

J.J. V.C.

WHAT IF JESUS DID NOT RISE FROM THE DEAD?

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

1 Corinthians 15: 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? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

INTRODUCTION :

Story : I have a team member at work who asked if she can take the day off on April 10 (Friday) and April 13 (Monday). I asked her why? She said her family will celebrate Easter Sunday. I got confused because Good Friday was April 5 and Easter Sunday was April 7. She saw the confusion on my face and she understood and she said that we are Orthodox Christians (she's Serbian in origin) And the Orthodox Easter, comes after a week after the normal Resurrection Sunday celebration.

I did a little research on Greek Orthodox tradition and here's an interesting thing that they do.

William J. Bausch shares: "In the Greek Orthodox tradition, the day after Easter was devoted to telling jokes. . . .They felt they were imitating the cosmic joke that God pulled on Satan in the Resurrection. Satan thought he had won, and was smug in his victory, smiling to himself, having the last word. So he thought. Then God raised Jesus from the dead, and life and salvation became the last words."

For the past three Sundays, we have been focusing on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and it was purposely done because I believe we do not preach much on the resurrection only except on Easter Sunday when it is the central part of our faith – more important than Christmas (the birth of our Lord).

Last week , we discussed about the Testimonies of the Resurrection. And that's the background of our topic today from God's Word, by His grace.

Paul was reminding the Corinthian church regarding authenticity of the Gospel and to hold on to it firmly.

1 Corinthians 15 :1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

One of the crisis of faith some people go through even Christians regarding their faith, “Is this true?” “What if there is really no God?” “What if I die and there’s really nothing beyond this world?” “What if Jesus is just a man who died on the cross and was venerated to become a God?”

These are the tough questions about our Christian faith that was blasted away BY THE FACT THAT OUR LORD JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD which we have shown in the past weeks.

Before answering the question, what if Jesus did not rise from the dead? Let me show to you what the resurrection proves and assures.

- **It is His resurrection that proves Jesus as the Son of God.**

Romans 1:2-4 The sacred writings contain preliminary reports by the prophets on God’s Son. His descent from David roots him in history; his unique identity as Son of God was shown by the Spirit when Jesus was raised from the dead, setting him apart as the Messiah, our Master. (The Message)

- **It is His resurrection that proves that there is life beyond death. Our physical death is not the end of life.**

John 11: ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (NIV)

- **It is His resurrection that assures us that God has forgiven our sins.**

Romans 4: 25 He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God. (NLT)

***Quote :** The resurrection is God’s “Amen!” to Christ’s statement, “It is finished.” – S. Lewis Johnson

- **It is His resurrection that assures us that He is present with us and intercedes for us.**

Matthew 28: 20 "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"

Romans 8:34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died —more than that, who was raised to life —is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us

- **It is His resurrection that assures us that He will come back for us again and then judge the world.**

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep"

Acts 17:31 "For he [God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead"

Now for the sake of argument,
WHAT IF JESUS DID NOT RISE FROM THE DEAD? :
OUR FAITH IS USELESS, BASELESS, WORTHLESS

Pray

I. OUR FAITH IS USELESS

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? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Now, look at the logic of Paul here by God's grace.

- We have to remember that he is writing to the Corinthian "church". It means they are believers, although Paul mentioned them as "carnal" YET they are still saved – although still as "baby" Christians (1 Corinthians 3)

1 Corinthians 3:1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ.

And as mentioned several times, one cannot be a Christian if we do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

Romans 10: 9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Yes, this Corinthian church was saved BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE WHAT JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS FROM THE DEAD AND HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD but we have to **remember they came from a pagan religion** and that pagan religion believes in what you call "dualism", where they believe that the flesh is "intrinsically" evil. So they thought to resurrect OUR OWN body again means it's not good.

That's why Paul is saying, "yes" our bodies will be resurrected but it's not going to be the same body, but "glorified" bodies.

1 Corinthians 15: 42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Paul was saying, there will be a resurrection of the dead... we will be resurrected because **CHRIST HAS RESURRECTED.**

13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

You see Paul's logic here? He's saying to the Corinthians, how can you say we will not be resurrected when our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was resurrected? We will be resurrected BUT with a different kind of body – a glorified body JUST LIKE OUR LORD'S!

That's why John wrote :

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Illustration: True story, a pastor was preaching about the Rapture and encouraging one of these days, we will have glorified bodies. In the church, there was a person who was born with legs that cannot be used. He cannot walk since birth. So the pastor, pointed to him and said, (let's name him John) "John, one of these days when Jesus comes back again, you will be able to walk." John replied, "You're wrong pastor!" The pastor was surprised but John followed with these words, "I will not walk, I will be able to fly".

