

Resurrection - it makes sense!

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and we're looking this morning briefly at verses 12 to 19. We very often hear accusations that Christianity is actually in some ways quite illogical.

That it doesn't really fit together very well when you think of the main doctrines and the main emphasis in the Christian message. And especially when it comes to the ideas of being saved through the death of Jesus on the cross.

This one man, this Jew that the Bible speaks about. And that this death on the cross was followed by resurrection from the dead.

And then exaltation to glory to be with the Father to heaven. And that the world then should expect him to return. And that Christians do expect him to return at that day appointed by God to be the judge of all the earth.

People will tell us that doesn't really fit together. It's illogical. In fact the Bible agrees with that. Are you surprised me saying that? The Bible does agree with that because the Bible says yes that's so if you think about it from a natural, unregenerate, unbelieving, skeptical point of view.

[1 : 2 7] In other words what the Bible calls the natural mind. The mind that has not been renewed by God. The mind that has not been enlightened through God's truth to accept the truth of God's word. The truth of the Bible.

That mind is going to say inevitably these things are not just illogical they're also offensive to me. They're offensive to my understanding. They're offensive to the way that I myself see the world and see my place in the world.

And see what things are possible and not possible. That's what the Bible really says in terms of the natural mind. But when the Bible speaks about the spiritual mind.

The mind that God has renewed and enlightened. The mind that God has come to fill with the knowledge of his truth and acceptance of his truth. That's a very different outlook to the natural mind.

Because that mind, the mind of the Christian doesn't see these things as illogical. Even though that mind does confess not to understand every single detail of this great salvation.

[2 : 3 2] Nevertheless, it's not illogical. Because if we begin with God. And as we'll see in a minute. It makes a big difference where you begin.

If you begin with God. If you begin with God's love. If you begin with God's will to save his people. If you begin with that as your starting point.

Then you are really facing God's commitment to serve. You're dealing with God's commitment of himself to save these people that he loves. That he has willed from eternity to actually save.

Then it is logical to actually conclude that God is not going to draw back from that. That he's not going to renege on his promise or his covenant to do so. That he's going to logically follow out the steps that are needed.

To actually bring that salvation into being. And to bring these people to be saved. In other words, you begin with God's love and God's will to save. And God's commitment to save.

[3 : 3 6] And it's logical then to accept that he sent his son into the world to die. It's logical at least from the point of view of God's way of doing things. Of God's way of determining things.

It's not illogical to say that God having determined to save his people. Would then take the means that he has chosen in order to bring that about. Even though it involved the death of his dear son. And his resurrection from the dead. That is from God's point of view. And from the Christian mind's point of view. Far from being illogical.

It is in fact all fitted together. As God's great plan of redemption. And it's logical too within that.

The death of Jesus being what it was. And what it remains. As an atoning death. As a sacrificial death. As a death that paid the price of sin.

[4 : 40] It's logical that that death having taken place. The Lord Jesus would not be left. Without being raised from the dead. It's a logical conclusion.

To a death that God found perfectly acceptable. As an answer to the sins of his people. That God would actually raise his son from the dead.

And set him at his own right hand. In the heavenlies. That too was prophesied in the Old Testament. So there you have the accusations of it being illogical.

Yes from one point of view it is. It is to the people who are skeptical. Who don't accept the Bible to be the truth of God. Who really begin from the premise that in fact there is no God.

Or indeed if they say there is a God. Well it's not worthy of that God to have done all of these things involving his son. You believe this Bible to be God's word.

[5 : 43] You believe this Bible to set out the truth of salvation in Christ for you. You believe that God is not a concept in the Bible that's just an idea.

You believe that the Bible does not set out to prove the existence of God. It takes the existence of God as a fact. And it moves on from there.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The established fact is God's existence. And from there on everything is followed out in God's program of salvation.

That's really what this great book, this Bible is about. And in this passage Paul is actually dealing with things very, very logically. He's following out an argument that if Jesus was not, if there's no such thing as resurrection.

Which some in Corinth had come actually to conclude. They were being led astray and they had come to accept this false teaching. That actually there was no such thing as physical resurrection.

