

Easter Sunday

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[0 : 00] Open your Bible with me to the book of 1 Corinthians, chapter number 15. We're going to read a couple of verses right here. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 19 and 20.

It says here in 1 Corinthians 15, 19 through 20. That means I didn't have it in my Bible. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we have all men most miserable.

But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that have slept. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for all that you've given to us.

And we thank you most of all for sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins. And Lord, we thank you for providing a sacrifice that was so good and so wonderful that he conquered sin for us. And he rose again on the third day.

And that one day we with him will rise and spend eternity with you. We thank you for this. And I said, you work tonight, God. I love you. And I saw these things in your name. When you talk about heaven, when you talk about the resurrection, you'll find that a lot of Christians are really curious.

[1 : 07] And in the time that I've been studying this message, I've studied this message more than any other message I've ever studied for. And talking to people, they're so curious. You ask them, what do you think about heaven? And they have, I mean, so many different answers.

They talk about all these different things. I mean, if you ask, what are we going to be like in heaven? What's God going to be like? What's the world going to be like? You're going to get a different answer from every single person. But God has made us for heaven.

And we know that. And it's in our heart. And so we're longing for it. And we have all these questions about it. We want to know all these things about it because it's our home. And we're looking forward to it. And that's what the resurrection guarantees for us is a home in heaven.

But tonight, I want you to know that the hope that we have in the resurrection, the hope that we have in heaven is what sustains us through this life as we're looking forward to it.

And not only sustains us, it gives us the strength to be involved in God's work and to live for him even now. And we're going to see that through a couple of different things in this passage. We're going to see that through the importance of the resurrection, first of all.

[2 : 08] So here, we'll start reading in verse number 1 of 1 Corinthians 15. It says, And this is what the gospel is.

Jesus Christ came to this world. He died. He was buried. And he rose again. Very simply, the gospel is just, he's saying it's a set of facts. It's a historical fact. And what's pretty unique about the resurrection is the Bible really stresses that it's a historical fact.

And it sets out to prove it. And Paul sets out to prove it right here. He talks about a few different things. First of all, he talks about how Jesus appeared to Peter and to all the other apostles.

And he appeared in the body. And if you would have, you know, if Jesus had, if the resurrected Jesus had been some imposter, if he had been somebody else, the men who knew him the most would have known. He says, Jesus appeared to Peter and the rest of the apostles.

And they knew it was him. They were excited to see him. And he said, he appeared to me. And then after that, he said, he appeared to 500 witnesses at once. So he dispels any sort of notion that it could have been some hallucination.

[3 : 36] It could have been some dream or whatever. Because 500 people saw him at once. And not only had 500 people saw him at once, those people were still alive as Paul was writing this letter. And he's writing this letter challenging the Corinthians. He said, listen, if you guys don't believe this, you can go ask him.

Most of them are still alive. It's a historical fact. And the Bible wants to prove it. It says that in Acts chapter 1, verse number 3. As Luke is writing out the history of the church, he says that Jesus was proved to be alive with many infallible proofs.

There's no disputing it. It's a historical fact that Jesus rose. But why does the Bible do that? Because, you know, we read the Bible. And a lot of times, it kind of just assumes things. It just assumes historical facts.

It really, it assumes that God exists. It assumes its own authority. It doesn't really set out to try to prove itself. But it does set out to try to prove the resurrection. And that's kind of, it's different. Why is that?

And it's because, as Paul says it right here, if there is no resurrection, there is no gospel. If there is no resurrection, there is no gospel. Even if Jesus was God and he came to this world and he died for the sins of the world, but he didn't come back to life.

[4 : 42] If he didn't resurrect, there would be no gospel. There would be no salvation. We wouldn't have a church. We wouldn't have anything to celebrate today. It would be all sadness and sorrow. If there's no resurrection, there's no gospel.

Look at verse number 12. Now, if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? There in the church of Corinth, there are people who, they just didn't really believe that people, there was going to be a resurrection.

And, you know, they talk about the Greek thought, you know, everybody thought it was just the spirit was good and the body's bad. And so, you know, our bodies are going to die and that's going to be okay. And then we'll live on as spirits. But Paul, he wasn't going to have any of that.

