

The Good News of Jesus' Resurrection

Coming Back to Jesus

1 Corinthians 15

Easter Sunday

Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

Sunday, April 20, 2014, 10:30am at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

“We understand and acknowledge that the Resurrection has placed a glorious crown upon all of Christ's sufferings!”

A. W. TOZER, CHICAGO PASTOR OF MID-20TH CENTURY

Announcements:

- 1. Special Service at Heritage Baptist Church:** All are invited to hear Dr. Edward Panosian portray the lives of various preachers of the past. It is an engaging way to introduce all ages to the lives of church figures. Dr. Panosian will speak Sat., **April 26**, 6:30pm, and Sun., **April 27**, 6pm, at Heritage Baptist Church in Woodstock. We encourage you to take advantage of his outstanding presentation! No evening service on April 27.
- 2. Usher Call:** Our church is in need of more men to volunteer for the usher team. If you can serve in this way, please see Joe Nowosielski or Barry Patton.
- 3. Keith and Kristyn Getty Concert:** The Gettys will give a concert at College Church of Wheaton on Wed., April 23, 7pm (doors open 6:30). Tickets: \$15 in advance, \$20 at door. Information: college-church.org. We will not hold service that evening.
- 4. Baby Shower:** All ladies are invited to celebrate Christine Fragoso's baby boy (reg. Amazon, Target) and Amber Rowe's baby girl (needs clothes) on Sun., April 27, 1pm. Please bring an appetizer or dessert. To contribute to a group gift, you must pay Julie Moffat today.

 Open your Bible to **1 Corinthians 15**. Our message is entitled: “The Good News of Jesus' Resurrection.”

"Lee Strobel, in his book "The Case For Christ", said "Every single shred of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is also evidence for my eventual resurrection."

Many people think the Resurrection of Christ is important. In the next 24 hours over a billion people will celebrate the Resurrection all around the world. Many who celebrate it don't understand it. A recent poll said that 78% of all people America believe that Jesus rose from the dead.¹ Yet most people have no clue what it's all about.

The Apostle Paul said there was nothing more important. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul said it was the most important thing to know in life. Look at **1 Corinthians 15:3-4**, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with

¹ <http://www.marketwire.com/press-release/Easter-Poll-Majority-of-Cdns-Americans-Believe-in-the-Resurrection-589351.htm>

the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.:" Paul says the thing that is "of first importance" is the Gospel- the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Friends, the resurrection is the most important event in human history!

Reading of Holy Scripture

1 Corinthians 15, "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."

Paul reminds the church at Corinth the need to be reminded that we need to be saved. Why?

Death is Coming

Death is coming! This is why we should follow Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Death is our destiny.

Even as Christians, we are frustrated with death. We are NOT happy living in a world of funeral homes and cemeteries. Every day we are reminded that my death is coming and your death is coming. It could be today. Could be tomorrow. Could be this week. For those 300 young people in South Korea who thought they were going on a ferry ride to a vacation, death came for many of them.

Death is Ugly

At 15 years of age, my mother of 49 years died. I attended her funeral and saw her lifeless body. At 17 my cousin Brett died in a car accident. The same year my next door neighbor who was like a Dad to me died of cancer. Make note of this. You will die. The statistics on death are impressive. Ten out of ten people die!

Some of us are afraid of dying in great pain. I like what John Piper said, "I don't so much pray that my death will be without pain, but that it will be without doubt."

The Big Story

This is the big story of the Bible. We are not our own. We owe allegiance to our Creator God. But all of us "like sheep have gone astray." It's not just Adam that sinned and died. It's all of us. "All die!" All will die.

The question to us from the Scriptures is: do you know Christ? Are you certain that you will be raised with Christ when He comes again?

I. A message for Christians to grow

1 Corinthians 15:1-2, “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.”

First Paul Addresses Christians

By addressing them again as **brethren** (cf. 1:10; 2:1; 3:1; 10:1; etc.) Paul assures those to whom he writes that he recognizes them to be fellow Christians. The term not only expresses his spiritual identity with them but also his love (cf. 15:58).

Many people think that the Gospel is something like “Christianity 101.” You learn the Gospel and then you go on to the deeper things of God. You go on to the deep things of the book of Revelation, or the deep things of the book of Daniel, or the deep things of the decrees of God.

This is completely misguided. The deepest, greatest truth in all the Scripture is the Gospel of Jesus. God the Son left His throne and perished for sinners and defeated death. There is no deeper thing in the Word of God.

You’ll understand the entire book of Revelation the moment Christ returns. But you will live through all eternity still trying to comprehend the greatness of the Gospel.

Two Groups of People

So there are two groups of people Paul is addressing. Those who are holding fast to God’s Word, and those who believed in vain.

