**In Christ All Will Be Made Alive**

1 Corinthians 15:12-34
Key Verse 15:22 – *“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”*

In today’s passage, we bear witness to the power of the Risen Jesus through Paul’s letter to the Corinthian church. In defending the resurrection of the dead, Paul vividly illustrates how Jesus gives true life to all by conquering both sin and death on the cross. Jesus’ death and resurrection is the good news of great joy for all mankind and provides hope for all those who follow Him. I pray that through this passage, we too may experience this immense joy and hope within us as we celebrate Christ’s resurrection today.

**Part 1: No Resurrection, No Hope**

Unfortunately, Paul’s initial motivation for writing this chapter was not for it to be a stirring, morale-boosting battle cry but as an impassioned plea for the Corinthians to come back to their senses. The reason for this is found in verse 12; **“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”** To Paul’s dismay, certain members of the Corinthian church claimed there was no bodily resurrection for the dead. Although they believed Christ Himself rose from the dead, they maintained that the same privilege did not extend to His followers. For modern day Christians, we take this gift for granted and do not give it much thought.

For the Corinthians, they were strongly influenced by Greek philosophical thought that viewed the body as worldly and evil but the spirit as pure and good. So when a person dies, their spirit would leave the body and finally be free of all the sins and impurities of this world. Thus, a bodily resurrection would be the worst thing imaginable. In some ways, we still hold on to a similar idea because deep down inside, we do not love our bodies because we find them to be frail, ugly and prone to all the pleasures and temptations of this world. Even though our bodies are wonderfully made and a temple of the Lord Himself (Genesis 1:26-27, Psalm 139:14, 1 Cor 6:19-20), we despise them and just want to break free of them. But while this idea seems attractive on paper, it does not agree with the Gospel message that had been preached to them.

The Corinthians may have thought the resurrection to be impractical, and that resurrection faith did not add any tangible benefits to their lives. Their faith in Jesus was more concerned with their present situation than with man’s salvation from sin and eternal life through the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul rebukes by reminding them of the Gospel they first received. May we read 1 Corinthians 15:3 and 4; ***“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...”*** These two verses form the very foundation of our faith in Jesus and by the Corinthians denying the resurrection of the dead, by extension, they were also denying Christ’s own death and resurrection; **“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised”** (1 Cor 15:13). The consequences of Christ not being raised are extremely dire as described in verses 14 to 19. If Christ had not been raised, then our preaching and our faith is utterly useless for the entire Christian faith rests solely on Jesus death and resurrection (14). In John 14:19-20, Jesus teaches His disciples how they will receive life through Him but if Christ is still dead, then this scripture and all the rest would be false. Not only would we be guilty of lying and hypocrisy, we would also be guilty of falsely testifying about God (15).

But worst of all is what it means with regards to our sins. May we read verses 16-18; **“For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.”** The heaviest consequence of all is that without the Risen Christ, we are still in the slavery of sin with death being the end result (Romans 6:23). We learned on Good Friday how the fear of death has an overwhelming influence on our actions, thoughts, emotions and behaviour. Just about everything we do in life is governed by the spectre of death. We fear for our studies, we fear for our jobs, we fear for our loved ones, we fear for our well-being, we fear for our future and these are simply how the fear of death manifests itself in our lives. We hide our failures and insecurities behind plastic smiles. If anyone says, “How are you?” we say habitually, “Fine,” even though we clearly are not fine, because we are afraid of being looked down upon. In the end, we are completely lost. Without the hope that comes from the Risen Christ we grimly march towards our final demise, trapped in our sins and eternally separated from God.

**Part 2: Made Alive in Christ**

Thankfully, Jesus indeed rose from the dead according to the Scriptures and is proof that He is the Christ. May we read verses 20-22 together please, **“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”** Through Adam’s disobedience, sin came into this world with death being the ultimate penalty for rejecting our Creator. But through Christ, all are made alive. Recall Jesus’ words to Martha upon Lazarus’ death; ***““I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”*** (John 11:25-26). Though our sins are the sting of death (1 Cor 15:56), Christ’s forgiveness has given us new life in Him. The magnitude of His grace far exceeds the weight of all our sins and it is this grace that has the power to change one’s life.

