

Don't Sleep on the Resurrection

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[0 : 00] And you can take out your Bible, please, and turn on over to Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

1 Corinthians chapter 15. Are we ready? Okay, I want to read a portion of this to you before we begin.

1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse number 12. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith.

Moreover, we are found to be false witnesses about God. Because we have testified wrongly about God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead are not raised.

[1 : 17] For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins, then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished.

If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone. But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead.

The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Let's pray. Good Father, we are so grateful to be here. Would you please calm my racing heart?

Because I am so excited for the privilege of standing before your people and declaring the good news of the gospel. And the power of the resurrection of our Savior Jesus.

Thank you, Father, for raising him from the dead. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you received from the Father power to lay your life down and power to take it back up again.

[2 : 32] Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you quickened him. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are grateful to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are grateful for all that it means to us as followers of Jesus. And Father, as I consider this, I am humbled at what it might mean to someone here today.

Who needs to be pointed towards hope in Jesus. And maybe for the first time they would respond by believing this gospel.

And they would celebrate on Resurrection Sunday new life in Christ. We anticipate and eagerly hope for you to do work among us and in our hearts.

It is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Okay, 1 Corinthians. Written about A.D. 51 or 53.

[3 : 38] Give or take 20 years after the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross. And Paul wrote it, perhaps two months or two years, we're not really sure, after he left Corinth.

And his purpose in writing this letter is to deal with a laundry list of issues that are threatening this church's unity and testimony.

And when I say laundry list, I mean it in the sense that we would use that term. There is some dirty laundry that has been aired to Paul. And he needs to deal with it for the sake of the unity of this church.

And for the sake of this church's testimony for the name of Jesus. There is divisive behavior. There is gross immorality that is being accepted.

Christians are bringing lawsuits against one another. There is confusion about singleness. And there is confusion about the marriage relationship. And they need teaching about divorce.

[4 : 48] There is disorder in their worship gathering. There is confusion about spiritual gifts. And they don't know what to do about food that has been offered to idols.

Does it matter? Does it not matter? What do we do about this? It's a whole laundry list. And then, as Paul comes towards the end of this lengthy letter.

Leather. Not leather. Although. But let's not get into that now. This lengthy letter. He gets to the end of it. And he takes up sort of an interesting topic, I think.

Especially in light of all of the other things that he has dealt with. There are people in this church who don't believe in the resurrection.

And you're like, what? Amid all of that other junk that you got on your laundry list? Some of you forgot about the resurrection? What is going on?

[5 : 50] Well, Paul thought it was important enough to write down and to send this letter. And the Holy Spirit thought it was important enough for Paul to write it down and to send this letter. And so, I think we ought to be mindful about that ourselves.

And especially on Resurrection Sunday, that we don't sleep on the resurrection. This is what Paul takes up in chapter 15.

Do you know this feeling? The feeling that you get when you accidentally delete a very important file from your computer.

And you do it. And you check the trash bin. And you realize, ah, it's gone. What a waste. What a waste.

Now I have to start over. Maybe you clean the toy room. And then your three-year-old shows up. Right?

[6 : 50] And you're like, ah, that was a waste of my time. Here we are again. What have we done? Or, perhaps, you make a batch of cookies and you forget the baking soda.

And you think to yourself, well, now I have to start over. I need to make a whole new batch. Those are wasted. They are no good. Paul, I think, has something like that in mind.

Here, as he begins the letter, begins this 15th chapter. What a waste. Something is on Paul's mind that says, it was all for nothing.

It was all for naught. It was in vain. Look at the first two verses of this chapter. Now, I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand, and by which you are being saved, if, if, if you hold to the message I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

This is the message that you received. This is the message on which you have taken your stand. This is the message by which you are being saved, if, if you hold fast to this message.

[8 : 24] But if not, then it was all in vain. You have believed in vain. What would it mean to believe in vain?

To fail, to hold fast to this gospel? It's an interesting word that Paul uses here. We get a couple of different translations of this word.

It starts with this idea of vain. It means haphazardly, without care or consideration.

Have you believed in vain, without carefully considering the truth of the gospel? Paul says there is no excuse for this.

