

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

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He is Risen Indeed

April 9, 2023

Sermon Text: 1 Cor 15:12-19

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 15:12-58

“Many times in our lives, we experience how much of an enemy the devil is to our souls. He is forever striving to prevent the gospel from having free course, and he will use every possible means to do so. This draws to our attention the fact that God has set the teaching of Scripture as the source of all our well-being, joy and happiness. For the devil would not bother to interfere with this teaching unless he knew that it

contained all that men need for salvation.

So, Satan raises up numerous enemies to declare war openly on the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only this; he also seeks to draw intruders into our ranks who will act as internal foes. This has been the case since time began, as we can see in the example which Paul describes [in the second chapter of his letter to the Galatians].

We know that everyone made threats against Paul; and we know how many struggles and difficulties he had undergone because of resistance from the heathen and the unbelieving, who withstood the preaching of the gospel as much as they possibly could.

But worse than this, he says that there were certain deceivers who had crept in behind their backs. The Greek word he uses suggests they did so by stealth, but we cannot adequately express it in one word in our language. He is saying that spies had infiltrated secretly amongst the believers with the sole intention of undermining the truth of the gospel.

Let us be sure to notice that these rogues *did not openly reject the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the contrary, they bore the name and title of Christians. And yet at the same time, they only wished to have some half-gospel, which would have been neither one thing nor the other, but a mixture according to their taste.*

Likewise today, there are many such people in the world who seek to design and construct a religion to suit themselves. They take some of God's pure truth and mix in lies and delusions. Notice that even at the time of Paul, there were such liberals. This is what Paul is warning us of here. We ought to be armed and equipped, ready for our

internal enemies; for they are seeking to confuse and corrupt the message of the gospel to such an extent that we will no longer know anything for sure and all will be confusion. We ought not to be surprised when this happens, for it is nothing new. God will test us nowadays [to see] who among us will be consistent in obedience to Him.

[John Calvin, Sermons on Galatians, Banner of Truth]

As it was among the Galatians, so it happened at Corinth. As we have already heard this morning, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is a central part of the gospel.

1Co 15:1-4 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, (2) and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:

that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

Joh 13:2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,

Remove the resurrection and you no longer have the good news of Christ. There would be no salvation. The devil knows this, so it was not long after Paul had been among them that the enemy used his agents to deny the resurrection.

He began by pilfering from the money meant for the poor. He *ended* by selling Christ for 30 coins. All that time before, the other disciples did not see him for what he was. So it is today and we must be wise to it.

Listen to Paul as he confronts this damnable teaching -

The Corinthians then had those among them who not only denied the resurrection of Christ, *they denied the possibility of any bodily resurrection. Of anyone.*

1Co 15:12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

This most likely had its source in some school of Greek philosophy which exalted spirit and detested the physical body. To them, being free of one's fleshly body was to be exalted to some higher plane of existence. Resurrection of the body, existing in a real, physical body in eternity would have been disgusting to them. You see this in other Scriptures such as when Paul preached in Athens:

What do the devil's evil agents look like? They look like sheep. And more deceptive yet, they evolve just as Judas did. Did Judas begin in the fullness of the evil he ended in? No. He was never a genuine disciple, but we are told that as the time of the crucifixion neared, Satan entered him.

Act 17:30-32 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, (31) because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” (32) *Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.”*

[**Warning:** This gnostic business is still with us among professing Christians today whose thinking about heaven is very vapory, ghostly, with people floating around in a spirit world where real bodies and a real heavens and earth does not exist].

So you had these false teachers there, as John Calvin said, creeping in among the believers. They would have claimed to be Christians themselves, insisting that acceptance of the doctrine of the resurrection was optional, or outright denying it.

Paul shows that it is not an option at all.

1Co 15:12-19 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

(13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

(14) And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

(15) We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

(16) For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.

(17) And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

(18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have

perished.

(19) If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Boom! Paul fires several powerful salvos right back at these heretics.

1. The gospel proclaims that Christ is risen from the dead. This is the message we believe. *How can anyone claim to be a Christian and part of the church and yet deny it?* And to the resurrection of Christ, there were many witnesses. Yet many, many people do just this today. Liberalism says the resurrection is a myth, for example. But you can't have your cake and eat it too. Christianity without a resurrected Christ is another religion – a false one.

2. If there is no such thing as the resurrection from the dead, then this means that no one is ever raised – including Christ.

3. And if Christ is not raised, then the whole business is vanity – emptiness. All preaching, all faith – it is a big sham, a fake. The whole business. Not just part of it, but all of it. Those who preach it are liars, claiming to be speaking for God when in fact they are not.

4. If Christ is not raised, then your faith in Him for salvation is an empty hope – we are all still dead in our sins.

5. And this means that all who have died trusting in Christ have perished forever, eternally lost to non-existence, or to hell.

