

If Christ Is Not Raised

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[0 : 00] Please have a seat and turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 15.! If you are new visiting, welcome. My name is BK. I have the pleasure of serving here as one of the pastors.

I'm excited you could join us on this Easter weekend. And I'm hoping that through today's sermon you will come to a greater understanding of the significance of the resurrection.

If you are unaware about the context of 1 Corinthians 15, it actually begins with Paul, who is the apostle, who is answering a question because the people there are believing that Jesus Christ raised again, but they're not sure that the saints in Christ will rise again.

So essentially he's performing this logical understanding of what's going on. So please read along with me. I'm going to start in verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 15.

It says, Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there's no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

[1 : 29] And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 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.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you're still in your sins.

Then those who have also fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits 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 to its own order. Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

[2 : 49] Please pray with me. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we ask for your blessing upon this sermon. Blessing upon this truth. Lord, I pray that you not only give our ears the ability to hear, but our hearts to understand the truth that Paul is unfolding in this text.

Father, I pray that you would give my voice strength and steadiness and clarity. And that the questions being asked would be answered and be understood by all here this morning.

Father, thank you for conquering death and conquering the grave. We ask these things in your gracious and holy name. Amen. So I want to begin this Easter morning by asking you a simple question.

And as always, I'm asking for an honest answer. I'm not talking about the church-friendly answer. But I want an honest answer.

Have you ever thought about what if Easter isn't true? What if, and I'm talking everything that we are doing right now, the preaching, the teaching, the praying, is actually built on something that never happened?

[4 : 15] What if Jesus did not rise from the dead? What if the tomb wasn't empty? What if the stone was never rolled away?

And what if the body of Jesus is still somewhere in the dust of the Middle East? Now, if you're unsure on how to answer this question, let me help you out here.

Because if Jesus did not rise from the dead, if Jesus was still in the tomb and the stone was never rolled away, Christianity is not simply mistaken.

Christianity would be a fraud. Not mistaken, but a fraud. It would mean that every sermon ever preached is just empty noise.

It would mean that every prayer that's ever been prayed went nowhere. It would mean that every funeral you've ever attended, that you've stood at, every tear you've shed, every hope you've clung to, is built on an illusion.

[5 : 33] Listen, I'm not naive. I'm sure there's more than a few people here this morning who have asked this question. You sat in this service or some other service, and you thought, is this really real?

Or is this just some made-up, man-made tradition? Is this truth or is this something people believe because they just need it to be true?

And listen, I get it. People come to church for all kinds of reasons, but that doesn't mean they're convinced it's true. And let me be honest with you.

This isn't a bad question to ask. In fact, those are the exact questions the Bible forces us to face. Because when the Apostle Paul talks about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, he doesn't avoid the tension. He doesn't soften the tension.

[6 : 43] He doesn't say, well, if it's not true, Christianity still gives you a better life. In fact, as we're going to see, Paul goes the exact opposite direction.

If you're familiar with Blaise Pascal, he was a 17th century French mathematician and philosopher. He made what is famously known as Pascal's wager. He says, believing in God is your safest bet. Because if you're right, you gain everything.

But if you're wrong, you lose nothing. But as we're going to learn this morning, Paul doesn't give us the safe bet.

Paul gives us what is called testable reality. Not probability, but certainty. And this is what he says.

[7 : 44] If Christ is not raised, everything falls apart. Not some things. Not more things. Everything.

Thing. Your faith is useless. Your forgiveness, gone. Your future, it is empty.

Your hope, it is dead as the man who is still in the tomb. But in today's passage, what we're reading is Paul is taking a metaphorical sledgehammer to the foundation of Christianity and simply says, let's see what's left if you remove the resurrection.

So this morning in the text, we're going to go through this text of 1 Corinthians 15. And I want us to understand Paul's logic and answer the question, what if Christ is not raised?

