

Eternal Victory in the Risen Christ

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[0 : 00] Good morning.

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 54 through 58.! Our sermon text for today.! If you need a Bible, you're welcome to take one off the back table and keep it as a gift to you.

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.

O death, where is your victory? O death, 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.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, faithful, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

[1 : 04] This is the word of the Lord. Heavenly Father, thank you for this day in which we get to celebrate all the more the resurrection of Christ.

And God, thank you for this text in 1 Corinthians 15 that the Apostle Paul wrote to a troubled church. And we have this today because of those circumstances that you ordained.

God, would you help us to understand the glory, the mystery, the beauty, the wonder of what we see in this passage today. God, change our hearts by your spirit, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, church, he is risen. He is risen indeed. So good to be with you this Easter Sunday. My name is Mike. I'm one of the pastors here at Shoreline, and I see a number of faces that I don't know or maybe have not seen for many years.

And so I just want to welcome you to worship with us this morning. As Jim mentioned, there are Bibles on the back table. If anyone needs a Bible, feel free to take one of those and you can keep it if you need a Bible.

[2 : 14] Well, our culture is a bit of a walking contradiction when it comes to the topic of death. You know, on the one hand, we commercialize it and we celebrate it. People decorate for Halloween with these like giant 20-foot tall grim reapers and skeletons in their yards.

Now, even when I was a kid, that stuff wasn't around. Now, we're also fascinated with horror films, which account nowadays for a far higher percentage of movies than even a few decades. I think it's like tripled just over a few decades. And yet at the same time, we work hard in our culture to distance ourselves from actual death.

Now, this shows up in a number of ways from how we put the elderly in separate homes to the use of anti-aging products and procedures to the fact that the 1980s hit Forever Young remains sort of an anthem of our time still.

Even to the ways that we talk about death with different euphemisms, you know, like he kicked the bucket, things like that, when death unavoidably confronts us. Now, you know, maybe these two things are not actually a contradiction at all.

[3 : 24] Just think about this. I mean, maybe our death culture, if you will, is actually one of the ways that we avoid it, right? If we engage with death enough in imaginary ways and then make it a thing that involves parties and popcorn, that protects us from having to engage with death's gruesome reality.

But we all know that death and taxes is real and unavoidable, right? And the hope, the hope of Easter Sunday is that in the face of death's dark reality, we have a Savior who has conquered death through His own death and resurrection from the grave, and then in connection with Him, we become participants in that eternal victory.

And that's the hope that I'm here this day to proclaim to you all this morning from 1 Corinthians 15, verses 54 through 58. Eternal victory in the risen Christ.

So if you haven't yet, please turn there in your Bibles, 1 Corinthians 15. If you're not familiar with where things are, if you go to the New Testament, it's Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians.

So please turn to 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 15 is considered to be the greatest exposition on the resurrection in all the Bible. And Paul, the Apostle Paul, spends 58 verses on the topic and he's working to correct this misguided belief among the Corinthian church that was shaped by the Greco-Roman culture around them that there would be no future resurrection of the dead.

[5 : 04] Now in the 53 verses that came before our passage for today, and we walk through this as a church, in the fall, Paul steps through this logical argument to defend the reality of the resurrection of Christ and in connection with that, the future resurrection of the dead in Christ.

And he describes the awful implications if it's not true, but the glorious implications because it is true. Now at this point, I want to pause because I don't want to assume that everybody here actually believes that.

And I want to pause before we dive into the passage and just acknowledge that it is an extraordinary thing that we believe as Christians. That the Son of God stepped out of heaven, took the form of a man, was crucified as a criminal under Rome's authority on the cross, and then that three days later he rose bodily from the grave.

It is an extraordinary thing to believe this gospel message. I mean, it's not as if dead men are raised to life every day. You know, it's not like I'm saying, oh yeah, of course, of course Jesus rose from the dead.

You know, just last week, I was driving down Niles Hill Road and I passed that like old cemetery from the 1700s and some guy just popped up out of the grave and started walking. I mean, of course he rose from the dead. Right?

