

Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15

When the world mocks our beliefs, how will we respond? When they laugh at the idea of resurrection, will we surrender this tenet of our faith, or will we cling to it and share it no matter the consequence? Those who compromise will end up losing that which they hold most dear, while those who endure will find unassailable hope.

Turn to 1 Cor 15

When I was a preschooler I sucked my thumb

- unsanitary; can mess up alignment of your teeth
- parents tried to get me to stop... but nothing worked – habit; ingrained
- then around kindergarten – playing with friends
 - o always a pecking order – some kid whose size & charisma make him the leader
 - o Casey – everyone looked up to him... literally!
 - o one day I put my thumb in my mouth... and Casey laughed – what babies do
 - o I felt embarrassed, ashamed... and never sucked my thumb again!
- one minute of public ridicule accomplished what years of training failed to do!

That's the power of public shame

- incredibly painful to be ridiculed in front of others
- so painful that it can lead to radical change in our lives...
 - o either for good as in my example, or for bad as in our passage

The pain of public ridicule motivated a few believers in Corinth to make a radical change

- were ready to abandon belief in the resurrection of Jesus to escape ridicule

Greek culture like in Corinth, ridiculed the idea of resurrection

- **Acts 17:31-32**
- **Resurrection seemed laughable to Greek intellectuals because...**
 - o 1) they'd never seen it happen – no other examples
 - o 2) they couldn't understand why you'd want to be resurrected!
- **The Greeks viewed the body to be a "prison" for our human spirit**
 - o Socrates
 - o At death our imprisoned spirit is finally set free from this corpse that shackles us
 - o So why would you want resurrection!! to be re-imprisoned in your body??!!
- **That's why resurrection was not just an unpopular idea... it was a ridiculous idea!**
 - o People scoffed... mocked

Whenever the church is ridiculed over a particular belief, what are we tempted to do? Compromise that belief to make Christianity more acceptable to our culture

- You see the same response in many churches today over issues like...
 - o Resurrection – a miracle that's hard to believe – can't be proved by medical science
 - o Hell & the wrath of God – subject that's painful to us, offensive to the world
 - o Sexual morality – biblical view of marriage is highly unpopular
- When the world mocks a belief we hold, we're tempted to jettison that belief
- **That's what some were doing in the church in Corinth**
 - o felt embarrassed by the resurrection... so jettisoned it or redefined it

Paul was upset about that compromise – to put it mildly!

- Literal resurrection of Jesus was incredibly important to Paul – as important as anything
- Paul spends all of ch15 defending the truth of the resurrection of Jesus

Begins with the bare facts of the gospel – the good news about Jesus... read 15:3-4

- Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead
- “According to scripture” – prophesied in the Old Testament – fulfilled by Jesus

Then gives historical evidence for the resurrection... Read v5-8

- Lists out the people who saw Jesus risen from the dead – Peter, disciples, Paul, 500!
- v6 – most of them were still alive... so Paul’s point: go ask them!!
 - o resurrection verifiable because hundreds of witnesses were still around to confirm it

Now we can’t go ask any of these people – they’re dead! So how do we know it happened?

- We have lots of historical evidence – both in the Bible and outside the Bible
- Can’t cover it this morning – not the subject of our passage
- But I’ll post it to Facebook & Twitter this week
- Shows that it’s actually MORE REASONABLE to believe He rose than that He didn’t!

But he doesn’t spend much time on the FACTUALITY of the resurrection

Focuses on the RELEVANCE of the resurrection – why it matters to our lives

- wants us to understand why we can’t abandon this belief even if it’s unpopular
- the resurrection of Jesus – not just interesting history – essential to your life & future
- the resurrection is non-negotiable – must hold to it or everything we hold dear falls apart
- As **John Updike** so eloquently put it...

Paul gives us three reasons why the resurrection of Jesus is essential to us...

Because Jesus rose we have...

1) Forgiveness

- **Stated in the negative in v17... read v17**
 - o If he didn’t rise, your faith isn’t “less valuable” ... it’s “worthless”!!
 - o Your trust in God, love, obedience, service... just a waste of time!
- **Why? Because if He didn’t rise, then regardless of your faith, you’re still in your sins**
 - o You are unforgiven and ultimately unforgivable if He didn’t rise!
- **Back to 15:3 – Jesus died “for our sins” – His death paid the penalty for our sins**
- **But it’s His resurrection that proves that the payment was sufficient**
 - o His resurrection proves that His sacrifice was valuable enough to pay for all sins
 - o Think of it this way... if you go to HEB this afternoon
 - I don’t recommend it – crazy on Sunday afternoons – but if you go...
 - When does the stuff belong to you?
 - When you put it in your cart? Get in line? Scan it? Slide your card through?
 - NO – not till the receipt prints!
 - I once tried to walk out of HEB without a receipt – checker stopped me
 - “Your card didn’t go through” – hadn’t made sufficient payment
 - Had to go back and try again
 - The stuff’s not yours till the receipt prints
 - o That’s the resurrection: God’s receipt proving that Jesus’ death was sufficient
 - o If He did not rise, then there’s no receipt! Your sins are still not paid for!
- **And that leads Paul to the conclusion of v18...read 15:18**

