

RESURRECTION HOPE

Lesson Scripture: Mark 16; 1 Corinthians 15

Focus Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-14, 20-23, 42-45

Key Verses: If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. 1 Corinthians 15:19-20 (NRSV)

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8, 12-14, 20-23, 42-45 (NRSV)

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

1 Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand,

2 through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,

4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,

5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.

7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

12-14

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

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

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8, 12-14, 20-23, 42-45 (KJV)

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

12-14

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain.

20-23

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

21 For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being;

22 for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

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

42-45

42 So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is 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 physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.

45 Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

20-23

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

42-45

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

43 It is sown in dishonour; 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

INTRODUCTION

As noted before, this series of lessons focuses on the subject of justice. For today's lesson, we look at the links between justice and our celebration of Easter. Therefore, as you work through the lesson, look for these links.

We also address a related issue: how belief in the afterlife influences how we live, and our funeral service traditions. Psychologists tell us we cannot live

beyond our beliefs. In other words, our beliefs about what happens after death set the tone for our earthly goals, and the effort and resources we commit to achieve those goals. As Christians, we must be firm in our belief of eternal life and eternal rewards. If we are not, then as the Apostle Paul rightly observed, "We are more to be pitied than anyone else in the world."

Please follow closely as we look at examples of how a belief in the afterlife

impacts the lives of traditional Ghanaians. Briefly, we also touch on the effect that belief had on the icons in the American Civil Rights Movement. All of this set the stage for us to examine our own convictions about Christ's resurrection and the impact it has on our life and work for God.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

To fully appreciate Paul's' teaching in the **Lesson Scripture**, we must consider the audience to which it was first addressed. This audience included Greeks. At that time, Greeks believed that the soul was immortal (i.e. it did not die). So, we can say they did believe in some form of resurrection. However, they could not embrace the idea of a physical bodily resurrection. As is true for some people today, the Greeks found it hard to see a person who was physically dead getting up and walking out of the grave. Therefore, we can see in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul's arguments to push his audience past the limitations they were inclined to put on the resurrection of Christ.



They saw and had encounters with the resurrected Christ. It was no secret.

Paul started this argument with a reference to his previous teachings on salvation. He laid this basis to show how the resurrection story was but an extension of the Gospel message which they had already received and accepted. Then, Paul made the bold assertion that Jesus Christ whom they knew had died, was buried, and then rose again. And how did Paul know this? Many people could testify to its reality. They saw and had encounters with the resurrected Christ. It was no secret. There were many eyewitnesses.

In verses 9-12, Paul justified his own qualifications to preach and teach the gospel message. He himself had a personal encounter with the risen Christ. And this Christ called and equipped him to do what he was doing. In verses 12-19, Paul exposed the heart of his argument. He showed why belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ is so crucial to the message of salvation. Only a risen Christ can offer salvation. Only a risen Christ can give meaning to the gospel message. Without a living

Savior, Christianity was meaningless.

The Apostle then moved forward to show in verses 20-23 what the resurrection means to the believer. Christ's resurrection is the bedrock of the believers' hope for a better life. This is the life free of injustice. Christ's resurrection is God's assurance to all believers that they, too, will rise after death to a life in the Kingdom of justice. But how will all this happen? Paul explains in verses 42-45. Our natural human bodies, when compared with our spiritual bodies, are broken and weak. These broken, weak, physical bodies are buried in the earth. Then, as Christ did, we will rise from death with whole, strong, eternal bodies. That is how it will happen. That is what Easter is all about: God's assurance of life after death.

SANKOFA

In the West African country of Ghana, as in many other countries, various religions compete for the attention of the people. Although Christianity is now the

dominant religion, some of the traditional religious practices are still rooted among the people. In all the significant religions there, belief in the afterlife is common.

The traditional Ghanaian sees death as a transition point when a person moves from this plane of living to the higher stage of life. And the funeral services reflect this. Traditional Ghanaians hold firmly that the spirits of deceased persons

journey to join the spirits of the ancestors. This is the reason why the elaborate funeral services are so important. This belief extends to the idea that if the funeral rites are done properly, the deceased person will have a smooth transition and a warm welcome among the ancestors. On the other

hand, when the funeral rites are botched, the deceased persons miss the great welcome of the ancestors.

Even further, some Ghanaians still believe that in the second stage of life, the spirit of the deceased person helps to protect and guide relatives. Some of us will have difficulties with this

“ Our natural human bodies, when compared with our spiritual bodies, are broken and weak.”

idea. However, despite the various ways in which Ghanaians celebrate their dead, one thing is certain: they hold strong beliefs in the afterlife. This is the same belief the Apostle Paul points to in the set scriptures.

