

1 Corinthians – A Picture of the Real Church: Chapter 15 – the Resurrection

HE IS RISEN – HE IS RISEN INDEED

Review of 1 Corinthians:

Chapter 13 – What Love is about

Chapter 1 - Harmony

Chapter 8 – Love God by Loving Others

Chapter 11 – Communion

Chapter 12 – Nate: Spiritual Gifts: We need each other

Today: we are going to look at the Resurrection of Christ in Chapter 15.

PRAYER

Everything stops when you die. At least that's how it appears.

Your hearts stops pumping. Your lungs stop breathing. Your arms and legs stop moving. Your brain quits sending signals to your nervous system.

Your daily routine comes to an end. No more walking the dog. No more watching the 11:00 news. No more sipping coffee at Judy's Kitchen. No more playing with your grandchildren or cheering for your favorite team. There will be an empty desk where you used to work, an empty space where you used to park your car.

No more worries about money. Your paychecks will stop, and so will your taxes and bills.

For you loved ones everything will stop when you die – at least for a few days. Friends will take time off from work to attend your funeral. When the mortician transports your body to the cemetery, a police officer will escort the procession and traffic will stop while the hearse passes by.

Death is the finish line. After all, everything stops when you die – right? All enjoyment, all experiences of love, all hope for the future. At least that's how it appears.

It looked that way when Jesus' body was taken down from the cross. Didn't bystanders hear him say, "It is finished"? Then after his final cry, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," his lips fell silent. His lifeless hands would perform no more miracles that day. His nail-pierced feet wouldn't walk on water anymore. His blood covered the ground where soldiers walked about, doing their jobs; and tears stained the eyes of his disciples who feared their hopes were over. After all, everything stops when you die. Or does it?

As Christians, we believe that life does not end with death! We believe in the most powerful event that has ever occurred: the Resurrection of Christ.

That is what 1 Corinthians, chapter 15 is all about: the Resurrection of Christ. This chapters tells us that our faith lives and dies on the resurrection. If there is no resurrection of Christ, then life basically has no meaning. Paul explains the resurrection in a way that only Paul can: with power, with conviction, with assurance, with the knowledge that Christ's resurrection has great benefits for us. He then tells the Corinthian church something very important in verse 58.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15:58 - *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.*

Paul begins this verse with the word, "Therefore". Any time you see the word, "therefore," you must find out what therefore is there for.

The "therefore" is there because of what Paul just said about the Resurrection in this whole chapter. This whole chapter is filled with the principles of the Resurrection of Christ. Therefore, Paul is saying, "Because of the Resurrection of Christ... *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.*"

The Resurrection of Christ calls us to:

1. Stand firm (1-11).

- a. The very fact that you are alive means that you have three basic battles that try to bring you down:
 - i. The Battle with Satan – 1 Peter 5:8-9a - *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him!*
 - ii. The Battle within with our very own Flesh
 - iii. The Battle with the World
- b. The Resurrection allows us to stand up in these battles, to stand firm when we are under attack. When we keep our eyes on the Resurrection, we can have victory in these battles.
- c. Lamaze class – to deal with the pain of pregnancy focus on something (posture, breathing, your partner, your happy place). When these battles, keep us down, we can stand firm, because our focus is on the Resurrection of Christ.

- d. In fact, Paul calls the Resurrection “First Importance” for Christians. Read vs. 1-7.

It is of first importance that we understand that Jesus has defeated the most terrifying of all our enemies – death

Death has been defeated through his resurrection from the grave. Jesus died because of our sins. He paid the natural consequences of our rebellion against God and was buried on Friday. It was sealed that evening. It was quietly guarded all day Saturday and into the night. The Roman soldiers built a fire and kept watch all the early hours of Sunday morning. But at dawn, on Sunday morning, as the first rays of the sun touched the place where the grave was the stone was rolled away by the angels of Heaven and Jesus walked out. Death had been thoroughly, finally, completely, irrevocably, and perpetually defeated.

This is the heart of Christianity.

