

Living the Resurrection  
April 16, 2017

Dr. David Seamands, a missionary, tells of a Muslim man who became a Christian in Africa.

"Some of his friends asked him, 'Why have you become a Christian?' He answered, 'Well, its like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go, and there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive--which one would you ask which way to go?'"

Easter celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. Easter depends on the resurrection. If the resurrection had not occurred, if Jesus had not been raised from the dead, there would be no Easter. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, the New Testament part of the Bible would not have been written. All of the writers of the New Testament believed Jesus to have been raised from the dead. Everything they wrote was based on Jesus being raised from the dead.

True Christians believe in the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection is crucial to our salvation.

**1 Corinthians 15:17 (NIV)** And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

We believe Jesus was raised from the dead. We also believe that we TOO will be raised from the dead. Jesus was not the only one to be raised from the dead. He is the first one to be raised. God reveals this a few verses later.

**1 Corinthians 15:20-22 (NIV)** But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (died). 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.

Everyone who has ever lived will be raised from the dead. Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead. Everyone before Jesus is still in the grave awaiting the time that God will raise them from the dead. All will be raised to stand trial before God for their sins. Some will be claimed by Jesus for eternal life. Everyone else will die the second death in the lake of fire.

I have put my faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus. I am not counting on any goodness in me to get heaven. I'm not counting on the fact that I have served Jesus in one of His churches. I'm not counting on being a good citizen, paying my taxes, loving my wife and relatives. I am not counting on any kindness I have shown others. None of that counts for anything before God.

I am not a good man. I am a sinner. I have lied, stolen, lusted, hated, neglected my responsibilities, ignored God, been ungrateful to God, complained about His will, and more, most of my life. The pile of my sins could probably reach the space station. I need a Savior. And so do you. So do we all.

If Jesus was not raised from the dead, I am still in my sins and there is no hope of heaven. The resurrection of Jesus is the basis for believing that any of us will be in heaven. The resurrection of Jesus is the basis for all of God's promises to us. Therefore, we must be LIVING the resurrection.

We're going to look at how that plays out as we examine one of the books of the Bible this morning, the book of Colossians. It is a short letter written by Paul, the missionary, to the church in the city of Colossae. Everything he writes in this letter is based on the resurrection of Jesus.

First of all, **Every fact he writes about Jesus is based on the resurrection of Jesus.**

**Colossians 1:15 (NIV)** He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God...

Note the verb tense here. He IS, not He was. He IS the image of the invisible God. When He lived on earth He was the image of the invisible God. When he was working in his dad's carpenter shop, and later, teaching in parables and healing people of diseases He was the image of the invisible God. But He is still the image of the invisible God today. He is not a dead body in a grave somewhere. God raised Him from the dead into His resurrection body. Then about 40 days later, God returned Him to heaven, where He currently resides. Jesus is alive, not dead in the grave. He is STILL the image of the invisible God.

Every fact he writes about Jesus is based on the resurrection of Jesus. Secondly, **Everything he writes about his readers is based on the resurrection of Jesus.**

**Colossians 2:11 (NIV)** In him (Jesus) you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,...

Jesus, the risen Jesus, circumcised their hearts when they put their faith in Him. The same is true of all Christians. Jesus has circumcised the heart of every Christian here. He could only do that because He was raised from the dead.

Circumcision is a pruning a cutting off of some skin. Here, the word is used metaphorically as a figure of cutting something else off of us. Jesus has cut off the power of sin over us. This is part of receiving a new heart that I spoke of several weeks ago. We are reborn or regenerated with a new heart in Jesus. Here is the same using a different figure of speech. This is possible for Jesus to do only because He has been raised from the dead.

Everything Paul writes about his Christian readers is based on the resurrection of Jesus. In addition, **Everything he prays for them is based on the resurrection of Jesus.**

**Colossians 1:9 (NIV)** "... since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Why does he pray for them to know God's will? Look at the benefits he lists.

**Colossians 1:10-12 (NIV)** And we pray this in order that

- > you may live a life worthy of the Lord and
- > may please him in every way: (specifically)
  - > bearing fruit in every good work,
  - > growing in the knowledge of God,
  - > being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have
    - > great endurance
    - > and patience,
    - > and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

All of this comes from knowing the will of God. All of this is possible because Jesus has been raised from the dead. It was not possible for us before then.

