

The Resurrected Christ - 1 Cor. 15:12-23

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- [0 : 00] Power of your Holy Spirit to be upon him and upon us all, so that we would hear the word of God, our hearts would be opened, and we would respond and rejoice in the truth.
- Bless Michael now as he comes to preach. In Jesus' name and for his glory. Amen. Well, it's nice to be back with you again and to be able to share this Easter Sunday with you.
- The Lord has indeed risen from the dead, and that's what we're going to be thinking of this morning. I think the first thing I must say, I don't know whether you've listened to the news, because if you do, you'll know that there's not much good news in the world today.
- There's wars, and there's rumors of wars. I learned in the week what the mother of all bombs was, as a bomb was dropped, and we were told that many, many people were killed as a result of that bomb.
- We hear of friction in Korea, and what might or might not happen there. All around us, there seems to be so much that would cause us to be in the dumps, nothing to rejoice about.
- [1 : 46] But it's Easter, and the Christian, in spite of all that's going on in the world today, I can rejoice. I thought as I prepared this message of what took place at the end of the Second World War.
- Again, there had been so many deaths, so much destruction. And Japan, at that time, when war in Europe ended, the war was still going on in the Far East, and the Americans reasoned, well, if we try to invade Japan to bring an end to the war, well, so many people will die.
- So they decided to drop a bomb. They didn't quite know the effects of it. It had never happened before.
- An atomic bomb. And it underlined then, as bombs and wars, underlined now, that man is swift to shed blood.
- But that particular bomb that landed on Hiroshima killed thousands of people. But there's something else that it did.
- [3 : 09] Its effects continued to influence Japan for ages afterwards, as people suffered from radiation poisoning, and children who as yet were unborn, when they were born, were born with all kinds of deformities.
- That's what happens when men destroy men. When men are indeed swift to shed blood.
- A fallout took place that affected many people for many generations. Horrible, isn't it?
- But I want to speak this morning about another explosive event that didn't bring death, but brought life.
- An event whose fallout continues to this very day. For you and I, as a result of the resurrection are gathered here this morning, we can rejoice in the fallout from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- [4 : 33] We see on one hand in the world man's inhumanity to his fellow men. But on the other hand, we see the wonder of the death and the resurrection that continues, its message continues, to reverberate around the world.
- So that today we may be few in number, but we're meeting with thousands of others who are rejoicing that Christ lives.
- And we're joining mystically with those who have gone before us who are already experiencing the presence of Christ.
- What a wonder is the message of Easter and the message of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- And as we look at these verses this morning that were read to us just now, I want us to see two main points. The first point that I draw your attention to is that resurrection is a vital truth.
- [5 : 57] It's not an add-on. It's vital to the Christian message. If Christ isn't risen, says the Apostle Paul, then so much falls into the background that there is no Christian message if the resurrection didn't take place.
- And he tells us that in the verses 12 to 19. He tells us in verse 12 that some people were going about teaching that there was no resurrection of the dead, that it just didn't happen.
- Rather like people say today, something like this, no one has come back to tell us. So death is the end because no one has stood on the scene of time who has died.
- That, of course, is a lie. But people are still saying it because they haven't really grasped the wonder of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
- He came back to show that there was life after death. If there is no resurrection, says the Apostle Paul, then the fact is that Christ lies in the grave.
- [7 : 33] There has been no resurrection. resurrection. There were those who were teaching in that day as people teach today that Jesus died, he was put in a grave, and that was the end.
- Even one theologian taught something like this. He said it isn't the bodily resurrection that matters. He says it is if Christ's spirit lives on in the church.
- But the bodily resurrection does matter. It did happen. There are many religions in the world in which we live, and their founders.
- Well, they have been laid in the ground, and we can visit their graves. But we cannot go to the grave of Christ because he has risen.
- How then can you say there is no resurrection? If there is no resurrection, Christ is in the grave. But we come together this morning because the tomb is empty.
- [8 : 44] The grave clothes have been left behind. Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. I love the story of Lazarus.
- And you remember how Jesus says as he approaches the grave of Lazarus, who has been dead for four days. He says, I am the resurrection and the life.
- It lies within myself to give power over death itself. I am the resurrection and the life. And then Christ comes to the grave of Jesus, of Lazarus.
- and there he is outside of the grave and he says, Lazarus, come forth. And Lazarus comes out of the grave, still wrapped in the grave clothes.
- Why was he wrapped in the grave clothes? Well, he would need them again, wouldn't he? because he would die ultimately. But when Christ rose from the grave, he left the grave clothes behind, they would be needed no more.
- [10 : 03] How then can people say there is no resurrection of the dead? Christ does not lie in the grave. He is risen.

