

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Sown in Weakness; Raised in Power!

1 Corinthians 15

It was in Athens that Paul stood on Mar's Hill and proclaimed Christ to the philosophers. He made known to them "the unknown God" and pointed out that they should know Him because "in Him we live and breathe and have our very being." He said that we are "His offspring." (Acts 17:24-28). The philosophers eagerly listened to these new ideas. This was their forte'. They lived to hear "something new." (Acts 17:19-21).

These were the wisest people on earth, gathered around Paul that day. Just ask them! And then, as well as now, there were some things that were just not in vogue to believe. I suppose it was the first century equivalent to "political correctness." One thing that you just could not believe in and still be accepted by this group was resurrection.

It was when Paul began to expound upon the resurrection of Christ that every self-respecting philosopher began to sneer and mock (Acts 17:32). Some wanted to hear more, but most did not. It wasn't the "in" thing to believe. Instead, you were suppose to make fun of those who did believe in such things, thus improving your standing with the group (that,

unfortunately, is still the way many people determine what they're going to believe).

Against this backdrop, we come to another Greek city; Corinth. The same philosophies prevailed, and so special care was needed when addressing the resurrection. The converts at Corinth were from backgrounds that rejected the resurrection, so they needed help understanding and accepting the concept. This is certainly why the largest single passage in the Bible which deals with resurrection is found in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

The Resurrection of Jesus

They say "first things first". With the gospel, Paul said the "first" things (but not the only things) of the gospel are the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). Paul emphasized that the resurrection of Christ was not a new idea, but rather he appealed to the ancient writings of the prophets as evidence of the validity of the resurrection. It was "according to the Scriptures", he said (cf. Psalm 16:8- 11; Isaiah 53:7-9; 10).

After citing the ancient prophetic Scriptures, Paul gave further evidence; that Jesus had appeared to the apostles following His resurrection. He also appeared to many others, including more than five hundred on one occasion. And even better, most of those people who had witnessed the resurrected Christ were still around at the time the first Corinthian letter is written. They could be talked with; asked questions and, perhaps most importantly, watched. If what they said was true, they would be willing to die for their faith. We know from history that they were so willing. Their testimony is true!

Finally, Paul is able to add one more name to the list of witnesses; his own. Paul, the one who had been the chief persecutor of the church, had seen the church's risen Savior (vss.8-10). He invited an investigation of his life as he challenged; "but I labored even more than all of them." Because of what he had done to Christians before his own conversion, he was compelled to expend his life telling others of the truth he now knew about Jesus. In effect he was saying, "Why do you think I am so

driven in this work? It is because of what God has done for me despite what I had been."

Friends, do not delude yourselves; in the final analysis; the Lord has given us as much as He gave Paul. We, too, are saved by grace. We, too, are just as much forever in God's debt (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The Resurrection of Hope

(I COR 15:14; 20). Hope is necessary for inner peace. The promise of resurrection as seen through the resurrection of Christ gives believers undying hope. If this hope is untrue, then preaching and faith is vain. If this hope is true, then preaching and faith is worth more than anything this world can offer (1 Corinthians 15:14;20).

Part of the problem with people today is that they lack hope. Hope provides life its anchor (Hebrews 6:19). Without it, life is unstable. It loses its firm perspective on right and wrong as it loses its motivation to choose right over wrong. If there is no hope, then why worry about moral decisions at all?

Paul asserted that if his struggles with "wild beasts at Ephesus" (which is the unflattering way he describes the unruly mob that had wanted to lynch him) were only based upon a false hope concerning a false promise of resurrection, that there is no profit in standing for one's principles under threat. He says, if there is no resurrection it would be better to "eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32). Sadly, that fairly well describes the life perspective of the godless today.

The Resurrection of the Righteous

Our hope is valid because Christ has been raised thus giving assurance that one day our resurrection will follow (1 Corinthians 15:23). Of course, both the righteous and the wicked will be raised (John 5:28,29); the righteous to eternal life and the wicked to eternal judgment. But here, Paul does not discuss the future of the wicked. He is concerned here about the future of the righteous; that is, "those who are Christ's at His coming."

For the faithful, there will be a resurrection when Jesus comes. Then the end (vs. 24) will come. This end is described as the removal of the physical universe as we now know it and replacing it with a new realm (2 Peter 3:8-13; Revelation 21:1). Following "the end" will be a new beginning. Jesus will "deliver up the kingdom to the God and Father..." (vs. 24) and the last enemy, death, will have been conquered (vs. 26). At this time, all things will be subjected to the Father, "that God may be all in all." (vs. 28). It is in this sphere as the righteous dwell with God in their new, perfect home that eternity will begin.