Those who met the Risen Christ were all changed and received a completely new life in Him. Mary Magdalene had a very sorrowful past but after Jesus saved her from her demon-possession, she gladly served and followed Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, her heart was once again filled with sorrow. But when she met the Risen Christ, the sorrow and mourning in her heart instantly vanished. In their place was new hope and incredible joy she would later share with the forlorn disciples. There is also the story of two disciples in Luke's gospel: Upon Jesus’ death, they too lost all hope. Three years of following Jesus seemed to have ended with nothing to show for it. In deep despair and fear they fled to another town called Emmaus to escape persecution. However they encountered the Risen Jesus who met them in disguise along the way and slowly began to heal their despair through sharing the word of God. When they finally realized who they were speaking with, their hearts were burning with the spirit of boldness and victory. They went back to Jerusalem and bravely attested to Jesus’ resurrection.

Let us look again at verse 20, **“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”** Here, “firstfruits” refers to Jesus as being a sign of things to come. Just like how Jesus was raised in a glorious resurrection body, our hope is that we too will be raised in the same glorious manner that Paul describes in 15:42-44a; ***“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”*** Through the resurrection of the body, Christ will transform our whole being (body, mind and soul) into his perfect likeness and clothed with His holiness and righteousness. The ultimate hope as Christians is to be like Jesus and it through the resurrection that we will become like Him. All this will take place when Christ comes again to establish his kingdom and destroy all dominion, authority and power, the very last of them being death itself (24-26). However, just because these events will take place in future does not mean our resurrection hope does not have any effect on our present.

At the Good Friday meeting, we learned of someone who boldly lived with resurrection faith when it was clearly in her best interests follow the ways of this world. Corrie ten Boom was a Dutch Christian watchmaker who, together with her family, helped hide and protect many Jewish people from the Nazi invasions of World War II. In spite of the grave dangers and the risk of being placed in a concentration camp herself, she and her family loved and cared for the Jewish people when no-one else would. Because of her efforts, she was interned in the camps for 10 months, suffering many tragedies and unspeakable horrors yet still held on to her faith in God. It is through her faith that God used her in her later years as she created a rehabilitation center for fellow survivors and victims of war, became a public speaker and a noted author who emphasized forgiveness and God’s profound love for even the worst of sinners. These are her words after meeting with her former guard at the camp – “‘For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then.’”

If there is no resurrection, what kind of life do people try to live? The slogan of their time was “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” The slogan for our time may as well be “YOLO!” We sometimes hear Christians say that even if this life were all that there is, they would still follow Christ. But Paul does not think so. If there were no resurrection, we would be better off making the most of this life. This would be the only heaven we could look forward to. So why bother enduring all kinds of hardships in the pursuit of Christ?

Paul provides the answer in verses 30 and 31; **“And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I die every day - I mean that, brothers - just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Because of resurrection faith, Paul died every day for to him to live was Christ, and to die was gain (Php 1:21).

Paul gave the Corinthians some final words of advice. Look at verse 33. **“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”** Who are bad company? They are those who live without resurrection faith. Such people put all their attention into what the world had to offer. Such people waste their lives in “eating and drinking” in order to forget the reality of death. The things of the world are glittering and desirable, but they are all temporal. Paul said in verse 34a, **“Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning.”** Paul said, “Stop sinning” meaning that those who say, “I am a Christian,” but who do not have resurrection faith are sinning, because they are living a double life. So instead of living in the shadow of death, let us strive to live in the light of life who is Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Saviour.

On this Resurrection Sunday, we celebrate Jesus’ triumphant victory over the cross, sin and the power of death. It is through Jesus that we have eternal life in Him that can never perish or be taken away, allowing us to boldly live faithfully before Him. I pray the hope of the resurrection will truly empower each and every one of us to follow Jesus all the days of our lives.