

August 27, 2017
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Sermon Series - The Weak, Foolish, and Victorious Gospel
Sermon Text and Title - 1 Corinthians 15:20-34: But, Christ Has Been Raised

Sermon Points:

Drunk: Selfishness and Sin

1. Our Sure Resurrection With Christ (vv.20-23)
2. The Sure Reign of Christ (vv.24-28)

Sober Up: Turn from Sin to Sacrifice (vv.29-34)

Corporate Prayer:

Lord, help us not to be drunk on our selfishness and our sin. Help us remember the reality of our resurrection with you that will come and means that life in these bodies now matters.

Help us remember that we don't live for this life or our little slice of heaven on earth now, but we live for eternity with you. Help us remember that you are reigning and you will reign forever and deliver the kingdom to your Father for his glory.

And Lord, as we fill our minds with these realities, help us sober up and turn from lives of selfish sin to lives of humble sacrifice until the day we see you face to face, the one who lived a life of humble sacrifice to save us from our sins.

Drunk: Selfishness and Sin

The Corinthians had subtly let sin and selfishness grow and get them drunk on their own reputations, their own ability, and their own priorities.

But, the problem with the subtle intoxication of the world is that we begin to lose our gospel-senses. We begin to lose our balance. And a few drinks into the world and we begin to make excuses for sin and even worse, the further we go, the more we lose the beauty of the Savior. The further we go, the further the reality of eternity with Jesus becomes. The further we go, the more confident we are that we're OK in this sin.

Sin is deep and twisted and never stays by itself. The world, and our flesh, and Satan try to entangle us in our pain and our pleasures and get us drunk on little sins until we wake up one day staggering around looking for the next fix having forgotten about Jesus practically. And, sin destroys. It absolutely destroys us and everything around us. Fighting sin is not about legalism, it's about fighting by the Spirit of God with the promises of God for joy in Jesus that brings life to us and those around us and glory to God.

And in today's text, Paul tells us to wake up from our intoxication with the world and remember the sure resurrection and reign of Jesus. (Pray)

Our Sure Resurrection With Christ (vv.20-23)

Remember last week? The Corinthians had a new theory that the dead are not raised, which would mean Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised our message would be in vain, we would be false prophets, our faith would be in vain, we'd still be in our sins, all who have died in Christ would have perished, and we are a people to be pitied.

But, now Paul turns the tables with the good news that we ended with last week. But, Christ has been raised! And because Christ has been raised and has shown that he is indeed the Son of God it means the gospel is

true, our preaching is true, our faith is true, we are not in our sins, all those in Christ will never die, and Christians are not a people to be pitied.

We are not fools who lose what we cannot keep to gain what we cannot lose. (Jim Elliot)

So, Paul in a brilliant argument has shown what we'd lose if Christ wasn't raised and then declared Christ has been raised, to show the preciousness of what we cannot lose. Now, this week, Paul is going to bring the resurrection to bear on day-to-day life.

This week, Paul wants to help the Corinthians sober up with a couple huge, glorious realities that he hopes shine through the fog of worldliness with gospel light.

And it starts in verse 20:

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

First-fruits is an agricultural term that the biblical writers like to use to talk about the first of a certain kind of thing that guarantees there will be a greater harvest coming soon.

So, you can see why this is good news for the believers. Not only has Christ been raised, but in the resurrection of Christ we are meant to see and hope that many more will be resurrected like him. And that's what Paul explains in verses 21-22:

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Paul says that death came by a man and that resurrection from the dead also comes by a man. And then he gets more specific. In Adam, all die. And in Christ all will be made alive. This is one of the major themes of the Bible.

Back in Genesis 3, Adam ignores God, eats the fruit with his wife, and because of that, the curse of sin and death become a part of humankind from that moment on. We don't find any heroes without flaws in the Bible. From that point on there is sin and murder. Noah does some amazing, faithful, obedient things, but then he really messes up right after he gets off the ark. Abraham loves and obeys God, but often doubts God and tries to do things his own way. Moses is flawed. David is flawed. Solomon is flawed. They are all flawed. Sin lives in and corrupts even the most hopeful characters.

Romans 3:23 makes it clear that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Romans 6:23 make it clear that the wages of sin is death. So, sin has come through Adam, it's corrupted mankind, so that we've all sinned and earned ourselves death. And therefore, because of Adam, our first representative, we die. All of us. Death is coming for each one of us because of sin.

And yet, there was a hero that eventually came and lived a sinless life and conquered death, Jesus Christ. He is our 2nd representative. He is the perfect Adam. The God-man who perfectly obeyed the Father, fought temptation, died as the perfect sacrifice to pay for the sins of all who believe, and then rose again conquering death. And he is the firstfruits! There are more to come!

So, who will be made alive with him? It says, those "in Christ."

