

Overcomer – Jesus is Risen, Hope is Alive

March 27, 2016 - Pastor Randy Eliason

Most people have never heard of these historical persons: Athronges, Simon of Peraea, Simeon ben Kosiba, Menahem ben Judah, and Theudas. They were all proclaimed “messiahs” from around Jesus day. They are mostly unknown because they and their followers died off. Jesus, two thousand years later, has 2 billion claiming to be his followers.

Jesus and the others have one thing in common: They died. There is one difference between Jesus and the rest: He rose again and is alive forevermore!

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-7; 12-21

“I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.

But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can’t be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man.”

The past two weeks we have been focusing on Jesus, our “overcomer”. We learned that he has overcome the wall of ignorance that has blinded us to truth.

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We have learned that Jesus defeated the penalty and power of sin by virtue of living a sinless life and by bearing upon himself the punishment for our sins.

Today our focus is on the last great enemy of ours that Jesus has overcome; the enemy of death.

In this passage Paul is addressing people who have begun to question or outright deny that there is a future resurrection for Christians who have died. He begins by asserting what none of them doubted: Christ (the Messiah) died and rose again in fulfillment of the scriptures. He reminds them of the fact of Jesus resurrection, established beyond doubt by the over 500 witnesses to Jesus resurrection.

He didn't write this as an attempt to prove or persuade, but to establish where he and his audience were in agreement; to focus on the common ground they shared before he engaged in persuading them where they had gone wrong.

I am not going to take the time today to review the evidence for the resurrection, so here are some resources that give evidence for our belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

Why the Resurrection? By Greg Laurie

The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel

The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus by Gary Habermas & Michael Licona

Here is Paul's line of argumentation:

IF...there is no resurrection for those who are in Christ,

THEN...Christ has not been raised.

IF... Christ has not been raised,

THEN...Our sins have not been forgiven, our faith is a sham, our preaching is a lie and waste of time.

BUT...Christ has been raised.

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Paul is arguing that the resurrection of Jesus follows to eternal life is the necessary consequence of Jesus resurrection, so much so, that to deny the future resurrection of believers is to deny Jesus resurrection!

Then Paul reminds them that death came through Adam but resurrection comes through Christ. We need to remember “why”. That is explained in Romans 5:12-17. Romans 5:12 “When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. *Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.*”

Vs. 17 “*For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.*”

Here is the point: Death is the result of sin, so when Jesus defeated the penalty and the power of sin, he consequentially defeated death!

The resurrection means:

1. We have a great eternal future guaranteed for us.
 - A. We will live eternally in God’s presence, free sin and Satan.
 - B. We will live eternally in resurrected bodies that will never be subject, suffering, sickness, or death.

The resurrection of Christ gives us real reason to hope for our future resurrection. The resurrection vindicates and validates Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of Lords. The resurrection is evidence that Jesus really did overcome both the penalty and power of sin on the cross.

Notice what the resurrection does and does not guarantee! It guarantees victory over death via resurrection. It does not guarantee victory by escaping death. The promise is resurrection after death, not exemption from death.

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This is our great hope and it is a hope that you need to hold onto in your dark times such as:

Death of loved ones: 1 Thessalonians 4:13 "...we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope."

Personal Suffering: 1 Peter 1:3-4;6 "It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay".

"So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while."

We are in the in-between times.

Sunday has broken in on our Friday. We still experience a lot of the effects of Friday, but with the guarantee that Sunday is on the way!!

Resurrection Sunday does not offer the hope of no defeat. It is the hope of turning defeat into victory; not the promise of avoiding death, but the promise of death being turned into life. Death is no longer what it used to be!! It is not the end, because we will rise again.

Resurrection Sunday doesn't mean you will have no Fridays. It is about God's power to take your Fridays and turn them into Sundays.

People have mocked Jesus for being buried in a borrowed tomb. Why buy a tomb if you're only going to use for a couple of days.

In John 12:24,25 Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a

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plentiful harvest of new lives. Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity.”

The history of the Christian church is replete with examples of God bringing life out of death, turning defeat into triumph, darkness into light. In Christ we are indestructible!

1. God took Saul who was attempting to kill the church and turned him into Paul and used him to build the church.

2. Bernard Ramm, commenting on attempts by modern man to discredit and do away with the Bible wrote, “A thousand times over, the death knell of the bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and the committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put!”

3. Voltaire boasted Christianity would be extinct within 100 years. Fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible society used his printing press to produce stacks of bibles.

4. When the communists took over China in 1950, missionaries were expelled, churches destroyed, bibles burned, pastors imprisoned. Today, according to some experts, China is on track to have the largest Christian population of any country in the world by 2025.

5. Jim Elliot’s attempts to bring the gospel to the Auca tribe in Ecuador seemed to end when he was killed by the people he was trying to reach. But rather than ending it ended up resulting in the conversion of many Aucans, and some say a 90% decrease in murder over the next two decades. David and Svea Flood’s attempts to bring the gospel to a tribe in the Belgian Congo seemed to die with the death of Svea Flood, but her physical death resulted in eternal life for over 100,000 people in that country.

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Remember when you are going through your darkest Friday that Sunday is right around the corner. Your Sunday is on the way!

2. We have the power of Christ's resurrection operating in us now by the Spirit so that we can live a new life.

Jesus has risen to bring about a new creation. It is already beginning in the lives of His people who walk in His Spirit.

Romans 6:4 "...just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives."

The new life Paul was referring to was a life that was free from the controlling power of sin. A life that is infused with the power of the Spirit to no longer serve sin, but to serve God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (ESV)

Jesus' resurrection not only gives hope for life after death, it also gives hope for a new kind of life - a Christ kind of life - in the present.

Christ has risen means you have hope for the future! That sure hope is intended to give you the strength you need to endure whatever "Friday" you are experiencing. Christ has risen means there is hope in the present! You have already been seated with Christ and filled with his power. He rose so you can rise up now and live for him.