[6 : 26] That doesn't happen. That doesn't happen. No one's pretending like it happens all the time. But the thing is, sometimes we engage in what C.S. Lewis, I think he coined this phrase, chronological snobbery.

Do you know what chronological snobbery is? It's thinking that compared to us, because we're very smart now, we've progressed in our modern technology, we've gone through the enlightenment, post-enlightenment, we're very reasoned in our thinking.

It's thinking that we, in light of all that, are much smarter than all those who came before us. And so we think, well, it's no surprise that some would fall for the lie that Jesus rose from the dead.

I mean, they were gullible. Right? They had all these beliefs in the supernatural. I mean, of course they would fall for that. But friends, it also wasn't an everyday experience in the first century for people to rise from the dead.

Now, on top of that, it would have actually been unthinkable in Greco-Roman thinking based on what they believed. They believed the body was bad. It was corrupt. The spirit was good. Nobody in Greco-Roman culture would have expected a dead man to rise.

[7 : 31] And in Jewish thinking, the Jews looked forward to a future resurrection of the dead, but not one that would occur right in the midst of a broken and sin-corrupted world. That's not a message that anyone in the first century in Judea would have been inclined to believe.

Unless, of course, it were true. You say, well, the disciples of Jesus who were all in on this conspiracy, they were very convincing. And that's just the thing.

They were very convincing. But there was absolutely nothing for them to gain by preaching the resurrection of Christ.

No power, no popularity, no riches. Some attribute that to the church. That didn't come, friends, until a few centuries later, when the state and the church got mixed together.

In the first few centuries, there was none of that. Do you know what they gained? Ridicule, beatings, imprisonment, flogging, persecution, torture, death.

[8 : 38] It is unimaginable that not one, not one of Jesus' disciples would recant their faith in light of such persecution if it was some hoax that they had concocted of their own.

If Christ had not been raised, they gave up everything and they gained nothing. The evidence points to the historical reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the grave, and that changes everything.

Now, I'm under no illusion that if you're here and you doubt the resurrection, that these brief words altered that in any way. But I do want you to realize that believing in the resurrection of Christ is not a leap of faith that defies logic.

Now, I think our culture caricatures Christianity as like a child plugging his ears going, la, la, la, la, to the sound of rational thinking and nothing could be further from the truth. You read the Bible from cover to cover and I think you will be struck by the soundness of its logic and the coherency of its message.

In the Bible and in this chapter specifically, God is calling the saints and anyone who reads it not to abandon logic and reason but to think critically, more fully engage in logic and reason and think about the world as it is.

[10:04] After all, we believe that God is the source of all truth and that rationality has no rational basis apart from Him.

In a godless world, there's no reason that we are rational beings. He is the source of it all. Now, when it comes to the resurrection of Christ, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that it was a true historical event that took place in time and space.

Now, this is a topic that you are interested in, that you want to delve into further. I want to point you this morning to just three potential resources, okay? So first, on our website, under the heading Proclaim the Gospel, you will find an excellent sermon that our former pastor Dave Moser preached from Matthew 28, 11-15 in which he explains how the tomb of Jesus was empty and no one refutes that and the best explanation of the empty tomb is the resurrection of Christ.

So that's the first thing, that sermon. Second, on the back table, there is a book called The Reason for God by Tim Keller. And that book is a defense of the Christian faith and it has a whole chapter specifically on the resurrection.

So if that interests you, please grab a copy. And third, also on the back table, is the book Basic Christianity. If you're looking for more of an explanation of the Christian faith, grab that book and then it also contains a chapter defending the resurrection of Christ and by all means, please come talk to me if that's a topic that you want to discuss further.

[11:34] Okay, 1 Corinthians 15, 54 through 58. Look in your Bibles if you have them in front of you. Here's what it says. Here's what Paul says.

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 death, where is your sting? Here's the first point. Death will be utterly defeated on the last day.

