

09/26/10

Believing in the Resurrection -- 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

- Have you ever “painted yourself into a corner”?...
 - in other words, you’ve done or said something without carefully considering all the ramifications ahead of time?...
 - of course we all have...we don’t always think things through, do we?...
 - sometimes the results are unfortunate...and maybe even a bit humorous...
- **pic #1 (balcony with no way to get to it)**...can you see any problem with the lower balcony? (Really nice... just no doorway...)
- **pic #2 (errant stairway)**...how exactly do you get up those stairs?...or back down?
- **pic #3 (2 urinals)**...some pictures don’t need an explanation, do they?...somebody just didn’t think that one through...
- **pic #4 (errant ramp)**...what do you think about this ramp design?... (Ramp goes right into the side of a stairwell...)
- **pic #5 (security camera facing back of sign)**...go ahead and commit a crime, because you’re not going to get caught on that camera...
- **pic #6 and #7 (2 sides of a bridge that don’t meet)**...By the way, every man in this room knows what to do with that problem...get the caulk gun, right?...and these guys in the second picture?...it doesn’t matter how long you stare at those blueprints...there’s no easy fix on this one...
- **pic #8 (errant stairway)**...here’s another stairway to...not sure...
- **pic #9 (pole in the middle of the train tracks)**...anyone see a problem here?...
- **pic #10 (faucet)**...the good news is, that is a beautiful granite counter top, and a great looking faucet...the bad news?...
- **pic #11 (bike path sign into pole)**...wouldn’t you like to have a conversation with the guy who painted this sign on the sidewalk?...dude, what were you thinking?...
- **pic #12 (doorway with no step)**...any problems here – a doorway over a radiator...no step, but they have conveniently left a chair...
- **pic #13 (bathroom in the kitchen)**...
- **pic #14 (escalator to nowhere)**...
- **pic #15 (escalator replaced by stairs...)**
- **pic #16 and #17 (TV in the wall)**...might say – what’s wrong with that – it’s a nice flat screen TV...yea, until you look at in the next room...like getting stuck in the back end of the horse costume...
- **pic #18 (steep handicapped ramp)**...
- **pic #19 (wheelchair sign pointing to stairs)**...
- **pic #20 (curb over manhole)** – that design is going to work really well until you need to get into that manhole (or out of it)
- **pic #21 (telephone pole in the middle of someone’s driveway)**...how would you like to come home from work and see that the telephone pole crew had installed a new one in your neighborhood that day?
- **pic #22 (shower head with electrical line tied around it)** – the sign says it all...
 - so, do you agree with the premise that people don’t always think things through very carefully...sometimes there are unintended consequences of our actions...
 - now, for many of us, we might also say – you know it’s fun to laugh at illustrations like that...but honestly...we could show some other pictures where we thought something, or said something, or did something...without thinking carefully about where that road leads...without applying the “then what” test...and where that road led wasn’t all that funny...

