthians 15:1-58, Key Verse: 15:3-4

Easter Sunday Message 2012, by Sam Toh (12-34)

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures...."

II. The Power of the Resurrection (12-34)

In this second part, Paul discusses the implications of Jesus' resurrection. He does so by addressing the issue of some believers who believed the resurrection of Jesus, but denied the resurrection of the physical body. Some Corinthians were influenced by Greek philosophy that said that the spirit was good, and that the body was evil. So they did not accept that Jesus came into the world as a physical being. Paul argues that there is a seamless connection between the resurrection of Christ and the physical, bodily resurrection of believers. In this part of 1 Cor 15, let's think about what we lose if there is no resurrection, what we gain if there is, and what difference it makes in our life right now.

A. The Consequences of Denying the Resurrection

In verses 13 to 18 Paul explains that if the dead are not raised then there are 6 consequences.

First, and most significantly, Christ has not been raised. Let's read verse 13 together. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. It wouldn't make sense to believe that believers will not be raised and then believe that Jesus rose from the dead. We believe that Jesus came into this world, as a man, born of the virgin Mary. And that his physical body was beaten, whipped, and pierced. We believe that his physical body died on the cross. And that his body was buried in a tomb. But his physical body was not left in a tomb but instead, God rose him from the dead. He was the first man to be raised from the dead, showing us that all who believe can also be raised. So we can look forward to a resurrection of our own physical body.

If we don't believe in a resurrection of our own body, that we cannot believe that Christ rose from the dead. And if Christ was not raised from the dead, then there are so many other things that would be in shambles. Paul discusses these things further.

Second, if Christ has not been raised, preaching is useless. Look at verse 14. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless. If Jesus is still dead, the apostles' teaching and preaching is worthless. We should just take our Bibles and throw them away, because the New Testament is the explanation of the consequences of the resurrection of Jesus. And if he didn't rise then there is no Christianity. There is no church. There is no point. The book of Acts, for instance, is the constant preaching and teaching of the resurrection of Jesus, and if he didn't rise, they're all lies. Without resurrection P. Ron and every pastor who ever preached has wasted their time. Without the resurrection, every Bible study we ever taught was in vain. More than that, verse 15 calls us false witnesses of God.

Third, faith is useless and futile. Look at verse 17a. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. If Jesus is dead, our faith is worthless. It's good for nothing. It accomplishes nothing. Our faith is that Jesus lived a sinless life and died on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. Three days later he rose from the dead showing us God's stamp of approval, and acceptance of what Jesus had said and done. If Jesus is still dead, He would have just been another human being, like you and me. At best, a man who lived a good life, and said some good things. If Jesus is dead, we're all doomed. Our faith is a waste of time.

Fourth, we are still in sin. (17b) The Bible teaches us that the wage for sin is death. If Jesus didn't die on the cross to take away our sins, and rise to make it so, then there is no forgiveness of sin. The wage still is demanded. We have no hope of conquering sin. We're all sinners -- stuck in our sins. Any hope of overcoming the sins that burden our hearts and lives is lost.

Fifth, those who have died are lost. Look at verse 18. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. That means every martyr who died in the name of Christ died for nothing. It means the hope to see all our loved ones who passed away is just a false hope. For all who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

Sixth, we are the most pitiful people. Verse 19 says, If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. We are pitiful because we are living a life of self denial, sacrifice, of mission all for nothing. We are pitiful because we're putting our hope in a lie.

Paul gives us six reasons why it matters. The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the Christian faith. If Jesus is dead, what do we lose? Everything! We lose hope in this life, and the promise of eternal life, and everything in the middle that truly matters to the human soul. Our lives are pointless and we are truly the most pitiful people in the world. Thankfully, the message doesn't stop here!

B. But Christ has indeed been raised!

Paul says, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead." He says "but" to overturn everything he just mentioned. He says, "indeed" because this isn't just Paul's theory or idea. This is the truth. Christ has indeed been raised! And because he has, there are several things that result. Let's think about three things that result because of Christ's resurrection.

1. Christ is the first fruit. Let's read verse 20 together. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Like the farmer who sows his seeds and works the ground for many months, until harvest time. When the firstfruit appears. He sees it, eats it, and it is good. That firstfruit brings so much joy and anticipation because now the farmer knows that after the firstfruit, many more fruits will follow all season long. In the same way, the history of mankind has been anxiously awaiting the firstfruit of resurrection. Human history has been waiting for the first one to finally overcome death. And Jesus was it. He did it. He was the first fruit and he brings with him the anticipation of our own resurrection from the dead. He's the sign that we will all be raised. All believers will be raised like Jesus. So now we have great hope to be like Jesus.

2. All will be made alive! Look at verses 21 and 22. 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. These verses reveal to us our natural condition. Our deepest problem is our connection to Adam's sin. There are no exceptions to human sinfulness. Death for all came through one man Adam. And there is no way that we can overcome it on our own. We are all in Adam. All who come from the first Adam are in need of the second Adam.

