

"HOLD ON TIGHT!" 1 CORINTHIANS 15: 1-11, 58

Tryon First Baptist Church, April 6, 2008, 2nd Sun of Eastertide

Easter came too quickly for me this year. In fact, Anne Shu and I had a hard time planning for the proper joys of worship for us all, since the season was so rushed. I have always felt since Resurrection Day is the most thrilling Christian truth we have, that on this day we should have the most exceptional moments of worship to proclaim this great truth. I think that is where the Apostle Paul begins this 15th chapter of the letter to the Corinthians. *"Now brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you..."*

But who needs to be reminded of the Resurrection, for heaven's sake? Apparently they did, as the Corinthians suffered as severe a case of Attention Deficit Disorder as we have ever witnessed! The letter is written to a people who had received the gospel, then promptly lost their focus as their celebration turned into platitudes that had no power to direct their steps in the paths of a healthy congregation that really honored The Lord!

This congregation was slipping into divisions, quarrels, leaders playing for their loyalties- and the tantalizing allurements of worldly wisdom was too much for their weak commitments. They took each other to court, played fast and loose with their marriages, toyed with entertainment in worship and failed to honor their fellow Christians.

Their brash immorality, which was so evident to all observing, was, to the Apostle, only symptomatic of a poor case of theological shallowness. They had forgotten the **power of God** as seen in the **Resurrection**, and had taken their new liberty as privilege, to live just as they wanted. They lived their own self-directed lives! Paul's word to the

flashy and self-absorbed Corinthians was this, *“Live for yourself and you will die for yourself! Live for The Lord, and you will live with power and joy forever with Christ, The Lord!”*

He was reminding them that they had been set free to live for God in the power of the Spirit, because, at the Cross, Jesus had defeated all the enemies, seen and unseen, of the human heart. But it was up to them to fight the good fight, to choose everyday to live for Him instead of for themselves! *“I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you,”* he would say in 5:14. *“Some of you have become arrogant as if no one is looking, much less me, but I am coming soon, and I will test your self-proclaimed power....”* And I love his Elijah style challenge, in 4:20, ***“for the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but POWER!”*** Then he says slyly, *“How do you want it? Shall I come with a whip (since this is the family of faith I spawned, after all), or shall I come in love with a gentle spirit!?”*

I’d say he was pretty mad! Disappointed in his children of the faith, who are the best and the only proof that a father has that he was teaching and doing a creditable job with his children all along. Sometimes a father has to take a whip to his children when they stray, for their good and for the verification of his fatherhood. When it comes to straying from the truth, a father has got to mean business if he wants his children to succeed!

Paul says, *“I want to remind you of the gospel that I preached...”* They needed reminding! Now 2 weeks after Easter **I want to remind you** of God’s POWER. It was, as Paul says:

1. Preached: explained and proclaimed;
2. Received: you were thrilled and accepted it!;
3. Stood upon: they broke from their old failing religion to establish the truth that Jesus rose from the grave as the

cornerstone proof of their faith;

4. And they were saved by it: made whole, made right in God's eyes by it!.....That is..... ..

.....if they would **HOLD ON TIGHT!**

Today, we are called "***The Disposable Generation.***" That means we just use everything up, then throw it away, dispose of it when it is no longer useful! We are a "disposable generation," consumers, then dumpers! "***Let it go!***" we say. It has become a good word for a fast and "***Git 'er done***" generation. When something is no longer useful right now, don't do as the older generation did so much of the time: don't store it away, don't save stuff! There is plenty more to get when you need it.

