

What Good is Resurrection Now?
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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. 1 Cor. 15:58

I visited Meijers yesterday and looked through their selection of Easter cards. I was saddened when I discovered there were no Easter cards that even mentioned the resurrection, even in the “Religious” section. Jesus would be sad looking over the card section at Meijers or Hallmark. But I think He would also be sad if he walked through most churches today and saw how little we even talk about resurrection, much less understand it. It’s gone from a central truth which was celebrated daily in the early church to something that gets honorable mention at funeral services and Easter services. Have we lost sight of the power of the resurrection in our daily lives? What’s it good for? Our scripture today reminds us that

**Resurrection is not just a truth to comfort us in death;
it’s a truth to empower and give us hope as we face life.**

Notice how Paul ends the greatest chapter in the Bible on the resurrection: In essence he says, “In light of the truth of the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead that is to come at the end of the age, get on with your work that Christ has given you to do right here in Rockford and Grand Rapids and Cedar Springs and Belmont and Gowen and Cannonsburg..., because you know that in the Lord your work and your life won’t be wasted.” Paul applies the truth of the resurrection to hope for everyday life here on planet earth.

I. THE RECIPIENTS OF HOPE

Therefore - in light of all that has come before concerning the reality of Christ's bodily resurrection and his triumph over sin and the law, and the certainty of our bodily resurrection....

My dear brethren - It could be translated “favorite.” Does that strike you as a bit odd in light of all the problems Paul had confronted the Corinthians about? Their bad theology had resulted in bad behaviors. Some did not even believe in the resurrection. They didn't like Paul, but Paul loved them. They were dear to him, favored children. Listen to how Eugene Peterson translates 1 Cor. 4:14-16: *I'm not writing all this as a neighborhood scold just to make you feel rotten. I'm writing as a father to you, my children. I love you and want you to grow up well, not spoiled. There are a lot of people around who can't wait to tell you what you've done wrong, but there aren't many fathers willing to take the time and effort to help you grow up. It was as Jesus helped me proclaim God's Message to you that I became your father.* Like a good father, he shows them the road to resurrection hope. Listen to these truths which come from our loving Father in heaven, in light of your own story; this week, this month, this year. The Lord wants to apply resurrection hope as a salve to your broken life because he wants you to keep on going. He’s got more for you to do.

II. THE POSTURE AND BEHAVIOR THAT LEADS TO HOPE

1. *Stand firm.* This is a word whose root means 'to sit,' with firm conviction. Paul uses the same word in Col. 1:23, “*continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard.*” Hold your gospel ground.
2. *Let nothing move you.* Don't budge. Be steady and unshaken, firmly persistent. Don't be moved from this resurrection gospel. People may try to persuade you that Jesus didn't have a real body when he died

and that he wasn't really resurrected, that someone stole the body, and on and on; but Paul says, don't move away from this firm conviction. Tom Wright in his book, "*The Original Jesus*," reminds us that the most convincing proof that Jesus was who he claimed to be and that he did in fact rise from the dead in a glorified resurrection body, was the fact that all the early disciples gave their lives for him. The simple fact that the early church not only survived and thrived but gave their lives is ample evidence that Jesus was no failed messiah like many before and after him. Paul's argument in this chapter includes the legal proof required in a Jewish court, the testimony of 2 witnesses. But wait, there's more! In fact there were hundreds of witnesses! Read 1 Cor. 15:4-8, and notice the use of the word "*appeared*." Notice also in Acts 1, that one of the requirements to be an apostle was to have '*seen*' the risen Lord. The apostle John, in his first epistle begins his letter with the fact that the apostles had "*heard, seen, looked at and touched Jesus*."

