

**BECAUSE HE LIVES WE CAN FACE TOMORROW****1 Corinthians 15:58**

**Intro:** Charles Seet tells about a famous (in its time) non-event in Church history which took place 177 years ago and which became known as 'the Great Disappointment.' It started with a Baptist preacher by the name of William Miller who lived in upstate New York. In August 1831 Miller was fully convinced, after studying the Bible intensely for seven years he had discovered the exact time when Jesus Christ would return from Heaven – it would be on March 21, 1844. Believing with all his heart that God had called him to proclaim this as earnestly and as widely as possible, Miller and his followers spread the message for twelve years until the movement had some 50,000 followers.

But the predicted date came and went and nothing happened. Miller and his followers were disappointed. But one of his associates by the name of Samuel Snow went through Miller's calculations and realized that there was a mistake - the actual date of Christ's return was seven months later, on October 22, 1844. Both men claimed that there was no possibility of a mistake this time and anyone who rejected their message would most definitely be lost. Amazingly, the movement grew even more. The spread of the message was so wild and far-reaching that it went across the country and into Canada, and the Millerites, as they were called, believed completely it was all by the power of God.

When the October 22 came the Millerites watched and prayed. They had quit their jobs and they had given all their possessions away as a testimony to their faith. They had even dressed in white ascension robes as many of them waited on their rooftops, waiting for that blessed moment when the trumpet would sound from heaven, and the Lord would descend and they would be gloriously taken up to meet him in the air. As the hour drew nearer and nearer, their excitement grew more and more intense - and then - **NOTHING HAPPENED!** They were not caught up to meet Jesus in the air. What a huge letdown. It was a massive disappointment for tens of thousands expectant hearts. All the time and labor they had spent had come to nothing. They had believed a fallible preacher's prediction and it had all been for nothing. It was the Big Disappointment.

Jesus disciples had followed Jesus for three years and with each passing day they knew he was the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One, sent to deliver them. One week before they thought it was all coming together as Jesus rode into town triumphantly. But Friday it all fell apart. Jesus was tortuously killed on the most humiliating and horrific Roman execution device. They had seen him die. He was gone! Talk about a big disappointment!

But not just disappointment – they experienced a big terror. For a couple days after Jesus was killed they hid out in stark terror knowing that their three years with Jesus made them accomplices. They feared for their lives. By Sunday morning their high hopes of being high officials in Jesus's kingdom from just one week before, were a distant memory that may have even seemed to be a dream. They were too afraid to even believe when some women disciples came back from Jesus's grave to say it was empty and Jesus was gone. The women even said they had been told Jesus had been raised from the dead – they must have been hallucinating! But the truth was, they were not, the angels' words "*Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.*" Matthew 28:5b-6a, were the gospel truth. They were the foundation of the Gospel, as a matter of fact. The resurrection is a fact, and the forerunner is Jesus Christ himself, and his followers can do the same – follow him in resurrection. If the cowering disciples had been name Gaither, they may have even sang out,

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow*

*Because He lives, all fear is gone*

*Because I know He holds the future*

*And life is worth the living just because he lives.*

They no longer feared for their lives – their lives were worth living and they had a message to tell – even if it got them killed. They now knew what Jesus was talking about when he told them *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.* Matthew 10:28a. Their eternity was sure.

Those cowering disciples became courageous preachers of the Good News of salvation from sin and resurrection power. Those formerly fearful followers turned the world upside down with the wildly wonderful news of the death of death.

