

The Musts of the Gospel

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Date: 31 March 2024

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[0:00] Amen. Well, let's turn in our Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 today on this Resurrection Sunday. We've got a lot to be thankful for. Let me say a few things as you're turning there.

Just a couple of great things happening right now, just as I think about this week coming up. Of course, next Sunday, after church, we're going to have a fellowship meal, and that's always worthy of rejoicing.

Amen. Meal together. Are y'all with me? Can I get an amen to that? All right. We're going to eat together right here after the service. It's going to be a great time of fellowship.

All you've got to do is bring enough food for you and for one or two more, and there's always plenty for everybody. So just plan on coming, plan on staying. It's going to be a great time for us to have fellowship together.

This Wednesday night, remember, we have opened up Wednesday night here, and we're going to begin to turn a corner with Cornerstone, right?

[0:56] Turn a corner. All right. But we are. We're going to turn a corner here this week as we begin some planning for children's ministry, student ministry, and adult ministry that's going to happen here on Wednesday night.

Kingdom Kids is going to begin on the 17th. But those that are volunteering, we're going to do a workshop this Wednesday night so we can kind of get a handle on what our roles are going to be in that part.

Student ministry is going to be meeting on the other end. So if you've got a teenager, so they're going to be down at that end. Adult Bible study will be in the room next to us over here. But the kids are going to be in here.

And we needed about 18 volunteers to make this work. I mean, that's a lot of volunteers. You need 18 people that are committed to come and be a part of something like that. And it's always a commitment.

It's hard to get people to commit to anything these days. Amen? Amen. And so just as a testimony of what God's doing at Cornerstone Church, we didn't get 18. We got 31 volunteers.

[2:00] And they are excited and pumped about what we're going to be doing on Wednesday night with those kids. That's just for the kids area. That's dedication of our church wanting to minister and focus on this generation to equip them to be part of the kingdom.

So Kingdom Kids is going to be coming. So this Wednesday, we're doing a workshop for those volunteering. If you want to join and help in that or student or adult stuff, come Wednesday night.

We'll plug you in. But then the following Wednesday night, we have a big, big Wednesday night because we've got baptism service. Yeah. And baptism service at Cornerstone is a big deal.

We actually celebrate baptisms because they represent somebody putting their faith in Christ and being changed. And when that happens, we come together as the body of Christ because that's one of the ordinances given to the church for us to celebrate.

And when we do a baptism, it's a big deal. When we baptize this Wednesday night, if everybody comes to be baptized, we may have 10 being baptized this Wednesday or on the 10th. 10 on the 10th.

[3:08] Man, that's cool. All right. And so I'm just, I am just pumped. Okay. Just to say the least. So, so that's happening on the 10th. There's something, there's all kinds of stuff coming up and it's going to be

great.

I'm just, I'm just excited. Had to say something about it. Are you guys excited? It's Easter Sunday. We ought to be the happiest people on the globe.

Amen. Christ is risen. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

First Corinthians chapter 15. Today we are talking about this great gospel. And look, the sunlight is like shining on my Bible right now. I mean, this is like picture worthy, right?

But that's amazing. All right. First Corinthians chapter 15. We're beginning in verse one. And you can stand with me. We'll read this together. First Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse one.

[4:22] Now I would remind you brothers of the gospel. The gospel I preach to you. Which you received. In which you stand.

And by which you are being saved. If you hold fast to the word I preach to you. Unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received.

That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. That he was buried. And he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

God may you bless the reading of your word today. If there is anyone here that does not have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. I pray that before they leave this place.

They would turn from their sin. And that they would flee to the cross of Christ. And be saved. And for believers here today who understand the weight and the value of the resurrection of Jesus.

[5:26] I pray that today would be a day of great encouragement. For us to continue that flight from sin. And to continue to humble ourselves at the cross of Jesus Christ.

For whom we live. And Lord I pray that as we've been raised from the dead. By the glory of the Father. Lord that we would walk in a newness of life.

That we would reflect the glory of Jesus Christ in our life. In such a way that we would shine Christ to a dark and dying world. May you bless us to that end.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit. We pray this all in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. I want to talk to you this morning about the musts of the gospel. Okay. The musts of the gospel.

There are some things, some principles that regulate how we view the gospel. And I was thinking of this as I was reminded of the United States Postal Service.

[6:23] Very important for us. Right. The postal service hasn't always functioned very well. In fact the postal service was much more organized in many of your lifetimes.

