**The Good News of the Resurrection**

**1 Corinthians 15:1-19 (ESV)**

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***1*** *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,* ***2*** *and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

***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.* ***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.* ***11*** *Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

***12*** *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?* ***13*** *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised**.* ***14*** *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.* ***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.* ***16*** *For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.* ***17*** *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.* ***18*** *Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.* ***19*** *If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

What do you think about when you think of the ministry of Jesus?This is a very important matter because what you think about when you think of Jesus’ ministry will largely define the focus of your faith and of your worship. So think with me for a moment over this question. Many in the church would answer this question, “Well, when I think of the ministry of Jesus I think of His love for individuals. I think of His merciful and gentle interactions with sinners. I think of His kind provision for people who are troubled.” Others might say, “When I think of the ministry of Jesus, I think of His teachings. I think of His parables, of His Sermon on the Mount. I think of the way that He rebuked the Pharisees and the way He instructed His disciples.” Now, of course, the gospels record these details of Jesus’ earthly ministry. I do not deny that these things are significant and very important. But let me challenge you to change your central thoughts of Jesus’ ministry.

Let’s consider the writers of the New Testament. If we ask, “What did the writers of the gospels emphasize regarding Jesus’ ministry?” we would note that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John focused primarily upon the last week of Jesus’ life. Almost 40% of their content concerns the redemptive facts surrounding Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. And then if we ask, “What did the apostles emphasize about Jesus’ ministry in their inspired letters?” we would find that they emphasized the exact things that the gospel writers emphasized. The apostles did not emphasize Jesus’ compassion, nor His specific sermons so much as they placed primary attention upon His atoning work…a work completed in Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. This is the most important matter for the apostles.We find that abundantly clear in the passage that we open to today in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul says that these details of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection are of “first importance.”

Why are these historical facts the apostles’ first focus, their primary emphasis? The answer is because Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection are central to God’s salvation of our soul.If Jesus had not died and rose from the dead, all of His kind actions, all of His good teachings would have zero ability to rescue us from our sin. We would still be living in darkness under God’s eternal condemnation, and without any relationship with the living Lord. If we only had Jesus’ loving example and His moral teachings, we would be completely without relationship with God and without hope for our future. So I urge you believers, to make the New Testament’s focus your focus when you think about Jesus and His ministry. Do not be sidetracked away from Jesus’ essential work by the good but lesser aspects of His time on this earth.

When we open our Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15, we learn that the resurrection of Jesus is a game changer for everything in our lives. His resurrection teaches us to live lives in view of our eternal hope and in view of God’s infinite holiness. His resurrection moves us to live our present lives with an eternal perspective.Paul writes this chapter to this church in ancient Corinth to reassert the central role that the bodily resurrection has in the daily life of the believer. The fundamental problem that the Corinthians have is a doctrinal one and that doctrinal problem is identified in verse 12:

***12*** *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

It seems that the believers in Corinth affirmed Jesus’ bodily resurrection. So they weren’t denying that Jesus did not bodily rise from the dead. But they did deny, some of them, that there was a future bodily resurrection for those who are in Christ Jesus. It is likely that some believed the resurrection for the Christian had already taken place. Some believed in what theologians call an “over-realized eschatology.” They believed that the event which is future had already taken place in the present. They believed then that the bodily resurrection was spiritual and opposed to physical.

The church, I believe, was allowing the world to influence their thinking regarding a bodily resurrection. You see, the Greek philosophers of the day, which were dominant in the city of Corinth, all considered a future bodily resurrection as utterly foolish and unthinkable. The Greek philosophers considered this physical body of ours a prison. And they considered death then to be a liberation from this prison of our body. So the idea of a bodily resurrection was belittled as utter foolishness. And the church was listening to the world’s philosophy. And as they listened to the world’s philosophy, they were being led astray from the Gospel. Friend, the Christian church is tempted in every age to bend her beliefs to fit the current convictions of the unbelieving world. That’s a temptation that every generation within the church of Jesus faces, in every culture. We must be willing to accept open ridicule from the world so that we don’t wander from the truth, God’s truth, and from our joy in the Lord.

