

Message summary - 1 Corinthians 15:12-28 - 23.10.16

THE NECESSITY OF THE RESURRECTION

Do you ever get that uneasy feeling that something's just not right in life? Something doesn't fit. Something doesn't work. If you're not a Christian, you might have this feeling. But even Christians often struggle with doubts, fears, guilt, failure and lack of motivation. Why doesn't life - and Christianity - work better? Perhaps partly because we haven't understood the importance of the resurrection. The resurrection changes everything.

1. What the resurrection changes for us

The Corinthians' Christianity wasn't working. Their lives were a mess, partly because they didn't understand the importance of the resurrection. By saying that the dead don't rise, they were inadvertently saying that Jesus didn't rise either. In 1Co 15:13-19, this sets off a domino effect that unravels the whole of Christianity. No resurrection, no salvation, no eternal life, no point in being a Christian. Christianity doesn't work without the resurrection.

To understand why, we need to remind ourselves of the problem of death. Ephesians 2:1 says that we are "dead in our sins" (that is, *spiritually* dead). But as Paul points out in 1Co 15:22, *physical* death was also part of the punishment for sin from the very beginning. In some ways it is the ultimate sign that we are cursed. So to save us from sin, God had to deal with the whole problem. On the cross, Jesus bore our punishment, both spiritually and physically. That's why the resurrection is so important. If Jesus is still dead, he's still under the punishment - clearly his death was not enough to pay the price for our sins. But his death *was* sufficient, and so he *had* to rise - death could not hold him any longer! If the cross works, the resurrection *must* happen. If the resurrection doesn't happen, the cross hasn't worked. Our salvation depends on both. So the resurrection is like a signed document that says "paid", and guarantees our salvation.

One implication of this is that we can have assurance of salvation. The resurrection proves that Jesus paid for all our sins, small and big, past and future. We don't ever need to be afraid that we've blown it with God because of some sin that we've committed.

A second implication is that there is hope for the Christian life, since the resurrection means we are already raised to life. Because Jesus defeated sin and death for us, we also inevitably *have* to rise, just as he did. We are already 100% (spiritually) alive and perfect in God's sight. We're just as alive on our bad days as on our good days. We don't need to fear failure. We can even make progress in holiness and fighting sin, as we're empowered to behave in practice according to who we already are in Christ: righteous and alive.

A third implication is that we have a certain hope of eternal life. Because Jesus defeated sin and death for us, even physical death can no longer hold us. We will die, but we will inevitably be raised to life again with new imperishable bodies. This means we don't need to be afraid. It means we will be reunited with loved ones who died trusting in Jesus. And it means we should stop living for this life, accept the cost of being a Christian and live for the day when we will rise from the dead. The resurrection changes everything!

2. What the resurrection changes for God

In 1Co 15:24-28, Paul talks about what Jesus' resurrection achieves for *God*. He imagines the risen Lord Jesus reigning over all, one day even defeating physical death forever, and then reigning forever under the Father's authority, and all of this so that "God may be all in all" (v28). The resurrection is key to God's plan to glorify his name. God was already supreme, of course, but as Jesus rose from the grave he brought with him millions of dead people, made righteous and alive, himself as the living Lord of this new, resurrected people. And so they will forever cry: "It's all about you, God!" We will be like the trophies God has won for his glory. Jesus died and rose so that he might reign as the living Lord of his redeemed people forever! The resurrection changes everything - for us and for God.