

The Gospel According to the Scriptures
Part 3: How that Christ Rose Again
I Corinthians 15:3-22
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction:

- A. Today I'll be delivering the final message of a 3 part series on "The Gospel According to the Scriptures." Those of you who have heard either of the first 2 messages have heard in detail how the Gospel that Paul preached, (God's gospel, the gospel according to the scriptures) reveals not merely the historical circumstances of His death and burial, but most notably the significance of what was accomplished thereby. And that will be our focus once again today as we examine the significance to believers of the resurrection of Christ.
- B. And as with the previous 2 messages, today you will hear again a unifying theme of this series – a truth that is integral to a right understanding of the gospel of God's grace. And that vital truth is this – that in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ – in all that He did – He was not acting on behalf of Himself, but as a Substitute for a people, acting for them as their Representative and Surety.

II. Primary Text for this series: I Corinthians 15:3-4:

Let's look again at the portion of I Corinthians 15 which prompted this series – verses 3 and 4. Here, Paul is describing the gospel which he had preached to the Corinthians. And in verse 3, he wrote, "*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*" As before, note again my emphasis on the word "how" in verse 3 and the phrase "according to the scriptures," found in both verses 3 and 4, reminding us that the Gospel we're commanded to believe goes far beyond a mere concurrence with the historical facts of His death, burial, and miraculous resurrection.

And as I pointed out with regards to Christ's death and burial, likewise, the significance of His resurrection is inseparable from the significance of His death and burial. But in today's session, we will focus on the importance of this aspect of the Gospel – the truth and significance of Christ's resurrection to believers, in the context of the overall Gospel message. Just as Christ died and was buried according to the Scriptures, He likewise rose again according to the scriptures.

III. How that Christ Rose Again according to the Old Testament scriptures: As with Christ's death and burial, His resurrection was also prophesied and typified in the very Old Testament scriptures available at the time of Paul's writing.

A. Prophecies: As an example, you may recall from the previous message, our consideration of Psalm 16:10 as an Old Testament prophecy concerning His burial. But that passage also prophesies of His resurrection as it sets forth how He would not be left in the grave and would not see corruption. When Peter quoted this very passage in his sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, he confirmed in verse 31 how these words spoke of the resurrection of Christ. Suffice it to say, that through a study of this and other Old Testament passages, it's indisputable that the future resurrection of the promised Messiah was both foretold and typified. If you'd like to study that further on your own I direct you to a few scriptures, among many, that are most often cited as prophecies of the resurrection include not only Psalm 16:10, but passages such as Isaiah 26:19 and Hosea 6:2.

B. Types: And as with His death and His burial, there are likewise many types of Christ's resurrection set forth in the Old Testament scriptures. Among these we have the deliverance in Isaac when Abraham was offering him up as commanded by God on the altar. There is the burning bush which Moses saw that burned but was not consumed. We have the story of how Aaron's dry rod budded and blossomed. And some of these types picture not only the reality of Christ's resurrection but that it would take place on the 3rd day. For example, Isaac's deliverance took place on the 3rd day from the time Abraham had the order to sacrifice Isaac and so looked upon him as a dead man. And most clearly, we have the type I mentioned in the previous message of Jonah being delivered from the whale's belly when he had been in it for 3 days – this type being confirmed by the words of our Lord Himself in Matthew 12.

IV. The Significance of His Resurrection:

A. Now let us consider the blessings or effects of His resurrection to those to whom this Gospel is Revealed – those called in Luke 20:36, not only the children of God, but “...*the children of the resurrection.*” The significance and power of His resurrection to believers is indeed great. As we read in Philippians 3:9-10a, “*And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: ¹⁰That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection,...*”

1. Acts 17:30-31: With that, let's begin with the passage that I almost feel compelled to review whenever we contemplate the significance of His resurrection. I'm referring to Paul's famous sermon on Mars Hill as recorded for us in Acts 17. And here we see how the resurrection of Christ is foundational to a believer's assurance. At the end of Paul's sermon in verse 30 we read, "***And the times of this ignorance God winked at;*** <referring to the fact that God had overlooked these Gentiles up until now, not having provided for them prophets and teachers as He had the Jews so as to instruct them. But Paul goes on to say > ***but now <God> commandeth all men every where to repent:***" And then in verse 31, Paul explains why it is imperative that we repent as he continues saying, "***Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.***" He says it's imperative that we repent because God has appointed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness. How righteous do we have to be? We must be as righteous as that Person whom God ordained and raised from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, the great issue that determines what will be declared concerning you at the Judgment is this: DO YOU HAVE A RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT ANSWERS THE DEMANDS OF GOD'S HOLY LAW AND JUSTICE? Now this is important for this verse clearly sets forth God's standard of judgment. And it's His resurrection that confirms this for us – it is a proof that God was satisfied, showing that the righteousness He established by His obedience unto death got the job done. Just as sin demands death, righteousness demands life (Rom. 5:21). And His coming out of the grave shows that it is His righteousness, the merit of His accomplishment, which one must possess to inherit heaven's glory. Now how does happen? By the same way that Christ came to possess the sins of those for whom He lived and died so that He might bear the just penalty due unto them – by God's imputation or charging all of the demerit (the sins) of the objects of His everlasting love unto Him. So likewise, all of His merit, His righteousness, is imputed or charged to their account – to these objects of His mercy and grace.

