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The Resurrection of Our Lord • 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 • April 5, 2015 The Occasion for Paul's Words

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The Occasion for Paul's Words

The first verse of the text begins with these words: "Now I would remind you, brothers." This formula indicates that Paul is responding to an issue which had been a part of his original instruction to them. In this case, the issue is the resurrection of the body. Apparently the subject of physical resurrection had become a cause for some confusion, consternation, and contention within the Corinthian church. It appears that some in the church not only denied the bodily resurrection of the saints, they also doubted the resurrection of Jesus (v. 12). No doubt this is due to the influence of the prevailing Greek understanding of the afterlife, which asserted that only shades continued beyond death and that the body was heretofore dispensed with. Paul's argument is not only that the resurrection of the body is a reality, but that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is fundamental to the gospel message and essential to our salvation.

Homiletical Development

Focus: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an indispensable component of the gospel and an essential basis of our salvation.

Function/Goal: The hearer values the impact of Christ's resurrection upon his/her salvation.

Suggested Outline

Easter is Essential!

Introduction: "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" We make this acclamation each year at Easter. But we may wonder about its significance. We may ask: "So what? What difference does that make? How is this story of an executed Galilean who came back from the dead important for us today?"

The Corinthian Christians of the first century had similar thoughts and questions. In fact, some of them regarded the message of the resurrection as dispensable. And so do people today. For example, the Muslims affirm that Jesus was a great prophet, but they deny that he rose from the dead. Rationalists regard the story of Jesus's resurrection as a fairy tale. Even some liberal churches teach that Jesus did not rise physically, but only spiritually, whatever that means. All of these people deny the significance of Jesus's resurrection.

But the fact is that the empty tomb and the living body of Jesus Christ do make a difference. The fact of the resurrection is important! In fact, it is essential to the faith

and hope that we hold as Christians. On this Easter Day, let us examine why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is vital to our faith and life.

The Apostle Paul affirms that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is of “first importance” (v. 3). It is essential and of highest primacy for the following reasons:

- I. Christ’s resurrection is an indispensable component of the gospel.
 - A. The Apostle Paul identifies the gospel as the message he preached to the Corinthians (v. 1).
 - B. This message is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day (vv. 3–4). The resurrection is part and parcel to the gospel.
 - C. This message is of “first importance,” that is, it is of primary significance and essential to our faith (v. 3).
- II. Christ’s resurrection fulfills God’s supreme plan and purpose revealed in the scriptures.
 - A. Christ’s death and resurrection were “in accordance with the scriptures,” that is, they fulfill the plan of God prophesied in the Old Testament (vv. 3–4).
 - B. The scriptures testify of God’s plan of redeeming sinful human beings and of restoring the fallen creation through the death and resurrection of the Messiah.
 - C. Christ’s death delivers us from sin and his resurrection gives victory over death, which is the result of sin. All this fulfills God’s plan of salvation.
- III. Christ’s resurrection is confirmed by the eyewitness of many people.
 - A. The appearances of Christ were not just hallucinations; they were witnessed by over five hundred people whose testimony could be confirmed when Paul was writing (vv. 5–6).
 - B. James, who was previously skeptical of Jesus’s claims to be the Messiah, became a devoted follower after the risen Christ appeared to him (v. 7).
 - C. Paul, who was previously antagonistic to Jesus’s claims to be the Messiah, became a zealous missionary after the risen Christ appeared to him (v. 8).
- IV. Christ’s resurrection is the basis on which we stand forgiven and saved.
 - A. Jesus’s victory over sin and death is the reason we can stand before the judgment of God forgiven and righteous (v. 1)
 - B. Jesus’s victory over sin and death is the means of our salvation from sin and death (v. 2).