Do you see that? He doesn't use those words exactly. But he says, there is no excuse for this, because I told you that the gospel was most important.

[9 : 30] Look at verse 3. I passed on to you as most important what I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised again, according to the scriptures.

Now you might ask, why does Paul get to choose what is most important? Well, notice this. Paul didn't choose this. Paul is just the messenger.

He is handing off to this church in Corinth something that a very important messenger gave him. Do you see it there? It's right in the text. I don't want you to miss it.

He says, what I also received. This gospel is the gospel that Paul received from the risen Jesus Christ himself.

Put a little pin in that. I'm coming back to that. Paul didn't decide that this was the most important thing. Jesus did. And Jesus asked Paul to hand this off to the disciples, to the Christians, and help them to know this is most important.

[10 : 53] What is essential to the gospel? Christ died for our sins. This is the most crucial question that every person must ask.

What will you do about your sins? Will you try to do more? More good. Will you try to try harder next time?

Clean up your act. Get your house in order. Break some bad habits. Will you try to be better? Be a better person.

Be more kind. Be more loving. Listen, these things are not sustainable in yourself. You'll do it for a while. No doubt you'll do it for a while, especially here in North Dakota where we're all so nice. You'll pull this off for a while, but it is not sustainable in yourself. And furthermore, what will you do about your past sins?

[12:03] You know? Even if you were to say, well, look, from this moment forward, I'm going to be different. I'm going to be better. I'm going to try harder. I'm going to go to church. I'm going to do all the good things.

What are you going to do about all your past sins? What will you do about your sin? This is the most crucial question every person must ask.

Maybe you'll try to hide it. Maybe you'll try to rationalize it. Maybe you'll just hope that you can forget about your sin, but it is like a grape juice stain on the church's carpet after communion.

It doesn't come out. You can't hide it. What are you going to do about your sins? Well, don't despair. Because the message of the gospel is not what do I have to do about my sins. The message of the gospel is what Jesus Christ has done about sins.

[13:06] And Paul says, this is the most important things. Christ died for our sins. Do you believe that Christ died for sins?

I'm not asking you if you believe that Jesus came to earth, that there was a real, literal person named Jesus who really died on the cross. I'm not asking you that.

I'm not asking you to believe it historically. I'm also not interested, really, in that you merely believe it in your head, sort of cognitively, that you've sort of put that in a bucket in your brain and you have something to do with that idea of Christ dying for your sins.

Not historically, not cognitively. I'm asking you, do you believe this personally? That Christ died for my sins?

sins. What is essential to the gospel? Christ died for our sins. He was buried.

[14:13] He was buried by his friends. I take this to mean that Jesus was really dead. You know? Like, if you have good friends and they wonder if you're dead or not, they're not going to guess at it.

You know? I mean, I hope you're not those kind of people who would bury someone alive, would you? Like, if I've just swooned, like, slap me or something. Wake me up a little bit. You know? Throw some water. Are you okay? Are you okay? Like you learn in first aid training. He was buried by his friends. Not his enemies.

They knew he was dead. If he wasn't dead, they're not putting him in a tomb. How unkind would that be? Like, wake up. Let's see if we can get you back. Christ died for our sins.

He was buried and he rose again. Now, if you're a skeptic, thank you for being here with us and tolerating my energy this morning. But if you're a skeptic, I have something better than that for you.

[15:20] Because here's the thing. Paul answers this question. How can you be so sure that Jesus rose from the dead? Do you want to answer to that? That's a good question if you're a skeptic.

How can you be so sure, you churchy people? Paul answers that question. Verse number five. He appeared to Cephas.

That's Peter. And then to the twelve. Then he, Jesus, the risen Jesus, appeared to over 500 brothers and sisters at one time.

Most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, you can take the pin out now, he also appeared to me.

The risen Jesus appeared to Paul. How can you be so sure? Let me try to illustrate what I think Paul is trying to pull off here.

[16:28] If I said to you this, I heard that the president of the United States was in town yesterday, you would rightly say, how do you know?

And I might say to you, well, I heard it from my friend Dan. And you'd go, all right, Dan.

