

But Now is Christ Risen

**Sermon Delivered on March 31st, 2024
AM Service**

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Text:

1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2: By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3: For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4: And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. 5: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7: After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8: And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. 9: For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet 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 which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11: Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. 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? 13: But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15: 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. 16: For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18: Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19: If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 20: But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

1 Corinthians 15:54c ... Death is swallowed up in victory. 55: O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56: The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57: But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58: Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Introduction

Today, is Resurrection Sunday. To some that means baskets, eggs, and bunnies; but to us believers it means that Jesus Christ is alive! It's a celebration of the great truth that Jesus Christ, who was crucified and who died on a cross, rose from the dead just three days later!

When Jesus died, the religious leaders asked Pilate to secure the tomb until the third day. This is because they feared that Jesus' disciples might come and steal the body and tell the people that He has been raised from the dead. And so, they went with the guards and secure the tomb by sealing the stone. One song writer captured that historical event like this...

*Vainly they watch His grave
Jesus my Saviour
Vainly they seal the dead
Jesus my Lord*

*Up from the grave He arose
With a mighty triumph o'er His foe
He arose a victor from the dark domain
And He lives forever with His saints to reign
He arose, He arose
Hallelujah Christ arose!*

- Robert Lowry

Despite all the soldiers that watch and guard the tomb, Jesus rose from the dead. This is what sets Christianity apart from every other religion in the world! This one truth is what sets Jesus Christ apart from every other religious leader. **Buddha** is dead, **Confucius** is dead, **Mohammed** is dead, **Carl Marx** is dead, **Joseph Smith** is dead, **Felix Manalo** is dead. Every founder of every religion that has ever existed has died. But there is only One who has conquered and risen from the dead! And that's none other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the opening verses of this great chapter, the Apostle Paul reminds his readers and us that the doctrine of Christ's resurrection from the dead is a **central and foundational doctrine**. It is an essential component of the Gospel of grace.

1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2: By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3: For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4: And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

This chapter contains an extensive teaching on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of believers. [1 Corinthians 15](#) is the **longest and the most comprehensive chapter** in all of the Bible **about the resurrection**. You may be asking why so long a chapter? Why did the apostle Paul devoted a whole long chapter on the subject of the resurrection? It's because **some of the Corinthian believers were misled and confused** about the physical resurrection of Christians from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, **how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?** 13: But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

There are those among the Corinthian believers who had some doubts about idea a physical bodily resurrection. And so, Paul in this chapter tries to clear up these doubts and confusions. And how does he do it? That's what I invite you to consider this morning. What I want to do is to look at this long chapter by highlighting three important points that the apostle brings up in this chapter, **A Terrifying Assumption, A Confident Declaration, and A Practical Conclusion.**

I – A Terrifying Assumption

To awaken the Corinthian believers to the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ's and theirs, the apostle **Paul paints a depressing picture of what life would be like if there had been no resurrection.** If Christ be not risen, if Christ be not raised, what life would be like? Have you ever considered what your life would be if Christ did not rise from the dead. Let us look at what our life and hopes would be, had Christ not risen from the dead.

1. Our Preaching is Vain

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, **then is our preaching vain ...**

If Jesus did not rise from the dead and is still in that grave, then **preaching would be empty and worthless.** Because if we preach a risen Christ and if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is **based on the delusion, therefore vain and useless.** What we are doing here this morning would be a waste of time and energy. It would be an exercise in futility.

2. Our Faith is Vain

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and **your faith is also vain.**

If Jesus did not rise from the dead and is still in that grave, then not only our preaching is vain, but also our faith is vain. **If Christ be not risen, then He would not be what He claims to be.** He would not be the Son of God, the great I AM. He would not be the Bread of life, the Light of the world, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the True Vine, and the Saviour of the world. He would be none of these if He did not rise from the dead. **And why put faith in dead Messiah?** That faith would be vain and foolish.

3. We are False Witnesses

1 Corinthians 15:15 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.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead and is still in that grave, then not only our preaching is vain, and our faith is vain, but also, we are found to be false witnesses. In other words, **we are deceivers.** It's one thing to be mistaken, it's another thing to be a false witness. Every time we sing "*Because He Lives*", "*Chris the Lord is Risen Today*", "*He Lives*", every time we sing these hymns about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, if He is still in the grave, if He did not rise from the dead, we lie and deceive. Every time we witness, or testify, or preach, or whatever we

do in His name, then we are liars, if He did not rise from the dead. If Christ is still in the grave, we all would be false witnesses.

4. We are Yet in Our Sins

1 Corinthians 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; **ye are yet in your sins.** 18: Then they also which are **fallen asleep in Christ are perished.**

If Jesus did not rise from the dead and is still in that grave, then not only our preaching is vain, our faith is vain, we are false witnesses, but also, we are yet in our sins. If there is no resurrection, there is no Saviour. If there is no Saviour, there is no forgiveness. **A dead Saviour cannot save and cannot forgive.** If Christ is still in the grave, then we are still lost, still in our sins, and we are on our way to hell this morning.

5. We are of All Men Most Miserable

1 Corinthians 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, **we are of all men most miserable.**

If Jesus did not rise from the dead and is still in that grave, then not only our preaching is vain, our faith is vain, we are false witnesses, we are yet in our sins, but also, we are of all men most miserable. If we have hoped in Christ in this life and if He has not risen from the dead, then we are to be pitied more than anyone in the world. Think of it, being Christians, among many others, we are called to deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily, and follow Christ. Many in Paul's days severely suffered for following Christ. In chapter 11 and verses 35 to 38 of the book of Hebrews, Paul writes, "others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Now, if Jesus Christ was not literally raised from the dead, then the physical abuse and suffering these men and women suffered was truly pointless. They are of all men most miserable.

