

November 23, 2014

Let Me Remind You of The Good News

1 Corinthians 15

Through 1 Corinthians Paul deals with a full range of problems in the Christian Church:

- Divisions (Chapter 1-4)
- Immorality (chapter 5)
- Lawsuits (chapter 6)
- Marriage (chapter 7)
- Things offered to Idols (chapters 8-10)
- Church Conduct (chapter 11)
- Spiritual Gifts (chapters 12-14)
- The Resurrection (chapter 15)

The problem was not a question about the Resurrection of Christ, they believed that. Yet some in Corinth either doubted or rejected the doctrine of each individual believer's resurrection.

Paul began this letter by saying: 1 Corinthians 1:23

We preach that Christ was crucified

This was the foundation of his preaching. He ends by declaring high point & best moment of our faith and his message the resurrected Christ. Christ crucified and Christ resurrected appropriated by faith; this is the whole message of Christian salvation. This is what is most important.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 AMP

AND NOW let me remind you [since it seems to have escaped you], brethren, of the Gospel (the glad tidings of salvation) which I proclaimed to you, which you welcomed *and* accepted and upon which your faith rests, And by which you are saved, if you hold fast *and* keep firmly what I preached to you, unless you believed at first without effect *and* all for nothing.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 TM

Friends, let me go over the Message with you one final time — this Message that I proclaimed and that you made your own; this Message on which you took your stand and by which your life has been saved. (I'm assuming, now, that your belief was the real thing and not a passing fancy, that you're in this for good and holding fast.)

Paul says I preach to you now what I must preach to you at all times; the one and only true gospel; the message I proclaimed that saves you. Have you forgotten the Good News I shared with you? When you welcomed this Good News was your faith real? Are you still holding fast to the message? You are saved if you continue to believe; if you continue to firmly keep what I preached to you; if it continues to be the foundation which determines your spiritual standing and conduct.

You are saved from sin and given Eternal Life by this Good News. Not that the Good News itself saves you but God saves you by the Good News. God begins a work in you when He calls you by this Good News message. But you must make it your own, you must believe it. The message does not save all, it saves all who hold fast to it; whose faith rests in the message. So let me remind you of the Good News message, since it seems to have escaped you.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.

Here is the message that has been passed on to us and which we must pass on to others: Christ died, was buried, and was raised from the dead on the third day for the forgiveness of sin. Paul gives two evidences for the truth of this:

1. Testimony of History:

Isaiah 53:5-12

But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people.

He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants.

He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands. When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

Psalms 16:9-10

No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice. My body rests in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.

2. Testimony of personal witnesses:

1 Corinthians 15: 5-9

He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church. Peter, the Twelve, 500 people at the same time, James, all the apostles, Paul.

I mentioned how in this letter to the Corinthians Paul dealt with many problems that he heard existed in this church. In Chapter 15 we have a new problem. Some of the Corinthians were saying that there is no resurrection from the dead. This is the first doctrinal problem Paul has to address. The reason he first mentioned the importance and evidence of the resurrection of Christ is because of this unbelief in the resurrection of the dead. Paul taught, as did all of the other apostles, that the resurrection of Christ is the evidence of the resurrection of all believers in Christ.

A resurrection signifies a rising again; a rising of that which was buried. It also signifies a restoration of life of that which was dead. We believe that when Christians die their soul goes to be with God. The soul does not die with the body. Therefore the soul is not subject to resurrection, only the body. Yet one day the body will be resurrected, changed, and reunited with the soul. This is what Jesus taught and so it is what Paul and the other apostles passed on. And, as Jesus taught not only will the bodies of believers be raised, so will the bodies of unbelievers. But there is a difference:

John 5:28-29

Don't be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, and they will rise again. Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment.

But some of the Corinthians and perhaps some in the church today don't believe in the resurrection of the dead, so Paul gives this argument:

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection of the dead,

then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

The Corinthians accepted the resurrection of Jesus, but felt that a similar resurrection was not possible or probable for all believers. Look at Paul's first argument for the resurrection of the dead (v13): if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. Paul basically says if Christ has risen then other can be raised, and vice versa, so to deny that others will rise is to deny Christ has been raised. To question this basic fact is to start a chain reaction that would nullify the entire message of Christ.