Now look at what Paul is saying :

14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Etymology : useless; vain "kenos" useless, void, null, empty, meaningless, folly, no effect,

That's why by God's grace, I took the time to show to you what the resurrection proves.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then

- I'm preaching and you are believing that Jesus is not the Son of God –useless...not true
- I'm preaching and you believe that there is life beyond death –useless...not going to happen
- I'm preaching that and you believe that Jesus is interceding for us –useless...no one's interceding for us.

Let's talk about Jesus interceding for us.

A book entitled "Letters to a Christian Nation" written by atheist Sam Harris says that praying is talking to an "imaginary friend". Let me quote from the book of Ravi Zacharias quoting Harris.

***Quote :** What was God doing while Katrina (strong typhoon) laid waste to New Orleans, he asks? "Didn't he hear the prayers of those who "fled the rising waters for the safety of their attics, only to be slowly drowned there"? These people, Harris insists, "**died talking to an imaginary friend?**" -

When we are praying, are we really talking to an “imaginary friend.”? When we are worshipping and singing praises to Him, are we singing to an “imaginary God”? **OF COURSE NOT!** Why? It’s because we know our Lord Jesus hears us because HE IS ALIVE! HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD!

Quote : “The bodily resurrection of **Jesus Christ from the dead is the crowning proof of Christianity**. If the resurrection did not take place, then Christianity is a false religion. If it did take place, then Christ is God and the Christian faith is absolute truth.” — Henry Morris

And He surely did resurrect from the dead!

II. OUR FAITH IS BASELESS

*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. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.*

Same logical explanation that Paul did but this time if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead then our faith is useless and our testimonies are baseless.

Etymology : false witnesses “pseudomartys”

Remember, CONTEXT. That’s the reason we preached last week about the “Testimonies about Christ”

*1 Corinthians 15 : ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins **according to the Scriptures**, ⁴ that he was buried, **that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures**, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, **he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living**, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

What Paul is saying, if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead...

1. THEN THE BIBLE IS NOT TRUE!

that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

2. And the people like Peter, the Twelve, the more than 500, the half-brother of Jesus Christ, James and even Paul himself is a “liar” - false witnesses - pseudo from pseudos “lying” “deceitful”

Are they lying? If they know they are lying, I showed you last week, **why would they give their lives preaching about the resurrected Jesus and die the way they did.**

Let me show this to you again.

Peter : preached to the Jews - **crucified upside down**

Andrew : preached to the land of “man-eaters” (Soviet Union) - **crucified**

Thomas: preached in Syria and India – **speared by four soldiers**

Philip : preached in North Africa and Asia – **crucified**

Matthew : preached in Persia and Ethiopia – **axed to death**

Bartholomew : preached in India, Armenia, Ethiopia and Southern Arabia – **Flayed (skinned alive) and crucified**

James (son of Alphaeus): preached in Syria – Thrown from the temple tower; **Stoned and clubbed to death**

Simon the Zealot : preached in Persia – **crucified**

Matthias (replaced Judas Iscariot) : preached in Syria – **Stoned and beheaded**

Judas Thaddeus : preached in Judea, Samaria, Iraq (Mesopotamia), Libya – **killed with arrows**

James (son of Zebedee) : preached to the Jews – **beheaded**

John (son of Zebedee) : preached to the Jews and Ephesus – **exiled in Patmos**

Most of the 500, first Christians were persecuted for their faith (lost their properties and even their lives)

James – clubbed to death by a fuller’s club

Paul himself (a strict, educated Jew and Pharisee) as shown last week, was murdering disciples then transformed into making disciples and eventually was imprisoned and eventually beheaded.

Why would they allow themselves to suffer like that and was even willing to die for Jesus, if they know they are lying? It’s because THEY HAVE SEEN THE RISEN CHRIST!

QUOTE: Tacitus, a Roman senator and historian wrote about the first Christians.

“These early Christians were brutally executed... And perishing, they were additionally made into sports: they were killed by dogs by having the hides of beasts attached to them, or they were nailed to the crosses or set aflame, and when the daylight passed away, they were used as night time lamps”

LOOK! No one who claimed to have seen the resurrected Christ have recanted/withdrawn their statement even under the threat of extreme persecution, trials and even death. Why? IT’S BECAUSE THEY HAVE REALLY SEEN WITH THEIR OWN EYES THE RESURRECTED CHRIST!

