

THE AWESOME GLORY OF CHRIST (In His Victory Over Death) 1 Corinthians 15: 12-20

There is no greater day on the Christian calendar than Easter. Easter and Christmas go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other. And today all true believers in Jesus Christ can shout out the five most joyous words in any language. "He is risen, I'm forgiven". Friend, when you know that you are right with the God of Heaven, come what may you can make it, for like the hymn writer Harry Emerson Fosdick said, the right man is on your side! And today we are going to rejoice in the blessed truth that makes this possible, the truth that Jesus is alive.

When Jesus came, He came to redeem the whole person, body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23). And part of that redemption was to redeem us from the power of **present sin**. Friends, there is nothing, nothing, nothing good about sin! Sin will destroy your body. How many people die before their time because they've abused their bodies with too many crack hits or too many Bud Lites or too many Big Macs? But sin also destroys relationships. How many friendships and how many homes have disintegrated because of sin, and how many hearts have been broken as a result? Countless numbers. And how many men, women, and teenagers have lost their freedom and now sit in prisons all over the country, because of sin? And how many of their loved ones are suffering as a result? Countless numbers. Friends, there is never anything good about sin.

But praise God, when Jesus came He came to deliver us from present sin. 2 Cor. 5:17 says: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, He is a new creation. Old things are passed away, behold, all things become new". You will never be perfect, of course, but if

you are a true, born again child of God your life will be different than it was before you met Jesus. You have a new power in your life you never had before, the Holy Spirit of God, and Romans 6:22 says, "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life". Did you catch that? Before we were saved we were slaves of sin, but after we were saved we became slaves of God, and a holy, righteous walk with God was the result. Thank God that we don't have to live anymore like we lived when we were children of wrath. For Jesus has broken the power of present sin. But Jesus' power over present sin is totally dependent upon the fact that one day He arose from the dead. Paul said that gave up everything to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10). No resurrection, no power over sin.

But Jesus not only came to deliver us from **present sin**, but also from the **presence of sin**. He came to set an upside down world right side up again. All of us who do not have our heads in the sand should be gravely concerned about the moral and spiritual direction our country is headed. This week the Supreme Court heard debate on the constitutionality of the California law banning homosexual marriage. Beloved, do not be persuaded by the slick talking politicians and talk show hosts. God's Word is crystal clear in telling us that homosexuality is a sin. God says in 1 Cor. 6:9 that homosexuals and sodomites will not inherit the kingdom of God. We heard much about a fiscal cliff a number of weeks ago. Friends, let me tell you, if the Supreme Court strikes down the California law and homosexual marriage becomes legal nationwide, we will have just plummeted over a moral cliff of which there may be no return. As children of God we love every sinner that draws breath, for each one of us is the chief of sinners, just like Paul, and may we never forget that. And we love every sinner, including homosexuals, but we despise his sin. Pvbs. 8:13

says, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil...” And we should hate the proliferation of homosexuality in America, and it should break our hearts.

Just this week I heard the chilling testimony of retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General William Boykin concerning the advancement of Islam in America. General Boykin is a strong believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not have time to tell you all of what he said, but if he is correct, by the middle of this century Western Europe will be a Muslim continent, and the Muslim Brotherhood is hard at work in America to make sure that we follow in their footsteps. And the end of their plan is that Sharia Law would be the law of the land. We think this is impossible, but not too long ago a North Carolina judge denied a restraining order to a Muslim woman whose husband was beating and raping her. The judge ruled that the woman’s rights were not being violated, because Sharia Law allowed her husband to do what he did without consequences. Fortunately, a higher court overruled.

Friends, unless America has revival, unless we turn back to the God of our Fathers, these things are coming just as surely as I speak. But praise God, one day Jesus will deliver His people from the presence of all sin! One day there will be no homosexuality, no Sharia Law, no murder, no theft, no drunkenness, no adultery, no divorce, and no heartache that goes with all of these things. It will be a perfect world again, just like it was before the Fall of man. And all of those who have believed in Jesus in all the ages past and every believer in Jesus today will be there, and it will be a sin free environment for eternity. Can you imagine? But all of these blessings are dependent upon one thing – and that is that Jesus arose from the dead. So today I want us to look at the apostle Paul’s take on the resurrection of Jesus. And before we leave this morning I want every one of you to honestly ask yourself this

question, “Has the resurrection of Jesus Christ ever changed my life”?

Turn in your Bibles, please, to 1 Cor. 15:12-20. As most of you know, the church at Corinth had all kind of issues. There was idolatry in the church, there was immorality in the church, there was disorder in the church, there was jealousy in the church, there were law suits between members of the church. You name a church problem and the Corinthian church was likely to have it. And another major problem was theological. There were some in the church who had been persuaded to believe that there was no resurrection of the body. They believed in Christ’s resurrection, they just didn’t believe in their own resurrection one day. And this heresy led to some very serious consequences. And I want to examine them in just a few moments. But first I want to back up a step and make sure that we cover first base. Because there is no use talking about the blessings of the resurrection of Jesus Christ until we first understand the blessings of His death.

