

"If Christ Is Risen..."

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[0 : 00] So as I've said, on this day when many around the world are reflecting on the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, even many who do not know him still mark the day.

It seems fitting for us to pause and reflect on the meaning of the resurrection at this time. Not just as an event in history, but as a central truth of our faith.

So we're going to turn back to 1 Corinthians 15 and reflect on the truth of the resurrection and what it means for us all.

The Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians addressed a church facing numerous challenges. Located in the bustling cosmopolitan city of Corinth, known for its immorality, for paganism and for its philosophical diversity, the church was struggling with division, with disputes and confusion about the Christian life.

The believers in Corinth had many questions, particularly about what it meant to live as Christians in such a morally chaotic society.

[1 : 19] 1 Corinthians is a pastoral letter in which Paul addresses these issues, bringing correction, encouragement and teaching to a troubled church.

In chapters 1 to 6, Paul deals with issues of division, immorality and disputes between believers. And in chapters 7 to 14, he answers specific questions the Corinthians had about marriage, spiritual gifts and the proper worship in the church.

But here in chapter 15, Paul shifts to one of the most foundational aspects of the Christian faith, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And that implications for the believers. The Corinthians, like many people today, had questions about the resurrection.

Some were even denying the future resurrection of the dead and possibly even questioning the reality of Christ's own resurrection. In response, Paul argues that the resurrection is absolutely central to the Christian faith.

[2 : 37] Without it, he says, the gospel itself falls apart. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is meaningless.

Our preaching is in vain. And we are still in our sins. But then Paul offers the glorious hope of the resurrection in verse 20.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. This is the pivot of the chapter. And in fact, it's a pivot of the whole of history.

Everything in Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His victory over death is the guarantee of our own future resurrection.

And the hope that sustains us in the present. Paul's argument is not merely theological. It's deeply practical. He helps the Corinthians and us understand why the resurrection of Jesus is not just an event for us to remember.

[3 : 48] But the reality that transforms everything in our lives. If Christ is risen, then our preaching does have purpose.

Our faith is firm. Our work is significant. And our future is secure. Tonight we'll explore six key truths from this passage that Paul presents to us.

I feel I must say that I prepared this before Thomas preached his beautiful opposite sermons the other week. Because I'm taking a very similar tact.

So we'll be looking at the things Paul outlines that we are missing if Christ is not risen. And flipping them on their heads to see the beautiful opposite there.

But it's not plagiarism, I promise. So our six opposites for tonight are our preaching has purpose. Our faith is firm.

[4 : 52] Our sin is forgiven. Our labor is vital. Our future is flourishing. And our lives end not in defeat, but in victory.

These truths are the living reality of the resurrection. They aren't just doctrines we affirm. They are the very foundation of our hope, of our joy, and of our victory in Christ.

So firstly, from verses 12 to 14. Our preaching is not in vain. Our preaching has purpose.

Paul begins this section of 1 Corinthians 15 by confronting a tragic error. Some in Corinth were saying there was no resurrection of the dead.

And he doesn't dance around us. He presses this to its logical conclusion. In verse 14 we read, And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain.

[6 : 06] In other words, if there is no resurrection, if Jesus is still in the tomb, then everything that we say from the pulpit is meaningless.

It's powerless. It's just empty words. It wouldn't matter how passionate I was, how eloquent I sounded, how persuasive I could be.

If Christ is not risen, the gospel is just a nice idea with no substance. No power to save. No comfort to offer.

No hope to proclaim. Paul says our preaching would be in vain. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.

This is the turning point. This is the glorious reality that changes everything. Because Jesus is risen, our preaching is not in vain.

[7 : 10] It's full of purpose. It's alive with hope and truth and the power of God. Preaching isn't just a religious tradition. It's a proclamation of a risen saviour.

It's an announcement of victory over sin and death. It's the call to come and follow the risen Christ. When we preach, we are not sharing ideas.

We are declaring a fact. Christ has been raised. That's what gives preaching its purpose. It's why Paul could say earlier in this letter, we preach Christ crucified.

Yes, crucified, but also raised, triumphant, reigning. That's why people can come to faith when the gospel is preached.

Not because the preacher is clever or gifted, thankfully, but because Jesus is alive. And the Holy Spirit applies that truth of the risen Christ to human hearts.

[8 : 15] I think of the preaching that brought revival to this island in the past generations. Preaching that was Christ-centered, spirit-filled, and resurrection-focused.

It changed communities, not because the men were great, but because the Christ they preached was risen and reigning. And even now, preaching has eternal weight because of this resurrection. If Christ is not risen, preaching is pointless. But he is risen. So every time the gospel is proclaimed, God is at work.

Hearts can be changed. Hope can be born. Lives can be redirected for eternity. Moving on.

Our faith is not futile. Our faith is firm. Paul now turns from preaching to faith. If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain.

[9 : 30] And your faith is in vain. Then he repeats and expands this spot in verse 17. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.