Story: I remember Jett sharing the gospel to people at her work and two people reported her. Why would she testify about the gospel if Jesus did not rise from the dead? In short, she’s only spreading a myth or the teachings of a man but not really the Word of God. The reason we can believe that what we are preaching is true AND EVEN WILLING to suffer the consequences of our spreading the gospel is BECAUSE OUR FAITH HAS A BASIS. What is the basis? More importantly, who is the basis? JESUS CHRIST WHO ROSE FROM THE DEAD!

That's why Jesus Christ says,

John 14:6 I am the way, and THE TRUTH and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

He is saying, "I am THE TRUTH...I am the basis of your faith..." We can trust that our faith is real BECAUSE JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD IS ALIVE!

That's why I always say, faith should be based on facts and not feelings or emotions!

III. OUR FAITH IS WORTHLESS

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Etymology : futile "mataios" no result, no purpose
It comes from "maten" which means fruitless.

We have a term in Tagalog "bale-wala" in short, "worthless", there's no benefit! – all for nothing!

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, why is it worthless?

you are still in your sins

This means, we have not been forgiven. We are not truly saved! We are not right before God!

Remember my preaching during actual Resurrection Sunday on

Romans 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Jesus Christ paid for our sins on the cross but how are we sure of that? If He did not rise from the dead, then He's just another man who died on the cross.

Illustration : Remember this, it is said that more than 300,000 people were crucified by the Romans. It was a common punishment during Jesus time, that's why when Jesus said to His disciples,

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (ref also Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23)

This means, it is a common occurrence at that time that people were carrying their cross on their way to be crucified.

Significance : If there were thousands of men who were crucified on the cross during that time and Jesus was one of them, **how do we know that He's not just one of those men because He claimed to be the Son of God? – IT'S THE RESURRECTION!!!**

VERY IMPORTANT : Thousands were crucified during Jesus' time BUT ONLY ONE ROSE FROM THE DEAD!

And if Christ did not rise from the dead.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost

Etymology : lost "apollymi" KJV perished, which means destroyed.

Paul was saying those, if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead...those who followed Him and believed in Him are being tormented in hell. Why? Because they only believed in the words of a man.

Remember this...the resurrection proves that Jesus is truly who He says He is... GOD WHO BECAME MAN WHO DIED ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS!

Quote from C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity:

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. **You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God,** but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

How can we be sure that Jesus truly is the Son of God and must be worshipped?
IT'S BECAUSE HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

Because if Jesus did not rise from the dead...

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Context: Remember, they were being killed and persecuted for their faith in Christ and they were willing to die for their faith.

It means, all that SUFFERING IS FOR NOTHING????

That's why Paul said in the same chapter.

1 Corinthians 15: 30 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? 31 I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,

*"Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die."*

IN SHORT, Paul is saying, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then I will I will not rise from the dead, then why am I doing this? Why should I allow myself to suffer like this? It's because HE SAW THE RESURRECTED CHRIST!

Application : If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then it means what we believe is not true...THEN WHY AM I PREACHING THIS TO YOU RIGHT NOW? WHY ARE YOU HERE RIGHT NOW? **Why are you church right now instead of having siesta at home? Why is the music team practicing on a Friday or Saturday? Why are we serving others? Why will the men meet on Saturday? Why do you go to the seniors' home? Is it for ourselves? IT'S BECAUSE OUR LORD IS ALIVE! HE SEES WHAT WE ARE DOING FOR HIM AND FOR OTHERS!** And one of these days, we shall appear before Him waiting for the words, *"Well done, good and faithful servant."*

Our faith is not useless or baseless or worthless. WHY?

Because as Paul says in verse 20

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

KJV : *But now is Christ risen from the dead.... (now..hyemi.. at this moment)*

That's why the early Christians, when they greet each other, they greet each other like this.

"He is risen" The other person replies "He is risen indeed"

Let's do that right now, I say "He is risen", you reply, "He is risen indeed"

Let me finish with a very short story:

My season in life is the season where I see friends or family at the same age, either getting sick or dying or have died. Last Monday, I learned that my brother has Stage 4b prostate cancer. My father and all his brothers (my titos) died of prostate cancer. Every Monday, I have a prayer meeting with my best friends who are based in the Philippines, and so we talked about it. They asked about my brother's age. He turned 65 this year. And then one of my friends asked, "What's your target age in order to die?" He answered first and said, "My target is 80 years old." My best friend then replied that his target age is 75. And then I said to them, "I've already hit my target?" And I saw in Zoom, they looked at me quizzically, and then I said to them. "Because my target is eternal life." And both of them agreed.

Why am I sure that I've already hit my target? It's because Jesus died on the cross to pay for my sins and He rose from the dead and I know for a fact that it is true and that's why I believe it.

Now I declare and believe..

HE IS RISEN!

We reply

HE IS RISEN INDEED!

S.G.D.