And some of you may be old enough to remember when it was not so reliable. But there was many things at the turn of the century that the postal service was actually learning about the limitations of what they could and couldn't do.

There weren't very many regulations governing what they did. In fact, there was a point where a rule had to be put in place to prevent people from mailing their children.

It's actually, you're saying James, you're kidding. Right. This is just some preacher story. No, it's actually true. In fact, at the turn of the century, it was happening often enough that directives had to be given by the postal service that they could not receive children.

Because some people were mailing their kids across town to a relative. Some of you may have been tempted to do this from time to time.

[7:34] Right. But the reality is they would. And maybe it's because in some of those communities they knew the postman and they could trust him. And so they would end up mailing their kid.

But the nail in the coffin for this practice was when a woman in Florida mailed her six-year-old daughter to her father's house in Virginia.

720 miles from home. And for the low, low price of 15 cents in stamps, she mailed her kid and thus the rule was born.

I couldn't help but think of that. You know, it's the reality for us as the church of Jesus Christ that we have a work to deliver a message.

And I would say it's not just the simplicity of the message that we are delivering. We're not merely delivering the message of the Son, but the work of the church of Jesus Christ is actually to deliver the Son.

[8:42] It's to deliver the gospel message so that people can know Jesus Christ. So if we lose sight of the purpose of our existence, and if we lose sight of the substance of our message, we have lost sight of why we exist altogether.

We work to preach the resurrection of Christ. It is a resurrection message. Jesus said in John 11, 25, very clearly, he said, I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in me will live even though he dies. This is a critical message. It's why Lee Strobel said in his book, *The Case for Christ*, every single shred of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is also evidence for my eventual resurrection.

The gospel is a resurrection message. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then I will not rise from the dead.

This is a problem for many churches in our generation. There are many churches that claim to be Christian churches that do not preach this gospel.

[10:03] It is the influence of people like Rudolf Bultmann, a German theologian who has influenced most of liberal Christianity in America.

In his theology, he would say, quote, The resurrection stories are not meant to be taken literally. They are mythological expressions of the early church's faith in Jesus and nothing more.

However, this is the influence on liberal Christianity in America, which is no Christianity at all. It leads some modern feminist theologians or one by the name of Catherine Keller, who refers to herself as a professor of constructive theology, which just means imaginary theology.

Catherine Keller would say, The resurrection is not about Jesus coming back to life. It is about the possibilities of new life emerging from the ashes of suffering.

And her message is a message of religious pluralism. It is a message of blurring gender lines and sexuality. It is new possibilities. It's what Cornel West refers to.

[11:18] Cornel West being a racial activist in our generation, He would say the resurrection is a call to fight for the least of these. It's a call to challenge all forms of domination and oppression.

It is a message of liberation for class warfare. Well, I got news for you. That is a message of D-E-I, but it is not a message of B-I-B-L-E.

It is not the message of Scripture. It is not the Gospel. It is not the Gospel that we preach. The testimony of God's Word is very, very clear on this issue, which is why we make a big deal about it on Resurrection Sunday.

It's a big deal. Job said in the Old Testament, he said, Though my body rots in the grave, yet my flesh shall see God.

There is coming a bodily resurrection of the dead. It's the truth of Scripture, and we're not embarrassed by it. We actually glory in this truth.

[12:26] When you come to the New Testament, Jesus begins His ministry speaking in John 5, verse 28. He said, Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth.

There is coming a resurrection. A resurrection of the dead one day, all wrapped up in the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. John 6, verse 44, Jesus said, No man can come to Me except the Father who has sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up the last day.

That's the reality of the gospel that we preach. That there are ramifications beyond the here and now that are coming one day. One day, God is going to raise up the dead from the graves.

And I, if I die in this lifetime, I'm going to be with them. Praise the Lord. What a truth. John 11, 25, Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in Me shall never die, but have life that is everlasting. When you come to the apostles in Acts chapter 4, as they're speaking in the temple courtyard, they speak to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple are coming around them.

[13:52] They're grieved because the scripture says they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection. The gospel is a resurrection message.

Without the resurrection, there is no gospel. 2 Corinthians 4, 14, Paul said it. He said, Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus Christ will also raise us up.

The gospel message is a resurrection message. In Philippians chapter 3, Paul said, Our citizenship is in heaven. In verse 20. And then in verse 21, he said, It's where the Lord will change our lowly bodies into glorious bodies just like His.

