

1 Corinthians 15:19-28 “Resurrection First Fruits”
4/4/2021 Easter Sunday
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1 Corinthians 15:19-28 (NKJV)

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

The Last Enemy Destroyed

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.

24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

27 For “He has put all things under His feet.” But when He says “all things are put under Him,” it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.

28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Resurrection First Fruits

Since the dawn of commercials, trailers have been used to generate excitement and anticipation of what’s to come. Movies, TV shows, and video games all release short trailers for their product upon finishing them, hoping to excite fans with a taste of what’s to come. They often show some exciting action and/or comedic lines, and sometimes, tease some suspenseful cliffhanger that takes place over the course of the story. They then show the title of their product, and show the release date. Trailers, in a sense, give a “foretaste of the product to come.” In today’s text, Paul is using the concept of “first fruits” in a similar way to a trailer. Paul is telling the Corinthians that **Christ’s resurrection is the “first fruits,” the beginning, the foretaste, of the Restoration of all things.**

You see, sin, death, and corruption came in Adam. But then, grace, life, and restoration come in Christ by faith, and that restoration that Christ begun will be complete and by sight on the Last Day.

Before we can talk about Christ being the “first fruits” of Restoration, we need to talk about why Restoration is even needed in the first place.

Paul tells us why in verses 21 and 22. He says that by one man, Adam, came death, and all those who are in Adam will die. Death entered into the world when Adam and Eve fell. Adam and Eve were the first human beings to ever exist. They were God’s highest creation, His Image Bearers. They had the paradise of Eden. They had a perfect, harmonious relationship with God and with one another. They had it all. All was well. But then something terrible happened.

Satan, in the form of a crafty serpent, came and tempted them. He came to Eve and tempted her to do the one thing God told them not to do: eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They gave in and ate the fruit, and in that moment, sin and death entered the world. God cursed Adam and Eve for disobeying Him and expelled them from the garden. They lost their perfection, they lost their paradise, and their Image Bearer status had become tainted and corrupted.

We call that event the Fall, and we’ve felt its effects ever since. Through the Fall, death and sin have come to reign. Instead of perfect peace, harmony, and life; chaos, strife, suffering, and death rule the day. We experience natural disasters, pandemics, shootings, injustice, war, disease, death, and a host of other fruits of the Fall. And not only do we experience these fruits of a broken and fallen creation, we suffer the effects of the Fall in ourselves.

Because we are all descendants of Adam and Eve, we inherit their fallenness and sinfulness. It’s just as Paul says, that in Adam, all die. Because we have this inherited sinfulness, we are inherently selfish and corrupted creatures. We desire our own good instead of the good of our neighbor. We lie to cover our tracks and make ourselves look good, or make someone else look bad; we covet and desire to steal our neighbor’s possessions, or status, or lifestyle; we cheat on tests, or on our spouses. We hate others and murder them in our hearts, or sometimes actually kill them. We desire power so that we can rule over our neighbors and be the “top dog,” and exterminate those who oppose us.

And we want nothing to do with our Creator anymore. Not only do we just refuse to do the things that God, our Father and Creator, commands us to do, but we actively do the opposite. We want to go our own way and do our own thing. We want to be our own gods.

And our punishment for all this sin and evil? Death. Again, Paul says that in Adam, all die. Because of our sin and our tie to Adam, we are destined to die, for death is the wage we have to pay for our sin.

However, God didn’t only curse Adam and Eve. He also gave them a promise. A promise that said that Eve’s offspring would crush the head of the serpent, Satan, though he would bruise his heel. This was a promise of salvation that would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Now, grace, life, and restoration come in Christ by faith

In verses 21 and 22, Paul speaks not only of Adam, but of Christ as well. In those same verses where he speaks of death coming through Adam, he proclaims that resurrection and life come in Christ. He's making the point that though death came through humanity's first head, Adam, resurrection and life come through humanity's second, and greater, head, Christ.

How did Christ win for us life and reverse the curse of sin? Through his death and resurrection. On Maundy Thursday, we saw Jesus betrayed and his disciples scattered to the winds. On Good Friday, we saw the perfectly innocent Son of God killed in an excruciatingly painful way. He was beaten, whipped, derided, insulted, broken, and eventually killed.

And that death was for you, for the entire world. All those beatings, all that pain, was supposed to be for you. Because of our sin, you and I deserved to be up on that cross. You and I deserved to suffer all the pain and punishment that Christ did. But we didn't. Christ did, for you.

And with his death, He paid the debt of sin that stood against you. He paid the wages, and in doing so, won forgiveness of sins for you, and for me, and for the entire world. God, in His great love for us, graciously offered up His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for you and me and pay the debt that stood against us.