Paul comes back to the Corinthian believers, and he says, I need to preach the Gospel to you again. I need to remind you of it. Have you forgotten it?

The Sign of True Conversion

One sign of true conversion is that you “hold fast to the word” of the Gospel of Christ. Those who truly are saved will daily be conformed to the image of Christ. “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Rom. 8:29–30; cf. vv. 35–39; 5:9–10; 9:23; 1 Cor. 2:7; etc.). It is only by God’s power that we are saved and only by His power that we are kept saved. Our salvation is kept by Christ’s holding us fast, not primarily by our holding Him fast. Our holding onto Him is evidence that He is holding onto us.

The Great Deception

In this text we have something that clarifies where our hope is. Have you ever talked to someone who said, “I’ve known God all my life!” The truth is the God most people know is the one not found in Scripture but one that is in their own imagination.

People say “I loved God all my life.” No you loved something you made with your own mind. The Bible says that from the womb we are “wicked, going astray.” Until we are saved we are “haters of God” living for ourselves.

Where Do We Find the True God?

We must be careful that we do not invent a God out of our own imagination. The true God is revealed in the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, “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.”

Unless we go to the Scriptures, then we have no Gospel. We believe in vain.

Found in the Word!

So many have a false security. In the Old Testament book of **Hosea 4:6**, (KJV) we read: “My people perish for lack of knowledge.”

Jeremiah 9:23–24, “Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me...”

Do you know the Lord? We must worship Him, and not another. How can we know God? Paul tells us - stand in the Scriptures. Know the Word that He has given to us.

You are BEING SAVED

It is interesting how we often speak of our salvation as we have BEEN SAVED. Paul says “stand in the Gospel” “by which you are being saved.”

So this is first and foremost a plea from Paul for Christians to grow. Don’t forget the Gospel. I need to remind you! As you stand fast in the Gospel you will grow.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2, “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.”

. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus Christ is not only the “Author” of the Christian’s faith, but He is also the “Finisher” (NKJV). As Paul tells us in Philippians 1:6, “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Christ conquered death to make us holy like Himself. This pursuit of holiness is the fruit of the new heart.

II. A message for false converts to repent

1 Corinthians 15:1-2, “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.”

Paul is not teaching that true believers are in danger of losing their salvation, but it is a warning against non-saving faith. There are those who Jesus calls “stony ground hearers.” They receive the word with joy, but then when difficulty comes, they fall completely away from the faith.

Paul reminds the Corinthian people who have strayed, that they need to come back to Jesus. There are those in our churches that God calls “stony ground hearers.” Perhaps you thought you received Jesus as Savior, and you even had great joy, but now it’s not the same. To some, He means nothing to you. To others, you are confused and seeking Him. I want tell every one under the sound of my voice that there is good news!

The Gospel Changes You

If you truly believe the Gospel it will change you. Paul had to preach the Gospel again to the Corinthians. What is it?

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, “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...”

Christ bore the curse for us! He was slaughtered by God for our sins. This is “of first importance.” It is the most important thing!

On Your Way to Hell

Paul says, there are some who know the Gospel but it hasn't changed their life. All of them should have been “being saved” he says, “if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.”

There are some of you here, and you are only here because someone invited you. You could care less about the Gospel. You say you believe. But you are living your own way. The Gospel hasn't changed you. And you are on your way to hell!

There are those in our churches who hold to orthodox doctrine and living and then fully reject it. This proves that their salvation was never real. He is able to let go of the things of God because he is doing the holding. He does not belong to God and therefore God's power cannot keep him. Such a person does not **hold fast the word** because his faith is **in vain**. It was never real. He cannot hold fast because he is not held fast.

Stony Ground Hearers

Our Lord repeatedly spoke of sham believers who had useless, non-saving faith. The parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1–23) tells us that some of the seeds of the gospel fall on shallow or weedy soil, and that tares often look like wheat, but are not (13:24–30, 34–43).

AA Hodge, the Princeton theologian said, “There is nothing in the world that works such satanic, profound, God-defiant pride as false assurance.”

The Danger of False Assurance

There is nothing more dangerous than someone having a false assurance. A false or mistaken assurance is more dangerous than serial killers, rabid dogs, or the AIDS virus. All of those things can only kill the body. False assurance will most definitely damn a person's everlasting soul. A. W. Tozer said, “Of all deceived persons the self-deceived are the least likely to discover the fraud”.² It is one thing to be deceived about junk bonds or a mail-in sweepstakes. It is a whole different thing to be deluded about the destiny of your soul, thinking you are going to heaven when you will actually spend an eternity being tormented in hell.

