

Christ has Risen and You Are *Not* Still in Your Sins!

1Corinthians 15:17

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

The great equalizer of all human beings is the issue of sin. The one thing that I have in common with both the Queen of England who sits on her throne, and the dying drug addict who is lying in a ditch, is that we are all sinners. The Holy Bible makes the claim repeatedly and clearly that whether we are rich or poor, small or large, old or young, educated or uneducated; male or female; cultured or uncultured- we are all sinners- meaning that we all sin; that we transgress against God. And that is true regardless of what economic or Governmental system that we live under and regardless of what Age of Man we have lived.

And contrary to popular opinion that has divided sin into nice and neat categories that are more or less acceptable in a polite society- sin is defined in Scripture- as not being simply mass murder or pedophilia or being unjust toward another human. *Those* distinctions have been fabricated over the years by people to make themselves feel better about their own depraved and fallen natures and to lessen the impact of the reality that we are all sinners.

And we must understand that while it is true that sin hurts us and hurts other people around us, and while it is true that sin costs us money and makes us unhappy and puts us in jail or in the morgue or in drug rehab or in divorce court- none of that is what makes sin to be wrong. Sin is wrong because sin offends God- that is why sin is sinful, and so in the Bible- sin is very *narrowly* defined as being *any* thought or *any* act that does not bring Glory to God, that does not honor God as God, that dishonors God, that belittles God, that brings reproach to His Name and His Reputation, that operates in opposition to God and His pristine Character and Nature and His Word. So sin is any act or thought that functions in disobedience and rebellion to God. Listen to

what the Apostle Paul said about our relationship with sin from **Romans 3:23**:

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Now the common misconception about this verse is that Paul is saying here that humanity strives real hard to glorify and please God but that they come just a tiny bit shy of actually achieving that. So to many- this verse paints a picture of struggling humanity- exercising their own "free will choices" to honor God and be "good people" and "better themselves" and "treat people right", but in their effort to "do the right thing" they don't quite make it- and they come just ever so short of sinless perfection. Far too many today see this verse as meaning that human beings rise throughout their lives on the merit of their own internal goodness and human decency through a multitude of kind and good deeds to almost reach into the Heavens themselves- but they miss the mark of complete purity by just a fraction.

So while they will gladly and humbly admit that they are not as holy as "St. Pete"- they will be quick to point out that they are surely not as wicked in God's Eyes as a Hitler or a Pol Pot or some other mass murderer or child molester, and so in their man-made theology- they fit somewhere in between sinless perfection and total failure, and they feel really good about that.

And so they come to the conclusion that God understands them and so they have a deal worked out with God that they are very comfortable with because they believe that God sees how hard they are trying, and so they trust that God is going to overlook their ever so slight failure- because after all- nobody is perfect- and there is this mountain of good and noble acts that they have done that God can look at that must count for something, and so they have developed a Theology based on this false premise that says that God grades humanity "on a curve" and would never hold slight imperfections against us on Judgment Day- because in our "heart of hearts" we are really- deep down- "good people" and after all- even Paul says here that we fall just short of perfection anyway. And so if there is a God and if there is a Heaven- they are very confident that they are going there because they are a really good person. And that is a classic textbook

example of the self-righteousness and arrogance that will keep you out of Heaven and sadly is the predominant theology of modern America.

Please know, dear friends- that that is *not* what this verse means. This verse is much more insulting and degrading and much more damning than that false concept. You see, to "fall short" in the original Greek means to violently and purposefully and continuously trample the Glory of God in the ground with your foot. It is to demean God's Glory and to do so "on purpose"- because you *want* to- because you love to. This phrase means to belittle God and His Ways to the point that you actually think that both He and them do not apply to you, or that you are somehow exempt from being held accountable to Him and them or that you do not need Him or them or that God Himself and God's Ways are somehow *optional* to you and you can take them or leave them and that this will not affect your righteousness or your standing with God in the least.

So we must know that sin also includes those acts and those thoughts that function with little or no concern for God or His Will as people actually try to live good and decent and happy and productive lives on this earth *without* God and *without* gladly submitting to His Lordship.