And we rejoice today in the fact that he is risen. It's a vital truth. If Christ is not risen, then the very message of Easter is a lie.

But Paul has already told us, as I no doubt you received, you heard last week, that Christ has risen. When Paul arrives in Corinth, he tells them the message of Easter.

He says it is of first importance, verses 3 and 4. But if Christ isn't raised from the dead, says the apostle, then we are liars.

And we've lied about God himself, who we have said raise Christ from the dead. If Christ didn't raise him from the dead, he's still in the grave.

[11 : 19] And we've made out God to be someone who is false, because he has indeed raised him from the dead.

He is not false. And when Paul speaks the truth of the resurrection, it undergirds the message of salvation.

The message of salvation says that the death and the burial of Jesus wasn't the end. He rose again by the power of God.

Look at the verses that we have there before us in our reading. If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God. For we have testified about God that he raised him from the dead.

[12 : 27] But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. Resurrection is vital. And when Paul utters those words, he says this, we are then found to be false witnesses.

Who are the we that he's talking about? Well, there are a number of possibilities. Perhaps he's talking about those who first brought the gospel to the Corinthians.

We read about it in Acts 18. Priscilla and Aquila, a husband and wife team, they were involved in bringing the message.

Was their message false? No. Paul and Silas had an involvement in bringing the message of death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus to the people of Cairn.

Were they false? No. Timothy was involved. Also, Apollos had an input into the situation and all of them preached the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and it was the message of the early church and the early church turned the world upside down as they proclaimed the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13 : 55] No. The resurrection isn't a lie. We're not false witnesses. We have brought you the truth of the resurrection of this vital truth.

Or perhaps Paul was thinking of all the apostles. What did they proclaim? Well, they proclaimed the death and resurrection of Christ.

Were they false witnesses? Remember on the day of Pentecost? Peter preached, the other apostles witnessed.

And we are told that those who listened to them devoted themselves to the apostles teaching. What was that teaching? Well, it was indeed the whole counsel of God and the whole counsel of God contained the truth of the resurrection.

Remember Peter as he preaches at Pentecost filled with the Holy Spirit. Hear him. You, he says to the assembled crowd with the help of wicked men, put him to death, nailing him to the cross.

[15 : 17] But God raised him from the dead. And he goes on to say, God has raised this Jesus to life. We are all witnesses.

The resurrection message is a lie if Christ is not risen. But it is no lie. Paul, Apollos, Timothy, Silas, Priscilla and Aquila, the apostles, they proclaimed the resurrection.

They believed it. They were witnesses to the fact that Christ had indeed been raised from the dead.

But it is not just the witnesses, is it, of those who brought the message to Corinth. It is not just the message of the apostles. The whole of scripture testifies to the fact that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

On the day of Pentecost, what does Peter do? He proves from the scriptures that Jesus has risen from the dead.

[16 : 32] What scriptures? Well, the Old Testament scriptures. He quotes from the Psalms. And he says, well, David, his grave is with us today.

But he speaks about the Lord, the Lord who lives. When Jesus is speaking, about resurrection after death.

He speaks about the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. For God is the God of the living, not of the dead. He is speaking of resurrection.

The message of Easter is no lie. It's a vital truth. And it's a truth that you and I can embrace with gladness in our hearts.

What happened at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost? We are told that 3,000 believed. What happened in Corinth? Others believed.

[17 : 40] Well, says the Apostle Paul, if there is no resurrection, then we lied. And you who have believed by faith, your faith is misplaced.

And our faith would be misplaced if there were no resurrection of the dead. But we meet together as a church in Corinth met together and as every Christian church down through the ages meet together.

They see that the resurrection isn't an optional extra. It's a vital truth. And Paul in his day and generation wanted the Corinthian church to see the wonder of resurrection.

That it is no lie. That God has indeed raised Christ from the dead. Resurrection is a vital truth.

Christ doesn't lie in the grave. The message of the resurrection is no lie. It's the testimony of this book of the prophets and the apostles and Christian saints down through the years.

[19 : 02] The message of the resurrection is vital because if there wasn't a resurrection there's no gospel to proclaim.

Look what the apostle says in verse 17. If Christ has not been raised your faith is futile. You are still in your sins.

Paul is telling the Corinthians very clearly that if Christ hasn't risen from the dead there is no good news to proclaim.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. How did he do it? Well certainly through his death. For without the shedding of blood there could be no forgiveness of sins.