The second Adam is Jesus, and he makes us alive. What Christ has done for all who are in him by faith is far greater than what Adam did for all who are in him by nature. The disobedience of Adam brought all those who were in him into condemnation and death. But the obedience of Christ brought all who are in Him to justification and life. God saves us this way through one man Christ because it corresponds to the way we were condemned through one man Adam. It took one man to bring sin and death into the world, and it takes one man to take us out of it. Like children of slaves, when you are born into a slave family, that is your future. Unless, someone else comes along and redeems you out of slavery. Because of your parents you will always be a slave. Christ came and took us out of the sin and death we inherited from Adam. This is Christ's redeeming work on our life. In the end, our justification comes not from what we do but from what Christ did through His death and resurrection. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ, all will be made alive.

3. Creation order restored. The first two results of Jesus' resurrection impacts believers, and it is glorious. But the resurrection will also impact the universe. When God created the world, it was a perfect paradise. But Adam brought sin into the world, and ever since that dreadful day, mankind has been uncomfortable. Since Jesus rose again, we know that one day He will return and restore everything back to the way it was meant to be.

Look at verses 23-25. These verses conclude that all dominion, authority, and power will be destroyed. Dominion, authority, and power represent the evil forces and functions of the present world: injustice, violence, war, gangs, political systems, and terrorism. When the risen Jesus comes again, all these will be destroyed. Sometimes it feels like evil prevails, and "good guys finish last." There seems to be so many things that are out of our control and bring pain and hardship to our lives. This is the reality of the world we live in. But since Christ has been raised from the dead, all these things will be destroyed and paradise will be restored.

After all dominion, authority, and power are destroyed, death will be destroyed. Look at verse 26. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Man was never meant to die. Ecc 3:11 says that God set eternity in the human heart. But along with sin came death. Jesus' resurrection restores us to our original eternal form. Death is no longer the end. We have eternity waiting for us. The power of Christ's resurrection destroyed death.

Finally, God will be all in all. Look at verses 27 and 28. When God made the earth, everything functioned in perfect harmony and unity. There was peace and order because God was supreme. All creation bowed in reverence to God. This picture of paradise will be restored. All of God's enemies will be put to death. All things will be put under Christ's reign and dominion, and God will reign as our eternal King and father. This really is a bigger picture of salvation, beyond imagination. Sin made everything grotesque, but God will make everything glorious again. All things will be placed under God's supreme authority. God will be all in all.

C. Since Christ has risen, how then should we live?

All the implications discussed so far have been eternal implication. But what about now? What difference does Jesus' resurrection make to us right now? Look at verse 31. I face death every day--yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. The old NIV says, "I die every day." What does it mean to die every day? One thing it means is to die every day to our sinful nature. Col 3:5 says, Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. We are to die to all these things: the desire for recognition, power, greed, self satisfaction, worldly glory, living a comfortable life. We have to deny our selves every day. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, why live a life of mission? Why tithe? Why pray? Why read our Bible? Why forgive our enemies? All these things take struggle. Why not just do as we please? Paul continues: If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." If Jesus is dead, and there's no eternity, then Paul is saying Christianity is a waste of time. If this life is all we have, we really should just live up every moment, doing whatever we want.

Paul concludes, in verse 33 and 34, Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God--I say this to your shame. Paul is saying, it is really not an intellectual objection to resist the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the hardness of heart that is truly the issue because people want to sin. Paul says, this is what it comes down to: at the end of the day, when contemplating the resurrection, we're left with a decision: if I believe in the resurrection, then I have to repent of sin and obey Jesus. But if I can somehow convince myself that there is no resurrection, then I don't have to stop sinning, because nothing is going to happen after I die. So, he makes it clear, stop sinning, and accept the truth, that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

The resurrection makes all the difference in the world. Without Jesus' resurrection we're stuck. Life is meaningless. We are unforgiven sinners, with no eternal hope. A few weeks ago I began reading my son the stories of Jesus' death and resurrection from his children's story Bible. We've been reading the Bible a lot, every night, but I thought he was a little too young to be told a story about a man who was beaten, whipped, and nailed to a cross. But with Easter season I decided to read him the story anyways. As we started reading about Jesus' Gethsemane prayer, he could tell right away that this was not a happy story like the other stories of Jesus' miracles and healings. It's dark. He sees bad guys taking Jesus, and hurting him, and making fun of him. And he's so sad. He almost wants me to stop reading cause its so scary to him. I encouraged him that it'll be OK. So we read on, until Jesus appears again to his disciples. All of a sudden, my son's fear and darkness and sadness is wiped away. He's full of excitement and joy because God helped Jesus, and now everything is all better. This is a two year old's picture of resurrection faith. Now, every time we read the story of Jesus on the cross, my son anxiously awaits until we get to the part when Jesus is alive and well again. This is the kind of affect the resurrection has on our lives. Without it, we are sad, we are depressed, we are dark. But Jesus has indeed been raised to life! And so now we are alive! Like my son when reading about the Passion, our lives are anxiously awaiting the day that we will be raised again and be united with Christ. Let's live our lives every day knowing that Jesus rose again, and we will one day too.