2. Secondly, as we consider the blessings or effects of His resurrection, let's consider what followed as a consequence of His resurrection from the dead. He ascended in His exaltation to the right hand of the Father in heaven where we are told in Hebrews 7:25 that He "***...ever liveth to make intercession for...***" those He saves. As we saw in the first message of this series, a sinner's reconciliation before God and all the other blessings of grace are by the death of Christ. Yet it is because He arose (because He lives) that all whom He represented experience the enjoyment of these things in each successive generation. It is His life to which the whole of salvation as we experience it is attributed as we read in Romans 5:10, "***For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.***"

The same power that raised Him from the dead raises a spiritually dead sinner in the new birth so that they will come to know Him and the power of His resurrection. And thereby they might worship Him aright and bask in the certain assurance of salvation by grace – meaning every condition or requirement for the salvation of these “children of the resurrection” was fulfilled by the finished work Christ, their Substitute, in His obedience unto death on the cross on their behalf.

3. Thirdly, let’s consider Romans 4:25 that speaks of Christ as He “***Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.***” Some, including yours truly, have indicated that the “for our justification” would be better understood if it was read that He was raised again “because of our justification.” I’m not 100% sure about that as a literal translation, but I do believe that such a reading of it does accurately convey the sense of what God, through Paul, is teaching here. We know that Christ's resurrection did not procure the justification of His people, that was done by his obedience and death as the scripture is clear that we are justified by His blood. But His resurrection does testify of the truth of justification to His people that it might fully appear unto them that their sin debt was paid in full and that an everlasting righteousness was brought in. His resurrection tells us God was satisfied! And Christ as Mediator ever lives to see to it that the effects of His imputed righteousness (or their justification) are realized. And this includes the gift of spiritual life (regeneration and conversion) that shall take place for all His these “children of the resurrection” who will be birthed without fail. So in that sense, He was raised for “our justification” – that we might behold it in the person and work of Christ.
4. And so fourthly, regeneration (or the new birth) itself is another effect or blessing of the resurrection.
 - (a) Just as Ephesians 2 teaches us that the elect of God were all quickened (or made alive) with Him so as to be raised together in the Person of our Representative and Substitute, likewise, we see in from scripture that the elect are also quickened (or made alive) in regeneration by virtue of His resurrection. For example, the words of I Peter 1, verses 3 and 4 teach this as it reads, “***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,***⁴***To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,***”
 - (b) In John 14:19, Christ was speaking to His disciples of His forthcoming death and subsequent resurrection when He said, “***Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.***” We see here that their security and assurance (their lively hope) is not in their view of Christ, but in Christ Himself!

5. And then lastly, one of the fruit and effects of Christ's resurrection is the resurrection of the saints at the last day – a resurrection assured by His having arose. Christ's resurrection is like the earnest money – a pledge (and being from God, one that cannot be broken). It gives assurance of the future bodily resurrection of all of these “children of the resurrection.” And we see this clearly in the very chapter that spawned this series, chapter 15 of I Corinthians. So today I'd like for us to consider beyond verses 3 and 4 since this chapter's major focus is on the subject of the resurrection.

B. I Corinthians 15:12-22: Let's skip down to verse 12 and begin our reading there and I'll comment as we go along.

1. Verse 12: “***Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead***” From these words it is clear that that were some within the Corinthian church who denied the future promised resurrection of believers. And so Paul begins a beautiful and indisputable chain of reasoning on this foundational truth of the Gospel as he continues saying in verse 13...

2. Verse 13: ¹³***But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen***: Notice God's word doesn't say, “...if...then perhaps is Christ not risen.” God's inspired word here states it as a fact! Here Paul begins by showing that if they insisted in believing there would be no future resurrection from the dead for those for whom He died and arose, then it must follow that by virtue of the inseparable union between Christ and those He represented, that simple reasoning would force them to conclude that Christ had not risen – a conclusion they knew to be false. We skipped over verses 5-8, but these preceding words would have reminded the Corinthians of a truth of which they were well assured and was not even being questioned – that Christ did in fact rise from the grave. He mentions how Christ was seen after the resurrection by Cephas (or Peter), all of the apostles and over 500 hundred other brethren – most of whom remained alive at the time Paul was writing this. So that fact was not being contested, just as it isn't contested among so-called “Christianity” in our day.

