

1 Corinthians 15:12-22. *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? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. ²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

In Christ all will be made alive.

Our faith is not nonsense

Our faith is a blessed and reliable source of confidence and peace

He stood in his utter misery and yet his faith allowed him to utter words of victory and triumph. Death and trouble, pain and sorrow, surrounded him, and yet he spoke with full confidence and remarkable clarity. ***"I know that my Redeemer lives."*** These are words of the Old Testament believer Job that we hold dear still today, words that we sing with full vigor nearly every Easter morning, hum throughout the Easter season, and occasionally sing with both tears in our eyes and joy in our hearts at the death of loved ones. "I know that my Redeemer lives." But Job's famous confession of faith does not merely end there, but remember how he continues, ***"I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes - I, and not another how my heart yearns with me."*** (Job 19:25-26)

The resurrection of Christ, the fact that we will see him on the Last Day, the fact that we too will be raised and we will stand before our Lord in our own flesh, to say that these are important truths of our faith is an understatement. The truth of our resurrection from the dead is vital to our faith and it is a fundamental element that is so directly tied to the resurrection of Jesus. We recall those precious word of Jesus, ***Because I live, you also will live (John 14:19).***

This truth is a rock of our faith, the hope that has the power to sustain us in the most difficult of times. This is the truth of which Job spoke thousands of years before Christ even came. This is the truth of which Paul preached and proclaimed boldly and confidently so that many more would have the peace that only the risen Christ brings.

This is the truth that we continue to hold dear thousands of years after Christ died; for Jesus did not remain in the tomb. He rose from the dead and he our living Redeemer promises that we will be raised as well. **In Christ all will be made alive.**

But this concept of the resurrection is a difficult one for some to believe and to accept; and though we believe it, in all honesty we can probably understand why others don't. The dead being raised from the grave; that sounds like some sort of science fiction or fantasy, doesn't it? The more logical conclusion is that we die and then that's that. The body is disposed of, in one form or another we turn to dust, and then that's it. The resurrection of any kind is illogical to the logical and rational human mind.

You may have read or heard before (it mentioned in the WELS daily devotions this week) of how Thomas Jefferson, our nation's third president, dealt with the miraculous resurrection of Jesus from the dead. He simply cut it out his Bible. In Jefferson's Bible, he would slice out that which was supernatural, and therefore, as one writer put it, the resurrection of Jesus does not survive Jefferson's blade. The account of Jesus' life in Jefferson's book ends this way, *"There laid they Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."* Clearly Jefferson's rational mind could not accept the concept of the resurrection.

That is the very kind of opposition that Paul would face as he stepped before a king and governor. In fact, when Paul spoke of the resurrection in Acts 26, governor Festus, called him insane. And yet Paul stood firm and held to his belief because it was backed by Scripture and fulfilled by Jesus. ***22 But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— 23 that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles. 24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."***

But Paul responded in a most helpful way: ***"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable.*** And Paul went on to explain how these events of Jesus death and resurrection were well known and accepted facts. For King Agrippa the death and resurrection of Jesus was an undeniable, it was an integral part of current events, it was all recent history, and the talk of the entire region. Along with the fact that were many eye witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, Paul also pointed his listeners back to the Scriptures that Christ had come to fulfill, the scriptures that predicted his resurrection. As he did so he was able to hold onto the very words of promise that the resurrected and living Savior Jesus had spoken. Such as the words he spoke to his friends saying, ***"I am the resurrection and the life."*** and ***"Where I am going, you also will be."***

Our faith is based on incredible things and divine truth, but our faith is not a blind faith based on foolish things. Our faith in the resurrection **is not nonsense.** It is, as Paul says, true and reasonable. We have the eyewitness accounts, we have the confession of believers like Job who made their confession that this would happen thousands of years before the death and resurrection of Jesus predicting that it would happen. We have the

faith of believers passed down from the apostles. We have the Holy Word of God. Starting with the words Moses and the prophets and their prophecies and predictions, we are then able to put that together with the accounts of the four evangelists and the words of the apostles like Paul to corroborate the account of Jesus life, death, and resurrection and what it all means for us. And because we are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses and all these testimonies that confirm the truth that Jesus rose from the dead just as he promised we can be confident that we too may enjoy the gift of the resurrection that our Lord has promised to us. We can know without a shadow of a doubt that we who remain in faith will be with our Lord body and soul for all time.