Death will be utterly defeated on the last day. Now when the Bible talks about the last day and when I talk about it here, it refers to that day when Jesus Christ is going to return in power and glory.

You know, in his first coming, in his incarnation, Jesus came in humility. He came in weakness. And we saw this last week as Rob preached from the triumphal entry.

[12:33] He rode into Jerusalem as we saw on a donkey to demonstrate this. The goal of Christ's first coming was not to establish an earthly kingdom in which Rome was overthrown.

That's what a lot of the Jews were looking for. His goal was to die on the cross to save sinners. Jesus was on a rescue mission which he accomplished through his death and his resurrection. But when Christ returns, it's going to be another story. That donkey is going to be sidelined. That the white war horse is going to be enlisted. And the Bible says that everyone will know in that day that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords.

And all of us are going to appear before his throne of judgment. Those who trusted in him, the saints of God, will be set aside for everlasting life with him.

And those who rejected him in this life, they will be set aside for everlasting punishment in hell. Now what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 15 is that the saints who had died and the saints who are still living when Christ returns, they are going to shed these old corrupted bodies, the ones that are subjected to death and to decay.

[13:45] And God is going to clothe us with renovated bodies fit for the glories of heaven. He says it's like a plant. And this is fitting in the spring.

It's like a plant emerging up out of the seed. These bodies are the seed. The future bodies are the beautiful plant. Or it's like a butterfly emerging out of its cocoon.

And then, you know, animated, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are going to be like our Savior Jesus Christ because we shall see him as he is, 1 John 3.2.

That's what Paul means when he says the perishable puts on the imperishable. The mortal puts on immortality. And on that day, Paul says, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? Now, Paul is quoting here from two different Old Testament passages. You're welcome to turn to them.

[14 : 50] You don't have to. And the first line, Paul is quoting from Isaiah 25.8. Isaiah 25.8. Isaiah was a prophet who ministered about 750 years before Christ.

We looked at a portion of Isaiah on Good Friday. And in this portion of Isaiah's prophecy, a set of judgment oracles have been pronounced against the surrounding nations of Israel and then against Israel herself.

But then those judgment oracles, they give way to three chapters of restoration that's to come and of this future glory for both Israel and for the nations.

And so it's in those chapters that Isaiah says this. He says, He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all their faces and the reproach of His people.

He will take away from all the earth for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, behold, this is our God. We have waited for Him that He might save us.

[15 : 51] This is the Lord. We have waited for Him. Let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation. This beautiful prophecy from 750 B.C.

Paul is declaring in 1 Corinthians 15, it will finally come to pass when Christ returns and crushes His enemies, including the final enemy, death, and when He raises up the saints to everlasting life.

And when we see that the resurrection of Jesus was a foretaste and a pledge of that final, future day to come. Now similarly, the next two lines, Paul is quoting from Hosea 13, verse 14.

Again, you're welcome to turn there. You don't have to. In Hosea 13, God is once again, this is common in the prophets, He's declaring judgment against Israel for her sin, for her idolatry.

And right in the midst of this judgment, God says, I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol. Sheol is the place of the dead, the place where the dead would go.

[16 : 58] I shall redeem them from death. O death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Death's plagues, death's sting, are no match for the almighty creator God.

You know, the one that spoke all of life into existence by the power of His word, Genesis 1. As God tells the prophet Jeremiah, He says, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh.

Is anything too hard for me? God is surely able to ransom and redeem Israel from death. But then comes another line.

The sad reality for Israel in Hosea, God says, compassion is hidden from my eyes. Israel's iniquity has risen up too high.

She has forsaken the one person with the power to redeem her from death. And so instead, she's going to be punished. She's not going to experience His rescuing, life-giving power.

[18 : 04] Now Paul is saying here in 1 Corinthians 15 that even though in Hosea's time, Israel forfeited God's power to redeem her from death, God's declaration is surely still going to come to pass because of the death and resurrection of Christ.

On the last day when Jesus returns shall come the fulfillment of this promise to Israel in which the nations are also gathered into that promise. We become participants of that promise.

