

Why the Resurrection
1 Corinthians 15
Pastor Jeremy Cagle, April 1, 2018

Good morning, everyone. Have you guys enjoyed the morning so far? It's been a blessing, hasn't it? I bet you didn't know that Adam and Eve were the first ones at the tomb. You learn something new every day. They had it wrong all these years.

I do apologize for my voice. I've got a little cold going on this morning. For those of you who are joining us for the first time, we have been going to the book of Romans chapter by chapter on Sunday mornings. We did chapter eight last week and we're going to be doing chapter nine next week. It's been a great study for us.

We've learned so much, but this week, in honour of the Resurrection Sunday, we're going to be talking about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Specifically, we're gonna talk about why it was necessary. Richard talked about that a little bit during the time with the children, but why did Jesus have to rise from the dead? Why did He have to come back?

In preparing for this sermon, I actually came across some theories saying that He didn't have to rise. These are some theories to disprove the resurrection. Some of you might have heard these before. If you have, just bear with me. I've got quite a few of them, but I think they're very helpful to talk about for a moment.

The first one, the first theory to disapprove the resurrection is the stolen body theory. The stolen body theory is the idea that some early opponents claim that the followers of Jesus stole His body from the tomb and then invented the whole story of the resurrection. This was actually taught in Bible times. It's a 2,000 year old theory, but if you remember in Matthew 27, it says, "Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, and said, 'Sir, we remember that when He was alive that deceiver said, "After three days, I'm gonna rise again." Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise his disciples will come and steal Him away and say to the people, "He has risen..."', and the last deception will be worse than the first."

Later on in Matthew 28, as Richard actually just talked about, the chief priests went to the soldiers, gave them money and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while you were sleeping.'" According to this theory, the chief priests and the elders - oh, sorry - the disciples, while the guards weren't looking, walked past them, quietly rolled away the stone blocking the entrance without waking them up or bothering them and kidnapped Jesus' body. That's called the stolen body theory. It's actually the most popular theory to disprove the resurrection or one most popular. It was popular back then. It's popular today, which leads to another theory to disapprove the resurrection. It's the missing body theory. First, it was stolen. Now it's missing.

The missing body theory: this one said someone else took the body from the tomb without Jesus' followers knowing about it. The body vanished because someone else took it. That's what Mary

thought. If you remember Mary Magdalene, she thought someone took Jesus' body. John 20 says, "Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away. So she ran and came to Peter and the other disciple and said, 'They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have laid Him.'" Now Mary changed her mind later in John 20 when she saw Jesus, but here, she thought someone stole His body. They took it away. While the guards weren't looking, someone other than the disciples came to the tomb, quietly rolled the stone away and kidnapped His body, which leads to another theory. I'm just gonna go through these quickly 'cause I want to get to the point here.

Another one (you might have heard this one before) is the swoon theory. Has anybody ever heard of the swoon theory? It's the theory that Jesus didn't die on the cross, He swooned. He passed out. The basic assertion of the swoon theory, according to one source, is that Jesus wasn't dead when He was removed from the cross. In fact, many people have been mistakenly pronounced dead by modern doctors. If modern doctors can be fooled, then so could the Roman soldiers and the people in the first century, so Jesus didn't die. He passed out. After all Mark 15 says, "Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead." Maybe He wasn't dead. Maybe He just fainted.

Now let me just explain this theory, 'cause it's helpful to think about this for a minute. According to this theory, to disprove the resurrection, after sweating blood in the garden of Gethsemane, a process that would have actually softened his skin after extreme stress. Sweat goes into the blood - excuse me - blood goes into the sweat glands, comes out of the sweat glands, opening the pores, making the skin soft. After that takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is put on trial and beaten all night. It says He was beaten. We don't know what all happened, but that was one thing. He was flogged by the Roman soldiers, a process that often killed the victim. He was too weak to carry His cross.

Then He was crucified and had nails driven into His hands and feet. That would have paralyzed Him. He had a spear thrust into His side, blood and water flowed out. Then He was pronounced dead by the Roman soldiers, dead by Nicodemus, dead by Joseph of Arimathea and placed in a tomb. After all of that, Jesus woke up, quietly rolled away the stone from the inside. It was a stone so heavy, it would've taken ten men to move it. He moved it away from the inside, which was impossible to do, and He walked away. Now let me ask you. It'd be easier to believe in a resurrection, wouldn't it? Then that? But that's another popular theory, the swoon theory.

