

Death In Vain Forbids Him Rise

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- [0 : 01] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to the book of 1 Corinthians.! 1 Corinthians. And our passage this morning is chapter 15, verses 1 through 28.
- If you don't have a Bible with you, that's okay. We provide those for you in the seat back in front of you. You should be able to find one nearby. And if you're using the one in the seat back in front of you, you can find this on page 904.
- Or either way, I'd encourage you to have a copy of God's Word open in front of you as we walk through the passage together. So page 904 of the seat back in front of you. And if you don't have a Bible at all, then please feel free to take that one home with you as our gift to you.
- And on the one condition, that you let us know on the way out the door so that we can help connect you with somebody who can help you read it and understand it. It's a big book, often a complicated book, and we would love nothing more than to help you read and understand God's Word.
- So 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 through 28. And when you found that in your Bible, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning. Please listen along as I read.
- [1 : 13] Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
- For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, in that 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.
- Then He appeared to James, and then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
- But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that was with me.
- Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?
- [2 : 34] But if there's no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 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 are still in your sins. Then those also who have 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 firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For as by a man came death, by a man has also come the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive, but each in his own order.

[3 : 38] Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under His feet.

But when it says all things are put in subjection, it is plain that He is accepted who put all things in subjection under Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son of Man Himself will also be subjected to Him, who put all things in subjection under Him, that God may be all in all.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father, we pray now as we open up Your Word and ask You to speak through it.

Lord, we pray that You would draw our hearts to Christ, that we would be moved by His resurrection from the dead. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

[4 : 48] Amen. Amen. Amen. My family and I like to play games. We've been in a board game kick lately.

It's been, lately it's been Clue, Ticket to Ride. The boys had a spring break last week. We settled the land of Catan. We played a game or two of Yahtzee. But before that, I remember there was a season when we were playing a lot of Jenga.

Kids in the room, y'all let me know if you've ever played the game Jenga. It's a pretty simple game. Really, it's just a big stack of blocks. And to set it up, you put three wooden blocks on three wooden blocks on three wooden blocks.

And it builds up, stacks up to build a tall tower. And the goal of the game is to very carefully remove a block. And then if you're successful, very carefully stack that block back on top without having the whole structure collapse to the ground.

But you have to choose carefully because if you happen to choose the wrong block, if you pull out a foundational piece, if that piece is load-bearing in any sort of way, well then the whole tower collapses and you very loudly lose the game of Jenga.

[6 : 03] And my boys are older now. They're at the age now where they don't need as much help. But I remember there was a time when every time they reached to pull out a block, they would look over at me and see if I approved of the choice that they were making.

And if it was a good one, I would nod my head, yes, that seems safe. But if not, I would shake my head and say, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Don't pull out that piece. If you pull that piece out, the whole structure is about to come crumbling down to the ground. That piece is far too important to be removed.

This morning, as we look at our passage here in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, hopefully you picked up on the situation here. There's an issue here in the church at Corinth. The Christians there at the church at Corinth are trying to remove a key fundamental piece of Christian doctrine.

They are trying to pull out from the structure of Christianity the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. They say, well, surely we can remove this piece and still be okay, right?

[7 : 15] Skeptics in the room would agree. Somebody raising from the dead is impossible. Surely we can remove that doctrine and keep the framework, keep the morality of Christianity, keep the teachings of Jesus, keep the structure of the practice of the faith.

We can remove the resurrection and be okay, right? In our passage, we get to look over at the Apostle Paul and we see him shaking his head.

No, do not remove this fundamental foundational piece because if you do, the whole structure of Christianity comes crumbling down to the ground.

Why? Because as we've sung and discussed this morning, the reason why we're gathered here this morning is because the entirety of the Christian faith, the whole structure of what we believe, the whole thing from beginning to end hangs upon, it centers itself on the resurrection from the dead of a man named Jesus.

Pastor Greg Gilbert says it like this. He says, the resurrection of Jesus is the hinge on which all Christianity turns, is the foundation on which everything else rests, and is the capstone that holds everything else about Christianity together.

[8 : 40] Everything hinges on the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And if that's true, then friend, we owe it to ourselves this morning here on Easter Sunday to determine whether or not this resurrection thing actually happened.

I'll be straightforward with you this morning. My aim today is that you would leave here thoroughly convinced of the resurrection of Jesus. This is Paul's aim in the passage.

It is my aim for us this morning that you would leave here thoroughly convinced of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But not just convinced. My aim is that you would leave here moved by it.

Moved to trust Him. Moved to love Him. Moved to worship Him. Moved to live for Him. Moved by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

So let's look at this claim this morning. The claim that we're making is Jesus is alive. Jesus is risen from the grave. This is going to be our outline this morning. We're going to see it in two parts here.

