

Pick and Choose: God-designed or Me-designed?

Have you noticed the marketing strategy of many communication companies lately. Businesses like Telus, Bell, Shaw and other telecommunications companies want you to buy a bundle of services - not just one. It can be a windfall for those who need all the services. It can be an aggravating marketing scheme for those who just want one of the services, but have to take and pay more for the whole thing. There are times in life when you have to take the whole package when you would really prefer just to have a small part of the whole.

Taking the whole package is not what our society has become accustomed to. Let me explain.

We say "yes" to so many things and "no" to other things that are natural components of one another.

What do I mean by this? Examples:

We say "yes" to sex (the small part) and "no" to relationship (the whole package).

We say "yes" to a family (the part) and "no" to marriage (the package).

We say "yes" to love and "no" to the time needed to nurture love.

We say "yes" to God and "no" to his will and his plan.

Let me expand upon that last observation. This is even more pronounced when we talk about the Christian life. (Lk 14:26-27)

Professing Christians are perhaps the worst when it comes to saying "yes" to God and "no" when God expresses what He wants done. Let me run through the list. They are convicting. I am not pointing fingers, I am observing.

We say "yes" to Christ and "no" to his church.

We say "yes" to grace and "no" to responsibility.

We say "yes" to salvation and "no" to discipleship (disciplining our lives in this world the way Jesus taught and modelled for us)

We say "yes" to communion and "no" to baptism.

We say "yes" to worship and "no" to membership (intentional identification with the body)


We say "yes" to miracles and say "no" to the time needed to pray for a miracle.

The list could go on and on. Instead of adding to it, I will jump to what the church at Corinth was doing.

Slide
2

**"Yes" to Jesus –
"No" to Resurrection**

1 Corinthians 15:12
12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?



So what?

The church at Corinth was doing this with Jesus and the resurrection.

They were saying "yes" to Jesus and "no" to the resurrection.

Open your bibles to 1 Corinthians 15:12: Listen to these words. You claim to believe in Jesus who has been preached to you yet . . .

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead (and indeed he has been), how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Obviously, the rumour that had reached Paul's ears was that the Corinthians were claiming there was no resurrection from the dead.

This was an unthinkable heresy that Paul would confront with many words. Paul had just rehearsed the testimonies of hundreds of people that had seen the risen Jesus. Everyone agreed that Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus' resurrection was not a problem. BUT my resurrection (as an individual) was a different matter.


Paul's proposition throughout chapter 15 is this:

If we don't rise from the dead, then neither did Jesus. This lends weight to what we said last week. Jesus experienced in the past everything that God has promised to do for us in the future. Or, in other words, we can expect, in the future, to experience everything God did for Jesus in the past.

Slide
3

If God promised to do everything for us that He did for Jesus, then we also must rise from the dead.

"WHAT IF" there was no resurrection?



If God promised to do everything for us that He did for Jesus, then we also must rise from the dead.

However, Paul plays a game with the Corinthians. He takes the position that there is no such thing as a resurrection from the dead.

So what if there is no resurrection from the dead? What if the body, after being placed in the grave simply stays in the grave? Is there anything wrong with that? Does that change the way we think about Jesus?


Slide
4

IF there was no resurrection . . .

Reality #1: Christ is not raised. He is still dead.

1 Corinthians 15:13

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.



Paul challenges the notion that believers do not rise from the dead by presenting a "what if" scenario - what if there was no resurrection?

What if?

In 1 Corinthians 15:13-19 Paul paints a picture for us of what life would look like for Christians without the resurrection.

Reality (Disappointment) #1: Christ is not raised. He is still dead. (13)

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.


Slide
5

IF there was no resurrection . . .

Reality #2: The message about Christ is empty.

1 Corinthians 15:14

14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.



