

Prominence of the Resurrection

(1 Corinthians 15:1-20)

The Gospel, the Good News, is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul addresses those who denied the physical bodily resurrection, because only through the resurrection can we find the true hope of eternal life and freedom from the penalty and power of sin.

INTRODUCTION

I enjoy telling stories and many times, I give the blow by blow version. However, my family likes to get to short version instead of the long version. The other day, my son noticed that I was taking longer than normal dumping garbage and he came out to see if I needed help. For those that know me, I really like to be efficient with time and use of space. I was cleaning the pantry and I was telling him in detail how I consolidated all the boxes. He really didn't care about the whole story. He stopped me in the middle of the story and said, "Dad, can you tell me the bottom line?"

I am sure a number of you are bottom line kind of people. Don't tell me the whole story, tell me the most critical points. If you can sum it in one sentence, what would it be? How many of you are bottom line kind of people? If I were to ask you what is the bottom line for Christianity, what would you say? What is the most important doctrine in all of Scripture and how is it related to the gospel? If we can summarize Christianity into one word or phrase, what would it be? Is it the deity of Christ? Is it that God is the creator of the universe? Is it the virgin birth of Christ? Is it the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit? No, all of these teachings are critical, but the most important doctrine in all of Scripture is the resurrection. The bottom line for the gospel or salvation is the resurrection. In preparation of Easter, we will preach about the resurrection from 1 Corinthians 15 in the next 3 weeks.

Corinth was a Greek city and they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Because of the influence of the culture, the Corinthian believers began to question the resurrection. They were wandering off from the truth; Paul had to call them back. Every claim about Christianity has roots in Christ's resurrection. What we believe about this life and the afterlife depends upon what happened to Jesus after He died.

[Paul answers the question of why the resurrection is so valuable to our belief? We will see how the resurrection is attacked. What proof is there to show that Jesus rose from the dead? How is the power of the resurrection demonstrated in our lives today? First, let's look at the prominence of the resurrection. The first point is that the resurrection of Christ is the focal point in reference to salvation.]

A. The Prominence of the Resurrection

1. The resurrection of Christ is the focal point in reference to salvation

Paul had to clarify what the gospel is all about and its relationship with the resurrection. (15:1) "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand." You have taken the gospel, the Good News, and embraced it and believed it. The resurrection is pivotal doctrine to all of Christianity. The resurrection is the focal point of every other truth Christ taught. Without it, none of the other truths would matter. There is new life in Christ. If Christ did not rise from the dead, then there is no hope in salvation.

[The Greeks deceived the Corinthians believers and distorted the truth about the resurrection, and it caused the believers to doubt. Therefore, Paul explained the truth of the gospel and how the resurrection is the key to receiving salvation, which leads us to the second point: The resurrection of Christ is the focal point in reference to scripture.]

2. The resurrection of Christ is the focal point in reference to scripture

ILLUSTRATION If someone got into a car accident right in front of the church and he was dying and he asked you, “How can I get to heaven?” What would you tell him? What is the bottom line to the gospel? [READ vv.3-5] Jesus died & He rose again.

When Paul wrote “according to the Scripture,” he was referring to the Old Testament Scripture. The sacrificial system in the O.T. is only a temporary system to take away the penalty of sin for the people. It has to be repeated because the animal sacrifice is not perfect. The O.T. saints were looking forward to the coming Messiah, who will take away the sin of the world permanently. Isa. 53:4-6, “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Jesus came to earth as a man to identify himself with man and offers Himself up as the perfect sinless sacrifice. When Christ rose from the dead, it shows clearly that God has accepted the sacrifice that Christ has offered up on mankind’s behalf. Jesus Christ the Messiah fulfilled the O.T. sacrificial system. The resurrection of Christ is the focal point in reference to scripture.

The bottom line for the gospel is that Jesus died and rose again. Because the wages of sin is death, we either have to pay that penalty by ourselves or have someone else pay it on our behalf. Jesus paid the penalty for our sin by dying on the cross. How did we know that Jesus died? He was buried. How did we know that he resurrected? He appeared to many.

3. Resurrection being attacked

Since resurrection is the cornerstone of the gospel, the resurrection has been the target of Satan’s greatest attacks against the church.

The Greeks did not believe the resurrection. They believe that when the body dies, it disintegrates while the soul or spirit rests. Others Greek philosophers believe in dualism, which considered everything spiritual to be intrinsically good and everything physical to be intrinsically evil. It would be unthinkable to want to take your physical body with you after death because it is evil. Because the influence of the Greeks, the believers started questioning about the resurrection.

APPLICATION Our society emphasizes the importance of tolerance. There are no absolutes; everyone has their beliefs and you should not impose your belief on others. The world distorts the truth and some believers are influenced by it. But we need to uphold to Scripture, which holds truth. Truth is truth whether we like it or not. God has set absolute truths and there are consequences for not believing it. Yes, we are to respect others. But more importantly, we need to embrace truth.

