**CHRIST WAS RAISED ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES**

***1 Corinthians 15:1-34***

***“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures…” (vs. 3-4)***

We come now to the one of the greatest chapters in the whole Bible. It is also the bookend of chapters 1 and 2, which dealt with Christ crucified. But it is the subsequent chapter in between that Apostle Paul has dealt with the many struggles that the Corinthian church had like: divisions, sexual immorality, lawsuits among believers, and spiritual pride in regards to spiritual gifts and the misuse of their Christian freedom. Because of these issues, Paul reminds them of the gospel. Let’s think about the importance of the gospel and why we need to be reminded of it continually. May the Spirit guide us and teach us about the gospel message.

1. **The gospel according to the Scriptures (vs. 1-11).**

I would like us to start by reading verse 1, ***“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.”*** When we take into consideration all that the Corinthians were struggling with, like sexual immorality, pride, divisions and so on, Apostle Paul starts by reminding them of the gospel they received and on which they had taken their stand. Noticed that they had received the gospel and had taken their stand on its principles, but why, did they have to be reminded? It seems that they had forgotten the gospel and its power. The result of their forgetfulness led to their old ways, weaknesses and sins. Today, many Christians struggle with the same problems that the Corinthian Christians did. So, when we forget the gospel and its power, we tend to drift away by the strong currents of this world and go back to the old ways which could be materialism, lust, pride, and self-centeredness, among many others things. Therefore, to prevent ourselves from falling back into old sinful habits or into old weaknesses, we must remember the gospel message to take our stand against the powers of darkness.

Let’s now look at verse 2, ***“By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”*** Apostle Paul reminds them again that they were saved by the gospel. What does Paul mean by “if you hold firmly”? The Greek definition of this phrase means “to hold fast, keep secure”. We can look at it as a man holding to a rescue line in dark and deep waters as a matter of life and death. In this small example the rescue line can be seen as the gospel. The gospel is the absolute rescue line that we must desperately hold firmly for our salvation and victorious lives in our spiritual journey. Thus, what is the gospel that Paul reminds the Corinthians about?

Let’s read verses 3 and 4 together, ***“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures…”*** In Greek, the gospel means “good news.” It is good news of God’s salvation for all perishing people, so Paul delivered the gospel to the Corinthians as of first importance. The Apostle succinctly defines the gospel in these two verses. The gospel is broken down into two vital pillars: Jesus’s death and his resurrection. We must remember that if either of these pillars is removed, the gospel collapses and is empty and meaningless. Let’s look more closely at the gospel message.

**First, Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.** The first pillar of our faith is that Christ died for our sins. This deals with our sin. We are all sinners, right! Romans 3:10, 12 and 20 reminds us of this, *“…There is no one righteous, not even one…All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one…* *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.”* All humans are born in sin and have sinned. Sin is like a terminal illness with no human cure. Man consists of both body and spirit. So, people’s spirit can find life and true satisfaction only in God, the Creator, who is spirit. However, sin separates us from God. Consequently, sin brings spiritual death to people. Then sin strips people’s ability to live a moral life. Sin cheats people from being the person he or she was created to be. And sin robs people of their self-esteem and hope. Lastly, sin leads to death and judgment. When we face God’s judgment, however, we cannot claim no contest. There is only innocent or guilty. We all must appear before the judgment seat of God to receive our due penalty for the things that we have done in our lives. What is the penalty? Revelation 21:8b says, *“…they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*  What can be more dreadful than eternal separation from God in hell?

This is where Jesus comes in. Man does not have a solution to sin, but God does. God so loved the world that he gave His One and Only Son to die for our sins. Jesus is the Son of God. He became a man and gave his life for his creation. The Son of God made himself nothing and humbly received the penalty and punishment for our sins on the cross. The giver of life tasted death and was buried in a dark grave. In this way, he paid the wages of our sins and redeemed us and brought God’s forgiveness for all who believe. When we acknowledge that we are helpless sinners before God and believe that Jesus’ blood paid for our sin, God forgives and declares us innocent. We no longer need to feel the shame and guilt of our sins. We no longer stand condemned before God. Furthermore, Jesus’ blood heals our wounds and pains resulted from our sins. When we believe in Jesus’ blood, the Holy Spirit sanctifies our inner persons so that we can live holy and free lives for the glory of God. What a good news it is!

