

What If Every Day Were Easter?

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[0 : 0 0] There is a point every year during the Christmas season where I think maybe most people, at least most people that I know, right when all the stars align just the right way and all the right things are happening at just the right moment, you have this one fleeting thought that says, wouldn't it be nice if it were Christmas every day of the year?

And of course, if you're older than 12, that sentiment doesn't last very long because you realize very quickly, I don't actually want to spend time with family every day of the year. I don't actually want to have to go and purchase these things every year. I want my house back. Let's take the tree down, all the things. You think about that.

But the kids, typically we get to Christmas Day and we think, man, how awesome it would be if it was Christmas every day. There's something about the being together, the joyfulness of the season that we just want it to last. We want to have that feeling all the time.

I wonder if you've ever had that same thought, asked the same question about Easter. What if every day were Easter?

What if every day was an opportunity to turn our fears of death into the expectation of new life?

[1 : 2 0] Isn't that what Easter is? Even a secularist would acknowledge that Easter and spring, it's all about new life and winter is gone and darkness is gone and the sun is up and the flowers are coming and it's just, it's so wonderful.

It's new life. It's regeneration. What if every ache of the body that you feel now, what if every ache of the heart, what if every confusion of your mind was immediately confronted every time that it popped up with the hope that eventually it will all go away?

You think about that. Some of you this morning, you rolled out of bed and you thought, man, all I do is hurt. And then you come to church and you think, oh, well, it's Easter today and we're talking about the resurrection, which is just a reminder that this hurt that I feel and the sorrow that I feel and the struggle that I have right now, eventually it's going to go away.

Easter is about life. Easter is about hope. What if every day were like that? What if every experience, whether good or bad, was filtered through the recognition that God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins?

That's what Paul wrote to the church in Colossae. In other words, what if every day were Easter? Well, for many people, every day is Easter.

[2 : 5 2] And it could be for you too. Of course, it wouldn't mean anything if every day were spent focused on egg hunts and family dinners and Reese's peanut butter cups, which, of course, is the best Easter candy that there is.

But if our hearts and minds were just constantly focused every day on the resurrection of Jesus, what if that were true of us?

That's a different story, isn't it? Eventually, you get tired of the peanut butter eggs. Eventually, you don't want to hide the eggs anymore. Eventually, you're ready for the family to go home. But can you ever tire of the glories of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

What if it were on your mind every day? That's at least part of what we gain from Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 15, as he reminds the church here in Corinth that the resurrection is essential to the gospel message, and that the gospel message is essential to the everyday experience of life and hope.

Now, Paul's statements here were made to confront a growing theological problem in Corinth. Some of the people were confused.

[4 : 16] They were having difficulty grasping the reality of a general resurrection, what we call a general resurrection, which is a future moment when the bodies of all who died in Christ will be resurrected to eternal life.

That's really the primary topic at work in 1 Corinthians 15. There were people that were confused about that. There were also people in the church at Corinth who were not confused about it. They just outright denied that anything like that would ever happen.

So the context of the chapter has to do with Paul setting the record straight on that specific matter. But you'll notice, in order to answer the question of our future resurrection, he must link it directly to the fact of Jesus' resurrection after being crucified.

And at one point, Paul says that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then even Jesus has not been raised. And if Jesus isn't risen, then the apostles have nothing about which to preach, and the Christians have nothing about which to believe.

The resurrection changes everything. Think about that for just a moment. Without the resurrection, there is no apostle Paul. Without the resurrection, there's no apostles at all. Without the resurrection, the 12 disciples go back to Galilee, go back to fishing, and living out their lives, hoping that the Messiah will still eventually come for them to save them.

[5 : 55] If there is no resurrection, then there would be no church. There would be no reason for it to exist. If there were no resurrection, there would be nothing for us to believe. There would be no reason for us to gather together, not only today, but any day.

Paul says everything about Christianity, it hinges on the resurrection of Jesus. And he continues. Just set your eyes a few verses down in the chapter on verse 20.

He says, But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order. Remember, Christ the firstfruits, Christ is the first resurrection.

Then at his coming, those who belong to Christ, then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father. After destroying every rule, and every authority and power, he must reign.

[7 : 02] Until he has put all his enemies under his feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed, is death. It's just significant. Now what I want to focus on this morning, is not the specific controversy that was plaguing the church in Corinth.

