

THE GLORY OF THE RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15

Introduction:

Last Sunday – Easter – we looked at John 20 – the events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus, and the process through which his followers progressed as they moved from despair to the recognition of the Lordship and Deity of the One whom they knew as Master.

This week I decided to stay with the resurrection theme for another Sunday. This morning I want to take a quick tour through a fairly lengthy chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church. I want to consider not just the reality that Jesus rose from the dead, but the significance and the importance that truth has for us today.

I hope you have your Bibles open to 1 Corinthians 15. That is where we will be for the next few minutes. The first few verses – Paul reiterates the reality of Jesus' resurrection. He insists that the death, burial and resurrection make up the critical core of the gospel message. Without these events, there is no gospel – no good news.

The evidence that Jesus did rise from the dead is given by Paul in the number of people who saw him alive in the flesh after his death and burial – as many as 500 people at one time as well as numerous other individual and small group appearances.

But what I really want to get to this morning is the rest of the chapter as we consider the difference the resurrection makes to us in our lives here and now. (Note – there are a number of verses or sections in this chapter that we will not dwell on today. I just want to pick out the main points...)

We begin in vv. 12-34 with...

The Truth of the Resurrection vv. 12-34

The problem in the Corinthian church – there were those who were saying that there is no resurrection. After all, it is impossible for someone to come back to life after they have died ... isn't it?

Look at Paul's argument – v. 13 – if resurrection cannot happen, then Christ has not been raised. And the results of that reality are incredible:

- Our preaching is in vain – our message is all a lie, we are misrepresenting God – vv. 14-15
 - Consider the sermons in Acts – Peter, Paul – they all focus on the resurrection... See Acts 2:23-24, 32.
- Not only that, our faith is futile – we are believing a lie – vv. 14, 17
 - If there is no resurrection then we are still in our sin.
- Even more, those who have died are without hope – vv. 18-19
 - Believers who died are gone and there is no hope of any future.
 - If this life is all there is we are the most miserable of creatures.

But ... there's that critical word. "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead..." – v. 20 That changes everything. If Christ has been raised, then clearly the dead can rise. In fact, Paul says, Christ's resurrection is only the firstfruits – there is more to come.

He then goes on to point out an important comparison and contrast between the first Adam, and the last Adam, who is Christ:

The first Adam brought death; The last Adam (Christ) brought resurrection. *Read vv. 21-23.* The resurrection of Jesus Christ assures us that there is a resurrection waiting for us as well.

Read vv. 23-28 – suffice it to say that Christ, in his resurrection, destroyed death, and because of that we do have hope. Death, physical death, is not the end. It is only the beginning for the child of God.

The next section we are going to pretty much skip over. You may be wondering about Paul's comment on being baptized for the dead—so am I. My only explanation is that he is simply making a point. He is not justifying the idea of being baptized for the dead. He is saying that even your corrupt, pagan behaviour contradicts your claim that there is no resurrection. But let's go on to...

The Nature of the Resurrection vv. 35-49

Read v. 35 – "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" Let's consider now just what happens in the resurrection.

Read vv. 36-41 – there are a number of principles about life and death here that are taken from nature:

- For there to be any fruit, death must come first. A seed must first be put into the ground and die, before it will grow up into a new life. And that seed can be dead for a long time – grain found at Masada
- There are different types of fleshly bodies – animals, birds, fish, humans – each is unique and special
- There is also a difference between earthly bodies and heavenly bodies, each with its own unique glory.

Now ... v. 42 – “So it is with the resurrection of the dead.” Just as there are different kinds of bodies in nature, and earthly bodies and heavenly bodies each have their own type of glory, so there is a difference between the human body that is planted in the ground and the body that comes forth in the resurrection.

Read vv. 42-44 – what a change that is going to be. Just as you can plant what appears to be a dead seed in the ground, and a few weeks later you find a beautiful flower blooming, so the body that comes forth in the resurrection is far more beautiful and glorious than the mortal body that was put in the grave. *Review the statements made in 42-44.*

Read vv. 45 – “The first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam became a **life-giving spirit**.” Life entered into the first Adam, but true life, eternal life, spiritual life comes from the last Adam.

Read vv. 46-49 – there is just so much in these verses that we don’t have time to go into, but let me just say this: We are descended from the first Adam and from him we received the image of the man of dust. But through the resurrection of Christ we receive a heavenly image, which will be revealed in the heavenly body we receive at the resurrection.

The Triumph of the Resurrection vv. 50-57

Read vv. 50-57, with comments throughout.

Friends, that is going to be a glorious day. Here in this world we are confined to a body that is susceptible to all kinds of weakness and failure. We struggle with illness, with weariness. We deal with disease and

hunger. We suffer with pain and sorrow and grief. And ultimately, we face the reality of death itself.

But Jesus changed all that. His resurrection was not only for him. It was for us. Look back at v. 20 - *read it*. Because of his resurrection, we know that resurrection will come to us as well.

This week, as I studied this and thought on it, something came together for me in a whole new way. Resurrection is defined simply as the event of coming back to life, of rising from the dead. But it carries the idea of something much more than that. We even use the term to suggest something more – the resurrection of an old idea, to resurrect a forgotten dream. When we say that, there is the suggestion of something coming back to life, only better than it was before. That is what the resurrection really is.

In the Bible, we find several people who came back to life – Lazarus, the son of the widow of Nain, the son of the widow of Zarephath in the OT. But in everyone of those situations, it was a case of the old life returning to the old body. Nothing was different, they just carried on from where they were before, and eventually they died again.

But the resurrection that awaits us is true resurrection. When Jesus was resurrected, he rose with a new body, a glorified body, and so shall we. One day, in the resurrection, we too will have a new body...

When that day comes, death will be finally put away, “...swallowed up in victory.” As Paul says, O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

The sting of death is gone, Jesus forever removed it in his resurrection. And we will join in that victory on the day of resurrection.

Conclusion

So, what does this mean for us today? How does this truth affect our lives now? We need to wrap this up by looking at verse 58 – *read it*. An understanding of the resurrection and what it means for us gives us a whole new motivation for faithfulness and service here and now.

Read the verses of hymn # 543 – When the Roll is Called up Yonder, before singing it together.