In verse 1-4 of chapter 15 Paul states the gospel message in a nutshell, and the first fundamental was that Christ died for our sins. Look at verse 3. I want you to do your very best to do something right now. I want you to pretend for a few moments that you have never heard the name of Jesus before, that you have never heard about the love of God before. I want you to listen as though you were listening with virgin ears.

Friend, you were born with a birth defect for which no doctor on earth has a cure. It is not a defect of the body, it is a defect of the soul. And the name of the defect is sin. Sin means to miss the mark, to come up short on obeying the laws that God has given us to live by, which are contained in His holy Word. And God says in Romans 3:23, “For **all** have sinned and come short of the glory of God”. Every one of us has sinned; we’ve all broken God’s holy laws. Romans 3:10 says, “There is none righteous, no,

not one". And friends, sin is much more serious than most people think. God says in 1 John 3:8, "He that commits sin is of the devil..." Now, the devil is the supernatural Darth Vader of the universe who is the arch enemy of God, and if your sins have never been forgiven, every time you sin you entrench yourself just a little more firmly right alongside of the devil as God's arch enemy, too. And that is not a position you want to be in – an enemy of God.

"Sin" is also the governing power in our lives that causes us to break God's laws. Teenagers, you know what it means if your mom or dad said to one of you boys, "Boy, you've got an attitude". And under your breath you are muttering, "Yeah, and you've got one, too". Well I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but God says that we all have an attitude. Adults, we all have an attitude and teenagers, you all have an attitude, and children, you all have an attitude. We all have an attitude of rebellion against God and His laws. So sin is breaking God's law or an attitude that leads to breaking His laws.

Sin manifests itself in our lives in a thousand ways. The Bible says that the very first commandment is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37-38), and every one of us break that one every day. We sin from our greed to our gossip, from our critical spirits to our cursing, from our lying to our laziness, from our pornography to our prejudice to our pride, from our stealing to our stubbornness to our temper. And these are just the tip of the iceberg. But a man named Jesus, Who was born of a virgin, God in human flesh, stated the ultimate sin in one sentence. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came He would convict the world of sin, "because they do not believe in Me". That is the greatest sin, friends. It is not believing in Jesus. And here's why it is so important to believe in Jesus. Jesus said, "He who believes in Me has everlasting life". In other words, those who

believe in Jesus will spend eternity in Heaven, and those who don't believe in Jesus, won't. But before you can believe in Jesus you must understand exactly what that means, and most people don't have a clue, even those who are sitting in churches all over America today. So please, please listen carefully so that you may truly know what believing in Jesus really means.

Most of us, if not all of us, know the facts about Jesus. We have heard that Jesus Christ was God's Son Who came to the earth from Heaven, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for the sins of the world, rose from the dead three days later, and is alive today. But to believe in Jesus means so much more than just agreeing that these facts are true. God says in the book of James that the devils believe and tremble (James 2:19). To believe in Jesus means to make a total commitment of your life to Jesus. To trust Him alone as your Savior and to surrender to Him as the Master of your life.

You see, God says that there is a penalty for our sins against Him, and the penalty is death. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death". You can argue with that if you want to, but friends, it won't do any good. God is running this universe, not you. The Bible says in God we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). It is God Who created us and gives us each breath we take. The Bible says that God has richly given us **all things** to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). And God says that after all I done for you, to break My perfect laws and live as you please is high treason against Heaven, and there is only one just punishment, and the punishment is death.

So friends, that leaves all of us with our sinful attitudes and actions in a horrific position. We are all walking around as spiritual dead men because of our sin. But also we are all sitting on eternal death row, awaiting our final heartbeat when eternal death begins. And friends, there is no "get out of jail free" card, there is

no free pardon for our crimes against Heaven. Our sins must be punished by death in Hell, a place of eternal torment. Friends, let me tell you, hell is not a myth and hell is no joke. No bats fly out of hell. Hell is not your mother-in-law coming for a visit. Hell is not what your boss gives you every day. Hell is not what your football team beats out of another football team. Jesus said that Hell is a place of eternal torment where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. And Jesus said that it would be better to pluck your eye out rather than it cause you to sin and go to hell.

That's the bad news, but now, here the good news! The God of Heaven loved you and me so much that He acted on our behalf and made a way that we could escape the punishment of death that we so rightly deserved. He did the only thing that He could do, He sent a substitute to take our punishment for us. But it could not be just any substitute, it had to be a perfect substitute, One Who had no sin of His own to be punished for. And the Substitute was His only beloved Son, the darling of Heaven, Jesus Christ. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world....."