What I want to focus on, is the gospel-saturated way, that the apostle Paul, answered their question about it. What these people in Corinth needed, was not a theological essay on the topic.

They just needed a fresh reminder of the gospel message, and its eternal implications. And it's in this gospel primer, that Paul writes in these first 11 verses, that we find one of the most powerful resurrection texts, in all of the scriptures.

And it begins, by reminding us, that the gospel matters, not just at one point in our lives, but at every point in our lives.

That it matters every day, and in every way. Look at verse 1. Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preach to you, which you receive, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved.

[8 : 23] If you hold fast, to the word I preach to you, unless you believe in vain. Now I want you to think about something, keep your eyes on the verses. Paul could have gone straight, from this phrase in verse 1, I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preach to you.

He could have gone straight from that, to the phrase in verse 3, at the beginning, for I delivered to you, what I, as a matter of first importance. And think about that, just in the way the structure, the sentence is made.

It would have made just as much sense to us, we wouldn't have thought anything was missing, had he just said, I want to remind you of the gospel message, because I delivered to you, the gospel message I delivered to you, was this.

But that's not what he does. He adds in these other portions of verse 1. But why does he do that? Because the declaration of the gospel, is not an intellectual exercise, in which one person, simply passes on information, to another person.

No, that's not what the preaching of the gospel is. It's much more than that. The preaching of the gospel, is a spiritually intrusive, potentially transformative call, that demands a response, from those who hear it.

[9 : 41] And in the case of Paul's preaching, to these people in Corinth, the response was to believe the message. They believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Paul was reminding them, not only of the content of that message, but of the ongoing impact, of that message on their daily lives. Let me prove it to you.

Notice the past, present, and future dimensions, of salvation, that are laid out here. These Christians, are said by Paul, to have received.

They have received. That's past tense. There was a time in their life, when Paul came, or some other apostle came, and they preached the gospel of Jesus. And these people, as they heard the gospel, understood that it demanded a response.

And their response was to receive it, to believe it. They confessed their sins. They confessed Christ as Lord and Savior. And the Holy Spirit changes them, saves them.

[10 : 46] And that moment of conversion, in their past, then launched them, into a life of faith, in which they were at that moment, in the present, quote, standing, in which you now stand.

They're standing on the gospel, and are being saved. That is, it's happening in the present. They are being saved by it, which is a statement, reflecting their ongoing growth in Christ.

So, keep up with me here. They are saved, because of this past conversion. They are being saved, because as they stand daily, in the gospel message, the Lord is transforming them, from the inside out.

Now, that process, of what we call sanctification, implies, that it eventually has an end. Sanctification does not go on, indefinitely, ad infinitum.

It has an end, which brings in the future, dimension of salvation. One day, they will be saved, at the return of Christ.

[12 : 05] It's amazing. Of course, they will be saved in eternity, unless, Paul reminds them, that their profession proved, inauthentic, and it would only prove, inauthentic, if they stopped, standing, on the gospel message.

That's his point here. So, here's what he's saying. I want to remind you, about the gospel, not just what it is, but why it matters for you, every single day, Corinthian church, he said.

In other words, when a person, becomes a Christian, by the power of God's grace, it begins, this unstoppable, lifelong move, toward eternal salvation.

Now, in so far, as Easter, is about the good news of Jesus, and in so far, as that gospel, the good news of Jesus, is essential, and relevant, to our daily lives, then, every day, should be treated, like Easter, by those, who have received, and are standing, by faith, in the gospel, of Christ.

Every day. All those things, I said a moment ago. Every day. If you are in Christ, that is your reality.

[13 : 41] For a believer, focused on the gospel, each day, no matter how dark, it may prove to be, and you know, that some days, are very, very dark.

For a believer, even those dark days, are lived in the light, of the resurrection, of Jesus Christ. when you suffer, physically, emotionally, when loved ones die, what is our only hope, in life and death?

Our only hope, in life and death, is that Jesus, is alive. And that for those, who have trusted in him, that life is ours, and it is coming.

For Christians, that are living every day, like Easter, get this. Every sin, every sin, no matter how terrible, it may be, is followed, by the peace of knowing.

