

Resurrection Life
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What would you say if I were to tell you that Jesus' death was not sufficient for your salvation. Some of you might be a little shocked. Others might call me a heretic. But before you form a lynch mob, turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:14

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

More significantly look at 1 Corinthians 15:17

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”

If Christ has not been raised you are still in your sins. Think about that. If Jesus died and was not raised, his death would have no ability to cleanse us from our sins. We would still be in our sins. Christ's death itself was not sufficient for our salvation, rather it is Christ's death and resurrection that provides the foundation of our salvation.

We tend to ignore the resurrection. On the average Sunday, we tend to de-emphasize the resurrection in favor of an emphasis on Christ's death. Just think about the hymns we sing. We rarely if ever sing resurrection hymns. We may sing them on Easter Sunday, but hardly ever on other days. It's as if it would be inappropriate to sing them on other days. But then we are very comfortable singing about Jesus' death. We do not reserve those songs for Good Friday.

But before you swing the pendulum all the way to the other side, we must remember that the scriptures surely emphasizes the saving power of Christ's death.

Look also at Romans 5:9 for example.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

We are justified (declared innocent) by Jesus' blood. And blood of course is connected with his death. The blood that justifies us is the blood that Christ shed on the cross. Because of Jesus' death, we are declared to be right before God. The basis of our justification is the blood of Jesus.

And because the basis of our salvation is the blood of Jesus, the proper object of our faith is the blood of Jesus.

Look at Romans 3:25

God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.

Notice that the proper focus of our faith is in the blood of Jesus. We must trust that Jesus' blood, shed for us on the cross is the source of our forgiveness, the source of our being made right with God. We must believe that his blood atones (pays) for our sin.

It is scriptures like these that cause us to have high esteem for the death of Jesus. And this is rightly reflected in our esteem for the blood and for the cross.

But these scriptures do not tell the whole story. As necessary as Jesus' death is for our salvation, we must not focus on it to the exclusion of the resurrection. In as much as Jesus' blood is the basis of our justification, so is the resurrection. Yes we are to have faith in Jesus' blood, but we are also to place our faith in His resurrection.

Turn to Romans 4:25

He [Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Notice that last phrase "raised to life for our justification." This tells me that Jesus' resurrection is equally important as his death. The resurrection is also the basis of our salvation.

And because the resurrection is also the basis of our justification, it is also necessary that we have faith in the resurrection. Just as we must believe that Jesus' blood pays for our sins, we must also believe that Jesus' resurrection secures our forgiveness and our future.

We see this in Romans 4:24

... God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Notice how righteousness is credited to those who believe in the God of the resurrection. Belief in Him who raised Jesus.

Look also at Romans 10:9. This is a popular verse. It clearly and directly speaks to the response needed in order to obtain salvation. Notice what it says.

“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

I find it very interesting and extremely significant that Romans 10:9 makes the resurrection the focus of saving faith. One must believe in one's heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. There is no direct mention of the saving significance of Christ's death or blood only his being raised.

With all of these scriptures as evidence, we would have to conclude that it is impossible to separate Jesus' death from his resurrection. Both form the basis of our justification and as such both are the proper objects of our faith.

Are these concepts contradictory? Not at all. Rather both work together and support each other. It would be wrong to settle on either Christ's death or his resurrection as the solitary focus of our faith. And when we are emphasizing one aspect we must always remember that we are not excluding the other.

This brings me to the question of “What in fact is the significance of the resurrection in our salvation.” We are quite familiar with how Jesus' death accomplishes our justification, but it is harder for us to see the contributing role of the resurrection.

We understand that because of our sin, we deserved the punishment of death and that because of God's great love he sent his Son Jesus to die in our place and receive our punishment. And God considered Jesus' death as satisfaction for our required punishment. Jesus lived a pure and innocent life and did not deserve death, so when he died, he was not dying for his own sin, but for ours. Therefore, all who identify themselves with Jesus through faith are no longer under God's wrath. That makes sense. Jesus' death was a substitution for ours. Jesus' death paid the penalty of our sin.

So where does the resurrection come in? Why does Paul say in Romans 4:25 that Jesus was raised for our justification? How does the resurrection contribute to our salvation?

First of all, the resurrection identifies Jesus as the Son of God.

Turn to Romans 1:3-4

Paul is speaking about the gospel "regarding [God's] Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notice that Paul says that the resurrection has declared Jesus to be the Son of God. The resurrection is the final proof that Jesus is who he said is. If Jesus had not risen, we would have to conclude that he was just another man. His miracles and teaching alone would not be enough to declare him the Son of God. Only through his resurrection is Jesus' life vindicated. Jesus is not merely another good prophet who has come and gone, he is the Son of God. The resurrection establishes Jesus' identity.

He is declared with power to be the Son of God. The resurrection is the ultimate verification of the identity of Christ.

Secondly, the resurrection confirms the saving significance of Christ's sacrificial death. Since it was God the Father who raised Christ from the dead, we see that the resurrection is a testimony that God accepted his sacrifice. The resurrection is an act of vindication. It shows that God the father was satisfied with Christ and that he accepted his death as payment for sin. If he had not been raised, we would have to conclude that he was just another man. Just another death.

Moreover because the resurrection is victory over death and death is the penalty of sin, we conclude that Christ's death has dealt with sin. The proof that he has dealt with sin is shown in his victory over the result of sin, namely death. Death is the ultimate power of sin. Jesus shows us in his resurrection that he transcends death and therefore has defeated sin.

In that great chapter on the resurrection Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:56-57 "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." This victory that Paul is speaking about is the resurrection.

So the resurrection is essential for our salvation because it confirms the saving power of Christ's death. Christ's death paid for our sins and this payment was verified in resurrection. Jesus' death satisfied the justice of God and the resurrection is God's way of saying payment received. In Dying Jesus said it is finished. In rising he puts an exclamation point on the end.

So how does this affect us today.

Certainly I implore you, if you have not already done so, to put your faith in Christ. To specifically believe and trust that Jesus died for your sins and was raised so that you could live.

It is not enough to believe in God, you must have a Christ centered faith. It is not enough to believe in Christ as a person, you must believe in his death and resurrection. It is not enough to believe that he died and rose, you must believe and trust that he died and rose for you.

But what can we take away from this sermon if we have already placed our faith in the death and resurrection of Christ?

Death and Resurrection can become a framework for understanding Christian living. Listen to Paul

Philippians 3:10-11

¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship

of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The Christian life is at once triumphant strength of resurrection power and humble suffering for the sake of Christ. We must embrace the two together. We must embrace the negative, recognizing that the Christian life is not immune from suffering and that in fact we are called to deny ourselves take up our cross and follow Christ. We must put to death the deeds of the sinful nature and daily die to sin.

Yet we must not forget the resurrection power which is ours through the Holy Spirit. We are not left to ourselves. We have the incredible power of God. We can face down temptation. We can endure suffering and persecution in the strength that God gives.

We must Power amidst weakness, death and resurrection. This is the character of the Christian life and it need to be reflected in our attitude. We are not the sour suffering, destined to slog it out in the trenches, but neither are we the ever triumphant, immune to the difficulties of life. Rather we suffer and we triumph. We embrace death and resurrection.

We must live as if we are both dead and alive again. Dead to sin and self and alive in the Spirit of God. This is a moment by moment life for us as believers.

Let us not overshadow the resurrection or the death of Christ. Both are equally important and are meshed together. Let us take the celebrations of last week and live them today. Living dead to sin and alive to God.