It is of first importance. Nothing comes close to it and this simple truth sets Jesus apart from all other prophets, philosophers, teachers, leaders, great men, and noble women. You can visit the tomb of Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Confucius, and Mohammed – but you will not find the tomb of Jesus because it is empty.

I know this to be true because the Bible tells about all of the witnesses who saw him. In fact, vs. 5-7 is actually considered one of the first early Christian creeds or hymn. Let’s READ vs. 5-7. People knew it was true, because they knew the people who saw Jesus alive!

Therefore, we must Stand firm on the Resurrection, AND :

2. Let nothing move you (12-19).

- a. The Resurrection should move us to look on the bright side of things:
 - i. A group of Florida senior citizens were talking about their ailments:
 - ii. “My arms are so weak I can hardly hold this cup of coffee.”
 - iii. “Yes, I know. My cataracts are so bad I can't even see my coffee.”
 - iv. “I can't turn my head because of the arthritis in my neck.”
 - v. “My blood pressure pills make my dizzy.”
 - vi. “I guess that's the price we pay for getting old.”
 - vii. “Well, it's not all bad. We should be thankful we can still drive.”
- b. When we keep our eyes focused on the empty cross and the empty tomb, we can not be moved! Our attitudes are fixed, and our hearts are moved to keep going.

- c. In fact, in Chapter 15, Paul explains what happens if the Resurrection of Christ is just a big hoax.
- i. According to verses 14 & 17 - The apostles' preaching and our faith is useless, if Christ is not risen from the dead.
 - ii. Verses 15 & 16 tells us that the apostles are a bunch of liars, if Christ is not risen from the dead.
 - iii. In verse 17, if Christ is not risen from the dead, we are still in our sins!
 - iv. Verse 18 tells us that those who have died will never be seen again.
 - v. The fact is: verse 19 is right! If Christ is not risen from the dead, Christians are the biggest fools and should be pitied the most.
- d. Here's the thing, the Apostles were not moved, even by the threat of death, because they knew the resurrection to be true:
- i. MARK was dragged through the streets until he died.
 - ii. BARTHOLOMEW, was skinned alive, and then crucified upside down.
 - iii. DOUBTING THOMAS was speared to death on the east coast of India.
 - iv. SIMON PETER was crucified, head-down, at his own request.
 - v. PAUL OF TARSUS was beheaded in Rome, some say he was boiled first in hot oil.
 - vi. ANDREW, THE BROTHER OF SIMON PETER - was crucified in a spread-eagle position on an X shaped cross.
 - vii. JAMES, the Apostle John's brother, was beheaded as described in Acts 12:1-2
 - viii. PHILIP died with his daughters who were also preachers.
 - ix. MATTHEW, also known as LEVI, was burned, stoned, or beheaded while preaching in Ethiopia.
 - x. JAMES, the SON OF ALPHAEUS was beheaded in Egypt.
 - xi. JUDE was shot to death with arrows while preaching.
 - xii. SIMON THE ZEALOT was either crucified or hacked to death while in Persia
 - xiii. MATTHIAS was stoned and then beheaded.
 - xiv. Even the APOSTLE JOHN, ONE OF THE SONS OF THUNDER, who died a natural death in Ephesus, spent many years in prison.

These guys are the biggest fools, if Christ did not raise from the dead. They preached a lie, lived a lie, and died for a lie. The men were filled with integrity. They would not have dedicated their lives and even sacrificed themselves for a lie. We can know the Resurrection is true because of their testimony and the testimony of millions of people around the world! Because of it, the Kingdom of God, and those who are in God's Kingdom can not be moved.

Romans 8:37 (NLT) - *Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

Because of the Resurrection, we are to stand firm, let nothing move us, and...

3. Always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord (20-34),

- a. The Bible gives us several active jobs to do – for example:
 - i. Preach the Gospel
 - ii. Care for widows and orphans
 - iii. Minister to the sick and poor
 - iv. Be reconcilers (teachers and examples of forgiveness)
 - v. Encourage one another
 - vi. Meet your neighbor's needs
 - vii. Serve in the Church
 - viii. Be peace-makers
 - ix. Use your gifts
 - x. Love One Another

- b. Without keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can be discouraged, and burn out. Paul tells us that the Resurrection can keep us going. Do you know what is going to get our Church on fire? It isn't the strength of the people (even though they are strong); it isn't the fire in the pulpet; it isn't even great programs or ministries. The thing that will give our Church new life is the Resurrection power of Christ!

