

Resurrection: Of First Importance

Introduction

- Tonight, I want to proclaim what the Apostle Paul said is “of first importance” to the Gospel: The Resurrection
- The Gospel rests on this single truth: Is resurrection possible
- And by resurrection, the Scriptures mean this:
- A person in an earthly, natural body, dies and is born again to an imperishable, spiritual resurrected body
- All Jesus said and did rests upon the resurrection
- If there is no resurrection, why should we be disciples of Jesus Christ?
- We might as well eat & drink for tomorrow we die
- So tonight let us look at what the Scriptures proclaim regarding the resurrection, its reality and significance, concerning Christ’s resurrection as well as our resurrection
- As we begin, let me express a caution:
- Satan has orchestrated a great deception concerning the unimportance of the resurrection & thus the gospel
- He does this by getting people to be worried about the cares of this age, instead of focusing on what the Scriptures proclaim
- So it is critical that we be active hearers and readers of the message from the Lord
- There is an example of Satan’s influence on a group of assemblies long ago who departed from the gospel, who, according to Paul, were “severed from Christ”
- So, it is essential that we have a clear understanding of what the Scriptures present concerning the resurrection: both Christ’s & ours
- Because this is the critical issue:
- The Scriptures clearly proclaim that apart from the resurrection, there is no hope after the grave
- Let me repeat: If there is no resurrection, Christ has not been raised, we will not be raised, and no one this evening has any hope beyond the grave
- So I invite you to be an active listener and reader of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15

The Gospel Paul Preached

- Read 1 Cor 15:1-2
- Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel he proclaimed, which leads to salvation
- IF they hold fast the message that was preached
- Which concerns the resurrection!
- If they DON’T hold fast, have believed in vain
- What is this message, this good news?

- Read 1 Cor 15:3a
- This message is of “first importance”
- It is the most critical element in the gospel
- Read 1 Cor 15:3-4
- Christ died for the sins of His people
- Penalty for sin paid, so we too can die to sin
- He was buried, because he was DEAD
- And then He was RAISED
- If we don’t believe He was dead, we don’t believe the gospel, because Paul said that Jesus died
- If we don’t believe that He was raised, we don’t believe the gospel, because Jesus was raised
- And note: this was according to the Scriptures!
- This is not a new truth that Paul was proclaiming
- In fact, resurrection is proclaimed throughout Scriptures by Moses, the Prophets, & the Psalmists
- In fact, the reality of the resurrection so permeates the Scriptures, that if we don’t believe in it, we might as well throw away our Bibles
- Read 1 Cor 15:5-7
- The reality of the resurrected Christ’s was witnessed by the Apostles and hundreds of people
- Yet some had fallen asleep! Figure of Speech
- Temporary; expect to awake; power to awake
- Now all witnesses have died
- But the testimony of the Scriptures remains!
- They are basis of our faith
- And then last of all the resurrected Christ appeared to Paul who writing this letter: Read 1 Cor 15:8-11
- Paul was so impacted by the resurrection & gospel, that he labored tirelessly to proclaim it
- Paul & Apostles preached SAME MESSAGE
- Christ died for sins, was dead & buried and raised from the dead, according to the Scriptures

If There is No Resurrection . . .

- Now, in spite of the witness of Paul, the Apostles, and the proclamation of the Scriptures, some in Corinth did not believe in resurrection of the dead
- Read 1 Cor 15:12
- Same is true today
- Some don’t believe that Christ was raised
- Therefore they don’t believe the gospel
- Some don’t believe God can raise any from dead
- Therefore they don’t believe the gospel
- Some believe that Christ was raised, but they don’t believe they are going to be raised
- Therefore they don’t believe the gospel
- So, what if there is no resurrection, and therefore no Gospel? Paul tells us the implications.