Reality #2: The message about Christ (and all his promised kingdom and redemption from sin) is empty. (14)

14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

what are *we* with our *preaching!* what *you* with your *faith!* (Meyer, H. A. W. (1879). (W. P. Dickson, Ed.) (D. D. Bannerman & D. Hunter, Trans.). Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (51). Edinburgh: T&T Clark.)


Slide
6

IF there was no resurrection . . .

Reality #3: The ministry is a huge plan to deceive the masses.

1 Corinthians 15:15-16

15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. **16** For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.



Reality #3: The ministry is a huge plan to deceive the masses. A con job of epic proportions. (15-16) Instead of magnifying the goodness of God, we would be maligning his character.

15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise.

16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

If we preached that Christ had risen from the dead and he hadn't, we would be setting ourselves up for the punishment of God. It would not be doing God a favour by telling lies. It would not please God that we did such a thing. It would ignite his anger.


Slide
7

IF there was no resurrection . . .

Reality #4: There is no hope for sinners and no future for saints.

1 Corinthians 15:17-18

17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! **18** Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.




Slide
8

IF there was no resurrection . . .

Reality #5: People should feel sorry for Christians who believe in it.

1 Corinthians 15:19


19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.



Slide
9

IF there was no resurrection . . .

1. We have no Messiah.
2. We have no message.
3. We have no ministry.
4. We have no mercy from God.
5. We are the most miserable people in the world.



Reality #4: There is no hope for sinners and no future for saints (17-18)

17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

Reality #5: People in the world should feel sorry for Christians. (19)

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

Let me review what Paul has said. IF OUR BODIES DO NOT RISE FROM THE DEAD, THEN . . .

1. We have no Messiah.
2. We have no message.
3. We have no ministry.
4. We have no mercy from God.
5. We are the most miserable people in the world.

We'd all want to belong to that cult wouldn't we.

The Christian life, if it were not for the resurrection would be a total waste of time. The Christian life is not about being moral. If morality counted, life without a resurrection would be worth living. The Christian life is not about good deeds. If good deeds counted by themselves, life without a resurrection would be worth living. But life without the hope of the resurrection is not worth living because if there was no resurrection, Christ would not be who he said he was. He would not be the Lord. He would be a liar.

The resurrection is a deal breaker. If you say "no" to the resurrection, you are saying "no" to Christ and everything his life stood for. If you say "yes" to the resurrection, you must also be saying "yes" to Christ and "yes" to all that he has promised to do for you.

There is no resurrection without Christ and there is no Christ without the resurrection. The two are bundled together - a package deal.



Let's turn our thinking back to the bundle of truths and responsibilities that God gives to us when we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior.

In OUR church, we don't need to be convinced about the resurrection. That's not the issue that we struggle with.

BUT our church DOES have the same problem as the Corinthians did. WE DO pick the beliefs that we want to believe in and WE choose NOT to obey those things we consider an inconvenience or a non-essential.

We are probably more like the followers of Jesus when Jesus was feeding the 5000 in John 6. We pick the part of following Jesus that involves receiving the food and filling our stomachs. We pick the part where he is showering his attention upon us. BUT when the part of following Jesus involves showering JESUS with OUR attention, we just choose to say to Jesus, "We don't have time for this. You are asking too much. Who do you think you are?" That's what happened in John 6 when Jesus said to his followers that they must do more than receive food from him, they must actually feed on him and abide in him. Jesus must be the FOCUS of our attention, the food we feed on all the time, not just someone we run to when life has left us starving.

Now what?

The Christian life comes as a bundle. When you receive Christ as your Savior, you receive the whole package - salvation, sanctification, suffering and service. You receive forgiveness in exchange for God's rule and reign over your desires and destiny. You make a commitment to be faithful to Christ. You enter into a relationship with the whole Christ - the One who is Savior, the one who is Lord, the one who is virgin born, the one who is sinless, the one who was crucified on the cross, and the one who was resurrected in his body. Whether you understand it or not, that was all bundled with Christ when you received him.