[6 : 52] That this was just a kind of spiritual thing. Or whatever it is exactly they believed were not sure. But they had swallowed up this false teaching. That there was no such thing as a physical resurrection.

And that's what Paul is dealing with in this great passage in the Bible. The most sustained treatment in the Bible of resurrection. Of the doctrine of resurrection. And as we'll see his logical argument is one that follows out all the steps.

Beginning with, if there is no resurrection. And ending with, then we are of all people most to be pitied.

So we'll see Paul's logical argument. And then verses 14 to 19 will bring together the various points that he raises there as logical conclusions to this argument.

Remember he's beginning with what he knows is false teaching. The premise that there is no resurrection as some are claiming. What he's doing is drawing conclusions from that.

[7 : 53] But it's not so that we will come to have a skeptical mind about these things. It's so that we'll come to have our faith reinforced. Our love for the Lord reinforced.

Our commitment to the Lord reinforced. As we'll see from the final verse of the passage. Well what does he do in terms of the logical argument? Well the starting point is if there is no resurrection of the dead in verse 13.

Then he says not even Christ has been raised. Now it's crucial as we said where do you begin with your reasoning, with your argument? If you begin at verse 13a.

There is no resurrection of the dead. Then it's logical that you arrive at verse 13b. If there is no resurrection of the dead then not even Christ has been raised.

In other words Paul is saying begin with the fact that you deny. Begin with the denial of resurrection as a fact. There is no such thing at all.

[8 : 57] Begin with that. And you have to conclude that Jesus could not have been risen from the dead. Have been raised from the dead. That's the logical outcome.

That's the logical conclusion to that starting point. But if you begin with verse 20. In fact Christ has been raised from the dead.

Then it's logical to arrive at verse 20b. Second part there. He is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. In other words Christ is the prototype if you like.

He is the very first instance. And the one who has been raised from the dead. So that all his believing people, his saved people will follow him. In resurrection from the dead.

That's the logical conclusion to that argument. But then you see some people would say to us. Well that's very well. That's where you as Christians begin your argument. That he is raised from the dead.

[9 : 57] But there's never been any proof of that. What proof can you give? What verifiable proof can you actually give? That such a thing took place as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

And then these people who deny this. And who want us to reconsider where we are as Christians. Will say to us. Because you haven't got the proof. I'm not going to believe you until you can prove it. Well Paul actually sets about proving it. Really in the only way that's possible. Because he speaks about the testimony of scripture. And the testimony of the saints.

How did Paul know. That Jesus was risen from the dead. He first of all points to the testimony of scripture.

He says. When you find him there saying. That in verse 3. I deliver to you as of first importance. What I also received.

[10 : 54] In other words he didn't make this up himself. He received it from God. 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. What he's saying is. The raising of Jesus. Exactly fitted. Hundreds of years.

Of writings. By different people. Under the ownership of God. Of course. But if you take them. Even on a natural level. As various people.

Who have written these books. Of the Old Testament. In which there is such an abundant. Prophesying of the coming. Of the Messiah. Of his sufferings. Of his death.

Of his resurrection. From the dead. In Psalms. In the books of the prophets. Way back to the time of Moses. What Paul is saying is. When Christ died.

[11 : 50] And rose from the dead. All of these scriptures. Were actually fulfilled. And what he's saying is. Can you possibly imagine. That this is simply possible.

If this is just human reasoning. And a human idea. At the end of the day. Would you have the possibility. Of all of these writers. Over hundreds of years. Over centuries.

All of them coming. To have their writings. Wonderfully knitted together. And fulfilled. In this one great event. You know what it's like.

When you. Some congregations do this. Some churches do this. Some other groups do this. You find. Recipe books. You've bought some yourselves. WFM recipe books.

Or whatever. You gather together. Different recipes. From different people. Different dishes. Starters. Main dishes. Desserts. Whatever. And you put them together. Into the one book.

[12 : 49] They're all from different sources. But they form. This one final book. And it's all come together. In that way. But they're all different dishes. And if you were going to try.

