

**RISE**  
**“The Centrality of the Resurrection”**  
**1 Corinthians 15:1-5**  
~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on February 4, 2018

**SERIES INTRODUCTION**

- Today we begin a new series through the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians. This chapter is all about the resurrection of Jesus and how this one truth changes our entire lives in very practical ways.
  - Our study of this chapter will take us right up to Easter. Week after week this chapter will build excitement in us over what Jesus’ resurrection means for us. I am praying that all of this will build up to the joyous moment of Easter Sunday.

**INTRODUCTION**

- **(SHOW SLIDE)** One of the most striking things about the early Christians is how free they were. Many of them seemed to live freely in areas of life where most of us are not free at all. Take the apostle Paul for instance.
  - Here was a man who, unlike so many of us, was not bound by guilt over all the things he had done wrong in his past. In Romans 8 he shouts that there is no condemnation.
  - Here was a man who, unlike so many of us, was not controlled by a need for approval from others like we so often are. You can hear how free he is in 1 Corinthians 4: ***“I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear.”***
  - Here was a man who, unlike so many of us, was free from worry and anxiety about money. He could say in Philippians 4, ***“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.”***
  - Here was a man who was so free from any fear about death. He was so free that later in this chapter he will laugh at death and mock it saying, ***“where O death is your victory? Where O death is your sting?”***
    - Where we are so often in bondage to things like guilt, approval, worry, and a fear of death, Paul lived with a sense of freedom.
- We see this freedom in the early Church as well. One of the major reasons for the explosive rise of Christianity was the way Christians responded to the many outbreaks of disease that ravaged the ancient world. Their response was so astounding that it attracted people to Christianity. People said, “I want what those Christians have.”
  - When a disease broke out people fled the cities, leaving the sick and dying behind. It was so bad that people would throw their infected family members into the street.
    - But not the Christians. They stayed in the cities. With complete selflessness they cared for the sick and dying and became infected themselves. How did these early Christians become so liberated

from a fear of death and so liberated from selfishness that they could cheerfully lay down their lives for others?

- How can we get such freedom? We all want this kind of life. But how do we get it? The message of our generation is that you need some principles to live by. And so you have a book outlining five principles to a worry free life. A magazine article gives tips to deal with personal failure. A seminar teaches you how to be free from needing your parent's approval.
  - And so when people investigate Christianity and look at the lives of these early Christians they come looking for the teachings, the tips, the advice, and the principles that will enable them to live a life of freedom.
    - Even when people become Christians they often approach the Christian life this way. They say, "Give us the practical tips and ideas." They read the Bible like a self-help book searching for God's tips on living a good life.
- Now it is not wrong to ask how God wants us to live. The Bible most certainly tells us how we should live. But as an approach this entirely wrong. This is why so many people misunderstand Christianity and why so many Christians lack freedom and power in their own lives.
  - You see, Christianity is not in the first place a set of self-help principles, or tips, or teachings to guide your life. It is, in the first place, about something that happened in history. It is a revolution that changed the story of history. It is only when a person embraces and lives their life in light of that story that they can live this life of freedom.
    - It is like the Japanese soldier Lt. Hiroo Onoda. He was stationed on an island in the Philippines in WWII. Despite the fact that the war ended in 1945 he kept fighting until 1974. They finally managed to get him to surrender by finding his old commanding officer who told him the war was over. He needed to hear the news and then live his life in light of it.
- In the same way, Paul does not begin 1 Corinthians 15 by showing us principles for how to face death with courage or how to conquer anxiety. No, in our verses today he begins by laying the foundation for this life of freedom.
  - If we want to know this life of freedom then Paul says we must do three things.

## WHAT CHRISTIANITY IS ALL ABOUT

- **(SHOW SLIDE) First, in order to live a life of freedom we must grasp what Christianity is all about. What we will see in this point is that (SHOW SLIDE) Christianity is about news of something that has happened before it is teachings about how to live.**
  - In verse 1 Paul says that he wants to remind these Corinthians of something. What does he want to remind them of? Look at verse 1.  
**READ 1 - *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you.***
    - That little phrase "the gospel I preached to you," tells you what Christianity is all about. Paul did not come preaching about tips

and teachings for how to live. He came to announce news. We've been talking about this over the past few weeks but let me try to say it in a different way.