And then I would sense your skepticism, and I would say, oh, I forgot to tell you, Dan was there with his whole family. Jenny and the kids, they were all there.

They all saw the president of the United States. And you would say, I don't know Dan. I don't know Jenny. I don't know any of those kids. I still don't believe you.

And then maybe I would say, with some, I think the word is incredulity-like, I'm a little frustrated with you at this point for not listening, right? I might say, you don't understand. The president of the United States was at Costco yesterday.

[17 : 45] And I would say, there's like 500 people there all the time. You go ask one of them. You don't have to take my word for it.

Go ask one of those people, because there was 500 of them who saw him at Costco yesterday. I think that's what Paul is doing here with this little testimony, this lineup of people who saw the risen Jesus.

He's cutting the legs out from underneath any skeptical thoughts, because he says, listen, this letter that I'm writing to you, Jesus died less than 20 years ago.

Most of those people who saw him are still alive. You probably know somebody who knows somebody who saw him alive. Ask around.

You'll find out. It's like Kevin Bacon a few degrees away. You know someone who saw the risen Jesus. Go ask.

[18 : 55] That Jesus was raised from the dead is no secret. God let people see the risen Jesus.

Not one or two or ten, but hundreds. At one time. This is the gospel. The essential elements of the gospel.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried by his friends, truly dead, and he was raised from the dead on the third day.

The resurrection is essential to the gospel. Now notice how Paul leverages the essentiality of the resurrection as he continues his argument in verse number 12.

Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, in other words, he's saying, if you still are somehow doubting what I have told you about the resurrection of Jesus, if you are still a skeptic, if you're still not believing, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection from the dead?

[20 : 16] If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith.

See, since the resurrection is essential to the gospel, if you say there is no such thing as the resurrection, then Christ is not raised.

And if Christ is not raised, then both the gospel message and your faith in this gospel message now devoid of the resurrection, your faith is, do you see it, in vain.

A different word in the original language. I love that we sang together. I'm not sure if you all noticed this. We sang vainly they seal the dead.

And then we sang death in vain forbids him rise. Here Paul says if there is no resurrection from the dead, the gospel message and your faith are in vain.

[21 : 39] The word here is empty handed. Empty handed. It's like if I were to reach into my pocket and pull out my hand and offer to Sean whatever is in my hand and then I open my hand and there's absolutely nothing there.

What is faith? Faith reaches into the future grabs hold of God's promise and pulls it into the present and then acts as though it's true.

If there is no resurrection from the dead then your faith has nothing to hold on to. You might be reaching out and grasping at something but there is nothing there not without the resurrection.

Your faith is empty handed Paul says it is in vain. The resurrection is essential to the gospel.

The resurrection then is essential to faith. No resurrection no true faith in Jesus.

[23 : 03] Jesus but wait there is more but it gets worse not better if we take out the resurrection.

Look at verse 15. I love this. I don't know what your Bible says but in the CSB that I'm reading it says more over more over Paul is piling on here his logical arguments.

Moreover we are found to be false witnesses about God. Everyone who has preached the gospel to you has been a liar.

That's what Paul is saying. If there is no resurrection from the dead then everyone who has preached the gospel to you has been lying to you.

You are false witnesses! about God. Why? Because we testified wrongly about God that he raised up Christ. If we take the resurrection out of the gospel message then everyone who preaches the resurrection rightly as essential to the gospel is preaching a false gospel.

[24 : 17] Do you see that? Do you see how Paul works this argument over? If I preach the gospel and include the resurrection of Jesus and there really is no resurrection at all then I have just lied to you.

