

Proof of The Resurrection

Once a year, in March or April, we set aside a Sunday to celebrate Christ's resurrection. I am not sure if you are aware that Jesus died on Nissan 14. The resurrection occurred on Nissan 17. When we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ on what we call Resurrection Sunday, it is near Nissan 17. We celebrate resurrection in March or April because the Jewish calendar is constantly moving the date of the celebration. It's a lunar calendar as opposed to a solar calendar. Therefore, sometimes Resurrection Sunday occurs in March and sometimes in April. We do this once a year because Jesus Christ arose from the dead on Nissan 17.

HOW THE GOSPEL WAS COMMUNICATED. Now, if we are really honest about it, the resurrection is not something that I can prove by videos. I cannot prove the resurrection by showing you photos. I cannot prove the resurrection by showing you some news report—at least a modern-day news report by CNN, MSNBC, FOX, ABC, CBS, NBC, or what-

ever other channel or network you might want to talk about. I cannot prove the resurrection by a movie. I cannot prove it by satellite images. The reason that I cannot prove the resurrection

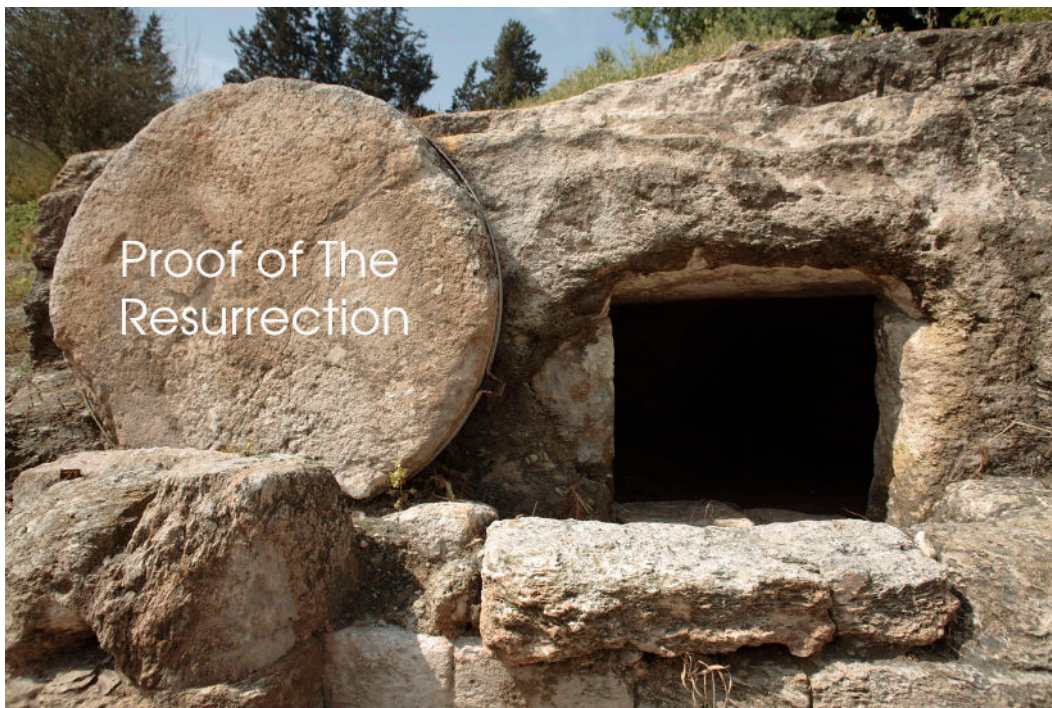
by any of those forms of media is because Christ's resurrection occurred over 2,000 years ago,. Back then the only method of communication was verbal—that is, they communicated by language, or in writing with some kind of pen and some kind of paper. The paper varied from place to place, culture to culture, and country to country. Maybe it

was engraved on stone. Limestone was a very common stone to engrave messages on.

Therefore, when we start thinking about the resurrection, we have to ask ourselves, "Why do we believe Jesus Christ came back from the dead?" I want to tell you that I believe that there are historical facts and prophecies that give us incred-

ible confidence that Jesus Christ came back from the dead. That is, Jesus Christ arose from the dead. You might say, "I have some personal experience. I get these goosebumps and I just feel like

Jesus came back from the dead." Well, personal experiences are okay, but I cannot prove, and you cannot prove that your personal experience is valid. I have made the comment before that there are people all around the globe who believe in a god. They believe in a cult. They believe in their religion. They believe in whoever, and it is by personal experience.