These are things that come along with the Christian life package which are bundled and cannot be removed. You may think you can take out of it JUST what you want and leave the rest. My educated opinion is that you can't. Here are the consequences of picking and choosing.

- 1) You fool only yourself.
- 2) You cheat others of a testimony of who Jesus really is.
- 3) You make God out to be 'the liar' when He is not. You are. You are living the lie, not God.

The Bundle You are to Receive

Romans 12:1
1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Matthew 28:20
20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you . . .



Do you trust Jesus enough to receive what He offers you? Then take it. Trust Him. But I warn you, He expects you to take the whole bundle. He did not offer you half of Himself, he offered all of himself and he expects you to do the same for him.

Paul said in **Romans 12:1**

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Jesus said in **Matthew 28:20** that the wise Bible teacher is to teach his students the following:

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you . . .

It may take time to download and process all that Jesus wants you to receive and believe, but when it is fully revealed, He expects you to take the whole package.

Review of today's talk:

1) Beware of the inclination to pick and choose your faith

Paul says it is impossible to split the package up. There are some things in a decision to follow Jesus that when you say "yes" to Him, you get a lot of other things included which you are not allowed to say "no" to.

2) The insanity/impossibility created by picking and choosing

When you start picking apart the person of Jesus, you may discover that you haven't chosen Jesus at all. It is better to discover that early than to wait until its too late.

Jesus cannot be unbundled. You can't take what Jesus said about himself, and what he said about his Father, and what he said about us and our sin, and what he said about our neighbours and His love, and break up the package. He wants us to believe and obey all the things he commanded his original disciples to do.

What this looks like in contemporary terms is this. I don't think you can choose to simply live like Jesus AND not believe everything Jesus taught about Himself. On the other hand, I don't think you can believe everything the Bible teaches about Jesus and choose to live doing what is right in your own eyes. I don't think you can intentionally remove the church from your life's agenda AND still be a maturing Christian. If you do, you have removed Jesus from the package. I don't think you can participate and indulge in the sinful behavioral choices of the world that Jesus denounced and

still claim that He is Lord of your life. I don't think you can ignore the needs of fellow human beings and say that the love of the Lord is flowing through your life.

I read an interesting quote this week that seems to speak to this problem. Our "call to a holy life is based on the fact that God Himself is holy. Because God is holy, He requires that we be holy. (no choice - it's a bundle) Many Christians have what we might call a "cultural holiness." They adapt to the character and behavior pattern of Christians around them. As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy. **But God has not called us to be like those around us. He has called us to be like Himself.** Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God." (Jerry Bridges, Pursuit of Holiness, p. 26).

When we pick some traits of Christianity and reject others, it is the arrogance of thinking we are wiser than God. But that is not the greatest sin. The greatest sin is that we cheapen or dishonor the majesty of the One who has wisely put the whole package together. The reason He has bundled it the way He has is because it's exactly what we need to be rightly related to Him.

Next week Paul will expand upon the teaching of the resurrection. It will reveal to us . . .

3) The incredible privilege of picking the whole package

He will base his thoughts on ...

1 Corinthians 15:20 But now Christ is risen from the dead . . .

If that is true the opposites of this passage must be true: Because of the resurrection

A CHRISTIAN CAN CONFIDENTLY KNOW

1. Our MESSIAH is alive.
2. Our MESSAGE is meaningful, valid, valuable, significant
3. Our MINISTRY is a mission of love as opposed to a mission of deceit
4. GOD'S MERCY is real.
5. We have reason to be envied.

The thing I hope you will understand today is that, if we don't believe in the resurrection of our own bodies, then we are excluded from all the benefits that attend Christ's resurrection from the dead. Don't be guilty of picking and choosing. Embrace the whole bundle.

Slide
12

Because of the Resurrection

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2. Our MESSAGE is meaningful, valid, valuable, significant
3. Our MINISTRY is a mission of love as opposed to a mission of deceit
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