

Every week I get emails from Christian bloggers and Christian sites with articles to read or videos to watch. It is that time of year, Easter week or weekend, that there are plenty of articles on offer about the resurrection of Jesus. "10 proofs for the resurrection of Jesus." "Why believe in the resurrection of Jesus." And these articles, these videos are useful. It's a good thing to know that it's not unreasonable to believe that Jesus did indeed come out of the tomb. He is indeed resurrected as the biblical accounts affirm. But while there are many articles that emphasize the veracity of the resurrection, there are many less that speak of its implications. It is good to know that Jesus was resurrected, but then we need to know how to live out the implications of his resurrection.

The resurrection is not something we celebrate just at Easter. It's something we experience, day in and day out.

Today we can celebrate Easter, we can celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, but what will that change tomorrow when the alarm clock rings, when the children are in a bad mood, when you are in a bad mood? What does it change when, after the celebration, you remember the pains you've been having for months? What does it change when the celebration is over and you still don't have a job? What does it change when the temptation that has been assailing you for years arises? What does it change in the church when there are disappointments, frustrations, when the gospel seems to have very little impact? The fact that Jesus Christ was resurrected, that he came out of the tomb victorious, that he conquered evil, conquered sin, conquered even death, what does that change for us?

In chapter 15 of his first epistle to the church in Corinth, the apostle Paul devotes an entire chapter to the doctrine of the resurrection. And the doctrinal problem that Paul focuses on is not that the Corinthians do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Paul does not try to convince them that Jesus rose from the dead. He tries to convince them that Jesus' resurrection also guarantees their own resurrection. Jesus is risen and therefore they too will rise. The Corinthians already believe that Jesus rose but they do not understand the implications for them. They don't understand what this changes for them.

Paul spends this chapter explaining the implications of Jesus' resurrection. And in conclusion, Paul proclaims the wonderful victory that the resurrection brings to those who are in Jesus. It's hard to imagine a more glorious victory cry to close his presentation. Verse 55 he quotes the prophet Hosea "O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" What a subject for celebration! We feel like shouting "Amen! Preach Paul, Preach! But Paul is not finished. Paul does not end with a cry of victory, a cry of celebration. Paul does not end with a song of exultation and euphoria because Paul knows that tomorrow morning the Christians in Corinth will return to the daily grind, they will return to the world where the Christian life is hard. Paul does not end with a word of celebration, he ends with a challenge. He calls the Corinthians not to celebrate the resurrection but to live it, where life is hard. Verse 58 begins with the word "Therefore". Since Jesus has risen, since you also will rise, since you have victory in Christ, this is what you must do. Here is how to live these great realities: "Be steadfast, unshakable, always abounding in the Lord's work, knowing that your work is not in vain in the Lord." This is the life to which the reality of the resurrection calls you.

The resurrection calls us to a life of stability. The resurrection calls us to a life of activity. The resurrection calls us to a life of hope and trust And I think of these imperatives given by Paul to the Corinthians and I say that we too, we need them. It's easy to celebrate the Resurrection this morning, but what about when I get home from worship? What am I to do tomorrow? What does a life lived in the light of the resurrection look like?

### **The resurrection calls us to a life of stability**

Paul says "Be steadfast, unshakable!" These are two words that describe something that does not move, that is fixed, precisely so as not to move. If you have seen the feet of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. There it is, something firm, unshakeable, something that will not budge. And Paul says, since Jesus is risen, since your resurrection is sure and certain, you can stand firm. You must stand firm. So why does Paul need to write this?

Remember, Paul is writing to a church in one of the most wicked cities in the history of the time. There was even a verb in Greek "to corinth" which meant to behave in a particularly debauched manner. The city was marked by sexual immorality. And the church had been influenced by these things too. In the face of all these worldly influences, also in the face of false worldly teachers, Christians in Corinth must stand firm, unwavering.

But it is especially in the context of the rejection of the doctrine of the resurrection that Paul says, "Be firm. Do not move! Even if those who oppose this doctrine do so eloquently, stand firm. On this doctrine hang a lot of other doctrines, the assurance of salvation, the perseverance in holiness, the reliability of the Word of God, everything that is taught about life after death, about the return of Christ. To have stability in the Christian life, one must be convinced of these key doctrines.

