



Tim Pauley

PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358

304.767.8430

tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

Were You There When He Rose Up From the Grave?

Colossians 2:9-14

Romans 6

A powerful old spiritual song asks the poignant question, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" The verses go on to recount the gospel story: "Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?" "Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?" And finally, "Were you there when He rose up from the grave?" Along with the fact that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead, the most amazing truth of the Christian message is that believers were in fact there when Christ was crucified and when He rose up from the grave. If we have trusted Christ we can change the words to that wonderful Easter song and sing, "I was there when He rose up from the grave!"

The Resurrection is the Central Truth of Christianity.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 of the resurrection's place of importance to the Christian faith. Jesus' risen body was observed by many reliable witnesses, some who recorded the events for us. It is key to our faith since **"...If Christ has not been raised, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins"** (15:17). Belief in the resurrection is essential to becoming a Christian as Paul makes clear: **"...If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved..."** (Romans 10:9). Our celebration of Easter is often rightfully taken up with the amazing events of that morning. The empty tomb. The soldiers. The woman. The angels with the message **"He is not here, He is risen as He said"**. Matthew 28:6). As amazing as the resurrection account is, perhaps even more amazing is the spiritual significance of this event in the lives of those who trust in Christ.

The Resurrection is the Central Truth of Our Christian Lives.

The Marvelous Truth

The Bible teaches us that when we repent and believe in Christ we are united with Him, we are placed into Him. So, in a spiritual sense, **we were there** when they nailed Him to the tree. **We were there** when He rose up from the grave. This is a deep truth that I find difficult to understand and explain. However two key passages tell us how important an understanding of this teaching is. Both passages explain how we died with Christ, and how we were raised again with Christ. Both passages go on to tell us how understanding this truth will affect our lives. We will briefly look at these passages to try to better

understand this amazing relationship we have with our Savior.

In Colossians 2, Paul writes of believers:

¹² ...Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions...

In Romans 6, Paul again writes:

³ ...Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection...

In both passages we notice the descriptions of our relationship with Christ: "buried with Him in baptism"; "raised up with Him"; "baptized into His death"; "united with Him". Here and in many other place the Bible speaks of believers as being "with Christ" and "in Christ".¹

As sinners, we all deserved death – God's just punishment upon our sin. Jesus, as our representative, took that punishment upon Himself and died on our behalf. So, in a spiritual sense, when Jesus died, we died. When Jesus rose again, we rose again.

Perhaps the world of politics gives us an illustration to help us understand this relationship we have in Christ.

We as citizens have leaders who represent us. We do not vote to pass legislation or make executive decisions. Our elected leaders vote on laws and make decisions on our behalf. We live under these decisions and are responsible for them.

Christ, as our representative has acted on our behalf. He lived a perfect life. He suffered and died on the cross, taking upon Himself the punishment we deserved. He rose from the dead for us, that we might have new life. How do we gain His representation? By becoming a citizen of His kingdom through repentance and faith in Him.

The world of sports may give us an even better illustration. Many of us know the excitement of following a favorite sports team through a championship season. On a championship team, there are a few players who actively participate to win the games. There are players who sit the bench, never taking a shot or running a play. Yet they, as part of the team are still champions. There are fans who may have never played the game, maybe never even actually going to a live contest. Yet in celebration of the victory, they say "We won! We are champions!" The players on the field or the court "represent" the players on the bench and the fans in the stands.

In a spiritual sense, there is only one "player" who could successfully compete and "win the game" for us – Jesus Christ. We were weak, helpless, and hopeless of obtaining victory. He endured the greatest of contests for us when He suffered and died on the cross. He won the greatest victory of all for us when He rose up from the grave.

"DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵ O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

The Meaningful Application

Both these passages lay out for us the marvelous truth that in Christ believers were with Him in His death and resurrection. Both these passage do so for a specific purpose, to show how this truth affects our daily lives and how we live for Christ. As is Paul's habit, he first lays out for us gospel truth regarding Christ, His work, and who we are in Him. Then he explains how that truth works out in our lives. Consider the application Paul makes of this truth in Colossians:

¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

Paul explains that if we have indeed died with Christ, and are risen with Him, then our mind, our focus, and our priorities should be on heavenly, spiritual things, not the things of this world.

Consider Paul's whole point in Romans 6. He is writing to explain how believers should and can have victory over sin in their lives.

¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ²May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? (vs. 1-2)

¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (vs. 11-14)

Paul explains to us that we died with Christ and rose with Him so that we might be free from the power of sin. Understanding this truth, living it out, and putting it into practice is what will give us victory in our Christian lives.

Conclusion

In Philippians 3 Paul wrote of his overwhelming desire to "***know Christ, and the power of His resurrection***" (Philippians 3:10). He wrote of his desire to experience the future resurrection when he would be with Christ forever. But he also wrote of his desire to better know, understand, and experience the power of Christ's resurrection in his daily life. He wanted to know what it meant to say:

I was there when they crucified my Lord.

I was there when they nailed Him to the tree.

I was there when they laid Him in the tomb.

I was there when He rose up from the grave.

¹We must consider what Paul meant when he said we are "buried with Christ in baptism" and "baptized into His death". Was Paul referring to water baptism as that which places us into Christ, as that which saves us? No, both Colossians and Romans make it clear that our salvation is through faith in Christ alone. Paul is speaking of our **spiritual** immersion into Christ. Water baptism is a physical symbol of that which has already taken place spiritually. Compare how he speaks of circumcision in Col. 2:11.

BIBLE STUDY

Thursday, March 24

12:00 Noon

House Conference Room

(M252 Located by Minority Offices)