

04.24.11 / 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 and 55-57**Passage Insight**

This is day of the year that we as Christians most anticipate and celebrate – Easter. With this day we mark the shift from death to life, the complete undoing of our rebellion AGAINST God – our salvation being executed completely BY God. Beautiful. As we examine these two excerpts from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, let us seek to understand more clearly WHO GOD IS, WHO WE ARE APART FROM GOD, and HOW THIS SHAPES OUR RESPONSE TO HIM.

Paul was simply relaying a message, passing to the church in Corinth what had been passed to him by God Himself. He explains that what he is sharing is of first importance, in other words primary. We should view that which is “of first importance” in this light – unshakable, perfect truth on which everything rests. These things have major implications, and those implications are listed after each “of first importance” truth:

- Christ died for our sins. Implications . . .
 - Our sins are repulsive to the Lord, and He requires their complete annihilation
 - The sins are OURS
 - We deserved death
 - God died instead
- This happened in accordance with the Scriptures. Implications . . .
 - God foretold and foreordained these events
 - God promised us that they would take place
 - God fulfills His promises
- Jesus was buried. Implications . . .
 - His bodily death was real and complete
 - He was buried in a tomb, as foretold in the Scriptures (what God says is true and trustworthy)
- Jesus was raised on the third day. Implications . . .
 - He came back to life
 - God conquered death
 - Death is powerless against God
 - God has authority to grant life at will
 - Jesus is alive
- Jesus appeared to those who followed Him. Implications . . .
 - He provided Himself hundreds of witnesses
 - He wanted us to know that He’s alive
 - He has a message for those who love Him
 - He sends those who follow Him
- Jesus appeared to Paul. Implications . . .
 - This happened after Jesus had been taken up into heaven in Acts 1
 - Jesus is alive after His bodily resurrection
 - Jesus is alive after His heavenly ascension
 - Jesus pursues whom He chooses

The results of these “of first importance” truths are seen in verses 55-57, where we see that:

- Death has lost
- Death ultimately has no sting – when we are in Christ, death actually leads to life as we DIE to our sins (Romans 6:2), are BURIED with Jesus (Colossians), and RAISED to new life with Him (Colossians)
- The power of sin was in the law, for sin seized an opportunity through the good and holy commandment of the Lord and killed us (Romans 6:7-12)! BUT since Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the law, He has the power to give us His Spirit, setting us free from sin and death (Romans 8:1-2).

To summarize:

- WHO IS GOD?
 - God is righteous
 - God fulfills promises
 - God brings redemption
 - God does all the work that needs to be done
 - God gives all He has to those who don't deserve it and who can't earn it – He's generous
- WHO ARE WE APART FROM GOD?
 - We are unrighteous without God
 - We break promises if we are without God
 - We NEED redemption
 - We can't do any good thing without God
 - Without God, we fight for scraps and hold tight to that which doesn't even belong to us
- WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE?
 - As we are freed from / given victory over the sin that entered in and enslaved us, verse 57 states simply the appropriate response: “. . . thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus is risen, and when we believe in Him, we are risen as well, from death in our sin to life in Jesus. Praise God for HIS mighty works.

Application Questions / Prayer

What We Cannot Earn

- 1) If you are in Christ, you can never be more loved that you are right now at this very moment. Where do you struggle to believe this?
- 2) How do you attempt to earn God's approval?
- 3) How will your life look different as you trust more and more that Jesus has already COMPLETELY gained God's approval for us?
- 4) What will you no longer do as you taste this freedom?
- 5) How will you love others differently as a result?
- 6) How will your prayers change as a result?

God Deserves All the Glory

- 1) How do you convince yourself that you're not all that bad?
- 2) How does this rob God of the glory He is due?
- 3) What does repentance look like?

Giving Thanks

- 1) Where have you personally seen death being swallowed up by Christ's victory in your own life?
- 2) Practically speaking, how do you thank God for what He has done for you?
- 3) How can you thank God in the way you love others?
- 4) What do you currently take credit for, giving yourself thanks for your own efforts, rather than giving thanks to God? What sin is at the root of this?

Sources

- Prayer
- Tim Keller