Jesus, died for it. Isn't that wonderful? after I blow it, with my wife, with my kids, after I do that thing, that if, if, if people in my church, knew that I did it, no one would ever, want to be around me.

[15 : 22] Even after that, I can have the peace, of knowing, Jesus died, for that sin. That's what it's like, to live Easter, every day.

And the reality is, that it is, Easter, every day. It's just that, many of us don't live, as if the gospel, is truly a matter, of first importance. So we don't experience, the benefits, of an every day is Easter, way of life.

But notice, what Paul says next, in verse three. For I deliver to you, as of first importance. what I also received, and believed, this gospel.

The fact that the, gospel message, is of first importance, it doesn't negate, the importance, of other issues. There are many, significant things, that Jesus, and his apostles, instructed the church over.

There are many, important discussions, about life, and culture, and society, that we must, be willing to have, with one another. But only the gospel, as Paul says, in Romans one, is the power of God, to salvation, for all who will, believe.

[16 : 37] Meaning, the gospel, must have the priority, of focus, every day, and in every way. All other matters, of import, must be, subservient, to that gospel.

All conclusions, and actions, regarding those issues, must have, the truth of the gospel, as their foundation, and the glory, of the gospel, as their end.

When you're dealing, with stuff as a family, your conclusions, your actions, the way you deal with that, as a Christian, if you're going to live Easter, every day, the gospel, must be the foundation, of all of those discussions.

It must be the foundation, of all of those actions. And the gospel, in its glory, must be the end goal, of those actions, and conclusions. That everything we do, is focused, and governed by Jesus.

That everything we do, everything we say, everything we believe, has the end, of glorifying Jesus, and his gospel, before the world. In other words, we have to learn, to live, and view all of life, and faith, through the lens, of the gospel.

[17 : 47] The gospel, must have priority, in our preaching. The gospel, must have priority, in our worship. The gospel, must have priority, in the way that we live, from day to day, in the things that we do, in the sins that we commit, and do not commit, in the evangelistic efforts, of our church.

So if the gospel, is so important, then, what is it? If this is, such a matter, of import, to my life, if it can make, that much difference, for me, what actually is, this gospel?

Secondly, can I actually, trust this gospel, or this message, or this thing, that you're trying to, get me to think about, and to believe today? Can I actually trust it? Is there, credibility to it?

Third question, well, what can it actually, do for me? Because all of this, just feels like, an intellectual exercise, at this point, doesn't it? You came to church today, you wore, perhaps a new outfit, and you're excited, about the ham, that weighed you later, or a low country boil, in my case, and you're excited, about all those things, right?

Like it's easy, it's fun, but now you just have to, get through this part, where Jared just talked, for an hour, and it's just like, okay, I just, I don't want to go, to school today, Jared, so it'd be great, if we just wrap this thing up, I get on the rest of my day.

[19 : 04] Like that's what it feels like, right now, doesn't it? Doesn't it? So then the question is, what does this gospel, actually do for me? Those three questions, are the three questions, that I want to answer, that I think Paul helps us, to answer, at least begins, to give us the answers about, here in this text.

They aren't everything, that you can know, but they are enough, to help you experience, the truth of Easter, today, and every day, okay? So let's deal with them. Question number one, what is the gospel?

What actually is this gospel? Let's talk about, the gospel defined, verse three, 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, that he was raised, on the third day, in accordance with the scriptures.

Well, what is the good news, of Jesus? Paul very plainly, defines it here, as the death, burial, and resurrection, of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

but that leads us, to a second question. If that's the simple definition, what makes it good news, rather than just basic, historical, bibliographical, or biographical information, right?

[20 : 22] Glad you asked. Let me answer. The answer has everything, to do with this little phrase, for our sins. brings us, into the picture here.

This isn't just about Jesus, it's about Jesus, in relation to us, for our sins. God's word teaches, that death, both physical, and spiritual, is God's judgment, against those who, by nature, and by action, have rebelled against him.

And every one of us, is guilty before God, because as Paul says, in Romans chapter 3, all have sinned. But then the Bible, also teaches, that Jesus of Nazareth, is the sinless, son of God, who perfectly, fulfilled God's law, in all the ways, that we were meant to.

So the things, that makes us sinners, Jesus never did those things. He didn't have that nature. He didn't tell those lies. He didn't have that rebellion.