Matthew 7: A Great Shock

Matthew 7:21 says we are going to be surprised about some church people on Judgment Day. There are those who have done all the things outwardly that Christians do, but have not lost their will to Christ's. They have not yet in their heart of hearts been able to say “*for me to live is Christ*” (Philippians 1:21). What Christ says is that on Judgment Day there may be professing Christians there who are respectful of Christ, have the right doctrine, who have private devotions and public proclamation of the Gospel, but when they are examined by Christ they will be eternally lost because they have built a religious life of their own making instead of abandoning their will for Christ's. He will look at them and say—“you say you know Me! You trumpeted to all on earth that you knew Me. But *I never knew you! Your heart was never changed.* You were a law unto yourself. Get away from me you lawless, you antinomian—I never knew you!”

²A.W. Tozer . *Man: The Dwelling Place of God* (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 1997), 96.

False Teachers

There may be some of you who do not want to believe the Gospel, because if it is true, then all of your family is on their way to hell. But if the Gospel is true, then it is like you having the cure for cancer and not sharing that cure with those who are dying.

Are you telling your family that they are ok, when they are not? What would you think of someone telling a person dying of some dreaded disease that they are going to be ok when they are not? That would be cruel. That would be deceitful.

Neither can we lie to those we love just because we don't want to believe they are on their way to hell. This is exactly what Jeremiah warns against in chapter 8 and verse 11, "They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." What does it mean to "heal the hurt...slightly". We would say today, "You have put a bandaid on a gaping wound that will cause death by saying, 'Peace peace,' when there is no peace." We don't need a bandaid. We need major surgery. We need to tell them they are going to die!

Holding Fast to the Word

Unless a person is being changed and standing firm in the Gospel, then they are not saved. Let us not misunderstand God's work of justification and sanctification. A regenerate heart produces the fruit of holiness. We must not give false hope to people who do not have the fruit of a regenerated heart. Whoever God justifies, He sanctifies. Justification without sanctification is no salvation at all. We must not give false comfort to those who show no fruit of a new heart.

III. How do we apply the Gospel?

How do we let the Gospel take hold of us?

Believe the Witness of the Scriptures

Our faith is not founded in our emotions but in the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, "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,

Our Hope is Found in the Record of Scripture

Scripture records that God sent prophets and kings and priests and mediators to bring you the message of salvation.

The Gospel in the Old Testament

ADAM: In God's gracious covenant with Adam, though Adam and Eve tasted the forbidden fruit, yet God was merciful. He promises a Savior. Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." The seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head.

MOSES: God promised a Mediator and a Prophet that would be greater than Moses. (Deut. 18:18).

DAVID: 2 Samuel 7:13, "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" There would be a King who would have an everlasting Kingdom.

ISAIAH: Isaiah 53:5-6, There would be one who would come as God in human flesh and be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The LORD would lay on Him the iniquity of us all.

HOSEA: Hosea 6:2 tells us that the true Israel, Jesus Christ would be raised again on the third day.

JESUS said that all the Old Testament sacrifices in the Temple pointed to Him, He said, “in this place is one greater than the temple.” (Matthew 12:6).

All the Kings of Israel pointed to Christ as King of Kings, yet He said when He came to earth “a greater than Solomon is here.” (Mt. 12:42).

We think about JONAH and how he was swallowed by the fish. As he was in the fishes belly for three days and then would rise again, so Christ would rise after three days. And he says again in Mat. 12:41, “a greater than **Jonah** is here.”

DANIEL said that Messiah would be cut off for His people (Daniel 9:26)

The Bible is All About Jesus

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, “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**,

The Bible, he’s saying, is about Jesus. It’s not just about what to do. It’s about what’s been done. Here’s the truth, friends. The Bible is not primarily about you, but it’s for you. But it’s about Jesus.

Believe the Witness of the Apostles / Other Witnesses

1 Corinthians 15:5-7, “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.”

It was against the law to be a Christian, because Christians refused to worship Caesar. Yet Christians were willing to die, because there were over 500 eye witnesses of the resurrection travelling around the Roman Empire. **1 Corinthians 15:6**, “Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time [after his resurrection], most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [DEAD]”.

Why are we here today? How did a lot of very unknown poor people convince thousands and perhaps millions in the Roman empire that Jesus rose from the dead? They had seen Him.

- ❖ There were 500 of them all telling the same story.
- ❖ They were willing to die excruciating deaths. The resurrection of Christ was the single motivating factor for their willingness to die.
- ❖ Folks, no one dies while willingly believing a lie. 500 people do not risk their lives in unison. You’d have thought at least one of them would have cracked and said it was all made up. No it was true, and it radically changed the Roman Empire.
- ❖ Jesus appeared to these 500 people at once, and Paul says, go talk to these people. They’re walking around the streets even as far as Corinth. Go interview them. They saw

The Disciples Saw the Risen Christ

Matthew 28:1-9, “Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on

it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” ⁸So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.”