**Second, Jesus was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.** The second pillar of our faith is Jesus’ resurrection. This is also just as important. If Jesus’ death was the end, he wouldn’t be any different from any other religious figure that died. But Jesus had said, *"The Son of Man must suffer many things…and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Lk 9:22)* God did raise Jesus from the grave. What does it prove? Jesus’ resurrection proves that God is the Almighty Creator God; nothing is impossible with God. Jesus’ resurrection also proves that God accepted Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins and broke the power of death. Right now, Jesus is alive. He is sitting at the right hand of God. The Risen Christ says in Revelations 1:18, *“**I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!”* Wow! Forever! But, what does Jesus resurrection mean to me? Since, he is alive forever, we also will be raised to life and live forever with him in the kingdom of God. Jesus resurrection guarantees us eternal life. More than eternal life, we are a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:The old has gone, the new is here!”* In Christ, we are a new people. A people belonging to God and now capable of living holy lives before the Creator with resurrection faith. Let’s remember Apostle Peter’s words, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you…”* *(1Pe 1:3-4).* This is our power. This is our true hope.

After declaring the two pillars of Christian faith through the gospel message, Apostle Paul immediately starts introducing eyewitnesses to Jesus’ resurrected body, in verses 5-11. Let’s now look at verses 5-8. ***“and that he appeared to Cephas,and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”*** The Risen Christ appeared to Peter and the apostles. They were all common men with the same weaknesses and ordinary problems we have today. They were fearful but ambitious. And, their hope was their human glory in an earthly messianic kingdom. But when these men met the Risen Jesus they were changed. They became courageous servants who feared no one. They no longer feared death, for they had a living hope of the kingdom of God.

The Risen Christ also appeared to more than 500 brothers on one occasion. Then he appeared to James, his human brother. James and his other brothers did not believe in Jesus during his earthly ministry (Jn 7:5). After James met the Risen Christ, however, he believed and became the leader of the Jerusalem church. Finally Paul writes, ***“Last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”*** He considered himself abnormally born because he had not been a disciple of Jesus. Rather, he was a zealous Pharisee who was a persecutor of the early church. But the Risen Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus. After his conversion, he became one of the most influential and sacrificial Apostles of Jesus Christ. The changed lives of all these men testify to the life-transforming power of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus’ death and resurrection are good news because we all can have hope to be changed. May the Spirit guide us to have resurrection faith to bring powerful changes in our lives.

1. **The Resurrection of the Dead (vs. 12-34)**

Apostle Paul now deals with the last problem the Corinthians were dealing with. Let’s look at verse 12 to see what the trouble was, ***“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”*** Among the Christians in Corinth, some did not believe in the bodily resurrection; consequently, their own resurrection. This may have been because Greek philosophy saw the body as evil, so why would it be raised to eternal life, if it is evil? Also, many embraced Christianity in hopes to receive worldly benefits only in this life, such as peace and prosperity as many people do today. They saw no practical value in man’s future resurrection. The resurrection is hard to believe because it is beyond science. However, we can believe in the resurrection when we believe in the Creator God, who created this universe out of nothing. So, Paul explains the folly behind the idea if there was no resurrection of the dead.

In verses 13-19, Apostle Paul breaks down all the individual arguments that would logically fall apart if there were no bodily resurrection of the dead. Apostle Paul starts with Christ’s own resurrection. Look at verse 13, ***“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.”*** If one denies the resurrection of the dead, he must also deny the resurrection of Christ. Jesus is the Son of God who became flesh and made his dwelling among us (Jn 1:14). Jesus shed his blood on the cross and died. But, he did rise from the dead on the third day. Jesus resurrection meant victory to us over the power of death. But if there is no resurrection of humans, even Christ, who was fully man, could not be raised either. If Christ has not been raised, then there was “never” “any” resurrection. Then the world in its contents is nothing but death--a sea of death. The world is full of graves and dying people and evil spirits. If Jesus Christ has not been raised, there is no hope for mankind.

Apostle Paul now continues his logical argument in verses 14-17. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is dead and we are still unforgiven sinners. Not only that, then our preaching is useless and we are made out to be liars and false witnesses.