The Bible, that's not what the Bible teaches about the resurrection. So these people are saying there is no resurrection of the dead. He's asking this question. They believe the soul will go on living forever, but that once the body was dead, that that was it and that it was gone.

And there's a big problem with that. You know, later, earlier on, he said, we preached to you and you believe that Christ bodily rose from the dead. But some of you believe there's not going to be any resurrection at all. So you think Christ rose again from the dead and his body came back to life and he walked around and he proved himself.

[5 : 50] He showed himself to people. But then you don't believe that anybody, you believe there's no resurrection. No bodies are going to come back. It's just going to be spiritual, all these different things. He said, how on earth can you believe these two things at the same time?

Because look at this. You can't have one without the other. You can't have Christ rising from the dead and believers not rising from the dead. You can't have Christ rising from the dead and there not being a bodily resurrection of believers in the end.

And Paul's about to say that. And if we don't rise from the dead, that means that Christ didn't rise from the dead. Look here at verse number 13. It says, but if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.

If there is no resurrection from the dead, if in the last days believers don't rise again from the dead, if it's just going to be spirit from here on out, if that's all it's going to be, Christ didn't rise from the dead.

You can't have one without the other. If Christ didn't rise from the dead, there's no life in Christ and our faith is useless. Look at verse number 14 and 15. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain and your faith is also in vain.

[7 : 02] Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ whom he raised not up. If so be that the dead rise not. Faith in a dead Christ gains you nothing, no forgiveness, no grace, no righteousness, no any of it.

Look at verse 17 says, and if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain and ye are yet in your sins. The resurrection is of central importance to everything that we're doing here, to everything that we believe.

If Christ didn't bodily come back from the dead, if believers don't bodily come back from the dead, the gospel is not true. The gospel is not true. Our faith is in vain and it says, if he didn't come back from the dead, you're yet in your sins.

We're still lost. Our sins still abide on us. See, by resurrection, I mean, the word resurrection means a bodily resurrection. There's no resurrection of a spirit.

It doesn't even refer to the spirit. Spirits are immortal. But if Christ didn't bodily come back from the dead, we're yet in our sins. Look at this. If there's no resurrection, all those that have gone on before us, all our loved ones that have died in Christ are lost.

[8 : 16] Verse number 18, 1 Corinthians 15, 18 says, Then they also, which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished and they're lost. If Christ didn't come back from the dead, that's it.

This is all we've got. Now, Christianity, the gospel, is only worth as much as the resurrection is true.

It's only worth as much as the resurrection is true. It's only worth as much as the certainty of the resurrection. Read verse 19. We already read it. If in this life only, we, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Now, you notice there, as you're reading that verse, it doesn't say, if in this life we only have hope, we're all the men most miserable. It says, if in this life only we have hope in Christ. It says, even if all the other stuff is true, even if, you know, you can try, you know, if we live our lives according to the Bible principles, we'll have a good, we'll have a good life in this life, which is true.

We will have blessings in this life. But he says, if that is all it is, we are the most miserable, pitiful people in all the world. The hope of our lives is really nothing we can find in this life.

[9 : 27] It's in the life to come. It's in the resurrection to come. It's in the body to come. It's nothing in this body. It's nothing in this time that we have now. It's in looking forward to the hope of heaven and the resurrection.

Our hope isn't in this life. It's in the life to come. It's in the resurrection that he's brought to us. And if that's not true, we're the most miserable, pitiful people in all the world. One preacher said this.

Christianity is not a system of good advice. And the preachers had not simply told people of a good way to live. They had said that something had happened.

God raised up Christ. Christianity is basically, at the foundation, the gospel. The good news of what God has done. What we do, what this church is about, what we're all about with the gospel, what missions, what all this is about is we're just telling people this is what has happened.

And because of this, this is what's going to happen. Christ rose from the dead. And one day, all who believe in him will do the same. One day, all who believe in him will do the same.

[10 : 32] That's what this is all about. The resurrection is of foundational importance to all of our belief. The first thing was the importance of the resurrection. The second thing is the results of the resurrection.