Why? Because the gospel is a resurrection message. My body one day is going to be transformed just like Jesus' body was transformed.

I think of even the pagan philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche who understood the gravity who understood the gravity of this more than liberal Christians do. He said, The belief in the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of Christianity.

[15:09] Without it, Christianity would simply collapse. Why is it that Friedrich Nietzsche understands the gospel and many of the churches in America do not?

The cornerstone of a building is laid to give stability to a structure. The resurrection of Christ is the primary support for all our teaching.

If we don't get this right, the entire structure is doomed to collapse. A theology that minimizes this is even more sinister than one that rejects it outright.

There is no way to lessen the importance of this point. To lessen the importance of this means that you are not a Christian, that you do not follow the Christ of the Bible, that your faith is false, and that your end will be the just and fair punishment in the lake of fire that burns forever and ever.

That's the gravity that we speak of. That's why Adrian Rogers, great pastor of a generation past, said it so clearly. The resurrection is not merely important to the historic Christian faith.

[16:25] Without it, there would be no Christianity. It's the reality. So, am I making a big deal of this? Yes! I'm making a big deal of this.

Why? Because it's a big deal. And there are some musts about this. The gospel is a message of resurrection. There are some things that regulate it as we come to this passage of Scripture.

As Paul is coming to the end of a series of arguments dealing with problems in the church as we have talked about before, he comes to this last key problem and it is the issue of the gospel itself.

Paul is turned to the controversy of the resurrection. There's many in the church that are not preaching the resurrection.

There are many that are denying the resurrection. It may be for them, just like for our generation, that there's a little bit of embarrassment about something like a resurrection from the dead. So that some that are looking at the facts and the science of the matter, the rationalist would rationalize away the reality of the resurrection and just say, well, that simply can't happen.

[17:43] But then on the other side of this, the spiritualist will approach the resurrection and say, well, it's not that it didn't happen, it's just that it means something else. The Scripture is very clear that not only did it happen, but it means what it says.

I would remind you, verse 1, chapter 15, I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel that I preached to you which you received and which you stand and by which you're being saved if you hold fast to the word that I preached to you unless you believed in vain.

This is a message that is governed by the word of God, by revelation for us so that we understand how this functions and why it's important. Number one, the Apostle Paul is teaching something very important about the gospel.

Number one, it is a message that must be spoken. It must be spoken. It is not merely a gospel message to be lived out in front of people.

It is to be lived out in front of people. It ought to make a difference in our life. But the reality is what he says here is that this is a gospel that's preached. I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you.

[19:02] The gospel, and he's using two forms of the same word, the evangelion and evangelizo. One is the noun form of the word.

One is the verb. The noun form of the word is simply saying this is good news. It's something to be heralded. And so you herald it. You proclaim it.

So it's the content of the message and the fact that that message is being proclaimed. So this is the nature of the message of the gospel. It's something that must be preached.

It helps us understand how it functions. The word literally means to bring good news, announce good news, or herald something. You see it in Luke 1.19, even when the word describes the work

of angels.

Hark, the herald angels sing. What are they doing? They're heralding some great thing. There's great news. The King of Kings has been born.

[20:02] And we're announcing that. That's what we do with the gospel. We preach it. We proclaim it. We talk about it. We live it. Yes, but it is a gospel to be preached.

It's in the middle voice which is emphasizing the subject's participation in the action. Meaning Paul is saying this is the gospel that I preach that was preached to me.

You received it. And now you have something that in turn is to be preached. It's the nature of the message. Romans 10.14 Romans 10.14 says, How then will they call on Him who they have not believed?

And how are they to believe in Him who they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent as it is written?

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. And he uses both words again. He uses the same words to say this is a message with substance and reality.

[21:08] And it is a message to be preached. We don't just deliver a message. It is a message. But when we deliver this message, we actually deliver the Son.

He who has the Son has life. You understand the gravity of this. This resurrection message is the message to be preached.

Paul goes on in this passage to say in 1 Corinthians 15, 5-8, all these that saw the resurrection and he's mentioning them by name up to he himself seeing the resurrected Christ.

These are all people who have experienced something with Jesus. It's not just that they heard the news. It's that they came in contact with the Son through the news.

