

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:12-34

Key verse 15:22

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

Thank God for the study of 1 Corinthians 15 during this Easter time. In the first part, Apostle Paul reminded the believers in Corinth of the gospel that Christ died for our sins according to Scripture, that he was buried and that he rose again on the third day according to Scripture, and that the risen Christ was seen by many witnesses. We were encouraged to record the gospel in the form in which our predecessors in faith proclaimed it and testified to it through their lives.

In today's passage, Paul warns believers not to be influenced by the bad company of those who deny the resurrection of the dead. Then he proclaims the power of the resurrection: as they all die in Adam, so shall they all be made alive in Christ. Finally, Paul testifies how he himself lived by faith in the resurrection, dying daily for the glorious work of raising up disciples.

May God help us today to come to know the power of the resurrection and, like Paul, to serve the work of disciple making victoriously with the philosophy of life "I die daily".

1. The necessity of the resurrection (12-19)

Let us read 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?“ Also in Corinth Christ was preached that he rose from the dead. The Corinthians had heard the

preaching of the gospel of the resurrection, accepted it, stood firm in it and would be saved by it. They were now living as witnesses of Christ's resurrection. It is all the more surprising that there were some among them who said, "There is no resurrection of the dead." Who were these few and where did such thoughts come from?

We know that outside the church there were ideologies that held such thoughts. Among them were the Gnostics, who taught that the world is spirit and matter. Only the spirit is good, while everything material, including man and his body, is evil. Some said that you cannot know anything precise and you have to doubt everything. Others taught that Jesus was also only a man with sins. Therefore, there could be no resurrection in the flesh. As a result, the followers of this teaching either led a hypocritical, ascetic life or lived a very pleasure-seeking life.

Some in the church in Corinth took up these thoughts. They considered them suitable to justify their own sinful lives. They gave a Christian touch to the Gnostics' teaching and began to criticize the work of faith. Paul clearly turned against their thoughts. He asked, "Then how can some of you say...?" He helped them realize how nonsensical their teaching was. Let us read verses 13-14: "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." The church of God is founded on the gospel: that Christ

died for our sins and rose from the dead. Through the resurrection of Christ, believers have received new life as living witnesses of the resurrection. The resurrected Christ is the cornerstone upon which the church is built as a spiritual house and holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:4,5). If there were no resurrection of the dead, all this would be in vain. We would also be found to be false witnesses of God, all those who joyfully study one-to-one on campus would be liars, and those who stand at the lectern and preach would be deceivers.

Paul makes it clear that those who said that there would be no resurrection attacked the core of the history of salvation and the cornerstone of the church of God through their selfishness, and thereby harmed themselves. Verses 16-18 say, "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." Those who said that there is no resurrection of the dead do not have this joy of forgiveness of sins themselves, nor do they grant it to others. They even tell the believers that they are the most wretched of all people. Let us read verse 19: "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."

Paul therefore calls these some "bad company" (33). How do they deal with the believers? They attack the believers and try to seduce them into giving up their life of faith. A young man decided to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul and strength and to cooperate with his shepherd in life and death for spiritual renewal and revival in Europe and for world mission. But some told him that if he lived in this way, he was the most wretched of all people. They said this because they themselves lived a miserable life without resurrection faith. Their sin made them bad company. The young man resisted their temptation and clearly testified that Christ rose from the dead and made him the most blessed man. He even invited them to convert to a life of resurrec-

tion faith through repentance themselves and not to live in vain.

Today we no longer speak of Gnosticism. In the history of the Church it was replaced by mystical teachings, then by humanism, idealism, and even atheism. But the core of their teaching remained the same: that there is no resurrection of the dead. Gnosticism teaches that spirit is good and matter is bad. Some mystics turned the spiritual world into a game of thought without practical effect. Humanism teaches that man himself is master of his life. Idealism describes an ideal that people strive for but can never attain. Finally, atheism says that there is no God and that man is on his own. Each of these currents sounds convincing, but makes its followers the most miserable people without the resurrection faith. Without the faith in the resurrection, all these teachings are null and void substitute religions that give neither freedom nor a well-founded hope and cannot do so because they deny the resurrection of Christ.