There are dreadful consequences if there was no resurrection. [Read vv.14-19]

a. Preaching would be Pointless (15:14)

From verse 14, it says that If Christ is not raised, then our preaching is in vain.” The word vain means “empty; futile; with no purpose; a colossal waste of time.” If Christ did not resurrect, then we are wasting our time being here. I am wasting my time preaching to you and you are wasting your time listening to me because it does not have any value. The heart of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins and he rose again to show that God has accepted His sacrifice on our behalf. Not only will my preaching would be pointless, our faith would be foolish.

b. Faith would be Foolish (15:14)

Note also in verse 14, if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is in vain. Our faith will be empty and futile. Our faith would be foolish because it does not have anything to base it on. One of the major differences between Christianity and all other religions is that we believe in a living God and not a dead one. All the other founders of their religion lived and died. They are still dead. However, Jesus lived, died, and is alive.

c. The Disciples would be Deceivers (15:15-16)

If Christ did not rise from the dead, then the disciples would be deceivers. They would be false witnesses. In another words, they are liars. A false witness is one who gets in a courtroom and knowingly, deliberately perjures himself and becomes a liar. There is a big difference between hypocrites and martyrs. A man may live for a lie, but few will die for a lie. Beside John, all the disciples died because of their faith. It would not make sense if they knew it was a lie and is willing to die for a lie.

d. Sin would be Superior (15:17)

If Jesus is still in the grave, then sin would be superior. In verse 17, “You are still in your sin.” If Jesus did not raise from the dead, it indicates that God’s wrath was not appeased. God did not accept the payment of Christ made for our sin. When God raise Jesus from the grave, it is a clear proof that God has accepted Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf. Our sins are forgiven. Sin no longer reign over us.

e. Death would have Dominion (15:18)

If Christ did not raise from the dead, then in v.18, it says that those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. Our loved ones that believed in Christ, but have died are still lost. Death would have dominion. Death has won. The penalty of sin, which is death, has not been paid for. Therefore, we will face eternal condemnation.

f. The Future would be Futile

If Christ did not resurrect, then the future would be futile. In v.19, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pited more than all men.” Therefore, there is no hope for the future. The believers that had suffered for the gospel could only be pitied. Those who lived for the pleasure of the moment would be right.

Preaching the gospel would be meaningless; faith in Christ would be worthless because Christ did not rise from the dead. All mankind would still be in sin and there

will be no hope for the future. But the Good News is seen in V.20 "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." But praise God that Christ did raise from the dead. What proof do we have that Christ resurrected?

B. The Proof of the Resurrection (15:5-8)

1. Resurrected Christ Appears to Individuals

How do you know if something is true in the law of court? The proof that Jesus rose again is by eye witnesses: the more the better. It was not only one eye witness, but numerous individuals. He not only appeared in one occasion, but numerous occasions. He not only made His appearance to individuals like Peter, James, and the Apostle Paul, but also to large group, twice to his disciples and once to 500 people. [READ vv. 5-8].

2. Resurrected Christ Appears to a Large Group

It is important that a large group saw Jesus at the same time because some claim that these eye witnesses only hallucinated. They did not really see Jesus. The chance for 500 people hallucinating is unlikely. There were many eye witnesses and most of them were still alive when Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians. No one refuted their testimony at their time. Jesus indeed rose from the dead.

[Resurrected Christ appears to individuals. Resurrected Christ appears to a large group. Thirdly, resurrected Christ changes lives.]

3. Resurrected Christ Changes Life

From verses 9-11, the apostle Paul shares how the resurrected Christ changes. God changed him from a persecutor of the faith to a proclaimer of the faith. This is demonstration of tremendous power. The power of the resurrection is also seen God's power over death and power over sin.

C. The Power of the Resurrection

1. The power over death

Because Christ died to bear our sins, it satisfied the righteous demands of God. Because our penalty of sin has been paid for, our sin is forgiven. Because of the resurrection, we have the power to overcome death. (Rom. 6:23) "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." By believing in Jesus' work on the cross, we are saved. We will be assured of eternal life. We have confidence that if anything happens to us, we will go to heaven. We have victory over death.

ILLUSTRATION Some of us might say, "Oh, I don't have to worry about that now. I am still young and I am in good shape. I will think about it when I get old." A few years ago, one of our pianists from the Chinese worship service, who was a 27 year old graduate student, came down with pneumonia. And within a few days, he went home to be with the Lord. Although he is no longer with us, we know that he has placed his trust in Jesus Christ. Just as Christ was resurrected, he was resurrected and was with God in heaven. Those who believe in Jesus also have the power to overcome death. We have no fear of death.

We have no control as to when it is for us to go. Even when we are young or athletic thinking that we have many years ahead of us, life is not within our control. Every breath

that we take is a demonstration of God's grace. May we be appreciative of the life that we have. Too many of us complain too much about what we do not have. Instead, we should thank God for all that He has provided for us. Most importantly, God has provided eternal life. If you have not trusted Christ, I invite you to believe in Him today. [Because of the resurrection, we not only have power over death, but also power over sin.]

2. The power over sin

(Rom. 6:6-7) "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin." That resurrection power that raises Christ from the dead can also transform life. God can change the coldest hearts, the most selfish people, and the most evil sinners. No matter what kind of bad habits that we might have, God can help us to gain victory over it. It might be procrastination, pornography, anger, greed, unforgiveness, pride, and loose tongue. Don't underestimate the power of God. Do your life need to be changed? The power that resurrected Christ is also available to us to change and transform us. God can change you today.

He has set us free from the penalty of sin as well as the power of sin. No longer do we need to fear death or fear our bad habits. He has given us victory because of the resurrection. I invite you to submit yourself to God today.

In a couple of weeks, Easter will be here. People that normally do not attend church are opened to attending an Easter worship service. May we take advantage of this special time. I challenge you to identify 3 non-Christians and pray for them each day in the next two weeks and invite them to the Easter Service. May they come to hear the Good News of the gospel and the resurrection of Christ.