- with that thought in mind, let me invite you to open your Bible to 1 Cor. 15 this am...page 138 in the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- this year we're doing a study entitled **Taking the Next Step...with Joy.**
 - we're just working our way verse by verse through the book of 1 Corinthians...
- I need to tell you that next week we're going to be taking a break from this series and will actually be having three different special speakers with us, one in each of our three services...
- Here's why – this year our church has the privilege of hosting the annual conference for an organization called NANC – the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors...
 - that name comes from a word group in the NT...the words nouthetew, and nouthesis...
 - when you see that word in your English Bible, it is generally translated warn, or admonish, or counsel...
- here's a couple of examples...**Colossians 1:28 - We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.**
- **Romans 15:14 - And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.**
- it's a compound word...nous/tithimi (develop)...
 - that's what biblical admonition is all about...placing or putting God's Word in the mind/heart (not behaviorism)...and doing so in a way that results in lasting change for God's glory and our benefit...
 - so church isn't about simply coming and hearing facts and going away unchanged...
 - and being force fed some sort of behavioral rules or expectations...it's about establishing a personal relationship with God by trusting what Jesus Christ did on the cross for you and then learning what it means to change the fundamental affections of your heart...you begin to love the Lord your God with all your heart...
 - that, in turn, impacts the way you live every day in practical, obvious ways...
 - so we need to be admonished, counseled with the Word in the everyday areas of life...
 - notice also that Paul saw that as something that ought to be occurring as part of the body life of the church...not a small group of experts...
 - because you have the Holy Spirit of God, and the Word of God...you can, and should, admonish one another...
- so that becomes an approach to helping people face difficulties in their lives...where the Word of God is the standard and the care is given in the context of the local church...
- now if you're thinking carefully about what I'm saying and you know your Bible well, you might say – well, aren't you just talking about discipleship?...about helping all of us take our walk with Christ seriously, and learning practical ways to change and grow?...
 - yes, counseling is just a form of discipleship, but it addresses the question...what do we do around here when a person is caught in sin, or has a question for which they don't have a Bible answer?...[develop]...point – it's a subset of discipleship...
- for us, it is also an important part of outreach...[develop]...

- now, because God tends to bless churches and people who are trying to use His Word to be a blessing to people, there is a tremendous amount of interest in other churches developing similar ministries for their communities...
- and our church has always believed we should care about that...[develop the reason we travel, etc]...
- that belief also motivates us to be interested in participating in groups that are trying to serve and equip churches to reach their communities for Christ...
- that's what the NANC Conference is about...so next Monday-Wednesday, there will be 1000-1200 people here on our campus...
- NANC also has a board of directors, and that group will be meeting Friday night and Saturday before the conference...so that means we have access to those men for next Sunday, and we want to take advantage of it...
- **[develop with pics]** – John Street, Lance Quinn, David Powlison
- now, back to our study of 1 Corinthians...last week we started the last major section of this book...which is a marvelous and extended passage on the topic of the resurrection of Christ...
- and we saw that Paul explains to the Corinthians...there are four solid strands of evidence that should lead a person to believe that Christ is alive...
 - there's the testimony of the church, and the testimony of the Scripture, and the testimony of the eyewitnesses, and the testimony of Christ Himself...
 - and the overall point was – this isn't some fairy tale that God is asking people to believe with no evidence...
 1. How else could you explain the miraculous change that had occurred in the lives of so many people in this church?...
 2. And what else do you do with the fact that the resurrection was prophesied hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of years before it occurred?...
 - so when someone says, how could you believe in the resurrection of Christ?...the answer is...how could you not?...
 - you have to patently ignore the power of fulfilled prophecy...even up to Jesus' own teaching about how He would die and what would happen afterwards...and the fact that that's what happened...
 3. Then you have hundreds and hundreds of eyewitnesses...and Paul says – look, many of them are still alive...just go ask them...
 - and remember, the persecution of the church is beginning...people are paying a price for being followers of Christ...
 - why in the world would any person give his/life for something they knew was not really true?...it makes no sense...these eyewitnesses know what they saw, and there are hundreds and hundreds of them who are all saying exactly the same thing...
 4. Then look at Paul...the miraculous transformation in his life and the power of his ministry scream the fact that Jesus is alive...
- no you might say – OK, PV – I get it...then what's the problem?...
 - well, the problem was that some people in the Corinthian church were making a statement, or nursing a doubt...that they apparently had not thought through very carefully...
 - and frankly, their position made the people who designed the bridges and stairwells we saw in the introduction to look like geniuses...

