

“The Gospel Of The Resurrection”
1 Corinthians 15:1-8; 50-58

September 8, 2019

SI: This is a sermon series on the Gospel. We started out by asking:
What is the Gospel?

We saw that in the big picture, the Gospel is everything in the Bible,
it’s the whole grand story of God redeeming this fallen world.

But more specifically, the Gospel is the proclamation of salvation through Christ.

So what is the content of the Gospel?

If it’s good news, what exactly is that news?

There are many important and true teachings in the Bible that we have to know that
give us a context for understanding the Gospel, like statements about judgment.

The soul that sins shall die. God is angry with the wicked every day.

But those statements about judgment aren’t, strictly speaking, the good news.

The content of the good news is the incarnation,

the crucifixion,

and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

INTRO: Dr. Nyquist told me about a time he was in Israel twenty years ago or so. The group he was with was in Capernaum, Peter's town, where Jesus often went. They were all gathering together for a lecture Dr. Nyquist was going to give and a woman who was there, who was not part of their group, asked what was going on. Someone told her it was a lecture on the Bible and she asked if she could join them and they said of course you can.

After it was over the woman came up to John and said: That was fascinating. So he asked her, What in particular was fascinating to you.

She said: You talked about Jesus as if he is alive.

John said: He is alive.

She was taken aback by that and asked what he meant.

So he told her that Jesus lived here in Israel in the first century, the religious leaders hated him because he said he was the Son of God, so they had him arrested and the Roman authorities crucified him.

Have you heard about the crucifixion? She said she thought so.

So after Jesus died he was buried in a tomb and then a few days later was raised to life by the power of God, he rose from the dead and he's alive today.

She said again, fascinating. Where does he live?

I asked John if he thought she was pulling his leg and he said he didn't think so.

During our time in Europe we met many people who were so secular that they were completely ignorant of the Bible and Christianity, that was this woman.

She was hearing it for the very first time.

So he told her about Jesus' ascension into heaven and how he has sent his Holy Spirit into the world so that people can know him. She said again. Fascinating.

It is fascinating. But it's more than a curiosity.

I've been reading Rosaria Butterfield's autobiography.

She was a Marxist feminist atheist lesbian tenured professor at Syracuse U.

She calls her encounter with Jesus Christ and her conversion an alien invasion.

That's what the resurrection of Jesus Christ is.

It's an invasion of the power of God and the life of the world to come into human history in order to overcome death.

Look again at verse 3.

Paul says: For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance.

The four lines that follow are not Paul's words.

He's quoting the earliest creed of the church.

Paul says he received this. When did he receive it?

Most likely when he went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter and James after his conversion, around the year 36.

So just three years after Christ, and this is already what the church is affirming. Four statements.

First statement: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

We looked at that in detail last Sunday. The crucifixion.

Second statement: And that he was buried.

Why is this part of the creed of the early church? His burial shows he was really dead for a time. And his burial was witnessed, people knew where his tomb was, he wasn't buried in an unmarked grave, so this points forward to empty tomb.

Third statement: And that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. He died and he was buried are a Greek past tense that means a one time event that happened and is done.

He was raised is a Greek past tense that means an event that happened and the effects and repercussions are still at work, still in play. He was raised and is alive. You talked about Jesus as if he is still alive. He is alive.

Fourth statement: And that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve.

It actually uses Peter's Aramaic name Cephus, so another evidence of how early. That was probably where the original creed stopped.

Paul probably added the additional witnesses, the 500, James, himself and so on.

Here's why this creed is significant. It proves the resurrection wasn't a legend the Christians invented decades after Jesus' death as a way of embellishing his story, or as a way of expressing their spiritual connection with him.

Instead, from the earliest days of the church, this is what they affirmed, that he rose.

It would be interesting to look at historical evidence for the resurrection.

There are lots of books you can read on the subject.

But what I want us to focus on is why the resurrection is good news.

In particular, we're going to look at three things Paul says in the conclusion of this chapter, verses 50-58. He says it happened, then why it's good news.

I'll give them to you as we go.

Credit where credit is due, got this outline from sermon by Tim Keller

MP#1 Swallowed Suffering

Paul says the resurrection means: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

What do moms do at the end of the meal if there is a little bit of food left?

They say: Somebody eat this. I don't want to throw it away.

They don't want it to be wasted. They want it to nourish their family.

When you eat food it goes down into you and becomes part of you.

Gives you energy and life.

The resurrection does not throw away your suffering—

it swallows it in such a way that it becomes part of you and enhances your joy.

When the disciples saw Jesus on Easter—what did he call their attention to?

His wounds. Look at my hands and feet. Touch them.

Look at my side where the spear pierced. Touch it.

Have you ever pondered how strange it is that Jesus has scars on his glorified body?

If he had been raised and glorified, why weren't those completely wiped away?