But if you want to prove that Jesus Christ came back from the dead you need two forms of proof: historical facts and prophecies. I call them facts because our faith is based on fact, and then feelings follow facts.

LUKE WROTE FACTS TO THEOPHILUS. Someone once said that Christianity is based on facts, resulting in faith, followed by feelings. I believe that is actually true. This morning I want to talk about some facts: historical and prophetic. In my study of the New Testament, I have discovered that is exactly what the apostles did, and that is what the early Christians did. They presented us with facts, so that we could believe with confidence, resulting in feelings—feelings of confidence. Sometimes we have feelings that might give you goosebumps, if you want to put it that way. I will give you an example. In Luke 1:1-4, the writer of Luke, who is a medical doctor; we call him “Dr. Luke,” writes this.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. Luke 1:1-4 (NASB)

Here we discover that Luke is writing to a man called Theophilus. We have no idea who Theophilus is, but he is writing this to Theophilus so that he will know the truth, and so that he would believe. Luke is presenting him with some facts so that he can believe in Christ. Watch this: in Acts 1:1-2, Luke, who is also the author of the book of Acts, continues writing another letter to Theophilus. He says,

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. Acts 1:1-2 (NASB)

Dr. Luke wrote the gospel of Luke first and then he wrote the book of Acts, so that Theophilus would know the truth

so that he would believe. The gospel of Luke is incredibly detailed. In fact, we are going to talk about Luke 24 soon. The book of Acts lays out detail after detail or fact after fact about Jesus Christ and the beginning of the early church. If you were to look at the gospel of John 20:21, the apostle John says,

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written . . . John 20:30-31 (NASB)

When he says “these have been written,” he is talking about the things that he has already written in the gospel of John. What was written? Facts!! Why? He says,

. . . These have been written so that you may believe . . . John 20:31 (NASB)

Our faith is based on facts. Our faith is not a flying leap into nothing. Our faith is based on facts.

. . . so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. John 20:31 (NASB)

He is talking about having eternal life.

PAUL TOLD FESTUS TRUTH. In Acts 26 we find a very important passage. Paul the apostle has been standing before a king and has been telling him about Christ.

While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.” But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. Acts 26:24-26 (NASB)

Then Paul continues talking about the fact that he believes the king knows about the prophecies about Christ. Now that

introduces the next part. There are historical facts, and then there are prophecies. We are going to look at some history this morning, and we are going to look at some prophecies which will give us reasons to believe in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. At the end of the gospel of Luke in chapter 23 we are told that Jesus has died. In chapter 24 and verse 1 we are told that it is the first day of the week. Jesus died on a Friday. When it says the first day of the week, it refers to Sunday, which occurs three days later. We are told in verse 1,

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; and as the women were terrified . . .
Luke 24:1-5 (NASB)

Here we are told that there are some women (Luke 23:55-56) who came to the tomb. You can see the names of the women in verse 10. They were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and there were some other Marys. You find that fact in the gospel of Matthew. But here we are told some women came early in the morning on the first day of the week. That would be early on a Sunday. They came to the tomb with some spices, and what happened? There was no body. This is absolutely wonderful.

What we discover in the opening verses of Luke 24 is that Jesus' body was not in the tomb (Luke 24:2-3). Now, if you have been a Christian very long, you have heard sermon after sermon, and message after message about verses 1-12. This morning I want to skip to verse 12 and then go to verse 13. In verse 12 we are told,

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened. Luke 24:12 (NASB)

We already know there were some women who came to the

tomb and there were some apostles who came to the tomb: John is one of them. John is not mentioned here in Luke's record. John 20:2 tells us that John came.

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS. Then in verse 13 the account jumps forward probably a few hours since verse 21 reveals the events on the Emmaus Road occurred on Sunday.

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.
Luke 24:13 (NASB)

Now you might wonder where was Emmaus? Emmaus was on the west side of Jerusalem. Therefore, this means somewhere between Jerusalem and Emmaus these men are walking. Verse 14 says,

And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. Luke 24:14 (NASB)

So they are walking and talking about all the things that had happened to Jesus. We will discover that they were very unhappy that Jesus had died, as you are going to soon see. Verse 15 says,

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. Luke 24:15 (NASB)

So Jesus finally joins them, and we are told in verse 16,

But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. Luke 24:16 (NASB)

I find this to be extremely interesting. They were not able to understand that this man was Jesus. This is a miracle. These two men had seen Jesus before. Jesus is now resurrected. He has an immortal body, and we are told they cannot recognize Him. That is a divine miracle. And I was thinking why would Christ not want these men to recognize Him? I believe Christ wanted them to understand some facts about Christ before they recognized Him. We are going to see that Jesus gives them some facts about Himself before they are allowed

to recognize Him. I think that if they had recognized Him first, they might have missed the truth. We are going to find out that after they get the information, after they get the facts, then they recognize Jesus. This is incredible!