Thomas who wasn't there, later got a visit from Jesus, and he bowed before Jesus and confessed, “My Lord and My God!” (Jn 20:28).

The Apostles Martyred

All the Apostles went on to lose their lives for the testimony of the Resurrection.

- **Matthew** suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, killed by a sword wound.
- **Mark** died in Alexandria, Egypt, after being dragged by horses through the streets until he was dead.
- **Luke** was hanged in Greece as a result of his tremendous preaching to the lost.
- **John** faced martyrdom when he was boiled in a huge basin of boiling oil during a wave of persecution in Rome. However, he was miraculously delivered from death. John was then sentenced to the mines on the prison island of Patmos and later died a natural death in Ephesus.
- **Peter** was crucified upside down on an x-shaped cross, according to church tradition because he told his tormentors that he felt unworthy to die in the same way that Jesus Christ had died.
- **James the Just (Jesus half-brother)** the leader of the church in Jerusalem, was thrown over a hundred feet down from the southeast pinnacle of the Temple when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. When they discovered that he survived the fall, his enemies beat James to death with a fuller's club. This was the same pinnacle where Satan had taken Jesus during the Temptation.
- **James the Greater, brother of John and** a son of Zebedee, was ultimately beheaded at Jerusalem. The Roman officer who guarded James watched amazed as James defended his faith at his trial. Later, the officer walked beside James to the place of execution. Overcome by conviction, he declared his new faith to the judge and knelt beside James to accept beheading as a Christian.
- **Bartholomew**, also known as Nathanael, was a missionary to Asia. He witnessed to our Lord in present day Turkey. Bartholomew was martyred for his preaching in Armenia when he was believed to have been **flayed to death by a whip**.
- **Andrew** was crucified on an x-shaped cross in Patras, Greece. He continued to preach to his tormentors for two days until he expired.
- **Thomas** was stabbed with a spear in India during one of his missionary trips to establish the church in the subcontinent.

- **Jude**, the brother of Jesus, was killed with arrows when he refused to deny his faith in Christ.
- **Matthias**, was chosen by the Apostles to replace Judas Iscariot. Matthias was stoned at Jerusalem by the Jews, and then beheaded.
- **Barnabas**, was stoned to death.
- **Phillip** was crucified,
- **Paul** was believed to have been tortured and then beheaded by the Emperor Nero at Rome in A.D. 67.

All the Apostles were willing to die excruciating deaths. The resurrection of Christ was the single motivating factor for their willingness to die.

Listen to Paul's Testimony

Here is one final thing to consider. The transformation of Saul of Tarsus. 1 Corinthians 15:8-11, "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."

Before Paul became a Christian, he was a sinner, but his real problem was religion. Sometimes we forget that. He says elsewhere, "I was a Pharisee." That's the strictest of the strict. He said, "I studied under this leading rabbi named Gamaliel." So he went to the best theological school. He probably memorized whole books of the Old Testament in the original Hebrew.

Paul Needed A Savior from Religion

We need a Savior. Paul's religion could not save him. Today, if you're a sinner, repent of your sin and trust in Jesus. If you're religious, repent of your religion and trust in Jesus. Jesus has two enemies, not one: sin and religion.

Here's the truth. God's grace does forgive you when you fail, but most of the time, it's God's grace empowering you to be who you cannot be, to do what you cannot do, by a power you do not possess. God's grace doesn't just pick you up when you fail. It keeps you strong so you can serve Him.

Saul of Tarsus was dragging Christians to jail, and often he was putting them to death by stoning (remember Stephen). What can change a man who trusted in his religion so much? 1 Cor. 15:8, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me..." He appeared to me! On the Damascus Road! And he says, "I worked harder than all the other apostles."

1 Corinthians 15:50-56

Paul concludes that the hope of Christ's resurrection is the hope of our own resurrection.

"I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality."

54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise God for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

Conclusion: Jesus said that the resurrection is the way to eternal life. Remember his words to Mary? “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25-26)

Do you believe this? Is the center of your world the resurrection? It ought to be. Because of the resurrection...

- 1) Death is dead! Death cannot harm those who are in Christ
- 2) We have a Savior that truly can save us! AW Tozer said, “We understand and acknowledge that the Resurrection has placed a glorious crown upon all of Christ's sufferings.” “thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 15:56).
- 3) You are empowered by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead.

If you have strayed from this Gospel, come back to Jesus! This is the message of I Cor. 15. The resurrection will change your life. It will secure your future. Christ's resurrection secures your own resurrection! I pray that no one here will have “believed in vain.”