This is a lot to take in, this is beyond our full understanding, but by faith we believe it all. And our Lord Jesus calls us blessed because even though we have not seen, yet we have believed. Our faith is a testament to the wealth of resources in the Bible that point to Christ and his death and resurrection. Our faith is a witness to the power of the word of God and the Holy Spirit working through that Word. We believe in these incredible truths even as we live in a world that tries to deny such a faith.

We may not have to put up with the scrutiny of presidents trying to slice things out of our Bible, nor have we had to stand up for our beliefs in front of kings and governors, but the criticism and questions come and will continue to come from other sources. A critical co-worker might comment, "Why do you believe in such fairy tales?" A cynical neighbor will ask, "Why do you believe in this kid stuff? Sure, I went to Sunday School with you but I grew up, I moved on; why haven't you?" A brother or a sister, a friend or a family member might offer a compromise. "Well maybe Christ rose from the dead because he was the Son of God, but can you really believe that is going to happen for is going to happen for you?" Normal people don't just rise from the dead. Why, would you believe that?" And the questions come again and again as the devil works through a cynical world and prods at our sinful flesh. *Why, Why, Why?* This can be a serious challenge to our faith.

But our biggest challenge will most likely not come from a critical neighbor but our biggest challenge might very well come from within our own minds. Influenced by those around us, pushed by the devil, nudged and elbowed by a proud sinful nature, we start to wonder about the message of the risen Jesus. We start to wonder about all of God's word and his message: Do I really believe all this? What is it we are doing here, anyway? It all seems a little silly, a little pointless, a bunch of nonsense? Do I really believe that God's Son came to this earth, died for me, and rose again? Do I really believe that I too will rise from the dead? Do I really believe that Jesus has paid for my sins and opened heaven for me? Do I really believe that saying a few words while a few drops of water are poured out on a child's head can really cleanse him from his sin and make him God's child and connect him to the blessings of Christ death and resurrection? Do I really believe that the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper is the body and blood of Jesus that grants the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life? Do I really believe this; that all people from the dead or is this, and everything else, nothing more than nonsense?

Paul was dealing with all of this when he writes to the Corinthians. He was trying to put to rest the dangerous doubt that was being created and fostered by a deadly combination of false teaching, the influence of the world, and the sinful nature. Paul was writing to a congregation of believers who very much lived in a culture that encouraged people to question and to be critical, especially when it came to the topic of the resurrection. We hear it in the disdain in Festus' comments. We also remember another portion of the book of Acts that in Athens some philosophers showed their distaste for Paul's message of the resurrection when they asked, "What is this babbling trying to say?" (Acts 17:18) To the Greek mind of that time, and perhaps we can add the American mind of today to that as well, this whole idea of the resurrection is nonsense. This attitude was starting to affect the church in Corinth. Some were starting to give into this rejection of the resurrection and they were compromising the pure biblical teaching that Paul had given them.

And so Paul warns them of the danger of letting go of one piece of doctrine, when one teaching is compromised, where does it stop? That's his warning as he lays out a very logical argument that both disproves the false teaching that was being tolerated and leads the Christian to rejoice in the truth of Christ's resurrection which is directly tied to our forgiveness, our resurrection, and our eternal life. Our faith is not futile. Our faith is not silly, or worthless, or a bunch of nonsense and nothing makes that clearer than the resurrection of Jesus. Christ has been raised from the dead and the witness of the apostles and the very word of God backs up this truth. Our sins have been paid for, God has accepted that payment and he welcomes to heaven those who die in faith. Our God will receive us into heaven through faith in Jesus Christ and on the last day we will rise from the dead and see our Lord with our own eyes while standing in our own flesh. This is the truth, of which the Scripture testifies, and which leads us to rejoice with Job and so many others, "I know that my Redeemer lives!" How our hearts yearn within us. Like that Old Testament believer Job, like the apostle Paul, like Jesus' disciples, we know that even when this life is difficult, we have a sure and certain hope of eternal life that far exceeds the joys and hopes that this life can offer.

And this is all true, this not pointless nonsense or some children's fairy tale, but rather this something we can depend on and put our trust in, because Christ Jesus has indeed been raised from the dead. **Our faith is a blessed and reliable source of confidence and peace** because through our risen Lord Jesus we are no longer in our sins, we are at peace with God, and we know that one day we will rise from the dust of the earth and live with our God forever in heaven.

As we, this Easter season continue to gaze in wonder at the empty tomb, as we consider how we have been connected by faith through God's Word and through baptism to the death and resurrection of Jesus, our doubts are silenced, the skeptical questions are answered and we know that in Christ all will be made alive. Therefore we confidently stand together united with believers here on earth and those in heaven as we confidently confess, I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.