Here it is again, the beauty of the gospel. Look for this little phrase as you read through your Bible: "in Christ." In those two little words is a BIG doctrine called union with Christ.

Union with Christ means that by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus, his death to sin counts for our death to sin, and his resurrection life becomes ours. We are united with him in his death and resurrection. Let me read you my favorite verses on this:

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:3-4)

Do you hear how connected we are to Christ by faith? We HAVE died to sin. Our life IS hidden with Christ in God. Christ IS our life. We will appear with him in glory.

Adam brought sin and therefore death. Christ came and paid for sin, and conquered death as the firstfruits of resurrection. We were all born into Adam's sin and death. And those who belong to Jesus are born again, and by faith are saved from sin and enter into the eternal, resurrection life of Christ, which lives in us now by the Spirit until the day we rise to be with him.

Paul, goes on in verse 23:

But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

Notice, that while verse 22 says that "all shall be made alive" Paul is obviously talking about "all" who "belong to Christ" in verse 23. This is not a promise for everyone. This is a promise for those in Christ.

And that promise is this: Christ has risen as the firstfruits after he came the first time to conquer sin and death and when he comes a second time, we will rise with him for good, to dwell forever in his presence, in the new heavens and new earth, free from sin and death completely and free to worship him forever.

Our resurrection with Jesus is certain and soon.

The Sure Reign of Christ (vv.24-28)

Paul gives one more sweeping view of reality here. I want to start in verses 27-28 to deal with what exactly is going on there first, and then we'll backtrack to verses 24-26.

For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. (27-28)

Paul simply explains here that the Father has given his Son all authority. He has put "all things" in subjection under his feet. This phrase is brimming with Old Testament imagery.

In Genesis 3 after the fall and curse, God promises there is an offspring coming one day who will crush Satan's head under his feet, namely Jesus. In Daniel 7, the "Ancient of Days," gives all authority and dominion and an everlasting Kingdom to the "Son of Man," which is the favorite phrase used of Jesus in the gospels. In Psalm 110:1, a Psalm of King David, David says, "Yahweh says to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." In other words, there is someone who is Lord over David, but who receives authority from Yahweh to have all his enemies crushed, thus again pointing to the Son of God, to Jesus.

So, what's the point? The point is this, since before time began God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have been together in perfect holiness, delighting in each other and finding joy in each others' perfections. One God, three persons. One God, equal in nature, but differing in roles.

And part of the very nature of this divine, holy joy of God was to overflow and create so that others could see this holy display and find joy in it and then join it forever.

So, God created, but, then sin entered the world, and men could not enjoy this divine joy because of sin. And so, before the beginning of time, the Father and the Son agreed that a divine rescue mission would be accomplished. The Son would come into the mess of our sin, the mess of the world and would receive all the authority from the Father, and would give the decisive blow to conquer sin and death for all who trust him through the cross and the resurrection.

Then, he would return to his Father's right hand. Finally, he'd return a 2nd time and give the final, knockout punch to sin and death. And after that final knockout punch, every knee would bow and every tongue would confess that Jesus is Lord, and it will be to the glory of God the Father so that God is all in all.

In other words, the plan of redemption will be complete. In the New Heavens and New Earth it will be all God all the time. No sin or suffering to mess it up. When Jesus is declared "Lord," he will give the glory to his Father, submit to him, and the final, full, forever enjoyment of the three-in-one God will begin by all of those who have had their sins paid for by the blood of Jesus. And that is exactly what verses 24-26 pictures:

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father.

Christ returns and we are raised to be with him in glory. Then comes the end of earth, at least as we know it now.

Jesus delivers the Kingdom to his Father. Redemption is finished. Jesus wins. The glorious, perfect worship feast begins. But, we could paint this picture of final resurrection and final victory with a brush that makes us feel like all is hopeless until then. But, listen to the rest of those verses:

After destroying every rule and every 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.

Those verses teach us that Jesus is currently reigning, because he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. So, right now, Jesus reigns. He's not waiting to reign. He's not lost control right now. He's not wringing his hands at our circumstances until the day when we can finally help us. No, in fact, right now, he's reigning over everything. He's reigning over Satan, and Satan can only go and do what Jesus allows him to for his purposes. He's reigning over our suffering, using the brokenness and curse of this world to make us long for and depend on him alone.

And every time a believer fights sin by the Spirit, every time the gospel is preached and new, eternal life is created, and every time we obey, Jesus reigns. He is crushing Satan little by little under his feet and he is crushing Satan through his blood-bought people who live in the resurrection power of the Spirit of Christ now until the day we rise to be with him forever. *Jesus reigns now.*

And there is a day coming soon, when Christ will return and finally destroy every enemy. Every nook and cranny of Satan and sin. Even the last enemy, death. Listen to the picture Revelation 20:14-15 and Revelation 21:4 give:

Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

In other words, death itself is thrown away for good. It is no more. All those against Jesus go with it. And all those in Jesus, belonging to him are raised and he will personally wipe away every tear from their eyes...no more death, mourning, crying, and no more pain. Those will be done.