Jesus will explain some prophecies that relate to Him, and then all of a sudden they are able to recognize who He is. Therefore, let's read verse 17.

And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. Luke 24:17 (NASB)

Jesus essentially asks, "What are you talking about?" Now, I do not think this means Jesus did not know what they were talking about. Instead, Jesus is trying to get them to talk. And we are told that they were sad and discouraged. We have all been there—moody, depressed and struggling. That is these men. Now verse 18:

One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" Luke 24:18 (NASB)

Cleopas says, "Are you kidding?! Don't you know what happened?!" He cannot believe that Jesus does not know what happened. That reveals several important facts. First of all is the fact that Jesus had been crucified was public knowledge, and it had spread throughout the city and the region. This event did not occur in secret. This was public information. Back in those days information was communicated by mouth. News traveled by one person telling someone else. Therefore, he is asking, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and you are not aware?! Everybody knows! You should have known too."

In verse 19 Jesus asks another question,

And He said to them, "What things?" . . . Luke 24:19 (NASB)

Jesus asks, "What things?" Do you think Jesus knew exactly what the things were? The answer is Yes! What is He doing? He is trying to motivate them to talk. Jesus has a purpose.

He is trying to get them to think about something.

And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him." Luke 24:19-20 (NASB)

Now verse 19 reveals an important statement. They told this man who they did not know was Jesus, that Jesus the Nazarene was raised in Nazareth. They said that He was a prophet. What they were referring to was Deuteronomy chapter 18:15. In that passage a prophecy was given about a future prophet who would come—actually the Messiah. These two men said that Jesus did mighty deeds: miracles, signs and wonders. They also said He was a great teacher. That is exactly what Jesus was known for. He taught, did signs, did miracles and did wonders. They got it right. They were also right when they said He was a prophet and He was the Messiah.

Then in verse 20 they accuse the religious leaders of Jesus' death, "And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death and crucified Him." Did you know that almost every cult, every religion, all agree that Jesus died? There is universal agreement that He died. He died! That is the testimony of Roman emperors, Roman writers, Roman satirists, Roman poets, Greeks, Jews, Christians and non-Christians. Everybody agrees that He died. I hope you believe He died.

There is an interesting prophecy that I want to point out in Daniel chapter 9. In Daniel 9:24-26 we find a prophecy that pinpoints the week in which the Messiah would die. The time-line for the prophecy starts in 1 Nissan in 444 B.C. That is, in 444 B.C. an edict would permit the restoration and rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. The prophecy specifies 483 biblical years from the start to the end of the prophecy. We must convert the 483 biblical years into our Gregorian calendar. As a result, we obtain 476 years and roughly 25 days. After performing the calculations, we are told that the end date is A.D. 33 and the week before Christ died. We know that Jesus died on Nissan 14 of A.D. 33, or

in the Jewish calendar that would be the year 3793. This prophecy pinpoints the week in which Jesus would die. Not only are there historical facts about Christ, but there are prophetic facts that point to the death of Christ.

So at this point in the conversation the two men on the Emmaus road believed Jesus was dead. He had not risen yet. In Luke 24:21 we are told that these men had hoped for something better.

But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. Luke 24:21 (NASB)

They were hoping that Jesus would be the one who would redeem Israel and make Israel a kingdom. Israel would have a king and a kingdom. In the gospels we discover that when Jesus fed five thousand men, the massive crowd wanted to make Him king. Jesus said, “No!” But at the triumphal entry people hailed Him as king. Then Jesus accepted their praise and then days later they crucified Him. In Luke 19:11 the disciples asked Jesus, “When are you going to restore the kingdom?” The people and the disciples were looking for a king and a kingdom, and these two men on the Emmaus road were as well. Notice what they said at the end of verse 21, “It is the third day since these things happened.” This tells us that this discussion occurred on Resurrection Sunday.

Verse 22 reveals that these men had heard the report of the women who had been at the tomb earlier that morning.

