

<b>Series:</b> All Things Rise	<b>Reference:</b> 1 Corinthians 15:3-4	<b>Title:</b> Raised Up	<b>Date:</b> 04.21.2019
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Website Writeup:</b></p> <p><i>Life from death. From hopelessness to hope. So let all things rise &amp; bless Your Name, all things made right &amp; new again! That is the hope of Christians due to Jesus work on the cross &amp; His resurrection from the grave!</i></p>			

### Color changes in text indicate slide changes

Paul begins in vv1-2 of 1 Corinthians 15 by saying... *“Now, brothers & sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received & on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”*

He’s emphasizing the importance of the gospel message, of which he’s about to remind them. The good news of Jesus they’d already received, and on which they’d taken their stand in life. Taking a stand means to come up against, or weather opposition. It’s the image of standing upright leaning into the wind in order not to be blown over. He states clearly, the gospel of Jesus saves you, but if we change the story, leave part out, compromise it, mix it with other philosophies, or even just take it too lightly - the gospel ceases to have saving power, and all of this would be in vain.

Paul argued the same with the Galatians when they were toying with the notion of adding requirements to the Gospel. In Galatians 5:1 he said, *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”* The same thought, stand firm. Stay pure to the Gospel message, since if they added to the Gospel, they’d have lost it - Jesus would mean nothing, and freedom goes away.

An excerpt of a speech given by Winston Churchill (*Harrow School, Oct. 29, 1941*), always comes up when speaking of standing our ground. He said to the pupils of the Harrow School, *“...never give in, never give in, never, never, never - in nothing, great or small, large or petty - never give in except to convictions of honor & good sense.”*

Paul might have said it this way, *“...never give in, never give in, never, never, never - in nothing, great or small, large or petty - never give in except to convictions of Jesus’ death & resurrection.”* Because, according to the Scriptures, this standing firm in gospel purity is of utmost importance.

It’s also found in Ephesians 6 where Paul speaks of the spiritual battle in which we all engage as Christians...<sup>11</sup> *Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh & blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world & against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after*

*you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup>In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup>Take the helmet of salvation & the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph 6:11–17)*

After you stand firm, stand firm then...never give in, never give in, never, never, never... same sentiment...

Paul follows the first two verses in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians with the purest form of the gospel there is...*“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures....” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)* That is the Gospel.

These 2 verses have it all, don't they? A devotion to the directive nature of the Scriptures (Paul uses, *according to the Scriptures* twice here). The Cross, God's pouring out judgment on Jesus for the sin of humankind. The empty tomb, his conquering of death - the spiritual battle won. Even discipleship, Paul received it, took it in, knowing this is something of such great value, usefulness & importance that it must be passed on to others. He both becomes disciple as a result of this message, but also makes disciples of others.

It's a message of complete allegiance, not to be kept to ones self...it's to be given away. We think about that a lot at Six:Eight - the Great Commission, His last command, our first concern. <sup>18</sup>*Then Jesus came to them & said, “All authority in heaven & on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Mt 28:18–20)*

We do well, like the Galatians, Ephesians & Corinthians, to catch this message of such high priority. To realize, the Gospel isn't one thing in a list of things important - it's of first importance. Utmost importance. It has the power to save. It must be kept pure, in first place, before all things. The Gospel's on its own shelf, above all else, all other things in life fall in line accordingly with it. The first-order business here is the death, burial & resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus didn't have to earn His authority over me, but he exhibits His is right as king over my life by his death & resurrection. John Wesley stood by his fathers' deathbed & listened as he was told the most important thing his father thought to tell him in his dying moments. He said, “The inward witness son, the inward witness - this is the proof, the strongest proof of Christianity.” In other words, the inward witness, the transformed life, that John Wesley would center everything on the person & work of Jesus. That even

inwardly we are seen as obedient to Christ, not just in some religious rituals, but inwardly we are convinced that Jesus is Lord - and it makes a difference in who we are. The process of spiritual formation where we walk in obedience to the Gospel allowing ourselves to be purified as Christ is pure; ordering our desire to put it into place with reference to what is good according to God.

The Scriptures speak of Jesus as God incarnate. God come in the form of a man. *John said in chapter 1 of his Gospel account, <sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh & made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one & only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace & truth. (Jn 1:14) And also, <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God, but the one & only Son, who is himself God & is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. (Jn 1:18)* Jesus, God incarnate, God in flesh. Colossians 2:9 reiterates this truth, <sup>9</sup>*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...*

*Colossians 1 corroborates as well...<sup>19</sup>For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. <sup>21</sup>Once you were alienated from God & were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup>But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish & free from accusation - <sup>23</sup>if you continue in your faith, established & firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard & that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. (Col 1:19-23).*

Notice how similar this is to the words in 1 Corinthians 15. Continue in faith, established & firm. Do not move from the hope held out in the Gospel. The gospel we heard. One we proclaim. One we share. And faith is not some blind belief, faith is an active obedience to Jesus due to his work on the cross & his being raised up from the grave.

Dallas Willard said, we must have always both the Cross & the Resurrection - we cannot preach one without the other to ourselves or anyone else. If so, we'd have a mistaken view of salvation. But both together reflect the present spiritual life of believers; resurrection life. One in which Jesus does not only save me from my sin, but transforms me, bringing life & light to all areas in the here & now! Continual spiritual formation under His grace.