All of those who are in Christ, for them, death will be swallowed up in eternal victory. Friends, you know what that means for us today?

For those who are in Christ, we do not need to fear that great and final enemy, death. Death has been forever defanged.

It might wound us now, and it does, but it will not finally defeat us. Nothing in all of creation, not even death itself, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Romans 8.39.

[19 : 11] That means, friends, that means that we can even face our own death without fear. That means that when we're confronted with the death of loved ones, and we are continually, we have been in this church this year, when we're confronted with the death of loved ones, we do grieve to be sure, because death was not the original intent.

We should grieve. It is right, but we are able to grieve as those who have hope. We grieve in hope unlike the world, because we know what's coming when Christ returns.

But how do we know that this victory belongs to us? Right? How is it that the victory that Jesus won becomes our victory?

Paul answers that in this ultra-condensed way in the next two verses when he says this. Look in your Bibles. Look at verse 56 of 1 Corinthians 15. He says, 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.

The sting of death is sin. The power of sin is the law. Now, I think Paul's language here conjures up could be a serpent. I think more likely a scorpion, right?

[20 : 32] Those hideous, venomous, prey-stinging vermin. Now, perhaps you've encountered one of these before. I have, and I told that story in my previous sermon. You can go check that out if you want. But that scorpion, it represents death.

Right? It represents that the final enemy to be destroyed by Christ, and death, Paul is teaching here, it only holds power because of sin. Now, what, you know, what, we talk about sin all the time. What is sin? Sin has a number of different ways that we can define it. Sin is missing the mark. Okay? God has a perfect standard of holiness, of purity. Sin is missing the mark on that standard. Sin is, it's doing what God forbids or not doing what he requires. Sin is not, it's not being or living in proper relation to him.

It's all of those things and more. And Paul is saying, where there is no sin, death holds no power.

Right? No sin, no death. But Adam sinned.

[21 : 33] Right? Now, we just walk through Genesis as a church. Or we're walking through Genesis. We still have another year to go. But Adam sinned. And the disease of sin was then spread to all of Adam's race.

That's us, to all of humanity. And so, Paul writes in Romans 5.12 that sin came into the world through one man, he's talking about Adam, and then death through sin. And so, death spreads all men because all sinned.

Now, this is personal. We're not just talking about some man thousands of years ago. We're talking about us. We are, the Bible teaches, sinful by nature.

We just read that from Colossians earlier. We are sinful by nature. Our hearts are corrupt. And this corrupt sin nature is demonstrated constantly with evil thoughts and evil desires and evil choices. And you know, we don't think that they're evil, but they're not in accordance with what God wants. And so, they are. They are. This sin nature, it's something that we cannot escape. Now, you might ask at this point, but why does sin lead to death?

[22 : 43] Like, is that a fitting punishment? Why does sin lead to death? And that's because, I think, of two simultaneous realities. One, God is holy, and two, God is the source of life.

Okay? God is holy. That means that he is totally unlike us. He is infinite in his perfection, his moral perfection. He is perfectly righteous. He's perfectly just.

He's unstained. And because of this, God cannot tolerate sin. And therefore, sin, it causes a separation between sinners and between God.

So, God is holy. But God is also the source of life. You see, and so, if God, if all of life comes from God, and we have been separated from God, the source of life, through sin, then that means we have been separated from life.

Now, again, we've seen this in Genesis. Right up close with Adam and Eve in the garden, they sinned, so they were banished from the garden of Eden, and they were therefore subjected to death and to death's decay.

[23 : 50] Sin leads to death. Sin is the reason that death holds power. It is the sting of death. And what makes sin so potent, though? Paul says here, the power of sin is the law.

The law, the law, the commandments of God, the precepts of God, the power of sin is the law. Now, that doesn't make sense. You might object. The Romans objected. You know, isn't the law from God?

It is from God. And this is why Paul tells the Romans in Romans 7.12, the law itself is holy and it's righteous and it's good. The problem is not with the law.

