

Up from The Grave He Arose
1 Cor 15:50-58

Well, we are almost done with our study of 1 Corinthians. We'll wrap thing up next week and start a new series after that looking at the book of 1 John.

Anne Graham Lotz tells this story: The year was 1799. It was Easter Sunday. Napoleon had laid siege to the little town of Feldkirk, Austria. The people of the village were terrified by the size of his army and had decided they had no choice but to surrender. As they were about to raise the white flag, the bishop of the church interrupted them.

In a voice filled with emotion, he said, "Remember what day this is. This is the day of the resurrection of our divine King. We must have one moment of triumph. Let us at least ring all the bells of Easter."

So they did, but not without a great deal of trepidation. They were afraid such audacity might have severe consequences. As the sun came up over the mountains, the church bells began to ring. Soon the air was filled with the triumphant sounds of a victory celebration.

The soldiers surrounding the town were puzzled as to what was going on. Napoleon's generals called a hasty meeting and decided that the only reason the townspeople could possibly be celebrating was that Austrian troops had arrived during the night to defend the town. So even before the bells stopped ringing, the French forces had begun to retreat!

In Christ we have more than a perceived victory, we already have the real thing; we just need to start celebrating! That is the essence of this chapter.

PRAYER

I. The Resurrection Is Everything

A. Paul makes the resurrection the centerpiece of Christian belief

1. 1 Corinthians 15:1–2 (ESV) — 1 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

2. 1 Corinthians 15:12–19 (ESV) — 12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who

have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

3. Paul understood the importance of Christ being resurrected and wanted to make sure the Corinthians did too.

B. Without the resurrection, Christianity is meaningless

1. Without the resurrection, Christianity is a meaningless religion.

2. A story is told about the cornerstone of a large, fashionable church was the text: "But we preach Christ crucified." As the years passed, vines grew up around it until all that was visible were the words, "But we preach." Ironically, this was a sad commentary on the deteriorating ministry of that church, for the pastor spoke only of social issues and no longer mentioned the crucified, risen Savior.

3. America has far too many dying churches who are really no more than social clubs.

4. What we call the traditional, mainline churches are dwindling at an alarming rate.

5. They are trying to grow by not really standing for anything and being as inclusive as they can.

6. You can do as many wonderful social things as you can, but if you are part of a church that has lost sight of the resurrection of Christ, it's all meaningless.

C. Without the resurrection, Christianity is powerless

1. The resurrection is the centerpiece of all we believe in.

2. Without it, Christianity is a great set of moral codes and an interesting philosophy to debate.

3. I know a preacher who became a minister because he loved the intellectual aspects of the philosophy of Christianity. He liked doing the church relations of his

denomination, but he never really had a passion for Christ and his teachings. When he quit preaching, his faith disappeared.

4. He didn't really believe in Christ. He believed in Christianity.
5. The resurrection of Christ gives real power to Christianity.
6. The resurrection sets Christianity apart and above all other religions.
7. Without the resurrection, Christianity is powerless
8. Jesus wasn't just a good man who lived and died.
9. He was the Messiah who lived, died and rose again for all eternity!
10. When he promises us eternal life, he can back it up with his own eternal life!
11. If you don't believe that, your faith is powerless.

II. The Resurrection Changes people

A. The Apostles

1. Through most of the gospels, the one picture we consistently get of the Apostles is that they just didn't get the picture.
2. They were scared most of the time and timid the rest of that time.
3. Yet after the resurrection these men changed.
4. Peter denied Christ at his trial.
 - a) Later he asked to be crucified upside down because he wasn't good enough to die as Christ did.
 - b) From the resurrection on, he was a great force and spoke boldly for Christ.
5. The others
 - a) All of the apostles but John are believed to have been martyred for their belief in Christ.
 - b) Those men who ran and hid at his trial, never ran again.

c) They went from always questioning and not getting it, to being the most vocal leaders of the early church.

