

Introduction

- The Guardian, May 1997:
 - "A man arrested for running down the street naked in Melbourne, Australia, has been released. The police dropped charges against him when they discovered that he was running away from the mortuary where he had just mistakenly been pronounced dead!"
- Not quite a resurrection, but certainly an event that would make a startling difference to the rest of his life!
 - if nothing else, a great story to dine out on....!
 - more seriously, a real appreciation of what it is to be alive!
- A close shave with death can really give us a zest for life.
- In the same kind of way, Jesus' encounter with death, and more particularly his resurrection from death, can change dramatically the way we live our lives as Christians here and now:
 - that's what Paul is talking about in these final verses of 1 Corinthians 15;
 - and we'll pick out with him three particular differences the resurrection can make:

Not Afraid any more

- Corinthians had been uncertain that their life would continue after death - couldn't see how their "creaking joints and smutty minds" could have any place in God's kingdom!
 - "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (v.50)
 - Paul knows that, in a sense, they are right!
- Letter from FP Dilkes in "The Times", May 1998:
 - "I have received in the post a communication addressed to my wife, lately deceased, offering her the chance to Win A Trip To Paradise!"
 - there's a poignancy about that letter...

BUT:

- God wants our presence with him in heaven so much that he is going to do something about the perishable nature of our current flesh.
 - he will change our minds and bodies completely when we get free of this land of the dying and enter the land of the truly alive (vs.51-53).
 - *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.*
- Jesus blazed a triumphant trail for us in his own experience of death, burial and resurrection - that is the victory which he has won (v.54, 55).
- Whilst we can all be forgiven not wanting to go through the dying process (just like Jesus), the fear of death need not defeat us any more.

Not Paralysed by sin any more

- Medicine and the hospice movement have done much to alleviate the physical discomfort of dying.
 - but sin cannot so readily be disposed of
- For many the sting in death's tail is the fear that, when they meet God, they will be found not to have been good enough; not to have 'obeyed the Law' sufficiently, done enough good deeds, whatever.
 - the death and resurrection of Jesus have drawn that sting once and for all
- The Christian knows that it no longer matters whether or not he or she has been good enough:
 - the fact is that Jesus HAS been good enough!
- "In Christ" there is nothing sin can do to prevent our resurrection!

- Liken this to this story:
 - an **unexploded bomb** is found on the beach. The bomb disposal squad comes and the **vital part of the bomb is removed**. No longer is the ominous object feared. Children even play round it!
 - so our Lord's death and resurrection have made **death ineffective**. Christians don't escape physical death, but they do escape its power.

Not Idle any more

- Set free from these anxieties, what else can we do but give thanks?
 - *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (v.57)
- It means that we can have lives of great stability (v.58, "**stand firm**", 16:13).
 - no matter what doubts or difficulties may shake us in this life, we can have confidence in the joy of the next.
- However, **this leaves us with work to do!**
- The natural consequence of knowing that all eternity is available to rest with the Lord, is that there is business to get on with in the meantime as his representatives:
 - *"Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.* (v.58b)
- The hope we have in the **future** resurrection has implications for the way we live on earth **now**:
 - whether it involves our **money** (16:1-4 - collections, probably for Jerusalem);
 - our **evangelism** (16:5-9 - Paul's journeys determined by opportunities to speak of Christ);
 - our **hospitality** (16:10-11 - caring for Timothy);
 - our **service** to those with whom God has put us in the Christian community (16:14-20 - those in their church);
 - or simply **the love we show people** (16:14).
- And even if that effort seems to have limited results now, it is not wasted (v.58c, "**not in vain**"), because there is the whole of eternity for it to bear fruit.
- **Finish with an observation CS Lewis once made:**
 - "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for this present world were just those who thought most of the next. The apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English evangelicals who who abolished the slave trade - all left their mark on earth because their minds were occupied with heaven. Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in ... aim at earth and you will get neither."
- Not **afraid** any more
- Not **paralysed by sin** any more
- Not **idle** any more
- **"...Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in ... aim at earth and you will get neither."**