So the first point Paul makes is, if there is no resurrection, there is no hope. Verse 14 says, if Christ had not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

[9 : 11] And then later, he repeats in verse 19, he says, if in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

See, Paul doesn't say, well, Christianity would be a little weaker. No, he says that Christianity would be empty. That word vain means to be empty as in hollow.

It would mean to be meaningless, aimlessness, fruitless, without any usefulness or success. There would be nothing inside.

That is Christianity without the resurrection. Well, what else would happen if there's no resurrection? Well, the first truth is, if there's no resurrection, the gospel becomes empty.

The gospel becomes empty. Think about it. What's the message of Christianity? Most people know this. Jesus died for your sins, and he rose again.

[10 : 24] But if he didn't rise, then the message collapses. You're simply left with, a good man died.

That's it. There's no victory. There's no triumph. There's no proof. There's no power.

There's no power. Then Jesus was just another execution. And Paul simply says, if that's the case, why are we even talking?

Why do we preach? Why do we gather? Why do we believe? Because if there's no good news left, why would we be here this morning?

Second truth that Paul brings from this passage, if there's no resurrection, then faith becomes meaningless. Paul says, your faith is in vain.

[11 : 27] In other words, it doesn't matter how sincere you are. It doesn't matter how passionate you are. It doesn't matter how committed you are. If the object of your faith is dead, your faith is dead.

Let's be honest. We can believe something with all of our hearts and still be completely wrong. I can sit in an airplane that has no engines and I believe it's going to fly with all my might.

I believe this to be true. Will it fly? Of course not. And in the same way, if Jesus is still in the grave, can Jesus be trusted to save us if he cannot save himself?

The truth is a dead savior cannot give life. The third truth is if there's no resurrection, hope simply becomes wishful thinking.

And now Paul presses even deeper here. He says in verse 19, if in Christ we have hope in this life only, and that's a key phrase, in this life only, it says if Jesus didn't rise, then Christianity might give you some moral guidance, some sense of community, maybe even some comfort.

[12:56] He didn't say that. Because the moment you hit the grave, it's over. And Paul says if that's true, we of all people must be, we are, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Why? Because Christians just don't believe something. They build their lives on this. Christians sacrifice.

Christians serve. Christians suffer. Christians say no to sin. Christians endure hardship. They cling to Christ when it costs them everything.

And if Christ is not raised, then all this was for nothing. That you gave your life for a lie.

Let me give you the brutal honesty of Christianity. You see, Christianity is not like other belief systems that say, well, even if it's not true, it still helps you live better.

[14:11] The Bible actually never says that. Never, ever gives any idea of that. The Bible says, if it's not true, you are a fool for believing in it.

That's how grounded in reality Paul makes this. Paul is saying, don't follow Jesus because it feels good. Don't follow Jesus because it helps you cope.

Follow Jesus because he is alive. And if he's not, walk away. Walk away. I remember in university, someone challenged me with, was the Bible even true?

And they kind of led me in some arguments that I was not familiar with. And I remember going away to one of my best friends for the weekend. And I just said, this is my quandary.

Because if they can demonstrate to me that this Bible is not true, I'm walking away. Everything.

Praise the Lord. He, an older, more faithful brother in the faith, brought me to a greater understanding of that.

[15:22] The Bible is indeed true. Amen? Amen. So let me bring this truth to you. If Christ is not raised, then your hope for forgiveness is gone.

If Christ is not raised, your hope beyond death is gone. If Christ is not raised, your hope that suffering means something is gone.

Your hope that justice will be done, gone. What that leaves you with is simply this life.

And once it's over, silence, darkness, nothing. But here's the problem.

And you and I both know this. You and I both know that we were made for something more. We all know there is something more than just this present life.

[16:38] That there is this ache for something beyond today. It's interesting in an article published in the Cambridge University Press, John Cottenham wrote, Anthropology shows these longings are not random byproducts of evolution or society.

They appear at the dawn of symbolic human behavior. Tens of thousands of years ago, they persist in every society, and they address core existential realities.

That death, meaninglessness, and injustice. They point to a built-in human restlessness, an incompleteness that this world alone cannot satisfy.

