

Title: United with Him  
Text: Romans 6.1-14 (focusing on verses 9-10)  
Theme: The Resurrection of Christ  
Occasion: Resurrection Day 2014  
Prop Stmtnt: The Resurrection of Christ seals our hope.

Read Text:

In our world, there are two types of facts: 1) Facts that matter and 2) Facts that are irrelevant. For example, gravity is a fact that matters and rally caps in baseball are facts that do not. If your team is losing in the latter innings of a game, it is a demonstrable reality that fans of the losing team will turn their hats inside out and wear them backwards in an effort to change the forces of nature so that their team will rally from behind and win the game. So, while rally caps are indeed a fact, and a popular one, there is no actual affect that rally caps have on reality. On the other hand, gravity is a fact that matters. Gravity is not only a reality, it is a reality that needs to be understood and you need to know the personal significance of gravity.

For example, the owner of a local tool and die shop was giving me a tour through this company one day. He was explaining to me the process of designing and building tools that were used in the stamping process for car parts. He told me that one of the biggest safety challenges in the shop had to do with dropping these solid steel parts. He explained that when we drop things that often our instinctive response is to put out our foot in order to break the fall of the object so that it or the floor is not damaged. He said that when you do that with one of these tools, you will crush your foot and that he had lost some good workers for several months because of that. Gravity is a fact that matters.

We have gathered here this morning because of the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus is not a rally cap kind of fact that makes people feel better in the moment, but has no demonstrable impact upon reality. What is the significance of thousands of people turning their hats inside out? Nothing, really. What is the significance of Jesus Christ rising again from the dead? Everything! The resurrection of Jesus is a life-changing, world-impacting reality that must be reckoned with and responded to. Therefore, the outline of this message has 3 points. 1) What we know 2) What this means and 3) Why this matters.

I. **What we know.** (9)

A. **We know that Christ lived.**

There is an intellectually sloppy, lazy assumption that is often leveled against Christ-followers. The assumption goes like this: 1) We are more intelligent now than people who lived 2,000 years ago. After all, we have iphones. 2) Since so many people were so ignorant back then, they were easily duped into believing things and propagating things that were untrue. 3) Stories became legends, and legends became myths, and people wrote these down and called it a Bible, but the whole thing is really made up. So, with an

air of arrogance that is actually ignorance, Christianity is dismissed as if it's a fable that has been and continues to be an obstacle to real learning. C.S. Lewis calls this chronological snobbery. But no serious student of history challenges the fact that there was a man who lived in Israel named Jesus Christ. After all, the calendar of the world changed! Sure, we have iphones, but the historical records of Christ are overwhelming and most people are willing to concede that.

### **B. We know that Christ died.**

Once again, the historical records of the death of Christ are beyond dispute. I am not just referring to the records of the NT, but am speaking of the clear record of the Roman historian Tacitus, the Jewish historian, Josephus, Pliny, the Roman Governor of Bithynia, the Babylonian Talmud and Lucian of Samosata (the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Greek satirist).

And when you go back look at the historical accounts of the death of Christ, it is obvious that he died! He wasn't "mostly dead" he was completely dead. The soldiers knew it. The governor knew it. The women who helped prepare his body for burial knew it. Joseph of Arimethea knew it. Christ's adversaries knew it. Political spin is not new, is it? They fabricated the story about the disciple's stealing the body because everybody knew he was dead.

### **A. We know that Christ rose again.**

Seriously, when you discuss the historicity of Jesus, his birth, his life and his death are not really challenged. What causes people to either roll their eyes or go bonkers is when you declare and profess to embrace the fact of his resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is a critical issue and a highly problematic one. Here is the tension. If you accept the idea that miracles cannot happen, and that every claim of miracle in the Bible has some sort of scientific and natural explanation, then you obviously deny the reality of the resurrection. But, if you deny the reality of the resurrection, then how do you explain the beginning of Christianity? And more than that, how do you explain the explosive growth and influence of it? At least with the Islamic religion you can understand how it initially grew and in some cases, it is still that way. Either convert, or we will kill you. Christianity was and is radically different. It was not advanced by the sword at all. In fact, if you converted to Christ, you were threatened with death. And yet, in the face of that, thousands believed. They believed in the face of great hostility, why? What do you do with that? The testimony is unanimous. They believed because of the fact of the resurrection. So, either all of these people, several hundred of which claimed to be eyewitness of the resurrected Christ were all deceived, or they believed because it was true. Yet, we have not seen Christ with our own eyes. Christ knows this and anticipated this. When the disciple Thomas finally believed that Christ had indeed risen again because he saw him with his own eyes, Jesus said, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." So, while we believe without seeing, is our belief, blind? Do we believe only because we want to?