So it was a bit frustrating to Saint Paul as he wrote to the Corinthians about 18 or 19 years later, that he subject of the resurrection was such a tough and even controversial subject. Over the past month you've endured my unpacking of his explanation of it in the 1 Corinthians 15:1-57. Maybe you're even a bit relieved we've gotten to the end of it – but there is a method to mine and Paul's message and it's in verse 58 – it's the hope we have because of this day we celebrate today. So Paul say, now that you heard all my reasoning,

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.* 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV). Peterson says it this way, *With all this going for us, my dear, dear friends, stand your ground. And don't hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort.* 1 Corinthians 15:58 (The Message)

Now that you have the confidence that comes with resurrection power,

### **The World Can't Scare Us!**

- No cowering in some hiding place worrying about our connection with Jesus. He's risen! We will too! Being a Christ Follower might mean attacks and insults and even death, but that's just a blip in our eternal life.
- So stand firm. No hiding. No fearful pacing back and forth. You and sit back and relax, God's got this. That is the very meaning of Paul's words, "stand firm". We have the truth – we can stand firm on it.
- Let nothing move you. Stay on message. The Bible is the unchanging word of God. Persistently stick with your hope in the resurrection. In short, BE FAITHFUL!
- One commentator put it this way . . .

### **FUTURE HOPE SHOULD MOTIVATE PRESENT FAITHFULNESS**

- That's what Paul means when he tells us *always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord*. That word the NIV renders as "fully" means "over-and-above." Christ Followers should always be characterized as people of the extra measure. Christ Followers are not slackers. Do all you do to the glory of the Lord. As Fred Holland used to say, "*The pay's not good, but the benefits are out of this world.*" We're not working for ourselves – we're working for the King and the end result is worth the present investment.
- Paul then says, keep up the extra measure work because *you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain*. When I was a kid, my dad did dishes at one time and one time only – on Sunday mornings. Mother would be making dinner for us and whoever was coming that day after church – and there was always someone. So there were lots of dishes. It's a sweet memory to hear in my mind's ear, Daddy's playful complaining that Mother took too much delight in making more and more dishes for him to wash. The implication was that any two steps forward in completing the dishes was met with Mother's three steps backward with even more pots and pans. With a grin Daddy was accusing Mother of making all his work in vain. Kathy felt the same way as she vacuumed the house on Thursday afternoon anticipating the grandkids arrival. She knew that the spotless floors would soon be covered with Cheerios and toys. But she cleans up anyway – because her work is not in vain. Floors need to be clean and scattered toys must be stored – otherwise we'd have to move into another home because the toys and cheerios reached the ceiling and there was no longer room for us to live.
- If we gave up on the Gospel message every time we were rejected, the Gospel would dry up. What we need to realize is those seeds we plant do, very often, very often, bear fruit. Many of us can point to someone who didn't take "NO!" for an answer when we snubbed their presentation of the Gospel – and because of their persistence, we now have the hope of the resurrection. Holy History is replete with examples of people left everything to share Jesus with the lost. Some even spent their entire life with few if any converts, but they knew that nothing they could do for the Lord was in vain. That is our promise. Because Jesus rose from the grave, we will too be resurrected, and because of that, we keep on keeping on.

**Conclusion:** Charles Ryrie wrote, "*A firm belief in the resurrection and a solid hope for the future gives incentive for service in the present.*" John Piper, as he faced cancer 15 years ago, wrote of the hope of the resurrection with "*Christ has come. He has died for you. He took all your sins on himself. He satisfied the demands of the law for you. The sting of death is removed. There is no condemnation. No hell. No fear. Though your body be laid in the grave, Christ will come and the trumpet will sound, and this mortal body will put on*

*immortality and this decomposing, decaying body will become imperishable. Death is swallowed up in a great, blood-bought, Christ-wrought victory. To die is gain. Away from the body, at home with the Lord.”*

Here’s my point for this Easter Day which is a culmination of a one month discussion on the resurrection from Paul, “*If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then nothing in life really matters. But if He did rise from the dead, then nothing else in life really matters!*” Jesus rose giving hope to a lost world. Nothing would matter otherwise. And because he rose, nothing else does matter. That’s why we can confidently sing,

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow*

*Because He lives, all fear is gone*

*Because I know He holds the future*

*And life is worth a living just because He lives. Amen.*