- because some of these people were saying that there was no such thing as the resurrection of the body...anyone's body...and Paul says – have you thought about where that road leads?...seriously?...**read 1 Cor. 15:12-19...**
- we're talking this morning about...Believing in the Resurrection...
- and with the time we have left, let's think about **7 consequences of denying the resurrection and 7 blessings and benefits of believing it.**
- now, I realize you might say – well, that's going to be long...not necessarily, but the reason we're doing it this way is because Paul understood that the vast majority of the people to whom he was writing believed in the resurrection...
 - he gives these reasons from a negative perspective for the few people who were doubting or denying what God had said...
 - but it's very easy, and beneficial, and appropriate for us to turn these ideas around and look at them from the positive side for someone who has chosen to accept them as true...[repeat proposition...]

I. Not Even Christ has been Raised.

- **1 Corinthians 15:13 - But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;**
- now, there's probably a question in the back of many minds right now, and that is – what was their problem?...why in the world would there be anyone in the church who would deny the possibility of the resurrection of anybody's body?...that is a very important question...

A. The background of this issue.

- many of the people in Corinth were dualists...I'm not talking about the Corinthian church right now---I'm talking about their culture...
 - that meant they believed that everything spiritual was essentially good and everything physical was essentially bad...
 - (by the way, a lot of people who don't understand a biblical philosophy of music make that same mistake..as if anything that appeals to the body is all bad—how people like that order at a restaurant is a complete mystery to me)
 - so such persons believed that at death, their soul left their body and that was one of the great values of the afterlife...that they had left behind all things physical...
- that belief causes huge problems for a follower of Christ...
 - for one thing, how then could Jesus have taken on a literal body as the Scripture clearly teaches...
 - and how could there be a resurrection of a believer's body some day?...
- but what was going on here was – some people in the church were trying to be followers of Christ on one hand...and still be accepted by their culture's beliefs and values on the other...
 - and that does not mix...on purpose...
 - if you are going to be a follower of Christ, you are going to believe all sorts of things that don't make any sense to those around you who don't know the Lord...
 - but for a person who craves approval, that can be a very difficult position, for sure...
- but Paul is just trying to get them to think this through...if you don't believe there is a resurrection of any body in any sense...do you realize what that means?...then not even Christ could be raised...

B. The importance of continuing to emphasize core doctrinal beliefs today.

- I agree with Jay Adams when he said -- **Truths that the church does not treat systematically it has a tendency to lose (Jay Adams, Page xi, The Theology of Christian Counseling).**
- that is why it was so important for use last week to think through very carefully all the reasons in the first portion of this chapter for why we should believe in the resurrection...
- and I realize the church growth experts keep saying --- well, you can't have a growing church if you are going to emphasize solid biblical exposition and sound theological teaching...well, then explain the parking lot/foyer...
- I have never believed in trying to give people what they want...I believe in giving people what God says they need...

II. Our Preaching is in Vain.

- **1 Corinthians 15:14 - and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain...**

A. Our ministry of the Word would be empty and meaningless.

James 2:20 - But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

- if there's no resurrection, then the cornerstone and power of everything we believe is gone...
- everything we would have to say is empty, worthless...we're all wasting our time...
- of course, that's not what Paul believes...nor what he thinks the average person in this church believes...so we can turn it around, can't we...

B. But now our ministry of the Scriptures has power and efficacy.

- I mentioned to you last week that I had just returned from Spokane, WA...
- time didn't allow me to explain that trip, but here's what we were doing...
- if you are familiar with that part of the country, you know that it is very hard for the people who live there to find a church that believes and teaches the Word of God...
- if you think our community is unchurched (and since 65% of the people in this town won't be in churchy today—you'd be right), but that is nothing compared to a place like Spokane...
- but there is a church out there that really wants to impact its congregation, and its community with the truth of Scripture...
- and so they asked us if we would start sending teams of people there over a course of three years to provide training for them and other churches in that region of the country...and that's what we've been doing...
- now, if you said – who got all of that started?...the answer, humanly speaking, is this man...Earl Dannon...**[show pic of Earl]**...
- Earl is the counseling pastor at this church...and what is unique about Earl is that he's blind...but he's learned to find ways to overcome his handicap, and it is amazing the impact Earl has had on men, women, couples, families, and children...
- it is so obvious that people absolutely love Earl...
- well, what empowers Earl's ministry...what is it that fuels his passion and keeps him teaching and preaching the Word?...