Another one ... I think these are interesting, so thanks for your patience with this: The twin theory. This is a theory that Jesus had a twin brother. You didn't know that either, did you? First, you found out Adam and Eve were the first ones at the tomb. Now you find out Jesus had an identical twin brother. According to this one (there're two versions of this) ... one is that the twin died on the cross instead of Jesus. Or the twin appears as an imposter after Jesus dies. That's the twin theory. This one says that Jesus' followers who were the closest people to Him for three years were hoodwinked into thinking the wrong Jesus came back. Or the wrong Jesus died on the cross.

Another one is the vision theory. The vision theory says that Jesus came back in a ghost-like vision. And later on, the disciples were tricked into thinking He was real. After all, if you remember, Luke 24 says, "When they were telling these things, Jesus himself stood in their midst, and said to them, 'Peace be to you.' But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a ghost." Some say that's what happened at the resurrection.

Another one is the hypnosis theory, which says Jesus hypnotized the disciples. Another one, which is my personal favorite, is the alien theory, which says He was abducted by aliens.

Now I went through these very quickly to point out a couple of things. One thing is there's a lot of theories out there as to why the resurrection didn't happen. But also, I brought all that up to ask you the question, "So what?" What does it matter? So what if Jesus swooned on the cross or if He was abducted by aliens? Why would our faith be any different? So what if He had a twin brother and His body went missing?

Let me say this another way. Why is the resurrection so important to our faith? Why is it necessary? We celebrate a holiday every year to remember it; the holiday of Easter, Resurrection Sunday. We meet on Sundays to remember it. I don't know if you know that or not, but the reason Christians meet on Sundays is because Jesus was resurrected on Sunday. The Jews met on Saturday to celebrate the Sabbath. Christians meet on Sunday to celebrate the resurrection. But why is this so important to our faith?

That's what I want to talk to you about this morning. If you would, turn in your Bibles with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. As you're turning there, I just want to give you a little background about this book of 1 Corinthians.

It's safe to say that of all the churches in the New Testament, the Church at Corinth might have been the worst, or close to it. It was a church in constant turmoil. Corinth was located on the island of Greece right between Athens and Sparta on the Mediterranean Sea. This means it was a coastal town and a lot of bad traffic went through there.

There were actually two parts to the city. There was Corinth the regular city, located at the bottom of the hill. There was Acrocorinth, the high city, located at the top. And on the Acrocorinth was an enormous temple to Aphrodite the goddess of love. It just towered over the city. Everywhere you went, you saw this big temple. And at night, there were 1,000 priestesses who would descend on the town and sell their bodies for worship. That was how you worshiped the goddess, Aphrodite, in the first century was filled with prostitution and immoral sex. Because of this, the town of Corinth, where this church was, became known for its wickedness.

There were actually terms the ancients used to describe the wickedness of the Corinthians. Like the term *Corinthiazesthai*, which means "to behave like a Corinthian," "to behave like a wild man". That's what the term meant. They also came up with the term "Corinthian girl," which was a synonym for a prostitute. Prostitution was so common in the ancient world, the Greek language had several words for it, and one of them literally meant "Corinthian girl" or "a girl from this town".

You can imagine growing up in a place like this and someone asking you, "Where are you from?" And you say, "I'm from Corinth." They would say, "Ah, we know what you're like. We know what people are like from that place." You know, "Where you from?" "I'm from Corinth." "Stay away from that guy. He's just trash. He's just trash." This is where these people grew up. Corinth was their home, but now the Lord has saved them, and He planted a church here.

As you read the Book of 1 Corinthians, one thing you notice is that all that wickedness from the town has bled over into the church. It's just problem after problem after problem in this place. For instance, you read 1 Corinthians five and you hear about a man sleeping with his father's wife. You say, "Who would do that?" A Corinthian would do that. That's normal Corinthian behaviour. Or you read in 1 Corinthians six where the believers are suing each other. I mean who would do that? Or in 1 Corinthians 11, they're getting drunk at the Lord's supper. What's going on? This is Corinth bleeding it over into the church. This is problem after problem after problem.