We have also applied it to relationships: don't stash stuff in a gunny sack of pain, don't store up personal hurts and resentments, don't save up all those negative experiences of life! All that stuff will eventually weigh you down and you won't get anywhere, ever again! These things have helped us keep moving on. But when do you decide to let it go, and when to "**Hold on tight?**" Reminds me of Kenny Rogers' song, "*You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em!*"

One of the great keys to the strength of a man is to keep his marriage vows in today's world of temptations, the multitude of options, today's moral relativity. It is said of us again, that this generation is "**Dying for Change,**" meaning we are so quick to jump for every change that allures us, that we are 'dying' because we can't keep our word, our commitments, our lives in the road! We are afraid to hold on, afraid we will miss something, afraid when it doesn't feel good, afraid God didn't really mean it when he said about His

covenant protection, *"I will be your God...IF...IF... you will be my people!"* Paul said, *"I want to remind you of the gospel..."*

"Hold on Tight!" It has proven a good word for the pocketbook, for the nation and for the soul as well. But how to discern and decide which ones to hold and which to fold!?

One key is this: All experiences of our lives are cumulative, meaning they build on each other. If we start with a good foundation we are more likely to build something lasting. If we start with a weak foundation, no matter what we pile up on top, it will be shakey and shody and less likely to be lasting!

In our spiritual lives it is no different. Build on the rock of our salvation; build on the Christ who loved us and gave His life for us to have life everlasting through the forgiveness of our sins. Build on the power of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, and you cannot, will not fail! The Bible says, *"Be reminded of the gospel, of the forgiveness of your sins and of its end result, the resurrection from the dead....or else!"*

Later in Romans 10:9-10, Paul clarifies, *"If you believe in your heart that Jesus was raised from the dead, and confess with your mouth that He is Lord, you will be saved!"* The transforming power of God is at work in you, too, when you believe in the power of God! To have a part of the good news and forget the power of God which we saw in the resurrection is weak and finally useless!

The Bible urges us to REMEMBER and to HOLD ON TIGHT! These 11 verses speak convincingly. Look at the scriptures. The first 4 verses tell the facts: Christ died, was buried, and was raised to life! The next 4 tell of the evidence: the 6 appearances-3 were personal, 3 were to large groups! Verses 9,10,11 speak with humility of being undeserving, about how all is of God's goodness and grace. It

is an essential element to really comprehend this wonder, this love, this POWER! As Paul said, *"The kingdom of God is not about words but about POWER!"*

The Resurrection remains at the heart of our faith. It is the validation of the Gospel. Let me remind you it was preached; you received it, our whole faith stands on it, by it we are saved from the failure to believe and the failure to have a sense of purpose. God created each one of us for a joyful relationship with Him. In POWER at the first Easter, God demonstrated His plan and let us glimpse it and build our lives around this astounding truth. We were made for eternity, for living with the confident hope of one day being with Him, knowing Him as we ourselves are now known by Him. And so we live by faith, today, trusting in tomorrow.

We need a perspective from knowing what God can do, what God offers each one who lives for Him now. Do you need to be reminded? I do. Peter was impulsive, then Jesus warned him that within hours he would deny ever having anything to do with him! Peter was a "whatever" kind of guy! Whatever! Paul was a compulsive, not open to new truth, that is, until God smacked him down in Damascus, blinded him, called him to serve Him. We are all sinful, always on the edge of denying him, refusing Him, or just dropping out of the fullness of His love. The Resurrection screams at each of us.....DON'T DO IT! There is so much more to come!

Judge Orion Douglass of Glynn County, Georgia was the featured guest addressing my daughter's High School graduates' breakfast. He told a story about tattoos, about a young woman arraigned before him for a minor traffic violation. As she stood before his bench pleading her innocence, he noticed a small tattoo on her neck. He asked about it but got no satisfactory answer. You see, he had recognized it as a gang marking, one given at induction when

a new candidate had successfully completed the requirements for acceptance in the gang. The tattoo was given when a recruit killed someone. A random murder was required!

With this marking, she was later identified and taken into custody for an unsolved murder. The Judge's point was this: *You should never make a permanent solution to a temporary problem.*

The Resurrection of Christ our Lord is telling us this, do not make any permanent actions, marking us as faithless because of the difficulties and troubles of this life. This life nor its troubles are permanent. The glorious gospel is, and you are a part of it, permanently!

Remember! And hold on tight!

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