1 Peter 3, 18, for Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the Spirit.

[22:12] This is Peter's Gospel. Paul is a persecutor of the church. And he writes most of the New Testament stories after having been confronted with the resurrected Jesus.

Not just the story about Jesus, but the story about Jesus that led him into a confrontation with God. That's the Gospel we preach. It is a message that confronts you with the reality of the risen Christ who is alive, interceding at the right hand of God.

A God who's not dead. He is truly alive. You think of somebody like James, Jesus' half-brother. I mean, here's a guy that denied the reality of Jesus when Jesus was alive.

But when Jesus is raised from the dead, James, his brother, becomes an evangelist. Somebody that's proclaiming Christ. Why? Because he saw something. He experienced something in the reality of Jesus being actually alive.

It wasn't just a figment of his imagination. It wasn't just a warm fuzzy. It wasn't some psychological reality. He actually encountered the risen Christ and it changed him. And I'm telling you here today, if you have come into contact with the risen Christ, you'll be changed too.

[23:28] It'll affect your whole life. You won't be the same. It'll get you up on Sunday morning. It'll get you out of bed to go to church. Because I'm telling you, if your faith doesn't get you out of bed on Sunday morning, how in the world is it going to get you to heaven?

This is the gospel. This is the risen Christ alive. And it means something to follow this Jesus. only reasonable explanation about a change in somebody's life like James's change.

He saw somebody alive from the dead. That'll change you. I remember being in the military and I got a letter one time.

We were, this was Persian Gulf War and we were in the Saudi Arabian desert for a long time, you know, doing, I mean, playing war games for a long time and then, you know, five or six days of conflict.

But it was just, it was, you know, hard time. Young guy, I'm 20 years old, I'm out there in the military and thinking, hey, I could die out here. And I remember getting a letter from my Aunt Frances.

[24:41] My Aunt Frances knew that I had become a believer and she wrote me a letter while I was off in war and it was an amazing thing because we

were moving all over the place.

We didn't even know where we were half the time. But we were moving all over the place. We would move every few days. We would put up a new position and move and move and move and move and how in the world the mail ever found us.

I do not know. Sometimes it didn't. But the reality every now and then sometimes it made its way to us. We'd get into a new position and they'd come out with mail and I'm telling you there is nothing like getting mail when you're in that situation.

When you get a touch from home and somebody writing to you, somebody saying that they care or thinking about you and it brings you back in touch with home for just a moment in all of that.

It does something. But what she wrote I will never forget all my life because she knew I was a believer in Christ and what she was doing was to remind me of the presence of Jesus in my life.

[25:49] You see, this is the gospel we preach. It's not just a message of news and it's just news alone. But when we deliver this message we deliver the sun to somebody.

And when I was there in the middle of the desert in the middle of nowhere nobody in the world may know exactly where I am but I'm telling you this, Jesus knew where I was and He was with me the whole time.

The scripture says Jesus said I'll never leave you I'll never forsake you. That's the nature of this relationship. So when we preach it that's what we're preaching. We're preaching Christ and Him crucified.

I'm proclaiming Him. Not just a message. It is the message. But it's Him. Man, that's people, man that is good stuff.

Peter's sermon at Pentecost Acts chapter 2 it was a resurrection message. He foreseeing this spoke concerning the resurrection of Christ that his soul was not left in Hades nor did his flesh see corruption.

[27:01] This Jesus God has raised up of which we are all witnesses. The gospel is a resurrection message. And when it's referred to all through the book of Acts it's referred to as preaching the resurrection.

You take the resurrection out of this gospel you don't have Christianity anymore. Peter is standing before the Sanhedrin Acts chapter 4 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified whom God raised from the dead by Him this man stands before you whole and with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all.

What might happen in the church in America is great grace may be upon us all again if we would preach the resurrection with that kind of authority.

Preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ the living Christ who changes people's lives who comes in not just with a theological truth but with a reality truth.

It is theological. But He's alive. Paul is in Athens Acts chapter 17 and it says because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained He has given assurance to all of this by raising Him from the dead.

[28:31] Resurrection Gospel. And when Paul gives his testimony what does he point to in Acts 24? I have hope in God he said that there will be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and the unjust.

it is for this one statement that I'm standing here before you O Governor concerning the resurrection of the dead. The sticking point.

It's a message to be preached. Charles Spurgeon was a great preacher of the gospel and he was preaching the gospel in a generation in England when entertainment was way more important than preaching.

and it was a movement that was beginning then. Spurgeon addressed this and in this Spurgeon said a sermon without Christ as its beginning middle and end is a mistake in conception and a crime in execution.