That's what he's talking about. That's what every anthropologist has concluded. Anthropologists who study every corner of the human story, from Ice Age graves to modern global surveys, confirm what our hearts already know, that we were made for more.

That ache isn't wishful thinking. It's evidence that you and I were designed for eternity, and we were designed for justice, and this is something only the risen Savior can deliver.

[18:10] And Paul is going to show us why. Because if the resurrection is gone, there is no hope. But it can only get worse.

Because if Christ is not raised, you don't just lose hope. You are still in your sins. This brings me to Paul's second point.

If there is no resurrection, there is no forgiveness. Let's look at verse 17.

And if Christ had not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. The fact of the matter is, this is one of the most terrifying sentences that we can read in the Bible.

Paul is saying, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then nothing has been fixed. That would mean the work of the cross is incomplete.

[19 : 14] Let me break it down for you a bit more. We often say, Jesus died for my sins. But Paul refuses to let us stop there.

Because if Jesus only died and never rose, then his death accomplished nothing. And this would leave us with only two options.

One, that he died for his own sin, like every other human being will. Or, his sacrifice was rejected. Either way, it leaves you with your own sins. Now, let me follow this up with several facts.

One, if there is no resurrection, you are still guilty and accountable. See, let me put it in these terms. The cross is where the payment was made.

[20 : 15] The resurrection is where the receipt was issued. You with me on that? On the cross is where the payment was made. The resurrection is where the receipt was issued.

The cross says paid. The resurrection said accepted. If there is no resurrection, then the receipt never came. Which means the payment didn't go through.

Which means you're still charged, you're still guilty, you're still accountable. That's the first fact or implication of this truth.

The second implication is that sin is still your master. If Jesus didn't die, sin is still your master.

Now, when the Bible talks about sin, it's not just talking about the mistakes we made.

It doesn't talk about just our bad habits. Not just the worst things that people do. You see, sin is deeper than that. Sinning is living as if God is not your authority.

[21 : 22] Just this month, probably one of the most powerful definitions was preached by John Piper on this subject. And I'm going to read you what he said about sin.

He simply said, sin is the glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not revered. The greatness of God not admired.

The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured.

The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The promises of God not believed. The commandments of God not obeyed.

The justice of God not accepted. The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized.

[22 : 27] And the person of God not loved. That is sin. It's not just that you do wrong.

It's that you actually stand guilty before him. So when Paul says you are still in your sins, it's not just that you have sins, but you live in the consequences of your sins.

It means you're still under sin's penalty. You are still under sin's power. You are still under God's judgment.

Nothing's changed. You're not forgiven. You're not reconciled. You're not saved.

You're simply defined in a term, religious. Now let me just strip away the church language for a second. If Christ is not raised, then every sin you've ever committed is still on your record.

[23 : 34] Every lie still counted. Every lust still there. Every act of pride, anger, selfishness still counts.

Nothing erased. Nothing forgiven. Nothing covered. You simply stand before a holy God fully exposed.

And here's the problem. Man does not need religion. Man needs forgiveness. Because the issue is not, are you a good person?

The issue is, are you guilty? And if there is no resurrection, my friends, yes.

Yes, you are fully, finally, hopelessly guilty. Let me answer why this matters more than anything.

[24 : 39] You see, this is where Easter stops being theoretical and now becomes personal. Now, every single one of you know this tension. You know what it is to carry guilt, to carry shame.

Every single one of you has known regret for what you have done. Go ahead, call me a liar. I guarantee you, you have felt that regret.

You know what it is to wish you could go back and fix something. Who hasn't thought about that, right? There's even TV shows and movies built around this.

If I could only go back, I wouldn't lose it with my brother. They wouldn't hate me today if I only would have asked for forgiveness back then.

And the question is, can that actually be dealt with? Or are we to carry forward the regret, the shame, the guilt, the wishing forever?

[25 : 49] And Paul's answer is clear. If Jesus is still dead, you're stuck with it. You're stuck with it. There is no cleansing. There is no freedom.