Maybe you've seen footage on TV of people outside in a storm with wind gusts over 150 km/h. How hard it is for them not to get blown away by the wind. And isn't that the impression we have sometimes in our life. Many winds are blowing very, very strong and frankly, we find it difficult to stand firm, unwavering. The wind of atheism prevailing in France, the wind of hostility towards the Christian faith. And if we are not steadfast, unshakeable in the doctrines, the key truths of the Christian life, we will be carried away by these winds. The wind of evolution which rejects any idea that we were created by God and for God, which rejects the truth that we have an eternal soul that will never die. Paul says, since the resurrection is sure and certain, since you are going to live with Christ eternally, you can stand firm, unshakable.

We are talking a lot at the moment about the weariness of the French in the face of Covid and all the health measures in place. But one can also experience spiritual weariness. Living as strangers in the world, living in a society that makes fun of everything we hold dear, living with our own spiritual and other struggles, it is spiritually draining. Paul says: Grounded in the doctrines of the faith, be firm, unshakeable.

But how does Jesus' resurrection help us stand firm?

It does this because in it we see proof of God's faithfulness and God's power. And since God is faithful, since God is powerful, you can stand firm. God is the faithful rock on which we stand. The power of God that brought Jesus out of the tomb is the same power that works in you to help you stand steadfast in the face of the strongest, most violent winds that shake you.

It's like Paul knows that every day there is a battle raging in the heart of the Christian, a battle between his new nature and his old one. Be steadfast, unshakeable in the battle between faith and doubt. Stand firm in the battle between courage and fear, between temptation and righteousness, between hope and disappointment, between the will of God in your life and your own will. Be steadfast in the battle between the truth of God and the lies of the devil. The resurrection calls us to a life of stability.

### **The resurrection calls us to a life of activity**

It is one thing to stand firm in the Christian life, to stand steadfast. This is clearly a good thing. The Christian life is a life of stability. But the Christian life is also a life in which we advance, we progress. It's a life of activity. Paul says: "Always abounding in the work of the Lord"

Let us first try to understand what is the work of the Lord and then to see what it means to abound in it?

What is the work of the Lord? Let's not forget that Paul is writing here to the whole church. It is not a letter written only to pastors, elders, church leaders. It's for the whole church. And every member of the church is involved in the work of the Lord. And this work is simply all that God asks every Christian to do. The work of the Lord is prayer, collective and individual prayer, family prayer. The Lord's work is to come together to worship him together, to study the Bible together. It is evangelism, witnessing about Jesus. The work of the Lord is to give to the church. It's fellowship, taking care of each other. This is the work God gives us. Parents, the work of the Lord is the time you spend with your children to read the Word of God with them, to talk to them about God, to pray with them, for them. It is a special work that God has entrusted to you. Here are some of the works of the Lord

But it would be a mistake to limit the work of God to these "spiritual" activities. Paul told the Colossians: "Whatever your work, do it willingly **as for the Lord** and not for men." Whatever job you do, it's a job you do for the Lord. It is the work of the Lord. The Lord's work is what we do in the office, in the school, in the factory, in the hospital, in the workshop. Cleaning is the work of God. Take care of the children, fixing something for the neighbor across the street, visiting a friend. These are works that God has prepared for us, works that we do to give glory to God, that the name of God

may be glorified. The Lord's work can be the most ordinary, the most trivial task. And the most mundane task becomes a glorious task when it is done for the Lord, for the glory of the Lord. Think about your responsibilities. Think about your works. Think about the roles God has given you. These are your works of the Lord. And how should we do our works?

At home we have a book called "Halfhearted Harry". The book describes the life of a boy who does things by half. He is not very enthusiastic in his work, not very motivated. He tidies his room halfheartedly. He does his homework halfheartedly.

Paul writes to the Corinthians to say that it is not normal that there are Halfhearted Harrys in the church of Jesus Christ. Paul says "always abound in the work of the Lord." There are other possible translations of this sentence. We could translate it: "always overflow in the work" "exaggerate in the work" "May the work of the Lord be superabundant in you". Be enthusiastic about it, motivated, zealous.

Everything we do is in the Lord, it is in his name. It's for his name. It's for his glory. Our work is done for a risen Lord, a living Lord, a reigning and returning Lord. And Paul says that we must "always" abound in this work. The word "always" is underlined in the original. Why does Paul want to underline "always"?

I don't know if you're like me, but I have to admit that there are days when I'm like Halfhearted Harry. There are days when I really don't want to give myself to the works of the Lord. I lack motivation. I lack enthusiasm. I am not abounding. Joy in the works of God does not overflow in me. I often blow hot and cold. I go through periods where I am abounding and then I slow down and I am halfhearted.