But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see. Luke 24:22-24 (NASB)

What did these two men tell Jesus? They said that the women had gone to the tomb. Some today do not understand that Jesus returned to life. These two men did not understand that truth. They were thinking Jesus was dead. The women told these two men that Jesus was not in the tomb. They still

thought He was dead. They were sad and discouraged. They had hoped He was the promised king. They had hoped there was going to be a kingdom. They did not yet understand. There are people today who do not understand.

REASONS TO BELIEVE THE RESURRECTION. Now, I want to discuss five reasons why we can believe in the resurrection. The first reason is that some women saw the tomb is empty. You might ask, “Why is that important?” It is important because women were not considered to be reliable witnesses at the time of Christ. In the Roman, Jewish, and Greek cultures women were not considered reliable witnesses. So why would someone try to prove the resurrection by using women as your source of authority? That is the last thing you would want to do. So why are the women quoted in the Gospels? The reason is that the women went to the tomb and saw that it was empty. It happened and it was true—that is why. You would not want to quote them otherwise.

Second Reason - Why Die For A Lie? The second reason is why would every apostle die for a lie? If you were to examine how the different apostles died, you would find that every one of the apostles was tortured until he died, except for one! One was beheaded. One was flayed with knives. Another one was hanged. Another one was shot with arrows. Another was executed with a spear, and another one was sawed in half. What an ugly way to die! One of the apostles was crucified.

Historical records do not tell us that one of them asked for their execution to be stopped. The fact that the apostles never, ever denied the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a reason to believe that the resurrection occurred. Why die for a lie?

As I was thinking about the fact that there are some Philippine men and women who volunteer to be crucified but not die on a cross. They do this every year. I have been thinking, why are these men and women willing to do that? Here are some thoughts. First, none of them plan to die. We are told that the nails that are pounded into their hands and feet are sterilized. The nails are pounded in carefully so that no bones are broken. We are told that support bands are provided to hold them up to minimize the pain induced by the heavy pulling against the nails. They were given foot rests

so they can push themselves up to minimize their suffering. Finally, they can decide when to come off the cross. Then they are rushed to a hospital where they are given medical care to make sure that they have functionality of their hands, feet and body. We know that their sides are not pierced with a spear. Their bodies are not flogged with whips. Therefore, when they are being crucified, their situation is very carefully controlled. That never happened to the disciples. They were persecuted until they died.

Here is another thing to think about. In Jesus' day, crucifixion was also humiliation. It was common Roman practice to strip the one who was being executed naked. They had no clothing on. It was very embarrassing. Another important fact is that sticks were often jammed up through their groin. You can only imagine where they were jammed. Cicero described crucifixion as the most cruel and disgusting punishment imagined. That is what Jesus went through. That is what some of the apostles experienced. Their crucifixion was not like that which occurs in the Philippines or other parts of the world. Now I have a question. "Why would an apostle die for a lie? Why would they do that?"

Third Reason - Jewish Records Say The Tomb Was Empty. Here is the third reason why we can believe in the resurrection. If Jesus' body was still in the tomb, the Jewish leaders could have shown Jesus' dead body to the world. That would have been a major blow in the development of Christianity. If the Roman or Jewish leaders had revealed Jesus' body to the world, they would have proved that Jesus was still dead, and the grave was not empty. But that did not occur. Do you know what they did? Because the body was not in the tomb, they did not have a body to display to the world. Therefore, they created a lie. The Jewish leaders admitted that the body was not in the tomb when they published their own report. It was missing! I find it amazing that Matthew, in the last chapter, records what the Jews claimed happened to Jesus' body. Did you know that the same report is recorded in Jewish historical records? The Jews claimed that the tomb was empty. They just had a different explanation. That is an admission the tomb was empty. That is an admission that the resurrection occurred. What else should we expect from the enemies of Christ? The message is that there is no reason

to believe the report of an enemy. An enemy wants to disprove what is true.

Fourth Reason - There Were Eyewitnesses. The fourth reason is that there were many eye witnesses. 1 Corinthians 15 is an amazing chapter because it is devoted to the proof that Jesus came back to life. That is the purpose of the chapter. Read the chapter sometime! It starts by talking about the eye witnesses of Jesus after the resurrection. We are told that there were five hundred brethren who saw Jesus at one time, and Jesus was seen by the apostles.

After Paul gives us a list of many witnesses of Christ, he then implies in verse 6 that, "You can go talk to them yourself." The Corinthians could have actually talked to those witnesses. It says "most of them are still alive today." All they had to do is take a trip and talk to them. Paul gives us proof that the resurrection actually happened.