However grand the language it may however grand the language it will be merely much ado about nothing if Christ be not there. And I mean by Christ not merely his example and ethical precepts of his teaching but his atoning blood his wondrous satisfaction made for human sin and the grand doctrine of believe and live.

[29:54] That's the gospel and that is a gospel to be preached. Not only number one is it a gospel to be preached Paul goes on and says that this is a gospel that must be received.

It's a gospel to be received. I would remind you brothers of the gospel I preach to you which you received.

The word received there is a word that means to take something in close association with yourself to take along something. In Matthew chapter 1 verse 20 it talks about Joseph taking Mary as his wife.

Taking her along. Receiving her. As his wife. In verse 11 you look down a little further and at the end of this he said talking about the gospel preaching whether it was I or they so we preach and so you believe.

And so now he pairs up the word received with the word believed. And so you're seeing a synonymous use of the idea here that to believe Christ is not just to receive the message but to take Christ along with you.

[31:12] To take him for your own. You must come to a place in your life where you believe the gospel receiving him to yourself. Where you not only believe the facts about Jesus that he died on the cross that he was raised from the dead according to the scriptures he gives the summary of the gospel right here reminding the church of the core message that they must preach.

He said it in verse 5 I delivered that to you which was of first importance. I preached it to you. I delivered it. I gave it to you. What's the message?

That Christ died for our sins. The one thing that separates you from an almighty God is your sin. And unless something happens to the sin in your life you'll stand before an almighty God.

A holy and just judge with no advocate. Unless something happens to your sin you will pay the full brunt of your sin. But the scripture says this is why Christ came.

That's why it's good news. It's actually good news that there's forgiveness for sin. There is life for sinners. You're dead and you're trespassed in sin but he can raise you up from the grave.

[32:26] That's good news. man I'm going to start preaching in a minute guys. Hang with me. This is what we live for.

You might want to help a homeless person. So what does our culture do? We'll throw a bag of beans at them or something. We'll give you some food. And I've done my duty.

I've relieved myself of some sense of moral guilt or something and so I've done the good deed and I walk away and feel resolved that I've done something noble, something wonderful. I helped him out, I gave him something.

He can't even cook it, it's a can of beans or whatever. He doesn't have a kitchen, he can't do anything with it. Someone else takes that person, and I'm not suggesting you necessarily do this depending on your circumstances, but somebody takes that homeless person into themselves. They take care of them. You see the picture of this, the guy that's beaten and left for dead where Jesus is walking along the road. It's a Samaritan man, he's unclean. And what does Jesus do with him?

[33:36] Jesus tells the parable, says that this man goes, the Samaritan actually goes and heals him up and brings him to a place to stay, lets him recover from his wounds.

He ministers to him, he holds on to him, he takes care of him, leaves some money for him. And in this picture, it's just a picture of what Christ does for us. Christ sometimes is treated like the homeless guy by us, when the reality is, you're that guy.

You're the homeless guy. That feeling and that sense of rejection and saying, I don't want anything to do with that. And sometimes there's a right carefulness that you have to deal with in dealing with people in bad circumstances like that.

But the reality here is, sometimes if you're not careful, this is how you're going to treat Jesus. He's the homeless guy. You're going to come into church on a Sunday.

You're going to throw him a can of beans and go live your life every which way you want to live it. And that is not the gospel. This is a gospel to be received. This is a gospel where you receive the message and receive Christ himself because he has received you.

[34:53] that's a different message. See, that'll affect how you treat ball games. Oh, is it quiet now?

That'll affect how you treat politics. Can I get an amen? That affects your whole life. There's no shadow or corner of your life that does not belong to him.

when you receive him. You're taking him in not just to be a resident in your life. You're taking him in to take over your life. He's the king. He's the Lord.

He's the master or he's the homeless guy. But he's nothing in between. John 1 11.

It says, he came to his own and his own did not receive him, but to his many as received him. to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe on his name.

[35:58] Receiving and believing put together once again. How do you receive Christ? You receive him by turning from sin, turning to the Savior, by receiving him as Savior and Lord.

Savior, forgive me of my sins. Lord, my life belongs to you. number three, it's a message in which you must find standing, find solid ground for your life, foundation.

