



Independence Church Of Christ

Sharing The Freedom That Is In Christ

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THE RESURRECTION SHOWS THAT JESUS DEFEATED DEATH

Scripture:

⁵⁵O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. ⁵⁷But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1st Corinthians 15:55-57 (NLT)

Introduction

Death is the enemy of mankind and the just punishment for each person's individual sins (Romans 6:23). The mortality rate is, and will always be, 100%. No amount of effort, medical technology, power or riches can escape the clutches of death.

Christ rose from the dead because death could no longer hold Him, and we no longer need to fear death because Christ has triumphed over it. Death is no longer an enemy because, in Christ, we no longer need to fear the punishment that comes after death.

Where We Are Currently

In our self-centric world, we often live life from the viewpoint of how events and relationships affect **us**. The current pandemic is a case in point. So many things are forbidden, all in the name of protecting life. But if we have "*no life*", what exactly are we protecting? If we cannot be around each other and cannot worship together and cannot work or socialize in our communities, what is the point to this kind of living? Is it just about breathing and sheltering in place? Life is more than that. It must be about more than that.

The problem is this – if we are so concerned about ourselves only, we lose the meaning that is found in the resurrection. We are all excited about what Jesus did for **us**! But our perspective cannot be myopic. We must expand our view to the bigger picture. Yes, it's great that **we** are *led by the Spirit*, that **we** are more than conquerors, and that if God is for **us** who can be against us, but is our world so small that it

only revolves around *us*? There is an old saying that *the world's smallest package is a person all wrapped up in themselves*. The world's reaction to the current pandemic crisis is ample proof of that statement.

Paul addressed this problem with many of the faithful who met in various cities throughout the world of his time. His admonition was to **live** life... and to **live** life for God and for others. The self-absorbed life was, in Paul's view, antithetical to the Christian way to live life. To the Corinthian Christians he penned this statement:

¹² 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? ¹³ For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. ¹⁸ In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! ¹⁹ And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. - 1st Corinthians 15:12-19 (NLT)

In our current *living in fear* state, could it be we are proclaiming that there is a *useless faith* on our part? Are we more focused on the pitiful *shelter in place lifestyle* that puts a premium on the few years we have in the here-and-now rather than in our hope of heaven? Have we willingly given up our personal freedoms and our social and mental well-being for the sake of *living* out our meager lives (if you can call this *living*)? Why are we clinging on to what we know is temporal and not relishing the hope we have in the eternal? Paul would say, "...above all, you must **live** as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ... standing **together** with one spirit and one purpose, fighting **together for the faith**, which is the Good News (Philippians 1:27 NLT). A few verses earlier he had said this: ²¹ For to me, **living means living for Christ, and dying is even better**. ²² But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So, I really don't know which is better. ²³ I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. ²⁴ But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live (Philippians 1:21-24 NLT). Paul is asking the penetrating question, "Where is the downside to dying?" And that is the question you must answer. If COVID-19 (or a myriad of other, currently more deadly, diseases – i.e. the Flu or cancer or heart disease) were to take you, doesn't that just get you to your eternal destination sooner? But we continue to **live** because for us to live is to live out Christ in our lives and share His love with the world. When the time comes for the Lord to bring us home, let us be ready and not fearful, looking forward to His welcoming home celebration.

Paul's greatest discourse about this subject is found in Romans Chapter 8. To the *self-centric* it is viewed and interpreted differently than Paul intended. Indeed, it does spell out a lot of truths that are personally beneficial (*we are led by the Spirit, we are more than conquerors, if God is for us who can be against us*), but the true emphasis that Paul was referencing was on The Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the death He defeated by virtue of that Resurrection. Read carefully and thoughtfully Paul's discourse from Romans Chapter 8:

Romans 8 (NLT)

Life in the Spirit

8 ¹ So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ² And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. ³ The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent His own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁴ He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

⁵ Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. ⁷ For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. ⁸ That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

⁹ But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to Him at all.) ¹⁰ And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. ¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, He will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

¹² Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³ For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, "Abba, Father". ¹⁶ For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. ¹⁷ And since we are His children, we are His heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share His glory, we must also share His suffering.

The Future Glory

¹⁸ Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later. ¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who His children really are. ²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full

rights as His adopted children, including the new bodies He has promised us. ²⁴ We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. ²⁵ But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

²⁶ And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. ²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them. ²⁹ For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And having chosen them, He called them to come to Him. And having called them, He gave them right standing with Himself. And having given them right standing, He gave them His glory.

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

³¹ What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ³² Since He did not spare even His own Son but gave Him up for us all, won't He also give us everything else? ³³ Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for His own? No one — for God Himself has given us right standing with Himself. ³⁴ Who then will condemn us? No one — for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and He is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

³⁵ Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? ³⁶ (As the Scriptures say, "For Your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") ³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow — not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below — indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Today, the world celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ some 1963 years ago. But this Easter, things are different – different than at any time since His resurrection. We have had our fellowships and celebration taken away from us by government decree. We have willingly capitulated to fear rather than hope (which is the very essence of the Resurrection). We have trusted in our medical and governmental authorities over God to provide answers to our current crisis. It should be obvious to all that the human inspired *cure* is worse than the disease. We were not created to *shelter in place*, God did not design us for that nor did He intend for us to covet our temporal lives over that of our eternal lives. But the world will be silent this Easter and mankind will cower in fear in their rooms while worship sanctuaries remain empty and lifeless. We have defied the spirit of the Resurrection for a self-centric existence as if God would not – does not – protect His own. I mean, *if God is for us, who can be against us? Can anything separate us from Christ's love? Do we truly believe overwhelming victory is ours through Christ?* Nothing in all

creation (not even a virus) can separate us from the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. And we understand it clearly through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We are not advocating defiance of governmental orders. What we are advocating is *great faith* in the face of the virus that has petrified our world and the more debilitating reaction to that virus that has taken our personal freedoms away. Let us embrace a bold faith in Christ and share that faith with others. Now is the perfect time to challenge our world, nation and communities to **live** by faith – a faith in the power of our God and in the meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as He defeated death. That is our hope. That is our destiny.

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