

Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own 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. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Friends,

In 1815 the English people were anxiously awaiting news of the Battle of Waterloo. They hoped their General Wellington would defeat Napoleon. The means of communication in that day was a system of signal lights flashed across the English Channel. The battle was over and the message was sent but before the whole message could be sent a dense fog settled in. Gloom overcame the people because the two words they had received were, “Wellington defeated.” Imagine their joy when the fog lifted and they were able to receive the whole message, “Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo.”

People look at the cross and the death of Christ and they see the message, “defeated.” But the message is incomplete. Three days later at the Resurrection, God's message was finished. **“The resurrection spelled victory.” “Victory over sin as Adam’s deed is undone,” “Victory over the enemies of the Gospel when Christ comes again,”** and finally, **“Victory over death seen in the final resurrection of all the dead on Judgment Day.”**

I. At the beginning of this chapter Paul asked the question, “What if Christ had not been raised from the dead? What would that mean to Christianity?” The resurrection is an essential part of our faith. That is why Paul doesn’t let us dwell on that thought for very long. He says, **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”** There is no doubt. There are many witnesses to the fact that Christ rose from the dead. Since he rose, we can be assured that his payment for our sins is complete. But Paul also calls him the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

When it came to harvest time, the firstfruits were the first part of the crop to be harvested. That was the portion brought as an offering to God, but it was not the only part of the harvest. More was to follow. The same with Christ. He is the firstfruits of those who have died. In other words, he is not the only one who will rise from the dead. More will follow – his resurrection assures us of our resurrection on the Last Day.

You might ask, “How is this possible? Is that really a valid argument that because Christ rose we too will rise? Paul continues, **“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of**

the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Adam brought death into the world by disobeying God and sinning. Paul in his letter to the Romans wrote, **“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.”** (Romans 5:12). Just as sin and death came through Adam – the one man, so life came through the one man Christ Jesus.

But he is more than a mere man. He is God’s Son born under the law to keep it perfectly and nailed to the cross to pay for all the times we fail to keep it perfectly. Only God’s Son could pay for all sin for all time. Yet he had to be true man to suffer and die in our place. How do we know his sacrifice was sufficient? Because of the resurrection.

The resurrection proves that God accepted Jesus’ payment for our sins and thus the serpent’s head is crushed. Forgiveness is ours through faith in Jesus. Once Christ paid for the sins of the world his work on this earth was finished and he now rules for the benefit of his Church and when he returns the enemies of the gospel will be destroyed.

II. “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.” Even though the risen Jesus is already in control of the world, we are well aware that the devil and his many minions in whatever form they appear do have the power to affect and afflict our lives. But when Christ returns in his glory, he will take away even that limited power from them when he puts an end to every government, authority and power.

You might wonder what the Lord is waiting for. Why doesn’t he come and crush those who are opposing the gospel right now. **“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus has not yet trampled these earthly powers because he’s waiting – waiting for a college student, who in spite of all the fun he’s having, still finds there’s something missing in his life. He’s waiting for that person who’s been giving Christianity a second thought. He’s waiting for a family or individual who hasn’t been to church in awhile but knows that they should be here to learn more about what Jesus has done for them.

Perhaps he’s even waiting for you and for me to turn away from an unrepented sin – like the sin that leads us to tear down instead of to build up, or to repent of the sin of laziness. Maybe we have gifts God has given us but don’t use them. Maybe we have the gift of time but spend the day complaining about how we have nothing to do. Thank God Jesus hasn’t trampled his enemies yet, because at times we stand among them. Repent of your sins and then look to your Savior for forgiveness. His resurrection assures us that forgiveness is ours through faith. And when Christ finally destroys the enemies of the gospel he will overcome the final enemy – death.

III. Spiritual death has been overcome through the new life that comes with faith. Jesus assures us, **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”** (John 11:25-26). Faith gives us spiritual life but we still face physical death. Yet the Christian faces death without fear. Christ

promised, **“He that believes and is baptized will be saved.”** (Mark 16:16). Death is just the doorway to heaven for our soul and faith in Christ takes us through that doorway. The resurrection of Christ assures us that our bodies will follow on Judgment Day.

Then the bodies of all believers will be raised glorified. The perishable (because of sin) will become imperishable (because of faith in Christ). All believers will be caught up with Christ in the air and taken to heaven forever. This will be the fulfillment of what was begun at Christ’s resurrection and God will be praised. It will be a glorious day.

Sometimes people don’t want to talk about death. We know what God’s Word says, but our sinful nature wants to avoid the subject. It only hits close to home when a loved one dies or we, ourselves, have to face death. Then we might have doubts and fears.

God doesn’t want us to fear death or dying. He wants us to be confident in his promises. He has removed the sting of death because he has removed the penalty of our sins. Because our sins are forgiven then we can stand before God without fear. That is the confidence we have through faith in Jesus.

Christ is our Savior. He has defeated our enemies of sin and death and on the Last Day every enemy of the Gospel will be under his feet. May Christ’s Resurrection always remind us that we share in His victories through faith and because we share in his victory we have peace with God. May we always thank God for this gift of salvation that comes to us through faith. Amen.