Why weren't all evidences of the fall and sin removed?

Furthermore, if heaven is a happy place, then wouldn't those scars cause a problem?

If he looked at his scars, wouldn't that remind him of the cross?

Wouldn't his scars remind him of the betrayal, abuse, cruelty?

Wouldn't that detract from the joy of heaven?

Not at all. In fact, the very opposite.

It is by seeing the marks of his suffering, that his joy is made greater.

Jesus' sufferings part of who he is. He will forever be the Lamb that was slain.

They enhance his glory.

His wounds weren't removed, they were swallowed up in victory.

It's going to be the very same way with your suffering if you are in Christ.

Paul says: "We will bear the likeness of the man from heaven."

We are going to be like Jesus in his glory and in his scars.

God is going to take your suffering, and through the power of Christ's resurrection

he is not going to throw it away, or wipe away your memory of it—

he's going to glorify it.

That means that even the worst things you have suffered

will end up making your joy and glory

even greater than it would have been if you had never suffered.

The resurrection is a guarantee that your most intense suffering

will be swallowed up in victory—even death.

Your scars will be like Jesus' scars—trophies of God's grace and power

that will intensify the joy of life with God.

Think of the harmful ways people try to wipe away their suffering and scars.

Using chemicals or distracting themselves with entertainment or shopping or maybe a cycle of romantic or sexual relationships.

Sometimes people end up doing more damage to themselves than original hurt.

But no matter how hard you try to get rid of your pain it's going to come back.

A person, or a conversation, or a memory is going to tear the wound open again.

Because we live in a fallen world.

And it is impossible to deaden or do away with all suffering.

The resurrection gives us a much better hope.

Like Jesus, all our sufferings, even our death swallowed up one day, and making our future life and joy that much more intense.

I read this on Easter seven years ago, maybe you remember. Joni Earekson Tada.

She's been a quadriplegic for decades after breaking her neck in a diving accident.

I sure hope I can bring my wheelchair to heaven. Now, I know that's not theologically correct.

But I hope to bring it and put it in a little corner of heaven, and then in my new, perfect, glorified body, standing on grateful glorified legs, I'll stand next to my Savior, holding his nail-pierced hands.

I'll say, "Thank you, Jesus," and he will know that I mean it, because he knows me.

He'll recognize me from the fellowship we're now sharing in his sufferings.

And I will say,

"Jesus, do you see that wheelchair? You were right when you said that in this world we would have trouble, because that thing was a lot of trouble. But the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on you, the stronger I discovered you to be. It never would have happened had you not given me the bruising of the blessing of that wheelchair."

Fascinating. The resurrection means everything bad in your life, even death, is not wasted, but swallowed up in victory.

The resurrection is also good news because it guarantees

MP#2 Stingless Death

Paul quotes the prophet Hosea:

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

Jesus' resurrection guarantees a stingless death for everyone who trusts in him.

I read something recently that I had never heard before.

When a yellow jacket stings you it paints you with a pheromone that signals all the others to come join in the fun. When I was a boy I stumbled on a yellow jacket nest once and they swarmed me and I got stung a lot, so now I know why.

To this day I remember how it hurt to get stung all over.

If you've ever been stung by a wasp or yellow jacket, you know that it's totally different from getting poked with a pin—it burns, it's scary.

There's poison in the sting.

Paul says: "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Death in the Bible is never just physical. Death is a state. It's a condition.

It's a condition of being separated from the fellowship and goodness of God. The sting of death is that when you die, your life is judged by the law of God.

Every thought, word, deed, things no one else knows you have done, you hidden sins, your darkest motives, your cravings—everything is judged.

One of the ways the Bible describes it is that the books will be opened.

Everything about you has been written down.

That record of your life will be judged by the law of God.

The Bible also describes it in terms of the light a person has received.

If a person has never heard about the Bible or Jesus, will be judged by his conscience—the law of God written on the heart.

If you've known the Bible, you will be judged by God's law revealed there.

But everyone has sinned against the light they have received.

So death brings the sting of sin and the powerful condemnation of the law.

Most people don't ever think about the sting of death.

They don't think about their death period—they hold it at arm's length.

Imagine a plane load of people, calm, reading magazines, then an engine blows up and the plane starts to dive and everybody starts screaming.

But didn't they know they're going to die some day?

Even if the pilot recovers and lands the plane safely, every person in that plane is still destined to die.

I remember a number of years ago at the funeral of Woody Jacob's sister Pam,

her husband told a remarkable story. He and Pam were on an airplane,

when suddenly it began to dive, cabin filled with fog, and oxygen masks dropped.

All the passengers were screaming.

But when he looked over at Pam, she was completely calm.

She took his hand and said—I know Jesus and I’m ready to die.
In that moment, I was determined to have the faith in Christ that she had.

