

## THE GOSPEL OF THE RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Key verse 15:3.4

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : 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."

Happy Easter! The Lord is risen! Thanks be to the Lord that last week through John 4 and the transformation of a Samaritan woman we were able to see God's vision that the fields are ripe for harvest. Instead of waiting with the expectation that people will change or that the situation will change, we can see that the fields are now very ripe for the spiritual harvest. People wait for harvesters because they are thirsty for true love, for true hope and a perspective that goes beyond our earthly existence. Let us proclaim the Gospel diligently through one-to-one Bible study and be used as God's harvesters.

On this Easter Sunday 2020, let us reflect on what faith in the Gospel means. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus died for our sins, and that He also rose from the dead. It is crucial to keep the gospel in its original form. Through Jesus' death on the cross, our sin problem is solved and through Jesus' resurrection, we have victory over sin and death. Today let us renew our faith in the resurrection and see what the resurrection does in our lives and in the lives of young people.

### 1. Holding fast to the Gospel (1-2)

Let us read verses 1 and 2: "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain." Paul begins the 15th chapter of his letter by reminding the Corinthians of the gospel. In the previous chapters he had repeatedly addressed various practical problems and concerns of the church and given them important orientations. In

Corinth there was division, arrogance, judgement and fornication. It is important to deal with all these problems. But at the end of the letter he comes back to what is most important, namely the Gospel. All people suffer from the problem of sin, and this is solved only by the gospel of Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. He had preached this gospel to them from the beginning, since he came to Greece on his 2nd missionary journey. They had accepted this gospel and had come to faith. They knew the gospel. This gospel, if they kept it in the form in which it was handed down, would make them blessed.

The gospel has been known in Europe for almost 2000 years. Nevertheless, people have developed different ideas about how they could attain beatitude. Some think that material wealth and human success would make them happy. Some dream of unlimited human freedom, in which they could do anything they wanted. Some still dream that technology and progress could one day solve all human problems. But especially in the current Corona wave we are experiencing that all these things we have so much hope for are either suddenly taken away from us or turn out to be completely unstable and helpless. We are confronted with illness and death. We are confronted with great restrictions, hygiene rules and unemployment. Fundamentally, we must acknowledge that we cannot defeat even a small virus with our own strength.

Why does Paul remind us of the gospel in this chapter of all things? The reason is that there is a much more fundamental problem than the Corona problem. It is about the sin by which we are all infected. Sin has a 100% infection rate and a 100% mortality rate. Even if it is slow, sin

leads people to death inexorably. You can become immune to a virus, but no one can free themselves from sin or develop immunity to it. But the good news is that God has given us a healing power, namely the gospel. Because Jesus solved the problem of sin through His death on the Cross and His resurrection, this gospel is truly the good news for all people and the most important thing we are allowed to proclaim at this time.

Holding on to the form of the gospel means that we hold on to the gospel in all circumstances, just as we hold on to a word of God. Paul exhorts us to hold on to the gospel in its original form, just as Paul and all the apostles proclaimed it to us. The gospel was their life, and their lives bear witness to the truth of the gospel. It is therefore of central importance that we hold fast to this gospel and proclaim it courageously and freely and openly even in this time of crisis.

## **2. Christ died for our sins (3)**

Then what is the gospel? What is the good news? Let us read verses 3 and 4 together: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: 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." The first and most important thing that Paul proclaimed always and everywhere was the gospel, namely the historical fact of Jesus' death on the cross for our sins and His resurrection.

Sin here does not describe a mistake or a misstep, but the condition of fallen people. God created man in His own image, namely as a being who delights God and reveals God's glory. But man was tempted to disobey and rebel against God's order. Instead of becoming equal to God, sin brought only shame and guilt and broke his love relationship with his Creator God. Since then, man can no longer believe in God's love and is even afraid of God. Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." Sin is disobedience and causes separation from God.

Sin is also not a specific problem of some people. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," So all people are

in a state of sin and hopeless. People have lost paradise. The consequence of sin is the wrath of God. Tribulation and fear dominate the souls of men. After all, not only death awaits them, but afterwards also the judgment of God and the never-ending damnation, which the Bible calls the second death. It is very important that we acknowledge our hopeless condition under sin, because it is the first step to experience the salvation of God.

Let us read verse 3 again: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Christ died for our sins. We deserved nothing but punishment. But Jesus died vicariously for our sins by taking our place. He himself became a sin on the cross to deliver us from it and restore us as God's children. In his love, God sent Jesus to our salvation. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Jesus, the Lamb of God, bore our sin, cleansed us and restored us to perfection. 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

## **3. Christ was raised on the third day (4)**

Let us read verse 4 together: "that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." Jesus was buried and he rose from the dead on the third day. This shows the uniqueness of our Lord Jesus Christ. There have been many great people in history. But in the end, every one of them had to kneel down before the power of death. Alexander the Great conquered an empire that stretched from Greece to the Nile and the Indus. But at the height of his power, he died at the age of 33. Our Lord Jesus is the only one who rose from the dead. He is the only mediator between God and man. He is also the only way of salvation. That's why he says in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The resurrection of Jesus gives us the victory over sin and death and opens the door to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Now we are born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Without faith in

the resurrection, our life was only a succession of defeats, but in the risen Jesus we can overcome all difficulties and achieve victory.

Apostle Paul grew up as a disciplined Pharisee. Not only did he know the Old Testament in and out, but he also lived by it. But although he tried so hard, in the end he had to acknowledge his complete defeat and wrote: "For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death." To fight against sin had been a hard and hopeless struggle. But finally he found the answer in Romans 7:25: "Thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord." When he received Jesus Christ and believed in his power of resurrection, God gave him victory. He carried out the change of leadership and became a new man in Christ. Then he could testify, "I live, but now it is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Before then it was no longer Paul's ego, but only Jesus who lived in him.