The problem is with the corrupt human hearts, stained with sin that all of us have. Right? Our hearts, Paul says, they seize an opportunity through the holy law to disobey God.

Now, it's kind of like this. The first church that I attended as a kid owned a house next door called a parsonage. There were periods of time where that parsonage wasn't occupied and I really didn't think at all about that house next door until one day I was given a command.

[24 : 59] You're not allowed in that house. Then all I wanted to do was go in the house next door because I was told I can't go in the house. The problem wasn't the rule.

The rule wasn't bad. It was a good rule. The problem was my heart, my little wicked heart. Like, I wanted to do the thing I couldn't do. And yes, I did go in that house and yes, I did get in trouble if you want to know. Our sinful hearts, they multiply sin through the holy commandments of God. None of us is able to perfectly obey God. We've all missed the mark. We've all transgressed his law. I mean, you can just take one of the, the last commandment is do not covet.

Do we have anybody in this room who has never coveted, who has never wanted something that doesn't belong to them? I don't think anybody here could say that. And that's just one commandment. Right? And the Bible tells us if you've broken a commandment, you're a lawbreaker.

Right? That's true in our, in our own law here. If you break one rule, you're a lawbreaker. And therefore, Paul writes, you're under a curse. For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse.

[26 : 05] This is Galatians 3.10. For it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them. The sting of death is sin.

The power of sin is the law. All of us are lawbreakers. And Paul also talks about in Romans how even if you don't, you know, you don't, I don't believe in the law, I don't believe in the Bible. Well, he says, you actually have your own standards that you can't even keep anyway.

And so like, you can't even keep your own standards, much less the standards of God and his word. The power of sin is the law. We're lawbreakers and therefore we are sinners and therefore we are subject to death.

What a formidable foe this scorpion of death is to Adam's race. We cannot escape the reach of its venomous sting. We are utterly helpless.

We are utterly defenseless. And then comes verse 57. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 08] This right here is the gospel of grace packaged in this tight format here. The good news about how God in Christ has rescued undeserving and helpless sinners from certain death.

Now there are three aspects to this. In light of verse 56, there's three aspects to this victory that we have in Christ. Here's the first one. Christ, how through the, sorry, this is point number two here. Through the gospel of Jesus Christ is how we become participants. And we're going to talk about that first. Christ gives us his perfect law-keeping record. And we just said the power of sin is the law, right?

We could never meet the law's demands. But who has? Who has? Jesus Christ. Christ said, I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law.

Matthew 5, 17. Jesus, and only Jesus, lived a life of perfect obedience to his Father. He fulfilled every requirement of the law.

[28 : 12] Every requirement. And now those, the good news, friends, is that those who trust in Christ, they receive his spotless record as their own. His righteousness.

This is part of the great exchange that we talked about just a couple days ago on Good Friday. Because of his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus clothes, we have these shabby clothes, these sin-stained clothes, and he takes them and gives us his robes of righteousness.

For our sake, he made him, Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5, 21. That leads to the second aspect of the gospel that Christ takes our sin, paying the punishment in our place.

On Good Friday, we said that Christ is our sin-bearing substitute. Our sin-bearing substitute. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

[29 : 15] Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds, we are healed, Isaiah 53, 5. Friends, we deserved to drink the cup of God's wrath for our sin.

And that would have taken an eternity in hell to drink down to the dregs, but hallelujah, God in Christ drank the cup himself. God drank the cup in Christ of his own wrath.

The sinless Christ became sin for your sake and mine. The sinless Christ bore our punishment in our place.

We deserve that punishment, but his once-for-all sacrifice on the cross pays that punishment in full. And as a result, what happens? We are forgiven of all of our sins.

The ones you've committed, the ones you're going to commit, forgiven in Christ Jesus, washed clean by his blood. In my place, condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood.

[30 : 26] And friends, the resurrection of Christ, it proves that his payment on the cross was sufficient. It satisfied the wrath of God. The resurrection proclaims that good news to us.