- the answer...the fact that Jesus is alive...
- and therefore his ministry of the Word is the polar opposite of being empty...and there's a long line of changed lives to prove it...[could develop—is there evidence in the way you minister the Word that you're convinced...]

III. Your Faith is in Vain

1 Corinthians 15:14 - and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

1 Corinthians 15:17 - and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless...

- now Paul makes it really personal...”this is a package” is his point...
- now, let's be clear about this because this question comes up frequently in Intro to Faith...
 - is it possible for someone not to be absolutely convinced of everything in our church's doctrinal statement, and still be a Christian, or even a faithful member of this church...
 - what's the answer to that question?...sure, on certain things...
 - could develop – origin of the universe, end times issues, etc.
 - but that's not what we're talking about here – the resurrection is central and absolutely essential to all we believe...

A. Everything else you believe would be devoid of power.

- think about how significant it would be if you had to come to the conclusion that your faith, everything you believe, was empty...
- Pastor Green and I had a special treat when we were out in Spokane because our flight arrived pretty early on Friday morning...and the conference didn't start until 5:00...
- and they knew I liked to bike ride...so the fellow who picked us up had road bikes on the back of his car...
- and after we checked into the hotel, he took us to the Centennial Trail which runs along the Spokane River...
- in fact, Rob and I rode all the way into Idaho (of course Spokane is only 10 miles from the border...)
 - but the man who took us was named Ken, and he was telling us that he retired from a company where part of his pension plan was the promise to provide ongoing health insurance benefits...
 - then 2 months after he retired, the company went bankrupt...and that promise was vain...was empty...was of value or help to him...

- can you imagine if you had to come to that conclusion about your faith?...

B. But now you can act on your beliefs with confidence.

- just think about how many ways that's true...
- how about this one – because Jesus Christ is alive, you can go to Him in prayer knowing that it is a real experience with a living Savior...
- **Hebrews 4:14-16 - Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

- [develop current prayer requests and how the truth of the resurrection drives us to our knees...]...

- we could walk this out in thousands of ways...

- for example... your belief that God is up to something in your life...as opposed to events just being the product of random chance... **Philippians 1:6 - *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.***

- where does that kind of confidence come from?...[could develop what was occurring the book of Philippians at the time...]

IV. We are Found to be False Witnesses.

1 Corinthians 15:15 - Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

A. All of our witnessing efforts would have been deceptive.

- think about how much effort and resources this church pours into telling our community, and telling our world about Christ...

- wouldn't it be terrible if we turned out to be false witnesses?...

- [or the gas company whose line just recently ruptured...]

B. But now we can tell others about Christ with assurance in our hearts that what we are saying is true.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 - Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- [develop – what does your faithfulness in witnessing say about the sincerity of your belief in the resurrection?]...

V. You are Still in Your Sins.

1 Corinthians 15:17 - and if Christ has not been raised...you are still in your sins.

A. The greatest blessing of the gospel would have been removed.

- aren't those words incredible haunting...

- still in your sins...

- [develop the freedom that came when you trusted Christ...]

B. But now we can celebrate our freedom in Christ.

- we are not in our sins anymore...we are in Christ...

- Ephesians 2:4-6 - But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

- think about how delightful it is to not be living under the eternal penalty of sin, or the hopeless power of sin...and some day to look forward to even being delivered from the presence of sin...all because of the resurrection...

VI. Those Who Have Fallen Asleep Have Perished.

1 Corinthians 15:18 - Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 - But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

- [develop – men and women in this church family who have gone before us...]

VII. We of All Men are to be the Most Pitied

1 Corinthians 15:19 - If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

- [develop the opposite...]