BACK ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS. Now notice what Jesus said next.

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" Luke 24:25 (NASB)

These two disciples on the Emmaus road already knew the historical facts. In fact, they knew it better than you and I know it. They were there. They saw it. The city was abuzz, the region was abuzz, with the historical truth that Jesus had died. And so when Jesus says,

Oh foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken.

Jesus reveals in this verse is that there is one truth they had missed. They had the historical data, but they missed the prophetic truth. In verse 26 Jesus continued speaking,

Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? Luke 24:26 (NASB)

Jesus told them that Christ had to suffer.

PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS. Then verse 27 tells us that Jesus continued speaking.

Then beginning with Moses and with all these prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. Luke 24:27 (NASB)

Then Jesus presents a series of prophecies related to Himself. Now we do not know exactly what prophecies He told them. We know that some of them were from the Law of Moses and the prophets. Here are some that I think are important. In Genesis 3:15 there was a prophecy about a coming redeemer. In Genesis 49:10 there is a prophecy of a coming king—that is the Messiah. In Numbers 24:17 there is another prophecy of a coming king, a Messiah, who is referred to as a star. In Deuteronomy 18:15-18, there is a prophecy about “The Prophet.”

These two men were talking about Jesus and they said He was a prophet who did mighty deeds and spoke the word. There are many prophecies dealing with the death and the resurrection of the Messiah in Psalm 21 and Psalm 22. The suffering Messiah is described in Isaiah 53. The entire chapter deals with the fact that the Messiah would have to die for our sins. In Isaiah 53:6 we are told that we are like sheep who have wandered astray. Then the gospels tell us that Jesus came and died for us. Zachariah 10:12 is very interesting. There the prophecy states that at the end of the tribulation the Jews in Israel will look on Him who they pierced. That refers to the fact that Jesus would suffer. Are these some of the passages Jesus talked about? I do not know, but they are incredible prophecies about Christ.

PROPHECIES ABOUT CHRIST ARE TRUE. Now I want you to notice that some people have said, “Those prophecies were written after the fact.” That is not true. Those who say that do not know what they are talking about. Did you know that all of those prophecies are contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls? The Dead Sea Scrolls date from 50 to 150 B.C. That is, these prophecies occurred at least 50 years to 150 years before Christ. The Septuagint, which was translated between 260 to 200 B.C., contains all these prophecies. That means that all the prophecies existed at two hundred and sixty years before Christ was born. Add thirty-three years to His death and the time is almost 300 years. Jewish legend tells us that many of the books would have been in

existence at that time, 450 B.C. These facts tell us that these prophecies are real. Therefore, we have historical facts and prophetic facts that tell us that the resurrection is real.

In verses 28-35 we are told that Jesus had a meal with the two men on the Emmaus road. Their eyes are opened. They recognized Jesus and believed. Then we are told that they visited the apostles and shared with the apostles what they experienced. Do you know what they did? When they finally understood the historical facts and the prophetic facts, they believed and shared the good news with other people. The message for us is that we are to share about Christ too!

IT IS FINISHED. In John 19:28 we read that Jesus was on the cross and was making sure that the prophecies about Him were being fulfilled.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.” John 19:28 (NASB)

Jesus is aware that prophecies are being fulfilled, and He waits until the right time, until all the prophecies are fulfilled, and then He says, “I am thirsty.” Then He says, “It is finished,” and He gives up the spirit and dies (John 19:30).

In 1 Timothy 1:15 we are told,

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 1 Timothy 1:15 (NASB)

Do you understand why Jesus came? He came in order to die for you and for me, so that we could have our sins forgiven. Unlike God Who is holy, we are not holy. We needed a Savior to forgive our sins.

Another important passage is John 10:10. Here Jesus tells us why He came.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. John 10:10 (NASB)

I just love that part of John 10:10, “And have it abundantly.” Are you having an abundant eternal life? You will have life

in the future and life now. Jesus says that He came to give us abundant life.

1 Corinthians 6:14 says,

Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. 1 Corinthians 6:14 (NASB)

Here we learn that not only was Jesus raised from the dead but we will be raised also.

Then in the last three verses of 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul states that Christians have victory over death because we have victory through Jesus Christ.

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:56-58 (NASB)

Now we have victory through Jesus Christ. Our victory is not through our efforts. It is through Jesus!

