

EASTER MESSAGE (2018)

There is a strange phenomenon in the discipline of mathematics that makes no sense to me, but it apparently makes good sense to those who teach math or those who have business minds. In fact, this is one of the reasons I was poor at math. The phenomenon is this at times two negative numbers produce a positive number.

For example, a negative number that is multiplied by another negative number produces a positive number. So $-10 \text{ times } -3 = +30$. Now being the simple-minded man I am, I could not wrap my brain around that. I would think $-10 \times -3 = -30$.

So one teacher explained it. Let's say you owe someone \$100 and you are going to pay the loan off in \$10 dollar increments. Now let's say that someone comes along and says I am going to make three payments for you. I will make a negative payment of 10 and I will do this three times. What has happened is the -10×-3 has given you a plus 30. That is how it works.

So in all reality the two negatives have created a positive.

Now the Apostle Paul decided to do something like that concerning the resurrection. He decided to use hypothetical negatives to prove the soteriological positives. In I Corinthians 15:12-20 what Paul does is this:

PAUL PRESENTS NEGATIVE HYPOTHETICAL SPECULATION TO PROVE THE POSITIVE REALITIES OF THE RESURRECTION.

By doing this, Paul wanted to drive home the importance of the resurrection. So Paul presents seven negative hypothetical ideas that would demolish Christianity if Christ had not been raised from the dead:

- 1) If Christ has not been raised, preaching is vain. 15:14a
- 2) If Christ has not been raised, faith is vain. 15:14b
- 3) If Christ has not been raised, we are false witnesses. 15:15
- 4) If Christ has not been raised, our faith is worthless. 15:17a
- 5) If Christ has not been raised, we are still in our sins. 15:17b
- 6) If Christ has not been raised, those who have died have perished. 15:18
- 7) If Christ has not been raised, we are to be pitied. 15:19

Now the reason Paul is presenting these negatives is to drive home the positives about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the key events that sets Christianity apart from all other religions.

The gospel message that Paul preached he clearly states in **I Corinthians 15:3-4** - **“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”**

Now we are living in a world that presents all kinds of religious ideas as to what will save you:

- 1) Some say you can be saved by keeping the O.T. law.
- 2) Some say you can be saved by your own works.
- 3) Some say you can be saved by following religious traditions and man-made legal codes.
- 4) Some say you can be saved if you submit every area of life over to the Lord.
- 5) Some say you are saved if you are healthy, wealthy and problem free.
- 6) Some say you are saved by being positive and thinking the best about yourself.
- 7) Some say you are saved by getting involved in social causes.

All of these things are presented as being ways of salvation. **Paul says there is only one way and that is faith alone in Christ alone who is the only one who was raised from the dead.** To prove the point, he uses the hypothetical arguments of an unrisen Savior to prove the reality of the positives of the risen Savior.

What I would like to do is to take the theoretical negatives to show the positive realities of the resurrection:

POSITIVE REALITY #1 – The fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead gives value to preaching. **15:14a**

The thing that makes it worthwhile for you to get in your car and go to church to hear the books of the Bible taught is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the whole theme of the Bible. All of those O.T. sacrifices point to Him. That entire O.T. law is designed to show us that we cannot measure up to the righteous of God and we need Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:24).

In the O.T. predictions are made that Christ will come. In the Gospels, we see and learn that Christ is here on earth. In the rest of the N.T. books, we see and learn that Christ is coming back.

POSITIVE REALITY #2 – The fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead brings fullness to faith. **15:14b**

Because Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, Biblical Christianity is the only faith that is well-founded and well-grounded. If you believe in anyone or anything else, your faith is shallow and simple and frankly, undependable and indefensible.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ means that you can place your complete, total and full faith in Him to save you.

This is where these works oriented; Lordship salvation oriented people miss the mark. I do not place any of my faith in me to save me from my sins. I do not look to me at all. I do not trust in my works and I don't trust in my commitments or promises. **The totality of my faith to save me from my sins is placed in Jesus Christ.**

In Princeton, New Jersey, is the Princeton Cemetery. In that cemetery are buried some famous people. Jonathan Edwards and his wife Sarah are buried there. Charles Hodge is buried there and so is B. B. Warfield.

B. B. Warfield was a theologian who embraced what we would call today “Lordship Salvation.” He didn’t like Dr. Chafer’s teaching on many things, including grace. He wrote against Dr. Chafer, who was promoting that all one needed to do to be saved was to believe in Jesus Christ. Warfield felt there needed to be total submission to Jesus Christ and that each person needed to look at self to see if there had been total submission.