Now there are a number of different Scriptures that God inspired that show us the depth and width and prevalence and pervasiveness of sin- such as:

2Chronicles 6:36

When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to a land far off or near,

or

Jeremiah 13:23

Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? *Then* you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.

or

Romans 3:9-20

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;
10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;
12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."
13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPES IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";
14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";
15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,
16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,
17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."
18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

Now please turn in your Bibles with me to **Romans 3** and I want you to let your eyes fall on verses 19&20 again. Now in verses 10-18 Paul describes the condition of every single human being on earth by quoting from the Old Testament and he *re-affirms* fourteen qualities that are true with every single human being on earth:

1. **THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE** ("Righteous" as defined as being right with God in, by, and through his own actions)
2. **THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS** (God and His Ways)
3. **THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD** (Absent a sovereign Move of God)
4. **ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE** (from God and His Ways)
5. **TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS** (as far as earning or developing their own Righteousness)
6. **THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE** ("Good" being defined as an inherent quality that grants forgiveness of sin and entrance into Heaven)
7. **THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE**
8. **WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING**

- 9. THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS**
- 10. WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS**
- 11. THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD**
- 12. DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS**
- 13. THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN (the Ways of God)**
- 14. THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.**

... and then he says this in verses 19&20,

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

So Paul says here in verse 20 that it is through the Law of God as recorded in the Old Testament that gives us the knowledge of sin. And then in verse 19- Paul said that the reason why God set it all up like this and why He defined sin as being any transgression of the Law of God that belittles God's Glory- was so that two things might happen:

A. So that every mouth may be closed

B. So that all the world may become accountable to God

And the "closing of the mouth" occurs when God the Holy Spirit invades the individual and forcefully convicts the sinner of the mountain of evidence against him of his own belittling of God's Glory and the lost sinner has absolutely nothing to say because he cannot refute it and he comes to the conclusion- by the Grace of God- that he is guilty and he agrees with God about his own guilt, his own unworthiness, and he agrees that God would be perfectly just to damn him and he is dragged to the most beautiful place in the world- a place of complete humility, complete devastation over his sin, a place of brokenness- where any and all self-righteousness has melted away, any and all courage is gone, and any and all clinging to any act or any work that would earn him God's Favor vanishes, and he has no place to go except to the Feet of Jesus and he has nothing to say except,

“God please have mercy on me- I am a sinner! Forgive me and save me!”

This is the “spiritual poverty” that Jesus said was “Blessed”. This is the place of “spiritual bankruptcy” that God must bring every single human being to- if that person is to be saved.

And the “**all the world may become accountable to God**” part occurs when nobody lays claim to what former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said last week as he was talking about how hard he has fought against gun violence and said,

“I have earned God’s Favor by my actions- I have earned my place in Heaven”.

No you haven’t Mr. Mayor- you, too, must be saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone or you are not going to be saved at all.

So all the world becomes guilty before God or accountable to God in the sense that Paul teaches that this insulting and damning listing of the condition of fallen Man and is all inclusive reality- meaning that it pertains to *everybody*- because Paul used words and phrases like,

- ✓ **both Jews and Greeks are all under sin** (verse 9)
- ✓ **NONE... NOT EVEN ONE** (verse 10)
- ✓ **NONE... NONE** (verse 11)
- ✓ **ALL... TOGETHER... NONE... NOT EVEN ONE** (verse 12)

... but perhaps the most concise and the most descriptive summary of the sinful condition of fallen human beings is found in **Genesis 6:5**- so let’s go there- **Genesis 6:5**:

Genesis 6:5

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

... and we must understand that the word “**great**” here means: *all pervasive or all- encompassing*, which means that:

The wickedness of Man pervades and encompasses every single thought and act of every single human being all of the time.

... another way of saying this is that:

There is not a single thought or a single act of any lost and unsaved human being that is not completely and totally drenched and saturated with the wickedness of fallen man.

... yet another way of saying this is that:

All thoughts and all actions of all people are entirely and completely wicked in their origin and intent all of the time and thus cannot in any way bring Glory to God

... and of course this is the very unpopular Biblical Truth of "The Total Depravity of Man" or "The Radical Ruination of Man" from the Fall of Adam in the Garden.