Here are 2 evidences: 1) The testimony of Paul 2) The testimony of the gospel writers.

Now, in this text, Paul is not defending the historicity of the resurrection he is assuming it as fact. He defended it earlier 1 Cor. 15. You see, while the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John appear first in the New Testament, they were not written first. In fact, John's gospel was one of the last books of the New Testament to be written. The first books that were written were the letters of Paul and one of the earliest was his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians. Humanly speaking, Paul had everything to lose if he became a follower of Christ. He was an enemy of this movement that became known as Christianity. There is no other logical explanation for Paul's change of heart, change of life, change of message, and change of mission than he became convinced of and believed in the resurrection of Christ. That is one of the reasons why I trust Paul's writings in 1 Corinthians. He paid for this with his life. Another interesting feature of the gospel accounts is the prominent role that women have in the story. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century world, women occupied such a low social level that their testimony was not admitted in a court of law. So, if Matthew or the other gospel writers were trying to change the story so that it would sound believable, they would not have included women in it. The fact that they did is clear evidence that they just wrote the truth as it happened. Another aspect to note is that eyewitnesses saw both the empty tomb and the resurrected Christ. If the tomb was empty but no one ever met the resurrected Christ, you could argue that his body had been stolen. If the tomb had a body and people met Christ, you could argue that they had been on a field trip to Denver and were all smoking something funny. But, the tomb was empty, they met Christ and Christ had told them beforehand that it was going to happen.

In this text, Paul assumes the fact of the resurrection. The tomb had a body in it and the entrance was sealed and guarded. Now the tomb is empty and the once terrified and timid disciples are unabashedly bold and willing to risk their lives for Christ. Stephen is killed. James is executed. Peter is imprisoned. And in a record that does not hesitate to speak of the failures of its main characters, there is no turning back by any disciple after the resurrection. If the Jewish leaders wanted to stop the movement dead in its tracks, they only had to produce a body and reveal the plot. They don't because they can't. So, they resort to threats and persecution, which is the lowest form of argumentation. But they had a serious problem on their hands. What do you do with the resurrection of Jesus? And here is my point. It is factually accepted that Jesus lived and died because of the historical evidence. But the historical evidence that tells us about his life and death also tells us about his resurrection. Why do people choke on that? Again, what do you do with a resurrected Jesus? I'll tell you what you better do. You had better bow down and worship because you are in the presence of the Lord of the Universe. And here is where we move from the facts of history to the interpretation of those facts.

## II. What this means (9-10)

Many people, it seems, claim to be angry with God because of how he "runs the world." In most cases, people seem to be upset because they are not consulted a bit more. But wait a minute. If you create something, do you not have the right to design it, govern it and name it? This is what God has done and is doing. Because God knows that He is the ultimate and highest good, anything that is in rebellion to him is not only wrong, it is disastrous. So, when God created the world, God put into motion the law of sin. If the

law of sin is broken, then the consequence is death. That is why, the Bible says that the “wages of sin is death.” That is the law of sin and death. Since God created the law of sin and death one could argue, that, in theory, he could overrule that law. Except, this law was based upon his own character. If God overruled his own law, he would be inconsistent with his own nature.