By the time you get to the end of the book, by the time you get to 1 Corinthians 15, which is our passage for today, their questioning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They're wondering if Jesus really had to come back to life or not. I don't think I have to tell you guys, there're a lot of churches and even professing Christians today, that doubt the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul puts this ... It may humble to say this, but the worst church in the New Testament wrestled with that. A lot of seminaries, Christian colleges today, would say, "Boy, we are so smart because we don't believe the resurrection happened." Paul says you're on the same level as the worst church in the New Testament. This was a big, big problem.

He goes on to explain why the resurrection was necessary. Why is it important? So what if Jesus swooned or if He was a magician. So what if He had a twin brother or He was abducted by aliens. What's the big deal? Paul answers that in 1 Corinthians 15.

If you'd read the first couple of verses with me. He says, "Now I make known to you, brethren," there in 1 Corinthians 15. "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."

If you notice, Paul says that this chapter what he's talking about now is about "the gospel, which I preached to you." The word "Gospel" there means "good news". Paul says this is about the good news of the Christian faith, the good news that we have a Saviour, and it's all tied to the resurrection.

In verse 2, he says "unless you believe what I'm about to tell you, you won't have a Saviour." He says, "You have believed in vain." He says there's no point in calling yourself a Christian if there is no resurrection. There's no point in believing a Gospel, because there is no good news if there is no resurrection.

We've been going through the book of Romans on Sundays and talking about how the Gospel is the power of God for salvation. That's what Romans 1:16 says. Paul says there is no power if there is no resurrection. Then he goes on to explain what that means. Your life can't be changed without this. Our entire faith is built around this. Let me unpackage this for you a little bit this

morning. In the first few verses of chapter 15, first half of the chapter, Paul gives us six reasons why the resurrection is necessary.

If you're taking notes, here are six reasons why the resurrection is necessary. I just gave you six reasons why it's not necessary, or why people try to disprove it, and we flew through those very quickly. We're going to go through these a little slower. Here, let me give you six reasons why it is important, why it is necessary.

The first one is this: It proved the Old Testament true. It proved the Old Testament true. The resurrection fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. Like many events in the Bible, the resurrection was not an afterthought in the mind of God. It wasn't a last-minute idea. It was something He planned long, long ago. Paul mentions that in verse three when he says,

For I delivered to you as a first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time...

In other words, if you want to know if the resurrection happened, go talk to all 500 of those guys. "...most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also."

You see the phrase "Scriptures" repeated a couple of times there, once in verse three and again in verse four. That refers to the Old Testament Scriptures and the Hebrew Bible. Paul says according to that, a sacrifice must be offered to pay for sins, and according to that a Messiah would rise from the grave.

If you want to see this for yourselves, keep your finger in 1 Corinthians 15 and turn back with me to Isaiah chapter 53. Brian Giesbrecht actually talked about this on Friday. It's a great Good Friday passage. You guys enjoy Good Friday service by the way? Yeah. That was good, wasn't it? I told Brian not to preach that well in front of my people again 'cause they'll want to hire him and get rid of me. That was fantastic.

But in Isaiah 53 (keep your finger in the passage in 1 Corinthians), the Old Testament said a Messiah would come and spill His blood for our sins. Isaiah says it this way. In Isaiah 53 verse 1, I believe this is called "The Gospel according to the Old Testament," but it says,

Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like

sheep have gone astray, each of us have turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people, to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

But not only would the Messiah do that, Isaiah said. Not only would He die for sinners like that and provide an offering for them, if you read on in verse ten, it says, "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days." In other words, He will come back to life.

Some of your translations actually render verse 11 this way. (The NASB has a little different rendering there). But some of your translations render verse 11 like this. "After the suffering of His soul, He will see the light of life and be satisfied." The point is that even in the Old Testament, Isaiah said that the Messiah would rise from the dead. After He's butchered like a sheep, He will come back like a king. After He is killed and put to death like a sacrifice, He will reign and rule.

Psalms 16 in verses nine to ten, let me just read this to you. It says, "Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely, for You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will you allow Your Holy One to undergo decay." That phrase "Holy One" there is a reference to God, the Son of God Himself. The Son of God will not undergo decay.