[9 : 47] First, we see evidences of the resurrection. And second, we'll see the effects of the resurrection. This is our outline. If you're taking notes, it might help you to follow along.

First, we see the evidences of the resurrection. And second, the effects of the resurrection. So first, let's look at evidences of the resurrection of Jesus.

You know, if we're going to make a big claim like this, claims like this need to be backed up, right? Now, if you claim something this big that somebody actually got up from the grave, we need to hear some evidence.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to base my life on something that has zero proof, that has zero substance behind it. So what evidence does Paul give us here to support his claim that Christ Jesus has, in fact, died and risen from the grave?

I count at least three evidences that Paul gives us here in verses 1 through 11. Look there with me. For one, Paul says, the scriptures give evidence of the resurrection of Jesus.

[10 : 54] He says the resurrection is according to the scriptures. You notice the repetition there in verses 3 and 4. He says, I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received.

In other words, this is foundational. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. He was buried. He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

He tells us Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. You might think of Isaiah 53, the passage that Treg just prayed through moments ago for us, this beautiful passage about the suffering servant.

And it's hard to believe as we read through it. This passage was written 700 years before Jesus was born. Listen to what it says. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

[12 : 00] Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds, we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way.

And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 700 years before the death of Jesus, the scriptures prophesied about his death.

His death is in accordance with the scriptures. But not only his death, Paul says his burial is in accordance with the scriptures. If you keep reading in the same prophetic passage, Isaiah 53, it speaks of his burial.

It says they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death. Although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth, his burial is in accordance with the scriptures.

But not only this, his resurrection is in accordance with the scriptures. Hundreds of years in advance, the scriptures have been prophesying, paving the way, foretelling about this event that we're celebrating here this morning, the resurrection of the Messiah.

[13 : 07] Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring.

He shall prolong his days. In other words, he's alive even though he died. He is alive, seeing the fruit of what his death accomplished.

Paul says the scriptures speak clearly about the death, the burial, the resurrection of the Messiah hundreds of years before it happened. Paul says evidence number one, the resurrection of Jesus is according to the scriptures.

But that's not all. Second piece of evidence here, starting in verse five. He says the resurrected Jesus appeared to eyewitnesses.

And so not only is the resurrection prophesied and predicted in scripture, now Paul says it's actually verified in human history. This is absolutely crucial for us because we're not dealing with simply a religious claim now.

[14 : 11] We're dealing with a historical claim. You understand the difference? Paul is rooting this argument that Jesus is alive, not in just some religious practice.

He's saying this actually happened in human history and he lists out eyewitnesses to back it up. Ask yourself, why do you believe that Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States?

He weren't there. Why do we believe that Leonardo da Vinci was born in Italy in the 1500s and none of us were there? We believe those things on the basis of reliable, credible, historical testimony.

Eyewitnesses who were there and recorded those facts for us. That's exactly what Paul is doing for us here. He says, many witnesses saw the resurrected Christ.

He appeared to Cephas, that's Peter, and then to the 12, and then to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive. In other words, if you don't take my word for it, you can go ask them yourself.

[15 : 17] They'll tell you what they saw. Then he appeared to James and then to all the apostles. Then last of all, Paul says, he appeared also to me for 40 days after his death, we're told in the scriptures.

Jesus appeared, resurrected to many. He appeared to individuals. He appeared to groups. He appeared to men. He appeared to women. He talked with them.

He ate with them. He spoke with them. He forgave them. They saw him with their eyes. They touched him with their hands. They interacted with him and they worshiped him. Over 500 eyewitnesses.

What do we do with that sort of testimony? Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, he said, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is one of the best attested facts on record.

There were so many witnesses to behold it that if we do in the least degree receive the credibility of men's testimonies, we cannot and we dare not doubt that Jesus rose from the dead.

[16 : 21] They saw the risen Christ. As you read on through the rest of your Bible, as you read on in the New Testament, you can see the impact that that had on their lives, which is the third piece of evidence that we have here.

Third piece of evidence for the resurrection is the transformation of the disciples of Jesus. What happened to change these men?

And no doubt something happened to change the lives of these men. How do you explain the curious case of the Apostle Peter who went from denying Jesus three times before his death to now becoming one of the pillar leaders of the church in Jerusalem?

What happened? He saw the risen Lord Jesus who forgave him and restored him and commissioned him.

How do you explain the curious case of the Apostle James? The half-brother of Jesus who knew Jesus for years for his whole life but didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah until after the resurrection.

[17 : 28] And then he too becomes a pillar of the church in Jerusalem. What happened? He saw the risen Lord Jesus. And how in the world do you explain the curious case of the Apostle Paul?