It's all just smoke. Verse 16 For if the dead are not raised not even Christ has been raised and if Christ has not been raised your faith is do you see it worthless verse number 17 and you are still in your sins not only is your faith empty handed you have faith that is reaching out to grasp onto something that is not there if there is no resurrection but you have a faith he says that is worthless and if you're familiar with the book of Ecclesiastes this would be the Greek word that the writer of Ecclesiastes would use he would say it is vain it is hevel there is no substance to your faith it is like clouds and mist you have faith that is like a giant

Costco size bag of potato chips that is mostly air if there is no resurrection then your faith is worthless why because you are still in your sins now you say wait a minute I thought you said Christ died for our sins he did praise the Lord he did Christ did die for our sins but listen if death holds on to Jesus on the third day in the morning that means Jesus has sins of his own that needed to be dealt with if death holds on to Jesus then Jesus had sins of his own that needed to be dealt with. And if Jesus had sins of his own that needed to be dealt with then Jesus was not a sinless sacrifice. And if Jesus was not a sinless sacrifice then he could not make a full atonement for sin and therefore if you believe in a Jesus who has died but not been raised from the dead that faith is worthless because you are still in your sins because that Jesus cannot make an atonement for anyone else's sins if he stays dead on the third day in the morning.

You can believe all day and twice on Sunday that Jesus died for your sins but if Jesus was not raised from the dead your faith is hevel it is worthless according to the preacher of Ecclesiastes.

[27 : 54] Paul presses this point to its logical and spiritual conclusion. Verse 18 Those then who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished.

perished. This is awful. But this is the logical conclusion of stripping the resurrection from the message of the gospel.

Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only we should be pitied more than anyone.

Let me rephrase it just slightly this way if there is no resurrection from the dead if Jesus is dead right now then there is all condemnation there is all condemnation even for those who would claim to be in Christ as Paul writes to us in Romans chapter 8 if Jesus did not rise from the dead then there is now all condemnation even for those who might say no I believe that Jesus died for my sins you are still in your sins under God's condemnation that's the logical point that Paul makes here he says those who have died in Christ they're perished they have died and they are gone forever without the resurrection this is my Mr. T translation of verse number 19 pity the fool who believes in a dead savior pity that fool who believes in a dead savior don't waste your life believing in a gospel stripped of the resurrection what a worthless waste why because the resurrection is essential to future hope look at verse number 15

I said 50 not 15 we are not going back 50 what I am saying brothers and sisters is this Paul is wrapping up he's bringing his point to a conclusion what I am saying brothers and sisters is this flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God God nor can corruption inherit incorruption what's Paul doing here the resurrection is essential to future hope and and he says flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God Paul is not being judgy but he does have something to say to you your body is unfit for an eternity in the kingdom of God this old thing this old shell that I am wearing it is too weak to worship

[31 : 56] Jesus for all eternity the way that he ought to be worshipped it is too weak to love and serve the Lord my God with all my heart soul strength and mind it is too weak to love and serve my neighbors in the new kingdom the way that God would ask me to love and serve them your body is unfit for eternity and it is unfit in ways that neither diet nor nutrition nor exercise can remedy perhaps you recall in the garden of Eden after sin had entered into the world God had this to say to Adam and to Eve Genesis chapter 3 and verse 19 you are dust and to dust you will return this hangs over every person it hangs over every sinner you are dust and to dust you will return your body as you know it is unfit for an eternity of worshipping

Jesus this old body is going to decay it will be I hope when I'm fully dead and not just swooned or passed out it will be put into the grave in some kind of an honorable way the best that we can do but Paul says even that is dishonorable you're depositing a body into the ground dishonorable it's

buried Paul says in weakness it's lifeless there will be nothing left to it just this old shell why because it is a natural body it was made from the earth for this earth friends you don't need the fountain of youth you need the tree of life and in order to have the tree of life you need a new body and

Jesus says I got you verse 51 listen listen listen I am telling you a mystery we will not all fall asleep Paul says we're not all going to die but even if you don't die whether you die or whether you are alive in Christ we will all be changed what will that be like in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible and we will be changed for this corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptible and this mortal body must be clothed with immortality what will your resurrected body be like what will it be like well it will not be corruptible it won't be subject to decay and rot like this old thing is it will be incorruptible it will not be mortal it will be immortal it will not be dishonorable in any way

Paul says that new body that Jesus is going to give you will be glorious it will not be weak it will be powerful it will not be a natural body it will be a spiritual body this is future hope that we have in the resurrection not only for those of us who are alive but for those who have loved ones who have died in Christ what we put into the ground is not what is going to come out of the ground Jesus will give your loved one in Christ a glorious powerful immortal incorruptible!

strong spiritual body sometimes I hear this phrase passed around when it looks as though the competition is going to be uneven I'll hear someone say well!