This is depressing picture of what life would be like if there had been no resurrection: our preaching is vain, our faith is vain, we are false witnesses, we are yet in our sins, and we of all men most miserable.

II – A Confident Declaration

1 Corinthians 15:20 **But now is Christ risen from the dead,** and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

I love Paul's confident declaration—but now! **But now is Christ risen from the dead!** This is reality. This is not just Paul's wishful thinking. How did Paul come to that solid and sure confidence? It's because, like the death and burial of Jesus Christ, His resurrection is **a well-documented and well-established event in history.** It is not based on a religious feeling or unsupported rumor. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a myth nor a legend but **a historical fact with solid evidence to support it.**

Let us look at one of the many undeniable proofs that Jesus Christ really did rise from the dead. The resurrection Jesus Christ is **supported by actual eyewitnesses.**

1 Corinthians 15:5 And that he was **seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:** 6: After that, he was **seen of above five hundred brethren at once;** of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7: After that, he **was seen of James; then of all the apostles.** 8: And last of all he **was seen of me also,** as of one born out of due time.

Paul cited as undeniable evidence the **more than 500 eyewitnesses,** who saw Jesus after He arose. He was seen by over 500 eyewitnesses **at once,** along with numerous other appearances to His disciples. That fact of His resurrection is attested by a countless of personal eyewitnesses, by the ongoing life of the church as well.

There were more witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus than to the signing of the Declaration of Independence! Some would say that it was just a hallucination. Lee Strobel was an atheist but now a believer and follower of Jesus Christ. But before he became a Christian, he said the resurrection was just a hallucination. He tried to disprove the resurrection and went to his psychologist friend. Listen as he explained what his friend told him. *“I went to a psychologist friend and said if 500 people claimed to see Jesus after He died, it was just a hallucination. He said hallucinations are an individual event. If 500 people have the same hallucination, that's a bigger miracle than the resurrection.”*

1 Corinthians 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; **of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.**

This letter of Paul to the Corinthians was written within a few years after the death of Jesus Christ. So, at the time of Paul's writing, many of those witnesses were still alive. Paul was inviting people to check out the facts. A greater part of these first-hand witnesses was **still alive and available for questioning.**

But now is Christ risen from the dead! Jesus Christ lives! Our Lord Jesus Christ conquered sin, death, hell, and the grave forever. Because He lives, believers, our preaching is not in vain, our faith is not vain, we are true witnesses, we are longer under sin's condemnation, and we of all men are most blessed!

1 Corinthians 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and **become the firstfruits of them that slept.**

Christ's resurrection provides for the future resurrection of the believer.

III – A Practical Conclusion

1 Corinthians 15:58 **Therefore,** my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Having completed his extensive and comprehensive teaching on the resurrection of Christ, **Paul brings it now to a practical conclusion.** Since Christ is risen from the dead, and in light of that glorious truth, Paul writes, “**be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.**” In other words, this glorious truth of the resurrection of Christ **ought to affect the way you and I live.** He says first, be steadfast and unmovable, which means **to stand firm and do not be shaken.** Don’t deviate from the truth.

1 Thessalonians 5: 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

2 Timothy 1:13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Heb.10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

Paul goes on to say in this closing verse, “**always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.**”

Not only hold fast to the truth, but also abound in the work of the Lord. We see the same exhortation in [Galatians 6:9](#) where Paul writes, “**And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.**” Don’t stop serving the Lord. Don’t stop living for God and loving people. Don’t stop reading your Bibles. Don’t stop praying. Don’t stop coming to the house of God. Don’t stop fighting temptation. Stand your ground. Why? Because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Because you know you will reap, if you faint not.

*We have labored in the vineyard of the Lord.
And it seems the world has stolen our reward.*

*But God has not forgotten,
And when He calls us home
We’ll receive eternal treasures,
And a place of honor near His throne*

*God has seen our faithful service,
Through the years
All our heartaches
All our burdens, all the tears,*

*But do not be discouraged,
There’s a purpose, there’s a plan,
There’s a reason for each season.
So, trust the leading of His hand.*

It’s not in vain.

*It's not in vain.
We serve a risen Saviour.
Jesus rules and reigns
The heavens cheer us on
We do not walk alone.
Our labor, our witness
Our faith is not in vain.*

-Mike Speck, Niles Borop and Dwight Lilies

Closing Exhortations

A teacher asked the students to write an essay on the greatest living man. One student wrote an essay on Jesus Christ. And teacher said, “*Son, that's a good essay, but I said, living man.*” The student said, “*Sir, He is alive! Jesus Christ is alive!*”

Amen! We don't put our faith in a dead Messiah. He is [“declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”](#) (Romans 1:4).

Because He lives, those who believe in Him have everlasting life. Because He lives, life itself is worth living! Because He lives, I want to live! Thank God for the resurrection! No matter how dark the day may be, no matter how tough life may be, because He lives, we have hope, and we can face tomorrow.

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living,
Just because He lives!*

-Bill & Gloria Gaither

If you are here this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ, I want you to know that Jesus Christ has conquered Satan, sin, death, and hell. He rose from the dead on that Resurrection morning. He is alive and well today. You will not find Him among the dead. And He offers you forgiveness and eternal life. The Bible tells us that those who trust in Jesus Christ, we will share in His resurrection. The fear of death and judgment is taken away. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

AMEN!