

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:12-34

Key Verse: 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

Happy Easter! Last weekend Northwestern fellowship had a wonderful Easter conference at the beautiful Lake Geneva, Conference Point center. Messages were delivered by fresh young students; Samuel Lee, John Lee and Grace Baek. We liked the place so much that many of us want to go back there again next year!

Last Sunday we studied the first part of chapter 15 about the gospel. The gospel, the good news is 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." This is what we believe and this is what we have taken our stand on.

Today's passage is not an easy one. For example, Paul talked about baptism for the dead. Theologians debate what that means. So I am not going to talk about that since I am not a theologian. Rather, I want to talk about three important points with some testimonies:

First, it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead (12-19);

Second, As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (20-28); and,

Third, the moral implication of the Resurrection (29-34).

First, it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead (12-19).

Apostle Paul pioneered the Corinthian church about 2,000 years ago. Corinth was a very prosperous seaport in Greece, located on the isthmus connecting the Greek mainland and the Peloponnesian peninsula. Paul spent 18 months there on his second missionary journey and established a church there. About 8 years ago I had a chance to visit Corinth. There was no trace of the prosperous city, but a few archaeological ruins remained.

During the Apostle Paul's lifetime, I would say the most important event of his life was his encounter with the risen Christ. When he met the risen Christ, his life was completely turned upside down (Acts 9:4-5).

Paul had been a strict Pharisee who followed all the Jewish laws and traditions. As a Pharisee, he was faultless. He was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians who belonged to the Way. He was 100% sure that what he was doing was a right thing before God.

But suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Saul did not know who he was. He never persecuted Jesus. He only persecuted

Christians. But Jesus identified himself with Christians as the body of Christ. So whatever Paul did to the Christians, he did it to Christ. For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything. This **encounter** with the risen Christ changed him to the core. This was an epochal watershed event of his life.

Paul had never met Jesus while he was alive, unlike Jesus' disciples who spent three years with him. But on the road to Damascus, he personally met the risen Christ. After much prayer and meditation and scripture study in the wilderness of Arabia, he could clearly see who Jesus was; the Christ, that is, the Messiah. Christ is Jesus' title, which means the Anointed One or the promised Messiah.

God's one sided, irresistible grace was poured out on Paul, who was the enemy of God. He did not deserve God's grace. So he confessed, "By the **grace of God** I am what I am."

Several years ago I was diagnosed to have cataracts. I had some difficulty reading street signs and night time driving. My daughter recommended that I see an eye doctor at the UIC hospital. The doctor removed my old cloudy lenses and implanted new artificial lenses. After the surgery, the first thing I noticed was that the images on television were **so bright** and colorful. "Wow, the color is so beautiful!" I said. My old cloudy lenses are gone and now I can appreciate beautiful colors on television without eyeglasses!

Likewise, Apostle Paul's **spiritual cataracts** were removed by his encounter with the risen Christ and he could clearly see who Jesus was. He became a suffering servant just like Jesus and he never forgot the wonderful grace of God.

Look at 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?" Paul knew some of the Corinthian Christians didn't believe in bodily resurrection.

In Paul's time, Greeks were heavily influenced by **Platonic dualism**. What is dualism? **Dualism** divides things into two parts, such as good and evil, or matter and non-matter, or body and soul. (I am in; you are out. I am good; you are bad.) Many dualists considered matter as unimportant or evil. Therefore they had difficulty in believing in bodily resurrection.

But in fact, Jesus' resurrection was a bodily resurrection. The risen Jesus appeared to more than five hundred Christian brothers and sisters at the same time. There were so many eyewitnesses of Jesus' bodily resurrection.

Look at verses 13-19. # "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our **preaching is useless** and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be **false witnesses** about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 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. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people **most to be pitied.**”

Here Paul said that there are serious consequences if Christ has not been raised from the dead: Our preaching is useless. We are false witnesses. Our faith is futile. We are still in our sins, and so on. The most serious consequence was in verse 19. “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

We Christians have hope in Christ and resurrection. We live different lives from worldly people who don't have this hope. We don't live momentarily, enjoying our sinful human nature. But if death is the end of everything, then we are of all people most to be pitied.

Many young people suffer from despair because of broken homes, broken relationships and depression. As a medical doctor, I see so many people suffering from depression and anxiety. They say about 30% of all people suffer from depression and anxiety. Any human hope we put in this world does not last long. They all end with sin and death.

For a long time I only had a vague idea about resurrection. I just believed in the resurrection, because the Bible said so. Many years ago, I thought about my life after death. “What will happen **one hundred years** after my death?” I have a wonderful family with four children and five grandchildren. My children and grandchildren will remember me, but my great grandchildren maybe not. I concluded that after one hundred years nobody in this world would remember me, not even my great grandchildren. When I thought about this I felt very sorry. Meaningless. Meaningless! What is the meaning of my life if no one remembers me after one hundred years?

Then I found an answer. I realized that even if nobody in this world remembers me, God will remember me forever! He can remember me forever because he is able, and because he is faithful, and because he is trustworthy. Amen! I found great comfort in God with this assurance. Yes. This is resurrection hope and this is eternal life! My life is hidden with Christ in God and will last forever!

When I was born, my birth certificate was recorded semi-permanently in the genealogy of my ancestors. But when I was spiritually born again, my name was **recorded in Christ** permanently. And I will be remembered by Christ, not mechanically but personally. This gives me new hope, new joy, new strength.