Whatever it may be, it was sinless. He has not sinned, nor has he fallen short, of the glory, of God, as each and every one, of us has done.

[21 : 41] So, that means, that Jesus' death, was not a payment, for his own sin, because Jesus, had no sin, for which, to pay.

Therefore, the Bible, makes it clear, that Jesus' crucifixion, was a sacrifice, for the sins, of others. Which is why, Paul speaks, of Christ's death here, in terms of substitution.

Bearing shame, and scoffing rude, in my place, condemned, he stood, sealed my pardon, with his blood.

Hallelujah. What a Savior. Isn't that what we see? Christ died, yes, for our sins.

Here, John Stott, on the matter. The essence, of sin, is man, substituting himself, for God, while the essence, of salvation, is God, substituting himself, for man.

[22 : 50] Man, asserts himself, against God, and puts himself, where only God, deserves to be. God, sacrifices himself, for man, and puts himself, where only man, deserves to be.

Man, claims, prerogatives, that belong to God alone. God, accepts the penalties, that belong to man, alone. But as you might expect, the gospel is not good news, if all Jesus did, was die.

Everyone dies. So his death, on its own, doesn't mean anything. which is why, Paul continues to define, the gospel message, by his burial, his resurrection.

Now, Jesus' burial, is a validation, of his death, for those, who would suggest, that he was merely, resuscitated, rather than, resurrected.

That's been, one of the, many alternate conclusions, that people have offered, through the years, that Jesus, when he was taken down, on the cross, wasn't actually, fully dead, that he was still alive, he still had, had life in him, and no one realized it.

[24 : 03] So when they put him, in the grave, eventually, he just kind of, resuscitated, and three days later, was healed enough, from this excruciating torture, that he just kind of, decided he was going, to push the stone away, and walk out.

Like that, that's, that's a conclusion, that many people, have drawn. Well, Paul says this here, in order to, confront that. The Romans, were expert executioners.

Those responsible, for Jesus's execution, they even, were told that, they stabbed his heart, with a spear, post-mortem, just to make sure, that he was dead, before they allowed him, to be taken down.

Then his body, was handled, by multiple people, as it was removed, from this cross, as it was, briefly prepared, and wrapped, in the linen cloth, that we read about, in John chapter 20, just a moment ago, and then carried, short distance, for sure, but actually, physically carried, from the cross, to this tomb, someone would have, had to gotten down, on the ground, with this body, to actually get it, in the tomb, because the way, these were designed, we picture a doorway, like a stone, about this high, that covered a door, that you could just, walk right through, that's not how, these graves, these tombs, you can see them, today in Israel, they're actually, very small, about like this, the stone is about, like this, okay, not as big, as you would think, that's why, when Peter and John, run to the tomb, it says that they, stooped down, to look inside, because they would have, had to get on the ground, and crawled in, and then it would have, been an open, cavity, inside the hill there, okay, think about this, professional executioners, going to great lengths, just to ensure, that death is done, but then comes the grave, and all these people, handling the body, surely someone, would have noticed, hey, this guy is still breathing, no, he was buried, that's the point, he was buried, he was dead, he was fully, really, truly, completely, dead, so Paul's mention, of Christ's burial, it verifies his death, and it anticipates, the most significant, element of the gospel, which is Christ's resurrection,

I delivered to you, as a first importance, what I also received, and believed, Christ died, for our sins, according to the scriptures, he was buried, and he rose, on the third day, in accordance, with the scriptures, now here's why, this matters so much, that Jesus rose, from the dead, proves, that he was truly, without sin, and if he was truly, without sin, that means, that he was actually, eligible, to make an atonement, for our sins, this is what Peter says, when he preaches the gospel, in Acts chapter 2, in verse 24, he says, God raised him up, losing the pangs of death, because it was not possible, for him to be held by it, why was it not possible, because death, had no claim on him, he laid his life down, for the sins of others, so God raised him up, but Jesus's resurrection, it also shows that,

[27 : 32] God's wrath, against our sins, was satisfied, it was satisfied, we just sang about it, a moment ago, in Christ alone, till on that cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God, was satisfied, for every sin, and on him was laid, here in the death of Christ, I live, it's wonderful, that Jesus rose from the dead, proves that his death, was sufficient, nothing else is needed, God's not going to make you, experience some form of death, for some period of time, based on your level of sins, in order to make up, for whatever Jesus couldn't do, that won't happen, when he forgives your sin, he forgives all your sin, because as Jesus hung on the cross, he cries out, it's finished, there's nothing left,