She got there because of her faith in Christ’s death and resurrection.
Why did Jesus groan aloud and sweat drops of blood before his crucifixion?

Was he scared of the nails? Was he scared of the pain?
Of course not. He was a strong man with a perfectly clean conscience.
If it was just a matter of physical pain he could have handled it.
Physically speaking, there have been many people who have suffered what
Jesus suffered—and worse. He was not the only person ever crucified.

He groaned was in agony because he was feeling the sting of death as he who
knew no sin was made sin for us. He was feeling the weight of the law.
That’s what happened in those three hours of darkness, the descent into hell.
And Jesus crying out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.”
That is the sting of death. That is the judgment we all face.

The resurrection is proof that your guilt has been paid for.

It’s a receipt for the sting of death.
If you walk out of a store and clerk stops you and says—You haven’t paid.
You pull the receipt out of the bag and say—Yes, I have. Look. Proof.
The resurrection is the receipt. It’s assurance that price is paid.
Jesus took our judgment so the sting of death is gone—the guilt and the shame—
and the fear.
So death can’t really hurt you, it can only make you better.

See, you don’t have to wait until death to experience the power of this certainty.

It frees you from fear now—so that you can live a happier life.
Are you troubled with guilt? Things you have done and left undone?
People you have wronged. Sins against God.
Any time you are troubled by guilt, can pull the receipt out of the bag.
He is risen. All of my sins have been paid for, payment has been accepted
My death will not sting. I can face God unafraid.

Third, Paul says that Christ’s resurrection guarantees . . .

MP#3 Spiritual Bodies

When a believer dies, his body is buried and his soul goes to heaven to be with the
Lord. But that’s not the way it will be forever.

God created us with bodies—and that is how we are going to live forever.

We are going to be like Jesus, with a resurrected body.

It will be a body different in wonderful ways from the bodies we have now.
A spiritual body, Paul calls it in this chapter.

Spiritual doesn't mean non-material. The resurrection body is physical.

But it's without weaknesses and limitations, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

How can we understand this mystery? Paul gives three illustrations.

He compares it to putting on new clothes. Taking off old, putting on new.

It's taking off all weakness and decay, all sinful desires,
and putting on power, purity, immortality.

Paul also compares this new body to sleeping and waking.

Emphasis is that one day our bodies will be awakened.

When wake up from a long sleep, refreshed, new day is dawning.

You get up and go out into a new world.

Paul's third illustration compares new body to the plant that comes from the seed.

A seed is buried, it dies in a sense—out of that comes a plant that is much more
glorious than the seed itself.

If you've ever planted a garden you know how amazingly different the dried brown
seeds are that you put in the dirt compared to the green plant with squash, beans.

But it's somehow the same genetic material.

That's just a little picture of how much greater our resurrection bodies

will be from the bodies we have now. These are just seeds of something great.

Jesus' resurrection is the guarantee.

This is such an amazing promise—hard to comprehend.

New, glorified bodies, animated and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Living and working in a new earth, perfectly restored.

All of us, sooner or later deal with the pain and decay of our bodies.

And we watch the bodies of people we love falling apart.

Hurts because we love them body and soul.

Some of you have held your mother's hands and thought—

these are the hands that fed me, these are the hands that felt forehead when I had
fever, these are the hands that spanked me when needed, waved goodbye to me
when I grew up and went away.

I love these hands. I don't want these hands to get old, weak, cold, and dead.

What a great hope it is to know one day we will not just get well, be made new.

All of our prayers for healing will be answered in amazing ways.

Whenever you doubt that you can look at Jesus' resurrection and know true.
But there is something deeper.

The resurrection of our bodies means that what we do with our bodies now matters.

Yes, our bodies turn to dust.

Yes the martyrs' bodies eaten by beasts and burned by flames.

But there is a connection between what we do with these bodies—
and the future bodies we will receive.

The more you use your mouth to bless—

the more beautiful your mouth and voice will be.

The more you use your mind to think on what is true, noble, right, pure, excellent—

the sharper your resurrected mind will be.

The more you use your eyes to look at what is really beautiful—

the sharper your sight will be.

The more you use your hands to perform the skills God has given you—

the stronger and more skilled your glorified hands will be.

The more you use your feet to go where he wants you to go—

the swifter your feet will be—you will walk on water as Jesus did.

The way I live with this body has a bearing on my resurrected body.

If you trust Jesus, you will be raised on the last day by the same resurrection
power that raised him.

But if you don't trust Jesus, you won't be raised by his resurrection power.

You will be summoned from the grave when God commands you to step forward
for judgment, and you will feel the sting of death when he says depart from me.

That's terrible. And there's no reason you have to suffer judgment.

Because Jesus suffered for you and he's alive. You can know him.

Where does he live? He's in heaven at the right hand of God.

And by his Holy Spirit he lives in you and is with you forever.