

# FULLY ALIVE / Sunday, April 5, 2015

Unifying Topic: RESURRECTION GUARANTEED

## Lesson Text

**I. A Reminder Of Good News (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)**

**II. The Resurrection Of The Dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)**

**The Main Thought:** For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** People need to be reminded of important events that shape their identities and actions. What kind of event can make such an influence on their lives? Jesus' resurrection provided tangible evidence of the possibility of resurrection for those whose identity is formed by Christ Jesus.

**Lesson Aim:** To explore the meaning of Christ's resurrection and to show how His death has brought about forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.

**Life Aim:** To help believers understand the implications of the resurrection for their lives and for the life of the Church.

## HISTORY:

**1 Corinthians 14:26-40** <sup>1</sup>In this section on conduct in church worship, Paul insists that all the parts of worship should be conducive to instruction and edification. Tongues, prophecy, and other gifts were to be practiced under strict regulation (**vv.26-33a**). Also, for the sake of decorum in the churches, women were not to speak in public worship (**vv.33b-36**). Paul declares that what he is writing is the Lord's instruction (**vv.37, 38**). He concludes by encouraging the Corinthian Christians to seek to prophesy and not to prohibit people from speaking in tongues, provided that the whole of the worship service is decorous and orderly (**vv.39, 40**).

This is what Paul wrote.

## LESSON:

### *1 Corinthians 15:1-11 A Reminder Of Good News*

**15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;**— Moreover, tells us that Paul had finished his answers to the Corinthians' questions and now goes on to a new subject. Paul says he declared the gospel to the Corinthian church, the same gospel which he had already preached to them and they received and stood on. Some in the church were in danger of not continuing the faith; some were denying the resurrection and undermining the gospel which the hope the Corinthian believers stood on. So, they desperately needed the gospel proclaimed and three things come to mind in verse 1 and 2: **1**) they received the gospel; **2**) they stood on the gospel; and **3**) they were saved by the gospel (v.2). The word "declare" (*gnorizo*) means *to make known*. Paul is not reminding the Corinthians of the gospel, he is again (vv.3-8):

- Declaring it as though they had never heard it.
- Proclaiming it as though they had never sat before it.
- Making it known as though they had never known it.

**15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.** By this gospel he preached, they are saved if they hold firmly to the Word. Otherwise, if they turn from the gospel and deny the resurrection, they have believed in vain.

- They must keep the gospel in memory. A person must hold fast and continue to believe to be saved.
- They must not believe in vain. The idea is that some might believe, but believe in the wrong thing—believe in something that is vain, empty, worthless, useless.

What Paul preached is not to be believed in vain.

**15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;**—You can only testify of things you have received, and that's what Paul is doing. **1**) The **first truth** of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

- The word "*first of all*" means that the very first thing Paul ever preached to the Corinthians was the death of

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thywordistruth.com/corinth/less21cn.pdf>

Jesus Christ. The death of Jesus Christ is so important that it must be the first thing preached. It is the very foundation of a person's salvation.

- The first truth Paul himself received was the death of Jesus Christ.
- Christ died for our sins. The word "**for**" (*huper*) means *for our benefit, for our sake, in our behalf, in our stead, as our substitute*.
  - Christ died as our sacrifice.
  - Christ died as our ransom.
  - Christ died as our propitiation.
- Christ died...according to the Scriptures. The truth of the gospel is not only important historically but prophetically as well. They had occurred as had been predicted.

**15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:**— 2) The **second truth** of the gospel is that Jesus Christ was buried and arose from the dead according to the Scriptures.

- The burial of Jesus Christ is important, for it proves two significant things:
  - It proves that Jesus Christ died.
  - It proves that no man is put into a tomb with a sealed rock to enclose it unless he is dead. The resurrection. The empty tomb is evidence that Christ assures the believer that he too shall be raised from the dead.
- Jesus Christ rose again...according to the Scriptures.
  - Most Old Testament scriptures such as Isaiah 53 foretold Jesus' atoning death, and His fulfillment of those and other predictions is one strong evidence that He is the Christ, the Son of God—that he was buried and that He was raised again on the third day. The resurrection of Christ proves...
    - ...that God is; that He exists.
    - ...that Jesus is who He claimed to be, the Son of God Himself; that Jesus Christ was sent to earth to secure the Ideal righteousness for man and to die and to arise from the dead for man.
    - ...that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, the very One whom God sent to earth to save men from death and to give them life.
    - ...that He is "the Spirit of life"; that Christ is the very energy and force of life, the very power and Being of life, and that He can give the same "*Spirit of life*" to men.