Now many of you are familiar with the oath that is taken just before testimony is given in an American courtroom trial that goes like this:

"Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the Truth; the whole Truth; and nothing but the Truth- so help you God?"

And the reason that this oath is worded like this is that experience has proven to us it is possible for a person to tell the Truth without telling the *whole* Truth. This is what we call "a half- truth", which is always a whole lie and is designed to deceive. And it is also possible to tell the Truth in between telling a whole lot of *untruths*- which is also designed to *skew* things in somebody's favor and otherwise hide or disguise the Truth.

So by using these *universal* and *all-inclusive* terms and by swearing to tell the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth- the witness is trapped and cannot utter a single sound that is in any way untrue or deceitful in any way- without committing perjury.

And this is the very same logic that Moses used here as he was moved upon by God the Holy Spirit. Moses uses certain Hebrew words

here that make it absolutely impossible for anyone to opt out of this or for anyone to honestly assume that this does not apply to himself or herself. The words used here also make it impossible for anyone to honestly arrive at a meaning other than the one single meaning that Moses intended. Look at the end of verse 5 again:

... every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually

Now notice the "universal" and "all-inclusive" words like:

- ✓ **Every**
- ✓ **Only**
- ✓ **Continually**

... and so when you put Moses' words together- you arrive at the very same meaning that the Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 3:**

Every (normal and natural) intent of the human heart (and by extension every act) is never "good", it is never "righteous", it is never designed to be God- honoring and glorifying- but every single solitary intent of the human heart is "only" and "entirely" "evil" and self-serving - all the time.

... another way of saying the same thing is:

There is never a single second of a single minute of a single hour of a single day
when the intent of the fallen unsaved human heart desires and pursues
anything other than sin

... so whether this sits well with us or not- the Bible is crystal clear- all human beings are sinners- who sin precisely because they want to sin and, therefore, are fully accountable for each and every sin they commit.

Now that would be bad enough- but I suggest to you that since God was never confused about the fact that we sin or why we sin- that simply assigning blame for sin to us was not God's main Goal. The main Goal of God is revealing to us that we are all very sinful is the fact that God is very Righteous and His Righteousness demands that God judge all sin.

And the Bible says that the penalty for all sin and all sinners is death. But death is not defined in this case as simply the cessation of breathing but eternal and everlasting death in absolute torment in a lake of fire that burns continuously with brimstone called "Hell". The Bible says in **The Revelation 20:14&15**:

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

So those who say that we have our hell here on earth are wrong. And those that reduce the terror of eternal damnation to being nothing more than not getting a raise on your job or being married to the wrong person or not fulfilling your dreams and ambitions are also all wrong. And those who say that dead people simply cease to exist are also wrong, and those who say that that there is no hell are terribly wrong.

The Quality of God called "Righteousness" means that God *cannot* and *will not* and *does not* ever think or do anything that is not perfectly right- even though many things that God does- does not seem to be right in our eyes.

And the reason that what God says and what God does not sit well with us sometimes is only because we are fallen and God is not, only because God is Good and we are bad, only because we are evil and God is perfectly sinless, only because we are very finite and God is very infinite, and only because we only see in the here and now while God sees everything perfectly with the past, present, and future is proper focus.

And so we look through eyes that are fallen and sinful, and we think with a mind that is corrupt and evil, and we act through our actions that are wicked and depraved, and so we need an external Source of Eternal, Absolute Divine Truth that is not swayed by our individual circumstances and that transcends culture and human emotions- and that Source is the Bible.

And the Bible says that since God is more Righteous than we can even imagine that sin is unimaginably offensive to God, and, therefore, He is absolutely correct to damn unrepentant sinners and He is correct to send them to everlasting torment- precisely because they have gladly

and repeatedly sinned against God's Own Character and Nature and have gladly and repeatedly rebelled against Him.

So it is not just the knowledge that we are sinners- that surface knowledge is simply not enough to get the impact of this. You simply cannot come to the sobering reality of Infinite Righteousness and unquenchable Wrath meeting unsearchable Mercy and undefeatable Love with shallow sermonettes, pop psychology, and Vegetales.