Our hope is in Christ and Resurrection. When we have clear hope in Christ and Resurrection, we can overcome many trials and temptations, pain and sufferings in this world.

Second, As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (20-28).

Look at verses 20-22. "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."

Adam represents the whole human race. Since Adam's fall, the whole human race fell into sin. In Adam we are guilty of sin and shame. As Adam's descendants we cannot escape from the power of sin and death. In Adam, all die.

But **in Christ** all will be made alive. When we **belong to Christ**, we all will be **made alive!** But each in turn: When Christ comes those who belong to him will be made alive. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Death will be swallowed up in victory. There will be no more weakness, sorrow or sickness. There will be no more cancer or death.

Let me ask you a question: What word is most repeated in this short passage? ("Christ." I counted 13 times.) Yes, it is repeated quite a lot in this short passage.

I have an interesting story to share. When I was a medical student in Korea, I attended M. Sarah Barry's English Bible class every morning before school started. At that time she led an **inductive** Bible study: Observation, Interpretation and Application. In the observation part, she asked some question like, "What word is mostly repeated in this passage?" "How many times?" I thought this kind of question was only for the elementary school children, not for college students. But later, I learned that observation from the author's point of view was very important for Bible students.

Now back to the passage. Paul repeated the word "**Christ**" **13 times**. This is incredible. Paul was excited to talk about Christ again and again. He was never bored to talk about Christ!

Richard Rohr is a Catholic priest. He said that there are two stages of life. The first stage is to build a container. And the second stage is to fill the container, which usually starts at the age of 55. When I was a young man (in my first stage of life), I was excited when I heard the word "mission." (Bible Korea, World Mission) But these days (my second stage of life) I am more excited when I heard the word "Christ." Of course, both of these are not mutually exclusive.

Another good example is St. Patrick. We had St. Patrick's Day not long ago in Chicago. I want to share with you St. Patrick's prayer.

“Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.”

As you can see, St. Patrick’s prayer was full of Christ (15x). Both Apostle Paul and St. Patrick were full of Christ. Christ was the center of their lives. Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

But be careful not to put someone or something in place of Christ. For example: What would happen if you put your significant other in place of Christ? For example.----(Blank with me, Blank before me, Blank behind me, etc.)

Then who is the Christ? This is a very important question. This question is very important because Christ is **the key** to open the door of resurrection. Paul explained very well about the supremacy of Christ in **Colossians 1:15-18**. “The Son is the image of the **invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation. For in him **all things** were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is **before all things**, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have **the supremacy.**”

Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. In him all things were created. In him all things hold together. He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead. So **in Christ** all will be **made alive** when we belong to him!!

Apostle Peter boldly witnessed to the risen Jesus in Acts 2:24. “God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because **it was impossible** for death to keep its hold on him.” Yes. God cannot be defeated by the devil. It is

impossible for the devil to kill God. We all died in Adam, but in Christ all will be made alive.

Third, the moral implication of the Resurrection (29-34).

Look at verse 32b. “If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’” If the dead are not raised, people live momentarily without clear direction and purpose of life. This kind of life seems to be attractive and enjoyable but the end result will be emptiness, despair and darkness.

Look at verses 33-34. “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’ Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.”

Recently I heard a story about **Justin Bieber**. As you know he is a famous pop star, very popular among young people. As a young boy he got into trouble for his reckless behavior; vandalism, drag racing, smoking marijuana, etc. Now he accepted Jesus as his personal Savior. He said, “I look back on a lot of things in my life, mistakes, insecurities, and although I have felt I’ve wasted a lot of time, it also makes me want to be better, faster! For me personally I want to work every day to be **better at 70**.” He found a new meaning and purpose of his life and he wants to work hard. Wow! He had a vision and clear life direction to be a better person at the age of 70!

I grew up in a Christian family and attended church regularly for many years. But I suffered from dark thinking and inferiority complex. I had no meaning or purpose of life. When I studied the Bible in UBF during my college days, I found the meaning and purpose of my life. I was very joyful to find my new life direction in God. Looking back on my life in my old age, I could see how God has blessed me so much. Praise God!

For young people, the most important thing is to find a clear meaning and purpose of life in their young age. Then, as Justin Bieber said, they will be much better people at the age of 70. The choice is before us: To live momentarily or to live for the glory of God.

In conclusion, today’s key words are “Christ” and “Resurrection.” The take home message is in the key verse. “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” We praise and thank God who gave us a living hope through his death and resurrection. We received new life, a new value system and a clear meaning of life.

We have not studied the first part of 1 Corinthians. In fact the Corinthian church had a lot of problems. For example, the church had problems with lawsuits among believers, sexual immorality and sexual scandals, divisions, and so on. The church was far from perfect. It was messy. In this situation Paul found an

answer. In Chapter 13 he talked about Agape love. In Chapter 15, he talked about Christ and Resurrection. These are real solutions for all kinds of difficult problems in the church.

Francis Schaffer wrote a book titled, "How Then Should We Live?" This is a great question. So my question for you today is, "How then should we live when we have resurrection faith?"

I want to share Paul's encouragement in Colossians 3:1-2. "Since, 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."

He continued in **Colossians 3:12-14**. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, **clothe yourselves** with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **Bear with each other** and **forgive** one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues **put on love**, which binds them all together in **perfect unity**." Amen.

"Love one another deeply. Unity in Christ" is our New Year key verse given by the UBF General Director. By resurrection faith we can bear each other and forgive one another. We can love one another deeply and have spiritual unity in Christ.