The Resurrection Body

It would do little good to live in a beautiful, eternal home if our bodies continued to grow old and deteriorate (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). It would do little good for us "of flesh and bone" to inherit something that is unusable by "flesh and bone" (vs. 50). The resurrection of the body includes a miraculous change in its nature. Even those who are still alive will undergo this change "in a twinkling of an eye." (vs. 51,52). God has placed within natural bodies an ability to adapt in a limited way, but natural adaptation will not make our bodies what we need in "the new heavens and the new earth." The power of God will (1 John 3:1-3).

The Resurrection Song

"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). With the last enemy defeated, the songs of the righteous will express their joy as death itself, once so powerful an enemy, is reduced to a has-been. This statement is taken from a song of praise for God's favor that is recorded in Isaiah; (ISA 25:6-8). Thank God for the victory with which He blesses His faithful ones!

- Jon W. Quinn

The Armor of God

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13). Our Father has not left us defenseless when it comes to our battles "against the wiles of the devil" (v. 11). Earlier, Paul mentioned that the brethren should be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His great might" (v. 10). Let's take note of our armor that God has given us through Christ.

1. Having girded your waist with truth (v. 14). It is truth that can set us free (John 8:32). This gives us power over the enemy of lies, and the devil is that father of such (John 8:44). Without truth we have no defense against anything that is false. Truth is what is required for a soldier of Christ to be victorious.

2. Having put on the breastplate of righteousness (v. 14). It is this quality that the enemy abhors. Righteous actions (word or deed) causes those in opposition to be tormented further (Romans 12:20). Saints will be tempted to engage in carnal warfare (2 Corinthians 10:4), which would mean to take off our breastplate. Make sure it stays on and resist the devil and he will flee (James 4:7).

3. Having feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (v. 15). Any spiritual conflict would bring certain defeat without having a firm stand. Christians have the peace, which brings assurance, through the gospel (Philippians 4:7). Having doubts is to give a foothold to the enemy. Satan's earliest tool used to hurt man was by casting doubt: "You shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:3). The gospel of peace will cast out uncertainty (2 Timothy 1:12).

4. Taking the shield of faith (v. 16). The whole purpose of being a good soldier is to please our God, and without faith it is impossible to please

Him (Hebrews 11:6). The edge that children of God have is their ability to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). This enables them to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:16).

5. Take the helmet of salvation (v. 17). What greater comfort is there than knowing you shall be saved? What soldier would fear a battle when he is assured victory? The salvation of the Lord is there for those who will wear it. This is trusting in God who can deliver us (Matthew 6:13, 2 Peter 2:9). It is useless to fight without seeing the salvation of the Lord.

6. Take the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God (v. 17). Knowing that the only thing we are up against is everything that is not God's word, it is only fitting that the use of God's word would be our needed weapon. Too many soldiers are trying to defend truth without God's word. We must use the word for it has the power (Romans 1:16).

As is often pointed out, notice that the armor does not prepare one who turns his back to the enemy--he would be unprotected. This is why throughout the scriptures we are told to press straight ahead (Philippians 3:14). The narrow road doesn't have room to turn back for a rest. If you do that, you are not on the road.

Finally, our text in Ephesians 6, mentions, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (v. 18).

Are you wearing the whole armor of God?

- Chuck Bartlett

Think About It!

“It has been said that every baseball team could use a man who plays every position perfectly but there is no way to get him to lay down his hot dog and come out of the grandstand. It probably wouldn't be too difficult to find a man in the bleachers who would have knocked that last pitch out of the park if he had been at bat. But it is easier to talk a perfect game than to play one.

“Every congregation could use men who do everything perfectly, who preach without stumbling, who direct singing without a slip, who make announcements without a bobble, and who always teach their Bible classes superbly. But it is impossible to get them to leave the comforts of their homes on a cold day. Every church could use a man who knows how everything should be done, but it may be very difficult to get him to put down his paper on Lord's day morning or leave television on Wednesday evening so that he can be present to tell us what we ought to do and how to do it. Yes, it is much easier to talk than to demonstrate. The Christian life is a race, and we are to run it, not just sit in the grandstand looking on (Heb. 12:1). Being critical of others who do run does not entitle us to the prize. Don't waste your life doing nothing but being critical. We need your help, and you need to be in the race. So come on out of the grandstand!!!”

- *Author Unknown*

- > "Consider how much more you often suffer from your anger and grief, than from those very things for which you are angry and grieved."

 - > "What a pity human beings cannot exchange problems. Everyone knows exactly how to solve the other fellow's."

 - > "If you want to set the world right, start with yourself."

 - > "Christianity is often judged by what others see of it in you."

 - > "Bitterness corrodes the spirit."
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Led By the Spirit of God!*" (text: Rom. 8:12-17); Sunday evening: 1 Chronicles: Genealogy and the Reign of David!