We must get before God and appreciate the eternal danger we are all in so that we may appreciate the magnificence of the Grace that has delivered us *from* that danger. We must realize that we are *personally* guilty of *voluntarily* trampling under foot God's Glory – not only in our words and deeds- but in the very intent of our hearts. We must agree with Scripture that we, too, are guilty of sinning against God and therefore the unquenchable Wrath of an infinitely Righteous God is properly and correctly bearing down on us like a freight train at 300 miles an hour and we are chained to the railroad tracks, and we have one option- repent and believe the Gospel or perish! That is the infinitely "Bad News" that makes the "Good News" of Jesus' Life, Death, and Resurrection very "Good" indeed.

So Whoever forgives our sin has to be perfectly sinless in thought, word, and deed 24 hours every day and seven days every week- or they are no better off than we are. So that just flat leaves out Buddha, Lord Krishna, Ellen G. White, Mary Baker Todd Eddy Smith (she had a little problem with men), and Muhammad- since all of these people were sinners just like we are. And that also leaves out every pope and every cardinal and Bishop and every Prophet and every Pastor and every Teacher and every Evangelist who has ever existed since the Resurrection because they too are all sinners. And that leaves out Mary- the mother of Jesus and all the men whom God used to write the Bible and all the Apostles because they, too, are all sinners and none of them apart and all of them together cannot muster enough righteousness to even save themselves- let alone save me. I need a sinless Savior Who is God Almighty in human flesh to forgive me of my sins and rescue me from the Wrath of God and His Name is Jesus.

So I say to you this morning my dear friends- with every fiber of conviction that I have- if you do not fully comprehend and mediate upon and ponder the Justness of a Righteous God damning unrepentant sinners to everlasting torment; if you do not come to the conclusion that

this frightening Act of God is infinitely frightening on purpose and that it is infinitely correct for God to do this based upon the absolute pristine Quality of His Own Sinless Nature and Character- in other words- if you do not come- as John Owen did almost 400 years ago- of the unmitigated sinfulness of sin- then I say to you that it is only a matter of time before you will justify your sin and you will eventually minimize the Death of Jesus on the Cross and you will marginalize the Wrath of God against our sins- to the point- where a thousand issues are more important in your eyes than the Resurrection and you will live your life in such a way that proves that you really couldn't care less that Jesus has forgiven you of your sins.

You see, if sin is really not that big a deal- then forgiveness from sin and deliverance from the Wrath of God is also not that big a deal either. And if that is true- then all that pertains to our sins being forgiven like The Virgin Birth and The Sinless Life and The Trinity and Justification by Grace through Faith alone, and like the Vicarious Substitutionary Death of Jesus on the Cross, and the literal and physical Resurrection of Jesus from the dead become meaningless issues that have little or no bearing on our lives and are really just fantasies that make for good special effects in some movie.

If sin is not the single most important problem in my life that makes all other problems pale in comparison- then being delivered from my sin and God's Wrath against them would also pale in comparison to more urgent things like financial success and material possessions and physical health and emotional happiness- which I would suggest to you is exactly the position of many in the modern Church.

So, a lack of understanding or a complete rejection of what the Bible clearly and repeatedly says and teaches about the horrors of sin and of God's Just Wrath against my sin is the underlying root of most of the false teaching that minimizes the Value and Worth of God and that maximizes the value and worth of Man that has become so popular today.

And if all that I have said is true- then that would explain why The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day in the very same Body in which He died has become a second or third tier issue with many in the modern Church- an issue that ranks far below things like physical healing and financial prosperity and some strange animal called "the Prophetic Anointing".

So if it is true that since we who live in the 21st Century are all technologically advanced and no longer have the need to be told that we are lost and sinners, if we have no need to be told that God's Wrath is against us, if it is true- as the PCUSA has recently done by removing all mention of being saved from God's Wrath against our sin- that we are saved from "low expectations" rather than God's Wrath, and that what people need to hear today is how much God loves them and how He wants them to come to Him so He can "help" them fulfill all their dreams and ambitions and so they can have whiter and brighter teeth and hit more home runs and not how angry God is with them- if that is true- then I can understand why so many people become disillusioned with Biblical Christianity, and I understand why they tire of the straight and narrow path and why they can just walk away and leave Jesus standing in the middle of the road, and why they can seek after signs and wonders and dreams and visions and angelic visitations and other mystical and sensual experiences that have nothing to do with Scripture. If being forgiven from sin and being rescued from God's Wrath is not the main overriding issue of all humanity- then it is completely understandable why people would seek after some kind of "Second Blessing", and why people would put their Treasure on this earth and not in Heaven, and why suffering for Christ's sake has become the new curse word, and why dying to self has gone out of style, and why materialism and covetousness have gone the way of small pox and polio, and why humble and joyful obedience to the Lordship Demands of Jesus Christ are routinely condemned as being "Legalism" and why Joyce Meyer could tell Time magazine,