We serve under the reign of Christ in His kingdom, it's not a choice to do so or not for the Christian. *Colossians 1:13-14 say, <sup>13</sup>For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness & brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* 1 Peter 2:9 agrees...<sup>9</sup>*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Romans 6:18 states, <sup>18</sup>You have been set free from sin & have become slaves to righteousness. We who claim Jesus, know this Gospel is of first importance to not only us, but the world. Because in the Gospel story we see God both speak & act for His glory on our behalf.*

According to the Bible, Jesus is God, come to bring us into this wonderful kingdom of light - a story of 1<sup>st</sup> importance to us. But, it also teaches that humanity killed Him. And the thing which is so surprising about the whole story is that death couldn't hold him. On this Easter day, all those years ago, it was proven - God reigns over all things...even death. That not even our sin could kill Him, contain Him, or silence Him. That He loves us enough to go through the most humiliating death possible & come out the other side still embracing us. It's not just because He loves us, it's because He is Love - it's who God is...He can be no other way. It's why all other religious thought or philosophy fall short, they are either too human, or not human enough! They are marked by petulant gods, or systems of thought, which who only reflect our base nature, or they don't have the divine spark of love & justice which overcomes all things.

OUR FIRST ORDER MESSAGE - If this was first order stuff for Paul, it's priority for the Church. Our message isn't, primarily, generalized religious information about how to have a better life. Jesus isn't a set of principles to make things better for me. This isn't the message of Oprah or Dr Phil. The gospel isn't primarily about having better marriages, raising resilient children, managing money well, or even being a good person although those things are addressed & made better in obedience to Jesus - all of that's secondary to Christ crucified, resurrected & what that means to the world. This isn't a self-help program, or pop-psychology. We don't place Jesus on the shelf along with all other incomplete mediocre philosophies of life, as if we could pick & choose what works 'for me' today. Our focus isn't on the self, it's on Jesus. We're not asked what we think is good for us by God. Without asking, God makes the move by sending His one & only Son to the cross for us. He alone knows what we need & provides it for the sake of His glory among the nations.

We proclaim Jesus crucified & raised up for the Glory of God's Kingdom here on earth forever. We don't argue, nor care about proving that to anyone. Take it or leave it. This message has no equivalent. We believe it's Truth with a capital T. The only Truth. The one Truth. The Gospel Truth. As He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through me!" (Jhn 14:6) Our message is, first & foremost, a declaration of who God is (Jesus) & what He's done (overcome death by His own death & resurrection)! The Church bears the very cherished story of God incarnate crucified & raise up. We're not apologetic about it, nor ashamed of it. We're bold & respectful with it - we also have received it & realize the importance of sharing it with others - since everyone needs Jesus whether they admit it or not.

COME TO RECEIVE - It's also not lost on us, Paul says this message isn't only what he's passing on, but what he's received. For every believer there's a sense in which we must come to faith with open hearts & open hands. We come in our poverty. We come in our weakness, and we receive Jesus. It's the ultimate vocation of the church to receive & proclaim Christ. The ultimate goal of worship is to receive & proclaim that Gospel of first-order importance.

INCARNATION, RESURRECTION - God isn't making chessboards for entertainment; instead He's made the world & entered into it, at the deepest level possible, up to &

including taking on flesh & enduring the stinging loss of death! And after lying in His tomb, stone-cold dead for three days, He was raised up to life for us & to His glory!

What has happened in the world, God has allowed to happen to Himself. It's the incarnation & the cross which tells us that God intimately knows our suffering. And as the incarnation is bound together with the crucifixion & resurrection for all eternity - we know that what happened to Jesus, that he was raised up, can also happen to the world! You can't preach the Cross without the Resurrection. It's the hope that every feeble & weak thing will be strengthened. Every broken thing mended. Every dead thing will be raised to life.

This is part of the beauty & hope of resurrection, that God's doing His very best work in the very worst of places. If you've been around here long enough, you would've seen this image (Andre Serrano, The Piss Christ), an image made to upset the church.

Andre Serrano submersed a crucifix into a beaker filled with cows' blood & his own urine, took a picture, calling it, 'Piss Christ'. Senator Al Demato proceeded to rip up a copy on the Senate floor. The National Gallery in Australia had to close right after opening the show in 1997 due to two attempts to destroy the image. In Time Magazine, Newt Gingrich said this was prototypical of the cancer which is eating away at our society. He was right; it represents the cancer that is eating away at our society.

What's the world coming to? How bad can it get? Story after story in the news reflect the evil of man against man & the sin which permeates our culture. In the end you ask, where's God? Why isn't He destroying this filth!? He did, and is, through the cross & the empty tomb. He's transforming people. Restoring the image in us which we were originally created to be, one which reflects a God that is Love. Jesus immersed himself in the blood & urine of humankind in order to change it from the inside out. To transform it. Redeem it. To reconcile it to Himself.

This is why Christians can endure pain & difficulty, perhaps even expect it & know that we've not been abandoned or left for dead - because Jesus goes to the extent of immersing Himself in it with us. It's both so human, but yet so divine at the same time. A unique story with no equivalent. This is why true believers in Jesus will go the extra mile in justice, or reconciliation with others, or in showing mercy in practical ways, because we anticipate life & resurrection of dead things! Dead relationships. Dead situations. Hopeless causes. Where others give up Christians see life because of Jesus.

But even when all efforts fail, which they often do, since we minister in a world where people must respond to Jesus, and often don't...we still have an undying hope resonating with us. Because we know that the resurrection of Christ will somehow make right all things, even if we do not see it in the moment! *As Frederick Buechner noted, "Resurrection means that the worst thing is never the last thing."* And as our signature song for this series, *All Things Rise*, says... "So let all things rise & bless Your Name, all things made right & new again!" That is our hope in Christ.

Let's end with the words of Colossians 2:6-10... <sup>6</sup> So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted & built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow & deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition & the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, <sup>10</sup> and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power & authority. (Col 2:6-10)