We find hope in the results of the resurrection, of what the resurrection brings to us. It says, after all this, he said, if Christ didn't rise again, if there is no resurrection of the dead, we're the most pitiful people in all the world.

Our loved ones are lost. We're lost. But look at verse number 20. But now, Christ is risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.

Christ did rise again. It's a fact. He's proved it over and over again. It's a proof in your life. It's proof in all that's happened throughout history.

Christ did rise from the dead. Jesus did rise from the dead and what a glorious truth that is for all believers. Christ is risen from the dead. And we can never forget that.

[11 : 38] We can never let that not be forefront in our lives and forefront in our minds and forefront in what we believe. Jesus Christ rose from the dead. And that's what it's all about. He rose from the dead and that changes everything.

That changes everything. Never allow yourself to waver on the fact that Jesus Christ came back to life. Never allow yourself to waver on the fact that he rose again from the dead.

There are people all around this world. And they go by all kinds of different names who teach that he did it. They say, they teach all kinds of different things. Don't even need to mention it. But they say that he didn't rise from the dead.

And we can't even let that enter into our minds. Because if we don't have that, we really don't have anything else. Christ did rise from the dead. And it said he's become the first fruits of the resurrection.

Verse 20 says he's become the first fruits of those that sleep. And this is painted an Old Testament picture. And it goes back, interestingly enough, to the feast of the first fruits, which was the day after the Passover, which is Easter Sunday.

[12 : 41] And so the people of Israel, in this harvest time, they would get together as they're harvesting. They would take that first sheaf of wheat or barley or whatever it was. And they would take that sheaf of wheat and they would wave it before God as a wave offering.

And it would serve as a guarantee that the rest of the harvest would come in and that really it was all God's. And he says Christ is the first fruit. He's the first fruit of the resurrection.

Christ becomes the guarantee that we, too, are going to rise again from the dead. That we, too, are going to rise again from the dead. As Christ rose, so we will rise.

As Christ rose, so we will rise. Look at this. It's so important that we don't forget about how he rose bodily and how that means one day we will do the same thing.

We're going to do the same thing. There's all kinds of misconceptions about the resurrection. There's a lot of misconceptions about heaven. I'm sure there's been times in my life where I really thought, you know, we die and then we're separated from the body and we go to heaven and that's really just it.

[13 : 45] We're up there as spirits or souls or whatever. And when I was a kid, I thought we'd be angels or whatever it is. We think all these different things are going to be floating around in a cloud. But it's of vital importance. And the Bible makes it pretty clear.

This whole chapter is making it clear that Christ rose again bodily and so will we. We are going to have a resurrected, glorified body. And that's extremely important that we understand that.

Look at this. Look at verse number 12. John 21, 12 says this. It's talking about how Jesus, the Bible, it shows us that he really did come back and he really did have a body.

John 21, 12 says, Jesus saith unto them, come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, who art thou, knowing that it was the Lord. So Jesus had come back from the dead and he appears to them and he begins to speak to them.

He says, come and eat with me. And none of them even needs to ask who it is. They knew it was the Lord. It was apparent to them that this was Jesus. Luke 24, verse 36 through 40 says this.

[14 : 47] Let's skip down to verse 39. It says, behold my hands and my feet. He appeared to the disciples and they got scared.

They thought he was a ghost or some spirit. And he wanted to show them. I'm so much more than that. I'm really alive. My body is really alive. I'm here with you right now. He says, touch my hands.

Feel my side. See that I am alive. And look what that means for us. We're talking about the results of the resurrection and the hope that brings to us. It stresses that he wasn't just a spirit.

That he wasn't just some ghost or some soul. And what does that mean? Why did it stress that? Why does it make that so important? Because it was not sufficient to conquer just death, to conquer only death in the spirit.

But in every way that death curses this world. We sinned and so our spirits died and we were separated from God. But if you get saved, if you trust in Jesus Christ, your spirit is born again.

[15 : 58] Like John chapter 3 talks about. You must be born again. And so we're born again. Our spirit is born again. But that's not all that Christ came to accomplish. He wanted to erase the curse wherever it could be found.