Some of us listening to the problem being explained in verse 12 may be asking, “Well, what’s the big deal? Why make a big stink of this doctrinal matter regarding a future bodily resurrection for the Christian? If people don’t believe in a future bodily resurrection they might be wrong, but should we really confront them for it? Is it really that significant?” Paul’s answer in this chapter is “Yes!” We absolutely must confront this aberration, this unorthodox belief! Paul insists that if the Corinthian believers refused to believe in a future bodily resurrection unto life for those who have been united in Christ, they then are implicitly denying Jesus’ bodily resurrection. And by that, they are emptying the Gospel of its power, of its hope, and of its blessing. This church has to make a decision: Either rejoice in their own future bodily resurrection or deny Jesus’ bodily resurrection. This doctrine is central to our worship of God.

Not many evangelicals today consciously reject the future bodily resurrection for those who are in Christ. Now some do, so it’s still a danger for us to be aware about. But many of us push this doctrine to the periphery of our lives. We don’t consider it as central in our thinking. Webecome forgetful of it. We become neglectful over it. My prayer is that our study of 1 Corinthians 15 will reassert the central role that our future bodily resurrection must have upon our daily lives.May we live moment by moment with a conscious embrace of the resurrection. I believe this future reality will make a huge difference in the battles that we face day by day in this broken world.

In verses 1-15, Paul addresses the question, “How do I know that a future bodily resurrection awaits me?” Paul then offers three lines of evidence to prove future resurrection for those who are in Christ. Now as we listen to the evidence that Paul lays out, it’s really important for us to be aware that Paul is writing to a church. He is writing to people who are already “in.” They’ve already listened to the Gospel and received it through faith. He is not writing to the pagans who are in Corinth. The lines of evidence that he offers likely will have no effect upon an atheist or upon an unbeliever in the city of Corinth. But he’s writing to believers so that believers who have been turning their attention away from this doctrine, either in denial or shoving it off into the far corners of their lives, would turn their attention back to it and say, “No. This is very significant. We have to hold fast to this day by day.”

How do I know that a bodily resurrection awaits me as I am in Christ?

**Evidence #1: Our personal experience of the Gospel’s transforming power.**

He points to the believer’s transformation that took place when they believed in Christ and were born anew by the Spirit of God.

***1*** *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,* ***2*** *and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

In addressing this doctrinal confusion, Paul asks each believer in the church to think about when they first heard the Gospel, when they first received it, and the life-changing power that the Gospel had in their lives. Paul believes that the Gospel itself will bring clarity to this doctrinal confusion. So as they think through this doctrinal problem, he urges them to consider the basics of the Good News message. He asks them to remember how this Gospel opened their eyes to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus. And from this we learn a great principle when we too are struggling with moral or doctrinal confusion.

When we are struggling with a moral or doctrinal confusion in our lives, we are right to begin our pursuit for clarity by reminding ourselves of the basics of the Gospel and reminding ourselves of the Gospel’s power in our lives to change us. I do not believe we will find clarity about any doctrinal or moral issue outside the Gospel of Jesus. We must not begin with a discussion group. We must not begin by reading the philosophers or even the theologians of our day. We must begin by taking ourselves back to where we started—the Gospel of Jesus. The Gospel is the foundation for right living and right believing. We never move from this foundation. We always build upon it. The Gospel will shine light to help us find the right path in the midst of darkness and confusion. Paul reminds the believers of five specific features of the Gospel.

Feature #1: The Gospel was preached to them.

***1****… the gospel I preached to you…*

He says, “Church, remember that you did not discover this Good News message through personal contemplation or meditation or through dialogue with one another. Remember that you learned of this powerful message when God sent a messenger to you. He sent me to your city. He gave me this message to deliver to you. And when God spoke His message to you through me, His apostle, you received it. You believed it. But that’s how you came to know the truth in the first place.” Friends, let us remember that we must completely rely upon God’s revelation if we’re to be rooted in truth. We must not rely upon human philosophies, upon our own thinking, or upon our conversations with other people. He says, “The Gospel was preached to you. It was given to you as a gift, a revelation from the Holy Spirit, through me, God’s apostle.”

