

The Life Changing Hope of the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Pastor Guy Gray

This is NOT the Best of All Possible Worlds

"If for only this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people to be most pitied." So reads 1 Corinthians 15:19—the point being that there is indeed a hope that goes beyond this present life experience. The fact is, the Christian life makes absolutely no sense apart from the radical hope of the resurrection. This is a hope that is grounded in the truth of Christ's own resurrection on Easter Sunday. It starts there and unfolds into a living hope for each of us as we understand all it implies for our lives and our eternal destiny as believers in Christ (see 1 Peter 1:3). One of the most obvious lessons in all of this is that this current world is NOT the best of all possible worlds. There is a better world to come.

A Physical Life Beyond Your Wildest Dreams

Hope means having something to look forward to. I love this definition of hope. The message of 1 Corinthians 15 is that we have something amazing to look forward to after physical death. In fact, what we have to look forward to is so amazing that it makes this current life experience seem empty and dull by comparison. Indeed, the hope Paul speaks about is the hope of a new, imperishable, glorious, powerful, physical body through resurrection. Though this new body is described as "spiritual" that does not imply it is not also physical. "Spiritual" simply means that it is holy and without sin, as opposed to being touched and tarnished by sin as our lives are now in the physical yet "fallen" world in which we live.

You see it is a mistake to imagine that after death there is no physical dimension to existence. The idea that after death we will be disembodied spirits existing in some immaterial "netherworld" with God is not a Biblical idea. That idea came from Greek philosophy, not from the Bible and it isn't really very exciting. There just isn't much in that idea to "look forward to."

1 Corinthians 15 gives us a totally different and radical view of our life beyond this life. It is so radical that many people scoffed at it. How can that be, they asked? Paul shows them that their thinking is too limited. If God has created this absolutely amazing physical world we see all around us, can't we believe He is capable of creating another physical reality that is even more astounding—especially when you take sin and decay out of the equation!

Why Christ's Resurrection is "Everything"

Christ's resurrection is the key to understanding everything. For one thing, we learn clues as to what our resurrection bodies will be like as we get a glimpse of Jesus' resurrection body in the New Testament (also see Philippians 3:21.) More importantly, Christ's resurrection is shown to be more than an "ordinary" miracle! It was a miracle, but much more! It was also the actual beginning of the New Creation of God. In His resurrection Jesus is called the "first fruits" of this radical new reality into which we will also be raised (1 Corinthians 15:23.) This is why it was so wrong-headed for the Corinthians to deny the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. They just didn't get the full impact of Easter. Do we? Do we truly believe that Jesus conquered death AND that His resurrection actually began the "ultimate" miracle of starting a new and perfect creation? It is this new and perfect creation for which we long for and for which we have been redeemed. This is hope! This is truly something to look forward to!

Let This Hope Impact Your Life

The final verse in chapter 15 turns to practical application: *"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord,*

because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (15:58). Hope means having something to look forward to. Hope is also "an outlook about the future that impacts your attitude in the present." If we truly believe that this current world is NOT the best of all possible worlds, and if we believe that Christ is risen and will raise us up to live in the best of all possible worlds through the resurrection, it will impact the way we live in this present life. We will give ourselves to the work Christ. We will stand strong through hardship and disappointment. We will remember that what we do in this life will actually have an impact for eternity. This is also what it means to live in hope. May the Lord help us to be that kind of Christian community!

An Opportunity for Reflection

This week read through 1 Corinthians 35-58 each day. Spend time praying, meditating and journaling about this text. Allow the Lord to speak truth into your life.

Happening

Tonight: Sunday April 13th

Baptism Service 7:00pm @ RW

Baptism is an exciting and important step in the lives of believers. Come join us as people make this outward display of the inward change that has taken place in their hearts. If you are interested in Baptism or have questions about what Baptism is contact Adam at 699.2226 or adam@riverwest.org.

Thursday April 17th & April 24th Foundations: Christianity Throughout the World 7-8:30pm

This is the last session in our first series of Foundations. Come and hear this fascinating presentation on what it's like to be a Christian in other parts of the world. Presented by John Warton

Cover Photo: The power of the gospel is not just "that" God loved the world, but "how" he did so. 1 Corinthians 15 gives us the details, the "How" and "What" of God's love. It is more astounding and more powerful than we could ever imagine!

Saturday, April 20th

El Salvador Prayer Partners

10:30am between mornings services @ Fellowship Hall

Sign up this week to join in partnership through prayer with one of the team members going to El Salvador. For more information contact Gretchen @ 699.2226 or gretchen@riverwest.org

Saturday, April 26th-Saturday May 3rd,

El Salvador Mission Trip

Your support through prayer is appreciated as we send off 20 River West Volunteers on our 9th trip to Nuevo Renacer village through our partnership with Agros.