And put them all together. And make one dish. Out of them all. In one great concoction. I guarantee you. It wouldn't be very tasty. But if you take all the scriptures.

Of the Old Testament. You bring them together. And you see the outcome of them. Fulfilled. In the work of Jesus. And especially in his death.

And resurrection. Then you. Really have. Huge. Huge. Huge. Faith. To say. That there's nothing of God. In all of that.

But when you come to look at it. From a Christian point of view. It all fits together. It's in accordance. With the scriptures. That's the first. Testimony.

[13 : 52] That Paul has. To verify. The resurrection of Christ. But there's another one. The testimony. Of saints. He says. Then he appeared.

To Cephas. Then to the twelve. Then he appeared. To more than five hundred. Brothers. At one time. Most of whom are still alive. Though some have fallen asleep.

By which he means. They've passed on from this world. Then he appeared. To James. And then to all the apostles. And last of all. He appeared. Also to me.

And of course. You remember. Paul's. Conversion. Paul's. Great. Experience. On the road to Damascus. He didn't enter into that road. As a disciple. As a believer.

In Jesus. As the savior. But. He didn't finish that road. The way he began it. Because Jesus met him. And Jesus met him.

[14 : 47] In the glorious light. Of his risen life. So glorious. That Paul was blinded by it. Temporarily. Now then.

The testimony of these saints. Are they dependable? Are they dependable people? Did they all together.

These apostles. These individuals. The more than 500 disciples. That saw Jesus all at once. Is it feasible. That they all concocted together.

This story. That Jesus was risen from the dead. When they knew full well. That it was not the truth. Of course they didn't. It takes a huge amount.

Of. Mental energy. And unbelief. To conclude. That all of these people. Who gave testimony.

[15 : 50] That they had seen the risen Jesus. For themselves. That they really weren't telling the truth. And more than that. That knowing they weren't telling the truth.

They put together the story. Of his resurrection. In order to mislead people. In order to bring them to. Believe in something. That had never really happened. That's far more fantastic.

Than an actual resurrection. From the dead. In one sense at least. It takes a lot more. To believe that. Than to believe that. God being God.

And Christ death. Being what it was. Jesus rose from the dead. As an inevitable consequence. Of the death. He died. The testimony.

Of the saints. Peter. Gave us. The twelve. The hundred plus. James. All the apostles. Paul himself. They're not dishonest people. They're not misleading.

[16 : 48] In their testimony. They're not committing perjury. They're reliable witnesses. Jesus. And that's why Paul is pointing to this.

As very important testimony. The testimony of scripture. The testimony of reliable saints. Reliable people. Is behind this. Resurrection of Christ.

This truth of his resurrection. It's an established fact. That's Paul's. Logical argument. He's saying then. If there is no resurrection of the dead.

Then not even Christ has been raised. But if. Seeing it is in fact the case. That Christ has been raised from the dead. And here is the proof of it.

As far as it can be proved. This is in fact. What you now have to conclude. That he has become. The first fruits of those. Who have fallen asleep. But let's look at.

[17 : 44] His logical conclusions. Resurrection. Again following out. The idea that he's not risen from the dead. That there's no such thing as resurrection. Because that's really what he's setting out to do.

If Christ is not risen from the dead. Then. Three things follow from that. And then. There's a final conclusion. In the last. Verse.

Of the chapter. The three things that follow from that. Is that. First of all. Our preaching of the gospel. Is in vain. Or is futile. You could use the word.

Futile. The word. Futile. Or in vain. Means something that's empty. Something that's really. Of no value whatsoever. There isn't really any purpose to it. It's just completely. Empty of content.

Because. The preaching of the gospel. Has. As. Its very. Central feature. That Christ is risen from the dead. And if there's no resurrection from the dead.

[18 : 39] And therefore there's no resurrection of Christ. Then there's no gospel. There's no point in preaching the gospel. We're wasting our time preaching the gospel. There's no meaning to preaching the gospel. Preaching the gospel.

Is of no spiritual value. It's actually. A futility. It's a wasting of time. And more than that.