There is no new beginning. And the deeper truth of this, that there's no resurrection means there is no forgiveness for your past, no power over your present, no hope for your future.

You're still in your sins. Not improving, not progressing, still in them. Now, what Paul's about to tell us is that it gets even worse.

Because if Christ is not raised, you don't just lose hope, you don't just remain guilty, you also lose everyone you've ever loved.

You see, without a resurrection, there is no future. 1 Corinthians 15, 18 and verse 22. Let me read these. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

[26 : 54] And in verse 22, for as in Adam all die. See, Paul is now moving away from theology to some painful, personal, practical things.

You see, if there is no resurrection, death wins. If Christ has not been raised, then death gets the final word.

It's not delayed, it's not soft, and it's not spiritualized. Final. Paul says those who have fallen asleep, and that's his gentle way of talking about death, have perished.

They're not resting, they're not waiting, they are gone. Because Christianity makes a massive claim. That claim is death is not the end. But if the resurrection is false, then that claim collapses, and death remains the champion.

[28 : 02] What that means for us is that every funeral becomes final. Every one of us who stood at a gravesite would ask, is that it? Christianity says, no, it's not the end.

It is not the final chapter. But Paul says, if Christ is not raised, that grave is permanent. The goodbye is forever. That person you loved, you will never see them again.

There will be no reunion, no restoration, no future. Just a memory fading over time. And if true, there is no resurrection, then love becomes loss.

Think about how devastating that is for every relationship, every friendship, every family bond, ends and separation, and nothing that can fix it. Because if Christ didn't rise, then no one rises.

Now let's look at verse 22. It says, for as in Adam all die. What Paul's telling us is that's the human condition. From the moment you were born, you are moving toward death.

[29 : 20] And without the resurrection, there is no interruption of that trajectory. No reversal, no rescue. So how do we then live?

Well, life shrinks to the present. If there is no resurrection, then this life is all that you get. which means justice is never fully done.

Suffering is never fully redeemed. Evil is never fully answered. And broken things are never fully restored. And deep down, you know that's right.

You know there must be more. Because something in you says, this cannot be how the story ends. The longing, as I said, which exists in every civilization, is pointing to something real.

[30 : 27] But if there's no resurrection, the grave just simply gives us silence. So let me gather everything that Paul has said.

If Christ is not raised, your faith is empty. Your sins are unforgiven. Your loved ones are gone forever. And your future is a grave.

That's not just bad news, my friends. That's a total loss. You are wiped out. But, for those of you who know me, I have a favorite word when it comes to preaching.

But. And we hear this most incredible word, beginning verse 20. But, in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.

Amen? Amen. Not maybe, not symbolically, not spiritually. In fact, it's historically, physically, decisively, Christ has been raised.

[31 : 45] Notice verse 20. But, in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Now, I want you to pay attention to the phrase, in fact.

Not wishful thinking. It's not religious optimism. He is stating it is fact. This is the fact that turns history around.

The grave was not occupied. The stone was not the end. Christ has been raised. And this resurrection is the turning point of everything. Now, don't miss how absolute this is.

Paul doesn't say, this is important. Paul simply says, this changes everything. Everything we just said reversed. Hope is not empty. Faith is not useless.

Sin is not undefeated. Death is not final. Because Jesus didn't stay dead. Notice that word, first fruits.

[32 : 46] This is never just about Jesus. This is agricultural language. In the Old Testament, the first fruits were the first part of the harvest, and they guaranteed more was coming.

So when Paul calls Jesus the first fruits, he's saying, his resurrection is not an isolated event. It's the beginning of something more. In fact, massive.

If he rose, more will rise with him. This is the preview of what's coming for everyone who is in Jesus. But let me tell you, there's a reality. There are two humanities. The Bible talks about either being in Adam or in Christ.

Notice verse 21. It says, For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

[33 : 53] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. What Paul is saying here is that mankind has two representatives, and with two representatives come two destinies.