"Why would anybody seek to be a Christian if they thought they might have to suffer after they were saved?"¹

However- if sin is a real big deal, and if it is true that sin- not financial hardship- is my biggest problem, and if it is true that sin has separated me from God- not a lack of success, and if it is true that because I am a sinner- I am also guaranteed an eternity in hell, and, therefore, being forgiven from my sin and being rescued from God's Wrath against my sin is absolutely the best thing that could ever be-

¹ Joyce Meyer quote in Time magazine, April 2002

then I am very interested in someone Who says that He can forgive me, and I am very interested in being rescued from the Wrath of God.

If it is true that Jesus' horrific and agonizing death on the Cross was substitutionary in nature, and if it is true that Jesus was our propitiation as both John and Paul said- which means He was a sacrifice that satisfied the Wrath of God against us, and if it is true that by being granted the gift of repentance and the gift of faith I can hear the Gospel and believe the Gospel and be saved- then that is truly Good News indeed. And that makes the Resurrection to be the crowning achievement of all that Christ said and did.

Now as the realization of our true condition before God hits us- amazing things begin to happen. Because we are guilty of sin and entirely deserving of eternal damnation- we are brought into a humility about ourselves and the self-righteousness and arrogance- that is fed and built up inside us our whole lives- suffers great damage. And this humility allows us to be easily convicted of sin and easily broken over our transgressions. Our dependence on ourselves diminishes and we grow in our dependence on God.

Also there is a deep and sincere gratefulness and thankfulness that is born from this humility that doesn't allow us to gripe and complain about the straight and narrow path, it doesn't allow us to murmur about suffering hardship for the sake of Christ, it doesn't allow us to bellyache about the Lordship Demands that Jesus makes on our lives, and it causes us to be content with what God has chosen to give to us and will not allow us to get on that treadmill so we can keep up with the Joneses. This humility that comes from an awareness of our own sinfulness and a gratefulness that Christ has rescued us from our sins is eager to believe, eager to follow, and eager to obey.

But perhaps the greatest transformation of the lost sinner when he comes into the realization of his own sinfulness and unworthiness, and as he experiences that glory of God's Grace in forgiveness is that it allows the person who has been forgiven to forgive those who have sinned against him. Those who understand that they have sinned horribly against God and yet did not receive from God what they deserved and have been forgiven are given the gift of being able to forgive those who have sinned against them. And this is one of the greatest hallmarks of true Biblical Christianity- Christians are sinners who have been forgiven and people who can easily forgive those who sin

against them. Those who hold grudges and who cannot forgive when they are attacked and maligned are those who have forgotten that they, too, are wicked sinners- who have been graciously forgiven.

So with all of this in mind- let us read again what Paul wrote in **1Corinthians 15:17** when he said:

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

So Paul attaches the Resurrection of Jesus to our forgiveness from Sin here. And this is so true that Paul says here that if Jesus was everything that He was, and even if He had done everything that He did- up to and including dying on the Cross and yet stayed dead and had not raised from the dead- the Bible says:

... your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

So that is how important the Resurrection is- because without it- there is no Salvation for anyone and we are left unforgiven and therefore the Wrath of God is still upon us.

So this shows us the preciousness of both the Resurrection itself and the forgiveness of our sins. And that begs the question:

What is forgiveness?

... what does forgiveness from sin look like when it happens? And to answer we used a definition from the Puritan Thomas Watson who said that forgiveness includes:

- ✓ Resisting revenge,
- ✓ Not returning evil for evil,
- ✓ Wishing them well,
- ✓ Grieving at their calamities,
- ✓ Praying for their welfare,
- ✓ Seeking reconciliation so far as it depends on you,
- ✓ Coming to their aid in distress.