Paul actually says. It is a deliberate. Distortion. As he says in verse 15. We are even found. To be misrepresenting God.

Because we testified about God. That he raised Christ. Whom he did not raise. If it is true that the dead are not raised. Now that's a serious point. Paul is really saying.

You in Corinth. Or wherever. Who deny the resurrection. And therefore deny that Jesus is risen from the dead. You are really saying about us. That we have deliberately misrepresented God.

[19 : 41] That we have set out to say things about God. Which we knew were not true. You know how serious it is yourselves. To stand in a court of law.

And deliberately not tell the truth. It's called perjury. It's a serious. Serious. Crime. You can be jailed for it.

And that's really what. Is true of Paul and his companions. And of us preaching the gospel. If Jesus is not risen from the dead. We are distorting God.

We are deliberately misrepresenting God. Can you imagine. This man. Who was Saul of Tarsus. This zealous Pharisee. This man so zealous. For the reputation of God. And especially. Now that he's converted.

[20 : 41] And come. To know Jesus for himself. And to know that this Jesus. Is in fact. God. The promised Messiah. Can you imagine. Somebody.

With that sort of mindset. That sort of commitment. To the scriptures. That kind. Of background. And teaching. And commitment. To what he believed. Of God.

Can you imagine. This man. To go out. And deliberately. Say things he knew not to be true. About this Christ. Surely not. That's what he's saying.

If. You don't accept. The teaching. Of the resurrection. Then you're saying. Our preaching. Is in vain. We are even. We are even. Distortioners.

Of the truth of God. Secondly. Your faith is futile. If the dead are not raised.

[21 : 38] Then your faith. Is in vain. As well as our preaching. You are yet. Or still. In your sins.

Verse 17. If Christ has not been raised. Your faith is futile. And you are still. In your sins. Now. What he means. What he means. By your faith. Is. Not just. What you believe.

The truths you believe. But also. Your very act. Or activity. Of believing. It's all futile. Your believing. Remember. Is more than. Just believing. Things to be true.

About Christ. About. All the other truths. That you believe. Are in fact. True. From the teaching. Of the Bible. It's not simply. A matter of believing. These things to be true.

Remember. That faith. Is essentially. You're coming. To trust in Christ. To lean. And lead. Your life. In the hands. Of this Christ. What is the point.

[22 : 32] If he's not been raised. From the dead. He's dead. That's why he's saying. Your faith. Is futile. Your faith. Is in vain. There's no meaning to it.

There's no content to it. There's no point to it. There's no purpose to it. It's absolutely futile. If Christ. Is not risen from the dead. If there's no resurrection.

There's no point to faith. There's no meaning to it. No content to it. It's just. Futile. And he concludes from that. You are still. In your sins. And there is. Something that really. Should make us think.

If there is no resurrection. We will always be. In our sins. We're going to be left. In our sins. In our sins. There's no way out of our sins.

Friends. What a. Gloomy world. Is the world of unbelief. The world of atheism. The world of the ungodly.

[23 : 32] What a gloomy world it is. There you are. Look out that window. And look at the bright sunshine. That is a representation of. The world of faith. When you look at.

That same sky. With its thunder clouds. And its. Winds. And its rain. That's the gloomy world of unbelief.

Represented. There is no sunshine in it. You are still. In your sins. Nothing has changed. Christ. And in fact.

You have to conclude. That at the end of it all. Death. Wins the day. That's the conclusion. If there is no resurrection. If Christ is not raised from the dead.

Then death. Really. At the end of the day. Is the victor. Death. Wins it all. Heaven. Disappears. That glorious horizon.

[24 : 33] That you see. By faith. That your hope yearns towards. It vanishes. And all you have at the end of it.

Is a wooden box for your body. Fini. That's it. What. A gloomy. Desperately.

Dark world. But. It's not. The final point. That the. Apostle is saying. There's another one. Verse 19. If.

In Christ. We have hope. In this life only. Or if. In this life only. We have hoped. In Christ. We are of all people. Most. To be pitied. If Christ is not risen.