So, when we say that Jesus lived and died, we need to understand what that means. How can Jesus die when death is the penalty for sin? Jesus died because he was credited with our sin. The Bible says that “he who knew no sin, became sin for us...” It is true that when Jesus died on the cross, he took our punishment for us, but you need to understand this: he took our punishment because he actually took our sin upon himself. He was credited with our sin. All of this was planned by the Father and was intentionally carried out by the Son. The arrest, trial and execution of Christ were not an accidental tragedy. Jesus was and remained in complete charge. Jesus said, “...*I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.*” (John 10.17-18)

When people warned him that King Herod was trying to kill him, Jesus said, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.’” (Luke 13.32) In other words, I am on a mission and no one can stop my mission. And when it is time for me to die, I will lay down my life. He even predicted the details of his death when he said that “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” (Matthew 17.22-23) So, when the text states that...

#### **A. Death could not hold him. (9a)**

We could argue that Christ is more powerful than death because he is. However, Christ is more powerful than death because Christ took upon himself the curse of death when he became sin. Sin demonstrates its power through death. Death has power only through sin. If you can ever be rid of sin, then you can be free from the power of death. Death only has power to the degree that sin has influence. Sin and death are inseparable. It was not possible for Jesus to be held by the power of death because Jesus broke the power of sin. And this is what is so critical for you to understand. He broke the power of sin because he paid the ultimate price for it. He died! He died perfectly for sin. He did not die for himself because he did not sin. He died perfectly for your sin because you are the one who sins. He broke the power of sin for every person who would ever believe in him. That is why death could not hold him, and it cannot hold us.

#### **B. Christ will never die again. (9b)**

Christ will never die again because the payment for sin has been paid in full. There is nothing left to pay. Do you get it? There is nothing left for you to pay. Many of you grew up believing and being taught that you had to be good enough for God to accept you, but no one could tell you how good, good enough was. Oh, you had religious observances and rites that you were encouraged to perform and threatened with guilt and fear if you

didn't, but still no one could tell you how often you had to do those. "Saints" were those who went to church everyday, etc. And yet, no one could promise you that you were ever safe, sealed, and secure. The threat of death, the fear of judgment was held over you. And so you have paid and paid and paid and paid and paid, like paying interest on your credit card balance, you keep paying but you are still in debt. And the reason why you are in debt is because you think that you are the one who has to do the paying. If you believe that you are the one who has to pay for your sins, your payment will never be enough. But, there is One who has paid it for you, and his payment was so perfect that your debt is satisfied. There is nothing left for you to pay. That means for every person who is "in Christ" there is nothing left to fear. Christ will never die again because...

**C. Death no longer has dominion over him. (9c)**

The law of sin and death does not apply to Christ anymore. He paid for our sin and he rose again from the dead because he broke the power of death. Death is dead, life has won, it is finished. There is no threat that can be leveled against Christ than can give him a panic attack. Jesus does not get nervous. Jesus is not worried about MRI results or blood work. Pilate threatened him before he died and Jesus was not impressed, much less after his resurrection. Seriously, what can you threaten Jesus with?

**D. He died to sin, once. (10a)**

Do you know what this means? It means that his death was good enough the first time. We remember it, but we do not repeat it. He is not still dying. He is not still suffering. Your sins do not cause him fresh wounds. Your sins do not require another sacrifice. Your failures do not have to be the final word.

**E. He lives, forever. (10b)**

Jesus said, "*Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*" Revelation 1.17b-18

Many years ago, I took my family on vacation to Florida. We were staying on the east coast, but drove over to the west side to go to Busch Gardens. We had everything packed into our van and were in the middle of having a wonderful day at this amusement park when I realized that I did not have the keys to the van. I was overwhelmed with fear because I was going to cause my family a great deal of distress. I checked my pockets 15 times hoping that in the last 4 seconds from the time that I had just checked them that somehow they would just jump into my pocket, or materialize. Of course it is the summer and it is 98 degrees and 87% humidity and I do not know where our keys are. I have to leave the kids with Cathi and retrace my steps over an entire amusement park. I check with every security person, every park worker that I see. I feel like such a complete failure and to make matters worse, I am running through the park when I see this happy family walking toward me and the dad has this shirt on that says, "World's Greatest Dad." I thought what kind of a dad loses his keys at an amusement park which threatens to strand his family in the parking lot? Finally, after going back through every place I had

