Peter’s Resurrection Message

Acts 2:1-41

Key Verse: 2:24 “But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”

 Happy Easter! Almost every year during the Easter season we studied Apostle Paul’s resurrection message through 1 Corinthians 15. Some memorized the whole chapter, and others won the prize for the contest. In 1 Corinthians 15 we learned the necessity of resurrection (1-19), the power of resurrection (20-34), and the glory of resurrection (35-58). Thank God for teaching us the resurrection of Christ through Paul.

 Today we will study about Peter’s Easter message. Unlike Paul, who met the Risen Jesus physically once in his life time, Peter had been with Jesus for three years until he was resurrected and ascended. Peter, as an eyewitness and a top disciple of Jesus, testified Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection based on his experience. While Paul wrote his Easter message as a letter to the saints in the Corinthian church, Peter proclaimed his Easter message to the crowd in a loud voice, filled with the Holy Spirit. Let’s see the similarities and differences of the two messages between Paul and Peter and study how we apply Jesus’ resurrection to our life today.

First, the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (1-21) After Jesus’ ascension, his disciples went to Mark’s upper room and prayed together with one in heart and mind. They were waiting for the baptism of the Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised to give. (1:8) It was the day of Pentecost when Moses had received the law at Mt. Sinai. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. (2:1-4) All those who saw these and heard them speaking in many different languages were amazed. Some made fun of them and said that the disciples drank too much wine. Someone once said that he would drink lots of wine if it meant he could speak Spanish fluently.

 What was Peter’s view to see this miraculous sign? How did he defend the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Peter explained the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. The prophet Joel, who lived in BC 600, prophesied the baptism of the Holy Spirit in this: “***In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy***…” (Joel 2:28-32, Ac 2:17-18) According to the prophecy of Joel, Peter believed that the disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit. In the era of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came on specific persons for special occasions. But in the last day God poured out the Holy Spirit on all people so that they could may prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. We have prayed for great spiritual revivals through the work of the Holy Spirit in the International Summer Bible Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. We want to see our children prophesying, young men and women seeing visions, and old men dreaming dreams through the work of the Holy Spirit. It will happen when we pray together earnestly like Jesus’ disciples who had gathered together and constantly prayed. Amen!

Joel’s prophecy continued with the eschatological signs when Jesus comes again. God will show signs and wonders in nature and in human history before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. (19-20) People will be terrified with fear of death and judgment. What must we do at that time as believers? Look at verse 21. “***And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.***” We must call Jesus’ name in that day. We must identify ourselves as children of God through faith in Jesus’ Christ. The name of other people will not work. Our worldly success or achievement or charitable activities will not be accepted. Only those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved. Amen!

Second, Peter’s message of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection (22-24) Now Peter proclaimed the gospel message to the crowd by summarizing it in three parts:1. Jesus of Nazareth accredited by God (v.22), 2. His crucifixion planned by God (v.23), 3. His resurrection performed by God (v.24). In verse 22 Peter said, “***Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know***.” Jesus of Nazareth was accredited (publically approved) by God the Father as the Messiah through miraculous signs and wonders which he had performed. No one could perform the signs and wonders which Jesus did. Jesus changed water into wine. He healed the dying son of a royal official. He raised the paralytic who had been invalid for 38 years. He walked on the water and fed five thousand with five loaves and two fish. John 7:31 says, “*Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, “When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man*?”

This good Jesus was handed over to the gentiles and crucified on the cross. People thought that his crucifixion was a defeat and tragedy by evil people. But Peter did not think so. He said that the crucifixion of Jesus was not a defeat, but victory, not tragedy but glory. This is because it was planned by God since long ago, from the day of Genesis to Malachi through his divine wisdom and foreknowledge for world salvation. Look at verse 23. “***This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.***” Peter says that the crucifixion of Christ was not merely evil man’s action, but God's set purpose. It was God who had planned Jesus' coming into the world to be crucified on a cross for the sin of the world. In a word Jesus’ death on the cross was the fulfillment of God’s prophecies and his promise for world salvation. Here we learn that all things in human history are under God’s divine sovereignty and his control. We need to see all things with God’s perspective so that we may overcome our unbelief, sorrow, and sufferings which we confront now. In all things God works for the good of those who love him. (Ro 8:28) Joseph’s life in the Old Testament was one tragedy after another to the eyes of people. He was hated by his own brothers and sold as a slave to a foreign country. He was imprisoned with false accusations and stayed in jail for more than two years. He had no reasons to believe in God if only he thought about his life. But Joseph saw his life in view of God’s redemptive history. He believed in God. After he became a prime minister next to Pharaoh, Joseph said to his brothers who were afraid of his retaliation, “*Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended if for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”* (Ge 50:19,20) Evil people intended to harm Jesus and crucified him on the cross. But God intended it for good to save many lives through Jesus’ death on the cross.