This is what happens to us when God forgives us. He no longer seeks vengeance against our sins, He no longer seeks to damn us, He wishes us well, he does not grieve at our calamities, He prays for our welfare or our Good, He earnestly seeks reconciliation with us- as far as He is concerned, and He comes to our aid in times of distress. And we should rejoice in that.

But what might make us grieve, however, is that this is also what it looks like when we forgive those who have wronged us because make no mistake about it- we have been commanded to forgive those who have wronged us. And our ability and success at forgiving those who have wronged us is the natural result of understanding that we have been forgiven by God because we have wronged Him. So the question I ask today, on this Resurrection Sunday Morning, is this:

If the Power to live in Love and forgive those who wrong us- if this is accomplished by the Love of God and the Death of Jesus- then what does the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead add to it?

And the answer is found in **1Corinthians 15:17**

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

Now to be "**in your sins**" is the opposite of being "**in Christ.**" When we are "**in Christ**" we receive what Christ can do for us- which is eternal life. When we are "**in our sins**" we receive what sin can do for us- which is eternal condemnation and death (**Romans 6:20–23**).

Paul says here, "**If Christ has not been raised . . . you are still in your sins.**" So if there is no Resurrection- then we are still bearing our guilt and we are still under the Condemnation of God and we are still alienated from God because we are still unforgiven.

But why is this true- if the Death of Jesus satisfied the Father's Wrath against our sin? If **Romans 5:9** and **Ephesians 1:7** is true and every debt that you ever had has been paid up in full by the Blood of the Lamb- not the Resurrection of the Lamb- then why are we still in our sins if the Lamb does not rise from the dead?

And the answer—or at least an essential *part* of the answer—is that the Resurrection of Jesus is the Reward of His Sacrifice. And if the

Reward is not given- it's only because the Sacrifice is somehow deficient. And if the Sacrifice is deficient- then we are still in our sins.

So you can see that the point of The Resurrection is tremendously relevant to whether we can be a forgiving people or not. If Christ has not been raised- then all the Gospel power that supports all the Gospel doing is defective.

In other words- if God will not let His Own Son come out from the tomb and take His seat at the Father's Right Hand in Glory, it's because His sacrifice for our sins was in some way defective. And that won't work because that would mean that we are still in our sins. And that would mean that the Gospel did *not* bring us better news because it bid us to fly- but it did not provide us with the wings to so.

So the Resurrection of Jesus is tremendously important for our capacity to forgive one another. The Resurrection is the Reward that God gives to his Son- precisely because His Sacrifice is so totally sufficient for our forgiveness which always leads to our power to forgive others.

Now please allow me to try to show some of the evidence that the Resurrection of Jesus is the Reward of His Sacrifice. The Book of Hebrews makes this plain in three different places. Start at the end of the Book. In **Hebrews 13:20&21** it says,

20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, **21** equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Now this kind of sounds like Jesus died for Himself. Look at verse 20 again:

the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant...

So Christ was raised from the dead through His Own Blood! But we know from this same Book (**Hebrews 4:15; 5:9;7:26, 28; 9:14**)—that Christ was without sin and did not need anyone to die for Him- not even Himself! So when it says in Hebrews 13:20 that God raised him from

the dead "through the blood of the eternal covenant," I take that to mean that Jesus' Sacrifice so perfectly secured His Covenant Promises for His people that God rewarded Him with Resurrection to carry those Promises into eternal force.

So the Resurrection of Jesus *validates* the infinite Worth of the Blood of Jesus. If Jesus is raised- then that means that His Sacrifice was sufficient, and that means that we are not still in our sins!

Another text that shows this is **Hebrews 2:9b** that says,

But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

... There it that same thought again:

...because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor...

So the Glory and Honor that Jesus received in the Resurrection and the Ascension was

... because of the suffering and death...

... and that means that His Resurrection was the Reward of His Suffering. Therefore, if Jesus has not been raised- then it is only because God does not regard His Sacrifice as worth rewarding. And that would make it defective. And that would mean that we are still in our sins.