Feature #2: The Gospel was received through faith.

***1****…the gospel I preached to you, which you received…*

In other words, remember that you didn’t work hard in order to benefit from the Gospel. You simply listened to it and then you received it as a free gift from God. God spoke to you through His Word, you believed it, and then you were given eternal life. And he’s reminding them once again that they cannot work their way toward understanding about this particular doctrinal problem. Instead, they must listen to revelation and then they simply must take God at His word and believe Him. Whatever He says, believe Him!

Feature #3: The Gospel remains our firm foundation.

*1…in which you stand,*

These believers continue to “stand” in the Good News. This was not a message that they believed at one time in the past and then after they were grown they moved away from, into deeper and more wonderful truths. No! This is a message that they would never ever, ever walk away from; not now and not ever into eternity. It is an eternal message. It’s the kind of message that once we believe in it, we never move off from it. We stand in this message moment by moment, day after day, year after year, on into eternity.

It is this Gospel that provides a rock underneath our feet. It provides us with stability in the midst of a world that is shifting and slippery regarding morals and beliefs. Think for a moment how much our own culture has shifted in reference to morals or beliefs about what is important in life—about how to have a good life, about how to have a good world—just in the last ten or twenty years. It’s remarkable! If we could transport ourselves back twenty years, we’d think we were living on an alien planet because it was so different from the world in which we are presently living. Everything in this world regarding morals and beliefs about what is purposeful and good and right and true, everything shifts in a world that is seeking for truth without God. But it is this Gospel that provides us a solid foundation. And we never need fear building our lives upon it. It will provide a foundation which is sure, which is steadfast, which is eternal, and which will never ever disappoint.

Feature #4: The Gospel continues to save those who believe in it.

Notice what Paul says in verse 2.

***2*** *and by which you are being saved…*

Notice that he uses the present tense. Paul does not say, “By which you *have been* saved.” He says, “by which you are *being* saved.” It is true that believers in Christ have been saved, past tense, in the sense that we are completely free from the condemnation that is just, as a result of our sins. We’re free from that because Jesus took our punishment upon Himself. Paul in other places speaks of our salvation as past tense.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Paul affirms here in 1 Corinthians 15:2, that the Gospel also presently continues to save us. It saves us from wrong beliefs and wrong actions. In this life, we never graduate past our present need for the Gospel and our present, active salvation. Paul is saying, “If you want to be rescued from wrong beliefs and wrong lifestyles, the Gospel is what you need!” You are being saved by it.

Feature #5: The Gospel needs to be held fast.

***2*** *and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you…*

This means you grab it, and you cling to it, and you refuse to let go of it. He’s saying, “Beloved brother and sister, you must not become lackadaisical or careless regarding the Gospel. The Gospel is a treasure from God. Secure it! Safeguard it! Hold on to it!” Please know that Satan works to wrestle the Gospel away from us. He wants to sift our faith like wheat and destroy our soul. He uses the brokenness of the world to do so. He uses our disappointments. He uses our trials and our heartaches and our pleasures to lure us away from God and His Gospel. Paul urges us to hold fast and to persevere in this Gospel in the face of these temptations, in the face of these assaults.

I am reminded of a prayer that my son Jackson used to pray when he was just a wee little boy. He was about four or five. How precious it is to pray with your children! I would just really encourage you parents to persevere in that. Don’t let those evenings or those mornings or those afternoons go by without prayer and without listening to God together. But Jackson, when he was a little boy, he used to pray this: “Lord, help me love You not just this one day, but every day.” I thought, “Oh! I need that prayer, too!” That’s what Paul is driving at. He’s saying to hold fast so that you’re holding on to the love of God and see His blessing and see His joy not just this day, but every day—day by day, on into eternity. That’s what it means to hold fast to the Gospel.

Now some may say, “We just studied Romans chapter 8. I thought that Romans 8 teaches us that God holds fast to us. What is this about us holding fast to the Gospel?” Yes, indeed! God does hold fast to us. Keep in mind the means by which God holds fast to us are His loving encouragements and exhortations and admonitions and warnings through the work of the Spirit in the Scriptures, for us to hold fast to Him. God guarantees our salvation by holding fast to us. But He uses the means of these kinds of exhortations for us to hold fast to Him. This is not a passive pursuit, in other words.

