

## The Agony and the Ecstasy

Resurrection Sunday, April 4, 2021

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

As you probably know, I have a brand new grandson. His name is Henry Theodore Foster and he's very small. He's gaining weight every day and he's actually sleeping enough so that my daughter and son-in-law are able to get some sleep themselves. Life for the new parents and these new grandparents will probably revolve around Henry from now on and I hope to spoil him as much as possible. And every new parent and all new grandparents love to show pictures of the new little bundle, I'm no exception. And I will spare you by putting up just one picture.

Let's take our Bibles and turn to 1 Cor. 15 and v.1, repeat. This day is by far the most important day of celebration on the church calendar, more important than Christmas. As disciples of Christ, we affirm that our lives revolve around the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. I realize that's a little difficult to believe when our children are hunting Easter Eggs and gathering them in beautiful Easter baskets while they're wearing their new Easter clothes and eating chocolate bunnies and pastel candy eggs. I have always enjoyed that part of Easter and I still get a kick out of watching little ones having fun out in the yard with their parents and grandparents. And I never worry about these children growing up believing the Easter bunny is real. All I want to do this morning is glorify God and His risen from the dead Son and exalt His written word. That's all.

*1 Corinthians 15:1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,*

*<sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.*

*<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,*

*<sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Cor. 15:1-4 NAU)*

**Every disciple of Christ must be reminded of the essential truth of the resurrection.**

*Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel **which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,***

Why would Paul feel the need to preach the gospel to the Corinthians again? And why would he feel the need to emphatically emphasize the resurrection to a Christian congregation? It was because Paul had gotten word that there were some in the church who were denying the resurrection. Paul would have a field day with many congregations in our nation today. And if you are familiar with this letter and the second letter, then you are aware of how carnal and fleshly these people were. Paul had every reason to question the salvation of some of the folks in Corinth the same way he questioned the Galatians. So, what do ya do in that case? We preach the gospel to them again. *Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel **which I preached to you, which also you received.***

We have been taught that the gospel is only for the lost. But it isn't. You and I need the gospel as much as anyone. Not for the same reasons, but certainly to remind us of the sin cleansing blood of Christ and the life-changing power of the resurrection. The gospel says this to those who are saved, <sup>7</sup> *but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 Jn. 1:7 NAU)* Because we still sin after coming to faith in Christ, we need to be reminded that the blood of Christ and the grace of God are greater than our sins lest our sins weigh us down.

And since I can never assume that everyone who hears me preach is saved, I must preach the gospel each week.

**Second, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is of first importance for every God-called preacher.**

<sup>3</sup> *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*

**The visible church universal, that means every assembly on this planet that calls itself a Christian church but includes congregations that do not believe in the essential doctrines of the Christian faith,** has apparently chosen to please man rather than God. They are ashamed of the gospel. They are ashamed of the Bible. They are ashamed of preaching the word of God. Liberal pastors teach and preach what they call “the Christ experience,” which translates that Jesus wasn’t really raised from the dead but in our hearts. And that is literally preached from hundreds of pulpits and has been for decades. And it seems that there are more like these pastors and congregations than those who believe the gospel and believe in the risen Christ. That is precisely why the apostle Paul wrote this to the Corinthians, <sup>3</sup> *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,*  
<sup>4</sup> *and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

Brethren, without the resurrection we would still be dead in our trespasses and sins.

<sup>16</sup> *For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;*

<sup>17</sup> *and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. (1 Cor. 15:12-17 NAU)*

Liberal pastors will answer for this blasphemous denial of the resurrection.

**Third, we are to get our theology on the resurrection from Scripture and not from contemporary gospel songs.**

Some of you probably remember a song by Andrae Crouch from back in the ‘60’s or ‘70’s that said, Chorus  
But if heaven never were promised to me,  
even God's promise to live eternally.

It's been worth just having the Lord in my life,  
living in a world of darkness,  
He brought me the light.

**That my friends is hogwash.**

But what does the Scripture say? <sup>19</sup> *If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (1 Cor. 15:19 NAU)*

We cannot and we must not base our so-called faith on the lyrics of contemporary gospel songs. Rather we are to stick with the written word of God.

And what did the apostle base his beliefs on? The Scriptures.  
*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,*  
<sup>4</sup> *and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

That Andre Crouch song was written way back in the '70's. Honestly, I haven't heard it on any of the Christian music stations I listen to. But what about right now? Here's one example of how the gospel has become man-centered, putting God on the sideline.

The name of this very popular song being played on Christian radios stations right now is "Reckless Love," it was written by a trio of young musicians at **Bethel Church in Redding, Ca.**, the home of some of the most egregious heresies perpetrated against the truth of the gospel. And this is the theology behind the words of that song. This is a quote from one of the writers, Cory Ashbury, who was explaining the theology behind the song, "He doesn't wonder what He'll gain or lose by putting Himself on the line. He simply puts Himself out there on the off-chance that you and I might look back at Him and give Him that love in return."

That, beloved, is hogwash. God does not "put Himself on the line" as though He were taking a chance with our souls, hoping that we might come to Him. And He does not "put Himself on the line" as though He were putting Himself in some kind of dangerous position.

You and I and the entire world are too precious to God for Him to leave anything to an "off chance." "He simply puts Himself out there on

**the off-chance** that you and I **might look back** at Him and give Him that love in return.” Really? “On the off-chance?” Seriously! In other words, God has very little to do with our being saved and justified and forgiven and reconciled to Him.

Church, that off-chance means that God leaves sinful, dead-in-their-trespases-and-sins man to his own devices, hoping that he will choose life over remaining in his dead state. But the dead can not do anything about saving themselves. That takes an act of God.

But what does Scripture say? <sup>44</sup> *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. (Jn. 6:44 NAU)* Those so drawn by the Spirit to the Son will be resurrected on the last day.

Jesus said that <sup>44</sup> *"No one can come to Me* “No one is able to come to Him unless the Father draws him.” The dead in sin are incapable of coming to faith in Christ apart from an act of God.

<sup>63</sup> *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

<sup>64</sup> *"But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.*

<sup>65</sup> *And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." (Jn. 6:63-65 NAU)*

I close with this:

**The resurrection of Christ and the forgiveness of our sins are inseparable.**

<sup>17</sup> *and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*

Beloved, that’s what God says about the resurrection of His Son. It is not merely Paul’s opinion. But the fact is, Christ was raised from the

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dead and all who have come to faith in Him by the grace of God are forgiven and we are no longer in our sins.

Resurrection Sunday glorifies God; the world's idea of Easter does not. Easter can be fun with our little ones. But the resurrection deals with the serious issue of the sinfulness of man and God's Son reconciling us to our Creator.

<sup>25</sup> *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,*

<sup>26</sup> *and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (Jn. 11:25-26 NAU)*

Let's teach the empty tomb to our children. Enjoy your time with your children on this beautiful Resurrection Sunday. But keep His literal resurrection of first importance.