Now we get an even deeper insight into this rewarding of the Son in **Hebrews 10:12–14,**

12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, **SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,**

13 waiting from that time onward **UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.**

14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Now we can see the connection between the offering Jesus made and His Resurrection:

Verse 12, "Having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God [he was raised!] . . . (v. 14) FOR [because] by that one offering he perfected for all time those who are sanctified."

... in other words the Sacrifice of Jesus for our sins was so complete that He perfected us for all time by that one Sacrifice. This is awesome—all sins forgiven, past, present, future on the basis of one single Sacrifice. So all God's people who- by faith in Jesus- are being progressively sanctified now- have, in fact, been definitively perfected before God for all time—and that by ONE Sacrifice- the perfect, all-sufficient Sacrifice of Jesus of His Own Blood.

So, therefore—for this reason—Jesus sat down at the Right Hand of God! So the Resurrection was the Father's open and public Reward for such an utterly complete and marvelous Work on the Cross.

So Paul says that if Christ had not been raised from the dead- we would still be in our sins because that would mean that Jesus' Sacrifice was deficient. But Jesus *has* been raised! And so the point of all these texts is that this Resurrection is the open and public Reward for His Sacrifice and a Validation of its utter perfection and sufficiency to make us perfect before God.

And we could go over to **Philippians 2:6–11** and see the same thing where Paul says that since Christ emptied himself and was obedient unto death, THEREFORE, God has highly exalted him and given him a name above every name.

But I think it might strengthen our faith even more if we go to an Old Testament prophecy and see the truth of Christ's resurrection, and even there 700 years before the event, its connection to the sacrifice of Christ. Even Isaiah saw that the Resurrection of the Servant of the Lord would be the Reward of His Suffering and the indisputable proof that His Suffering was sufficient to justify His people. Notice the crucial connections as I read **Isaiah 53:10-12**

10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

So 700 years before the Death and Resurrection of Christ- Isaiah saw them and the connection he saw was that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the Reward of His Sacrifice and the Validation of His Suffering to cover sin.

- ✓ If he would render himself as a guilt offering, THEN he will see his offspring, he will prolong his days.
- ✓ As a result of the anguish of his soul, he will be satisfied (with its fruit in resurrection).
- ✓ Because he bears the sins of many, THEREFORE, God will allot him a portion with the great.
- ✓ He will divide the booty with the strong BECAUSE he poured out his life to death.

So we come back from Hebrews and Philippians and Isaiah to our original question from **1Corinthians 15:17**: If it's the Blood of Christ- the Death of Christ- that covers all our sins and justifies us before God, then why are we still in our sins if the Christ does not rise from the dead? And the answer we have seen is this:

The Resurrection of Jesus is the open and public Reward of His Sacrifice. It is the proof of how perfect and all-sufficient His Sacrifice was.

Therefore, if God does not give the Reward, it would only be that the Sacrifice was somehow defective and that would make our faith futile and we would still be in our sins- and that would make us both unforgiven and unforgiving.

But the Message of the Resurrection is the shout of **1Corinthians 15:20**, "**But Christ has been raised!**" And Paul gives the evidence for it in **1Corinthians 15:5-8**—the people Christ appeared to: individuals, small

groups, a large group, many of whom were still alive as Paul wrote so that the Corinthians could investigate his claim, "**But Christ has been raised.**"

Therefore, our faith is not futile and we are not still in our sins, and, therefore, we are not unforgiven, and, therefore, we need not be—indeed, cannot be—unforgiving. The Gospel does give us this Power.

So the Resurrection of Jesus is an exclamation point of God's Joy and Celebration of all that Christ did for us in His dying. Christ is alive today for this reason: to deliver to us personally and powerfully everything He died to obtain- including the joy of being forgiven and the doubled joy of being forgivers.

So to acknowledge this and embrace it and celebrate it- would you sing with me these words:

Be Still My Soul

**Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change, He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.**

**Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
To guide the future, as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt below.**

**Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord.
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.**

**Be still, my soul: begin the song of praise
On earth, believing, to Thy Lord on high;**

**Acknowledge Him in all thy words and ways,
So shall He view thee with a well pleased eye.
Be still, my soul: the Sun of life divine
Through passing clouds shall but more brightly shine.**