Christ gives us his perfect law-keeping record. He takes our sin, paying the punishment on the cross in our place. And third, Christ makes us participants of his eternal victory over death.

By fulfilling the law completely, by paying for our sin, and then by burying death in the grave and rising to indestructible life, Christ has totally neutralized our greatest enemy, death.

Right now, all those who are united to Christ by faith shall also rise to indestructible life when he returns. As the 17th century preacher John Flavel expresses it, he says this, by dying, he went into the dragon's den.

He changes the analogy here. He went into the dragon's den, fought with it, defeated it in its own territory and dominion, and emerged the conqueror. Death could not hold him because Christ conquered death as our representative.

[31 : 39] We triumph over it as a vanquished enemy. Hallelujah. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 2 Timothy 1.10.

The scorpion is neutralized. Its sting is removed, and one day it will be entirely crushed along with Satan underneath the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Friends, today, while you still have time, trust in Christ for the salvation of your soul. See how he's fulfilled the law's demands which you could never do.

He's done that on your behalf. He's given you his righteousness which you could never achieve on your own. See how in love he has borne your sin.

He has paid the punishment that you deserve so that you could be cleansed and forgiven eternally. See how he has trampled underfoot your greatest enemy, death.

[32 : 44] And he welcomes you to participate in that same everlasting victory. Turn from your sin this morning. Turn from your self-reliance and put your faith in Jesus Christ, the only name by which we can be saved.

And brothers and sisters this morning, let us revel in this grace that's been lavished upon us in Christ. Through his death and resurrection, we receive this grace.

You know, Paul's testimony given at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15 is also our testimony. I was a fool going my own way, thinking that I didn't need saving unknowingly unknowingly an enemy of God.

But then Christ opened up my eyes and he revealed himself to me and he saved me. By the grace of God, I am what I am. Saints, we owe all to grace.

We owe all to grace. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory. He gives it to us. It is a gift through our Lord Jesus Christ. He gives us victory over sin and over death.

[33 : 54] We didn't deserve it. We couldn't earn it. It is a gift given by sheer and matchless grace. Thanks be to God. Friends, this grace changes us.

It changes us. And so Paul concludes this, his 58 verse discussion on the resurrection with an exhortation to the Corinthians. In light of the resurrection hope that is now theirs by grace, he says, therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Here's the last point for today. Saints, live in light of this resurrection hope. Live in light of this resurrection hope.

Paul says, be steadfast and movable. Now this harkens back to the beginning of the chapter.

In verse 2, Paul called the Corinthians to hold fast the word I preach to you. He's talking about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now he says, similarly to the Colossians, when he urges them to continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven.

[35 : 17] Colossians 1.23. You know, brothers and sisters, there are many ways that we get destabilized in the Christian life. Right?

We have the world and its ideologies and its value system that run counter to God's word. That can destabilize us. We have our own sinful flesh.

Right? Our own ungodly desires and appetites. That destabilizes us. We also have our adversary, the chief adversary, the devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking who he might devour. These things, the world, the flesh, the devil, are all working to get us off balance. Right? And then ultimately standing somewhere else other than the gospel. You know, when I ride the metro in New York or the T in Boston, as long as there's enough space and, you know, I'm not holding a small child in my arms, I like to try and balance on my feet without holding on to anything.

The difficulty, of course, is that in the subway system you can't see anything. You don't know when the train's going to turn left or whether it's going to turn left or right. You don't know when it's going to start just shaking. And so that's part of the fun of the game if you've ever done this before.

[36 : 31] But there's a reason that there's handrails, right? So that you don't topple over as the subway is making its way. And so, in the Christian life, we don't know what bumps or turns are up ahead.

We're not given that future foresight, but we know that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a place that we want to be firmly standing.

Right? Anybody else? You want to stand firmly on the gospel of Jesus Christ. And you know, God gives us handrails to hold on to. He gives us His Word.

