

Title: The Facts of the Resurrection

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-18

## INTRODUCTION

There is no other faith that claims a risen Savior, one from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is that central moment in human history that serves as the foundational doctrine of Christianity. After having truly assumed human nature and submitted to an agonizing and shameful public death, the eternal Son of God was truly raised from the dead in his glorified physical body, no longer subject to decay and death. His resurrection validates his identity as the divine Son of God, demonstrates his irrevocable victory over death and the grave, and secures both the present salvation and future physical resurrection of believers. There...that's the sermon. Amen?

Today isn't a holiday. It isn't an event to celebrate a bunny or chocolate treats. It's the most vital, important, rejoicing, hopeful, glorious and majestic event to ever occur. And it's through the resurrection we have eternal life. It is one of the cardinal facts and doctrines of the gospel.

An outline of Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

Vs. 1-2, he is speaking to the brethren, and the gospel which he preached to them. Gospel of course means "good news" and Jesus dying, and rising the third day is good news for wretched men who cannot do anything for themselves. The gospel means "good news" and preached means "proclaiming good news." In Acts 8 in the account of Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, "**Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.**" God doesn't need our creative input into preaching, we must preach the good news from the Scriptures as they are. Paul says I preached these to you and if you don't believe them it doesn't change the truth, it literally means you have believed in vain. If you hold fast he says, which means, if you can walk away from truth, you never knew truth. If you believed in vain, it means "no purpose".

Vs. 3-9, I have delivered, spoken to you, what the Scriptures say. Paul says he has preached to them the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. He has done so not on the basis of his own ideas, but on what the Scriptures say. Note: if we are going to defend the truth, then we must proclaim what the Bible says, not what we want it to say. Paul's defense of the gospel, the resurrection was the fact the Scriptures say this is true.

He was buried, raised the third day, as the Scriptures said, this is second time he affirmed it's not his option, but what the Scriptures say. Not only do the Scriptures say this, but according to OT law, many witnesses saw it as well. Vs. 4-8, Paul describes in detail whom He appeared to, and finally says He appeared to me. As unworthy as Paul labeled himself, because he was a persecutor of the church, God graciously rescued him from the clutches of hell.

Vs. 10, but by the grace of God. I don't suppose we can define our lives as Christians in any other way, but by the grace of God. It was God's grace that found you in the pit of your self worth. This is Paul's transition in his point of this letter. He established the Scriptures have told of His resurrection, and now he points to himself. We are all an example and proof of His resurrection, because we have life. Jesus spoke of this effect in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies."

Paul is now who he is by the grace of God, and His grace didn't prove vain. He has labored to proclaim the good news, the word he has preached about the death, burial and resurrection. It was the grace of God that propelled him to proclaim such. It is today, the grace of God that compels us to proclaim Christ and His resurrection.

Paul concluded this first section saying "we preached and you believe" but the hinge is vs. 2, "unless you believed in vain." One can make a profession, but be swayed by cultural beliefs. The fact is there are certain truths that cannot be amended. The resurrection is one of those. You believe in vain, when you say you believe to relive some sort of conscience guilt you had. You have no right to amend the Bible on the truth of the resurrection.

#### THE QUESTION OF TRUTH

Vs. 12, Paul has spent the past few verses setting up this question to have only one real answer. If it is preached from the OT Scriptures and you say you believe it, then how can you say there is no resurrection? It was common among the "heathen" to say there's no resurrection, but among those who claim to believe?

I must reiterate this point, the Scriptures are not for you to adjust to fit your thinking. It seems from this passage, and the course of the argument, there were some among the Corinthians who thought the resurrection an impossibility.

Vs. 13, 16, Paul argues that Christ isn't raised if there's no resurrection of the dead. In other words, your bodies won't be raised if Christ isn't raised. In fact, Matthew Henry comments, "And yet it was foretold in ancient prophecies that he should rise; and it has been proved by multitudes of eye-witnesses that he had risen. And will you say, will any among you dare to say, that is not, cannot be, which God long ago said should be, and which is now undoubted matter of fact?"

#### THE RESULTS OF NO RESURRECTION

Vs. 14a-15, if Christ isn't raised, then our preaching is vain. What's the point of preaching, and the definition of preaching is, "that which is proclaimed by a herald, a proclamation." Why should we preach eternal life if there's no defeat of the last enemy to be destroyed, death, cf. 1 Corinthians 15:26. If I didn't believe in the resurrection what would be the point of preaching?

The guilt of false witness would be our conviction. If Christ isn't raised then we are peddling "fake news." We would be selling snake oil to cure all your ills.

Vs. 14b, not only is preaching in vain, but your faith is vain. If there is no resurrection then the faith you have in eternal life, a new body, a resurrected body is vain. Today as believers, our faith is in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. If there is no resurrection, there is no hope.

Vs. 17, Paul summarizes the main point of not believing in a resurrection. You're faith is worthless, vain, and futile, and you are still in your sins. This is the most vital point for us not to miss. It is Matthew Henry who says this, "No remission of sins is to be had but through the shedding of his blood. And had his blood been shed, and his life taken away, without ever being restored, what evidence could we have had that through him we should have justification and eternal life? Had he remained under the power of death, how could he have delivered us from its power? And how vain a thing is faith in him, upon this supposition!"

If you don't believe in the resurrection, then the death of Christ is just another good man's death. He didn't defeat death. He didn't defeat the grave. And you are yet still under the condemnation of God for the sin you have, it has not been covered or atoned for. Why? Because if there is no resurrection, then death has not been defeated. Furthermore, those who have already died, they have perished with no hope. Jonathan Edwards comments on vs. 18, "Upon supposition there is no resurrection in your sense, no after-state and life, then dead Christians are quite lost. How vain a thing were our faith and religion upon this supposition!"

Vs. 19, the misery and pity of those who don't hope in Christ beyond this life. It is really absurd to hope in Christ for just the life you live here. If your hope is limited to this life, then your plight is in a bad state. Christians have been and will be persecuted in this life for what they believe in the Bible. And if hope in Christ is only in this life, then where is the joy and hope of a resurrected body? Again Matthew Henry says, "Christians therefore had a hard lot if in this life only they had hope in Christ. Better be any thing than a Christian upon these terms; for in this world they are hated, and hunted, and abused, stripped of all worldly comforts and exposed to all manner of sufferings: they fare much harder than other men in this life, and yet have no further nor better hopes."

There is hope today beyond the pale of this life. A life that is full of trouble according to Job. It is because of the resurrection of Jesus that we can rejoice in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57.