Imagine a man in prison on death row, awaiting his execution. He has money in the bank and instructs his banker to donate thousands of dollars to the poor. That certainly would be a good deed and would benefit the poor. But it would not change the fact that he was condemned to die for his crime.

In that same way, every non-Christian may do all kinds of good deeds. But that does not change the fact that they are living under the condemnation of God for their sins. Only in the resurrected Jesus can you live a life worthy of the Lord and please him.

Here in this list we see the benefits of knowing God's will. Let us pray for each other this same request, to know God's will.

Now look at how he wraps up this word about his prayers for them.

**Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV)** For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

In here is another fact about Jesus. **Jesus has a kingdom**. God has brought Christians into the kingdom of the Son of God. Now if Jesus is dead, he has no kingdom. He isn't still a king if he is dead and in the grave. Choose any king or queen in history. They only had a kingdom while they were alive. Once they died, their kingdom became someone else's kingdom. Only living people have kingdoms.

Jesus has a kingdom because He was raised from the dead.

Everything Paul is writing is based on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In Addition,  
**Everything he commands them to do is based on the resurrection of Jesus.**

**Colossians 3:1-3 (NIV)** Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Jesus has been raised from the dead. And by faith we have been raised with Him. Because Jesus has been raised from the dead, and us with Him, **Our lives are tied to Jesus**. Our future is tied to Jesus. That is why he tells to change the focus of our hearts and minds from earthly things to heaven, where Jesus is.

We must change the focus of our hearts and minds from earthly things to heavenly things. Because Jesus rose from the dead, and us with Him, our attention should be primarily on heavenly things instead of earthly things. The primary focus of our lives, even on earth, must not be centered on the political situation, the international problems, the stock markets, on sports or hobbies, or even on our families. All of these are temporary things. They have no impact on our eternal future. Jesus is forever. And with Jesus we are forever.

We must focus ourselves on forever things in heaven. Why? Because that is where Jesus is. Jesus is our Lord and master. Our life is tied to Jesus. Our future is tied to Jesus. Our focus must be on Him.

And when He moves from where He is, my life will go with Him.

**Colossians 3:4 (NIV)** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Jesus is in heaven now, seated at the right hand of God, the most exalted place to be. My Lord and Savior is there. My heart must be there too, with Him. My thoughts, my prayers, must be focused there.

But Jesus is not going to stay there. Jesus is going to return to earth to claim His throne. And when He does, since my life is tied up with His, my new life will become unhidden then. For all Christians then will receive their resurrection bodies.

Our relationship to God has changed. We were enemies, and nothing we did pleased Him. Now we are reconciled to God. Our behavior must reflect that change in relationship. **Our change in relationship to God calls for a major behavior change.**

Let me illustrate. One common movie and TV plot is the young man or woman who has been living a carefree life, not taking much responsibility for anyone or anything, just breezing through life focused on having fun. And then something changes in his situation. His parent dies and he has to support himself. Or her sister dies and she has to raise her niece. Or his father dies and he has to take over the family business. Suddenly the young adult's situation has changed and he or she must suddenly grow up and take on some major responsibility. And it is that process that makes for an interesting story. A change in their life situation calls for a change in behavior.

That is what the writer of our letter expects of us this morning. We are expected to make major changes in our lives because our future is now tied to Jesus.

**Colossians 3:5 (NIV)** Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature...

In the verses that follow, he gives examples of what sins to put to death in us. You know what these things are. You see them all around you every day. You deal with some of them in yourself. Perhaps God has been trying to convict you of them and you have been pushing Him away. You know they are wrong. You know you must work with God to rid your heart and mind of such things. But you have been resisting this task. Following the list of sins, he lists positive characteristics of Jesus with which to replace our sins.

What does the resurrection mean for us? It means everything. None of God's good promises to us are possible without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And all of God's good promises to us are based on the death and resurrection of Jesus.

### Invitation

**Colossians 3:4 (NIV)** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Can you say that Christ is your life? If you had met someone new this past week and he or she had asked you what is your life about? What would you have said?

Maybe you would have said, "My family is my life." Maybe you would have said, "My job is my life." Or maybe you would have said sports or a hobby. Maybe you would have said, "The weekend is my life. Life starts on Friday afternoon."

For the Christian, because Jesus was raised from the dead, our lives should be Jesus. Can you say that today? Can you say, "Christ is my life?" He is asking you this question today. "What is your life about?" How will you answer Him?