So, what’s Paul’s point? I believe Paul is arguing that the first evidence that confirms our future resurrection is the work of God’s Spirit inside of us as we have embraced the Gospel. It’s apowerful piece of evidence to everyone who has been born again. Again, to the skeptic and to the scoffer, this piece of evidence means nothing. But for us who have been saved by this Gospel that teaches us about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, it’s a profound piece of evidence for us to say, “Whatever the Gospel teaches me, that’s what I’m going to believe.”

**Evidence #2: The historic events in Jesus’ life as prophesied by God’s Word.**

***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,*

Twice, the apostle Paul leans upon the authority of God’s Word to remind us of these events when he writes, “in accordance with the Scriptures.” In other words, while these events are real, historic events, they were all prophesied by God’s Word explicitly, profoundly, pointedly. So the apostle Paul urges us to build our faith upon the Word of God. But Paul now then reviews these two historic events in the life of Jesus. These events are central to Jesus’ ministry.

Event #1: Christ died for our sins.

The crucifixion is not a make-believe fairy tale. The crucifixion of Jesus is an irrefutable fact of human history. Jesus from Nazareth was crucified upon a Roman cross just outside of Jerusalem around 33 AD. That’s an historic fact. But Paul then presses the theology of that fact when he says Christ died “for our sins.” Those three little words are very important. Jesus did not only die upon a Roman cross, but He died for our sins. Jesus didn’t die merely as an example of humility and love and kindness. But Jesus died as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. He died to endure the punishment that our sins deserve from the Father. He died to endure that punishment for us in our place, so that we would never have to come underneath the justice of God. Christ Jesus died for our sins. That’s the first event.

Event #2: Jesus was buried in a real tomb and He was bodily raised to life on the third day.

That tomb became empty. That tomb once occupied, became empty because the body that was laid dead in that tomb was resurrected unto life. Christianity is a faith based on these historic events.

We sometimes hear people say things like, “Well, you have your beliefs and I have mine.” But the thing that matters is not what anyone believes. What matters is what is true. Christianity is not important because there is a whole bunch of people who believe it. If no one believed it, it is still the central, significant truth of life for all mankind. Christianity is important because it is true. It is God’s truth. And our faith rests upon historic, miraculous events. He calls us to root our faith in this real history. Again, not just in our emotions. Not just in our musings. But in the real historic events that took place in 33 A.D. in ancient Israel.

Some pastors assert that what is important about the Bible is not its historicity, but its spiritual truth. Run from that kind of pastor! Paul disagrees. He disagrees with them with some power and force. He says that these historical facts are of “first importance”! Without the real historic death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, the Bible has absolutely no meaningful spiritual truth to offer. That’s how profound these historic events are to us who are in Christ. Some say, “Okay. How do we know that the bodily resurrection of Jesus really happened? Paul advances this final piece of evidence.

**Evidence #3: The eye-witness testimony to the resurrected Christ Jesus.**

***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.*

God did not have His Son die and be raised to life in a secret, dark corner. Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection were public events to be testified to by many reliable eye-witnesses. These testimonies are so trustworthy that they would convince any unbiased jury in a court of law. Paul is presenting his case for the bodily resurrection of Jesus and he calls to the witness stand first, the apostle Peter.

Now remember, Peter was the first to see Jesus in His resurrected body. And this is significant because Peter didn’t expect Jesus to rise from the dead. When Jesus died, Peter thought all was lost, and he began to despair. But then Peter saw Jesus alive. That was a life-changer for him! Peter went from this timid guy who denied the Lord three times in the face of a little servant girl, to standing in front of this big city under the threats of imprisonment and death, and proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. And he did so all the way until the day he died. Isn’t that remarkable?!

Now, bear in mind that the apostle Paul was writing around the year 55 AD. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus took place around 33 AD. So only about 22 years have passed. This is not an event that Paul is talking about that happened 100 years earlier, 200 years earlier. It’s an event that took place a mere 22 years earlier. Now, for some of you, you’re 22 years old and that seems like a lifetime to you. If you’re over 40, 22 years doesn’t seem to be all that significantly long.