Peter continued to address about the resurrection of Christ. Look at verse 24. “***But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.***” Jesus shed his precious blood on the cross for our sins and was buried in the tomb. But God did not leave him in the tomb, but raised him from the dead. In fact Jesus could not stay in the tomb because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. Death cannot do anything against resurrection. Resurrection is a death sentence to death itself. So Paul said in 1Corinthians 15:54-56, “*Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*.” Satan uses a weapon called ‘death’ to threaten us as Kim Jung Un in North Korea uses nuclear weapons to threat the world. When people are enslaved by fear of death, they become paralytic and powerless. Even some Christians are under the power of death and live like paralyzed men. But God raised Jesus from the dead so that we also could be raised from death and live with resurrection faith. Indeed, it is impossible for death to keep its hold on us because we are children of God and forgiven sinners by the precious blood of Jesus. God is our father, and all things on this earth are under His control and sovereignty. Without his permission no one can buy and sell a bird and mere animal. Without his permission no one can harm us or take away our lives. God’s enemies killed Jesus and put some soldiers at the tomb to guard his body. But Hymn 258 says, “*Vainly they watch his bed Jesus, my Savior! Vainly they seal the dead Jesus, my Lord! Death cannot keep his prey Jesus, my Savior! He tore the bars away Jesus, my Lord!*”

Before Peter met the Risen Jesus, he disowned Jesus three times because of fear of death. He ran away from the cross of Jesus. But after he witnessed the resurrection of Christ, he was changed. No more death, no more fear was in him. He was free from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Peter. One young man was sorrowful that his father had killed himself when he was young. He thought that his life might also end like his father. His thoughts and life were filled with darkness and death. But he was changed when he heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. He accepted God’s forgiving love for his sins and his power of resurrection for his eternal life. Now the power of darkness and elements of death do not overrule him any longer. He lives by resurrection faith. Indeed, it is impossible for death to control God’s children because we are not under its rule any more. We are under God’s divine sovereignty and convinced by his absolute love. There is no failure and despair in Jesus because he died for our sins and rose again from the dead for our eternal life. Amen!

Third, David’s resurrection faith (25-35) In verses 25-35 Peter said that the resurrection of Christ is not a new idea made by Peter himself, but the fulfillment of David’s prophecies, especially Psalm 16:8-11 and 110:1. David was a poet, musician, warrior, and a great king. Above all he was a man after God’s own heart. But when he thought about his death, he was very sorrowful. He became more sorrowful when he thought that his body would decay and be eaten by maggots. But he believed in the resurrection of the dead. So he wrote, “***I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence***.” (25-28, Ps 16:8-11)

In verses 29-35 Peter proclaimed that David prophesied not only his own resurrection, but also the resurrection of the Messiah. Look at verses 29-32. “***Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on an oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.***” Peter’s message did not end with the resurrection of the Messiah, but extended to Jesus’ ascension and his second coming. In verses 34-35 Peter continued, “***For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet***.” Peter was one of the eyewitnesses of Jesus’ ascension. In Acts 1:9-11 the ascension of Jesus is well described. The Risen Jesus was taken up before the eyes of his disciples, and a cloud hid him from their sight. While they were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, the angels appeared to them and said, “…*This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven*.”

Apostle Paul said about Jesus’ second coming in this, “*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death*.” (1Co 15:25,26) Jesus will come again as he went up to heaven. When he came to this world first time, he came as the Savior. When he comes to this world a second time, he will come as the Judge. He will judge between the living and the dead. He will judge us according to what we have done, what we have believed, and what we have purposed for our lives. Jesus promised in Matthew 25:31-33, “*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.*” Are you sheep or goats? Are you going to stand on his right or on his left? Peter concluded his message in verse 36. Let us read verse 36 altogether. “***Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah***.”

What was the crowd’s response to Peter’s message? They were convicted by Peter’s message because they had committed the worst crime against God by crucifying the Messiah. They did not know what to do. Verse 37 says, “***When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”*** Peter replied. “***Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***” (37) The way of avoiding God’s divine judgment is repentance and forgiveness of sins. Then we will receive the Holy Spirit as God’s gift. We all must repent. The title of Easter Bible conference is the fruit of repentance. May God help us to repent and to receive forgiveness of sins. Help us to bear the fruit of repentance through this Easter Conference. Peter warned the crowd in verse 40. “***Save yourselves from this corrupt generation***.” The way to save ourselves from this corrupt generation is to live with resurrection faith. It is impossible for those who live with resurrection faith to be corrupt in this generation. It is possible for us to win over the power of death and experience the power of resurrection when we repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah. Amen.

Before Peter had resurrection faith, he was afraid of identifying himself as Jesus’ disciple before even a little girl. He denied Jesus three times because of fear. But after he had resurrection faith, he was not afraid of death any more. He delivered the resurrection message before 3,000 people. Among them there were his enemies who had tried to kill him. But, Peter was not afraid of death any more. He delivered the message of repentance and salvation. This is the work of the Holy Spirit which provides us power, love, and self-discipline. (2Ti 1:7) May God pour out the Holy Spirit on all of us as you promised! Fill us and this house with your Spirit so that we may also prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. Amen!