We will be raised with Jesus, death will be defeated and Jesus will wipe away every tear from our eyes. We will worship him and he will reign forever with his Father.

The glories and the beauty and the majesty and the power that will be in that place will make our noontime sun look like a light bulb, will make the Mona Lisa look like chicken scratch, will make the Grand Canyon look like a crack in a driveway, and make the most powerful thunderstorm look like a sprinkler.

There will be unimaginable joy living in the presence, and might, and beauty of God. The reminder of the reign and resurrection of Christ help us live for those realities today in the gospel-strength God supplies us.

Sober Up: Turn from Sin to Sacrifice (vv.29-34)

In these last 6 verses, the first 4 are examples of how the final resurrection and reign of Christ matter when the rubber meets the road of life. Let's read those now:

Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? Why are we in danger every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Now, there are at least 40 different interpretations of verse 29 with no solid historical proof for any of them that I can find. But, what is clear is that for some reason the Corinthians were doing something on behalf of the dead that they wouldn't have done if they didn't believe the dead were raised. My best guess is that some believers had been killed before having a chance to be baptized and that in honor of their faith, other believers had been baptized on their behalf later to show that they were now raised to life with Christ. That's an option that makes sense of the words and also makes sense of why Paul doesn't seem angry with them for it.

But, no matter what, Paul's point is clear: the resurrection changes how you live now. And that's the point in the rest of the examples too: Paul says, "I put my life in danger every hour because I believe I will be raised with Christ. I take up my cross every day and follow Jesus and fight with wicked people in lots of cities, because I believe I will be raised with Christ."

Paul's point is simple...the reality of the final resurrection and reign of Christ propels him to do very risky things for the cause of Christ, because he knows he will be raised with him someday, he knows he's on the winning team, and he wants as many people to be with him as possible on that final day.

Paul makes one final point of contrast: if we only have hope in this life, if there is no resurrection, then we should just eat and drink and be merry. In other words, we should just party in excess. We should just soak up as much worldly pleasure. We should run as hard as we can after everything that makes us happy in the moment, all the drinking, all the sex, all the power, all the instant gratification we can.

Don't you see that in advertising? Life is short! Run after sinful pleasure now. Life is short! Get as much as the next guy! Life is short! A little sin never hurt anyone. We are a culture run off of entitlement and envy. And it's because we all think all we have is this life and so we better hurry up and squeeze out as much of our little slice of heaven on earth here as we can. And even we Christians get caught up in this thinking. We get caught up in the here and now of this life and we give in to the call of the world that says they have something better to offer than Jesus. Or get caught up in showing we are the most consistently religious, trying to earn self-righteous points in the eyes of the world now. Or we get weary because it feels like Satan and sin is winning and so we give in a little because it's just easier and holiness is hard!

But look at verses 33-34...Paul calls us, because of the reality of the resurrection and reign of Christ to cling to the truth and to walk in the truth:

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

Paul says you can't play with fire without getting burned. He tells them not to deceive themselves and think they can give in to a little sin here and there, or be around sin here or there and think they won't be harmed by it. Then, he calls them to literally, "sober up" and walk away from sin and back to Jesus. To remember the truth and walk in the truth, instead of walking like they "have no knowledge of God," which would be shameful, since they do.

In other words, the world would say that time is short, indulge now! Time is short, a little sin won't hurt anyone! Aren't you tired? Just relax and give in. Show them how much better at Christianity you are and get some praise now.

But, Paul has reminded us that we will be resurrected with Christ because of our union with him. We have been forgiven. The gospel is real. We are not in our sins. We will not perish. Jesus is reigning and Jesus will reign and we will be with him forever.

Therefore, live in light of the resurrection and reign of Christ. Live as those who are made for another world. Live as those not on mission to squeeze as much prideful pleasure out of this world as possible, but as those on mission to bring as many people with you to eternity with Jesus.

Paul would say, don't be tricked. Don't drink with the world. Don't get tipsy. Don't get intoxicated. Sober up. Let the light of the gospel shine in your hearts again and remember you live for a permanent reality with Jesus, not a passing time in this world, and as you remember, let the fog fade away and turn a live a life of sacrifice not of sin. Live a life willing to look foolish for Christ, give up time for Christ, give up money for Christ, and take risks for Christ; not because it earns you anything, but because he has already paid for every sin, and you LOVE to live for him, no matter what pain it brings or how pitiful you look, because you know you will live again with him and all of life now is simply a short breath you get to use to make much of Jesus.