Some of you who are over 40 remember very clearly some of the events that took place in 1995. That was 22 years ago. One of those events, for instance, was a guy by the name of Timothy McVeigh who loaded a truck up with explosive material and blew up a federal building in Oklahoma City. That event, for some of us, seems still pretty fresh. It seems remarkable that it took place 22 years ago. I can’t hardly believe it was that long ago, but it was. If someone, a teenager, came up to you and said, “Well, I don’t believe the Oklahoma City bombing really happened. I think that was just fake news.” You probably would look at them and say, “Wait a minute! No, it really happened. Let me tell you because I’m an eyewitness to the testimony of the tv set. Here’s what I saw. I saw immediately after it happened. I saw the rescuers trying to go in there and get people out of there. I remember the trial. I remember the evidence that was presented. It happened!”

Paul is speaking of an event that only happened 22 years earlier. And many of the people are still alive and can say, “I’m still ready.” Peter is still alive. Paul mentions then the Twelve. All Twelve of the apostles, and these are ordinary guys. And remember too at the end of Jesus’ life, when He died, they were all huddled, scared in fright in a little room, hoping nobody would come after them and put them on a cross. But after they saw the resurrected Lord, they were out in the cities proclaiming Jesus. And early church history tells us that every one of those men died a martyrs’ death for preaching the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. What would cause guys to die for a lie? These are just simple ordinary, honest men and they were completely changed. Why? Because the resurrection of Jesus Christ really happened.

And then Paul goes on to say that there are 500 people who saw Jesus at one time. It was not a group hallucination. It happened at the same time. Everybody saw Him at the same event. And Paul said some of them have fallen asleep. In other words, “in those 22 years some of them died, but there’s a lot of them still around. If you really want me to, I can call them personally to talk to you.”

And then Paul said James also saw the Lord Jesus resurrected. Who is James? James is probably the half-brother of Jesus. You would say, “Well of course he’s biased.” No. He’s actually biased against Jesus through all of Jesus’ life. John tells us that Jesus’ brothers didn’t believe (John 7:5). And Mark will even say that Jesus’ brothers thought of their older half-brother as a mad man, as crazy (Mark 3:21). They didn’t want anything to do with Him. So what would change these family members from having the perspective that Jesus is a crazy man to “I’m willing to die to defend that this half-brother of mine is God come in the flesh and that He died for our sins and He rose the third day”? Nothing other than the truthful veracity of the real bodily resurrection of Jesus.

And then Paul calls himself to the Witness Stand. Notice what he says in verse 8 and following.

***8*** *Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.* ***9*** *For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

Paul reminds us that he began his life as a persecutor of those who preached about Jesus’ resurrection. He hated that message and he hated those who preached that message. He hunted them down to imprison them in hopes of having them executed. Yet now he says to this church in Corinth, “You know me. You know how many times I’ve been in prison. You know how many times I’ve been beaten up for this message. How do you think that change took place in my life? It’s because I saw the resurrected Lord Jesus. I’m an eyewitness that His resurrection truly happened.”

***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.* ***11*** *Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

He only brings his hard work to bear because he wants them to know that he is sincere in this. Nothing could possibly explain how he has lived his life these past many years since being introduced to the resurrected Lord Jesus, other than the fact of the resurrection. All the glory goes to God!

The truth that Paul is underlining here is that everything changes when God reveals His risen Son to us. Everything in our life changes and we are never the same afterwards. It happened with Peter. It happened with the Twelve. It happened with James. It happened with the apostle Paul. And it happened to many, many people who are here who can say, “I’ve had a confrontation with the risen Lord Jesus.” Everything changes when God reveals His risen Son to us!