In Adam, if you've been with me through our Roman series, we understand that sin entered the world through Adam. Death became the norm.

In case you do not know, we were not created to die. There is no cycle of life where we are born and we die. That is never the way God intended it. God intended for us to have a blissful forever relationship with him.

But our ancestor Adam chose himself over God and has hurled us into perpetual darkness until Jesus came, died in resurrection.

And here is the thing. You do not have to try to be an Adam. You already are by virtue of you being human. And there is one thing that is sure is that death rules over you.

[35 : 16] Whether you like it or not, you live in death's domain. But then there is in Christ where righteousness is given, life is restored, resurrection is guaranteed.

and this is different. This is not automatically in Christ. Scripture teaches that you must be joined to him. And when you are, everything changes.

You see, the resurrection proves everything. Because Christ has been raised, his death was accepted, your sins can be forgiven, your faith has substance, your future is secure.

The resurrection is God's declaration. This is my son and his work is finished. You have now been redeemed.

Death has been defeated. Think about this. The greatest enemy humanity has ever faced is death.

[36 : 24] No one escapes it, no one overpowers it, no one negotiates with it except one. Jesus Christ walked into death and walked out.

Alive, victorious, untouchable. And now, death is no longer the end. Death is simply a doorway.

So let me ask this final question. What does this mean for you? What I'm teaching you here is not just theology, this is personal.

Because the question is not, did Christ rise? The question I have for you is, are you in Christ? Are you in Christ?

Because Paul says, in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive. that leaves us with the same two categories. If you are in Adam, under sin, under death, without hope, or in Christ, forgiven, alive, secure, forever.

[37 : 41] So what does it mean to be in Christ? How does that actually happen? Like I said, it's not automatic. Scripture teaches that we were born in Adam, but there you must be brought into Christ.

And the Bible is clear. You come into Christ in two ways, through repentance and faith.

Repentance, that means you stop running your life your way.

You stop minimizing your sin, excusing your sin, renaming your sin, or calling it whatever it is, but you turn from it. Not perfectly, but genuinely.

You say, God, I am done trusting myself. I'm done pretending I'm in control. Now, does that save you? No. What actually saves you is faith.

Faith is trusting in Christ alone. It's understanding that you can't fix yourself. It's to trust in Jesus, not partially, not alongside your own effort.

[38 : 42] It means completely. You trust that his death paid for your sin. Two, his resurrection proved it worked.

And three, and he alone is the only one who can save you. You see, to be in Christ means you stop trusting yourself to make things right with God, and you trust Jesus to do it for you.

And if you're here this morning and you're hearing this right now and you realize, I am still in my sin, you now know you are not in Christ.

My encouragement to you is don't wait. Turn to him. Right here, right now as you sit in this seat. Call out to him.

Because the one who died is alive and he will save everyone who comes to him. Paul's words in Romans 10, 9, it says, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved into an eternal resurrection with Jesus Christ. [40 : 06] Let me pray. Let me pray. Such a simple truth, but the implications are so deep, oh, Lord. God, we thank you that your son's death paid the price of our sins, that it satisfied your wrath.

It wasn't a payment unto Satan. It wasn't a payment into any other power. sin. It was simply to satisfy your wrath because of your holiness, you could not accept sin in your presence.

sin. So you made a way for us. You exchanged your son's life for ours.

He became sin who knew no sin. And he dressed us in his righteousness so that we would be free to come perfectly before you unashamed with no regrets.

So Father, I pray if anybody's asking what is it to be a Christian, it is to be in Christ, to place their life, their hope in you and you alone.

[41 : 37] It's an understanding that there's nothing they can do to earn that salvation, but it's offered freely to them. to simply believe, to call on your name.

And the result of that will be repentance. It will be turning away from the rain of death and sorrow and it will be turning to a life of grace and peace with you, our creator.

So Father, I pray that you would hear this prayer this morning and those that are praying along with me. May you redeem them as you have redeemed me.

We thank you for you paid a price that I could never pay. And all of God's people said, Amen.