But he didn't stay dead! 3 days later, Christ rose from the grave, securing victory over the evil enemies of our time, sin, death, and the devil. In his death, Christ won the forgiveness of your sins, and in his resurrection, Christ defeated sin, death, and the devil once and for all, and set our broken and sinful world on the course to Restoration.

Now, all who believe in Christ are given forgiveness of sins and new, eternal life. By faith, Christ's death becomes your death, and Christ's resurrection becomes your resurrection. All of the wonderful benefits that Christ won become completely and totally YOURS by faith.

Though we are still in Adam right now, by faith, we are in Christ. Though we still will wrestle against our sin and deal with disease, debilitation, and all other kinds of suffering until the day we die or Christ returns, whichever comes first for us, we have resurrection and eternal life in Christ by faith.

Christ's resurrection was the guaranteed promise that all who are in him will also be raised when Christ returns to complete the work of Restoration by sight. That is what is meant by "first fruits" here. The "first fruits" were the first part of the harvest that is given to God in thanks after the harvest had begun. Christ began the work of Restoration with his resurrection, and will come to complete the harvest when he returns on the last day.

When will that day come? We don't know. I can't tell you exactly what day Christ will return. But, what we do know, is what Paul tells us in the later part of the text, and that is that restoration will be complete and by sight on the Last Day.

When Christ returns on the Last Day, that is when the work of Restoration will be completed and consummated before our very eyes. On that day of Christ's return, Paul says in verse 23 that all those in Christ will be raised. We will be raised from the dead and given new bodies, free from any of the effects of sin. Any diseases or infirmities that plagued us will be

gone. And not only will be raised, but we will see our Savior before our eyes, at long last! And we'll see him standing in triumph over all his enemies.

All the forces of evil that stand against us will have been defeated, laying in subjection under Christ's feet. Persecutors, evil ideologies, disease, anguish, and finally, as Paul says in verse 26, death. Upon his return and our resurrection, death is dealt its final blow. It was defeated in Christ's resurrection, and then will be utterly and totally annihilated when Christ returns and raises us from the dead. And with his foes finally defeated and all things subjected under His feet, Paul says that Christ delivers the kingdom back to the Father so that God "may be all in all".

Now this doesn't mean that Christ will cease reigning, or that the Father hasn't been reigning now. What Paul is saying here is that it will be a unified, harmonious, and peaceful rule of God once more. Christ the Son's mission from the Father will have completed, the battle won. He is simply returning to His Father with the defeated enemy and new kingdom in tow. As the Son of God, He then willingly submits Himself under the God the Father, who now rules over all creation as He did in Eden. There will be no more sin or evil to fight against Him and His people, and there will be no more sin and death to separate Him from His people, either. All will be as it should be. Perfect love, harmony, and unity with God and His people.

That is our hope, Christians! That is what we're waiting for! That is what our faith looks to! That is the significance of Easter. Our faith does not look for prosperity in this life. It does not look for heaven on earth through social justice, or a theocratic rule where everyone follows Christian morals. Should we attempt to love our neighbor and do good and justice? Should we be thankful when God does bless us with prosperity? Yes, to all of the above. We should be thankful, and we're commanded to love our neighbor and seek good and do justice according to God's Word. But, we do not look to them or do them in hope of pulling heaven to earth. Christ has already promised, and shown in the resurrection, that the new heavens and new earth will come to us when He returns.

So when you become beaten down from seeing evil out in the world, or from the struggle against your sin, or from some other trial or suffering you're going through, and are desperate for hope, look to Christ. Look to the cross and empty tomb. They are the sure and certain promise that all things will be set right once more. That day may come before I'm done with this sermon, later today, tomorrow, months, or even years from now. But remember, that **Christ's resurrection is the "first fruits," the beginning, the foretaste, of the Restoration of all things.**

Sin, death, and corruption came in Adam, but grace, life, and restoration come in Christ first by faith, and Restoration will be complete and by sight on the Last Day. Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday was the sneak preview, the beginning, the foretaste, of the Last Day. So, in a way, it was a "trailer," but I don't feel comfortable saying Easter was a trailer. Because it was so much more than some video clips mashed together. It was a historical event that changed the course of the world. Christ's resurrection reversed the curse of sin, and put the world on a course

of restoration. Christ's resurrection marks the beginning of the end of all the evil and suffering that we see and experience out in the world, and in ourselves. It was the guarantee that all who believe in Him will rise again with new, perfect bodies when He returns. And He will take them with Him to the new heaven and new earth, the new and restored Creation, where there will be no more sin, no more division, no more evil, no more suffering, and no more death, for all eternity. Alleluia, Christ is risen, He is risen , indeed, alleluia!