CASE STUDY

The legend of Deaconess Rosa Parks has a special place in American history. Her contribution to the fight for social justice is remarkable. Many have wondered what made this special giant of a woman tick. What was her motivation? Some of us believe that her famous quotes give a great hint of the answer to that question.

One such quote reflected her view of life after death. She is quoted as saying this: “Differences of race, nationality, or religion should not be used to deny any human being citizenship rights or privileges. Life is to be lived to its fullest so that death is just another chapter. Memories of our lives, of our works and our deeds will continue in others.” Do you see the big hint? Yes, it is right there: “...death is just another

chapter.” In other words, when we die, that is just the end of chapter one. There is another chapter. Some people may even say that a better chapter comes after death.

How did this view of life and death propel Deaconess Parks through the tough days of the Civil Rights Movement? Another of her quotes gives the answer. She said this: “I have learned over the

years that when one’s mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear.” Only a person with a solid view of life and death and the life *after* death can take such a position.

Therefore, our views of life and what happens after death determine how we live. If we see life as one dimensional, then we can just “eat drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” With such a mindset, we live in constant fear of losing life. We naturally run from anything that will threaten life.

On the other hand, when we see this earthly life as just the first chapter of life, we are more open to living fully. We take



The legend of Deaconess Rosa Parks has a special place in American history.

steps to follow our convictions. Our view of death, therefore, sets the framework for our lives. It explains Rosa Park's stubborn stance for justice. It explains Apostle Paul's endurance to preach the gospel in the face of daunting perils. Likewise, it will also explain the positions we take for justice, spreading the gospel message.

LIFE APPLICATION

In this lesson we discussed matters relating to life, death, and the resurrection. Most probably the discussions sparked thoughts of your own death and afterlife. At first glance, these are not the thoughts we usually associate with Easter. Easter is about joyous celebrations, Easter eggs, bunnies, and special food and drinks. But that is just the point. For believers, our sense of joy at Easter should reach beyond the clouds. And, this should happen not because of food and drink and Easter eggs. It should flow naturally, because we can view death with joy. Unlike the unbeliever, we see death as a mere

transition point. It will bring us closer to what we always wanted: eternal life in a kingdom of justice and glory.

So, let each believer examine his or her view of death. Consider how your views agree with the core message of the text. If you find agreement, then you will truly rejoice in Easter celebrations. If your views do not agree, you must make this a point of study and prayerful meditation. Also

consider discussing the matter with a minister or trusted mature Christian.

But our sense of high joy should not be restricted to the celebration of Easter. Therefore, consider the events and occasions when you appreciate the doors to eternal life which Christ's resurrection opened.

Consider regular Sunday services. Then, think about the quality of Bible studies and corporate prayer meetings. Finally, reflect on your private devotions. In some of these you must find occasions to draw joy from your position in Christ's body of believers. Reflecting on scriptures like Ephesians 1:5-6 and 2 Peter 1:2-4 will

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greatly enhance our appreciation of the resurrection story.

Above we noted how the belief in an afterlife influences funeral services. Personalize this point. Consider the thoughts and emotions you experience at the funerals of loved ones. Are funerals events of doom and gloom for you? Or, are they occasions of celebration and hope? Perhaps it is some of both. But, do not take it for granted.

Consciously examine your views and how these have changed over the years. Can you say that you are at the point where you see death as just the end of the first stage of life? If you are not yet at that point, are you getting there?

Nothing mentioned above should suggest that you not mourn the loss of loved ones when death comes. That is the human side of all of us. Even Jesus wept at the death of beloved Lazarus (John 11). However, in that same chapter Jesus assured us of Jesus' status as the "resurrection and the life." Yes, we can mourn when death calls. But even in that mourning we must

remember that the "resurrection and the life" is among us.

Finally, do not keep the wonderful message of the resurrection to yourself. Around us every day are people desperately looking for hope and meaning in life. Help them! Share freely with them the hope and meaning you have found in the resurrected Christ.



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QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe the resurrection of Christ happened exactly as given in the gospels? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think some people still have difficulties in accepting the bodily resurrection of Christ?
3. Why is it crucial for believers to defend the gospel account of the resurrection?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Listen to "Cornerstone" as sung by the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir.

Prayer: We thank you, Jesus, for opening the door to eternal life. We know there is perfect justice in your presence. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**April 6-April 12**

Monday	Mark 16:1-8 (Women Find Jesus' Tomb Empty)
Tuesday	Acts 9:1-9 (Saul Meets Jesus on Damascus Road)
Wednesday	Romans 5:12-17 (Free Gift of Grace and Hope)
Thursday	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (The Dead in Christ Will Rise)
Friday	1 Corinthians 15:24-28 (All Things Under God's Control)
Saturday	1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (Victory Through Our Lord Jesus Christ)
Sunday	1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-14, 20-23, 42-45 (All Are Made Alive in Christ)