The resurrection power brings about a new life with the living hope in us. Therefore, we no longer need to despair because of the power of sin, but may come to the cross of Jesus, receive it and begin a new and victorious life through faith in the resurrection. The new life is a life in union with Christ. In this world everything ends with death. But Jesus defeated the power of death. Therefore, we no longer live with the fear of death, but we may live with the living hope of the Kingdom of God. Jesus lives and he also gives us the victory.

#### 4. The witnesses of the resurrection (5-11)

In verses 5 to 11 Paul lists many witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. They had all met the resurrected Jesus. But the main point is that they led a new life, which testifies to the power of the resurrection.

Let's read verse 5: "and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve." Cephas is the Aramaic name of Peter. After his three denials he was deeply depressed and disappointed in himself, so much so that he even disappeared to go fishing. But the risen Jesus visited this desperate Peter and helped him to renew his love for Jesus. The encounter with the risen Jesus changed him, so that later he could encourage the scattered Christians in persecution to

proclaim God's good deeds as a royal priesthood. The twelve disciples were also witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. After Jesus had died on the cross and been buried, they had hidden behind closed doors. They were so fearful that they hardly dared to breathe. But when the resurrected Jesus met them, they became full of joy and courage so that they could finally preach the gospel to the ends of the earth.

500 brothers were a living testimony of Jesus' resurrection power even in Paul's time. James is the brother of the Lord and also became a witness of the resurrection. Finally Paul calls himself a witness of the resurrection. Paul had been a persecutor of the church, who went against the disciples of the Lord with rage and snorting. But the resurrected Jesus met him before Damascus and called him as his chosen instrument for the mission to the Gentiles. Paul repented and was transformed into an apostle of Jesus. God used him to preach the gospel even as far away as Rome. He became known as an apostle for Europe.

Let us read verse 10: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Paul testified that he was saved from his corrupt life and changed into an apostle by the grace of God alone. God's calling is never our merit, but the undeserved gift of God. This grace was not a matter of course for Paul, but it made him work even more diligently for the gospel.

What I am, I am only by the grace of God. It is God's grace that a cold-hearted and hurtful egoist, who could only be a curse for others, can now be used as a shepherd, a preacher and leader. It is because Jesus paid for all my sins on the cross and gave me a new life through His resurrection. Therefore, there is never a reason to become proud or self-righteous. I may work even more diligently for the Lord and testify that it is God's grace alone.

Faith in the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection means that we have died to our old ego with Jesus and risen with Jesus to a new life glorifying God. Our old being lives in sin and loves sin. We were dominated by sin. But this old being died with Jesus on the cross. Through the resurrection we are now allowed to lead a new life, a life that pleases God and glorifies

him, a life with the holy mission of God. This is why Paul said: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

We do not need to concern ourselves with our old nature, which lives in sin and draws us to sin. This old being has already died with Jesus on the cross. Rather, we may look at the risen Jesus and believe that we have risen to new life with him. Jesus has already made us into a new creature. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the is here." (2.Cor 5:17)

Dr. Samuel Lee grew up without his mother. This concern had often made him sad and fatalistic. But through Ephesians 2:10, he was allowed to take the new life through the resurrection and believe that God created him for his good work. He became free from the old sadness and was allowed to use his new life for the gospel. He was also able to help many students in Korea not to remain imprisoned in their fatalistic situation, but to challenge God's mission through the resurrection faith and be used as a royal priesthood for world mission.

In the past year, M. Peter was confronted with all kinds of false accusations and slander by which the work of God was to be destroyed. It is very painful when one's own devotion is misunderstood and even degraded as if he was a bad sinner. But God helped him to hold fast to Philippians 1:21 at that time: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Through the faith in the resurrection he was allowed to let Christ live in him alone, using his new life for Bible study, for the education of disciples and for the mobilization of our next generation.

I know a young man who personally accepted the gospel of Jesus through Bible study. Jesus freed him from his youthful lust and he was allowed to start a new life as a Bible teacher and global spiritual leader. This grace of God became the rock solid foundation for his new life. He experienced many temptations, even through his own family, who wanted to pull him onto another path. But through faith in the resurrection he holds on to the grace of God and God's calling for his life. We believe that God will bless his resurrection faith abundantly and use it precious as a witness to the resurrection, especially for the next generation.

In this time of crisis many people are in a waiting state. Fear and worries about the conditions occupy our hearts and make us paralyzed. But we may remember the historical facts that Jesus, who died for our sin, rose from the dead. The power of death is already completely defeated. We have a new life and a living hope in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, we may joyfully proclaim the glorious resurrection of Jesus in this Easter season.

Isaiah 6:3 says, "The whole earth is full of his glory." God also uses a time of crisis for His purpose and good work. We can be strong by being still and hoping. (Is 30:15) I have also been busy with calculation and worry. But here I am allowed to renew my faith in the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection and to live through the resurrection faith as a shepherd and Bible teacher for the students. Because Jesus resurrected, we are allowed to challenge the pioneering work at every college and faculty and raise 12 disciples of Jesus. Because Jesus has risen from the dead, we are allowed to experience the work of God in every house church. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we are allowed to see that through one-to-one Bible study, Europe is spiritually alive again and is needed as a pastoral nation for world mission.

Today we have learned what it means to hold on to faith in the gospel. Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose on the third day. Faith in the gospel means that we died with Christ of sin and now have a new life through the resurrection of Jesus. We no longer need to obey sin, but have a new life. Now we may put our members at the disposal of God as weapons of righteousness. May God help each of us to hold fast to the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection absolutely and be used as living witnesses of the resurrection in this time.