We could look at other passages here, but Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 15 verse four is that Jesus "was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The resurrection proved the Old Testament true. It fulfilled it. It made all these prophecies come to life.

Paul says if you want to understand all this stuff about the resurrection, you don't even have to just look in the New Testament. You can go back to the Old. Matter of fact, after the resurrection if you remember, Jesus appears to two of his apostles and it says, "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures."

That leads to a second reason why the resurrection is necessary. The first one is because it proved the Old Testament true. The second one is this: It proved the New Testament true. It fulfilled the words of the Old Testament, and it also fulfilled the words of the New Testament. The New Testament said Jesus would come back to life.

If you look in verse 12 of chapter 15, Paul goes on and says,

12 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. 15 Moreover we are even found to be false

witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

Apparently, some in Corinth were saying it didn't matter whether believers were resurrected or not because in verse 12, it says, "How do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" Paul answer that in verse 13. He says, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then even Christ has not been raised." And he goes on to say, "and we are false witnesses." In other words, we're all a bunch of liars because that's what we said. We said Christ came back.

Everybody in the New Testament talked about this. You may know this. You may not know this. The resurrection is one of the only events that all four Gospels mention. The Book of Revelation talks about the resurrection from cover to cover. Revelation is about the Risen Christ coming back to reign. That's the point of the whole book. The letters of Peter, Paul and John and Jude mention the resurrection. Peter mentions it in 1 Peter verse three. Paul talks about it here. John mentions it in 1 John five and Jude in Jude 21.

Paul says if the resurrection didn't happen, then we all lied. He said if one of those theories was true, the stolen body theory or the twin theory or the alien theory, then your Bibles are useless. You should throw them away, because this is what they talk about. They talk about the resurrection of the dead.

I don't know if you guys have ever talked...Do you ever talk with someone who said, "Well, I believe this part of the Bible, but I don't believe that part of the Bible?" Has anybody ever done that? "I believe the Sermon on the Mount and all that good stuff, 'love your neighbor,' but I don't believe in a crucified Jesus." Or "I don't believe in a resurrection." How do you pick and choose like that? Paul says you can't. The whole Bible is built on this event. If you take this away, you take away everything. If you lose this, the whole thing comes crashing to the ground.

This brings us to another reason why the resurrection is necessary: because it brought us out of our sins. It showed us that our sins had been paid for. I know I'm giving you guys a lot here. I appreciate your patience in hanging in there with me.

If you look in verse 16, he goes on and he says,

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 worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

I've heard people say (and maybe you have as well) that "Whether Jesus saved me or not, it doesn't matter. I just admire Him for His good life." Has anybody heard that before? "I admire Him for being a good person, a good teacher." Paul says here that doesn't amount to a hill of beans. Because, he says in verse 19, he says, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied."

Jesus didn't come to be a good teacher. He came to save us from hell. He came to bring us out of our sins, and He does it. Verse 17 says, with the resurrection, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins." The Greek word for worthless in verse 17 is *mataios*, which means "devoid of force" or "having no purpose". It goes back to what we said earlier. Paul says "for the Gospel is the power of God for salvation." Paul says "if Christ has not been raised, your faith has no power. It's a devoid of force." Why? Because if Jesus never rose then we will never rise. If Jesus didn't come back, then we're not going to come back from the dead. That's the point of the whole thing.

In Romans 6 verse 23, he says, "For the wages of sin is death." That's what sin costs us. It costs us death. And if Jesus never rose from the dead, He never paid that penalty. We have no reason to believe that. Does that make sense? You guys following me?

I was talking to my son the other day and I told him I was going to a funeral. He asked me what a funeral was, and I said, "It's a celebration of someone's life. We're honouring them, because they died." By the way, when you have a four-year-old, it's always a blessing to have a five-minute conversation straight through with a four-year-old. Okay. You guys don't know what I'm talking about. Maybe your kids have longer conversations than mine. But this is one we had the other day. And I said, "A funeral is you're honouring someone because they died." He said, "Who died?" I said, "It was the Bonneville's grandfather." Unfortunately, I couldn't make it to the funeral. I got this cold, but then he asked this question. It was interesting. He said, "Are you gonna die, daddy?" And I said, "Yeah." What are you supposed to say? I said, "Yes." And he said, "Today?" I said, "Maybe." "I'm ... kind of sick. I gotta cold." Suffering. Suffering. Just suffering, suffering. He said, "Tomorrow?" I said, "Maybe I'll die tomorrow. I don't know." He said, "Well, that makes me sad." I said, "It doesn't have to son, because I'm going to come back to life." I said, "Son, if I believe in Jesus, the Bible says," I was studying this passage, "It says I will rise from the dead."

