

1 Corinthians 15

Does my life depend on the resurrection?

The unique thing about Christianity, the thing that sets it apart from all other world religions is that it is actually not *based* on the teachings of its founder. Christianity is not *based* on the teachings of Jesus. It is based on an event. All four gospels and every other new testament book focuses on an event: the death and resurrection of Jesus.

All other religions are based on the principles the founder taught. Buddha taught the 4 noble truths and the 8 fold path. But then Buddha died and after his death his inspired followers picked up the torch to teach his ways. And Buddhists seek to live out those teachings still to this day.

When Jesus died though, his followers ran scared and cowered in a room. There was no inspiring carrying on of the torch. No they ran and hid. Peter didn't stand up and go "GUYS, I GOT IT...IT'S ABOUT NEIGHBOR LOVE! Quick...let's go tell everybody!" they weren't singing "yes Jesus *loves* me." They were singing "Yes Jesus *left* me." So what happened? What changed them from a bunch of scardy cats to the handful of guys who would change the world? It wasn't Jesus' teaching, it was an event: It was the Resurrection.

Yet, too often the resurrection is this awkward add on for most christians. I think many Christians just don't know what to do with it. If you are explaining the gospel to someone you say: Hey great news God loves you. He made you to be able to have a relationship with him. Your sin though has separated

you from God. So God sent Jesus to die for your sin and this is great news! Jesus died in your place which means your sin has been paid for so now you can have forgiveness for your sin and can be reconciled to God! Oh.....btw... Jesus came back to life. Which is cool. and you should probably know that.

Yet, the one word that the New Testament often uses to talk about the power of God in the gospel is THE RESURRECTION! The great confessions & the great theologians in church history put this at the heart of what we believe. EVEN WIKIPEDIA said this EVENT is the core tenet of Christianity.

Today we finish our 1 Corinthians series and we finish with a confrontation. There were some people in the Corinthian church questioning whether the resurrection was real and if it meant anything for them now. And so Paul draws a line in the sand and says you either believe Jesus rose or you don't. **It's not a philosophy question. It's a historical fact question.** Did Jesus rise from the dead? That's the first question each one of us has to answer today.

What you are going to hear Paul say today: All of the implications of Christianity hinge on it. God's love for you – only true if Jesus rose again. God's forgiveness of your sins – all hangs on the resurrection of Jesus. God's presence with you as you endure suffering – Only there if Jesus rose. God's power in you to fight sin – only if Jesus rose. The power to forgive others – Only if Jesus got out of the grave. The hope that one day you will be with God in heaven – ONLY if Jesus rose again. All of it, the whole great mysterious glorious

truth....it all hinges on whether or not Jesus got up out of the grave.

Here's my question today: I can't just ask you "do you believe Jesus rose" because I think some here might nod their heads yes without grasping what that means for their lives. So I'm going to ask my question in a way more consistent with Paul's tone in chapter 15.

Does your life depend on the resurrection of Jesus?

Here is what I mean: all our actions are based in what we believe to be true about the world. Our behaviors, not our words, are better at revealing our hearts. I may SAY twix bars & combos are bad for me...but my behavior yesterday indicates I believe they aren't *that* bad and that ultimately road trip calories don't count against you. My point: Paul is going to make the claim that the resurrection is the most important event in human history and it makes such an intensely personal claim on your life that if you believe it...it will change you waaaay down deep. And it will affect you...so deeply...that it will be the defining force of your everyday visible life. Your decisions, the way you approach your relationships, the way you approach culture, the way you handle conflict, the way you handle your money...the resurrection of Jesus makes such a personal claim & such a Powerful claim that if you choose to believe it, you wont be able to contain it. It will drastically affect every part of you. That's Paul's claim today. And that's what I want you to ask yourself. First: do you believe it? And second: Do you *really*? Or have you been believing that you could believe it and keep

it over in the spiritual compartment of your life? Today is a mind question, but deeper it's a heart question. Does your life depend on it being true. **Is the only explanation for why you live the way you live is that you are one of those people who believe Jesus got out of the grave?

Three parts: The gospel, the possibility it is false, the promises if it is true. First Paul puts the resurrection back into the spotlight he believes it deserves.

[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [7] Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. [8] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me... [11] Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

This message Paul received from God & gave to them. It's the most critical point of everything he taught the church and guess what...he's saying it AGAIN. Even though they said they believed it...they didn't seem to get it.

Like my kids when I give them instructions... Please stop licking the oreo container and put it in the trash. Ok? Ok. Then they just stare at me. "did you hear me?" "yes." "what did I say?" "ummm, I don't know." That's some of the Corinthians. Hearing but not getting it.