From the dead. We are in the most. Pitiably. Condition. Of all people. Because we believe. That he did rise from the dead. We believe. That there is. For God's people.

[25 : 30] A wonderful future. A glorious. A glorious. Eternity. With this Jesus. In heaven. That's what we believe. That's what the hope. Of the gospel. Brings to you.

That's what God. Creates. In your heart. But if Christ is not risen. From the dead. That all disappears. We are of all. Most to be pitied. You know. The cruelest. Deception. Of all. Or certainly. One of the. The cruelest. Deceptions. Is. When somebody. Is told. When there is no hope. Of life.

Or no hope. Of recovery. When somebody. Is told. Oh don't worry. That person. Is going to get better. I know. That that person. Is going to improve. I know. That that person. Is not going to die. That person. Is going to recover. That person. Is going to be well again. They are going to be as good. As ever before. Now if you know. As a consultant.

[26 : 26] A nurse. Or whatever. That that's not the truth. And yet you still. Tell that person's loved ones. That instead of them. Coming inevitably.

To die. As you see it. They are going to have. A great recovery. They are going to be restored to you. What a cruel deception. That is. It's not the cruelest.

The cruelest. Is God saying. Here is eternal life. For you. But there is no resurrection. Here is a life. Worth living. But actually. Christ is still dead. In the sepulcher.

His body is still there. There is no resurrection. So he couldn't have risen. From the dead. So your faith is futile. And your hope is futile. And there is no glorious eternity. It's alright. While you are in this life.

You can enjoy. All that I give you. In this life. But there is nothing more than that. And as you end this life. You end it all. And that's it. You just write. A full stop.

[27 : 25] After your life. And it ends with that. What a cruel deception. That would be. We are of all people.

Most to be pitied. But then enough of that. That's Paul's argument. Logically taking things to that conclusion. If there is no resurrection.

But you know that there is. And Paul knows that there is. And that's why he is giving us. All of these details. And these conclusions. That are so dark. And so gloomy. And so hopeless.

From the starting point. Of there being no resurrection. But in fact. Christ has been raised. From the dead. The gospel is not a deception. The gospel is not in vain.

The preaching of the gospel. Is not in vain. Why? Because Christ has risen. Triumphant over the grave. And Christ rising. And being raised from the dead.

[28 : 27] Is the very substance of the gospel. And the very substance of your faith. And the very substance of your hope. As you look forward beyond this world. To eternity.

And to eternal life. At least I trust today. That that is your personal hope. Because remember. This doesn't happen automatically.

It's not just a matter of believing. That all of these things took place. You have to make them your own. Your own property. Your own basis for hope.

You have to come to say. About this Jesus. Lord thank you. Thank you for giving me. This foundation.

On which I can now build. As I trust in this Jesus. And know that my eternity. Is secure in him. You have to make it.

[29 : 26] Personal to yourself. You have to bring. By faith this Jesus. Into your own possession. You have to accept him. You have to come to him. You have to receive him. As he is offered in the gospel.

That's why the gospel. Is not deception. That's why the gospel. Is not futile. That's why the preaching. Of the gospel. Is not futile. That's why faith. Is not a futile thing. Because in all of that. There is a living Christ. A living savior. A risen savior. A triumphant savior. Who gives you. To share in his triumph.

When you come. To place your trust in him. And in fact. When you go forward. To verses 53. On to the end of the chapter. There is really the conclusion.

That Paul wants to arrive at. Because that's the logical conclusion. From the beginning. From the starting point. Of in fact. Christ has been raised. From the dead.

[30 : 24] And then he says. For this perishable body. Must put on. The imperishable. And this mortal body. Must put on. Immortality. When the perishable. Puts on the imperishable. And the mortal.

Puts on immortality. Then. Shall come to pass. The saying. That is written. Death is swallowed up. In victory. Oh death. Where is your victory. Oh grave.

Where is your sting. The sting of death. Is sin. And the power of sin. Is the law. But thanks be to God. Who gives us the victory. Through our Lord.

Jesus Christ. Not only. Is the gospel. Not a deception. And not futile. And not illogical. It is in fact. A glorious.

