

Why Easter Is Glorious

Our world is in need of hope. Swipe through online news, linger on mainstream news websites, watch TV listen to the radio, pick up the paper, or talk with anyone, and you will discover that there is a lot of depressing news out there. With COVID 19 and all its dangers spread to the bulk of the world, and with government responses having an impact on worldwide economics, it is easy to feel discouraged. Compound that with the depressing and varied long term effects of the isolation and mistrust in society, and our world is in desperate need of hope. Is there good news out there?

I stand before you today to assure you that there is good news. Not only is there good news; there is glorious news! Jesus sent his disciples into the world with a message. The Bible calls that message “gospel,” which means, “good news!” That good news is a compelling and real today as it was when Jesus first sent out his friends. What is that good news that Jesus sent to the world? It is summarized for us in 1 Corinthians 15. I would encourage you, whether you are reading this or watching this, to stop and read 1 Corinthians 15:1-28. If you do not have a bible, or do not know how to look a verse up in the bible, you can find it by googling it online. Actually, feel free to read the whole chapter, although I will be focusing my comments on verses 1-28.

Here, Paul reminds them that this is the “gospel,” (vs 1) which he preached. What is that gospel? Paul summarizes it for us in verses 3-4: “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared...” Some of you may disagree with the whole idea of sin. Others may not understand Christ’s death. If that is you, I would urge you to look back at what I posted on “Good Friday,” April 10th, 2020, about why Good Friday is good. For now, I want to focus on what Paul focuses on in the whole of chapter 15, namely, “that he was raised on the third day.” The resurrection of Jesus is good news, glorious news! Why? I want to highlight three things that Paul proclaims. Because of the resurrection, there is completeness, certainty, and confidence.

First, completeness. The resurrection completes Jesus’ work. It is the completion of what Christ did on the cross. Paul does say “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.” In other words, Jesus went to the cross to deal with sin. Did it work? Was his effort successful? Was it fruitful? Although at the cross Jesus suffered with a crown of mocking piercing his skull, although died for sins, although Jesus died to save all who would put their hope and trust in him, the cross was not the final climax of what Jesus came to do. If Jesus’ history ended with his death, there would be no salvation. Paul tells us as much; “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” (1 Cor. 15:17). If this were the case, then Christians should be pitied (see 1 Cor 15:18-19). What good is a dead savior? “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.” (1 Cor. 15:20a) The resurrection is the climax! Jesus crowning achievement is seen in that he conquered the grave! The resurrection shows that Jesus’ death on the cross accomplished what Jesus intended! Jesus really has redeemed every person who trusts him! His power to save is demonstrated in the resurrection. As he himself says to

those who trust him; “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.” (Revelation 1:17b-18)

What does that mean for us? How is this good news? For all who trust in Christ, this means that we have confidence and joy. Why? Our sins are forgiven, and the sting of death is gone! The worst that can happen to anyone – death – has no sting for the Christian. Even death has become Christ’s servant, for it ushers God’s people into the very presence of Jesus! The hymn “Jesus lives and so shall I” celebrates this truth, when it says “Death is but my entrance into glory!” Christian, you have good news! Jesus work actually accomplished what he intended it to. The resurrection makes that clear. If you are not a Christian, you can have this confidence and joy if you commit your life into Jesus hands: “For whoever would save his love will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matt 16:26) Jesus work is finished; he has the power and authority to offer life, real life, to all who trust in him. Are you trusting him? The offer is given to the world. The resurrection guarantees that Jesus work is complete. He truly is finished..

Second, the certainty of the resurrection. How do I know, how do you know, how does anyone know that Jesus is to be trusted? What proof is there? What evidence is there? If you have been listening or reading what I have been saying, and you are tempted to dismiss it as fantasy or simply the unwarranted belief of a religious person, then consider what the resurrection makes certain. If you are a Christian but you occasionally, or often, wonder if you can know that the good news is true, then consider the evidence of the resurrection. How do I know that the gospel is true? How do I know that Jesus is trustworthy? The resurrection testifies to the reality and truth of what God has done in Christ. If the resurrection is true, then it is absolutely no stretch to believe that the whole of the bible is true.

