

1Corinthian 15:1-11 Gospel of the Resurrection

INTRODUCTION

Happy Easter! Let us rejoice and praise God for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. It is the privilege of Christians to praise Jesus who defeated death and rose again. Herein lies our hope. Isn't this an amazing message that can be an encouragement to everyone who believes in it?

The Scriptures we will be discussing today are part of a letter written by the Apostle Paul to those who were skeptical about the resurrection of Christ. Many people today would probably think that "there is no such thing as the resurrection of the dead". In the same way, many of the people of the first century A.D. did not blindly embrace superstition. In fact, today's Scripture is a dialogue among those who denied the plausibility of resurrection. Let us then take a look at what hope and encouragement for life there is in the resurrection of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

First, from verse one, let's again raise the question of what resurrection means. Paul is reminding skeptics that the Gospel is the most important thing. Let us also constantly remind ourselves of the gospel of the resurrection in every moment of our lives. Second, the manifestation of the risen Christ is repeatedly emphasized. In other words, Jesus is alive!

Thirdly, let's take a look at the impact of Christ's resurrection on our lives. The resurrected Christ, who transformed the disciples and changed Paul, will transform your lives and this world. So there are the three points

- (1) What is the gospel of Resurrection, (2) The meaning of Christ's appearance, and
- (3) The impact of His resurrection.

The most important aspect of the Gospel: The death and resurrection of Christ
Today's Scripture is part of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Christians in Corinth, Greece. Among them were those who doubted the resurrection of Christ. Let's take a look at verse 12.

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

From verse 12 and onwards, we can see how those who denied resurrection deniers developed their case, but why did they deny the resurrection in the first place? Of course, even for us modern people, resurrection is a foreign concept. Many of us may not easily believe in it. Perhaps you, too, initially had doubts about resurrection, and thought to yourself, "I can't possibly wrap my head around it!"

Modern-day people conclude that there is no such thing as a resurrection, based on the science that can even create life, or in light of the philosophy that death is the end of all things in life, or based on the claims of history that resurrection never took place. Similarly, the ancient Greeks denied the resurrection of Christ, based on the idea of spirit-mind dualism, in which the physical body is an evil entity that enslaves the spirit or soul.

When Paul evangelized in Athens, the capital of philosophy, people listened to him as he began by respecting the piety of the Athenians and spoke of God the Creator, telling them that they would find truth in the words of their poets. But when he talked about the resurrection, they closed their ears. Let's take a look at Acts 17:32

Acts 17:32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."

To begin with, the Bible (Christianity) and Greek thought have very different views on the body and death. They are never compatible. In other words, in the Bible, the body and matter are all wonderful, good things created by God. Of course, after man sinned, the nature of the body becomes "flesh," because bad things are done through it, but it is still a reflection of the divine form.

In Greek thought, however, the body is inherently bad. The spirit, which has eternal value, is held captive in the prison of the body. As long as we are alive, the body is considered a hindrance to the free movement of the spirit and a hindrance to living in accord with our inherent eternal nature. Therefore, death is the great liberator of the soul. Death is like a savior who takes the spirit out of the prison of the body and brings it back to its eternal home.

However, the Bible says that death is the "final enemy." Death is complete separation from God who is the source of life, and the judgment for sin from a holy God. That is why Jesus clearly expressed his very real fear of death when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion.

It says in **Mark 14: 33- 35**

33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." 35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.

The pain and fear that Jesus, as a human being, felt in the face of death is still shared among us as something real. Not only that, Jesus overcame death through His own death. He guaranteed our forgiveness and salvation through His resurrection.

In order to defeat the enemy, we must enter the front lines of battle. And through suffering and wounds, we win the battle. In the same way, Jesus took up the cross and entered into the midst of the battle of sin as a man of holiness and truth. He did this in order to free us from

sin and death!

Victory didn't come through His death alone. It is by rising from the dead that Jesus has guaranteed us complete forgiveness of sins and a new life. Therefore, I urge you all to reflect well on the most important points of the Gospel, which are the death and resurrection of Jesus, as we read in today's Scriptures.

1The manifestation of the resurrected Jesus: Christ is alive!

By the way, how does Paul portray the gospel? He says Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again on the third day, and appeared to people, just as the Bible says. This is the most important point. The gospel is God's salvation story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration, in which Jesus becomes King by His death on the cross and resurrection, and that is how Jesus brought in the Kingdom of God. Let's take a look at verses 3-5.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance^[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas,^[b] and then to the Twelve.

All of these events of Jesus Christ are recorded in the Gospels, but Paul did not actually write this letter while looking at the Gospels, because they had not been written yet. The Gospel of Mark is said to be the earliest gospel written, but it was written in the late 60s AD. In contrast, the first Corinthian Gospel is thought to have been written around AD 55, when Paul was in Ephesus. So how did he learn about the resurrection of Jesus?