So he's saying it again. As clearly as he can. So if you think "I don't need this part, I know the gospel..." That is exactly who he is talking to here. You do need to hear it again. So listen in.

So Paul says Here is **The Gospel**:

1. **Christ died for our sins** – We have each sinned. The payment for sin is death physical and death spiritual. But God loved us too much to leave you to die in our sin so he sent Christ to die FOR our sins.
2. **He was buried** – He died. And dead people are buried. He was put in a tomb that was sealed up with a huge stone. No getting in there. Jesus in there dead
3. **He was raised 3 days later** – Just like you heard in our readings earlier God the father raised him from the dead. The man who was dead...came back to life!
4. **He appeared to a bunch of people** – Are you catching how this is more like a news article than a philosophy? In fact I believe one of the evidences that prove he did rise is the very "news story" way the gospels talk about Jesus appearing to people. It doesn't say "he came floating along looking like a fiery glow stick." It says he appeared to them and ate some fish. They are just recounting what happened. The gospel is NEWS. You have to decide if its fake news.
5. **Salvation from sin comes through faith** – He closes with we preached and you believed. You can't just know it, you must believe it. The gospel is news that is either true, or its fake. Do you believe he died for you & do you believe he rose again? Before you answer that, let paul tell you what

is at stake in believing this news. We'll call this part of the passage:

IF JESUS DID NOT RISE FROM THE DEAD (vv12-19)

Paul says without the resurrection the christian life is a house of cards. it all falls apart. Watch the progression of how it falls apart:

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

First, **Preaching is empty and void of any spiritual value.** The preaching that led you to Christ, the preaching that changed your life...worthless. Right out of the gate my career is over. next, **your faith is just a fantasy.** A hoax. Because it all hinged on Jesus getting out of the grave everything else you believe is just a delusion. There is no power in it at all other than to deceive you.

[15] **We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.**

next, **the New Testament absolutely cannot be trusted.** It is written by a bunch of guys who said Jesus appeared to them. If he didn't, They are liars who are preaching fake news. & we are all a bunch of suckers for being duped by them

[17] **And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.**

next, we are still dead in our sins. We cannot know God. We cannot have victory over pain, sin, & suffering. We are like people drowning in a vast ocean with no hope of a rescue.

[18] **Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.**

next: the dead are gone forever. Christians had a radically different view of death than pagans. It wasn't the end...it was

just “sleep.” Because to say someone is asleep is to imply they will wake up again. For pagans death was the end. But for Christians...death was a nap where you wake up in the presence of Christ. To be absent the body is to be present with Christ. BUT NOT IF JESUS DIDN'T GET OUT OF THE GRAVE. If he didn't....they are gone forever. All those funerals where you mourned but did so with hope because 1 thessalonians 4 says we grieve as those with HOPE since Jesus ROSE AGAIN so one day we will to and we will all be with Christ in heaven...NOPE. If Jesus didn't get out of the grave...this life is it. Which leads right to the last domino:

[19] If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

next: Our whole lives are a sad lie. Follow Paul's reasoning...if there is no resurrection of Christ...then Paul is saying there is no resurrection for us. No heaven, no eternity with Christ. Which means anyone who puts all their eggs in the Jesus basket is a complete and utter fool. If Jesus didn't get out of the grave the Bill Maher is 100% right about us. Christians believe in a fairy tale on par with the tooth fairy. We are so pathetic we should actually be pitied by society.

Does your life depend on this being true?? For Paul and for the early church and for many Christians around the world today...they have quite literally sacrificed everything because of this belief. We support a church planter who is seeing muslim imams in india place saving faith in Christ. They immediately get fired & their families hold a funeral service for them. They lose all property, everything, and everyone they love. IF THEY ARE WRONG....HOW AWFUL IS THAT! Coptic

Christians hauled out to the beach by ISIS and given one last chance to recant only to pray to Christ and then be beheaded. IF THEY ARE WRONG!?! THEY JUST ENDED THEIR ONLY LIFE FOR NOTHING!!! In Syracuse, NY a feminist studies professor became an evangelical Christian, gave up a long term lesbian relationship, and most of her academic & social community disowned her. When Courtney asked her if it was harder to come out to her parents as gay or to come out as a Christian she said it was way harder to come out as a Christian. All because she is convinced Jesus got out of the grave. What!?! If she's wrong...her life is ruined for nothing.

