

Resurrection Sunday

In his book, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, Tim Keller **states** **"If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead."** In my message today we will focus on a well-known passage of scripture that has even been called "the resurrection creed" because of its creed-like structure. It is one of the earliest and most significant confessions of faith in the Christian tradition.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 **3** For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. **6** 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. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, **8** and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:

What had he received from whom? I am sure he is speaking of the Lord. **We need to receive from heaven in order to give. You can only impart that which you have.** We live in a time where many are trying to pass on what they don't have or what they only have a second-hand version of. Paul is talking here about passing on revelation and insight that he had first received. **When did you last receive something worth passing on to others?** When did you last receive something from heaven? In an age of instant everything the question of the hour is, **have you been long enough with Him to receive?** The word in the Greek for receive is "paralambano". It is an active word. It speaks of taking initiative. I take from, receive from, or: I take to, receive (apparently not used of money), admit, acknowledge; I take with me.

There are certain things I have been giving away that I once liked. Things that were once precious sometimes lose their relevance and status over time. I have been thinking of giving away most of my "vans" (shoes). I don't value them like I used to. That's okay with shoes but not revelation. Are there insights you used to have that you now take for granted? Paul here was passing on something that he had ranked as "of first importance". **Revelation and insight have ranking. Someone said to me recently, "only a few things matter."** What truths do you have that are of primary importance? What truths do you have that are of secondary importance? **What truths do you really need to guard lest you forget them?** The word in the Greek for first is "Protois" meaning chief, before and most important. It is important that we pass this on before other things. For example, with your children, what is of primary importance for you to pass on. I saw a clip recently where someone was explaining how only 0.2% make it into professional sport yet we emphasize it so much. On the other hand there is 100% guarantee that at some point our kids will die, but are we preparing them to meet their maker?

If we look at verses 1 – 3 we get to see the context of the Gospel he was talking about:

1 Cor 15:1-3 **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. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.**

Which Gospel did you receive, and which Gospel are you passing on?

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3b that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

The cross is the ultimate display of God's love for us. It is the ultimate proof that God is for us and not against us." - R.C. Sproul

This is what was of primary importance to Paul; Christ died for our sins. This is why elsewhere he could say, "for me to live is Christ." What does this mean to you? There are many implications:

- I am free from God's wrath because Christ has received it on my behalf.
- Christ didn't just die for my sins alone but for everyone else. This affects how I see others.
- There is a love and an honour due to him for doing so, because He didn't deserve it. I must appreciate the sacrifice involved and the benefit I experience.
- I am free from the shame and guilt associated with my sin.
- I can now relate to God as Christ would. For example, I pray in His name. I am in Christ Jesus. When God looks at me, He sees His son.

4a that he was buried,

- **What is the significance of the burial of Jesus?**

Elliot's Commentary for English Readers states, "*The burial of our Lord is dwelt upon and emphasised as the proof of the reality of His death. Similarly in the case of Lazarus, his entombment is brought out strongly as showing that it was from no trance, but from death that he arose.*"

"The cross is the very essence of Christianity. It is the point where God's justice and mercy meet, where our sin and God's grace intersect." - D.A. Carson

"The cross is the only place in all the universe where the love of God and the justice of God are both fully displayed." - Timothy Keller

4b that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

"The resurrection was God's way of stamping PAID IN FULL right across history so that nobody could miss it." Tim Keller

- **What is the significance of the resurrection of Jesus?**
 - **Proof that Jesus' words were true. Both His predictions about it and all His teachings.**
 - **Validation of life after death.**
 - **Validation of His power over what is seen as the most powerful thing; death.**
 - **A picture of our own immortal resurrection bodies.**

"He was raised" is the perfect tense. *The change to the perfect marks the abiding state which began with the resurrection. He hath been raised and still lives. Vincent Word Studies*

Paul keeps reiterating that these things were in accordance with the scriptures. The Gospels were not readily available in written form at the time, so he was showing how these events were in alignment with God's divine plan. ***The resurrection was no subsequent invention to try and explain away or mitigate the terrible shock which Christ's death had given to his followers. (See Psalm 2:7; Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 53:9-10; Isaiah 55:3; Hosea 6:2.) Elliot's Commentary.***

Charles Spurgeon, in one of his sermons on this passage stated: ***"The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the great fact which lies at the foundation of our faith. It is the truth which gives vitality to all our doctrines, and without which they would be but dead, empty shells."*** (Sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

The doctrine of Christ's death and resurrection, is the foundation of Christianity. Remove this, and all our hopes for eternity sink at once. And it is by holding this truth firm, that Christians stand in the day of trial, and are kept faithful to God....All true Christians believe that Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and then risen from

the dead, is the sun and substance of Christianity. All the apostles agreed in this testimony; by this faith they lived, and in this faith they died. Matthew Henry

5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 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. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

- **What is the significance of mentioning all these people?**

Materialists, such as the Sadducees, believing that mental and spiritual life are only manifestations of physical life and dependent upon it, necessarily concluded that with the death of the body the whole life of the individual terminates. And it would rather appear as if the Corinthians were tainted with materialism. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," can only be the suggestion of the materialist, who believes in no future life of any kind... But many who opposed materialism held that the resurrection of the body, if not impossible, was at all events undesirable. It was the fashion to speak contemptuously of the body. It was branded as the source and seat of sin, as the untamed bullock which dragged its yokefellow, the soul, out of the straight path. Philosophers gave thanks to God that He had not tied their spirit to an immortal body, and refused to allow their portrait to be taken, lest they should be remembered and honoured by means of their material part. Expositor's Bible Commentary.

Jack Hayford emphasizes the importance of each of these elements, noting that without Christ's death there can be no forgiveness of sins, without his burial there can be no assurance of his death, and without his resurrection there can be no hope of eternal life.

8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Despite all his great revelations, Paul is happy to mention himself last as one abnormally born. What does he mean by this and how does it translate to our lives today? It means that we can also see Christ, albeit after His ascension. We can also have encounters with Him. They may not be at the same level as Paul on the road to Damascus but there is hope that we can encounter Him. It's not so much about the intensity of the encounter but more to do with our response. With regards to this verse, Richard L. Pratt, Jr. states *"Paul's experience of the risen Lord was not merely a subjective vision, but a real encounter with the living Christ. This appearance confirmed his call to be an apostle, and gave him a unique authority to proclaim the gospel."*

How has the Lord appeared to you? What has He said to you by way of instructions and assignments? What has been your response? Jesus was interested in the Apostles' response to His resurrection. He is also interested in ours. This is why He said, "blessed are those who have not seen yet they believe."

What shall we do?

Charles Spurgeon stated in a sermon on this passage: *Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The disciples of Christ would never have had the courage to face the world with a crucified and dead Messiah. The fact of the resurrection gave them the boldness to proclaim the gospel, even in the face of persecution and death.* (Sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

Tim Keller said, in his book "The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith" "The resurrection is not just consolation for the weary, but a challenge to the comfortable."

Now that we have resurrection life at work in us, we have the ability to become agents for His Kingdom. The Kingdom Life at work in us catapults us to make a difference. There are scriptures we could not quote, if the resurrection had not happened. We would not be able to say.

1 John 4:4 *"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."*

“Romans 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”

Eph 1:19-20 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

May God bless you as you take responsibility now that you have resurrection life at work in you that others don't have. May you pass on the life of God even as you have first received it. May the death, burial and resurrection of Christ be central in your life.