**15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:**— The **third truth** of the gospel is that there were eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection. He was seen of Cephas (Peter). Peter had failed the Lord miserably, having denied Him three times. Jesus definitely appeared alive after His resurrection to Peter, then the twelve apostles of Christ. Although Judas, having committed suicide, the term twelve was a customary name to refer to the group, even though they were only eleven at the time. Matthias later replaced Judas.

**15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.** Afterwards, Jesus was seen by 500 of His brethren at the same time, of most of whom are still living, though some had fallen asleep (died). This may have been the appearance in Galilee (Matt.28:10, 16-20) where the larger number of Christ's followers were. The point is: five hundred believers could testify of God's love for men.

**15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.** Then He appeared to James—either the apostle the son of Zebedee, or James the brother of Jesus, who did not believe in Jesus until after the resurrection but later became prominent in the leadership of the Jerusalem church. The appearance of Christ was to equip the apostles to be eyewitnesses of the resurrection.

**15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.** The **fourth truth** of the gospel is that there was one strong eyewitness of Jesus Christ. Paul's most important credential to be an apostle was that he was an eyewitness of the risen Christ.

- Paul saw Christ after the Lord's ascension. The phrase "*one born out of due time*" (*to ektromati*) means a miscarriage, an abortion, a child born out of time. Paul is simply saying that he did not know and follow the Lord when the Lord walked upon the earth, but he saw the Lord after He had left the earth and ascended

into heaven. Paul of course, referring to his experience on the Damascus road and perhaps to the visions granted him.

- You see Paul was very prideful in who he was and what he had achieved in his position and personal morality and righteousness. He was a rising young leader in Judaism; a promising career of looking forward in a place on the Sanhedrin high court. Yet, he turned 180° in a day, gave up his promising future and chose a life of suffering and sacrifice because he had seen the Lord! Nothing less than having actually seen Christ face to face could change a man so radically. Nothing less than having actually seen Christ face to face could make a man give up so much and pay so great a price for preaching the gospel.

**15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.** Paul could not forget the souls he had destroyed and the people he had wronged; or how he had fought against the Lord. Like Paul, we would give much to go back and redo the past; change some things, but we cannot. Paul was radically converted and changed against all odds. He had a deep sense of unworthiness.

- Paul says I am the least of the apostles.
- I am not meet (fit; unworthy) to be called an apostle.
- Because I persecuted the church of God.

**15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.** There's that word "**but...**" What we can't change, God's grace can. That's why God's grace had to come in for somebody like Paul. "**But by the grace of God**" meaning it was God working within and without. It was God's prevailing love moving when he didn't know what he was doing. The grace of God had to take over to make him what he was to be. It is by God's goodness and through no merit of our own of who we are today! For you see the grace God granted upon Paul was not useless; was not ineffective, but it effected his life so much that Paul lets us know that he labored, desperately driven more abundantly than them all (*being an instrument for God—laboring in the Word—preaching—enduring hardships—suffering than any other apostles*). Yet it was not him, but it was the grace of God in him (*that made him an apostle of Christ; a preacher of the gospel*). To Paul the greatest thing in all the world was the grace of God, because it was the fact that God loved him so much! Look at this:

- God forgave his terrible sins.
- God allowed him to follow and serve His dear Son.
- God allowed him to proclaim the glorious cure for the cancer of sin and death, even the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ!

All that Paul was and all that Paul did was by the "*grace, the underserved favor of God!*" — the grace that was with him.

**15:11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.** The **fifth truth** of the gospel is desperately needed in the world: there is only one gospel that is preached and that has to be believed — The gospel of the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Only His death and resurrection truly offers eternal life to men. The fact and truth is that God gave His only begotten Son for the world that they might believe. He allowed His Son to die, and then raised Him to life. It was to assure man that God truly loved us and will raise us up to live eternally with Him.