You know the story of Paul. Paul alludes to it here in verse 9 doesn't he? I am the least of the apostles unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

This man Paul hated the church. He hated Christians. Absolutely hated Jesus. He went from town to town place to place to arrest Christians.

He went from town to town approving of their execution. But now here he is going from town to town proclaiming the risen Lord Jesus. Why? What happened?

He saw the resurrected Jesus and it changed everything for him. By the grace of God he says I am what I am. These men saw the resurrected Christ and it changed everything for him.

[18 : 33] And you who know church history know that these same disciples would go on to give their lives for the spread of this message. I mean clearly they were convinced that Jesus Christ actually rose from the grave.

Some of you know the story of Charles Colson one of the Watergate seven. Charles Colson he said I know the resurrection is a fact and Watergate proved it to me.

How? Because twelve men testified that they had seen Jesus raised from the dead and then they proclaimed that truth for forty years never once denying it.

Every one of them was beaten tortured stoned put in prison. They would not have endured it if that weren't true. Watergate embroiled twelve of the most powerful men in the world and they couldn't keep alive for three weeks.

You're telling me twelve apostles could keep alive for forty years? Absolutely impossible. Paul gives us these pieces of evidence that our faith might be in an actual historical real risen reigning Christ.

[19 : 43] Three pieces of evidence here that I believe anchor our faith that Jesus Christ really truly actually physically rose from the grave and is alive this very minute.

But now in our second point we ask why does it matter? Why can we not pull that piece out of the structure of Christianity and keep the framework?

Why does it matter? So second let's consider the effects of the resurrection and what Paul does in the rest of the passages he explores two polar opposite realities and these are two just distinct universes what would it mean if Jesus were not risen from the dead let's just entertain that for a minute and what does it mean then that he is risen from the dead so we'll start here with the negative what would it mean if Jesus were not risen from the dead Paul says let's just play along for a minute what's going to happen if you pull that block out and he gives us six tragic effects here of no resurrection this is the anti Easter message okay six effects of no resurrection effect number one he says our preaching is in vain verse 14 if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain he starts with himself first in other words

Paul the church planting apostle who went from town to town to town proclaiming the good news of the resurrection of Jesus he is proclaiming risking his life telling other people that Jesus is alive he says well if he's dead I'm wasting my time it is a waste of time to proclaim a dead teacher and he sends another letter to the same church in Corinth if we were to flip a few pages forward the book of 2nd Corinthians Paul describes some of what he endured as he preached the gospel I'll read it to you he said imprisonments with countless beatings often near death five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one three times I was beaten with rods once I was stoned three times I was shipwrecked a night and a day I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys danger from rivers danger from robbers danger from my own people danger from gentiles danger in the city danger in the wilderness danger at sea danger from false brothers and toil and hardship through many a sleepless night and hunger and thirst often without food and cold and exposure and apart from other things there's this daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches

I mean talk about a hard job I cannot imagine a worse way to live if it's all for nothing I'll tell you my life is a lot more comfortable than the apostle Paul's yours is too but I agree with him completely if you could convince me that Jesus Christ was in the grave I would leave this pulpit and never return I have no gospel to preach unless Christ is alive it's a vain waste of time to proclaim the good news of a dead God not only my preaching second effect he says verse 14 your faith is in vain if Jesus is not risen from the dead your faith is in vain now the attention is turned to us and to you what is the Christian faith the Christian faith is trust in a resurrected savior sometimes the way we talk about faith is as if it were disconnected from reality we talk about blind faith or just have faith is belief without evidence you should know that's not how the

[23 : 37] Bible talks about faith biblically faith is anchored to reality it's tethered up to the truth faith is trust in something real and here Paul says if Jesus is not alive what in the world are we doing having faith we have no one to put our faith in we shouldn't be here singing songs of worship opening up the scriptures reading our Bible in private with our family we shouldn't be proclaiming the good news of Christ we should have no faith at all if we have no one to put our faith in faith in a dead man is vain in fact!

he says! if Christ isn't raised we're even misrepresenting God why? well we've been talking about this whole time God raised him from the dead and if he's not raised from the dead then we're lying about God himself we've completely misunderstood and completely misrepresented God if Christ is not raised but it gets even worse are you depressed yet?

not only this effect number four and this is tragic he says if Christ isn't raised you are still in your sins verse 17 if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins and this is the problem isn't it?