There is a danger that you can saddle up alongside of Christ without being a Christian. You can participate where it is culturally acceptable but not actually be personally convinced, down in your heart, the resurrection is true. If definitive proof came out tomorrow that Jesus DIDN'T rise from the dead...and the only thing that changed for you is what you did on Sunday morning...your life is not dependent on the resurrection being true! That isn't being a Christian, that's being conveniently religious. This is why, when we talk about belief in the gospel, we say it means resting the weight of your whole life onto it.

Think of it like sitting in a chair. If I sit down in a chair...and the legs of the chair all snap at the same time...what happens to me? I fall. WHY do I fall? Because I wasn't holding myself up, I was being entirely held up by the chair. The chair for Christians is the gospel and Paul says it all hinges on the resurrection. Would your life come crashing down if you discovered the resurrection is a hoax? Would it be laughable?

I've heard some Christians say to non Christians "Well, if I'm wrong I don't really lose anything but if you are wrong...well then eternity is at stake for you." I get what you are going for there, but if you don't lose anything if you are wrong about Jesus...based on what Paul says here you probably aren't a Christian. You've probably slipped into convenient religion that does a nice job masking your functional atheism. Which means you talk about God in spaces where it is safe to do so, and attend church a couple times a month. But your sexual ethic, your goals for your life, your friendships, your free time, your money...these are not dependent on Jesus' resurrection or giving him glory, they are dependent on you being in charge and bringing yourself glory. **Does your life depend on the resurrection?**

The rest of the chapter Paul devotes to the other side of the discussion. And he doesn't pose it as a question. First side he said "**IF** Jesus didn't rise." Second part he says "But he did rise." He doesn't even offer it as a hypothetical. So to honor that here's the other side:

The Promises for Christians in the Resurrection of Jesus

Listen guys in this is the real heart of today. I want to God's words to stir your affections for God. I think many of us are missing the power of God that is available and will transform you into the person God created you to be. And so I want you to listen and receive these promises. Don't let them stop at your mind, let them go where the resurrection is meant to go...all the way to the core. Paul prays in Ephesians 1.18 that you would have the eyes of your heart enlightened

Ephesians 1:18-21

[18] having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [19] and **what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe**, according to the working of his great might [20] that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places

As you hear these promises, I hope the eyes of your heart are open...and that you may know that power available to you.

[9] For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. [10] 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 is with me.

You can have confidence in your acceptance by God even though you are a sinner

This is pretty awesome. Paul said he was "unworthy to be called an apostle" because he persecuted the church of God. What did he mean by that? Paul had killed many Christians. Imagine that, many of the churches Paul preached in or wrote letters to had people whose relatives he had killed! Yet, he said that he worked harder and was more effective than all of the other Apostles. He was the Worst and the best. Where does the knowledge of your total sinfulness come from, as

well as such confidence that God can still use you in mighty ways? Only “in Christ.”¹

The resurrection is your proof that your sins are gone! Christ took them up on the Cross and died for them. He died in your place. And the resurrection is the cosmic defeat of death that serves as your proof that God has the power & authority to forgive your sins. Your sins are permanently forgiven...which means the one thing separating you from God is gone. You are now fully accepted by God!

Tim Keller says that what the gospel does is it tells you that you are at the same time more wicked than you ever realized and more loved than you ever thought possible. Yes you are a sinner...But you are accepted just as you are IN CHRIST. You don't have to work to earn God's acceptance. It's yours!

The gospel is the announcement to you of a gift of salvation that God offers you. No earning it. You receive it. Each person must decide if they will. When someone asks you when you became a Christian...it's the moment you received God's gift. You can't inherit this gift because God gives it, not your parents. You can't work your way towards it. Each person must decide if they will *receive it*. If they will fully surrender their lives and sit down in the chair. Have you ever done that? Today I implore you...receive God's salvation.

¹ Point 1 on the confidence of our acceptance in Christ comes from J.D. Greear's sermon on Mark 16 titled “Resurrection.”

And when you do...you no longer have to try to find acceptance from other people. If your life depends on the resurrection, you will know it because you will start to experience the fading of your need for acceptance by others. You'll start to experience a distaste for sin. It is a belief in the resurrection that unlocks the power for change in your life. The same God that brought Jesus out of the grave...he says he lives within Christians and he re-creates them to enjoy the things they were always meant to find joy in. And not only that...it means he wants to use you for his glory. I wish I could sit down with each one of you, look you in the eye, and tell you that God wants to use you in mighty ways to change eternity. I know you are a mess right now...but God loves a good mess. Abraham was a mess, Jacob was a mess, Moses was a mess, King David was a mess, the disciples were a huge mess. Every great Christian leader...huge mess. This church...full of messes. Here's the great news: your mess is not too messy for God to redeem. Know how I know that? The resurrection. Because he brought Christ out of the grave...I know he has the power to transform your life. It transformed mine. Brief story?