6. We all are pathetic, pitiful fools if there is no resurrection.

7. The Christian religion, the gospel of Christ, is far more than just a temporal remedy for issues in this present life. In fact, the primary hope that we have in Christ is one which is now AND yet to come in its

fullness. Christ does not give us just a here and now life – He gives us eternal life. He gives us blessings now, but our main certain hope is the blessings to be realized in the future. In heaven. In the new earth. Our real life is up there, not here.

These things and more are only true if Christ is raised from the dead.

You see then what we must take away from this – *that either we confess a whole gospel or we have no gospel.* This is why Paul was so incited against the heretics in Galatia:

Gal 1:6-9 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— (7) not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (8) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to

you, let him be accursed. (9) As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

The Bible emphasizes this repeatedly –

Rom 4:22-25 That is why his [Abraham's] faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” (23) But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, (24) but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, (25) who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

No resurrection, no justification. No salvation. The resurrection shows that Jesus our Lord made full atonement for all of our sins. His work was finished.

Rom 8:33-34 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. (34) Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who

was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

1Pe 1:18-21 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. (20) He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you (21) who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

thus, He arose from the dead. There was no more death payment to pay. He accomplished on the cross what we could never accomplish in an eternity in hell.

Heb 9:11-12 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) (12) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

Dying *once*, He effected *eternal redemption*. Somehow that cup of God's wrath was poured fully and completely out upon Christ on that cross in that point of time. Somehow *eternity met Him in time, once for all*. I don't understand that, but it surely was something only God could do. It was as if WE had suffered an eternity in hell, *in Him*. HE suffered, not us – and yet His suffering was imputed to us? I suppose my words may not be precisely accurate. But this much

Understand? *The wages of sin is death*. On the cross, Christ took the wages due us upon Himself and died for those sins. Then He did something no human being could do – only the God-Man could. *He suffered the full and complete wrath of His Father poured out upon Him that was due us. But unlike us, He made full atonement, full satisfaction to the Father. And*

we do know – Christ died for us and effected a full and complete atonement for His elect.

And here is the point for this Easter morning – ***He is Risen!*** And because He is risen, we **KNOW our sins are fully paid for by Him**

Rom 6:8-10 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. (9) **We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.** (10) For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, then as Paul says – death still has dominion over Him, and over us.

Paul of course continues in this 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, demonstrating to them that –

1. Christ is RISEN, just as each of His people will be,
2. That just as in Adam all died, so all who are in Christ are

raised with Him and made alive.

And he goes on at length showing us how **all of creation demonstrates resurrection**, so clearly in fact that he calls those who deny the resurrection from the dead, *fools*.

- Seeds are dead, then come to life. And I suspect Paul would have pointed us to the cycles of the seasons which show us trees that appear dead in the “dead of winter” suddenly coming to life again in the spring.

And Paul goes on at length emphasizing that even in this present world *there are different kinds of bodies*. Fish. Animals. Man. Birds. Different kinds of beings, you see.

And he says that the same is in the heavens. There is the glory of the sun. Then there is the glory of the moon. And of the stars. Different.

Therefore, it is plain – **God who created all we see in this world and sky is very capable of creating, of raising up, a new humanity, incorruptible, bodies fit for eternity in the heavenly places.**

To deny this is foolishness and wicked unbelief. To deny the resurrection from the dead into a new incorruptible body is to insist that all we see, all we have, all we know is *this present life and world*. You can't have your cake and eat it too – either Christ is risen from the dead and we shall be raised in Him, or we are dead in our sins, there is nothing else, those who have already died are.....well....let's close with this.

God has given us the most perfect and complete evidence of this in Christ. The Apostles and many others had seen Him risen.

1Co 15:4-6 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (5) and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (6) Then he appeared to more than five hundred

brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

And what did they see? They saw One risen from the dead in a resurrection body -

Joh 20:19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Luk 24:50-51 And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. (51) While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

A Better Place?

I know one chief reason why people deny the resurrection of Christ. It is this – *for all of their talk about "a better place" which awaits a man after death, what they really mean is nothingness. That is*

what the sinner wants – nothingness.

Why? Because the sinner wants no God. No judgment. No hell. And if Christ rose from the dead, if there is a resurrection, *then that dream of nothingness vaporizes and becomes somethingness.*

You see, all who are in Christ have this certain hope of a glorious resurrection and eternal life with Christ in the New Creation.

But...

If Christ is raised, the wicked know there is another resurrection – their own. And it will go down like this:

Rev 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the

books, according to what they had done.

(13) And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. (14) Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

There is no part of the gospel which has not been attacked by the devil. At Corinth, it was the resurrection. At Galatia it was justification by faith alone. The gospel has been attacked many times in our own church here and it is being attacked constantly throughout the world today.

This is what we must learn. We ought to expect and be ready for these attacks, lest we be carried away by deceptions and duped into preaching and believing a false

gospel which cannot save and is no
gospel at all.

Christ is Risen, indeed.