But here's the thing, friends, and this is Paul's point, I won't do that if Jesus didn't rise. Does that make sense? I won't come back if Jesus didn't come back to life. I will remain in my sins. I will still be paying the wages of them. The wages of sin is death. If I stay dead, I'll still be paying the punishment of that. I can't think of a more perfect punishment for sin than death. When you go to a funeral or see someone's life who's gone, it's over. But the point Paul's making is Jesus brings us out of that punishment. He takes us out of our sins.

This brings us to another reason why the resurrection is necessary, Paul says: because it raises us from the dead. We talked about that a little bit already, but the resurrection raises us from the dead. If you look in verse 20, Paul says,

20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.
21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22
For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own
order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

The word "first fruits" in verse 20 is an agricultural term. It refers to the first fruits of the harvest. The book of Leviticus says that, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the sons of

Israel and say to them, when you enter the land, which I'm giving to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest." Leviticus says the Israelites were commanded to bring the first fruits, or, the first of their crops to God as an insurance that He'll take care of the rest. Go out in the field, harvest your corn or your beans or whatever, and the first part of that goes to God as an offering.

In a similar way, Jesus, it says, is the first fruits of those who will be resurrected. He's the first one to come back from the dead, and if we trust in Him, we'll come back later. We won't stay dead. Or verse 20 says, "We won't stay asleep." Asleep is a metaphor for death there.

If you're wondering how this works, theologians have come up with a big term called "imputation". It's spelled like amputation, but with an "I," - imputation. He refers to the transfer of one person's sin or reward to another. On the cross, our sins were transferred to Jesus, and at the resurrection, Jesus' reward will be transferred to us. At the cross, our wages were paid by Him in full. Now there's nothing left to pay. At the resurrection, Jesus' eternal life, His resurrected life will be given to all those who will believe.

Some have called this the divine exchange. This is when God exchanged places with us. Others have called it, another big term, "penal substitution". It's the idea that Jesus was penalized as our substitute. He was punished in our place. I told our church last Sunday that God loves to save sinners. This is His passion. This is how He does it, by giving us Jesus Christ.

Some of you played a team sport where, whether you were actually in the game or not, you win. I play tennis, so I do resent that. Tennis is a lonely sport. You win, you win. You lose, you lose, but some of you played sports where if you didn't actually get on the field, but your team won, you got a trophy. Hockey, football, basketball, baseball, that's the idea. The Scriptures tell us Jesus won, and if we trust in Him, we win, too. God gave Him a trophy, a perfect trophy, a crown. If we trust in Him, we get one as well.

Verse 22 sums it up very well when it says, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." Adam and Eve may not have been the first ones at the tomb, but they were the first ones to sin, and as a result of their sin, the human race was plunged into sin. Paul says, but as a result of what Christ did, the human race, those who trust in Him, can be brought out of sin and given life.

This brings us to a fifth reason why the resurrection is necessary. That is: because by the resurrection, Jesus will defeat evil. By the resurrection, Jesus will defeat evil. Not only will He defeat death, but He will defeat evil, all the forces of evil. Verse 24 goes on to say,

24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. 27 For "He has put all things under subjection under His feet." But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.

Anyway. I will stop there. There's a lot in that passage, and we can't get to all of it. But just to point out a few things, it mentions Jesus' enemies. And he says the resurrection defeated His enemies. "His enemies" there is a reference to all kinds of things. Verse 26 talks about death. We could put Satan in here. We could put demons. We could put evil things that men do.

I'm from the Bible Belt ... was kind of funny. I prayed the Lord would bring me to the Bible Belt, and He did take me to the Bible Belt in Canada. It's kind of neat. That's awesome, but I'm from the other Bible Belt. It makes me sad to watch the news because a lot of the school shootings are happening in the Bible Belt in the States. You guys notice that? Texas, Florida, those places, the churches everywhere. But it gives me comfort to know that I serve a God who will send His Son to one day stop all of that mess. Amen?