So to believe in Jesus means that you believe what God has said about you and about His Son. You agree with Him that you are a sinner, and that there's nothing that you can do, no good works that you can perform, that can neutralize your sin. Your sins must be punished, and the punishment is death. And believing that, you also believe that God in His love for you has provided a remedy for your sin, the only remedy, and that remedy is His only unique Son, Jesus Christ. You believe that Paul included you when he said, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." But you must not stop there!! This is where so many fall off the wagon. To believe in Jesus means that you turn from your sinful, wicked ways, that you ask Jesus to cleanse you from those sins and change your life and to be the ruler of your life from that point forward. And then by faith alone, you ask Jesus to

take you to heaven when you die. You place your soul in His hands and say, “Jesus, You are my only hope. Save me, or I will perish”. Friends, that’s what it means to believe in Jesus.

Now, I must say to you that there are many who think that they have believed in Jesus when they have not. They believe the facts about Jesus, they may have been baptized, but their heart has never been transformed by the power of God. And the reason is that at the time they consider they were saved they did not truly repent of their sin and make a total commitment to Jesus as their Savior and their Lord. Maybe they were too young to understand salvation fully. Maybe they went through the motions of a commitment to please their wife. But they walked away from that experience with no change deep down in their heart and continued to live as they always lived. Beloved, God says in 1 John 2:4, “He who says, ‘I know Him’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him”. But this is the case with many who claim to be saved.

Can you imagine one of Nick Saban’s recruits doing this? He signs a scholarship to play for Alabama and reports to fall practice on the first day with the rest of the freshmen and practices for three days. But his heart really isn’t in playing for Alabama. And that night his girl friend back home calls and says that she misses him, and a friend calls and asks him if he can come home that weekend and hang out, which he can’t, and he is so homesick, and the next day he ups and quits the team and goes home. Well, the team has a great year and wins the national championship. And then at the awards banquet after the season, guess who shows up all dressed up and expecting to be honored with the rest of the team? That guy who quit the team. And that’s the most ludicrous thing in the world. But there are many who will stand before Jesus the moment after they die with the same idea. They’ve lived without regard for Jesus and His Word for years, but

they will say, “Jesus, I’m ready for my Heavenly reward, and they will hear Him say, “Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you”.

Well, friends, that’s what the death of Jesus is all about. He paid a debt He did not owe because we owed a debt we could not pay. But Jesus’ death on Friday would have been all for nothing if it had not been for what happened on Sunday morning, when Jesus arose from the dead! And this is where some of the Corinthians had fallen into dangerous error. For they did not believe that they could be resurrected from the dead. But Paul told them, “Listen, if there is no resurrection for you, then there’s none for Jesus, either. The resurrection power of God either works for everyone or for no one at all. And if Jesus is not resurrected, then we are all in a heap of trouble!”

What kind of trouble? Well, look at verse 14. Paul says, “If Christ is not risen, then we are all wasting our time. I’m wasting my time preaching, and you’re wasting your time believing what I say”. “If Christ is not risen”, Paul said, “I’ll tell you what we all need to do. Look at the latter part of verse 32. He was saying, “Let’s just pitch a party every night and get as much gusto out of this life as possible”. Now, to cease to exist is not a pleasant thought, but it is much worse than that, if Christ is not risen. Look at verse 17 & 18. Paul said, “If Jesus is not risen, then you are not forgiven, you are still condemned to eternal torment. Furthermore, all of your loved ones are now in hell”. And he concludes the tragic sequence by saying in verse 19, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable”. And the KJV says, “we are of all men most miserable”. Here’s how one poet put it:

If Easter be not true,
Then faith must mount on broken wing;
Then hope no more immortal spring;

Then love must lose her mighty urge;
Life prove a phantom and a dirge
If Easter be not true.”

But friends, I declare to you today that Easter is true! Look at verse 20, “But now Christ is risen from the dead...” But what are the proofs? The empty tomb is one. J. Oswald Sanders said that the tomb had to be emptied by either human or superhuman hands, and that Christ’s enemies wouldn’t have emptied it; that was the last thing they wanted. And Christ’s disciples couldn’t empty it because of the Roman guard. So the only explanation is that God emptied the tomb – that Jesus rose from the dead (The Incomparable Christ, page 216). But not only does the empty tomb cry out, but so do the lives of the 11 disciples, who were transformed from craven cowards to men who laid down their lives for preaching the resurrection was true. Would they have died defending a lie? But not only do they cry out, but so do 500 witnesses who saw Jesus at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). And many a scoffer has set out to prove that Christianity was a myth, only to come to saving faith in Christ because try as they did to disprove it, they could come to no other conclusion than that Jesus rose from the dead.

But what about you today? Do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Really? Then friend, you believe that Jesus did something that no other religious leader has ever done, something no other human being has ever done, be raised from the dead never to die again. Paul writes in Rom. 1:4 that this is the proof that Jesus is the Son of God. And this means that when Jesus said, “He who believes in Me has everlasting life”, we better believe it. Do you believe that Jesus that Jesus is the giver of everlasting life? Do you need everlasting life today? Come to

Jesus. His promise to you is, “He that comes to Me I will certainly not cast out”. I will never turn away.