[37 : 15] he's going to eat your lunch she's going to eat your lunch you go into that courtroom that lawyer is going to eat your lunch when every follower of Jesus dead or alive gets their fit for eternity body from Jesus Jesus is not going to eat death's lunch hear it Jesus is going to eat death for lunch I'm not even making a joke look at what it says verse number 54 when this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility and this mortal body is clothed with immortality then then then the saying that is written will take place all the way back in Isaiah 25 death has been swallowed up in victory where death where is your victory you have been swallowed up by the risen

Jesus Christ where is your victory you have none where is your sting death you have none verse 56 the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ what makes death sting sin but the gospel tells us that Christ died for our sins and he was raised on the third day and therefore because of the resurrection God gives us the victory through our

Lord Jesus Christ and so every follower of Jesus can live with hope hope for a resurrected body like Jesus has we can grieve with hope because we remember that those who have passed away in Christ they have not perished forever they're just waiting until Jesus raises them with a new body the resurrection is essential to the gospel the resurrection is essential to our faith the resurrection is essential to our future hope but now get this because the resurrection is not merely a theological phenomenon on the resurrection is not in theory where we can just say oh that's really wonderful that you all believe the resurrection happened and you have some kind of hope for your future the resurrection is intensely practical verse number 58 therefore on the basis of everything that I have said to you in all of chapter 15

Paul says therefore because the resurrection is true and I have proved it to you going through the course of this chapter because we believe in the essentiality of the resurrection therefore my dear brothers and sisters be steadfast immovable always excelling in the Lord's work because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain therefore be steadfast and immovable hold on to the essential truths of the gospel with all you've got steadfast and immovable holding on to the essential truths of the gospel therefore always be excelling in the

Lord's work why why because your labor in the Lord is not in vain fourth word Paul has used to try to help us wrestle with this your labor in the Lord is not without purpose it is not without result even if you don't see the purpose even if you never see the results the resurrection gives purpose to our present dear brother dear sister wherever God has you right now is where God wants you and your moments of labor your moments of work no matter how tedious no matter how chaotic no matter how empty or ridiculous it seems no matter how mundane or monotonous your work seems no matter how small or insignificant your work seems your labor in the

[43 : 20] Lord is not wasted it's not like having to start over on your file that you accidentally deleted it's not like making a batch of soda free cookies and you have to throw them out it is not like I'm sorry parents it is not like your freshly cleaned toy room that will only last a couple of minutes

when the kids get there your labor in the Lord is not wasted your present is full of purpose meaning and eternal value why because the same power that raised Jesus from the dead resurrected power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you my dear brothers and sisters!

that means you can live a life of humble self denial like Jesus lived that means you can live mindful of the needs of others and not merely of your own needs like Jesus did it means you can forgive freely even when you have been hurt deeply it means you can share the gospel boldly because after all what are they going to do kill this old thing who cares Jesus is going to give me a better body so go share that gospel boldly what's the worst they can do means you can be more gracious and less brittle and less harsh and more gentle it means that you can do whatever you do for the glory of God because we remember that the resurrection gives purpose to our present let's pray good father we are grateful for your word we are humbled to receive it help us to be careful receivers of your word who take the things that we have heard and test them against your word to be sure that they are so and when we find that they are so good father would you help us to believe and to obey please draw sinners to yourself today who have never responded to the preaching of the gospel grant them life so that they respond by believing the gospel of Jesus perhaps they didn't enter this room expecting to become a believer in Jesus and yet here they are and your spirit is at work oh good father please have your way by the power of the Holy Spirit do work in our hearts forgive us for treating the resurrection like it is in theory forgive us for thinking that the death of our Savior the Lord Jesus is something to believe something to be believed merely historically or cognitively help us to believe that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures that he was buried and that he was raised from the dead on the third day according to the scriptures good father help this church hold fast to this gospel for your glory and our good in Jesus name we pray amen