#### NOT APART OF THE LESSON VERSES 12-19

Paul has established first of all that *resurrection* is an essential fact of the gospel. He now tabulates the logical consequences of denying the *resurrection*. Most Greeks did not believe that a person's body would be resurrected after death. They thought the soul would enter some eternal state but not the body. Christianity, by contrast, affirms that the body and soul will be reunited after the *resurrection*. There were people in Corinth who were saying there was no *resurrection*. Paul presents logical consequences of denying the *resurrection*:

1. If there is no *resurrection*, then Jesus Christ is still in the grave (v.16).
2. If He is not raised, there is no gospel to preach (v.17).
3. If there is no gospel, then you have believed in vain and you are still in your sins (v.17).
4. If there is no *resurrection*, then believers who have died have no hope (v.18).

Faith in a dead Savior means that our religious beliefs are of no value. If our hope in Christ does not take us

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

beyond this life, then "we are of all men most miserable" (v.19). I SERVE A LIVING AND NOT A DEAD SAVIOR! If I do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Bible teaches, my belief about everything else is meaningless. I SERVE A LIVING AND NOT A DEAD CHRIST!

## ***1 Corinthians 15:20-22 The Resurrection Of The Dead***

**15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.** The words "**But now**" connect this passage to the former verses where some were arguing that Christ did not arise from the dead. If Christ did not arise from the dead, then the consequences are terrible:

- Our preaching is meaningless.
- Our faith is futile.
- We are liars and false witnesses
- we are still in our sins
- our loved ones who have already died have perished.
- we are of all men most miserable.

"**But now is Christ risen from the dead**" paints a different picture. He is not dead, He is alive, and He is become the first fruit, even of them that that have died (*always speaking of a harvest*).

What is the best way for God to prove that He can raise the dead? The answer is obvious. He raised up the Man Christ Jesus. Because He arose, we too shall arise. Since Christ has risen, we know that God has the power to raise the dead (them that slept). It's guaranteed! No person could want for a greater hope nor for a greater promise than this! Two things:

1. Christ has risen from the dead.
2. Christ has become the firstfruit of them that slept. The term "*firstfruit*" refers to the harvest of a farmer's first crop. The Jewish farmer was to take part of his very first fruit and give it as an offering to God. The offering of the first fruit to God assures us of God's blessings upon the rest of the harvest that followed!

The point is: the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the firstfruit, and the first resurrection of a Man who would never die again. It guarantees that we, too, shall be raised from the dead. "*But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*" Rom.8:11. That means us!

**15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.** Adam was the first man. The Second Man was Christ. Paul saw in Adam a type of Jesus Contrasting them: the first Adam fell and brought death into the world. But Christ, the Second Adam undid the damage by conquering death in His resurrection.

**15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.** Continuing in this contrast between Adam and Christ, it shows that in Adam all die. However, in Christ all will be made alive. The first Adam disobeyed God and brought sin and death into the world (Rom 5:12-21), but the last Adam (Jesus Christ) obeyed the Father and brought life and hope. Which do you want? Adam represented the disobedience; bringing sin into the world—the whole human race that follow him. Christ represents all who would belong to Him; follow Him and His obedience to the Father.

### **SUMMARY:**

Paul declared the gospel to the Corinthian church, the same gospel which he had already preached and they received, stood on, and were saved. (vv.1-2). The Old Testament Scriptures declared Jesus was buried, and that he rose again the third day (vv.3-4).

Peter saw Him, the disciples saw Him collectively (v.5). Five hundred plus people saw Him at the same time (v.6) and James, Jesus' half-brother saw Him (v.7). The greatest witness of the resurrection was Paul himself who had been one of the greatest persecutors the Church had ever known (vv.5-11).

<sup>2</sup>"*Firstfruits*" refers to the Lord Jesus Himself (v.20). When Jesus was raised from the dead, it was God's sign (assurance) to us that we shall also be raised one day (at the rapture) to be with Him (v.21). In Adam all die, but in Christ all are made alive (v.22).