Listen to this next promise from Paul's mouth...

[51] Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

[53] For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. [54] 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.”

[55] “O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”

[56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

[57] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You can face death with courage and confidence.

The word for “sting” in verses 55 & 56 is really the idea we associate with poison. Like a snake bite. It isn't the bite that kills you, it's the poison. Black snake bites you, no big deal. Copperhead bites you...you better hustle. It's the poison the bite injects that does the real damage. That's like death. The “sting” was the poison of eternal separation from God. But now in Christ...death still bites, but the sting is taken away! I love this phrase Paul is quoting from Isaiah ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ Isaiah 25:8
“He will swallow up death forever”

He – God...will swallow up death forever in VICTORY. The resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of every Christian's victory march over death. You do not have to fear death! You can hate it and it is the enemy...but it is an enemy that has lost all its power and now you can stand up to it and say “I do not fear you anymore.” The resurrection has taken the poison out

of death! Which is why 1 Thessalonians says we grieve “differently than those who have no hope.”

[13] But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. [14] For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

So yes death bites, but it doesn't sting anymore. I'll never forget when a giant of faith Curtis Crutchfield, leader of our prayer team and just a guy you felt walked closely with God. He was early 60s, great leader in our church. And we got to the office one day and someone said he had a massive heart attack and died overnight. And so we gathered the staff in to pray and one of our pastors said “Let's pray for Curtis” then he said “Wait, don't pray for Curtis. He's with Jesus, he's way better off than any of us.” “pray for his family who will miss him.” And that stuck because I'm like...yeah...we have hope so we grieve a little differently. We ache because someone we love isn't here...but if they are in Christ we ache but our hearts also rest easy because that believer is with God. That HOPE causes a believer in a persecuted country to look at his persecutors and say “Come at me. I MAY lose this life, but this life is but a moment in eternity. My eternity is set.” THAT is how a believer can face death with boldness. Maybe its through persecution, maybe its cancer...whatever form death takes...YOU CAN STARE IT DOWN WITH COURAGE. Because you are hidden in Christ and he HAS VICTORY OVER DEATH! HE GOT UP!!! WHICH MEANS YOU WILL TOO!

If that doesn't overwhelm you with hope, you might be in that phase of life where you have blinders on about how fragile life is. But the first time you experience real suffering you realize...we aren't promised tomorrow. Except in Christ. A brain aneurysm could drop you dead today without any warning and without any real ability for you to control it. If you are in Christ, you may drop dead but you will wake up in the presence of the Lord.

if you hear that and think yeah I like that hope. Remember it is only available to those whose lives are fully surrendered to Jesus. You can't have the hope of heaven without the lordship of Jesus. And some of you are being made aware today of the eternal war at stake for your soul and its not my goal to stir fear, but death is a real thing. And it only loses its sting if you allow Christ to be your substitute for you in death. If you don't death is a real enemy to you. You need to turn to Christ today!

You can have a new hope for everything in your life

The resurrection of Jesus is the pattern for how his power works in every area of your life. When you sit down in the chair...when you place the weight of your life on the resurrection being true...that FAITH unleashes the power of God in your life. Examples:

- **Marriage Trouble:** your marriage is on the rocks. You can either try to fix it yourself, you can run from it, or you can sit down in the chair of the resurrection. When you sit down in the chair you are saying "God, I know you love me and you love redeeming messy things. My marriage is a mess, but you say love others like you have loved me.

Especially love my spouse." The faith moment is extending love when you have received pain. And it is believing that first, God's love is enough to heal your wounds. And second...by extending Christ-like love...not putting up walls to self-protect, but instead being vulnerable and extending love...that God will soften the heart of your spouse and bring you both to repentance and forgiveness. That is resurrection power. Dead marriages come roaring back to life. I've watched it at least 3 times personally in the past two years. You say "this is too hard!" OF COURSE IT IS! You don't have the power to resurrect a dead marriage. But God does. He resurrects, not you. Open the eyes of your heart to his love for you in Christ. Sit back down in the chair. He will not fail you.

- **Porn Addiction:** Some of you can't get out of an addiction. For many its porn. You keep circling back into it. The resurrection tells you that if God can break the chains of death...he can break the chains of anything that has its hold on you. You gotta sit down in the chair. God I believe the resurrection happened. Sin lost its power that day. I'm believing Christ's resurrection is for me. I'm free from sin. Free from its power. I'm no longer a slave to it. I'm free. It's not a chant, you need people to help you walk through freedom but it is a promise. You are free!