But there also had to be a resurrection. Let's work this out. If Christ be not raised your faith is futile.

[20 : 10] you are still in your sins. See Jesus he's there on the cross. What is he doing? He's offering himself as a sacrifice to God.

It was the fulfillment of all those types that we read about in the Old Testament. I like the one about Noah when he comes out of the ark and we're told he makes a sacrifice.

A burnt offering and we are told the Lord God in heaven smelled a pleasing aroma.

In other words it was God accepting the sacrifice that Noah offered. Other times we read in scripture that when people offered a sacrifice it was a stench in the nostrils of God.

It was an unaccepted sacrifice. Now if Christ had remained in the ground the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus would not be accepted.

[21 : 28] But it was accepted and the resurrection is evidence of the acceptance of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on your behalf and on my behalf.

Here is Jesus hanging on the cross and all the wrath of almighty God is being poured out upon him. Your sins and my sins being laid upon him.

He offers himself as a propitiation. A long word, I know. But what it means is he was turning away the wrath of God that was deserved by you and me.

And as that wrath is turned away, so God in heaven accepts the sacrifice. It's a pleasing aroma to God.

Isn't this what Isaiah spoke of when he wrote Isaiah 53 and verses 10 and 11?

[22 : 43] Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him, to cause him to suffer. And though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days.

Resurrection and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hands. And if you look in the margin you will have these words, he will see, that is God will see the suffering of his soul, that is the soul of the Lord Jesus Christ and will be satisfied.

this theme is taken up by the apostle Paul in chapter 4 and verse 25 of Romans where it says about Jesus our Lord, he was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

So it's not just the death of Christ, vital though that was, it is also the resurrection of Christ for God has accepted the sacrifice of his son.

So the moment you and I believe and trust in the risen Christ who died for our sins, the perfect righteousness of Christ is put to our account and all the blessings that come to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[24 : 29] Christ died, Christ rose, God accepted the sacrifice. But if Christ isn't risen, well the sacrifice doesn't be accepted.

We are still in our sins. It is a dead Christ. But no, the message of Easter says he is risen.

There is a gospel. Paul is no false witness. Christ is risen. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

If Christ is not risen, then there's no hope after death for any one of us. When we die, we're put six feet under, and that's the end.

That's what Paul tells us in verse 18. Then those, if there is no resurrection, who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

[25 : 43] lost. There were those in Paul's day who had died. And when Paul writes his letter, the church is continuing to grow.

Some were being mocked because they believed in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And others, we know, in the early church, had become anxious about loved ones who had died.

And Paul writes to the Thessalonian church in chapter 4 and verse 13 and says, Brothers, we don't want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope.

There were people that were dying. They had no hope beyond the grave. But the Christian has hope. Why?

Because Christ has risen from the dead. And millions over the years have died trusting in Christ.

[26 : 56] But no resurrection. People are lost. They have perished. They are forever in their sins. There is no one at the right hand of God to plead their cause.

There is no mediator between God and men. There is no advocate. But my friends, he has risen. There is an advocate.

There is a mediator between God and men. Thank God for the biblical message that Christ lives. Thank God for the reliable witnesses who have testified down through the ages.

But remove the resurrection. There is no Christianity. Christianity demands the resurrection.

It is a vital truth. But one final reason why Christianity is vital. And that is what we have in verse 19.

[28 : 11] What a pitiable condition we are all in if Christ has not risen from the dead. Verse 19 says, if only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

So it's not only the future that is affected, if there is no resurrection, but also the present. If there isn't a resurrection, every Christian's hope is dashed to the ground.

His present, his future, you see, is found in the Lord Jesus Christ who lives. Christ is everything.

to the Christian. As Paul puts it, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Now what's the point, says the Apostle Paul, to suffer in this life for being a Christian as many were in the days of the Apostle and many are today.

what's the point of carrying on if there is no resurrection? We're to be pitied.

[29 : 40] Oh, but the Apostle Paul says our light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory.

there is life beyond the grave. We're not to be pitied. We can rejoice today. Don't pity me, says the Apostle Paul.

Christ has risen. The grave is empty. The resurrection is true. It's a historical fact.

we have a gospel to proclaim. We have hope beyond the grave. We're not to be pitied. We live because Christ lives and we can look forward to a home in heaven.

I love that hold hymn. Lo in the grave he lay. Jesus my Saviour waiting the coming day. Jesus my Lord.