- c. When you down, wanting to give up, look to the Resurrection. Turn to the Scriptures that talk of the Resurrection. Listen to some Scriptures that can keep us going. That can move us to always give more than what is expected:
 - i. Daniel 12:2 - *Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.*
 - ii. Psalm 49:15 (NLT) - *But as for me, God will redeem my life. He will snatch me from the power of death.*
 - iii. John 6:40 - *For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*
 - iv. John 11:25 - *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."*
 - v. Romans 8:11 - *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

- d. I don't know about you, but knowing that the resurrection is true keeps me going! It allows me to throw myself into the ministry, no matter what may come up that can bring me down!

Because of the Resurrection, we are to stand firm, let nothing move us, always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, and...

4. Know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (35-57).

- a. When we work hard, when we put our hearts into the ministry, we must realize that because of the Resurrection, what we do for the Lord is not worthless. That is why Paul tells us:
 - i. 2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NLT) - *Dear brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing good.*
 - ii. Galatians 6:9 (NLT) - *So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time.*

- b. Our labor is not in vain, because we know the rewards of the Resurrection of Christ. One of the most powerful rewards of staying true to Jesus is that our bodies will be new after death.

Our Bodies here on Earth	Our Resurrected Bodies
Will die, decay, and get sick (perishable)	Imperishable
Sown in Dishonor – the tendency to sin is passed down from generation to gen.	Raised in Glory
Sown in Weakness – powerless to overcome sin	Raised in Power
Natural – filled with battle of the flesh	Spiritual
From Dust	From Heaven

- c. We know that our labor, our work, our ministries are not in vain, because death is defeated. It is promised in the Resurrection. That is why Paul tells us in verses 54 and following:

⁵⁴ ... then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- d. We have victory because of the resurrection! Whatever you do for the Lord, whether big or small, will never be in vain. The Resurrection should be our biggest motivator to stay true, to keep going, to stay strong, to keep praying, to keep studying, to keep serving, to keep living for Christ!

Because of the Resurrection, we are to stand firm, let nothing move us, always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, and know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

You see, the Resurrection answers our basic questions in life:

1. **The question of the meaning of life** – what can I hang my life on? Where can I go to find direction for my life? What is life all about? In the resurrection, we find that life is about serving God where God has placed you. We find power to know life is worthy it because of the resurrection.
2. **The question of loneliness** – Does anyone really care about me? Do I matter? The Resurrection proves that you matter deeply to God. Jesus died for your sins and rose again to demonstrate that He has defeated sin in your life. He did it for you!
3. **The question of weakness** – How can I find power to change? Where can I go to break the bad habits in my life? Strength and confidence is yours in the resurrection of Christ. The same God who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you through the Holy Spirit, if you place your faith in the resurrection of Christ. He is right there to help you in your times of desperation.
4. **The question of guilt** – How can I get rid of my guilt for all that I've done? Here is the good news: the resurrection is final proof that Jesus is who He says He is: the Savior of the Universe! Because of the Resurrection, He is the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Lamb of God, the Great I Am, the Alpha & Omega, Our God and Savior!
5. **The question of death** – What happens when I die? Because of what Jesus did, you can know that there is life beyond the grave.

Today is the day that some of you need to decide: Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ a fact of history that changes your life, OR is it some nice myth that makes Christians out to be fools?

If you believe that the resurrection is true, then here are the decision you need to make:

- Will you confess Jesus as Lord?
- Will you start living for Jesus (repent of your sins)?
- Will you be baptized in Christ?

If you have a decision to make today, I want you to come forward and share it with your church, during the next song, or see me after church.

Maybe you believe in the resurrection, I want to challenge you to say Philippians 3:10 (at the bottom of your outline) everyday this week.

Philippians 3:10 - *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection...*

Decision Song: *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* – Hymnal # 280