He wanted to get rid of it. And whether it was in our spirit or our soul or our body. Whether it was even in this earth. He came to this world to get rid of it all. And he wants to get rid of it of death's reign over our body.

He didn't mean for us just to be some disembodied soul. Resurrection means that the body will come back to life. That we will come back to life. Charles Spurgeon said it this way.

By resurrection of the dead is meant something very different from the immortality of the soul. That every Christian believes that. And therein is only a level that the unbeliever believes to. Everybody believes in an immortal soul.

The doctrine of the resurrection is that this actual body in which I now exist is to live with my soul. That only in this vital spark of heavenly flame to burn in heaven.

[17 : 01] But the very censer in which the incense of my life doth smoke is holy unto the Lord and is to be preserved forever. The spirit everyone confesses is eternal. But how many there are who deny that the bodies of men will actually start up from their graves at the great day?

All kinds of people believe. You know there's a soul and it's going to go on living forever. That's really not what the resurrection is about. It's that your body will one day come up from the grave.

It's that when Christ comes back and he gets his church from the grave that they bury me in one day. My body will come back resurrected and glorified and perfected.

Because Christ came back to life and as I'm in Christ I will rise with him. And the same is true of every single believer. And this gives us hope. Because that body is never going to die again. It will never get sick.

All the effects of sin are going to be banished forever. We have all these misconceptions about heaven. And I'm afraid a lot of the times we just don't look forward to it. A lot of the times we don't look forward to heaven.

[18 : 07] We think, if I'm honest with you, at times I thought it was going to be boring. At times I thought, you know, it sounds so strange or boring. That only happens because we just don't understand what the Bible says.

When we really understand what it says, what it plainly says, when we learn about it, when we understand what he has for us, we get excited and it gives us hope that will last not only in that life, but in this life right here.

It's vitally important that we understand he is giving us a new body and he's going to give us a new world. And we're not, by making so much importance about this importance about the resurrection body, I'm really not just splitting hairs.

When we see God's plan all throughout the Bible, when we see his plan throughout the Bible, we'll understand how important this is. Verse 21 and 22 of 1 Corinthians 15 says this, For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. So he goes back to the beginning. And Adam sinned, and so death passed upon all men. That's what Romans 5 says, right?

[19 : 15] So death passed upon all men. And every one of us that has come from Adam, which is every one of us, has had death reigning in our life. Sin is in our life. That's our nature. We're born, we live, and we die.

But from the very beginning, right when we messed it up, God came in with a promise. And he said he's going to send this redeemer. And so this curse fell on the world, and it fell on us and on the whole creation.

But God made a promise that he is going to get rid of that curse. He's going to get rid of this curse on the world. He's going to get rid of this curse as much as it has a hold on us. He's going to get rid of it. And so Christ came to this world, and he was made in the image of a man.

He was born in the likeness of Adam, as the Bible says. He was made a human. And he lived a perfect life that we couldn't. And he died on the cross, and he took the sins of the world on him.

And he went down into the earth as he was buried in the earth, as the sins of all the world were put on him. He died with them. And for all these years, these animal sacrifices have gone on.

[20 : 16] And they've been to atone for sin, but none of those sacrifices could atone for sin. And so year after year after year, they would come, and they would sprinkle the blood. But in Hebrews 10, it says in verse number 4, that the blood of bulls and goats can't atone for sin.

It's impossible, is what it says. But Christ's blood was perfect, and it was the perfect sacrifice. And so as he died with our sins, as he died in that grave, the curse couldn't keep a hold on him.

The curse couldn't keep a hold on him. And so he rose again on the third day, and all those who were found in him will rise with him. And that curse for all those who believe in him is broken.

And the curse on this world is being broken. It's so important that we understand what he's doing. The resurrection, what we're celebrating today, has been God's plan from the very beginning.

And it's his plan throughout time, till the very end. He's giving us hope. Go to the last thing with me. The resurrection's important.

[21 : 28] And it gives us so many things. We'll have life forever. We'll be with the ones we love forever in Christ. We'll have a home in heaven. That brings us victory in this life and in the life to come.