6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, **8** and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Paul repeatedly writes that the resurrected Jesus actually appeared to people, that there are many eyewitnesses. And these eyewitnesses are still alive today. If you want to hear what they have to say, just look them up. Even in modern-day trials, "eyewitness testimony" is seen as paramount to ascertaining the facts.

Of course, the credibility of eyewitness testimony can be questioned. However, it is very important to have many eyewitnesses. Even if they don't agree on some details, if they agree on important points and on the overall flow of the story, they will be considered solid evidence.

Perhaps some attentive readers may be offended that women are not included in the list of witnesses to Christ's appearance. The Gospels show that it was Mary Magdalene, Johanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women who came to Jesus' tomb who first discovered He was missing. The women would have been the first witnesses.

Paul probably intentionally listed only Cephas (Peter), the 12 disciples, over 500 brothers, and another man named Paul. This is because in those days, women were not allowed to be formal witnesses in court. This was not due to gender discrimination, but rather to considerations of missionary work.

And Paul writes that the resurrected Jesus appeared to him as well. What was Paul trying to convey? First, he wanted to share that there were many eyewitnesses, so Christ's resurrection is a solid fact. Second, Paul was saying Jesus is alive today, as he appeared to people in this way! He was telling them that Christ is alive and at work as they were speaking. He was emphasizing the work of the resurrected Jesus, using his own testimony as an example.

15:8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. **15:9** For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Paul's conversion to Christianity is detailed in Acts chapter 9, which I urge you to read. His conviction here is that the resurrected Jesus is still working through the Holy Spirit, as was the case for Paul.

During this Passion Week, we received really happy news: three months ago in January, we received a call from a pastor and his wife, friends of ours in Asahikawa, who told us that the pastor had been diagnosed with inoperable stage 4 throat cancer, and even if he could have surgery, he would only have five months left to live. The lesion was too large to operate, so they asked us to pray for three months of treatment with radiation and anticancer drugs to reduce the size of the cancer so that it could be operated on. I prayed every day with my wife and also by myself. Because of Corona, his wife could not visit him. But an amazing miracle happened, and the doctors even called it a miracle. The stage 4 cancer was completely gone without spreading to other parts of his body. I got a call last week that there was no need for surgery, and I jumped for joy. Jesus is alive. He hears our prayers and is working through the Holy Spirit.

Brothers and sisters, our lives are filled with many sins and mistakes, a series of illnesses,

accidents, and unexpected problems. They feel like small death sentences. But Jesus is still at work, especially among those who believe in Him. After His resurrection, His body ascended to heaven, and He is seated at the right hand of God. Though invisible to our eyes, He is indeed alive. He is fulfilling the work of life among us through the Holy Spirit.

1. The Impact of the resurrected Christ

Therefore, if it weren't for the resurrection of Jesus, the Christian's faith would be utterly futile. In this 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, the significance of Jesus' resurrection is expressed in the paradoxical way. It is saying without resurrection, faith would also be in vain. We see this twice in today's Scriptures.

15:2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

15: 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me

Many people believe in atonement through Jesus' death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, as an important article of faith. However, if there was no resurrection, there could be no forgiveness of sins. Let's first take a look at what the disciples of that time were like. Peter betrayed Jesus when He was crucified on the cross, denying that he ever knew Him. The other disciples similarly lost faith in Jesus and feared that they too would be punished like Jesus.

Then how did such disciples (apostles) stand up as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and begin to preach the gospel? The reason for this is that the risen Jesus appeared to them, gave them encouragement, and gave them a calling as missionaries.

That's not all. Without the resurrection of Christ, they would still be in sin. Without Jesus' resurrection, who can declare forgiveness of sins and guarantee eternal life? The Corinthians in particular desperately needed the resurrection of Jesus. They needed the transformational impact of being called God's new creation, and the power of grace through resurrection.

This was because the Corinthian church was dying as a result of various sins and problems that made it spiritually blind. It had become so corrupt that it could hardly be considered a church of Christ. The impact of Christ's resurrection was desperately needed to resolve and rectify their sin. Let's take a look at **Romans 8:11**.

8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

The life and power of Christ's resurrection will overflow into your heart, into your life, and into your daily routine by the work of the Holy Spirit, if you have faith in him. Therefore, if people of all nations become disciples of Christ and partake of the life of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, imagine how this world could be transformed.

The final plan that can be found in the resurrection of Jesus is described in chapter **15:23-24**

23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. **24** Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

Because of this, those who believe in Christ's resurrection will never give up. Let us believe in Christ's resurrection today. Let those who have been undecided about the resurrection of Jesus state clearly this wonderful gospel of the resurrection. Let's look at **Romans 10:9**.

9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **2** By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance^[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas,^[b] and then to the Twelve. **6** After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, **8** and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. **11** Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