- If we're still in our sins, then when we die, we perish
 - perish = to die separated from God – lost in sin
 - **helpful to compare this verse to John 3:16 - read**
 - Paul's point: If Jesus didn't rise, then Jn 3:16 is a lie!! a pipe-dream!
- His death will not help you if He did not rise
- Reminds me of when I was in elementary school...
 - friend got hold of his parents' checks – wrote me one for \$1 Million!
 - thought I was rich... but I wasn't!
 - because no bank would ever accept a check signed by a 2nd grader!
 - And if a bank won't accept, then the check's just worthless paper
- The death of Jesus was just as worthless if He didn't rise from the dead.
- **But He did rise... and that's what proves that our sins can be forgiven**
 - **Rom 4:25**
 - Jesus was delivered over to death "because of" our transgressions - our sins
 - But it's His resurrection that makes our justification possible
 - "justification" = to be declared "in the right" by God = to be forgiven
 - His resurrection makes it possible for a Holy God to forgive sinners like us
- That's the first reason we must hold to this truth... without it there is no forgiveness

2) Hope

- **According to Nat'l Inst of Mental Health in 2012**
 - 68% of people have strong fear of death = necrophobia
 - Second only to glossophobia = fear of public speaking = 74%
 - I find that a little funny... trust me, it's not that bad up here!!
 - I think the stat on the fear of death is way low!
 - I've never talked to anyone who felt comfortable with the idea of dying!
 - Famous American writer Jack Kerouac (Keróack)
 - Natural to fear death because the statistics are so impressive: 1 out of 1 die!
- **We will all die... and if Jesus didn't rise, then it is reasonable to fear death**
 - If death defeated the Son of God then it will surely defeat us!
 - Death will be the end of our story if it was the end of His story...
- **But He did rise from the dead – He did defeat death!**
- **Result: we too will overcome death**
 - **read 1 Cor 15:20-22**
 - Death entered humanity through the sin of Adam
 - Jesus came to be our new Adam
 - As Adam's act of sin brought us death, so Jesus' resurrection brings us life!
- **Jesus' resurrection guarantees our resurrection... and that's why we have HOPE!**
 - **Acts 2:24**
 - "an end to the agony of death" – we will die... but we need not fear death
 - don't need to agonize over our mortality... because death won't last!
 - we won't stay dead – we will rise victorious over death
 - **And that's why we have hope even when life is hard**
 - even when life is disappointing / painful
 - we can have hope because we know a better life awaits us!
 - death will not end us – it's just a doorway to a better life – a resurrection life
- **But to really feel hope in resurrection we need to understand what it means**
- **Let's talk about what happens when you die... Turn to 2 Cor 5**
 - **2 Cor 5:8 – instantly with Jesus**
 - people you love who've died – if they trusted in Jesus they are with Him
 - they are awake – aware – see Him – worship

- **Instantly with Jesus... but bodiless**
 - At death the spirit is separated from the body
 - body goes into grave; spirit goes into presence of Jesus
 - Paul is clear: that's an improvement over your current state!
 - no more sin, pain, suffering – Paul preferred to die
- **Better... but not best – 2 Cor 5:2-4**
 - houses, tents, clothing, nakedness – a little weird!
 - all metaphors for your body
 - Your spirit inhabits your body like you inhabit a house/tent/outfit
 - so to be absent from this body is like being naked
 - your spirit and body were meant to be together – at death ripped apart
 - that was never God's plan for us – death was not what He intended for us
 - so for a believer, death is an improvement...
 - but it's not best because you were meant to have a body
- **God will fix that deficiency in the resurrection**
 - The resurrection is when your spirit is joined once again to your body.
 - But not your current body - a new body... the "dwelling from heaven" v2
- **Paul tells us much more about this new body back in 1 Cor 15... read v42-43**
 - **Resurrection is not a reanimation of our current bodies**
 - current bodies: perishable, dishonorable, weak
 - new bodies: imperishable = immortal; glorious; powerful
 - when Jesus raised Lazarus - NOT resurrection – just resuscitation!
 - got the same body back – could still get sick, hurt – still died
 - **So resurrection = creation of new, perfected, immortal bodies**
- **To understand what we'll be like we must look at Jesus after resurrection**
 - Here's what we know about His resurrected body – same will be true of us
 - **It was a real, functional body!**
 - Had flesh & bones – touch Him; pick stuff up – He wasn't a ghost
 - Your resurrected body will be a real body – bones, organs, blood...
 - It will function like a real body does
 - **Luke 24** – Jesus asked for food – ate broiled fish
 - I am very happy about that because I love to eat!
 - **Isaiah 25** – lavish feast after resurrection – best steak and wine you've ever had... I'm looking forward to that day!!
 - I don't know the details – will we need restrooms?
 - Do know we'll eat, drink, talk, run, and enjoy all of God's creation
 - **It was immortal & unbreakable**
 - We're told explicitly that Jesus can never die again
 - We're told that in heaven: no more death, injury, or pain
 - So our resurrection bodies will be immortal – can't die
 - And more, they will be unbreakable – can't even be harmed
 - **It was recognizable**
 - Jesus' disciples knew Him immediately by sight
 - exception: Emmaus road – but God blinded them so that Jesus could teach them unawares
 - So we will be recognizable to one another in the resurrection
 - I'll have a perfected body – but you'll still know "that's Blake"
 - What age will we be? I don't know... but assume we'll be at our peak
 - no effects of aging: no injuries, popping joints, nothing sags
 - we'll be at our physical peak... so will those who die young

