

Easter 2
April 8, 2018

Acts 26:19-29
150-143-155-166

“Christ Has Indeed Been Raised from the Dead!”

- I. Confidently believe this truth.
- II. Boldly share this truth.

Dear Christian friends,

AH – the **Sunday after** Easter- back to normal. NO MORE Lenten services. **No more Holy Week** services. **No more big crowds.** Easter is done for **another** year.

Wait a minute! HOW can **we go back** to normal after what we’ve just **celebrated**? How can life ever be the same after standing at Jesus’ blood-stained cross and His wide-open and empty grave? How can our lives not be TOTALLY CHANGED after hearing the Easter angel say, **“Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said”?**

HOW? That’s what Paul was wrestling with in the epistle reading. **Some** in Corinth took all this talk about rising from the dead **as nonsense – foolishness.** But if there is NO resurrection – **if** Jesus is still dead and buried somewhere in the Holy Land – THEN don’t waste your time being a Christian – **coming** to church – or **reading** your Bible – don’t bother trying to live a **God-centered – God-pleasing** life. IF Jesus is still dead – **“(our) faith is futile; (we) are still in (our) sins, we are the most pitiful people of all.”** IF Jesus is **still dead** we’ve been GULLIBLE FOOLS and played for suckers.

But wait – it’s ALL TRUE! **“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead,”** Paul practically exclaimed. SO TOO us today. Easter may be over for another year but the fact remains, **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”** As we see in these verses 1)confidently believe and 2)boldly share this truth.

I. Confidently believe this truth.

Confidently believe that **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”** CONFIDENTLY believe it because at first there were SO MANY who **just didn’t** believe it. Go back to that first Easter morning. Those women heading out to Jesus’ grave – the disciples huddled in Jerusalem – they were all convinced that Jesus was STILL DEAD and buried. Look at Thomas in the gospel reading. **“Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe,”** he insisted. ADD Paul – then known as Saul – to that list. Paul had been convinced that Jesus was the BIGGEST FRAUD – that Jesus’ resurrection was one GIGANTIC LIE.

What changed the **women** – the **disciples** – **Thomas** – **Paul**? They ALL saw and ALL talked with the **risen, living** Lord Jesus. For them SEEING WAS BELIEVING. Seeing Jesus ALIVE with their own eyes convinced them that **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”** Their doubts replaced with JOYFUL CERTAINTY means we can also CONFIDENTLY **believe** this truth. Jesus was dead – but He isn’t anymore! Jesus bodily came out of His grave **alive** and **victorious.**

Confidently believe that **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead”** because that’s exactly WHAT GOD had promised in the OT. Paul tells King Agrippa, **“I am saying nothing other than what the prophets and Moses said would happen, that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles.”** Hear in those simple words BOTH God’s faithfulness and His grace. God’s FAITHFULNESS – when God makes a promise He **always keeps** it. God may take His time as we see it but God always keeps His promises at JUST THE RIGHT time.

Hear and see God’s GRACE as well. Yes, what UNDESERVED love. God saw us in **all** our rebellion and **defiance** – our sinful stubbornness and **guilt** – and God TOOK IT UPON HIMSELF to do everything

to save us. God sent His own Son born a true man TO BE our Savior. Jesus lived for us that life of **perfect love** and **obedience** that we owed God. Jesus took the sins of the whole world on Himself – took those sins to **Calvary's cross** and there **on the cross** the innocent Jesus suffered and died IN OUR PLACE. There Jesus shed His precious blood – sacrificed His holy life – to **“take away the sin of the world.”** ALL THAT as promised – AND NOW as also promised **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”** Oh, WHAT GRACE and faithfulness!

Now that risen Savior **“proclaims light to our people and to the Gentiles.”** Jesus turns the light on for us and now we CLEARLY SEE the **truth**. God is NOT some mean, petty tyrant OUT TO MAKE our lives miserable – out to spoil all our **fun**. God is our loving Father who ONLY WANTS **what's best** for us. Jesus is NOT JUST a **great guy** but our perfect Savior. IN JESUS **we have** God's forgiveness of all our sins – we have a whole new relationship with God – we are now going straight to heaven when we die – our **dead bodies** will be raised back to life on the Last Day. CONFIDENTLY **believe** that because the proof is that **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”** Yes, confidently believe that AND...

