



The Gospel Paul Preached Part 2 (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

In last week's update we focused on the first element of the Gospel Paul preached, that is, the death of Christ. We presented two implications which can be drawn out from this truth. For starters, the death of Jesus was sufficient to remedy the problem of sin. Second, the death of Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures. As important as it is to affirm the death of Jesus, the apostle Paul always combine it with the second element, the resurrection of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 affirms "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." What then is the significance of this second element of the Gospel Paul preached? In next week's update, Lord willing, we will seek to answer this question in more detail. Let us now, however, identify four false views about what happens to a person after death.

One prominent view understands the community beyond the grave as a union with the divine reality. This view claims that there is no personal life beyond the grave. Instead, there is a melding or mixing of the personal life into the Absolute, the Divine.

A second view claims that our existence simply ends in death. There is no culmination to personal life. Those who adhere to this view tend to deny the existence of God. Their philosophy of life is based on the saying, "He who dies with the most toys wins!" They are like the man in the parable who had a bumper harvest and hatched a plan (Lk. 12:13-20): "What shall I do" he reasons, "since I have no place to store my crops?" And he said, "This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God had the final word, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you." This man did not realize that his existence does not conclude at death.

A third view known as Reincarnation, teaches that at death we do not immediately blend into the divine, for the person re-emerges into a new earthly form. It claims that the chain of re-birth can continue indefinitely as the soul progresses or regresses from one earthly life to the next. There is this eternal cycle of rebirth – death – rebirth.

In contrast to reincarnation, a fourth view promotes the teaching of the *immortality of the soul*. This view teaches that at death the soul discards the body that housed it and thereby attains its blessedness. The ancient Greek philosophers were imbued with this vision. In his description of Socrates' death Plato says, "death merely completes the liberation of the soul begun through philosophical reflection. It frees the soul from the contaminating imperfections of the body so that it might penetrate the world of eternal ideas to which it belongs."

As we would see in our next update, Scriptures present a quite different view of what happens after death. Our earthly life may end at death, but death certainly is not the finality of our existence. Jesus was raised on the third day, the second element of the Gospel Paul preached, is the indisputable proof of this truth. It is the only hope for the world.

By God's Grace and for His glory,

Pr. Francis

Hymn: "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today "

(Charles Wesley, 1739)

1. Christ the Lord is ris'n today, Alleluia! Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heav'ns, and earth, reply, Alleluia!
2. Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia! Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia! Once He died our souls to save, Alleluia! Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!
3. Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia! Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia! Death in vain forbids His rise, Alleluia! Christ hath opened paradise, Alleluia!
4. Soar we now where Christ hath led, Alleluia! Foll'wing our exalted Head, Alleluia! Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia! Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!
5. Hail the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia! Praise to Thee by both be given, Alleluia! Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia! Hail the Resurrection, thou, Alleluia!
6. King of glory, Soul of bliss, Alleluia! Everlasting life is this, Alleluia! Thee to know, Thy pow'r to prove, Alleluia! Thus to sing, and thus to love, Alleluia!