***12*** *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

The point here is that if we believe in Jesus’ resurrection, we must believe in the future bodily resurrection of all who are united to Him through faith. Jesus’ bodily resurrection guarantees a bodily resurrection for all who are in Him. The power of Jesus to destroy the work of sin is complete. The work of sin is what causes our bodies to die in the first place. It’s what causes our soul to die and be separated from God. And Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection reverses every effect of the curse. So our soul is no longer dead. We are no longer alienated from God. We are united with Him. We are reconciled to Him so we can know Him. But even this body that presently is wasting away, and most of us can give a testimony of how our present body is wasting away, that is because sin entered the world. God didn’t create bodies that were dying. Sin entered the world and our bodies began to die. But God said, “I’m not going to let sin have the last word over My people’s bodies. I’m going to raise those bodies to become a glorious body so that I will be glorified and My Son will be glorified in the salvation that I am bringing.”

Why is this doctrine of the bodily resurrection so significant? We’re just going to read through some verses rather quickly as the apostle Paul then tells us why this doctrine is so very, very important and why it must not be sort of on the periphery of our life. Why he’s arguing so strenuously for the resurrection not only of Jesus, but the resurrection of all who are in Him. As he argues this, he’s going to be really negative in tone. Read verse 20 with me so that we don’t misunderstand what he’s saying.

**1 Corinthians 15:20** But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead…

So keep that in mind. Paul is affirming the bodily resurrection of Jesus and that it is a fact. It’s undeniable and irrefutable. But he now is going to offer some reasons for the importance or significance of this doctrine, in a negative way.

***13*** *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.*

Jesus is God of very God, the second person of the Godhead. And at a point in time, Jesus took on human flesh. So He became fully human and yet was fully God. And so, here is Paul’s reasoning. If you’re saying that dead people do not bodily rise, then Jesus did not bodily rise. Jesus is a person. He is a human person. And if dead people don’t rise, and that was the reason why they didn’t believe in the bodily resurrection. They said, “That just doesn’t happen. Dead people don’t rise from the dead.” And Paul says that if dead people don’t rise, then Jesus must not have risen because Jesus is a human person.” That’s his line.

And yet, he says Jesus promised eternal life and resurrection to His followers. And He backed that promise up with His own resurrection. So if there is not resurrection for us, then Jesus lied to us about our resurrection and His. That would make Jesus to be an imposter. So reason number 1 of why the bodily resurrection of Jesus is so significant in our life is that if we refuse to believe that, we’re saying that

**Reason #1: Jesus would be an imposter.**

**Reason #2: Our faith would be meaningless.**

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

“In vain” just simply means it’s empty. It has no meaning. It has no significance. Faith in a dead Savior can’t rescue us from death. There is no Good News to proclaim to others if Jesus’ body remained in the tomb. So there would be no point to preaching, which Paul had set aside his life to do because of the significance of the message. And there is no point to believing. Why be in church? There’s no point if there was no resurrection.

**Reason #3: The apostles would be liars.**

***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.*

He’s talking as one of the apostles. What he’s saying is that “we as the apostles would not be merely mistaken, but we actually would be deceptive. We’d be devious people who foisted some grand conspiracy of deception upon the world.” The Bible then, which the apostles wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would be an evil book written by liars rather than a holy book written by God. That’s his point. That’s how significant this doctrine is.

Reason #4: Our sin would still condemn us.

***16*** *For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.* ***17*** *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.* ***18*** *Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*

The sin problem would not have been done away with. You would die and then that’s it. There’s nothing more! You would go into an eternal emptiness. So please understand that the whole meaning of life is rooted in this truth regarding the resurrection. If Christ had not raised from the dead, then sin killed Him like it will kill the rest of us and there would be no meaning to any faith whatsoever. There is no refuge in the storm if Jesus’ body is destroyed.

**Reason #5: The Christian faith would be pitiful.**

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

He says that because the Christian life is lived with eternity in view. The Christian who follows Jesus recognizes “I will say ‘No’ to this world and to the things of this world. I’ll say no to the rabid pursuit of material possessions. I’ll say no to the pursuit of sinful pleasures. I’ll say no to the acceptance and power and love that this world can give to me.” Why would I say no to that? Because I believe there’s something greater. There’s something eternal, something more meaningful, something more joy-inducing. That’s the reason why we say no to this world.