I've done it all, all the sins, all the sins, for those who believe, done, it's paid for, it's done, it's wonderful, you say, how can you know, because God raised him up, his resurrection, was God's way of saying, hey, I want you to know, this was enough, this was enough, to satisfy my wrath, against you, now just come to him, and receive it, it's wonderful, really, for our sake, God made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him, we might become, the righteousness, of God, but there's a final statement, in this, that we cannot ignore, before we move on, he wrote that Christ's death, and resurrection, fulfilled the scriptures, that is, it all happened, in accordance with what God, through the Bible, had said, what happened, look at it, for yourself,

Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures, he was raised on the third day, in accordance with the scriptures, now, your mind might immediately go, to those eyewitness accounts, of the gospels, we read one of them, a minute ago, in John chapter 20, an eyewitness account, of the resurrected Christ, that's not what Paul, is referencing here, Paul wrote his letter, his first letter, to the church at Corinth, before either, of the four gospels, had been handwritten, and distributed, so what does Paul mean, when he says, that Christ died, and was raised, in accordance with the scripture, doesn't mean the gospels, certainly they're included, but that's not what he has in mind, what Paul has in mind, is all of those types, and symbols, and prophecies, of the old testament, that point forward, to the death, and resurrection, of the Messiah, that's what he has in mind, we could spend, countless hours, exploring all the biblical material, that Jesus fulfilled, in fact, in some sense, what we do every Sunday, through systematic, expository preaching, is to do just that, all of the bible, is about Jesus, therefore wherever, we're preaching, we're trying to see Jesus, in the text, we're trying to see, how is this pointing us, to the gospel, because that's what it's for, we'll spend our whole lives, doing that, and we'll not come close, to getting it all, and in fact, after his resurrection,

Jesus said, that it all, ultimately points to him, Luke 24, then he said to them, these are my words, that I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me, in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, must be fulfilled, then he opened their minds, to understand the scriptures, what a Sunday school lesson, that must have been, and said to them, thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and on the third day, rise from the dead, and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, should be proclaimed in his name, to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem, Jesus says, guys, what are you marveling for, this is what I was telling you, all of it points to this, it's all about this, so go and preach it, we could talk about, Abraham and Isaac, going up Mount Moriah, we could talk about, the sign of Jonah, that Jesus explicitly said, that was a sign, of his resurrection, we could reflect on Jesus, as the fulfillment, of the sacrificial system, of Leviticus, but one of my favorites, comes from Isaiah 53,

I imagine, it might be one of your favorites, as well, but he was pierced, for our transgressions, he was crushed, for our iniquities, upon him, was the chastisement, that brought us peace, with his wounds, we are healed, yet it was the will, of the Lord, to crush him, he has put him to grief, here's resurrection, when his soul, makes an offering, for guilt, he shall, see his offspring, he shall, prolong his days, the will of the Lord, shall prosper, in his hand, all of that, comes after, his soul is crushed, as an offering, for guilt, death, burial, resurrection, Isaiah 53, so what is the good news, about Jesus, the gospel, that I declare, to you this morning, is that Jesus Christ, the sinless son of God, died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead, on the third day, to bring us forgiveness, and life, in his name, and the good news, is that this was God's plan, from before the foundations, of the world, and he graciously calls, for you to receive, this salvation, not by doing your best, and trying your hardest, or putting some money, in the basket, on your way out, or doing any of the things, he just says, come and believe, by faith, the person, and work of Jesus,

[33 : 58] Jesus Christ, salvation, is graciously, and freely given, to all, who come, to believe, that's the testimony, of the scripture, nothing more, nothing less, Romans 10, if you confess, with your mouth, that Jesus is Lord, believe in your heart, that God raised him, from the dead, you will, be saved, for with the heart, one believes, and is justified, with the mouth, one confesses, and is saved, for the scripture says, everyone who believes, in him, will not be put, to shame, for there is no distinction, between Jew, and Greek, the same Lord, is Lord of all, bestowing his riches, on all who call on him, for everyone, who calls on the name, of the Lord, will be saved, which necessarily means, that everyone, who does not call, upon the name, of the Lord, will not be, saved, what is the gospel, gospel defined, we're there,

