

The Warrior Lives

1 Corinthians 15:1-20

April 17, 2022

HDBC

The first house we bought was near five cemeteries. I often walked through them, reading the gravestones. Most are simple and direct. Names and dates. But there are some that go beyond and can be rather interesting. **In his book, The Darkness and the Dawn**, Chuck Swindoll offers some interesting messages etched into actual grave headstones in various places. Here are a few.

Here lies Les Moore, Shot four times with a forty-four. No Les, No Moore.

Anna Wallace

*The children of Israel wanted bread; The Lord sent them manna.
Old Clerk Wallace wanted a wife; The devil sent him Anna.*

*Beneath this sod, a lump of clay, Lies Arabella Young,
Who, on the twenty-fourth of May, Began to hold her tongue.*

Lonely widow wrote this one which appears on an old headstone in Vermont.
*Sacred to the memory of my husband, John Barnes, who died Jan. 3, 1803.
His comely young widow, aged 23, has many qualifications of a good wife
And yearns to be comforted.*

In a Silver City, NV cemetery

*Here lies Butch—we planted him raw,
He was quick on the trigger, But slow on the draw*

My kids have promised that on my gravestone will read the simple but bold phrase,
Shut the door!

You can visit a possible site of the burial of Jesus. It's an empty tomb. There is a sign, ***He is not here, for He is risen.*** That empty tomb declares a message to every traveler who enters it, ***The Warrior Lives.***

This is not simply a religious belief, but is verifiable, historical fact. That changes everything. 1 Corinthians 15 explains how it changes things. Note 4 things.

1. The place of the resurrection (1-4)

Four men wrote **accounts of the life of Jesus** and none of them ended the story with his death. They all recorded the miracle of His resurrection. His resurrection is not simply **a postscript to the story**. It is not a casual addendum. It is in fact **the pinnacle of the story**. He died for our sins. But without the resurrection His death would have been meaningless. The resurrection is the **linchpin of our faith**.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote of the resurrection. They described it as a real event, providing **descriptive details** that offer credibility to the **veracity of their accounts**. They established the fact of the resurrection.

Here, in 1 Corinthians, Paul began with its **essential place as part of the gospel**. It is not the death of Christ alone that saves. It is the death, burial and **resurrection** of Christ that saves. **This is important**. No one gets saved simply by believing that Jesus died for his sins. Saving faith includes a belief in the resurrection of Jesus, as well.

Some were claiming that there was no resurrection . . . of anyone . . . including Jesus. Paul is quick to refute that error and point out that the resurrection is essential to God's plan of salvation. Without it there is no salvation. If ***The Warrior does not live***, neither will we.

2. The witnesses to the resurrection (5-11)

Keep in mind that most of these people were still alive when Paul wrote this letter. They could corroborate what Paul wrote.

1) Peter (5)

Peter was crushed when he had failed Jesus. Here is an interesting thing. On the morning of the resurrection, some women came to the tomb to finish preparing Jesus' body for permanent burial. They found an empty tomb and were given instructions by an angel from Heaven. Listen to what the angel said. *Go, tell His disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you to Galilee;*

2) The Twelve (5)

The Twelve was a designation for the group of disciples. There were no longer twelve because Judas was dead. We also learned that Thomas was missing for that first encounter with Jesus. So it was only 10.

3) Five Hundred (6)

Quality witnesses in the disciples. Quantity witnesses in this group.

4) James (7)

Two apostles with that name. I believe this would have been James, the half-brother of Jesus. He was originally a skeptic, but now becomes an eyewitness of the resurrection. We do know that his life was radically changed. Became the pastor the church in Jerusalem and a key leader.

5) Paul (8)

I love the humility of Paul. He acknowledged his unworthiness. Jesus appeared to him, on the road that leads to Damascus, where he was scheduled to arrest and imprison Christians. It changed his mind and heart. Rather than arrest them, he joined them

3. The importance of the resurrection (12-19)

Did it change anything? Paul's bold answer is YES. He elaborates.

Verse 12 sets the stage. Some were saying that there was no resurrection. Paul quickly points out that if this true, then Christ as not been resurrected. And if that is true there is a domino effect of negative consequences. **If Christ has not been raised the following would be true.**

1) Preaching is meaningless (14)

Vain – Meaningless. Of no worth. Apart from the resurrection the preaching of the Gospel would be powerless. The gospel has the power to change lives as it is preached. Without the resurrection it would be powerless.

2) Faith is worthless (14)

Faith in a dead man is worthless faith. If Christ is dead, then he offers me no hope when I die. Our whole system of faith is based on the truth that Jesus lives. If that is not true, our entire faith system crumbles.

3) Witnesses would be liars (15)

This is a strong statement, but is logically true. If Christ had not been resurrected, then anyone claiming to have seen him would be dishonest.

4) Our sins are not forgiven (17)

Without the resurrection there would be no forgiveness of sins. The resurrection validates the declaration of Jesus on the cross that ***It was Finished***. Meaning that He had indeed paid in full the price of our sins. His resurrection was the stamp over my sins that reads ***Paid in Full***.

5) Believers who have died have perished (18)

Those who have *fallen asleep*, those who have died, have perished. They are gone forever. If Christ could not conquer death for himself, then he could not conquer it for others. All O.T. saints are not in Heaven. Stephen, James, etc.

6) We are to be pitied (19)

If all this is vain, then we are to be pitied as fools. Without the resurrection, then it is all a charade, a mockery, a bad joke.

But look at verse 20. Paul quickly moves from the hypothetical to the real.

4. The hope of the resurrection (20)

Paul affirms the resurrection and then makes an interesting statement.

Christ is the ***First Fruits***. We don't speak in those terms very often today. Today we would say ***a sample***. *When you go into a fudge shop they offer you a sample. It is a taste of what is to come. It points to more coming.*

It brings with it great hope for our future. More than hope, assurance. The great enemy of life, has been crushed. The claws of death have been rendered impotent by the might resurrection power of Christ.

The great plague of London in the seventeenth century was known to the people of that time as the Black Death. This epidemic crept through the dark streets of that vast city, as an ugly, sadistic killer wreaking havoc. In May 1664, when it claimed its first few victims, it was ignored.

By the next May 600 had died. By June 6,000 had died. By July 17,000 had died. By August 31,000 died in that month alone. People fled the city. But the disease was already crawling across Europe. In the end 70,000 people died.

It was called the *Black Plague* for two reasons:

First, the victims had large black splotches across their body.

Second, the blackness of ignorance surrounded the cause of the disease.

Most people believed it was caused from polluted air. Today we know that rats and fleas carried the disease. Doctors would take victims outside to a bed of roses. They would circle the plants holding hands breathing in the fragrant air. They believed this would clear their lungs of the disease.

For those too sick to go outside, doctors would stuff flower petals in to their pockets and sprinkle them on the bed of the patient. For those close to death the doctors would sometimes burn the petals, near the patient's nose, hoping the smoke would enter the lungs and clear them.

None of these worked. People died, by the thousands. But these rituals gave birth to a rhyme that was first sung by the man who pushed the cart loaded high with the bodies of those who had died. As he made his way to the cemetery he could be heard chanting . . .

Ring around the roses, a pocket full of poses. Ashes, ashes, we all fall down.

The last line of that little rhyme is so true. We all fall down. We will all die. But the good news is that through Christ we can be raised back up. And those who trust Him will. His resurrection makes all the difference in the world. That's why we gather each Easter and each Sunday. It is because . . . **Christ is risen.**

Do you believe it? If so, have you acted on that belief? Romans 10:9-10

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Have you believed with your heart and confessed with your mouth?