And you are still in your sins. Let's think about that for a moment. If Jesus stayed dead, then the faith we hold, the faith we sing about, the faith we share with others, it's not just weak.

It's utterly futile. It's pointless. It's powerless. It's powerless. Why? Because without the resurrection, Jesus is just another teacher who died.

If death beat him, then sin still reigns. There's no proof that the cross accomplished anything. There's no victory. There's no forgiveness.

There's no hope. Without the resurrection, Good Friday becomes a tragedy. And there is no triumph. And in verse 19, Paul says, If in Christ we have hoped in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

[10 : 52] If this is all just for now, if there's no resurrection at the end, then we've been duped. Faith becomes just a coping mechanism for hard times, rather than a living trust in a living saviour.

But again, Paul turns the whole thing around. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. And because of that, faith is not futile.

It is firm. It's grounded in reality. It's anchored to something solid, to someone solid, Jesus, risen and reigning.

It means that we trust in Christ, if we trust in Christ, we are not still in our sins. We are forgiven, cleansed, accepted, justified before our God.

Not because of anything we have done, but because Jesus died and rose again. It means that when we pray, we are heard.

[12:03] When we suffer, we are not alone. When we face death, we do not despair. Because our faith is in the risen saviour, who has conquered sin and death.

So when you come to Christ, you're not stepping out into the dark. You're standing on the rock. Our faith is not a feeling.

It's not a leap in the dark. It's trust in the one who walked out of the tomb. And that makes all the difference. We are not still in our sins.

If we are in Christ, we are forgiven. In verse 17, we read, And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.

Still in your sins. That's one of the most devastating statements in all of scripture. Still in your sins.

[13:09] Still guilty. Still under judgment. Still cut off from God. Still enslaved to sin. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.

That changes everything. If Christ has been raised, then our sins are dealt with. His resurrection is the Father's great declaration that the cross has done its work.

The debt is paid. The wrath is satisfied. The curse is broken. Forgiveness is found in him.

And that's Paul's point. If Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins. But because he has been raised, everyone who trusts in him is no longer in their sins.

As Paul says elsewhere in Ephesians, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses. So if you're united to Jesus by faith, if he is your savior, then you are not still in your sins.

[14:27] You are forgiven. Your guilt is gone. Your record is clean. You are no longer under condemnation. You may still feel the weight of your sins.

You may still remember your failures. But in the court of heaven, the verdict is in. Not guilty. That is true only because Jesus rose.

And it's true only for those who belong to him. If you haven't trusted in him, then hear the warning in this verse.

You are still in your sins. And that is a deeply serious place to be. But hear the invitation also.

Jesus is alive. And he offers full and free forgiveness to all who will come to him. You don't have to stay in your sins.

[15:29] You don't have to carry the guilt and shame or the fear. He is born at all. And he rose again to give you peace. And the empty tomb is there to prove it.

That he has the power to do so. Moving on. Our labor is not in vain.

Our labor is vital. If Christ is not risen, not only is our preaching pointless, not only is our faith futile, but all our labor for the Lord would be in vain.

That's what Paul says in verse 58, right at the end of this great chapter. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Why would he say that? Because of everything he has just said. Because Christ has been raised. But if he hadn't been, all our Christian service would be meaningless.

[16:45] If the resurrection didn't happen, then why bother? Why help in the Sunday school? Why visit the sick?

Why give sacrificially? Why bear witness to Christ? Why pray? Why labor? Why weep for the lost? If Christ is still in the grave, then none of it matters. There's no reward, no lasting value, no eternal fruit. We are just on a religious treadmill.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. And that changes everything. It means that every act of Christian service, however small, is infused with eternal significance.

It means that your unseen faithfulness matters. Your quiet acts of kindness matter. Your sacrifice for the sake of Christ is not wasted.

[17:55] Your labor is not in vain. Paul expands on this in verses 24 to 28, where he describes the end of all things.

That Christ will destroy every rule and power and deliver the kingdom to God the Father. The resurrection isn't just an isolated event. It's the beginning of a whole new creation.

And our labor now is part of that unfolding kingdom. And maybe some of you are weary. Maybe you wonder if it's worth it.

Maybe you've been serving faithfully for years, perhaps in ways that go unseen by many. And the visible fruit for you seems small.

The encouragement is rare. And the road is long. Take heart. Because Jesus is risen. Your labor is meaningful.

[19 : 00] It's not just worthwhile. It's meaningful in God's kingdom purposes. Not that God needs anything. But he has planned out good works for us.

He has chosen to use us in his mission. He's chosen to involve us in his wonderful plan. And we can be obedient to him and labor in those good works that he has prepared for us.

Paul says, Always abounding in the work of the Lord. Why? Because Jesus is alive. He reigns. And what is done for him lasts forever.

Our future is not fatal. Our future is flourishing. One of the heaviest consequences of denying the resurrection is what it means for our future.

If Christ is not raised from the dead, then death is the end. The grave is the end. And nothing lies beyond it.

