

Holy Jesus, You were delivered up to die for our sins, and rose again for our justification: Send now Your Spirit that by Your grace we may stand in this faith always trusting our sins are all forgiven and be at perpetual peace. Amen.

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. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

In Christ Jesus, who having fallen asleep into the sleep of death arose to awaken us to life, dear fellow redeemed:

We rightly look to the crucified Christ by putting before our eyes the very image of the payment that was made for all our sins, but as we learn in our text, if our Lord would have remained dead we would still be in our sins. We do rightly to preach Christ crucified, but there is the rest of the story we need to hear He has also arisen. Jesus' suffering, death and burial alone could not secure forgiveness for us. Christ's resurrection is a vital part of the work of our salvation. Considering this truth, rejoice that **Christ Rose without Your Sins Charged Against Him, You too Live without Them.**

### I

The Apostle Paul began in the first chapter of this letter to the Corinthians by saying: "we preach Christ crucified." Now in our text toward the end of this same letter he makes this observation: "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." Preaching Christ crucified is truly an essential part of the Gospel, that is, the good news which when proclaimed the Holy Spirit is at work creating and sustaining faith in sinners' hearts. But it certainly implies that the crucified Christ now lives.

Paul makes this point in his letter to the Romans: "Jesus, our Lord ... was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." To be justified before God means that we are declared sinless and holy. The delivering up of Christ Jesus unto death was necessary since His death would be our death, having had all sin

charged against Him. The wages of sin is death. By allowing the Father to place the charge of sin, all sin of all sinners, upon His Son, Jesus had to take on the death of all sinners as well, not only physical death, but especially eternal death.

The payment was made upon the cross, but it was publicly accepted when Jesus rose from our death. It is like receiving the confirmation notice when you make a purchase online. In other words: when Jesus declared "It is finished!" on the cross and then committed Himself into the Father's hands into death, the resurrection was the Father's *"Amen!"* to Jesus' declaration that indeed all was done to save the entire human race. The purchase was confirmed. You see if the work by Christ Jesus in our place was insufficient, our death would have ensnared Him forever.

In the Acts of the Apostles we read again and again that the word of salvation included the fact of Jesus' resurrection. When Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica they entered the Jewish synagogue and reasoned from the Old Testament "explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer AND to rise from the dead." Some of the Jews who heard this were persuaded, but many others formed a mob and accused these Christian preachers of having "turned the world upside down".

The truth of the resurrection does turn things upside down, does it not? Our society spends millions, if not billions, of dollars to forestall death. In our very limited powers, we see death as irreversible and we do much to put it off. But God views it only as sleep for the body and promises to awaken the bodies of His believers to life. But He can only provide this remedy through the resurrection of His Son your Substitute.

## II

But as glorious as this news is concerning the resurrection of Christ, why would there be anyone who denies it? We understand why those outside the Christian Church would deny this miraculously delightful truth as some fanciful musing. But there are even those who call themselves Christians who also deny it. I remember attending a Christian funeral in which not a word was spoken about the resurrection. I found out later the pastor did not believe in the resurrection. The closest he came to talking about life is when he invited everyone back to the church after the burial for coffee, then the deceased would live on in our memories as we would speak of him.

This is what Paul was dealing with in Corinth. So Paul, the missionary, took them back to his initial work among them and said:

“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 and that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” Sound familiar? Yes, these are words used in our creeds in worship to this day.

Sadly, it is not so strange to find resurrection deniers even in the outward Christian Church today. Because of the desire of the sinful flesh to find more knowledge, there is often a zeal for new quests to find the “*deep things*” concerning God, so that the simple truths of the Gospel are overlooked, even dismissed as old and tired bits of information. Contemporary issues of the day can so easily crowd out what is of first importance, so that the Gospel of life and forgiveness in Jesus grows unclear in the minds of professing Christians.

So Paul takes on this growing error in Corinth by reasoning this way: “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.” Resurrection from the dead is a supernatural event to be sure, but with God not only is this possible, He promises to raise all believers’ bodies to life for the sake of the risen Lord Jesus.

Here is how serious it was for the Corinthians to dabble in such thoughts that there is no resurrection – “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” Our hope will never be found in this broken world. All the laws passed by governments throughout history have not fixed this place. All the theories of psychology have not fixed the human race. All the medicines invented have not stopped our bodies from dying. All of man’s weapons of mass destruction have not and never will eliminate evil in the world. So we who would express a trust in Christ who is dead would be among the most pitiable, our sins would condemn us to death everlastingly along with every other sinner. Do not misunderstand we need laws, psychologists, medicine and weapons to deter evil, but none of them fix the problems we endure here.

Our Gospel lesson for today was the conversation between Jesus and His disciples on the night He was betrayed. Jesus was preparing them for that time they would not see Him and spoke of how they would weep and lament, but the unbelieving world around them would rejoice. There are times you and I who believe in the risen Lord become overwhelmed with life in this broken world, so

that we conduct ourselves as though our hope is only found in this life and are shattered by its devastating events. By losing sight of our risen Lord, and “if in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied!”

But Jesus did rise and His resurrection proves that our sins are all forgiven, we have peace with God through our living Lord. The disappointments in this life are only temporary. We can then fall asleep into death knowing that we will not perish, but live just as Jesus promised Martha after her brother Lazarus died: “I Am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.” Then Jesus asked Martha, and I now ask you: “Do you believe this?” Well, let’s see: The Lord is risen! **(C: He is risen indeed!)**

Then know that since Jesus rose from your death without your sin charged against Him any longer, so you too right now, trusting in the risen Lord Jesus, live without your sins charged against you as well. Jesus’ resurrection proves that all your sins are forgiven and you are justified before God in heaven now and forevermore. Amen.