- The word gospel means 'good news.' Christianity then is first of all about news. But what kind of news is it? The media sometimes divides news into two different types: hard news and soft news. Soft news includes things like human-interest stories and tips for consumers. Diet plans and car reviews are soft news. Who wore the best dress at the Grammys is soft news. Soft news, then, is news that you can take or leave.
  - Hard news on the other hand deals with serious topics or events that affect life. Some hard news is so big that it affects everything.
    - Think of these headlines: "JFK assassinated," or, "Hijacked jets hit twin towers."
- So Christianity is first of all hard news. It is an announcement of something huge that has happened in history that affects everyone of us.
  - But there is more. It is not just news. It is *good* news. It is gospel. There is some news that is so good that it causes people burst forth in response. It's why new parents fill their Instagram or Facebook with endless pictures of their new baby. It's why people broke out into huge celebration when the news arrived that WWII had ended.
    - In those moments, people don't burst forth in joy because they have learned some self-help tips. They burst forth in joy because something incredible has happened. The news is so wonderful they cannot contain themselves.
- Paul wants to remind the Corinthians, and us, that Christianity is first of all about the good news of something that has happened in history. All of this becomes even clearer when Paul says that he "preached" good news to Corinthians. This word is carefully chosen. We think of a preacher as someone like me who gives sermons. But this was a normal word taken from the culture of Paul's day.
  - One way it has come down to us is through running a marathon, which is 26.2 miles. Do you know where we get the idea of a marathon? It comes from a legend that occurred when the powerful Persian army attacked Greece at the city of Marathon. The smaller Greek army beat the Persians. When the Greeks won they sent a preacher, a messenger, a herald, a good newser back to Athens. The legend says they sent a man named Philippides. He ran 25 miles from Marathon back to Athens.
    - The people in Athens were anxiously awaiting the news of the battle. Now understand this: Philippides did not come to deliver soft news. He didn't run into town and say, "I've run all this way to tell you who wore their armour best during the battle." No, a preacher's job was to deliver hard news. And so the legend of Philippides says he ran the 25 miles back to Athens, yelled to everyone of the Greek victory, and then promptly died of exhaustion. And so when the modern Olympics began they formed this race after the legend of the preacher named Philippides.

- So put all of this together. Christianity is not first of all about principles of living. It begins with news. It is this news that is of “first importance.” Christianity is first of all, an announcement of news, that a battle has been won on your behalf and that you are free. It is news before it is teaching.
  - It is getting this order wrong that is at the root of so many of your problems. People will often say, *“I tried Christianity for awhile but it just didn’t work for me.”* The reason it did not work is because they never understood that Christianity is first of all news not teaching.
    - In the same way the reason why we as Christians are not living this life of freedom is because like the Corinthians we have forgotten or are not properly applying the news. We need to be reminded of it.
- To paraphrase Tim Keller, whom I have borrowed some thoughts from for this message, if you are not conscious that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the most wonderful, thrilling, and exciting news you have ever heard in your life then you have not understood it.
  - What was it that enabled those early Christians to laugh in the face of death, to be free from worry, guilt, and needing approval? What enabled them to face the lions with cheerful hearts? What enabled them to risk death in caring for the infected sick and dying?
    - It was not some self-help book that gave five tips on the psychology of being selfless. It was news that they had heard that transformed everything.
- So the first thing we must do if we want to enjoy this life of freedom is to grasp what Christianity is all about.
  - OK, we’ve said Christianity is all about good news. But what is this good news?

## **WE MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT THE GOOD NEWS IS**

- That moves us to the second thing that Paul says. **(SHOW SLIDE) In order to live a life of freedom we must understand what the good news is.** So what happened in history that is such good news?
  - Paul, the herald, the newscaster, defines what happened in verses 3-5. ***READ 3-5 - For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.***
- **(SHOW SLIDE) What is the good news? It is about what happened with God’s Messiah.** Notice that he does not just say, *“Jesus died for our sins.”* He says, *“Christ died for our sins.”* “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name. “Christ” means Messiah or Anointed One. In the Old Testament God promised that he would send his Messiah into the world to destroy evil, rescue his people, set up his kingdom, and renew all things. That is why Paul keeps saying that all of this “according to the scriptures.”