His Word is, it's a handrail as we read it and study it and meditate on it and memorize it and pray it. It keeps us grounded. To switch metaphors, it enables us to grow roots deeper and deeper into Christ and into the gospel.

And then we become, Psalm 1, we become well-nourished trees planted by streams of water. yield their fruit in its season. It doesn't wither. Another handrail God gives us is the church.

[37 : 37] Right? Look around the room. Fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, you know, when I'm starting to get off balance, I have you to hold me steady, to remind me what is true, to help me perceive rightly when I'm blinded by my sin or when I'm blinded by my suffering, to point me back to Christ when I'm letting fear or anxiety control me or when I'm seeking after pleasures of this world which are only temporary.

I have you, the church of Christ. So the word of God, the people of God are two handrails that God gives us that we might be steadfast and immovable. And ultimately, God himself, he's the one keeping us grounded.

Paul says in chapter 1 verses 8 and 9 of 1 Corinthians that he will sustain you to the end. Saints, this is a promise to those who are in Christ.

He will sustain you to the end. Guiltless in the day of Christ Jesus. God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son.

God finishes what he starts. Philippians 1, 6, he will finish the work that he began in you. Saints, the gospel is true. The Son of God died and rose to save us from our sins.

[39 : 01] He is coming again to finally crush death to death and to make all things new. Let us be steadfast and immovable in our faith in Christ and the gospel.

Okay, here's the next thing Paul says, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Always abounding in the work of the Lord. Our call, saints, in light of the death and resurrection of Christ, in light of our future resurrection, is to abound, to overflow in kingdom work.

Things that serve the purposes of Christ in this world. And what are those things? What is that work? Well, it's everything that Paul has been talking about in his entire letter to the Corinthian church and a whole lot more.

it's laying down our rights in order to build up others. It's a good work that God's called us to. It's exercising our spiritual gifts, the ways that God has gifted us, whether that's mercy or faith or teaching, whatever it is, in service to the body.

It's generosity. It's hospitality. It's seeking to serve and to bless and to refresh others. It's rejoicing with those who rejoice.

[40 : 13] It's mourning with those who mourn. It's persevering through relational conflict, extending grace and forgiveness when offended because of the grace I've received in Christ.

It's patiently bearing with and loving those that are hard to love. Thank you for loving me when I'm hard to love.

It's extending mercy to the least of these. It's feeding the hungry. It's clothing the naked. It is advocating for the voiceless and the vulnerable. It's sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with unsaved friends and family, neighbors, co-workers who desperately need to hear and believe the message. This is the Great Commission. It's making disciples of all nations, starting with our own children, baptizing them, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded saints. It is living out the gospel in every area of life. And the Spirit's power is bringing into reality this prayer, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[41 : 23] And the very last phrase reminds us why. Knowing that in the Lord's your labor is not in vain. Labor is not in vain. Why would we surrender our lives for the cause of Christ?

Why would disciples of Jesus, all of them, except for possibly John, we don't know, he probably died of old age, the rest of the disciples were martyred for their faith. Why would they do that? Why? Saints, when the risen Lord Jesus Christ returns in power and in glory, and when he raises us up to indestructible life with him, and when he transforms these lowly bodies to be like his glorious body, and when he remakes this broken world into something even better than the Garden of Eden, then we shall have no doubt whatsoever that everything we did in this life was worth it. No matter what it costs, we won't be thinking about the cost then, our reputation, a promotion at work, relationships even, finances, a starting spot on our sports team, whatever the cost, that will fade away in that day.

We will know that it was worth it. Christians, you have eternal victory in your risen Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

[42 : 53] Heavenly Father, we thank you for this word. We thank you for the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is our Savior. He has borne the penalty we deserved. He is our conqueror.

He has trampled death underfoot. And by faith in His name, we become participants in that victory. Participants, Peter says, in the divine nature.

What a mystery. But it's true. And God, we cling to that this morning. Would you continue to let these words, the message of Easter, reverberate in our hearts and in our lives. Pray this in Christ's name and for His glory.

Amen.