This isn't just for your personal life though. The power that brought Jesus out of the grave can bring healing to entire communities. See Paul is pointing us in this chapter to the day when our physical bodies will be resurrected and the earth will be transformed into a new heavens and new earth. That

renewal began at the resurrection and will come in full when Jesus returns to earth. So the church stands in between those two days pointing to the day to come by displaying the resurrection power of Christ in all things. It means Christians redeem all aspects of culture. Art, business, education...all of it. Whatever your profession we go in and work to redeem it for the glory of God.

Leads me right to the last thing.

[30] Why are we in danger every hour? [31] I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! [32] What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

You can give your life away for the sake of others

Paul was saying...every hour we are in danger. Why? Because the resurrection has set him free from thinking this life is all there is! So he can take bold risks for the sake of proclaiming the gospel.

Kevin & Carla – safety & security – probably get martyred.

Listen I want to say something that I hope will be a seed that will grow into something that may finally set some of you free from the American Dream that you've been conditioned to worship.

The resurrection tells you there is something bigger going on than your pursuit of a comfortable lifestyle. I think we have serious FOMO. We fear that if we give ourselves wholly to the mission of God that we won't be able to accrue the wealth we need to accrue to provide financially for our families...etc. So

we risk a little bit here and there. But we don't want to be crazy about it. The resurrection says this life isn't all there is!! And you aren't building your legacy for this life. You are building it for the next one. And because you don't have to worship the almighty dollar, Because there is no real security in this life anyways, you can take risks for the kingdom of God that are absolutely absurd...UNLESS JESUS GOT OUT OF THE GRAVE! If he got out of the grave those same big leaps will be the most logical thing you can do with your life! I want us to be a church of audacious faith who takes bold, silly steps for the glory of God. It's how we started and I want it to be how we walk day in and day out

Quit your job & move to the middle east or india to get a job & preach the gospel – not a financially beneficial move. BUT WHO CARES!!! Don't buy the lie! Jesus Rose! So this life isn't the big deal!

Some of you God has given an idea, a vision for a ministry that will bring the hope of the resurrection to a particular group of people and you are scared right now to give yourself to it. Scared of what it will mean for your life and for others. And LISTEN: JESUS GOT OUT OF THE GRAVE! HE'S WITH YOU! AND THIS LIFE ISN'T ALL THERE IS. TAKE THE RISK!

Weeknights with refugees – give to people who can't give back. You could do something more "productive" for yourself if you didn't do it.

Is THE RESURECCTION OF JESUS the driving explanation for your life?

Closing

Rodney Stark wrote a book called *The Rise of Christianity*. In it he pointed out that Christians were very different from their neighbors in at least three respects in the ancient Greco Roman world.²

1. When the epidemics hit the Greco-Roman urban centers then **Christians did not flee like everyone else**. They stayed to care for the sick and the dying, often at great peril to themselves. Many of them got sick and died as well.
2. When Christians were persecuted and slaughtered, **they did not die by resisting**. When put to death unjustly, They did not respond violently. They died praying for their enemies.
3. For the first time in history there was one world power that had conquered all major nations and people groups. There were no borders any more so the cities began to be multi-ethnic melting pots. **The Christians were the first and only ones at that point who recognized that there were no class or racial distinctions**. There were all kinds of ethnic tensions within those cities. But There was only one united humanity in Christ.

Rodney Stark asked why were Christians like that?

- Were they just ethnic and morally superior, progressive in their thinking?
- The answer is always found in the resurrection of Christ.

- In Christ there was no fear of death. So they could risk their lives to serve others.
- In Christ there was the ability to forgive their enemies because of the promise of the resurrection.
- In Christ there was one humanity. Christ was not jew or greek and since all were made in his image all are owed dignity and respect.

Everything about them was dependent on the resurrection. And because of that, they had joy. Do you have that joy? Does your life depend on the resurrection?

² I found this summary by Tim Keller really helpful and am indebted to him for it in this message.

Hurt by a friend: Similar – The resurrection gives you the power to forgive. Because it tells you that you were dead apart from Christ’s forgiveness. So it puts you on their level. And THEN, it tells you just as God brought you from dead to life he also brought you into close fellowship with himself. That reconciling power is available to you & your friend. God resurrects dead friendships and makes them stronger. I’m telling you his power is miraculous if you will just sit in the chair.