And I think Paul recognizes that it is like that for the disciples of Jesus Christ in this world. Paul knows there can be this spiritual weariness. We need encouragement. He often uses this word "always" in his epistles: always full of faith, always joyful, always persevering and patient, always abound more and more in this love, always seek what is good, always abound in the work of the Lord.

When you really don't feel like praying, always abound! When you really don't want to be merciful to an unpleasant person, always abound in the Lord's work. When you are at the end of your spiritual, physical, emotional tether, and you really don't see the point, always abound.

How is it possible to abound when we say to ourselves that there is no point?

### **The resurrection calls us to a life of hope and trust.**

At the end of the verse Paul explains how a life of stability and a life of activity are possible? He points to a great truth that allows tired, demoralized Christians, Christians who have doubts, to stand firm and abound. He says at the end of the verse: "knowing that your work is not in vain in the Lord".

Do you know the frustration of doing work that you think is completely unnecessary, an activity that you do in vain? Pick up the leaves in the garden in October and while I pick them up there are more leaves falling. Chasing the pigeons that are eating the seeds that we give to the chickens. I chase them and 2 minutes later they are back. Have Matthieu's shoes repaired knowing that in 1 month they will be too small for him. These are things, and I know I should be doing them. I do them but I do them thinking "it's absolutely pointless". And we hear the apostle Paul say, "always abounding in the work of the Lord" and we want to do it, we know we have to do it but maybe sometimes we say to ourselves, "But Paul, for years I've been trying to abound but I have the impression that it is in vain".

I see so little progress, so little fruit. My testimony bears so little fruit. I have been praying for people and situations for years, but nothing! What's the point? I have done everything to help this person in need but she continues in her rebellion against God. It's in vain! We are trying to work with our rebellious son but nothing changes. What's the point? We preach the gospel in the church. We announce it around us but we do not see any fruit.

What's the point? I have kept my heart pure, I have walked in your ways but I feel lonely and the temptation is so strong. What's the point? Everything I do for you Jesus, is it in vain?

To all these questions, to all these frustrations, to all these doubts Paul answers: "your labour is not in vain in the Lord". Paul talks about the work of the Christian. This word speaks of hard, exhausting work. "Your labour, your toil or your pain is not in vain." It's a word that's often translated as "a beating."

Paul chooses a word that speaks of grueling work and he says, I know the Lord's work is grueling. I know that you are suffering in this work, that you are struggling to persevere. But at the end of a chapter on the doctrine of the resurrection, that of Jesus and also our own, at the end of a chapter where Paul explains the glorious hope which is ours thanks to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, where Paul explains the reality of Jesus' victory, of safe and certain eternal life through the resurrection, he says: your work, though hard and exhausting, though painful, what you do in the name of the risen Jesus Christ, it is not in vain. You give your life for the work of the Lord and you see no fruit, it is not in vain. Because Jesus came out of the tomb, nothing you do for him is in vain.

Because Jesus is alive and since there is the hope of eternal life in him, no work for him is in vain.

When we pray for our loved ones, it is not in vain. When we testify before a hostile world, a world that makes fun, it is not in vain. When you don't do "like everyone else" at school and you refuse to bow down to the idols of this world, you refuse to follow the crowd in order to stay pure and holy and you feel terribly alone, this is not in vain because the risen Jesus is with you. Jesus sees you and he strengthens you. He says to you: "my child, what you do for me, there in your school, it is not in vain" When you serve others, discreetly and no one applauds, no one sings your praises, no one sees, the risen Lord Jesus sees you because you do it for him. Since Jesus is risen, what you do in his name has eternal significance. It is not in vain. Do you see the value of the Lord's work? You give a glass of water. You visit a sick person, you take, like Jesus, the role of slave and serve others, it is never in vain.

Risen Jesus, Jesus the King on his throne, he takes your works and uses them to advance his Kingdom in his own way in his time. Jesus uses your works for him in his time and in his way. He is alive and he is at work. It is not in vain.

What would be in vain would be to live for something other than Jesus, other than his Kingdom. It would be vain to live for something fleeting, temporal instead of something eternal. It would be pointless to think that all that matters is this world, what I can gain in this world.

I end with the words of a poem written by an old 19th / 20th century English missionary, CT Studd.

When this bright world would tempt me sore,  
When Satan would a victory score;  
When self would seek to have its way,  
Then help me Lord with joy to say;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,  
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";  
And when at last I'll hear the call,  
I know I'll say "twas worth it all";  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last. "

Be steadfast, always abound, your work is not in vain because Jesus is risen.