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

The proof of the resurrection wasn't the empty tomb, it was the appearance of Jesus in a resurrected body after he died. And even then Thomas needed a week to consider it. Why? No Jew had ever conceived of a resurrection involving only one person in a resurrection body before the end of the age. Resurrection was something that was going to happen to all the dead, all at the same time at the end of the age when the Messiah came back to establish his Kingdom. The argument that the disciples stole the body to fake a resurrection was preposterous! The disciples couldn't even conceive of such a thing ever happening, so why would they even attempt such a stunt? Hold your ground. Don't budge from this truth. That's our posture. Now he gives the behavior.

3. *Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.* This is from two words: *always*, (at all times and seasons, no matter the circumstances); and '*abound*.' Give it all you've got no matter what the circumstances are. Give yourselves fully to what? "*To the work of the Lord*." In the context, this '*work*' is anything that is in the direct interest of the gospel. We're busy with lots of things, but it's easy to get sidetracked from living and speaking the truth of the resurrection-centered gospel. What kind of work did the Lord come to do? Luke tells us in Luke 19 that Jesus "*came to seek and to save the lost*." That's the Lord's work and our work. What does the right posture and behavior lead to? Hope. Hope, for when? Now. Now **and** at the end of the age, but Paul's emphasis is on now. The Resurrection is good for right now. It's our hope now and for the future that keeps 'on mission' when we want to quit. It's what we need to hear and believe when we're exhausted.

II. THE BELIEF THAT SUSTAINS OUR HOPE

We know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. This word means, "*beating of the breast with grief and sorrow; intense labor united with trouble and toil*." Paul reminds us: It is intense mental, emotional and physical labor united with trouble and toil. I've grieved over tragic situations in the lives of church families. I've answered the phone after midnight trying to talk a person off the ledge. I've wanted to quit more times than I can count. And Paul tells me and you that our *intense labor united with trouble and toil* will not be in vain. Christ's own triumph over death guarantees that every act of love is valued, every deed done in Christ and by the Spirit is valued, every work of true creativity in preaching and living the gospel is precious to God, every justice done is noticed, every time peace is made and fractured relationships are healed, God smiles; all of these are valued by God and serve as signposts

pointing backwards and forwards to the truth of the resurrection. Not only does God give us hope, he sustains our hope.

Where is your hope coming from? Your 401K? The booming economy? The bright job market? Your good health? The upcoming Presidential election? Thoughts of a summer vacation? A new speed boat? The new world for which we long is a gift given to us in the person of the resurrected Christ. The resurrection means that the Kingdom of God is here. The celebration of the resurrection of Jesus is the greatest counter-cultural event in the history of the world, because it says that we don't put our hopes in this world system, its government, its economics, its pleasures, or its promises. The disciples' hope didn't rest in the defeat of Rome. Our hope doesn't rest in the American Dream. **To see Jesus' resurrection as the source of every joy and blessing remains laughable to most people in the world, but it's our greatest source of joy.**

What good is the resurrection to you and what difference is it making in your life today? The answer is up to you. If you don't believe it, it's not worth anything to you. But God wants it to bring you new hope. If you've never responded by faith to God's offer of life in Jesus Christ, today is your day. Resurrection could be so good for you.

If you're a follower of Christ and are ready to give up, resurrection hope is for you. The most powerful witness we can give to the truth of the resurrection is to stay the course and finish the Lord's work. Your "labor in the Lord" may look like a big fat zero to you. It may not look like it is of any value to God, but God is the great artist who can take a pile of ashes and make something beautiful, infusing hope just when we think things are the most hopeless. As we reflect on these resurrection reminders from Paul I'd like for you to view an artist's rendering of God's work of creation, from the garden of Eden to the glory of the resurrection. This is called Sand Painting. As you watch this artist make new things out of old things, just say, "Lord, I'm in need of resurrection hope today. I want to live in the power of your resurrection, right now."

If you are reading this message my prayer for you is that the resurrection hope of Jesus Christ would be yours today and on that day "when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord." Please contact us at www.bellavistachurch.org if you would like to speak to someone about your spiritual journey.

May God bless you!