

Introduction

Christos anesti! These are glorious words are they not! I want us to begin this morning by turning not to our sermon text but to Luke 23:50 and read through Luke 24:9. Hear the wonderful account of Jesus' burial and resurrection. Please stand for the reading of God's word.

[Read Luke 23:50-24:9; Pray]

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was not an afterthought. It was as much a part of God's eternal plan as was the death of Jesus. Jesus had told his disciples on several occasions that he was to die and would rise again. Luke reports to us in chapter 18 (vv. 32-33) how Jesus alerted the disciples of what was to come. Referring to himself as the Son of Man, he said, "he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." And as we just read, the young men in the tomb told the women to remember how he had said when they were back in Galilee that he would be crucified and on the third day rise. And they remembered his words.

What he had foretold came to pass. This was the plan of God. When Jesus was on trial, God was on the throne. When Jesus was mistreated, God was on his throne. And when he was crucified just as when he was being raised from the dead, the plan and purposes of God were being carried out. Peter said it this way in his sermon on Pentecost: "Men of Israel: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst . . . —this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of godless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it." Peter then went on to say that David spoke as a prophet of Jesus' resurrection when he wrote in Psalm 16, "you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption."

The death and resurrection of Jesus are vital to the gospel. Paul makes this abundantly clear in 1 Corinthians 15. Listen to verses 1-4. "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised in the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."

The gospel must be welcomed and believed if one is to be saved from the penalty of sin. This gospel is what Paul proclaimed to the Corinthians. The good news is this. Christ died for our sins; he was buried; and he was raised on the third day. So central is the resurrection to the gospel that Paul writes this in verses 12-17 of 1 Corinthians 15.

"Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. . . . and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

The death and resurrection of Christ are linchpins in the plan of God to bring forgiveness of sins and salvation to sinners. And so this is Resurrection Day! For those who have been united to Christ by faith, it is a happy day, a day for celebration and joy, a day for exuberance and delight. This day is when at the forefront of our minds is that work of God which places an exclamation point on all that the Bible says and on all that Jesus did!

In the study of happiness that we have just completed, we have been reminded how God delights in making his people happy, in giving us joy in him. He gives us good tasting food, beautiful scenes across the globe, a warm sun, a starry sky, joy-inducing pets, love of family, enriching friendships, and amazing plants and animals that bring wonder. But all those enjoyments would mean nothing without being reconciled to God. And along with reconciliation, God promises to those who turn from their

sins and believe the gospel an eternity of amazing delights in the new heavens and new earth. In resurrection bodies God's people will delight themselves in him as they look on his face and bask in his presence not simply contemplating the beauty of the Lord but looking at him face to face. That promise is for a world in which righteousness dwells! There will be no more sin and no more temptation to sin because his work in his people will be complete!

As we think on the resurrection of Christ Jesus today, every believer should be really happy as we think of the salvation obtained through Christ's death and resurrection and the promise of a future resurrection in the new heavens and new earth. But the resurrection of Christ is also critical to every day living for every one of his disciples. Laying hold of the reality of Christ's resurrection is critical as we live life in the trenches, as we walk in the midst of spiritual battle, and so that is where we are going to turn for the remainder of our time this morning.

Turn with me to Romans 6. We will be studying what Paul has to say to us here this morning in verses 1-13. I am going to read that now. You may remain seated.

So last week we looked at this text in terms of what it says about being united with Christ in his death. It is important for me to point out that Paul is not writing these words to explain why those who are in Christ should be sinlessly perfect or almost perfect. Notice the question he poses at the beginning in verse 1. What shall we say then? That is, what shall we say since God's grace abounded all the more where sin increased. Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? In other words, are we to intentionally persist in sin with the intent that God's grace will expand as well. This question is about intent, the intent to live in purposeful sin. Shall we approach daily life with a determination to sin because God's grace will abound?