- Do you remember what the angel announced to the shepherds? *“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”*
  - So this good news that brings freedom has everything to do with Jesus.
- **(SHOW SLIDE) Secondly, it is about what happened in the death of God’s Messiah.**
  - **READ 3** - *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins.* The heart of the gospel is about Jesus’ death. But why did he die? He died for our sins. Sin is our greatest problem. We have all rebelled against our Creator in countless ways. As a result we all stand under his wrath and judgment.
    - But here is why Christianity is such good news. He died *for* our sins. That is to say, he died on behalf of, or in the place of, us. This language is one of substitution. At the cross Jesus paid the penalty that we owe. He took our sins upon himself. He faced the wrath of God so that we don’t have to. He was punished in our place.
  - This is the oldest and most deeply moving storyline there is – one person sacrificially substituting himself so others can live. We love this theme in our books and movies.
    - This gets to something deep in us. But all of these stories are just a faint echo of the gospel story. Christianity is the only religion that has this kind of news in it. At its heart, it is the substitution of God’s Son for us.
  - So this good news is about what happened with God’s Messiah. Specifically, it is about what happened in the death of God’s Messiah. And in the third and final place **(SHOW SLIDE) it is about what happened in the resurrection of God’s Messiah.** **READ 4** - *that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.*
    - Jesus was dead. Jesus was buried. But the most amazing news of all is that on the third day he rose triumphantly from the grave.
      - This chapter will go on to show how the resurrected Jesus will one day come back to destroy evil, to raise his people from the dead, to give them resurrection bodies, and bring them into a world where there is no more death or crying or pain. What good news!

## **WE MUST SHAPE OUR WHOLE LIVES AROUND THE GOOD NEWS**

- We need to say one more thing. Having told us what Christianity is all about, and enabled us to understand the good news, Paul now says that **(SHOW SLIDE) in order to live a life of freedom we must shape our whole lives around the good news.**
  - Look at how Paul speaks to the Corinthians in verse 1-2. **READ 1-2** - *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

- In verse 2 Paul uses the word “saved.” To be saved means to be set free. Paul says that it is by this gospel, by this good news that we are saved – freed from the past, being set free in the present, and by this gospel we will one day know complete freedom. But Paul is clear that only those who shape their whole lives around this good news will experience freedom. So what does it mean to shape your whole life around this?
  - First of all that you must receive this good news for yourself. Notice in verse 1 that the Corinthians had received this gospel. If you reject this good news, then you are not set free. Like Lt. Hiro Onada – still fighting a war that is over. So this is a call to everyone to receive it. Turn back to God and place your trust in Jesus as the one who can set you free from sin.
    - Second, you must take your stand on it. We see here then that the gospel message is not just something that is only for non-Christians and once you become a Christian you leave it behind. No. Who is Paul writing to? The church in Corinth. He is writing to Christians and says he needs to remind them of the gospel. And now he says after you receive it you must take your stand on it. You build your whole life on it. What God has done begins to shape your identity, the way you live, the way you talk, the way you use your money, your sexuality, and your time.
      - Third, you must hold fast to it. To not hold onto this news means that you never really believed it in the first place. It was all “vain” for you. Once again, we see here that this good news is not just a message that non-Christians need to hear. It is also for Christians. It is the power that enables us to live. We are to take our stand on it. We are to hold fast to it. It is to be of first importance in our lives. How do we do that? Let’s get practical now and connect the gospel to the issues we have been talking about.
- Take guilt for instance. How do you deal with the guilt you feel over things you have done in the past? Most of us try to avoid it by rationalizing it or by not thinking about it or we try doing lots of good things to make up for it. In all of this though we cannot escape the prison of our own guilt.
  - The resurrection is God’s receipt to you that he accepted Jesus’ payment of your debt. If you are walking out of Walmart and a security guard chases you down and accuses you of stealing, what do you do? You pull out your receipt. **“Here is the proof. Leave me alone for I am not guilty.”** Jesus resurrection proves that your debt is utterly paid by Jesus.
    - So what you need is not tips or teaching on how to manage guilt. What you need is news that says your guilt has been taken away and that is the news Jesus brings.
- Or take your need for approval from others. What liberates you from this is the news that because of what Jesus has done you are loved by God and adopted into his family.

- That need for approval is met at the deepest level because the only one whose opinion really matters has said to you, ***“Because of what Jesus did, you are my child. I will never leave you nor forsake you.”***
- Or take your worry and anxieties in life. How do you deal with those?
  - Jesus is alive. I serve a risen Saviour who is with me and for me. ***“Because he lives I can face tomorrow. Because he lives all fear is gone.”***
- Or take death. We will all face it. Are you prepared for that? What was it that made those early Christians able to laugh in the face of death? It was the fact that Jesus conquered death. Paul is going to go on in this chapter to say that since Jesus was raised, God will also raise all those who love Jesus. He is going to speak about the glorious resurrection bodies we will receive.
  - This is not pie in the sky dreams. Jesus actually rose. It is news. It happened. Because he rose we also will rise. And so the Christian can laugh in the face of death. Those early Christians were free to serve others at the cost of their own lives because they knew that God will give them a resurrection body. The news of Jesus’ resurrection had so liberated them that they could lay down their lives for others.
    - Have you received the gospel? Are you connecting it to every area of your life? Receive it. Stand on it. Hold fast to it.