He concludes his argument with verse 18, ***“Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.”*** Thus, the last logical conclusion of no bodily resurrection is that death has won, and all those who believe are lost. If Christ has not been raised, there is no proof that our sins have been forgiven. Since sin was not forgiven, then death is the only payment for sin. So, there is no way that the power of sin and death can be conquered. And this is why Apostle Paul writes in verse 19, ***“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”*** Christians can walk the walk and talk the talk because of our hope in the resurrection. We can endure hardships or persecution when we have resurrection faith and a living hope in the kingdom of God. We can die to our sinful nature and habits and live as new creations when we have resurrection faith. But if Christ has not been raised, we become pitiful men and women because we gain no reward for our faith and life before God.

But what Apostle Paul says next is the truth. Look at verse 20, ***“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”*** After clarifying the necessity of the resurrection, Paul now reaffirms the historical fact that Jesus has indeed been raised from the dead. Then Paul reveals the power of the Risen Christ. What does the power of the Risen Christ mean for me?

**First, Christians are ensured of their own bodily resurrection.** In verses 20-23, Jesus is called the firstfruits two times. The first fruit shows the color, shape, and flavor of the fruits to come. So, when a gardener sees the firstfruits in his orchard, he knows color, shape and flavor of the coming fruit, and the abundance of that fruit in the years to come. Likewise, God sent his Son to be the firstfruits of the resurrection. We will be raised to be like the Risen Christ in glory and splendor. In Christ’s resurrection, we have confidence and hope of our own eternal glory. Wow! Can you imagine how awesome this will be!

Look at verses 21 and 22. ***“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”*** The first man Adam disobeyed God and sin and death entered through him. Adam represents fallen humanity, so in Adam all die. But through his obedience, Jesus brought righteousness and life to all who believe. Jesus represents a new humanity, which is restored and glorified. In him, all will be resurrected to live forever. Romans 8:29 says, *“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”*  God chose his children to make them like his Son so that they may be a family with the Father and Jesus the eldest brother in God’s kingdom forever. Praise be to God our Father for his love and hope for us! When will this happen? Verse 23 says, ***“But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”*** When Christ comes again, all believers who are both alive and dead will be lifted up to heaven and will be transformed. Wow! Let’s think about the scene for a moment.

**Second, the Risen Christ restores the power of the kingdom of God and destroys death.** What will Jesus do when he comes again? Look at verses 24-26. “***Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”*** He will reign until he conquers all his enemies. Who are Christ’s enemies? Satan, and all his realm. In this present world, these enemies control unbelievers and oppose God’s people. Christ will destroy all dominion, authority and power in earthly and spiritual realms under Satan’s power. Revelation 20 describes the final judgment. Satan will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, and then all unbelievers who disobeyed God will share the same fate with him (Rev 20:13). What is the last enemy? Death. Death is the worst and last enemy of mankind. But death will be also thrown in to the lake of fire and remembered no more (Rev 20:14).

After all these things have occurred, the new heaven and the new earth, the restored Paradise, will come for God’s people. Look at verse 28.  ***“When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.”*** We will be with God and our Lord Jesus Christ forever and ever in the new Paradise. This is our true hope.

With this glorious hope, what kind of life did Paul live? He says, ***“I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’" (31-32)*** As the apostle lived for God’s kingdom preaching the gospel, he received severe persecution from people. But Paul did not fight back. He fought a spiritual battle and lived a sacrificial life for God and others. He endured all hardships and lived for God because he saw the future glory he would have in God’s kingdom. Finally he warned the Corinthians, ***“Do not misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’ Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.” (33-34)*** Who are bad company? They are those who live without resurrection faith. Their hope is in the things of the world, and they live a pleasure-seeking life. Paul calls Christians to be fully awaken for their spiritual slumber. In order to over the world, we must have a biblical view of life and death, and live by resurrection faith.

Through this passage, Apostle Paul reminds us of the gospel. He clearly teaches the Christ has indeed been raised. Therefore, we too will be raised from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection and our subsequent resurrection gives us eternal life and power to live a new life in the glory of God. May the Spirit guide us to accept Jesus’ and our own resurrection to live as a new creation with the glorious hope for the kingdom of God.