I've got two more, they're far shorter, I promise, number two, can we trust it, that's great, I can see how, that's what Paul believed, and that that's, what Paul taught, sounds good, how can I actually, trust it though, Paul helps us, with that here, with the resurrection, defended, verse five, he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, then he appeared, to more than 500 brothers, at one time, most of whom, are still alive, though some, have fallen asleep, then he appeared, to James, then to the apostles, last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me also, it's worth remembering, that in this text, Paul was not, confronting anyone, who denied, the resurrection, of Jesus, remember, that's not what he's, dealing with, primarily here, what he's dealing with, is those who were, denying, a future resurrection, for believers, at Christ's return, which is why, this defense, is less exhaustive, than you might, want it to be, sometimes we get there, with the scriptures only, we get to a passage, and we think, you know what, it would be really great, if God had just given us, like a whole chapter, that just says, okay here's all the things, here's the steps to heaven, whatever, here you go, and laid it out, that's not how he worked, is it, it's not how he gave us his word, he gave us a perfect word though, which means his way, was better than whatever, our way would be, and so,

Paul's dealing with, a specific circumstance, that doesn't demand, a completely exhaustive defense, but, what he does give us, in this answer, to the Corinthian controversy, it relied, on the credibility, of Jesus's own bodily resurrection, so what he gave us, was this amazing rundown, of eyewitness accounts, he mentioned Cephas, that's the Aramaic name, for Peter, who met the Lord, shortly after his resurrection, and then multiple times, thereafter, Paul says, you know what guys, Jesus rose from the dead, in accordance with the scripture, don't believe me, go talk to Cephas, ask him what he saw, then he mentions the twelve, which refers to Jesus's disciples, to which he appeared, as we read in John 20, on the night of his resurrection, and then again, multiple times thereafter, this appearance, to 500 brothers, all at one time, it's not explicitly recorded, in the New Testament, but Paul's point, is that, almost all of them, were still living, and could be questioned, by any skeptic, about what they saw, in fact, many people, did question them, the whole reason, we have the gospel of Luke, and Luke's companion piece, the book of Acts, is because Luke, who was not an eyewitness, went to those witnesses, and said, tell me what you saw, and he gives us, this collection, of eyewitness accounts, it's amazing,

James was the half brother, of Jesus, who did not believe, in Jesus, he wasn't even, a follower of Jesus, until, the resurrected Christ, appeared to him, later, and upon that, he could not, deny it any longer, he eventually, became a primary witness, of the resurrection, and he was, a primary Christian leader, in the church of Jerusalem, all of the apostles here, refers to those, specially called witnesses, of the resurrection, who were not part of, Jesus's 12 disciples, and then finally, Paul himself, had met the risen Christ, as he journeyed, from Jerusalem, to Damascus, forever changing his life, now Paul's point is this, the resurrection of Jesus, could be verified, by hundreds, of eyewitnesses, who not only, saw the risen Lord, but whose lives, were wholeheartedly, changed as a result, you can't leave, that part out, most of those eyewitnesses, were still alive, and could be found, spreading this gospel message, across the world, that's what they were now, committing their lives to do, why, because the resurrection, it changes everything, for them it was as credible, as anything ever, in their life, and it changed them, many of them, were so convinced, by what they saw, that they willingly, and boldly, gave their lives, becoming martyrs, put to death, because of their faith, but they would not deny it, why would they deny, something that they knew, to be alive, we can't travel back in time, to personally witness Jesus, crawl out of that tomb, but the amount of credible, historical, and biblical evidence, that we have, it really is, it's overwhelming, you can't, and you must, trust it, it's true, thirdly, what can the gospel, do for me, what can the gospel, do for me, let's think about, grace, displayed, verse eight, or verse nine, excuse me,