The universal problem of all mankind the greatest need of every single individual in the universe is to have a solution for the problem of our sin it is our sin that separates us from a holy God it is sin that is the root cause and explanation of all the pain and suffering and evil in the world it's sin that ultimately leads to death and the bad news is every one of us are sinners we can all agree on this I hope none of us are perfect myself especially every single one of us are are flawed in many ways and the Bible calls this sin but it's not just minor imperfections the Bible says we are all actively in rebellion against God our creator that's bad news Paul says if

Christ is not risen if all he did was come and teach provide a good example then there is no answer for the problem of our sin we still have no answer for our pain there's no hope for our suffering no hope of reconciliation with God and so effect number five death wins if Christ is not raised look at verse 18 he says if Christ is not raised then those who have fallen asleep that's a nice way to say have died those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished if Christ is not raised then when we die we die that's it it's over if there is no resurrection there's no hope after the grave there's no victory over the grave if Christ has not risen in triumph over the grave there's no better place to go to if Jesus himself lied when he said I go to prepare a place for you the dead are truly dead it's a sad version of reality isn't it this is it's bleak isn't it which is why

[27 : 29] Paul says if Christ is not raised sixth effect we are worthy of pity verse 19 if in Christ we have hope in this life only he says we are of all people most to be pitied we're wasting our time the Christians are those who build their entire lives on the resurrection of Jesus and if he's not resurrected then we are wasting our time don't worship a dead teacher don't trust a dead prophet don't spend your time serving a dead god go have your fun because life is short and death is coming and then it's done I can hardly imagine a darker more hopeless version of reality than that can you but the fact is this version of reality is how many people live their lives they live without a concept of resurrection they have no clue about the actual historical resurrected

Jesus rising from the grave and the implications of that that has for their lives they live in a version of reality where their lives ultimately have no ultimate point no bigger picture no purpose no hope no answer for the pain and the sin and the suffering no comfort beyond the grave no victory over sin no reconciliation with God and I have no doubt that there are some in this room this morning who live in that version of reality!

if that's you Paul has good news for you here in verse 20 but in fact he says in verse 20 but in fact Christ has been raised from the dead Christ has been raised from the dead which means we can take all of these bleak and we can take all of these bleak dark hopeless false realities and turn them completely upside down because in fact Christ has been raised from the dead which means our preaching is not in vain this is good news for me I stay in here every week and preach about the resurrected Jesus I want to give my life to something that matters into eternity and what message could I proclaim that has more more meaning and more significance more impact than this Jesus Christ lives to save sinners

Jesus Christ truly lives to redeem the lost Jesus Christ truly has defeated death there is hope beyond the grave for all who put their faith in Christ I have a gospel to preach because Jesus in fact has risen from the grave which means church our evangelism is not in vain you're proclaiming the good news to your friends and family members and neighbors and co-workers you proclaiming that Jesus is alive is not in vain you're teaching your children the good news of Christ is not in vain our efforts to spread the gospel to the ends of the world are not in vain why? because in fact Christ Jesus has been risen from the dead in fact Christ has been raised from the dead which means Christian our faith is not in vain our trust in Christ is not in vain our trust in Christ is not in vain if you're looking for help with this problem of sin look to the man who rose from the grave your faith is not in vain because he lives in fact Christ has been raised from the dead which means the scriptures from beginning to end can be trusted every word of the Lord proves true all scripture is God breathed the word of the Lord endures forever

God can be trusted his word can be trusted because Christ is risen from the dead and praise God in fact Christ has been raised from the dead which means believer we are no longer in our sins sin no more has dominion over you believer because Christ has died and risen you are no longer living in sin and dead towards God now we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord in fact Christ has been raised from the dead which means friend there is certain hope beyond the grave and those who have died in Christ have not perished they have won all in Adam die but all in Christ shall be made alive we can say with Paul to live is Christ to die is gain and so Christian in fact because Christ has been raised from the dead you are not worthy of pity you who trust in the risen Lord Christ you are not worthy of pity or shame or embarrassment rather when Christ returns you too will be vindicated and risen with him

[32 : 53] I can't think of ten better words to tell you this morning but in fact Christ has been raised from the dead friend only one of these two very different versions of reality can be real each one of us has to decide which version of reality we believe will we pull out this foundational peace or will we build our lives on it Tim Keller says if Jesus rose from the dead then you have to accept all that he said if he didn't rise from the dead then why worry about any of what he said the issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead I like the way

Yaroslav Pelikan said it listen to this if Christ is not risen nothing else matters and if Christ is risen nothing else matters we rejoice church this morning but in fact Christ has been raised from the dead amen father we praise you for the good news of the gospel we praise you that we don't have to live in this false reality of no hope no resurrection no answer for sin no relationship with God but in fact Christ has been raised to purchase all of these things for us he stands to offer eternal life to any sinner who would turn to him in faith we praise you in the name of Christ we praise you amen we praise you