

*"Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."  
[1 Corinthians 15.57]*

## Resurrection Morning!

This is the triumphant note on which Paul concludes his great chapter on the resurrection of Jesus and our own future resurrection bodies. Paul reminds us first of the **indisputable fact** (vs1-11) and **over-arching significance** (vs12-19) of the resurrection of Jesus:

*What I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep [vs3-6].*

Paul then goes on to speak about our own future resurrection and the kind of body we can look forward to [vs19-23, 42-44].

*If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ... The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

This is one of the most significant and exciting aspects of our hope as Christians! We will not exist for all of eternity as mere disembodied spirits; we will be clothed in a resurrection body as perfect as Christ's (v49). This is the victory Jesus gives us over death (v54). Death will not have the last word for those who belong to Christ. It will be 'swallowed up' in Christ's victory over it - and we will share in that victory with him! These are some of the great facts we will be celebrating in our Easter services later this month.

## Celebrating Easter

A few days ago, someone asked me if we would be doing much to mark Easter as a church this year. When I ran through all the various activities we have planned, it quickly became apparent that we will be celebrating Easter in a big way as a church this year, and rightly so! Here are some dates for your diary,

so you can plan to be a part of our big celebrations:

- **Easter Special**, Tuesday 8th April, 7.00-8.30pm. A 'Food and Fun for all the Family' outreach special, with games, quizzes and a video showing of the Easter story.
- **Easter Coffee Shop**, Saturday 12th April, 10.30am-12noon.
- **Palm Sunday Service**, Sunday 13th April, 11.00am.
- **Jesus Video Distribution** to local houses on Palm Sunday afternoon and the Wednesday evening of Holy Week, 16th April. Further details will follow.
- **Good Friday Lunchtime Service**, Friday 18th April, 12noon-2.00pm, including a bread and soup lunch.
- **Easter Day All-age service**, Sunday 20th April, 11.00am-12noon.
- **Easter Day Evening Celebration**, including communion (moved from the morning), 6.30pm.

Don't forget too our next **International Tea** on the last Sunday of the month, 27th April, at 5.30pm. **Plan to be at all these events and use them to bring your friends and contacts one step nearer to our Lord Jesus Christ.**



## Waging War

Our recent AGM was held against the sombre backdrop of our nation being at war, something few of us had anticipated even a few months ago. But it reminds us that as Christians there is a sense in which we are always at war. In Ephesians 6, Paul reminds us of the 'struggle' we find ourselves caught up in (v12). It is not against 'flesh and blood' (other human beings), but against unseen, yet nevertheless very powerful spiritual forces ('rulers, authorities, the powers of this dark world, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'.) These forces are constantly seeking to undermine the advance of the church, more often than not by using guerrilla style 'hit-and-run' tactics. In fighting any kind of warfare, there are two essentials: to know the kind of **tactics** the enemy is likely to use against us; and to employ effective **counter-measures** to overcome them. Here are some of the thoughts that were shared at the AGM:-

### □ Focus overcomes distraction

Satan will often use *diversionary tactics* against God's people (Neh 6.1-4). He will try to distract us from our key task of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. He will attempt to get us bogged down in trivial issues which are of only limited or fleeting value, at the expense of us concentrating on matters of *eternal* significance (Luke 10.38-42). The counter-measure we must employ continuously against Satan's diversionary tactics is to *stay fully focussed* on our primary calling: that of *spreading the good news of Jesus with a view to making effective disciples for him* (Mat 28.18-20). As someone has aptly said,

*The main thing is to keep the Main Thing  
as the main thing!*

### □ Faith overcomes disappointment

It is ironic (but true) that the more we focus on pushing forwards the frontiers of Christ's kingdom, the more disappointments we will face along the way (alongside numerous encouragements, of course). A disappointment-free life is only for those who sit back and do nothing! Inevitably, as we seek to advance, we will face setbacks from time to time. Satan will then seek to exploit our disappointments by turning them into sources of potential *discouragement*, so we are left disheartened and ready to give up the fight. The Holy Spirit is frequently referred to in the New Testament as the *Encourager*. So we shouldn't be surprised to find Satan always seeking to sow seeds of *discouragement*. In his spitefulness and mischief, he continuously seeks to be the exact opposite of everything good that God is.

The counter-measure we must employ against Satan's attempts to discourage us is a firm and resolute *faith* (Eph 6.16):

*Take up the shield of faith, with which you can  
extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*

Faith is quick to snuff out every potential spark of discouragement, to prevent them from being fanned into destructive flames. Faith boldly takes God at his word. Faith firmly believes God will deliver on all his promises (2 Cor 1.20). Faith resolutely holds on to words such as these in the face of life's unavoidable disappointments:

*"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the  
proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.  
... Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm.  
Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the  
work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in  
the Lord is not in vain."  
[Galatians 6.9; 1 Corinthians 15.58]*

### □ Fellowship overcomes divergence

In every army, unity is vital for its success - unity of purpose, and mutual support for and by each combatant. So in the Scriptures we find plenty of exhortations to pull together in our common cause (Phil 1.27) and to give one another all the support we each need (1 Chron 19.12). We must be constantly alert to the fact that Satan will seek to turn our differences of opinion and outlook into occasions for sharp disagreements (Acts 15.36-40). He

will attempt to exploit the diversity God has given us for our enrichment into an excuse for divergence, fragmentation, and splinter groups. He will continually seek to sow seeds of division in the ranks of God's people, because he knows that *'united we stand, divided we fall.'* So mutual affection, respect, and frequent affirmation are the counter-measures to be employed - in short, everything we mean by true *fellowship*, real and active partnership in the Gospel (Phil 1.5). This is the glue that holds us together as we seek to move forward in God's purposes. Our unity is a precious gift to us from God. We must be vigilant to maintain it at all times and in every way (Eph 4.3).

### Measuring Progress

For those who enjoy statistics (!) here are a few facts and figures for the first quarter of the year [*comparative figures for the first quarter of 2002 are given in brackets*].

⇒ **129 different people** have worshipped with us so far since the start of the year [*compared to 84 in the first quarter of 2002*]: 27 adults and 2 children have attended from other churches, leaving 85 adults and 15 children for whom DRBC is their only church contact [*2002 figures were 19,2,48, and 12 respectively*].

⇒ 42 people have worshipped with us for the **first time** since the start of the year: 13 adults from other churches, leaving 24 adults and 5 children for whom DRBC is their only church contact.

⇒ **Sunday morning** attendance has averaged 34, with a maximum of 42 on 2nd February [*comparative figures for 2002 were 25 and 34 respectively*].

⇒ **Sunday evening** attendance has averaged 28, with a maximum of 43 on 23rd February [*comparative figures for 2002 were 18 and 32 respectively*].

⇒ On average, 50 people in **total** have attended the church each Sunday for one or both services, with a maximum of 64 on 23rd February [*comparative figures for 2002 were 34 and 43 respectively*].

**Consistency of attendance and retention of newcomers continue to be issues that concern us.**

⇒ 29 children have attended our **Friday Club** since the start of the year, with an average attendance of 12 and a maximum of 20 on 14th March.

⇒ 27 children have attended our **Rock Solid Club** since the start of the year, with an average attendance of 13 and a maximum of 18 on 7th February

**May I wish you all a very happy Easter as we celebrate together our Lord's sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection.**

**David Hunt**