

The Resurrection Life
2Cor. 4:13-18

Well, we come here early on this morning, on Resurrection Sunday to remember and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it is incredible how people view this day and this truth, and try to explain it away. Some see it as a fable created by the disciples or Jesus didn't really die on the cross but revived in the tomb. And then we are led to believe in his crippled state that he is able to roll the stone away and overcome the Roman guards and appear as if he never died. Some say that it is just an analogy of faith and we have to rise against all the negative thoughts and events of our lives. Some say that the resurrection was just a happy ending to a sad story but has very little relevance in our lives. The death of Jesus is what is important in our salvation but the resurrection had little relevance. And it is that last truth I really want to challenge us with today, because part and parcel of Gospel preaching, something that was emphasized over and over again was the resurrection of Christ. It is was vital to understanding the gospel and to gospel hope.

You see the resurrection over and over when the gospel is preached in the Book of Acts. The first sermon preached Peter declares in Acts 2:24, **"God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."** In Acts 3:15 before the Sanhedrin he preached, **"and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses."** He preaches in Acts 4:10, **"let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead –by him this man is standing before you well."** He goes on and says there is salvation in no other name than the name Jesus. Acts 10:40, **"but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear."** Acts 13:30, **"But God raised him from the dead."** It was such a critical message and vital point of the gospel.

And through 2 Corinthians Paul has been defending his ministry and his gospel. The argument of his opponents is when you look at the suffering and hardship of Paul it is evident that God is not with him. These were early preachers of the prosperity gospel. And chapter four is such a wonderful chapter. He begins and talks about the inability of people to believe but God can take this message and make it living and active in the heart and that is why we preach Christ. Then he talks about the adversities but at the same time the treasure in earthen vessels, look at what he writes in verses 7-12, **"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you."** We could certainly do a month of Sundays just talking about those verses.

But notice he says **"For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake."** Now what does he mean by that? And it is this - preaching the gospel is

very dangerous and costly business. And preaching, testifying, and claiming Christ as the only way into the presence of God could cost you your life and will bring great suffering and adversity into your life. So why would anyone ever preach Christ or follow him or seek to make him known? And the reason why is because of the glorious truth of his resurrection. It is key in understanding how we live and suffer in this life and where our ultimate hope truly lies. The resurrection is the essential. Since Christ is raised from the dead and death cannot hold him, I know my sin has been paid for. Since Christ is raised from the dead I know that death cannot and will not hold me. And I do not know what trials or the extent of what trials you are going through. It could be for your faith, it could be relational with your spouse. It could be with your children and the pain and hardship they create. It could be financial and the struggle and concern on top of everything else. But the resurrection changes everything in our lives and in our future. Rejoice this morning - He truly is risen! Do you live in the reality that Jesus is alive and what it means for you?

1. What we believe about Jesus changes everything. V. 13.

I really love this verse. Paul has such clear convictions. Think of it when you speak. If you are not promised to be cheered or listened to or that there will be a positive or fruitful response, when you speak and you realize that you might be hated and even vilified for it, why would you ever speak? Why would you ever stand up and make the truth known about Christ? Why would you go through all of the heartache and suffering that goes along with it? And the answer is because you know it is truth and the most necessary truth. You know beyond any doubt that the person speaking really believes in what he is preaching. There are no other ulterior reason why he would be speaking that truth.

So look at what Paul says here, **“Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, ‘I believed, and so I spoke,’ we also believe, and so we also speak.”** Paul is explaining why he can preach this message with such conviction and passion and know that God will use it as he sees fit. He says we have the same spirit of faith. He is not talking about the Holy Spirit here but having faith in the truth which God has made known that Jesus is the resurrected Christ. Think of Jeremiah or Isaiah who warned the people of God and no one listened to them but rejected his message but went on preaching. Why? Because he believe it, and believed that this is necessary truth. Again if there is no external payoff for preaching then he has the same spirit as other preachers of the past who knew God’s truth. And he quotes Psalm 116:10. And it is taken from the Septuagint or the Greek translation of the O.T. But here the Psalmists enemies are gathered around him, and he is fearful. And he prays to God for protection and aide. And what does the Psalmist believe? He believes that God is for his people and he hears our prayers and responds to them. Now, if you truly believed that God is for us and he responds to our prayers what would you do? You would speak. You would pray. And the rest of the Psalm is taken up with praising God and trusting God. Listen to a couple of these praises to God. Psalm 116:15, **“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”** Also, verse 17, **“I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.”**

Now, his circumstances have not changed. His enemies are against him. People still want his life. So why is he praising God? **“I believe!”** That is the key. God might not deliver him the way he wants but his confidence is in who God is and what he has revealed about his character and his relationship to us as his dear children. So think of what Paul is saying here because it is so key in our Christianity. Try and catch the flow and even your own heartache. Paul has just said, **“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”** Now if you are afflicted in every way and people are constantly trying to crush you and drive you to despair and strike you down, why would you ever continue in the way you are going? Why would Paul ever speak the gospel of Christ? And look at what he says at the end of verse 13, **“we also believe, and so we also speak.”** We believe! And what they truly believe, what are their true convictions about God and life and our hope has to come out of them in how they live and what they say.