He said in chapter 15, I would remind you, brothers of the gospel, that I preach to you, one, which you received, two, and in which you stand.

This word is the idea of putting something in a place or position, setting something in place. It speaks of an action accomplished in the past, where the consequences go indefinitely into the future.

You can kind of see the picture. The gospel was preached to me, I received it, and now in this, I receive standing. I've been placed somewhere.

[37:11] I've been given ground beneath my feet for me to stand. So now when the wind and the waves come in life, I've got something to stand on.

I've got standing. I've been put in place. I've been put in a set position. I am in the Father's hand and no one can snatch me away. Isn't that good news?

I don't want to get snatched away. My heart is prone to wander as we sing in the old hymn. It's prone to wander. I'm prone to walk away from the Lord.

But thank God I'm in His hand. I've been placed on solid ground. I'm in His hand and no one can snatch me from Him. 1 Corinthians 15 2 is just encouragement to us.

I've got standing. Trials of life come. The difficulties of life come. It's going to come. If it's not coming today, guess what tomorrow holds. Your life, according to Proverbs, is like the wheel where the sparks fly.

[38:15] The grinder's wheel. It's a picture of your life and the friction and the difficulty that there's going to be in this life. And if you want standing, if you want to be able to endure those things that are coming in this life, the difficulties, you better have something solid to stand on because when the wind and the waves come, you may think you're strong.

You have no idea how bad it can get. We're about to find out in America how bad it can get. We may not make it to November for elections if we don't close this border.

I'm just telling you. You may have no idea how bad things can get, but we're going to find out. We may find out together. Amen? It's coming. But if you're going to be able to stand in those days, you may think the Antichrist is coming.

You may think we're in the end times. I don't know if we are or not. I have no idea, but I'm telling you this. It's coming. And you better be ready. And if you think you're going to stand against the Antichrist and you can't get up and go to church, you can't do your taxes honestly.

You can't stand up to the moral corruption of our generation and stop a drag show from coming into your town. You're going to stand up against the Antichrist? You're a fool in yourself.

[39:33] God. Our standing is in Jesus. We stand on the truth. We stand on the word of God. On the B-I-B-L-E, that's the book for me.

Amen? Kids, can you sing it with me? My stepfather, my stepfather lost his leg, fallen down some stairs, got gangrene or something in his leg, didn't treat it, didn't do anything, ended up losing that leg.

I remember this vividly as a 14-year-old. There were times when he was in such agony after that surgery and just the phantom pain with that, but also just trying to get around.

We lived in a two-story house. His bedroom was upstairs, and every day, every night, he would have to go up those stairs. And it was for some reason that I was the only one home. I don't know where everybody else was. You know, sometimes your memory of growing up is kind of weird. I was the only one in the house all the time. I don't know. I know other people were there. They must have been. But for some reason, I felt like I was the only one there at those moments, you know.

[40:48] And my stepdad was trying to go up the stairs, and he would ask me to help him, and so I would. I'd get on my hands and knees on the stairs, and he would drape his arm over me.

And as a 14-year-old kid, I just remember it so vividly, him just in absolute agony going up those stairs and just weeping. And it was just, you know, as a 14-year-old, you don't ever forget that. It's the picture of a spiritual life that's broken. It's the spiritual life without standing. You come to Jesus, and when the message is preached, and you receive this message, you're receiving the Son who is going to help you up the stairs.

And without Him, you don't get up. You're not going to make it through this life. You're not going to make it through the difficulties of your day. It's with Jesus that I'm going to make it through the hard times. It's with Jesus I'm going to celebrate fully the good times.

That's why Paul ended this whole discussion in 1 Corinthians 15, 58. He said, therefore, therefore what? Therefore, based on this resurrection, on this gospel, on this Jesus, therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

[42:18] Oh, he used that word again. You might have been believing in vain. Now, your efforts are not in vain. Why is this true? Because greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.

So I'm pressed on every side, Paul said, but not crushed. My feet are on the rock of Jesus Christ, and when the wind and the waves crash against me, my anchor holds, not because I understand the points of the message, but because I know the man of the message.

Jesus Christ is Lord of my life, and I have a relationship with Him because I have received Him. And now in Him I am standing.

It's a message where I must find my standing. And it's a message that must evidence spiritual life. Notice how he said it. And by which also you are being saved.

Wait a second. I thought you were already saved. You received the message. Yes, you have been. But that's positionally. You're positionally saved, yes. But this is the practical side of salvation.