The Sadducees at the time of the apostles were supposed to be spiritual leaders, but they denied the resurrection of the dead and acted as politically minded people. When Peter and John healed a paralytic in the name of Jesus Christ, they became jealous and threw the apostles into prison and had them beaten (Acts 4:2; 5:17). The apostles were happy to suffer shame for the testimony of Christ's resurrection and did not stop preaching the gospel in the temple and in the houses every day (Acts 5:41,42). But the deniers of the resurrection became increasingly wretched. Christ is risen. The resurrection of Christ makes God's people the most blessed of all people. May God help those who are influenced by the ungodly teachings to repent earnestly and lead their lives by faith in the resurrection and become blessed.

2 The power of the resurrection (20-34)

Let us consider verse 20: „But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-

fruits of those who have fallen asleep." "But indeed" draws a line under the denial of the resurrection and opens the door for the power of the resurrection. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead as the firstfruits among those who have fallen asleep. Christ is the firstfruit of the resurrection. A firstfruit represents the whole harvest. Jesus' resurrection was not just about him. He rose from the dead as the firstfruit for all who believe in Him and live in faith in the resurrection.

Verse 21 says, "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man." Through Adam's disobedience death had come into the world and permeated all people (Rom 5:12). Death was something terrible and final. All men feared death. Because of the power of death, all people were hopeless, helpless and paralyzed. But now through Jesus came the resurrection of the dead. Death could not keep Jesus in the grave. He rose from the dead as the firstfruit and with him all who belong to him will rise again.

The resurrection of Christ gives freedom and hope. Let us read verse 22: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." Everyone dies in Adam. But in Christ they will all be made alive. This teaches us the power of the resurrection. It says, for one thing, that all men have hope. Everyone who is in Christ will be made alive. Through the power of the resurrection, he will be freed from the fear of death and of man and become a source of blessing. On the other hand, it teaches us the urgency of spreading this good news and helping people to be in Christ.

The young students in Korea in the early 1960s were overwhelmed by fatalism and without hope in Adam. Dr. Samuel Lee's heart broke when he thought about their spiritual condition. Through the resurrection faith, he began teaching them the Bible. Dr. John Jun was a medical student and son of a widow and just another candidate for a fatalistic life under the power of sin. But

through Bible study and disciple making, he was born again in Christ and accepted the campus UBF mission as his calling. In Christ, he began an influential life as a shepherd who was followed by many outstanding intellectual students in Korea and around the world, and in Christ led their lives as determined world missionaries.

In Adam I myself was full of fear. I hardly dared to leave the house and even during the lecture period I would lie on the bed in the darkened room. But God's servant took me in and served me patiently through Bible study until I was allowed to receive the new life in Christ under the lordship of Jesus through Romans 13:14. My life became full of hope. The power of the resurrection transformed me from a beggar for human recognition and a characterless chameleon to a righteous and blameless worker who rightly distributes the Word of Truth. The power of the resurrection was at work in Emmanuel, who overcame his worries, obeyed God's Word and grew as a self-motivated Bible teacher. The power of the resurrection is also at work at the Juridicum with the vision to set up there an Abraham, a Sarah, a believing chancellor and to use it as a house of prayer for all nations.

This world resembled a sea of death. There was no hope. But through the resurrection of Jesus, all who are in Christ will be made alive. Spiritually, the universities in Germany and Europe also seem like fields full of withered bones of the dead. So many people there, although they are young and grow up in the best conditions, are paralyzed and full of fear. But in Christ they will all be made alive. We have experienced how powerfully the power of the resurrection has worked among the young people through one-to-one Bible study. In Christ they will be free from fear, filled with the hope of resurrection and used as an exceedingly great army of God. God's work does not happen suddenly, but step by step through one-to-one Bible study with the spiritual help of the Bible teachers and parents. By obeying Ezekiel 37:10 and forming

10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams, the power of the resurrection will raise up an exceedingly great army of God on every campus and in every school, transforming Germany back into a pastoral nation and Europe into a missionary sending continent.

Verses 23-28 describe the order in which God will complete His universal work of salvation. As the first fruits, Christ has risen from the dead. Afterwards, when he will come, those who belong to him will rise. Then comes the end, when he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed all rule and all power and authority. Let's read verse 26: "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." Death was the last enemy that kept all mankind in fear. But the risen Christ is the victor over death. Death has no more fear. When we leave our earthly shell, this is rather only the transition to heavenly glory. In the end also the Son himself will be subject to the One who subjected everything to him, and God will be all in all.