And what is Paul's answer? Uh-uh. No way! Not on your life! May it never be! And then he proceeds to explain. If you are united with Christ, you have been united with his death. The union is such that when he was crucified, your old self was crucified with him. And you have become a

dead corpse to sin's power and authority over you. You have been delivered from sin's mastery, its dominion. And by God's grace you have been set free so that you are not bound any longer to obey the passions of your body. This was our focus last week as we looked on our connection with the death of Christ.

This morning we are looking at these same verses, but I want you to catch the other side of the union. Not only have believers been united with Christ in his death. We shall also be united with him in his resurrection. And there are four aspects of this union we need to grasp this morning.

I. New Life.

This aspect of our union with Christ appears in verse 4. We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

A. Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. The power to raise the dead to life is a power so far beyond human capability, it should boggle our minds. Think of the things that are possible with the ingenuity God has given humans. In the last hundred years, air travel, once unimaginable, has become something we take for granted. In the last 70 years rockets have been sent into space, to the moon and back and now two of them have entered interstellar space. Here on earth technology has enabled astonishing breakthroughs. Diseases, once killers, have been conquered. Atoms have been split. Roads have been built which criss-cross the continents over plains and mountains and bodies of water. We went from horse-drawn carriages to the horseless carriage, and very soon we will ride in driver-less cars.

But raising the dead to life, that is not even a hope for human achievement. The dead HAVE BEEN raised on the earth, but only through the glorious power of God. Elijah and Elisha were both witnesses to God raising the dead to life. They both prayed and God restored life. Jesus himself raised several to life including when he called Lazarus out of the tomb. And now God has raised Jesus from the dead. It is a display of divine power.

B. And this same power is at work in believers. It enables the redeemed to walk in newness of life. On the one hand we have been released from the tyranny of sin. This is the significance of being baptized into the death and burial of Christ. But on the other hand, those who are united with Christ have been granted power to obey and glorify God by living a new life.

We get a sense of it in the prayer Paul prayed for the believers in Colossae. Paul prays in Colossians 1:9-11 that they might "live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way . . . being strengthened with all POWER according to his GLORIOUS MIGHT." This is the truth Paul communicates to the Romans in chapter 6:4. We can walk in newness of life because the glorious power of God manifest when Christ was raised is at work in us! The strength to live a life worthy of the Lord and to please him comes from God. It is his glorious might.

The ability to walk in newness of life is granted by the fact of new life that has come to everyone who believes. As Paul said to the Colossians, you were "buried with [Christ] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him." (Colossians 1:12-13)

If you are in Christ, the power of God has brought you up, has raised you from death to live in a manner that pleases him. If you belong to Christ, as you rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus, rejoice also in the life he brought to you that enables you to live for his glory.

II. New Hope.

Romans 6:6 says, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."

A. Something striking jumps out at me in this wording, and it just really grabbed me this week. "For if we HAVE BEEN united with him in a death like his, we SHALL certainly BE united with him in a resurrection like his." . We have been united in death. That is past. Shall be united in resurrection. That is Future!

B. Paul has located us in the present between the death of Christ in the past and union with the resurrection of Christ in the future. Looking back he says we have died with Christ. Looking ahead he says we shall be resurrected with him. The power of the future resurrection is presently at work in Christ's people so that we can walk in newness of life. As he says in Ephesians, "we are created in Christ Jesus for good works." However, there remains a future hope for us who are in Christ. We shall be raised with him. That is, because of our union with Christ, we shall be raised with him.

Tom Schreiner explains. He writes: Believers are enabled to walk in newness of life now because of Christ's resurrection. Nonetheless, the resurrection for them is still future. Since the resurrection is still impending, believers are not liberated in every respect from the present evil age. . . . [they] will not experience perfect deliverance from sin in this age, so that they never sin at all. What has been shattered is not the presence of sin but the mastery of sin over believers."

C. Only in the resurrection will we no longer have to battle sin. But that is a glorious hope. And that is a reason and a motivation to keep us from intentionally walking in sin even if we are not able to be sinless.

So looking backward to Christ's resurrection, and looking forward to our own still future resurrection, we are enabled to experience victory over sin although we are not yet given complete deliverance as will be when we will be raised in the likeness of Christ's glorious resurrection. And what a glorious new hope! Paul reaffirms this hope in verse 8. "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we WILL also live with him," That is our future hope. We will live with him in the new heavens and new earth.