[20 : 16] Paul lays that out clearly in verse 32. If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. If this life is all there is, then why not live for the moment?

There's no justice. There's no reckoning. There's no hope. There's just the slow march of death. And as we all know, death is inescapable.

We can avoid thinking about it. We can distract ourselves. But it always comes. And without the resurrection, death is a fatal enemy that will always win.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Here is our hope.

Jesus' resurrection is not just his personal victory. It's the firstfruits. It's the beginning of the harvest. His resurrection guarantees ours.

[21 : 26] He is the pattern, the prototype, the risen king who blazes the trail for all who belong to him.

That means your future, if you are in Christ, is not death. It's resurrection. Glorious, bodily, eternal life.

Paul impacts this in verses 42 to 44. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable.

What is raised is imperishable. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. Right now, our bodies are weak.

They break. They wear. But the future that awaits us in a resurrection life is strong and glorious and full of the Spirit.

[22 : 29] This is not just wishful thinking. It's not just a metaphor. It's reality grounded in Christ's physical resurrection. He really rose and so will we who believe in him.

We live in a culture that fears death but can't explain it. One that glorifies youth but has no answer for aging.

One that hides from death because it has no hope beyond it. But we do because Jesus lives. We can live also.

Your future is not a slow fade into nothingness. It's a glorious transformation into the likeness of your risen Savior. That's not just good news for the end of your life.

It should give you courage for this life. And moving on, we are not defeated. We are victorious in Christ.

[23 : 40] Paul now brings us to the crescendo of this chapter. Having shown the resurrection's power to redeem our preaching, our faith, our sin, our labor, and our future, he now celebrates his triumph over our greatest enemy, death itself.

In verse 54, he declares, death is swallowed up in victory. And then he taunts death itself. Oh death, where is your victory?

Oh death, where is your sting? Again, this is not just poetic language. It's the bold, spirit-filled confidence of someone who knows the war has been won.

Because if Christ has not been raised, then death has the victory. It's undefeated. It holds every person in its grip.

It robs us of our loved ones. It breaks families. It humbles kings and crushes the strong. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[25 : 01] Because Christ rose, death has been defeated. He didn't just endure death. He conquered it. Jesus walked out of the tomb.

And that changes our whole story. It means death is no longer the end. It is a doorway, a defeated enemy, a broken chain.

and it means that in Christ we win. Not because of anything we have done, but because we are united to the risen, reigning king.

We may still face hardship. We may still see the sting of death in this life. But its power has been broken. The grave could not hold Jesus and it will not hold you if you put your trust in him.

Think of how many Christians across the centuries have faced death with calm or even joy. Not because they were brave, but because they knew the victory had already been won.

[26 : 12] This is the confidence the resurrection gives. Not arrogance, but assurance. We do not walk through life defeated.

We walk in hope, in joy, and in victory. Because Jesus is alive, we are not victims. We are victors. So where does all this leave us? Paul doesn't write this chapter to give us abstract theology. He writes it to shape how we live.

The resurrection is not something to be celebrated once a year on Easter Sunday. It's something to live in the light of every single day.

so for those who are believers, live in the light of the resurrection. If Christ is risen, then our preaching has purpose.

[27 : 13] So don't be ashamed of the gospel. Keep sharing the good news. It's not empty words. It is the power for salvation. If Christ is risen, our faith is firm.

So when doubts come, when the world mocks, when life is hard, remember your faith is not a blind leap. It's rooted in a living saviour.

If Christ is risen, our sins are forgiven. So don't live under the weight of guilt and shame. The empty tomb is God's great declaration that the price has been paid in full.

You're no longer in your sins. You're forgiven. You're washed clean. You're made new. If Christ is risen, then our labour is meaningful.

So keep going. Keep serving. Keep praying. Your work for the Lord is not forgotten. It matters for eternity.

[28 : 19] If Christ is risen, our future is flourishing. So don't fear what's ahead. Whether it's suffering, decline, or death itself, your future is secure in Christ.

And if Christ is risen, then our victory is sure. So rejoice. Sin and death do not have the final word. Death doesn't win.

Christ has conquered and in him so have you. Let the resurrection shape how you speak, how you serve, how you suffer, and how you hope.

hope. And for those of you who do not yet know Christ, what is your foundation? Paul makes it plain.

If Christ is not raised, then faith is futile and we are still in our sins. But because he has been raised, you must reckon with this.

[29 : 27] You must respond. wind. So let me ask you, is your faith firm or is it futile? Are you still in your sins?

Are you laboring with eternal purposes or are you chasing after the wind? What does your future look like? Does it end in the grave or does it stretch out to glory?

will your life end in defeat or will it end in victory through Christ? There is only one way to have that firm faith, that forgiveness, that vital purpose, that flourishing future and that glorious victory.

And that is to be united to the risen Jesus by faith. Come to him. Trust him. He has defeated death and he will not fail you.

Amen. Yeah, I'm just going to...