This world is passing away and all of its desires and all of its things. A person dies and all the things that are of this world are passed away and there is nothing that we take into that future, that is left to this world. And so if we have said no to everything in the world in order to follow Christ and then we die and there is nothing, he says “we are of all people most to be pitied.” At least the people who lived for the world before there was nothing in their death, at least they had a little bit of pleasure in their life. At least they had a little bit of stuff that they enjoyed. But we’re a people who excuse all the stuff of this world and then if there’s no resurrection, there is nothing. So we’re of all people in all of the world most to be pitied.

Present day Christianity is often lived in a way in which believers try to live for this world and for Christ. And it can’t be done. Paul is saying, “If we really live by faith in Jesus, and Jesus did not rise from the dead, then we are pitiful people.” We are like people who put all our retirement money in a business that has completely failed. Everything we had resting on our retirement, we put it in a business that completely fails. If we put all of our hopes in Jesus and He didn’t really rise from the dead, then there’s no resurrection for us. As Christians, we do put all our retirement investments in a stock that is simply marked “Resurrection!” This is why he says in verse 20, please don’t misunderstand him,

**1 Corinthians 15:20** But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.

Because He lives, Jesus is who He claimed to be. He is not an imposter. Because He lives, our faith is meaningful. It’s not empty or vain. Because He lives, the apostles’ teaching is validated as completely true. Because He lives, faith in Him brings blessings of forgiveness and eternal life. And because He lives, our lives are most blessed. Not only are we not to be pitied, but we are to be envied because we’re living for something that is eternal and true and good and joyful.

I want to close with a few applications. The applications to this doctrine are many. Since I believe that my body will one day be resurrected, how then should I live?

1. Because of the resurrection, we live life with eternal purpose.

We know that we have not just *a* purpose, but an eternal purpose. Have you ever been tempted to think on some dark, cloudy morning, “Why am I getting up today? This world is so hard and I am so discouraged. I don’t feel like anything I am doing is really purposeful?” Have you ever been tempted by that thought? I know many have. The resurrection is the answer to that lie from Satan. We’re living with an eternal hope, with an eternal joy, with eternal meaning in view because of the resurrection. Our worship of God is the most meaningful purpose possible.

2. Because of the resurrection, we labor joyfully for Him, knowing that our labors for His glory are always fruitful.

We don’t measure the work that we invest for the Lord and for the advance of His name on the basis of what’s happening today or tomorrow or next month. We measure the worth of that work on the basis of what God does with it in eternity. And so it’s possible that some of you are laboring for the Lord, you’re sowing seeds of the Gospel or you’re teaching in Sunday School and you’re wondering, “Am I making any impact for good?” And here’s Paul’s application. It’s really *the* application that Paul makes of this chapter at the very end of 1 Corinthians 15. Look at what he writes in verse 58.

**1 Corinthians 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

As a result of the resurrection, your labor in the Lord is never in vain. You may not see the fruit of that labor, see its meaning right now, but brother and sister, when you stand before God in your glorified body, you will know that every labor that you accomplished for the Lord has eternal value. It is a great treasure.

3. Because of the resurrection, we need not fear death nor despair because of death.

Death’s power is broken by our Savior. Death is not the last word upon our lives or upon the lives of our precious loved ones who are in Christ. Death is the end of this present life, but for us, death is the doorway into God’s glorious presence. The resurrection of Jesus guarantees this. What hope!

4. Because of the resurrection, we hate sin and we labor by faith in Jesus to kill it in our lives.

Sin is the cause of all death. Death is not part of our future, life is. The resurrection reveals the foolishness of investing our lives in the poisonous, passing away pleasures of this world.

5. Because of the resurrection, we boldly call everyone to believe in Him.

Beloved, there is no other Savior because there is no other Savior who rose bodily from the grave, who defeated death. There is no other hope. Because there is no other hope, every other Savior that has come into this world is now in a tomb. But not Jesus! He rose the third day. And that is why He would proclaim in John 11:

**John 11:25-26** Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

This is not just a truth for someone else out there. This is a personal truth that Jesus presses home to your heart. Do you believe this? And if you believe it, God says, “I’ll give you life and I’ll give you a resurrection.” Praise God for His Good News!