In the last passage, Apostle Paul describes practical life by faith in the resurrection. Let us read verses 29 and 30: "Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour?" Some of the Corinthians were baptized in place of the dead. They hoped that this would lead their deceased relatives or friends to the resurrection of the dead. This practice made no sense without resurrection faith. Paul himself and the apostles were in danger every hour. In 2 Corinthians 11:26, Paul testified to the dangers in his missionary life: "I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers." Paul could have avoided all dangers. But then he would have had to deny the grace of Jesus. He had received grace and apostleship

through Christ to establish obedience of faith among all Gentiles. This required numerous dangerous journeys, annoyed the Jews, challenged the Gentiles and led to disputes with false brothers. But Paul rejoiced to suffer with Christ while actively fulfilling the Gentile mission in faith in Christ's resurrection.

Paul briefly summarized his lifestyle and philosophy of life in verse 31: "I die every day." Let us read verse 31: "I die every day - I mean that, brothers - just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. "I die every day" is not a sigh here, but Paul's testimony of his glorious life in Christ. He called the believing brothers "my glory which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord". He served the work of raising up disciples through the faith in the resurrection and brought forth much fruit. The believers whom he served recognized in his life the risen Christ. They changed their mindset and life and adopted his lifestyle and philosophy of life. They recognized that to die daily for God's calling is not a special lifestyle of a few, but describes the life of all Christians. These believers who witnessed the resurrection by following Paul's example were his glory and crown in Christ Jesus his Lord.

As Paul served to raise up disciples, he died every day. This meant that every day he took care of God's flock of sheep with the shepherd's heart. Not a day went by without him dying in fellowship, Bible study, prayer and spiritual warfare. His life of resurrection faith was truly glorious. The more intense it became, the happier he became. In Phil 1:21, he even testified, "To die is my gain."

Here Paul included the believers as "dear brothers" in his life from the resurrection faith. But he clearly distinguished himself from those who lived without faith in the resurrection. Let us read verse 32: "If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." In Ephesus, Paul had

taught the gospel in the synagogue until some resisted like wild animals and publicly spoke evil of the teaching. Therefore he separated himself from the disciples and spoke daily in the school of Tyrannus. When he did this for two years, the word spread and became powerful. The makers of idols felt provoked by this, because they no longer made a profit, and they flocked together like wild animals. Why did Apostle Paul fight so resolutely against wild animals instead of making compromises and avoiding conflict? It was because Jesus rose from the dead. The alternative to a life of resurrection faith is a life with a philosophy like the animals: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Paul urgently warns the Christians in Corinth (33): "Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." There was a danger that the faithful would also be seduced by the question "What does it help me". We know that Christ is risen. We also know that we are servants of the risen Christ, following the example of our predecessors in faith and their lifestyle and philosophy of life. There is no point in engaging in discussions with those who live with an animal philosophy without resurrection faith. For otherwise there is a danger that our minds will become increasingly unclear and we will neglect good morals. Some live as if food and drink were the goal of life. This is not so. Our goal in life is to glorify our Lord Jesus through the faith in the resurrection and to fulfil His mission. We should not allow ourselves to be seduced, but should hold on all the more to good morals, early morning prayer, one-to-one Bible study, and the education of disciples through the community of life.

Let us read verse 34: "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." Those who do not live by faith in the resurrection are not sober, but mad. They sin gravely by denying salvation to obedience and letting their ego rule over their lives. If there are some in a community of Christians who know

nothing about God, it is a shame. Paul admonishes believers to become sober and not to sin.

In today's text we learn about the power of the resurrection: As they all die in Adam, so shall they all be made alive in Christ. The power of the resurrection gives us hope that helpless and fearful sinners will be transformed in Christ into fearless world missionaries full of vision. We also learn to live with Paul's philosophy of life: "I die every day" and to follow the example of the servants of God. May God help us to avoid the bad company of those who deny the resurrection of Christ. Let us die daily for discipleship through early morning prayer, one-to-one Bible study and life fellowship, and let us experience the power of the resurrection among the young people in all schools, faculties and colleges.