II. Boldly share that truth.

Let's set the stage here. Paul has spent the past two years in prison in the **city of Caesarea**. A new Roman governor named **“Festus”** has taken over. AS A ROMAN citizen Paul has appealed for a trial before Caesar in Rome. Festus realizes Paul has done nothing wrong but he needs to send Caesar information on Paul. So Festus asked **“King Agrippa”** for his help. This Agrippa's FULL NAME is **Herod Agrippa II**. Those other Herods mentioned in the Bible are all his relatives. Paul has just explained to King Agrippa how the risen Jesus had appeared to him on that **road to Damascus**. **“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. Rather, I first told those in Damascus and Jerusalem about it, and then throughout the entire country of Judea and also the Gentiles. I told them that they should repent and turn to God.”**

BOLDLY share the truth that **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead”** EVEN THOUGH it will cause you all kinds of **hardships** and **hassles**. **“These are the reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me,”** Paul tells King Agrippa. You know too what's happened to Paul on his **three missionary journeys** – the beatings, stonings, etc. Keeping his mouth shut would have been a LOT SMARTER and SAFER for Paul. But Paul couldn't do that – NOT SINCE he now knows that **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”**

BOLDLY share that truth but don't change any of it to KEEP PEOPLE HAPPY or to be more popular. **“I told them that they should repent and turn to God, while also doing works that are consistent with repentance.”** Paul didn't worry about STEPPING on some people's toes or turning some people off. ALL need to hear EXACTLY and CLEARLY **what God has** to say whether they like it or not.

BOLDLY share the truth that WE ALL need to **“repent.”** **Repentance is literally** a CHANGE OF MIND – a regretting what we've done. **Repentance is dropping** all the excuses and being honest – “I SINNED – I had no business doing – saying – thinking whatever. I ignored and defied God AND NOW I should be punished – STARTING here on earth and **continuing on** in hell forever.” The **sinful nature doesn't want to hear** that – ESPECIALLY when it comes to our PET sins. “I have to be SORRY about that – I have to stop doing that? NO WAY! At least, not right now – MAYBE LATER.”

“And turn to God.” That's the GOOD NEWS of the gospel. We return to God with an HONEST confession of our sins and God fully and freely forgives ALL our sins **for Jesus' sake**. God welcomes us back with **open arms** and as a loving Father He tells us, **“Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you.”** God takes us back NOT ON PROBATION but as His dear children in Jesus – heirs of eternal life in heaven. ALL THIS because **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”**

“While also doing works that are consistent with repentance.” God’s forgiveness is NEVER God’s permission to **keep on** sinning. To tell God we’re “SORRY” for whatever but then keep doing it is to make a mockery of Jesus’ cross. **For example, to tell God** I’m sorry for ROBBING BANKS and I will stop robbing banks AFTER **robbing five more** banks – that’s not repentance – that’s HYPOCRISY. We will never live PERFECT lives here on earth but our daily striving and struggling to live **God-pleasing** lives SHOWS – PROVES – that our words come from our hearts and are not EMPTY – MEANINGLESS words.

BOLDLY share this truth because all need to hear it. ***“I first told those in Damascus and Jerusalem about it, and then throughout the entire country of Judea and also the Gentiles. So I stand testifying to both small and great.”*** All people are BORN sinful. We don’t all commit the **same** sins but we all sin every day in countless ways. ONLY BY TRUSTING in Jesus does anyone have God’s **forgiveness** and God’s **promise** of eternal life in heaven. ONLY BY HEARING the good news that ***“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead”*** can anyone come to believe in Jesus as their Savior. It’s AS SIMPLE as that.

BOLDLY share that truth **even though** the majority of people will REJECT it. Paul’s words were HITTING HOME to **both Festus and King Agrippa**. But rather than FACE UP to **the truth** of what Paul was saying – rather than repent of sin – trust in Jesus as their Savior – change their lives around – INSTEAD they brush off Paul’s words with SNIDE REMARKS. ***“Festus shouted, ‘Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you insane.’ Agrippa said to Paul, ‘In such a short time are you going to persuade me to become a Christian?’”*** People still have their PETTY EXCUSES for shrugging off God’s Word **rather than taking it** TO HEART.

Paul doesn’t let their rejection STOP him. ***“I pray God, that whether in a short time or a long time, not only you, but also all those who are listening to me today would become what I am, except for these chains.”*** Paul was convinced that ***“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”*** That truth changed everything for Paul. **Changed** his eternity. **Changed** his life now. CONFIDENTLY believing this truth Paul just had to also BOLDLY SHARE it.

“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.” Easter may be over for another year but the facts of Easter CHANGE **everything** for us. SAVOR it. CONFIDENTLY believe and BOLDLY share the good news - ***“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”*** Amen.

APOSTLES’ CREED