B. Paul

1. Before Paul came in contact with the resurrected Christ, he was the chief persecutor of Christians.
2. He did all he could to destroy Christianity. Then he met Christ
3. 1 Corinthians 15:9–11 (ESV) — 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.
4. Those are words of someone who has been profoundly changed by the resurrection.
5. There is a similar story of a modern Paul. In 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a ruling that prohibited prayer and Bible reading in public school classrooms. The impetus for the decision was a lawsuit filed by the famous atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair and her son Bill Murray, who was in high school at the time. Madalyn had raised her son to hate anything religious and to believe that there was no God. While in his 20s, Bill worked with his mother on various lawsuits she was pushing through the courts. She wanted to get rid of the tax-exempt status of churches, to have the phrase "In God We Trust" removed from U.S. coins, and to expunge the words "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. At some point, Bill began to question atheism. He realized that his mother was a bitter, destructive person, who had abused and manipulated him all his life. He fell into depression and began drinking heavily. In an alcohol treatment program, he came in contact with people who had had their lives transformed by faith. He eventually opened his heart to God and came to the point of committing his life to Jesus Christ. Today Bill Murray is an

evangelist. Even though he resisted God every step of the way, he couldn't keep fighting forever.

6. This story is very reminiscent of the testimony of the apostle Paul.

C. You

1. Has the resurrection changed you?

2. For Christians, it's the greatest part of our faith.

3. It's what helps us deal with death.

4. We know it's not permanent.

5. It's a passage I usually include when preaching a funeral for a Christian.

6. 1 Corinthians 15:54–55 (ESV) — 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.” 55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

7. I miss my mom and others terribly, but what helps me in those quiet sad moments, is that someday, I will be reunited with them.

8. We don't have to say what the people of Paul's time said in vs 32. “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

9. We have a very different outlook on death.

10. We look forward to the day after tomorrow.

III. Stand Strong

A. Paul calls them to stand strong

1. If you are a Star War's buff you are very familiar with the words, “Use the force Luke” or “the force be with you.”

2. That's what Paul tells the Corinthian Christians in vs 58 1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV) — 58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

3. Use the power and the hope of the resurrection to meet each day head on.

4. To know that you can overcome...even death.

B. Paul calls you to be steadfast

1. The power of the resurrection hasn't faded in the 2000 years since this was written.

2. Stand Firm

3. Don't get moved by false ideas

4. Do the work of the Lord to the best of your abilities

5. One of the most common tactics of war is waging a propaganda war. Trying to convince the other side they are losing. All is hopeless. There is no use in fighting any more.

6. Satan is doing a great job of that today.

7. We need to remember however, we've already won the war, we just have to finish fighting the battles. The outcome is already decided.

8. At the end of WWII, the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The devastation of so incredible, that it finally broke the will of the Japanese to fight any longer as a nation. Everyone understood that for all intents and purposes, the war

was over, however there were still a few battles to be fought before being declared officially over. Good men still had to die.

9. We have the same situation as Christians. We know the war is over, we know we have won, but there are still battles to be fought until it is officially over.

10. Stand strong, don't be moved, do the work of the Lord with all your heart.

11. I love the very end of this chapter. knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain

12. I will be honest; I forget that sometimes.

13. I am glad I have the words of Paul and others to remind me of that very important truth.

C. Always abounding

1. We tend to really stick to the be steadfast, immovable part of verse 58.

2. We like to "hold to the old ways" and be the immovable fortress.

3. But that is only half of that verse.

4. Paul also calls us to always abound in the work of the Lord.

5. We need to be rooted in our faith, but that faith is an active thing not a static thing.

6. God wants us sharing the gospel, helping those in need in the name of the Lord, living our faith actively and honestly to those around us.

D. Don't give up

1. Then there is that last very important part. Your labor is not in vain.

2. Even when it seems no one is responding, your labor is not in vain.

3. Even when it seems the culture has left God behind, your labor is not in vain.

4. Even when people treat you poorly, your labor is not in vain.

5. Even when people take advantage of your goodness, your labor is not in vain.

6. **DON'T GIVE UP!!**

7. If nothing else about the resurrection sinks in from today's lesson, remember not to give up.

8. You've won!

9. Don't stop just before the finish line.

10. Don't spike the ball just before the end zone.

11. The resurrection tells us that no matter what, it's worth it in the end.

12. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:7–8 (ESV) — 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.