We have an incredible sense of when something's wrong, when we're wronged, when other people are wronged, of injustice and fairness. And when it doesn't, when there's not justice, and when we feel like unfair things happen, it really bothers us.

Deep down. The resurrection guarantees that God's going to fix all of it. Every wrong. And every sin.

And every injustice. It's all going to be fixed. That's what he was doing in the resurrection. You see, because he is coming back, and he's going to set everything right. If you go to verse number 22 in 1 Corinthians 15, it said, like we just read, for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

But every man in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, and afterward they that are Christ at his coming. You see, there's victory in the resurrection, because Jesus Christ is coming back.

[22 : 40] He is coming back. And he's going to set everything right. And the Bible makes that very clear, that he is coming back for us. Skip to the end of the chapter. 1 Corinthians chapter number 15, verse number 51 through 52.

Read this with me. It says, Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. We'll all be resurrected. We'll all be given that resurrection body.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. He is coming back to save us, and what a glorious salvation it's going to be.

Everything's going to be fixed. Every ailment, every sickness, every death, every injustice will be fixed, because Jesus Christ came back from the dead, and he conquered sin and death for everybody who will believe.

And he is coming back. And it's not going to be long. 1 Thessalonians 4 says this. Verse 16 says, For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

[23 : 50] Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with him in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. It says, And so shall we ever be with the Lord.

So shall we ever be with the Lord, never to be separated from him again. He's coming back. And the loved ones that we've lost will be reunited with him, and we'll meet our Lord.

We'll finally get to meet him. We've been waiting for him. We haven't had the chance to meet him in the flesh. But we will. And we'll never be separated from him again.

That's all because of what he did on the cross, and what he did by rising again from the grave, guaranteeing resurrection for every single one of us. There is victory in what Christ has done for us.

There is so much that he's done for us. I just want to read a few more verses for you. The scripture says it all. I really don't need to say much. Revelation 21, verse 1 through 3 says this.

[24 : 50] And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. Because our first heaven and the first earth were passed away. That's this earth right now. There was no sea.

And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God, the dwelling place of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God.

In this world, we go through times of suffering, and it's difficult. We go through all the effects of sin. And so much of it is because God is not here with us. He's up in heaven.

His dwelling place really isn't with men in the way that it's going to be. We can go to be with him now when we're separated from the body, when we die, we'll go to be with him. That's not his final plan.

One day, he'll bring heaven down to earth. And whereas now we go to be where God is, one day he's going to come to be where we are. And it's not going to be like heaven's up there, earth is down here.

[25 : 59] It's going to be one and the same. And God will be our God, and we shall be his people. We'll never be separated from him again. We have complete victory in Jesus Christ, the resurrected Savior.

We have complete victory in Jesus Christ, the resurrected Savior. So let's finish reading 1 Corinthians 15. Go with me to verse 54 and 55.

It says, For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall put off in corruption, this mortal shall put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? And O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Because of what he did on the cross, because of him rising again from the dead and conquering all this, death is put to death, and everyone who believes in him will never have to experience it again.

[27 : 19] He's coming back. We will rise with him. We will be with him forever, and that guarantees us victory. The last verse in 1 Corinthians 15, chapter number 15, is verse 58.

Read it with me. Therefore, my beloved, because he's risen again, because we will rise with him, be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

This hope, and what he's done for us, rising again from the dead, is what's going to sustain us through this life, more than anything else. This hope will give us strength to continue in his work, because our labor is not in vain, because he's coming back, and we will rise with him, and everything we do for him will be rewarded, and we'll never be separated from him again.

So I encourage you this evening, whatever hard time you're going through, whatever you're dealing with, just remember our Lord is, he's alive.

He'll never die again. One day we'll be alive with him, never to die again, because of what he's done for us. We can take hope of that, hope in that, and it'll sustain us through this life.

[28 : 34] Let's pray. Lord, we love you. Thank you for dying for us, and rising again. I ask that you'd use us, that you'd help us not to grow weary, and that we would abound in your work. We thank you for all you've done.

I love you. That's all he sings in your name. Amen. Amen.