Paul's second argument is (v14) if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. Paul's preaching, the preaching of all the apostles, and everyone else who preaches Christ would amount to nothing, and the faith that the hears put in the message would be fruitless, imaginary, empty and unfounded.

Not only that, but as Paul say (v15): And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. Therefore, Paul and the other apostles would be liars, for they have declared repeatedly that Christ is risen. They met on the first day of the week to celebrate His resurrection.

And, by the way, Paul continues (v16-17): And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. This is a continuation of the thought in v14 about faith being in vain. Even worse than a futile/vain faith is what this would mean about our spiritual state, without the Resurrection of Christ we would still in our sins. There would be no redemption and no hope.

In that case (v18 – then), all who have died believing in Christ are lost! Our loved ones who have died would not be with God, they would have perished. The word use here means: “utter loss consequent upon dying in sin.”

There is no hope without the Resurrection (v19): And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. Christians are being martyred for their faith. Christians are sacrificing the inferior pleasures on earth anticipating the joys of heaven, the hope of living eternally with Christ... imagine finding out it there is no such hope and it's been all a delusion? If our hope in Christ is only for this life we are more pitied than anyone in the world.

But, wait a minute folks that is not the case...

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

But in fact, (don't worry here it is) Christ has been raised from the dead (Paul already established that fact with the testimony of history and eyewitnesses). (And Christ) He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. (Continue in the hope of your loved ones being with Christ in heaven)

So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

So Paul establishes that there is a resurrection of the dead for all individuals. But he anticipates some questions:

1 Corinthians 15:35-41

But someone may ask, "How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?" What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting.

Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed. Similarly there are different kinds of flesh—one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.

There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory.

Paul is using this as an illustration. When a seed is put in the ground it dies, then a plant can grow. The seed doesn't give an indication of what the plant will look like. Someone once gave me and Ann seeds for wild flowers that they packaged themselves. The seeds look alike, we planted them but had no idea what the plants or the flowers would look like. We couldn't tell that from the seed. When they started to grow we then discovered the different variety of flowers. Each one the new body God wanted it to have.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44

It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will

be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

(45) The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. The first Adam sinned which brought death which was passed on to all his descendants. The last Adam, Christ is a life-giving Spirit. Adam was the founder of the human race, while Christ initiated a new order of human being – spiritual. The final nature of the spiritual life produced by Christ is the resurrected life.

(v46) What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. Human life begins with the physical body and ideally ends with the spiritual.

(47-49) Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.

Because here's the thing: (v50-58)

What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever. This is why there will be a resurrection of the old body, changed to a physical body.

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

"Death is swallowed up in victory.
O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?"

For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

A Sunday School teacher had just finished telling her third graders about how Jesus was crucified and placed in a tomb (P) with a great stone sealing the opening.

Then, wanting to share the excitement of the resurrection, she asked: "And what do you think were Jesus first words when He came out of that tomb?"

A little girl in the back of the room shot her arm into the air and leaped to her feet and shouted excitedly "I know, I know!"

"Good" said the teacher, "Tell us, Bethany what did he say." Extending her arms high into the air she said: "TA-DA!" (Pause)

Christ crucified, Christ resurrected – "TA-DA!"

Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised from the dead on the third day – "TA-DA"

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either.
If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. And all who have died believing in Christ are lost!
If our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

But... in fact, Christ *has* been raised from the dead – "TA-DA"

So our earthly bodies will die, but they will be raised to live forever.
Our bodies buried in brokenness, will be raised in glory.
buried in weakness, will be raised in strength.
buried as natural human bodies, will be raised as spiritual bodies.

Our dying bodies will be transformed into bodies that will never die;
Our mortal bodies will be transformed into immortal bodies.

"Death is swallowed up in victory.

Thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"TA-DA"