And it is the same with us. We often think of our adversities and trials and pain, and the unfairness and sinful pain that others have caused us. But those moments are given to us not by mistake but to truly show us what we truly believe — what is our core beliefs. We might have an official belief in God and salvation that we can articulate to others in public, but when the trials and sorrows and disappointments and heartaches enter what comes out of us is what we believe. God in his glory wants us to see our hearts. What we speak and how we respond in those moments is really our theology. It really is what we believe. Now here is the question: what led to Paul to go through all of these adversities and still speak forth the wonderful realities of Christ? What did he believe about Jesus that changed his life, his words, and his responses?

2. The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. V. 14.

The story of Jesus does not end in death. It does not end in the tomb. It continues with his resurrection. And think through again what is being said, because this is one of the most glorious truths about his resurrection — we will rise also. In order for Jesus to rise from the grave what needs to take place? What needs to take place is Jesus needs to die. If there is no death then there cannot possibly be any resurrection. So think of it, because save the coming of the Lord Jesus, what has to happen to us in order for us as believers to be resurrected? We must die. And the reason why I bring this up is so many believers are petrified of death. They look at death as the greatest obstacle of life. They believe death is the worst thing that could ever happen. But as we look at these early believers, and remember Paul would be martyred for his faith in Christ — this was not their greatest fear. They had other fears. That they would not finish well. That they would not make the most of Christ in the face of death and affliction. That they would cause others to either turn from Christ or not come to Christ. That they would somehow dishonour Christ.

Well, how did they ever get over the fear of death? **“We believe!”** And what did they believe specifically? Look again at verse 14, **“knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.”** We have this knowledge. And it is not only that we have this knowledge but we believe what we know. And what do we know? Jesus died for our sins. We know God the

Father raised the Son. Oh, it is such a glorious and securing truth. Jesus offers himself in our stead to take the punishment for our sin. Now the wages of sin is death. Jesus died. Listen to Acts 2:24, **“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”** Impossible to be held by death. The righteous God raises Jesus because it would be unrighteous to keep him in the grave. Why? Because the debt has been fully and forever paid. There is nothing remaining on the account of the believer. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus! Jesus is alive! He is alive forevermore. The tomb is empty and he has been given a humanity that is immortal and imperishable and cannot waste away. We are here this morning to remember that truth and rejoice in what we know And let me ask you: do you believe Jesus is alive? Do you believe he has paid the debt forever?

If the answer is yes, then think of the implications of that truth. If my sins have been blotted out, and the wages of sin is death, if I have my life hidden in Christ, then look at verse 14 and the outcome of believing, **“knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.”** Jesus’ resurrection guarantees that I will rise also and with Jesus come into the very presence of God. I will be given an immortality and incorruptibility just like Jesus. Think of the same rationale. If God would be unjust to leave Jesus in the grave after paying the penalty, then if our penalty is paid that God would be unjust leaving us in the grave. Death cannot hold us.

Now think if you truly believed that what would it do to the fear and the power of death in your life? Listen to Hebrews 2:14-15, **“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”**

Think of it because the fear of death shades every area of our lives. If I fear death then I fear any difficulties or anything that would take away from a carefree and full life as I want it. Many professing Christians get divorced because we only have one life and God wants me to be happy. If we fear death then we will live as if this is all there is. And we will protect ourselves from any adversity. Paul was able to preach and speak for Christ and represent Christ because this is not all there is. The most that man can do is kill you. But death and this life is not the end. Freedom from the fear of death will cause a radically different life to be lived for him, whether in our trials in our marriage, raising children, working with people who are hard to work with or whatever. We will speak his words. We will represent him through his love and grace.

The resurrection of Jesus changes our hope and how we live in this life. The more we meditate on him and his promises, the more we are changed from one degree of glory to another. The more the fear of death is eliminated and replaced with a different and more satisfying and delightful fear — the fear of God.

Let me end this service by reading 1 Corinthians 15:54-58,
“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, 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.” We speak these truths and live in light of these truths because we believe these truths. Christ is risen! We shall rise! “I believe.”