Paul says, I'm the least, of the apostles, I'm unworthy, to be called an apostle, why, because I persecuted, the church of God, but by the grace of God, I am what I am today, and his grace toward me, it was not in vain, look at the way, that he's used my life, on the contrary, I worked harder, than any of them, that's a reference, to the other apostles, he's not, he doesn't mean, that he was more committed, or passionate, he means that the scope, of his ministry, that God had given him, was greater in breadth, than any of the other apostles, though it was not, I doing that work, it was the grace of God, that's in me, so then whether it was me, or them, we preached the gospel, and you believed it, many of us have, known and, believed the resurrection, since we were very young, that wasn't the case, for Paul, the man writing this passage, was not always friendly, to the gospel, in fact, he was an enemy, of the gospel, he was a vicious persecutor, of Christians, working on behalf, of the Jewish leaders, in Jerusalem, early in his life, he believed, that Christians presented, this great heresy, that blasphemed God, and thinking, that he was doing,

[41 : 35] God's work, he led the way, in actually entering, their homes, dragging them, out of their homes, imprisoning them, and in some cases, putting them, to death, he wanted to squash, Christianity, because he believed, it was a great life, in that it was a threat, to the truth of God, he thought he was working, on God's behalf, he was the greatest, persecutor of the church, that it had seen, in its early days, which is why, he says all of these things, so how did the great, persecutor of the church, become a mighty, apostle of the church, giving his own life, for this gospel message, well according, to his old testimony, Paul was confronted, by the risen Christ, one day, he was on his way, to Damascus, to persecute some Christians, there, and Jesus showed up, which is why, he says last of all, meaning he was the last one, Jesus did this with, he was the last one, that could ever be called, an apostle truly, in the sense of, the biblical term, he says Jesus showed up, and it changed, everything, it changed everything, these final verses, they display,

God's grace, at work, in the life, of one, who comes to faith, in Jesus, in fact, grace, is precisely, the word, that Paul so often, used in these verses, to describe it, utter, total, transformation, not to sinlessness, it doesn't come, until we get to heaven, transformation, of heart, that's what it is, a hater of the church, becomes a leader, of the church, a despiser, of the gospel, becomes a preacher, of the gospel, one trying to work, his way to heaven, by doing all the religious, things the right way, suddenly, abandons, all of those things, to by faith, follow in Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, and Savior, it's total, transformation, Paul wasn't looking, for Jesus, on his way, to Damascus, Jesus came to him,

Paul didn't do anything, to earn God's salvation, Jesus opened his heart, to believe the gospel, Paul wasn't worthy, to be an apostle of Christ, Jesus chose him, to be one, all of Paul's life, was a testimony, of the incredible grace of God, displayed in the life, of one, comes to Jesus, and believes, look around you, this morning, same is true, for most people, sitting in this room today, don't believe me, go ask them, ask Josh, about the night, that he finally realized, through the work, of the Holy Spirit, in his life, that it wasn't about, what he could do, that made him a Christian, that it wasn't, what Christ has done, for him, in this transformative work, of God's grace, in his life, go ask him about that, he'd love to tell you, ask Mark, and all of Fennin, about how, even as young people, as teenagers, they were, after growing up in church, had finally, come to a point, of realization, of their own sin, and understood, the real necessity, of repentance, and reliance, on the death of Christ, for their salvation, and the transformation, that came as a result, of that, we talked to Marty Kane, who ran from it, for quite a long time, but had a persistent, family member, who constantly, was faithful, to share the gospel, with him, and he'll tell you, all about, how that gospel, was preached, and how it changed, his life, go to Brian, and Courtney Baker, and ask them, about what their life, was like, about 15 years ago, and then look at them now, and you tell me, the gospel, can't do anything for you, of course it can, through his gospel,

Christ will do more, than you ever thought, imaginable, that's the, that's the wonder of it, it's better, than you even think it is, because it's not just, this thing, that we give, mental assent to, it's this work of God, that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, does in us, he does this changing, he does this saving, he does this, transformative work, and he does it, through the gospel message, so that as we hear it preached, he woos us, by his spirit, he beckons us, to leave our sin, and our religion, and anything else, and believe him, he's a wonderful savior, he'll forgive all your sins, every one, even the ones, you haven't committed yet, he'll transform your life, from the inside out, he'll give you a new affection, affections, that you didn't even know, were possible, he'll put them there, he'll give you the hope, of eternal life, that on your darkest day, brings you peace, that is indescribable, joy, that can't quite be understood, even by those, who possess it, he'll make you at peace, with the father, in heaven, and he'll give you, eternal life,

Jesus will make, every day of your life, Easter, if you will just come to him, and believe, and trust, that's what he'll do, and he will not fail, for you, Thank you.