[30 : 48] And up from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph for his foes. He arose the victor from the dark domain and he lives forever with his saints to reign.

He arose. He arose. Hallelujah. Christ arose. Resurrection is vital for the Christian faith.

our second main point is this. Resurrection is a truth that comes with a guarantee and we see that from verses 20 to 23.

You know that advert that sometimes comes on the television? It does exactly what it says on the tin. It's dependable.

It will do what it says it will do. Well, here's a guarantee that is beyond that guarantee. We can be let down by what is in the tin.

[31 : 59] But we can't be let down by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Resurrection is not only vital but resurrection is a truth that comes with a guarantee.

Christ's resurrection is a guarantee of your resurrection, of my resurrection. See what he says in verse 20 of chapter 15.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. The firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. What does he mean by this?

The firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Well, he's taking us back to an Old Testament illustration. And he's showing us about the firstfruits of harvest.

And the law of God said this, Exodus 23 and verse 19. Bring, he says, the best of your firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God.

[33 : 17] So here was a farmer. His harvest began to ripen. and he would take a sheaf of that corn and he would bring it to the priest at the temple.

It was something he did at the beginning of harvest. It belonged to the Lord. It was saying to the Lord, thank you for the harvest.

It was a recognition of God's faithfulness, his goodness. fullness. But it was something else. The firstfruits, you see, anticipated the harvest in all its fullness.

It wasn't just one sheaf of corn, it was all the corn that was going to follow in later days as the rest of the harvest would finally be gathered.

it was recognizing God's goodness that seed, time, and harvest would not cease.

[34 : 30] It was an acknowledgement that God was a covenant God, that he could be depended upon absolutely and completely. So the firstfruits were given to God in anticipation of the final full harvest.

So what is Paul telling us? He is telling us that the Lord Jesus Christ has risen. He's the firstfruits.

He has offered himself to God and his resurrection is a guarantee, the assurance, the promise of your resurrection and my resurrection.

It's the promise of a bodily resurrection that we shall one day be with Christ given a glorified body on that day when the Lord comes in glory to receive us.

See what he says in verse 13? But each, verse 23, but each in his own turn, Christ the firstfruits, then when he comes those who belong to him.

[36 : 00] What a lovely picture. The firstfruits being brought. Christ rising from the dead, the firstfruits. You and I on that day will be raised up to be with Christ which for us will be far better.

In John chapter 12 and verse 24, there were some Greek people who wanted to see Jesus. And this is what Jesus says to them.

I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.

But if it dies, it produces many seeds. What Jesus was telling these Greeks was this, that I have come into the world, that I am going to die.

But in my death and in my resurrection, I am going to rise again and produce many, many seeds.

[37 : 19] How many seeds? Well, Revelation tells us a number that no man can number, taken from all peoples and nations and tongues.

So every Easter Sunday tells us loudly and clearly that he will bring all of us, every one of his people, to glory.

He has risen. We will rise. Let me read in those fullness of one, those verses from 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

And this is what the Apostle Paul says, Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope.

We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

[38 : 43] For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God.

And the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so will we be with the Lord forever.

Therefore, encourage each other with these words. Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of your resurrection and my resurrection.

He is the firstborn among many brothers. And all this means, of course, that death is going to be defeated by his resurrection.

He tells us in verse 22, as in Adam, all die. He tells us in verse 26, the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

[40 : 02] And death is real. We all know something if we have lost the loved one of the sting of death. It really does hurt.

death. But because of the resurrection, death will be no more. It's guaranteed.

There will be no more death, says Revelation 21 and verse 4. It tells us in verse 25 of 1 Corinthians 50, for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, even death itself.

In Christ, we're told, all will be made alive. And you and I have a foretaste of that.

For we are a resurrection people. we enjoy resurrection life in the Lord Jesus Christ now.

[41 : 12] But that day we shall enjoy it more perfectly. The day will come when the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ will be over.

And we shall be with him forever and ever. No more sorrow, no more pain, but life with him. No resurrection, no Christianity.

Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. What's the point of suffering if no resurrection? But I'm here to testify today, he is risen.

I repeat the words that I said a moment ago. up from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph over his foes.

He arose the victor from the dark domain and he lives forever with his saints to raise. He arose, he arose, hallelujah, Christ arose.

[42 : 24] And because he arose, each one of us can say with the apostle Paul, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ, the risen Christ, lives in me.

So can we all say today, hallelujah, what a saviour. Let's pray. Father, we bless you and praise you for all that we have in our Lord.