

Without the resurrection

- our preaching is empty
- our faith is empty
- our sins are not empty

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1 Corinthians 15:12-20 ¹² Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. ¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up-- if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶ For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. ²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

When I was vicaring for Pastor Jim Sandeen out in Denver Colorado, he took me camping up near Estes Park. Mrs Sandeen went for a walk while us men were going to get the fire going. Jim and I spent 45 minutes huffing and puffing and getting nowhere with that fire. Mrs Sandeen came back from the walk, looked at us, and handed us the air pump that we had used earlier on the air mattresses. A few minutes with that thing and the fire was roaring nicely. Without her we would probably still be blowing on that campfire.

Paul reminds us that without Christ's resurrection we would be huffing and puffing just as uselessly as Jim, and I were without that air pump. But since Christ is risen from the dead our faith is not empty, our preaching is not empty, and we are no longer in our sin.

Without the resurrection - our preaching is empty

Paul reminds us here of the foolishness of those who pretend to be wise and scholarly. They praise God and his word, but they scoff at the idea of the resurrection and other things they think to fanciful to be true.

Paul reminds us in our text that there is nothing wise about such people, although they think themselves very wise. Either Christ is risen from the dead and everything the bible teaches is truth including our resurrection, or Christ is not and everything the bible teaches is a lie. This applies not only to the resurrection but to all of the scripture.

We are always tempted to pick what we want and throw away what we don't like. We want heaven but we don't want hell. We want God to condemn those we think have done wrong, but we don't want anyone to say anything bad about us. We want to believe that God's word is true, but we also don't want to condemn those who teach what is contrary to this word.

When you order pizza for ten people you have to order ten pizzas because everyone wants their own toppings. Similarly, every so-called Christian wants to put their own toppings on God's word. Just as these preachers wanted to preach Jesus but deny the resurrection.

God's word is God's word. We either accept it fully or we reject it. As Paul reminds us in Romans 3, it is better to call every man a liar than to call God one. This is especially true about the resurrection, if there is no resurrection from the dead then there is no point in any of our preaching or in any of the teachings of the scripture.

Therefore, choose today:

Joshua asked the Israelites when they entered the promised land

Joshua 24:15 choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve

Elijah asked the people on the top of Mount Carmel

1 Kings 18:21 How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him;

So also, Paul asks us today, chose. If Jesus is risen from the dead, then you also will rise, and all that Christ has promised is yours. If Jesus is not risen, then there is no point in our preaching, and you may as well forget it and God's word. But Christ is risen.

Without the Resurrection it is not just our preaching that is empty but our faith as well.

The confirmation kids just finished their big year end final test. They had to list the differences between the Law and the Gospel. How many would you remember? One is that the Law has no power, but the gospel has power. It has power to transform our lives.

Romans 1:16 the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation

The power of the gospel is the resurrection. Without the resurrection that power is gone, our faith is empty. When Daniel was thrown in the pit with the lions, when the three men stood on the brink of the fire, when Stephen was being stoned, they triumphed by faith. Not a faith in a God who simply said do this and someday you will die and that will be it. It was faith in the God who is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was faith in the God who would die and rise again. It was faith in the God who had promised the resurrection. It was that promise of the resurrection which caused them to face death with confidence.

Hebrews 10:38-39 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

To be sure one can believe in Christ with a wavering and uncertain faith and still be confident of salvation. As the prophet declares:

Isaiah 42:3 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench

However, a shaking and wavering faith will find it difficult to face Goliath. It is the promise of the resurrection which gives us the confidence to lay aside the constant desires of this life and dedicate ourselves to Christ and his cross. Those who were burnt at the stake accomplished much for Christ but they did not do it by denying the resurrection.

Without the resurrection our faith would be an empty and useless thing, but because Jesus is risen from the dead, and because we know that we too will rise and join him in heaven, therefore we can as Christ says, "**deny ourselves pick up our crosses and follow him into death.**"

Finally, Paul reminds us that without the resurrection we would still be in our sins

This may seem to some the weakness and least important of Paul's arguments, but to Paul and Luther it is the most important thing. Because Jesus lives we know that our sins have been washed away.

We think this is a small and unimportant thing because we have so convinced ourselves that sin does not matter, and because we rarely feel guilty. We think we know what it is to feel guilty, but we do not. If we truly felt guilt for our sins, we would not so lightly dismiss the sacrament of confession, nor would we get so easily bored with the liturgy or the Lord's supper. If we truly felt the weight of our guilt, we would highly value all these things.

We are like spoiled rich kids, who have so much that they are quickly bored with everything and complain constantly. We have been so richly blessed with the preaching of the Gospel that we rarely worry about or consider our sins or feel the true weight of the condemnation of the law. This also is why it has been said that Catholics make the best Lutheran's. Having been brought up to fear the law and feel their guilt, they rejoice so much more in the preaching of the gospel and in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

This does not mean that we should stop preaching the gospel to our kids. But we should take a minute to appreciate the richness of God's grace that we have been given.

It is Christ's resurrection which assures that our sins are forgiven. By raising Christ from the dead God proclaimed to the whole world that the price of his death was acceptable and that everyone's sins are now forgiven.