[43:32] It's not the justified side where I'm legally declared righteous. This is the sanctification side where I am being made righteous practically. I was made righteous in the presence of Christ when I believed and received, and I've got standing.

I've got solid rock beneath my feet. You're not going to shake me from this. But I've got a lot of growth to do. And if I'm not growing, I remember being in the military.

You remember this. Aaron, you spent many a day, I guarantee, on police call. Right? I mean, anybody in the military, police call is a regular part of your life.

You're thinking, police calling? Why are you calling the police? No, you are the police. And you're arresting the trash. It's just every little piece of trash. Police call means we're going to pick up cigarette butts. And we're going to go pick up everything.

And I never will forget the instruction that we got from our drill sergeant about how to do this effectively. He said, you're going to go along and you're going to question whether or not you should pick something up.

[44:33] You're going to question it. You're going to wonder, should I pick that up? And what would they say? I don't know if they said the same thing. If it ain't growing, pick it up. What about the rocks?

Is it growing? What about, is it growing? Is it growing? Is it growing? No, no, no. Pick it up and throw it away. The reality is, if it ain't growing, there's something wrong.

If it's not growing, it's not supposed to be in this field. If it's not growing, it shouldn't be on your drill sergeant's grass. Where was I going with that?

I got lost in that one. Brought me back to too many painful memories. But that's why in my testimony, you know, I think of, I think of when I share about coming to faith in Christ because my misconception before I came to Christ is addressed in that.

Because my misconception before I came to Christ was I'm not worried that he'd come to Christ and so I'm going to clean myself up and then I'm going to come to Jesus. Right?

[45:44] And that's not how this works. I have to receive him first. That's what he shows the order here. You receive him. It's preached.

You receive it. Now you've got standing. You've got a place to stand. And this is the gospel by which you're being saved. The presence of the Lord, the reality of this gospel at work in my life, that Christ is risen in me by giving me his Holy Spirit to live inside of me.

Now I have life and I should be demonstrating fruit of the Spirit. Demonstrating the reality of Christ. If I'm not demonstrating a transformed life, it ain't growing.

I can't clean myself up and come to Jesus. I surrender to Jesus and he comes in and cleans me up. Does it make me perfect?

No, I'm not perfect. Not now. I'm being saved in a sense. Not that I haven't achieved my salvation. I've got that in Christ. I've got standing. I've been saved in that sense.

[46:52] But I'm being saved. I'm stepping into my salvation. Romans 6.23 says the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.

Christ Jesus. Paul, in his explanation in chapter 15, goes on and says, so it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable.

What is raised is imperishable. What is sown in dishonor is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It's raised in power. It's sown a natural body.

One day it'll be raised a spiritual body. The reality is that I'm demonstrating in spiritual life resurrection. The same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in my mortal body. I'm being changed into the likeness of Christ. I don't look like him yet. Y'all are looking at me and saying, you don't look like him. I don't look like him yet. I'm not a finished product.

[47:58] But I'll tell you this. I ain't what I used to be. Because I've been changed. And I'm headed down this road that one day is going to end in his presence.

No, there must be spiritual growth. It's the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. And then finally, it's a message with all of that in mind, a message that must lead to self-examination. It must. I don't care who you are. I don't care if you grew up in church, if you're the Pope. I don't care. I don't care who you are. I don't believe in the Pope.

I'm not saying that, but that's a different message. I don't care who you are. Rich or poor, job unemployed, male, female. I don't care who you are.

You've got to come to a place where you examine yourself. It's not about your parents' salvation. Some of you have got great parents. They love Jesus.

[49:09] They raised you in the fear and admonition of the Lord. And you've got a heritage of that. You look back to it with just great, great enthusiasm. But here's the reality.

Your parents may go to heaven and you may not. The reality of your salvation is what this resurrection is all about. It's an examination.

A self-examination. He says, unless you believed in vain. Do you mean to tell me that somebody can believe but believe in vain?

They think they believe. They've gone through the motions of belief. They've been a member of a church. They've been baptized. They know the Bible.

They can quote Bible verses. They can tell you about theology and still believe in vain. It's true. You can have an epic, epic view of theology where you can explain everything in the world about every theological point and you can be lost at the same time and spend eternity in hell.

[50:19] And how do I know that? Because the devil understands theology. You think he doesn't understand that Jesus was raised from the dead? That he doesn't understand the substitutionary atonement?