We will see his face! We will be able to fellowship with our Savior. I mentioned on Wednesday evening thoughts of how when Jesus was in the home of Mary and Martha and Mary was sitting at the feet of Christ. Have you ever wished you could spend time with Jesus like that? Well, in the resurrection you will!

As you think of the resurrection of Jesus, be grateful for the certainty that if you are His through faith, you will see his face. You will be privileged to

have real fellowship with him. What an incentive to live for his glory! And walk in newness of life right now!

III. New Direction.

We next look down to verses 10-11. For the death Christ died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The death of Jesus Christ was oriented to sin. Having been raised from the dead, his orientation need no longer be in the direction of dealing with sin. He is completely oriented towards God. Similarly, if we are united with Christ, we have experienced a re-orientation. We have been converted. Our orientation has been rectified. We were born dead to God. In the words of the hymn . . .

I was blinded by my sin Had no ears to hear Your voice Did not know
Your love within Had no taste for heaven's joys . . .

But what happened? Life replaced death!

Then Your Spirit gave me life Opened up Your Word to me
Through the gospel of Your Son Gave me endless hope and peace

We were born dead to God, but now by our union with Christ, we are alive to God! We are oriented towards him. And so how can we intentionally continue in sin? We cannot and we must not!

But how? What is the practical side of what Paul is teaching us in Romans 6? That is how I want to conclude this morning.

IV. New Pattern.

The work of remaking and reorienting us away from sin and unto obedience to God is accomplished by God in our union with Christ. But what does this mean for us in practical terms? How do these facts affect our everyday lives in terms of overcoming sin and temptation and walking in newness? To find the answer to that question, we look in the text for the exhortations, for the directives that Paul gives. There are two.

A. The first is found in verse 11. So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ. Having just looked at the last part of this directive, I now want you to focus on the first part. "So you must consider." Here is one thing you must do in light of these facts. Consider them. Paul uses the same word in Philippians 4:8. "Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, etc, and worthy of praise, THINK ABOUT these things." Consider these things. Let your minds dwell on these things.

We need to meditate upon the reality that we have been raised with Christ. And we need to approach the battle with the flesh with the firm understanding of who we are in Christ. A changed perspective about a change in you is promoted by CONSIDERING who you now are in Christ—dead to sin and alive to God. Preach this to yourself. Get up in the morning and proclaim you have been baptized into Christ's death and you have been made alive to God. Live to him. That is the first practical application Paul makes here.

B. The second is this. "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body." Do not submit to it as king. It is not king and you do not have to. How is that accomplished? Well Paul goes on. "Do not present your members to sin but present your selves to God and your members as instruments of righteousness." Understand that every moment you live, you are presenting yourself to be used. Either you are presenting yourself to sin to be used for ungodliness, or you are presenting yourself to God to be used for righteousness. Consciously, therefore, present yourself to God. Pray, "God, I present myself to you." And do it. Preach this to yourself. Refuse temptation with the refusal to present yourself to sin and the determination to present yourself to God. You are free to refuse sin and you are alive to present yourself to God. So do it.

Conclusion

These exhortations are of great help to those who are in Christ and seeking to overcome sin in their lives for the glory of God. But they do not apply to you if you have not yet come to faith in Jesus Christ. Every human being is born under sin's mastery and is dead in that sin. And because of sin, God's wrath is coming. Whoever believes in the Son of God is not condemned, but whoever believes is condemned already, because he has not believed in

the name of the only Son of God. It is He whose resurrection we celebrate today. His resurrection is significant because it vindicates the death he died to satisfy God's righteous and holy demand for the punishment of sinners. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But God gave his Son to die for sinners that whoever will believe on him will be saved. Have you believed on him? His is the only name that has been given among men whereby we must be saved! And I appeal to you by his power and glory and grace turn from your sins and trust him today for the forgiveness of sin, for the receiving of life, for the hope of resurrection when he returns to call his people even unto himself.