Triumphant message. Because here. Is your faith. Triumphantly.

[31 : 20] Mockingly even. Solemnly. But celebratory. Challenging death. And saying. Do your best. See what you can do to me. We don't say that lightly. We don't say that. Not taking death seriously. We don't say that.

In a way that regards death. As just something to be. Cast aside. And not thought of as. As important. But you say that. In Christ.

Triumphantly. You say to death. And can say to death. Where is your sting? Where is your triumph? Do your worst. Do your best. Against me. But I have something. That I know is stronger than you. I have my saviour.

[32 : 19] I have the Lord Jesus Christ. I have the son of God. I have resurrection. In him. And then. The importance of now.

Because Paul doesn't want us. Just to sit around. Thinking of the glorious resurrection. That awaits the people of God. And meantime. Just to sit and do very little. Therefore.

He says in the last verse. My beloved brothers. Be steadfast. Immovable. Always abounding. In the work of the Lord. Knowing. That in the Lord. Your labour is not in vain.

Now notice that word. Therefore. Therefore. That word therefore. Is very important. Because what he is really saying. Is seeing. Then all of these things. Are as I am saying.

Be this. Be steadfast. Be unmovable. Be always abounding. In the work of the Lord. You see. The logical consequence. Of knowing the fact of resurrection.

[33 : 18] And of knowing that Christ. Has brought you. To believe in his resurrection. Through believing in himself. The logical. Consequence.

Of knowing that. Is that you do. Your best for him. That you serve him. While you are in this life. That you are always abounding.

Indeed. And this is a great challenge. You see. Because the greatness. Of the resurrection. And the greatness. Of the victory. Of the resurrection. Means. That we are not to be engaged.

In the work of the Lord. In a small measure. We are. He says. To be always abounding. In the work of the Lord. Keeping nothing back. Whether it is in terms of our witnessing.

Of our public profile. Of our whatever it is. We give to the Lord. Privately. Or publicly. Whatever steps we need to take. To actually confess him. Whatever things he has given us.

[34 : 12] By way of gifts. To use for him. Be abounding. In it he says. You know what. Why? Because the resurrection. Deserves no less. And if we are not giving out all.

And what we are really. Giving the impression of is. That. Actually the resurrection. Is no big deal. It is not such a big thing. That doesn't really have much of an impact.

Upon my life. It is not like that is it. When you believe. In the resurrection of Christ. And when you believe.

That your resurrection. Is guaranteed in him. A resurrection to everlasting life. Therefore. My beloved brothers. Be. Always. Abounding.

In the work of the Lord. Knowing. That your labor in the Lord. Is never. Futile. You see the way he is using the word. In vain. That's.

[35 : 17] That's the. That's the point. That he rounds it off with. He's been arguing. All the way through. From. The starting point of. There being no resurrection. Then. Our preaching is in vain.

Our faith is in vain. Our hope is in vain. All of these things. Are just futile. But he says. Seeing it is the case. That Christ is risen.

And that there is resurrection. For his people. Therefore. Therefore. Be abounding. In the work of the Lord. Knowing. That your labor in the Lord.

Is never. Futile. Never. In vain. Futility. All on the side of unbelief. The opposite.

Is on the side of. Resurrection. Faith. Hope. Let's pray. Lord our God.

[36 : 13] We give thanks. That you have overcome. The futility of human life. Without faith. That you have overcome. The futility of our being. In our sins. The futility of seeking.

To remain. In the condition. That we are born with. We bless you. That you have overcome. That through your own triumph. Over death. And over sin. Through the death.

Which you died. That gave such a ransom. To deliver your people. From death. From the penalty.
Of the law. From the curse. And from the wrath.
Of God. We give thanks too. For your own triumphant. Resurrection. Lord help us. To. Take from it.
All the logical. Consequences.
That your own word. Teaches us about. Especially in the meantime. As we look forward. In hope.
Help us to be abounding. In activity. And seeking to know.
[37 : 09] That all that we do for you. Is never in vain. So bless us now we pray. For giving all our
sin. For Christ's sake. Amen.