

**1st Corinthians 15: 1-4 and 16-26; Funeral Sermon for Polly Titcomb,  
Delivered on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall,  
at the Reformed Baptist Church.**

There is nothing more precious to all of us here today than the fact that Polly Titcomb was a Christian woman. Whatever else we might say about her, whatever else we might appreciate about her, what we are thankful for this morning, is that our merciful God has saved her from all of her sins. He changed her heart in the New Birth, and gave her the gift of eternal life. We are thankful for Polly's calm joyful spirit. We are thankful for her love of her family and friends and all the brethren. But we are most thankful that she is now safe in the arms of Jesus. When someone whom we love dies, it is a time for real reflection. It is time to ask the question: Do I know God, as Polly did, or am I unsure? For when a person dies their eternal state is fixed forever. They have launched out into eternity to be blessed and live forever with God and Christ, or they have perished and will have to endure the eternal wrath of God forever because they did not believe in Jesus. With Polly's having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the real assurance that she is now in the presence of Jesus. The real difference between a Christian and one who is not a Christian is that the Christian is a person who has received the good news of the gospel, and therefore they have been saved from their sins. And because of that, they are in a safe and blessed place for all of eternity. The person who has Christ has eternal life. But how do you come to know Jesus Christ personally for yourself; so that you then come to know that you have eternal and everlasting life? Well, these verses tell us.

**1st of all – They tell us how we can be saved.** (verses 1-4)

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church of Corinth. He says – “I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which preached to you—unless you believed in vain.” “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.” “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” When you believe in the gospel, you are believing in the established facts of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. There were many witnesses to Christ's resurrection. Paul is telling us here that we are saved from our sins by believing in what Christ has done on the cross; that He suffered in the place of sinners like you and me. And, God has accepted Christ's sufferings in the place of punishing you for your sins, if you believe in Him. A Christian stands strong spiritually when they believe this truth. And a person who has never believed can trust in this gospel and be saved. They can have a full assurance of their salvation if they believe in Christ's finished work of full obedience to God's law, and His sufferings on their behalf. This you must believe in order to be saved. You are not saved by the best of your good works; you are not saved by your good feelings about yourself. You are saved by Christ and what He has done for every sinner who trusts in Him. One of the real reasons that so few are saved today is because so few really believe that their sin deserve to be punished. But looking at what Jesus did upon the cross proves that God is a holy God, and that He must punish sin. Otherwise Christ would not have had to suffer as He did. He suffered as a sinless Savior. He is the only man who has ever lived who has not sinned. There was not a particle of sin in Jesus or in His words and actions. He was always faithful to God and to His word, to keep all of God's commandments perfectly.

Now, here in verse 2, it tells us that the only thing which we have to do, to have assurance that we are God's child, is that we must receive by faith this atonement of Christ, and hold fast to

the word of God, the Bible, in regard to all the promises of salvation, and the principles of truth which are found there. Salvation is not based upon our own works, even the best of them, but it is based upon our continuing to see our need of Christ and His grace all the way through this life. He will save us if we believe; He will keep your soul. After you first believe in Christ, over time God will mold you and shape you into the image of Christ as you exercise your faith in Him. And then it says in verse 4 – “That He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” Let us understand that when Christ died, everyone who would believe in Him died with Him. When Christ was buried in the tomb, our sins were buried with Him. And when Christ rose from the dead, we who believe rose with Him. We are spiritually made alive by the Holy Spirit, and our spirit will never die, even when we physically die. Polly now knows the reality of this blessed truth. Even though she died physically, she never died spiritually.

**Then 2ndly - I would have you notice that these verses tell us of a sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection for every believer in Christ.**

(verses 16-26)

“For if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” “Then also those who have fallen asleep (that is, those who have died) in Christ have perished.” “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” “But now Christ has risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” “For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.” “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” “But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.” “then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.” “For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.” “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

When we die, our soul departs from our body. The body is spoken of here as “being asleep”. The soul never sleeps, but the body is buried in the ground, and it awaits the Day of the resurrection. Everyone who believes in Christ is believing that since Christ has been raised from the dead, God has accepted His sacrificial work and His perfect obedience to God’s law, on our behalf. He has succeeded where Adam failed to give us a confirmed eternal life. Through Adam’s sin in the beginning came death. Through Christ comes the resurrection from the dead. Therefore, since our sins have been laid upon Christ, we who believe, can joyfully look forward to our death, knowing that when we die, our spirit shall immediately be with the Lord Jesus in heaven. When Christ was raised from the dead He ascended on High to sit at the right hand of the Father. When He comes back again, the second time, we who believe, shall all receive our bodies back again; this time glorified and without sin. Those who do not believe shall also be raised from the dead, but it to a resurrection of eternal shame and everlasting contempt, as it says in Daniel 12: 2. Those who are wicked and unbelieving will also receive their bodies back again, but not glorified. Rather, they will come forth from the tomb still in their sins, and will be in anguish forever that they did not pray to God and ask for that full and free salvation which Christ could have given them had they sincerely asked, and really wanted to change and turn away from sin. Let us understand, even now, that sin is that awful thing which God hates, and it is sin which ruins our lives forever if we do not deal with it through faith in Christ. Years ago, Polly fled from the wrath of God and was delivered. She was set free, even then, from the bondage of sin. But how her soul triumphs even now, in the glory.

The triumph of Christ shall be seen in the good resurrection of everyone who believes, and learns to do good. Our Lord says in John 5: 28 – “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of

condemnation.” Let all who are Christians here understand today, anew and afresh, that even though we shall lose this body for a time, yet we shall receive it back again, far more beautiful, far more powerful, far more glorious and lovely; for we shall be changed to be like Christ. Christ is the firstfruits of a great harvest of people who will most certainly and surely be saved on the Day when He appears. But let it be known to those of you who have never believed before this, that if you believe today, you can be saved even now, if you never have been saved before. It does not matter how bad you have been in your sins. God’s grace in Christ can wash them all away. All of the worst of your sins may be washed away by faith in Jesus, and a New Heart and a New Life shall be granted to you. For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

O how I pray that you will remember what Polly believed, and what she stood for. She believed in her Savior, and she followed her Lord. She was not a perfect person, but she was saved, and she was being saved. God most surely and wonderfully changed her life by His grace. Over the many years after she was converted in 1970 He prepared her to come to be with Him; where she is now, beholding His glory forever. This can be your portion, as well, if you will only come to Christ; if you will only see your need of Him. Take Christ, and make Him yours forever. This salvation only comes by faith in Him, and so you can call upon Him in the secret place of your heart, and He will hear you. Ask Him to come into your heart and change you so that you will love God and everything that is good.

And let me close now, by addressing those of you who know the Lord here today. Will you not see how quickly our lives are passing by? Now is the time to live for God, and now is the time to put to away, and put to death, the sins of the flesh and the love of the world. Each of us must prepare to meet our blessed Lord. He says, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.” “I am Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter the gates into the city.” Let us remember how quickly this life may end, and eternity begin. Let us remember where Polly now is, and let us have faith in Jesus who is “the Way, the Truth, and Life”.