But Paul immediately confronts their heresy by showing how if it were true that there was no life after death for those for whom Christ died and rose again, then one must logically deny that Christ Himself, as the Head of the body, had risen. Christ and those He represented are inseparable in that the victory He gained over the grave was won as a Representative for and on behalf of His sheep. So if one concludes that Christ did indeed arise from the dead, it would defy all logic to believe that even one of those for whom He died and for whom He arose would not also arise from the dead. You see, Christ is not only the pattern and pledge of a future resurrection, but He also effectively is the sole meritorious cause of the resurrection of the dead – both unto spiritual life as well as their resurrection unto heaven's glory which He is more directly speaking to in this context.

3. Verses 14-19: And so in verse 14, he begins to set forth the undeniable implications of there being no resurrection, beginning with a “for the sake of argument” type denial of what they knew to be true – a hypothetical denial that Christ Himself had risen.

In verse 14 he continues saying...¹⁴*And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* ¹⁵*Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.* ¹⁶*For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:* ¹⁷*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.* ¹⁸*Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.* ¹⁹*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

4. Verses 20-22: Now as we reach verse 20, Paul moves from showing the implications of their false notions to declaring the truth as He says, “²⁰*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.* ²¹*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.* ²²*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Now as sure as all men experience both a physical and a spiritual or moral death (such as we all begin our life on earth – as spiritually dead sinners) due to Adam as the federal head and representative of all the human race, then see that with the same certainty – that without fail, all who are in Christ shall be made alive – both spiritually and eternally raised with Him to heaven’s glory.

V. Summary:

- A. Consider that if I come into this world a sinner as the scriptures declare, involved in sin, and endure the consequences of Adam’s demerit, Adam’s sin, (including a physical death to die) all by reason of my being born of the race of Adam, then likewise if I am born of the seed of the Lord Jesus Christ, I must be included in His merit, His wrought-out righteousness. So the natural question is: What experiential evidence do I have of my relationship to each of these two God ordained representatives?
1. First, our simple existence is evidence that we are of Adam’s race, a race of sin, being born of his corrupt stock, sinning, as he sinned and feeling the consequence of it as he felt. I don’t have to look any further than my own bathroom mirror to see the aging effects of a body that is in the process of dying. Now apart from the fact that I am a human being, a descendant of Adam’s by natural generation, I could not know experientially of my involvement in his sin as the head of the human race. Why, I was not even there when Adam fell.

2. Likewise, unless I have experiential evidence that I am Christ's by regeneration, I cannot lay claim to all the blessed consequences of His death, burial, and resurrection. Hear those words in verse 22, "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*" Well, physical life is evidenced by our tangible existence – becoming something we were not and we all know that we have a physical death to die. And likewise, the scripture sets forth the evidences of spiritual life – most notably the inseparable graces of God-given faith and repentance. One who has been made alive spiritually has likewise entered a new realm of existence – a walk of faith in which their perspective concerning God and how He saves sinners (their gospel) is radically changed. That's why, as we read in Acts 17, God calls on all men everywhere to repent. We all have before us the truth of the resurrection of Christ, proving that it is His very everlasting righteousness that merits and demands everlasting life before a holy God. And it was proven to have gotten the job done because He arose! Satisfaction to God's justice was established and it demands life for all for whom it was rendered. And as Acts 17:31 teaches us, it is that righteousness that God says will be the standard of ultimate judgment.

B. Now I suggest to you that Paul's reasoning here with the Corinthians is just as relevant in our day and time. Think of the vast majority who call themselves Christians, yet believe that many for whom Christ lived and died shall perish unless they do their part to seal the deal. Do you see if even one for whom He lived and died could perish and not live eternally, then Christ must also fail to live? That is so because of the inseparable, unbreakable bond between Christ and all those He represented. Salvation isn't contingent upon your believing. If you have been delivered from your unbelief (or false belief), it is by the blood-bought gift of God-given faith. It is a product and result of the salvation Christ finished for you on the cross. Faith, or anything else done by, in or through you, the sinner, is not the cause or ground of your salvation. If you imagine that your believing is what makes the difference in your salvation then the implication would be the same as Paul set forth to the Corinthians in today's text.

If any one for whom Christ lived, died, and rose again should perish for whatever reason, it would mean that He failed to justify them before the Father, that His righteousness – all that He accomplished – failed to get the job done. If any one for whom He died and rose again fail to be resurrected into heaven's glory, then it would have to follow that Christ really did not arise from the grave. I pray God will show men and women the illogical contradiction of believing that Christ arose but imagining that any could perish for whom He lived, died, and arose. Sadly, any who cling to such notions could accurately have attributed unto them the same indisputable conclusions that Paul related to the Corinthians – that such a faith is indeed vain (empty, useless, worthless) and that would mean that you too are yet in your sins.

Well, I pray better for all who hear this message – that God’s grace will shine upon you as surely as it does ultimately upon all for whom He lived and died. For true believers come to see the necessity and truth (1) that their sin debt was paid in full by His shed blood on the cross, (2) that their sins were buried with Him. And (3) as surely as He arose from the grave – because He lives – they too shall live! Now that’s the gospel truth, according to the scriptures.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God’s grace found in the only infallible source, God’s word itself – the Bible.

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