



Grace Christian Church, LeRoy MN, 11April2010

**7 – The Final, Enduring Victory – Life Without Fear
Corinthians 15, especially vv 50-58 – Revelation 21:1-7**

Theme: The resurrection of the dead is not just a teaching in the Bible... it has personal and great importance... it means we have a great life to live, beginning now and ending never.

Life is short (even if you live more than 7 decades).

A longtime reporter, Liz Carpenter, had just come across an envelope from the Alzheimer's Association and thought to herself, "I'm getting to the point I ought to send them something." So she opened the envelope which read, "Thank you for your contribution."

M. Scott Peck reminded us many years ago in the very first sentence of his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, that "life is hard."

What I want to affirm today is this...

for Christians life doesn't end and it gets better, too.

Of course, this is not about what Brian thinks. Let us look carefully what the apostle Paul said.

Everything in the Bible realistically and candidly acknowledges this... DEATH is coming and therefore the FEAR of DEATH grips us. WE ARE ALL TERMINALLY ILL!

The tragedy of 29 miners killed in a terrible blast makes "tough guys" cry. The TV news shows a flag draped coffin with a full dress military honor guard and it sobers everyone.

Any new kind of pain in our bodies, or the return of some previous symptom, sends new fears racing through our minds. Fears and dreaded things prevent restful sleep for everybody sometimes, and for some people it happens a lot. I'm talking about brief episodes, like the week before taxes need to be filed, when we have bad dreams.

All of this because we are not immortal like we wish we were, our days are numbered.

Despite this, few people actually prepare for death. We accumulate things and hold on to them like we can keep them forever. But we can't.

William Gladstone, Prime Minister of Great Britain many years ago, once had a talk with a young man about what he intended to do with his life. The prime minister asked him what his dreams were. Bursting with ambition and energy, he replied, "First law. Then government."
Asked Gladstone, "Then what?" --- "Service to my nation."
Again Gladstone queried, "Then what?" --- "Perhaps fame and wealth."
"Then what?" --- "I guess to retire and to live on what I have made."
"Then what?" --- "What do you mean? I guess I'll die."
"Then what?" ----- (*There was complete silence.*)

Can you answer that question in your life? We can talk about the resurrection of Jesus as if it were an ancient event but not something that actually affects us. But...

**If there is no such thing as an actual RESURRECTION...
there are serious consequences of having faith in a falsehood that must be explained:
I Corinthians 15:12-19**

- #1 Either Jesus did NOT really or factually arise or else he was never really dead. V. 13
By the way, the many witnesses were either duped or they lied.

- #2 Faith in Christ doesn't do what we thought it would do and those who preach it are wasting their own time - V. 14
Paul calls it useless, junk faith. Christianity is the only religion in the world that justifies its very existence on the resurrection of its founder, if He did not rise from the dead ALL CHRISTIANS have removed the most important event of their faith.
Instead, Christianity has always taught that it is **not based upon a set of ethical principles which, if carefully followed, will win the favor of God or the gods.**
In fact, as we all know, Christianity teaches the exact opposite. NOBODY can possibly be good enough and even the best person falls short of His righteousness.
For this reason, God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ to go to the cross for our sins.
Through His life, death and resurrection, He rose triumphant over them, and He offers us the gift of His grace.

- #3 Worse than that, those who claimed to be witnesses were actually lying and anybody who repeated it was misrepresenting God. V. 15
The evil one desperately wants people, especially Christians, to turn away from believing in the resurrection... because when he does that he has gutted the Gospel.
Churches that don't believe in it might as well close their doors.

But how can you explain why so many people over so many years have so totally trusted the resurrection they were ready to die for it? After enduring great hardship and even extreme persecution, surely that would be enough to shake many of their dependence on an unproven premise.

- #4 We are still in our sins and we ARE going to die without any real hope for eternity. V16-17

#5 Those who have already died, whether peacefully or as martyrs, are simply gone forever and soon will be forgotten in the mists of time. V 18

#6 If all that really takes place is that Christians have happy feelings and high hopes when in fact there is no truth to the testimony of the witnesses, we are a sorry bunch of losers, more to be scorned for choosing to be gullible rather than being merely pitied for being ignorant. V 19.

Were those first readers of this letter ready to dump all their own valid experience and the evidence they had thoughtfully heard and chewed on just because they could not fully understand the resurrection? Not really. Nor should we.

Paul returns to his point of the chapter (1st 11 verses) CHRIST WAS TRULY RESURRECTED...!

Jesus' resurrection assures us WE will be resurrected, too. V.20

First fruits – analogy of harvest ritual of Jews, the first of the crop went to the Temple as an offering. That was a way of expressing thanks for the increase (sow a bushel and harvest 30, 50, +++) and trust for the mysterious way that agriculture works, sun, water, soil, seed. All farming is based on this trust... plowing, planting, cultivating, and finally harvesting.

This is the preview of the coming attraction...

Paul, writing to the church at Thessalonica, urges them to hold on to their hope even though some of the believers had died. He writes, "*But we would not have you uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died*" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

Jesus did rise from the dead and He still lives. If you believe in Him and follow His will for your life, YOU will also pass beyond death to live again.

But for a lot of people, that isn't enough. We want to know HOW and WHEN, too. Oh, and we want a lot more details.

There is a foolishness about fastening our attention to such questions. V. 35 – How are people raised? What kind of body do they have? V. 36 – This is foolishness.

My view is that Paul is NOT saying that anybody who spends some time and thought wondering about such things is a silly goose. But people who get fixated on such questions and thus permit their faith slip are misusing their brains.

We can **not** know everything, certainly not those kinds of details about something that is beyond the realm of all human experience.

But we do know enough to realize our future state is a wonderful thing. Something everybody wants and will be completely satisfied with. There is a connection, and there are differences. I get the

sense of a professor responding to the student's questions. Finally he asks, "do you have any more questions?" but everybody knows he does NOT want anybody to raise their hands any more.

Here is Paul's main point... and his bottom line.... Vv 55-58

a- We will overcome death. The deepest sadness that lives in human hearts is realizing we will die. But that no longer stings. V 55

b- Give yourself to the Lord's work without any worrying about how everything works out in the end... whatever that is, it is all good. V 58

Refuse to give in to fear or worry (*the most common form of fear where we fail to act with courage or purpose and let it stop us from taking any useful action*).

The opposite of faith is not atheism or doubt. It is fear.

Revelation 21:1-7

This is the grand preview of the coming attraction...

but this is not a movie.

It is real life.

As Christians we already have been given wonderful new lives...

ones that will never end..... NEVER!

No matter what our outward circumstances, we truly can say,

"It IS Well With My Soul."