been, I narrow it down to the Ball Pit. I realize that they had to fall out while I was playing with the kids in the Ball Pit. I explain my dilemma to one of the workers so that he doesn't think I am weird, and I have dive in. The guy has pity on my and he dives in and we go back and forth with our hands covering every square inch of the fabric on the bottom. I realize that every ball has been wiped by a snotty nosed kid, goobed up by slobber, and other unmentionable fluids. All of these plastic spheres are like cosmic contaminants that ought to be impounded by the infectious disease department, but at this moment, I don't care. I have to get these keys. The park is now about to close when I hear the worker emerging from the middle of the pit shout, "Hey, I think I found them." And he did. I got his name in order to thank him properly, got the keys and ran to find my family. I had the keys. My fear of failure was over. I had the keys. My uncertainty was over. I had the keys. My family was safe, I had the keys. Jesus has the keys, but they are not to your van. He has the keys to death and hades. Only in his case, he cannot and will not lose them.

### III. **Why this matters.** (history to meaning to significance)

#### A. **All benefits of his death are secured.** (4.25)

Christ made many promises to his followers. There is no greater promise than the one he made to Martha when he said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me will never die." That means nothing unless you die and rise again. And if the one who dies and rises again says that he is the resurrection and the life and that you need to believe on him, then you had better believe on him because this means that he can deliver on his promises. The promise that his death paid for our sins and that we are declared righteous by faith is secured by his resurrection. "[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."

His promises are not just well-wishes with good intentions. His promises are guarantees that cannot be broken and cannot be stopped. "If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." (Romans 6.5)

#### B. **All future ministry of Christ is certain.**

His position of power is certain. (Matthew 28.19) His ministry of interceding (Romans 8.34) is guaranteed. His position as your advocate (1 John 2.1) is yours now and until the end of your life. His ministry of comfort and presence (Matthew 28.20) can never be taken from you. And his promise to return (Revelation 19) is ironclad.

#### C. **All of Christ is mine by faith, now and forever!** (6.5)

When you trust in Christ, you are united to Christ forever. You are placed into Christ. You are credited with his life and with his death which guarantees your bodily resurrection. When you come to faith in Christ then right now, the real you, the eternal you, your soul is saved, it is safe, you are his, forever. Your body will die, but you won't. So, what can threaten you? What can harm you? I mean really harm you? What can

separate you from the love of Christ? Tribulation? Distress? Persecution? Famine? Nakedness? Danger? Or Sword? No, in fact, we are more than conquerors because we do not just win temporary battles; we get it all, forever, because we are in Christ. There is no circumstance, no disease, no threat, no report, and no news that can change who we are. We are, already, alive forever. We are just awaiting a new body.

#### Conclusion:

You may be a skeptic, but even if you are, shouldn't you want to believe? Here is what I mean. If there is no resurrection, then there is nothing after this. If there is nothing after this, it is only because there was nothing before. Nothing before, and nothing to come means nothing now. No God, no meaning, no purpose, no significance and no truth. That means, no justice, no right, and no wrong. It does not matter if little people are exploited by the powerful. It does not matter if someone steals your children or burns down your home. It does not matter if you are lied about at work or falsely accused by the law. It does not matter because nothing matters and never has, and never will. There is no cause to live for or die for because there is no cause of anything. Look into the eyes of your child, or any child and tell her, "You do not matter. Your life has no meaning. You are nothing." Are you going to say that? "Cause that's all you have. That is the very best that you can do. But why do people hesitate to say something like that? Why does it not seem right? Do you know why it does not seem right? Do you know why it is cruel? It is not just cruel because it is hurtful. It is not just cruel because it crushes the spirit, rips apart dreams and steals hope. It is cruel, because it is not true.

That thinking both intellectually and intuitively not only collapses underneath its own weight, it is crushed by the reality of an empty tomb. But there is a better way to say that. The curse of nothingness and meaninglessness is not just crushed by an empty tomb; it is rescued by an empty tomb. This tomb is empty because there is a God and He has come and is coming again. He lived. He died. He rose again. He did it for you. He did it in your place because you could not. It is now time for you to respond. Trust Him! Trust Him alone.