He doesn't understand the intricacies of the Trinity way more than you do? Oh, he understands it. He's not going to heaven because he hasn't exercised saving faith where the gospel has been preached and he's received it to find standing so that he can experience spiritual growth.

And if I look at my life and I don't see that, I've got to ask myself some hard questions on this Resurrection Sunday. Have I been raised from the dead?

See, that's resurrection. Without the resurrection, there's no gospel to preach. There's no living Christ to be with. There's no place for me to stand.

There's no security in which I can stand. There's no hope of heaven. There's no nothing. But not only is that true if Christ is not raised from the dead, that's true if you have not raised from the dead.

[51:42] To believe in vain may be the most frightening reality of the Bible. someone can actually and sincerely believe in an empty gospel. Someone can sincerely believe and their life not be changed.

Someone can sincerely believe and have no security. Paul went on to say in 1 Corinthians 15, I tell you this, verse 50, Brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed.

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal must put on immortality. Have I been changed?

C.S. Lewis wrote a book called Mere Christianity. It's a classic. It's a classic book. If you're not used to reading, it can be a difficult read. I remember trying to read it after I was a high school dropout.

[53:01] I made it to the introduction and put it down for a few years. And I came back to it. But boy, as I've read it over and over through the years, man, the truths of it are just really, really awesome.

C.S. Lewis was right when he said this. I'm trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus. I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.

That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.

He would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil himself. You must make your choice.

Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool. You can spit at him and kill him as a demon.

[54:05] Or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher.

He has not left that open to us, nor did he intend to. You can't come to the gospel and stay the same.

You got to make a decision. February 3rd, 1990, I decided to follow Jesus. God intervened in my life and opened my eyes to my sin and I turned to Jesus.

I was raised up from the dead that day. I was changed and I've never been the same. And God has brought some of you in this room this morning for this very reason.

Because you were raised in church. You have heard the gospel. You could tell somebody the facts about the gospel. But if truth be known to your horror, you have never come to the place where you've confessed Him as Lord and received Him.

[55:21] And the reality is that maybe, just maybe, that's exactly why He brought you to this place today. To a church that actually preaches the gospel.

So that you could hear the gospel preached. You could see Christ on the cross for your sin according to the scriptures. He died and was buried and rose again according to the scriptures. Knowing that one day He's coming to judge the living and the dead and that means you. And today, you can respond by faith. So as we come to this invitation time, I just want to open an opportunity for you to do that.

Right where you're at. You're going, oh man, what are you going to do? I'm not going to embarrass you. My intention is not to embarrass anybody. But in this invitation time, really, it's not an invitation to come to me or come to this church.

This is an invitation from God to respond to His gospel and have Jesus come in as you receive Him. And what you do in that moment, if you've never done that, is you, in a moment of prayer, do what Romans 10, 9, and 10 says.

[56:32] If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. He said, behold, I stand at the door and I knock and if anyone hears my voice, I'll come in and have fellowship with Him and He with me, Jesus said.

It's not about just the message. It's about the messenger who's got you here to invite you to come in. And your response to that is just surrender.

It's turning from sin and turning to the Savior and saying, Lord, I'm a sinner. I don't have any hope. I can't save myself.

I can't fix things. My heart, if anyone saw my heart, they'd know. One day, God, I know that you're going to see my heart. I'm coming today and I'm asking you to forgive me of my sin.

I'm asking you to come in and save me. And in a moment, right here, as you're praying where you're at, you can just say, Lord, come save me. I believe that you died for my sin.

[57:44] I believe that you rose again. I believe you're who you said. I don't understand everything, but I know you're the only hope I have. And if you'll turn your life to Jesus, the Scripture says, nobody, nobody, nobody can do this.

Nobody can come in that kind of surrender. Nobody will be turned away. Anyone who comes to Christ like that, he said, I'll receive him. Why? Because it's his work in you, drawing you to himself. So let's have a moment of prayer as we come to our invitation time at the end of this service here. And some of you, as we sing, can do business with God.

Father, we come to this moment for the phrase of the earth, the death protective house as follows. All in the access of Africa and the seaivore■■■■ is■ firm, for the name of God. We come in that way of benefiting and doing something with shining very quickly.

We come in with you, on the Menschang, and what mur■■ is Lord and to inquisit to remind you that that story. We come here and bless you. The artist you long