#1: Read 1 Cor 15:13-14

- If no resurrection of dead, Christ not been raised
- If Christ has not been raised, the message that Paul and the Apostles preached is worthless
- If Christ has not been raised, I, like Paul, am wasting my time proclaiming the gospel to you

#2: Read 1 Cor 15:15

- If Christ is not raised, Paul & Apostles are false witnesses of God
- Because they testified that God raised Christ
- Perpetuated a hoax of massive proportions

#3: Read 1 Cor 15:16-17

- If there is no resurrection, Christ is not raised
- No resurrected Christ, no payment for sin
- God's edict for the penalty for sin is death
- If Christ has not been raised, the penalty for sin has not been paid, because He is still in the grave
- And therefore, we cannot die to sin
- Thus, there is no hope of forgiveness of sins, for the Corinthians or us or for anyone else

#4: Read 1 Cor 15:18

- If Christ has not been raised, then those who are dead in Christ have perished
- Because apart from the resurrection, there is no hope beyond the grave, for both Christ and us
- Repeat: Apart from Christ's resurrection there is no hope for us beyond the grave. We are still in our sins & we will perish because we will not be raised

#5 Read 1 Cor 15:19

- Therefore, Paul draws logical conclusion: If there is no resurrection, we who have hoped in Christ are to be pitied; we are liars before God
- That is why Paul says later in this chapter, "If the dead are not raised, Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor 15:32)
- Because if there is no resurrection, there is no hope beyond the grave

Our Hope

- We do have hope because Christ has been raised
- Read 1 Cor 15:20-23
- First Christ is raised; then when He returns those who are His will be raised also
- Christ's resurrection provides us real hope, IF we Christ's at His coming; if we belong to Him

Those That Belong to Christ

- So, what does it mean to belong to Christ?
- Paul tells us explicitly in Galatians 5:24; Read
- Some have taught that to be in Christ is:
 - To say a prayer; To belong to a church
- But the Scriptures proclaim that to belong to Christ means that we have crucified the flesh . . .
- What does it mean to "crucify the flesh . . ."

• Read Galatians 5:13-18

- Choice: walk by the spirit or desires of the flesh
 - Those that belong: walk by the spirit not flesh
 - What are the deeds of the flesh?
 - Read Galatians 5:19-21
 - Note: Deeds of flesh: will not enter Kingdom
 - Paul doesn't say when they die they enter heaven
 - What is the fruit of the spirit?
 - Read Galatians 5:22-23
 - Those in Christ, have died to fleshly sins
 - They have denied, taken up the cross, follow Him
 - And they now express the fruit of the spirit
 - We are not talking sinless perfection, but a life that forsakes sin & lives according to spirit of love
 - So we don't belong to Christ because we:
 - Asked Jesus in our heart; belong to a particular denomination; take communion
 - We belong to Christ because we have crucified the deeds of the flesh and are producing the fruit of the spirit of love in our actions
 - That is why Paul says what he says in some well known verses to the church at Rome
 - Whose members, Paul calls "saints" in Romans 1
 - Which is from the Greek, "hagios," meaning those who have died to sin to live for a Holy God,
 - Read Romans 6:1-7
 - This the freedom that Jesus spoke: John 8:31-32
 - Freedom from sin, in the context
 - Some may say, how is this possible?
 - With men, impossible: with God, possible
 - Not only is it possible, but it is critical
 - For only those in Christ raised to Kingdom of God
- #### **Will Resurrection Be 1st Importance to You?**
- If the gospel, which the resurrection is of 1st importance, is not our central hope, we will share the same fate with a group upon whom the Scriptures proclaim a curse; Read Galatians 1:8-9
 - On the other hand, if we share Paul's attitude toward the resurrection, and it becomes our central focus, it will yield great reward
 - And we will live each day preparing for Jesus' return, forsaking sin and embracing righteousness
 - If we live this way, the resurrection is the most practical truth to conduct our day to day lives
 - For it will give us focus, purpose, and hope
 - In closing, I want to call us to faith by asking the same question that Jesus asked Martha
 - Read John 11:25-26a
 - Then Jesus asks Martha: Do you believe this?
 - If you do, you will respond by living with the resurrection as the central focus of your life.