The resurrection is the most profound miracle. Dead people don’t come back to life. It empirically doesn’t happen. Except that one time it did. Jesus, really and truly dead, not mostly dead as some speculative theologians imagine, killed by professional executioners and buried in the grave, came back to life. You want evidence that you should believe Jesus? You want proof of the truth of the gospel? What more evidence could there be than a person actually coming back from the dead? I know that we do not see Jesus physically now. This is because he is now at the right hand of God. Consider, though, the historic case for the evidence of the resurrection. It is strong. There are multiple witnesses. Notice 1 Cor 15:5; “And he appeared..” Look at the list of whom he appeared to (vss 5-11): Peter, the 12, 500 people, James (likely Jesus’ brother), and Paul, the one-time enemy and hater of the church. When the Watergate scandal broke, all the powerful men involved were tripping over each other to testify and to try to get less jail time for themselves. Not so the eyewitnesses. Those who saw Jesus bodily, in the light of day, and over a period of 40 days, not as a group illusion or hallucination, spent the rest of their lives testifying to the truth what they witnessed. They experienced persistent suffering because of their insistence in the truth of the resurrection. Most of them died precisely because of their eyewitness testimony. At least one was exiled. Their testimony has the ring of truth. This is only one line of evidence. There are many other lines of evidence; not least being that, by all Gospel accounts, God gave the dignity of being the first witnesses to a group of women. In a culture and

at a time when, grievously, a woman's voice did not count in any court of law, Roman or Jewish, God says that those women's voice count in His court, the One that matters. The evidence is there, if only we are willing to see it and trust it. It is not a matter of evidence; it is a matter of how we respond to the evidence that is given for the world to see. God has given clear evidence of the truth regarding life, ministry, and death of Jesus, through raising him from the dead.

Third, the confidence of the resurrection. The resurrection gives us an objective and a subjective confidence. Objectively, we have confidence in Christ's completed work. Paul writes; "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order; Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ." (1 Cor 15:22-23). For all who trust Jesus, this means that we have a rock-solid confidence that we have real life in Jesus. Those who belong to Christ all have the Spirit of Christ within them (Col 1:27; 2 Cor. 3:17). The resurrection assures us of the depth of our hope. This is our objective reality. This reality is true for every person who confesses his sin and trusts in Jesus. Have you trusted him? If so, praise God! If not, Jesus calls you to trust him, today!

This objective reality can also fill us internally with a peace and joy. We can subjectively experience this confidence. Although the end has not yet come (1 Cor 15:24) when death itself is destroyed, and although Jesus himself tells us that in this world we will face troubles (John 16:33, Matthew 24:6-7), we nonetheless have great hope and confidence! We have peace with God, which means that we can rejoice in that peace even when difficulty is present as well. This is good news! It means that we have hope, even when the news headlines in the world are depressing. If you trust in Jesus, may you experience that peace and hope today. The gospel is the best news! The gospel is glorious news!

What have we seen in this passage? We've seen that the heart of the bible is the message of good news. That message is the message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The resurrection is glorious news! The resurrection is the completion of Christ's work. It shows that the cross was effective. Jesus really IS the Savior! Further, the resurrection gives us certainty in what is true. It authenticates and is the foundation for Christian belief. God wants us to have assurance of the truth, He wants us to have true hope, a living knowledge, and a reasonable faith. He gives that proof. Faith in Jesus is not blind; it is based on the resurrection. Finally, the resurrection gives us confidence. Objectively, we have confidence in our identity as a result of Christ's work. We have confidence for the future. Subjectively, we can experience this confidence even now! No wonder Paul proclaims: "for I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!" (Romans 8:38-39) Praise God! What a Savior!

Father, we praise you for saving us, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Spirit of God, fill us with your peace and hope. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen!