

MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, November 9, 2021

#44 | Resurrection — 1 Corinthians 15:14

Overview: We as Christians have a habit of running to the cross and for good reason. It was at the cross that God's love was made known to us through the wrath-absorbing sacrifice of his very own Son. However, do we often stop too soon by focusing solely on Jesus's atoning death? According to Paul here, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." Hence, it seems prudent to focus not only on Jesus's death, but also on his resurrection! Today, we will look at how the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth both gives credence to the gospel message and provides us unshakeable hope in the face of death.

Segment Questions: (References are on back)

Read 1 Cor. 15:3-6

- In verse 3, Paul says what he is about to say is of "first importance." Paul wrote a lot of great and wise things in the Bible, so what makes this particular message so important?
- Paul describes Jesus appearing to Peter (Cephas), the 12 disciples, and then to a crowd of more than 500. How does this eyewitness testimony strengthen your faith? How is this different than one person claiming to have heard a message from God that no one else has access to?
- What objections/alternate theories to the resurrection have you heard? If you haven't heard any, can you think of any? Do these seem plausible?

Read 1 Cor. 15:14-17

- Why is the physical resurrection of Jesus such a critical matter?
- How does the resurrection assure us that we are not "still in our sins?"

Read 1 Cor. 15:20-23

- Paul repeatedly uses the term "firstfruits" to refer to Jesus. What does he mean by this?
- If Christ is the firstfruits, how is that good news for the rest of us?

Read 1 Cor. 15:58

- Paul concludes this lengthy discussion of the resurrection with a practical admonition to work hard. How does the hope of a resurrection encourage us that our work has lasting value?

Action Questions:

- Who do you know that you could talk to about the resurrection? Will you talk to them?
- The resurrection gives our work here on earth (both vocational and non-vocational) eternal value. What upcoming work does this truth encourage you to tackle?

Closing Personal Prayer: Jesus, we celebrate your resurrection this morning. We rejoice in the hope of forgiveness and life that you have given us. We trust that we too will one day be made as you are and see you face to face. Until that time, strengthen us by your Spirit to continue in the work you have set before us. Amen.

Introduction

Imagine that you are having a conversation with an unbelieving friend. Your friend asks you, “So why are you a Christian?” Take a second to think about what you would say. There’s probably lots of good ways you could answer this question. However, what if you gave this straightforward reply: “I’m a Christian because I think it’s true.” This may hit your friend like a splash of cold water. “You’re not a Christian for some subjective, mushy, spiritual reason that I’m pretty sure isn’t for me, but because it actually happened?” Now we have something to talk about.

The resurrection is like a giant support beam for the Christian faith. Everything rises and falls on whether or not Jesus actually did walk out of the grave that first Easter morning. While other religions are founded on the private and unverifiable spiritual experience of their leader, the Christian gospel is uniquely rooted in real history. Because of the historical nature of this claim, we are able to investigate its veracity. The eyewitness testimony of the New Testament authors demands us as a jury to deliver a verdict: “Yes or no, did Jesus really come back from the dead?” If the answer is no, we can go ahead and cancel Men’s Life next week and toss our Bibles. But if the answer is yes, if a singular Jewish man on the other side of the world died and came back to life 2,000 years ago, well that changes everything.

But what in particular does it change? Well, nobody’s perfect and everybody dies. As one author put it, those are the two easiest Christian doctrines to convince anybody of. However, the resurrection of Jesus addresses both of these issues head on. First, when Jesus arose, his sinless life was verified. One man *was* perfect and he assures us his perfection can become ours through faith. Second, when Jesus arose, he proved that death does not have the final word. He trampled death underfoot, and, as with his perfection, he made his life available to us by faith. What a wonderful future hope we have in the resurrection!

However, the resurrection does not merely give us hope for the future, but actually infuses hope and meaning into our lives right now. In the face of death, why does anything we do even matter? Leading a family, running a business, or building up a community are all pointless endeavors if death reduces them all to nothing at the end of the day. However, the good news of the resurrection empowers us to press into the work of here and now, knowing that our labors are not in vain but will echo on through eternity.

1 Cor. 15:3-6 | ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

1 Cor. 15:14-17 | ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵We 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. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

1 Cor. 15:20-23 | ²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

1 Cor. 15:58 | ⁵⁸Therefore, 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.