- We will still be us – we'll be recognizable – but we'll be at our physical best
 - Our resurrection bodies will not be like these bodies
 - They will be perfect, immortal, powerful, and glorious!
- **That leads Paul to the conclusion: 1 Cor 15:54-57**
 - Death will not have the final word over us - we will be victorious over death
 - That's why we have HOPE in this life, even when it's painful
 - Even when we see terrorism... lose our jobs & fall in debt... become ill... lose a loved one
 - We have hope because we know that death won't win!
 - Death has lost its sting - nothing more than a temporary inconvenience
 - **That's why 4x in this chapter Paul refers to the death of believers as "sleep"**
 - look at v20 again... read 15:20
 - how Paul commonly describes the death of a believer
 - **Why? because for believers, death is as temporary as sleep – won't last**
 - **After we die we will awaken to a new and unending dawn**
 - immediately at home with Jesus
 - and then in the resurrection – glorified and perfected for all time

So because of the resurrection, we have forgiveness and hope... and third...

3) Purpose

- **negative: 1 Cor 15:19,32**
 - As followers of Christ there are many sacrifices we must make in this life
 - sinful pleasures we must avoid
 - legitimate pleasures we must give up in service to God and others
 - **The Christian life is a life of sacrifice**
 - **But if there's no resurrection then all of those noble sacrifices are a waste!**
 - If death wins: when everyone has died no one will care what you gave up
 - because no one will exist to care!
 - If there is no life after this one...
 - then sacrificing this life is incredibly foolish
 - then we who make sacrifices in this life are to be pitied
 - then we should "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!"
 - the right way to live if this life's all we get!
 - It's Robin Williams mantra from Dead Poet's society...
 - If Jesus didn't rise, then do your best to be happy because this life is all you get
- **But Jesus did rise from the dead...**
 - **...therefore you will rise from the dead...**
 - **...therefore your life now has meaning that will transcend death**
- **You have a purpose in this life that will matter in the next life**
- **What is that purpose? ... read v3-4**
 - **"... delivered as of first importance"** – this is it – this good news about Jesus
 - Our purpose in life = share the good news about Jesus with all who will hear
 - The most valuable thing you can do with your life
 - Because this good news is what brings forgiveness and hope to the world
 - Everything else we do to try to fix the world...
 - charity, economic development, medical research, education...
 - just Band-Aids – treat symptoms but not underlying problem of sin & death
 - Only the gospel can do that!
 - So we make it our ambition to tell as many people as possible the good news...
 - Jesus died & rose again so they could have forgiveness & resurrection
 - A free gift to all who believe

So let me challenge you... have you believed?

- Do you believe...?
- If not, will you come talk to me or send me an email...

For those of us who have believed, Paul challenges us in v58

- **read 1 Cor 15:58**
- Let us hold fast to truth even when it's unpopular
 - o because without this truth our faith is worthless and our lives are hopeless
- Be willing to endure ridicule and shame for the truths of the Bible
 - o God's people have always been mocked by the world
 - o If the world's not mocking us, something's probably wrong... with us!!
 - o If the ridiculed Jesus, they will ridicule us
- So expect to be ridiculed and shamed... and when it comes, stand strong in the truth!
 - o Don't surrender to public opinion
 - o A compromised Christianity is a waste of your time
- Stand strong and when ridicule comes... "abound in the work of the Lord"
 - o Don't fight back
 - o Do good to those who ridicule you... Love them... Serve them... Share the gospel
 - o Return good for evil and love for hate
- ...knowing that your sacrifice is not in vain
 - o God won't let it be wasted
 - o He will use your sacrifice and endurance for great good in this life and the next