Well, Warfield died in 1921 at the age of 70. Chafer died in 1952. Both were buried and both are still in the grave. So do you want to place the totality of your faith in Jesus Christ, the only one raised from the dead, which is what Chafer taught? Or do you want to place part of your faith in yourself and your discipleship obedience?

Here is Paul’s point—the totality of your faith needs to be placed totally, only and completely in Jesus Christ. His resurrection proves that. I don’t look to me. I don’t trust in me. I don’t trust in my works. I don’t trust in my obedience or my spirituality. I place the fullness of my faith in Jesus Christ to save me because He is the only one who was raised from the dead.

POSITIVE REALITY #3 – The fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead brings truthfulness to preaching and witnessing. **15:15**

I want us to grasp this point. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves Jesus Christ is our only Savior and it proves He is God (Romans 1:1-5).

This is the only Person and the only Message worth communicating. All other religious messages are false. Now young people are going to schools that try to convince them there is really no absolute truth. There is really no right and wrong. Live your life your own way. Get involved in various causes and pick a religion that suits you.

There is only one absolute system worth believing and that is the one that is found in the Bible. It is proved to be true by Christ’s resurrection. When Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6), He meant it. He is not a way to salvation; He is the only way to salvation.

The proof and evidence that proves this is the resurrection.

POSITIVE REALITY #4 – The fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead brings value to faith and life. **15:17a**

Any religious faith in anything other than Jesus Christ is useless and of no value. It is of no value to God, to you or to others. If you believe you can save yourself, if you believe your works can save you or that your attempts to keep the O.T. law can save you, you have a faith that to God means nothing. It doesn’t mean anything. It is you just believing what you want. That has no value to me or anyone else.

Why do you think Jesus Christ came to this world to die? Why would God permit His own Son to come to this world if God wanted you to believe in yourself? It makes no logical sense. The only faith that is valuable faith is faith that trusts in the only one raised from the dead and that one is Jesus Christ.

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that gives value to you living your life in view of Scripture. We do not want to get to the end of life and say, “I wasted it.” What shows that there is value to our faith and to our life is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

POSITIVE REALITY #5 – The fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead proves forgiveness for our sins. **15:17b**

I want to state what verse 17 says here. Since Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, you who believe in Him have been forgiven of all your sins.

This is something people need to know. Everything about a relationship with God is contingent upon sins being forgiven. Paul said in Romans 4:25 that Christ was “delivered over because of our transgressions and was raised on account of our justification.”

In other words, the resurrection proves we have been justified and we have been acquitted and that our sins are gone. Christ’s resurrection validates the reality that our sins are gone.

Now it does not matter who you are here today or what you have accomplished. You are a sinner and there is only one way and one Person who can clean that slate for you and that is Jesus Christ. The resurrection proves that.

POSITIVE REALITY #6 – The fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead guarantees life to believers who have died. **15:18**

When people are facing death, all people believe something. The resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees that when a believer dies, he lives.

Jesus said that Himself: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies” (John 11:25).

POSITIVE REALITY #7 – The fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead means those who believe and proclaim this are to be the most honored. **15:19**

Since Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, we who have believed in Him and proclaim that are to be envied, not pitied.

Many people will probably honor you if you don’t believe this or stand for this. But I promise you this; you will never be honored by God. Believing and proclaiming the truth about Jesus Christ is not just honorable, it is to be envied.

When Jesus was here on earth, He said this: “And I say to you everyone who confesses Me before Men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8-9). Those who have believed in Jesus Christ and proclaim Him are to be envied.

We have been with many believers as they near their death. I have yet to have one of them say- well my faith in Jesus Christ was all empty, pointless, useless, insignificant. That would be a pity. I have seen many face the thought of death with a confidence that their faith in the resurrected Christ was about to take them to heaven.

These people are not to be pitied, they are to be envied.

These are realities proved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That resurrection proves that if you will believe on Him all your sins will be forgiven. It proves that when you die you go to heaven.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest news in the entire world. If you will believe on Jesus Christ, He will turn all of your negatives into eternal positives.

All of the negative things that Jesus Christ suffered were done to do that in your life which is forever positive. He is in the business of turning negatives into positives and His resurrection proves it. He turned death into life.