But here's the thing, guys. If Jesus is not alive today, then He won't be alive then to stop it. Does that make sense? If He's not alive right now, what's my hope that He's gonna be alive then to come back and put an end to it? All the wars, all the school shootings, all the suicide bombs, all that horrible stuff, that's all tied into what Paul is saying here. He can't stop all that then if He's not alive now. Our only hope to seeing an end to the misery is the resurrection.

That brings us to one more reason. I've given you several here. I appreciate your guys' patience. I wanted to walk you through the whole passage so you could get your arms around the whole idea of what he's seeing here; how important this doctrine is. It proved the Old Testament true. It proved the New Testament true. It brought us out of our sins. It raises us from the dead. It's going to ultimately defeat evil and put an end to the work of Satan, which is good news to believe in this morning. That's the Gospel in a nutshell right there. I'm going to give you one more, and we'll close it out with this one.

One more reason, a final reason why the resurrection is necessary: it explains our present suffering. Or we could even say it even gives us hope in our present suffering. If you know that death is not going to be the end of you, then there's hope, isn't there? If you know that Jesus will one day come back and defeat evil, that gives you hope.

There's a book written some time ago that asked the question, "Where is hope?" It said there isn't any. Well, I guess if there is no God, then there is no hope. But Paul says there is. If you look in verse 29, he says

29 Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them? 30 Why are we also in danger every hour? 31 I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 32 If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

That sounds like a bleak way to tie this passage off, but it's really not. I can just walk you through this. Verse 29's a pretty controversial passage because the Mormon's take it literally to mean you can baptize people for the dead. You can baptize living people for dead people. But that's not what ... that contradicts so many passages in the Bible. A better idea is that those who once followed Christ have now died. People today are being baptized for their testimony. Do you

follow that? But Paul says their testimony is no good if there is no resurrection. Some of you came to faith in Christ because of somebody who's dead now. But Paul says, "If the dead are not raised at all, then why are they baptized for them? Why are we believing because of their testimony, if it does them no good?"

This greater point that he goes on to say is that the resurrection is necessary because it gives us hope in our present suffering. Paul says this from the negative angle in verse 30. He says, "Why are we also in danger every hour?" In verse 31 he says, "I die daily." In verse 32, "If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me?" That all describes suffering. Paul says what's the point of all my suffering, if there is no resurrection from the dead? And he says in verse 32, there is no point. He says, "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'"

Anyone who says that Christianity makes this life easier, should talk to Paul because he had a totally different experience. He said it was much easier being a Pharisee than all this. A true Biblical, repentant, self-denying, life-changing Christianity is hard. It makes this life harder, but Paul says we're not doing it for this life, we're doing it for the next life. And if there is no next life, he says, it's futile.

One author said it this way. He said, "I did not become a Christian to make me happy. I knew that a good worldly party would do that." He says, "If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I don't recommend Christianity." Paul says I don't recommend it for that either. I recommend it for the next life and the next life comes, through a resurrection.

He says it this way at the end of the chapter in verse 54. This is good way to end the chapter here. He says in verse 54,

54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about 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.

Paul says this is all about the victory that is to come.

He mentions "the sting of death" there. You guys have experienced death. You've had loved ones die. It stings. It's painful. Paul says the victory we have in Christ takes away the sting of death. You know they say that a bee can only sting you once. And if you believe in Jesus, death can only sting you once.

Let me ask you this morning, do you believe all of this? Is this your hope this morning? Do you believe Jesus can remove the sting of death for you? Do you see this as important? Are you looking forward to this day? Are you trusting in it and resting in it? I hope you are this morning.

In my third year of seminary, I took a class called Apologetics in Evangelism that was about sharing and defending the faith. And one of the assignments was to tell someone how we would

witness to a lost person in a four-page paper, which I thought should be pretty easy to do, because I've done it before. I was ready to coast through that assignment, until a professor said this. He says, "And," he says, "if you don't include the resurrection in your paper, I will fail you for this class." My jaw hit the floor, because that was exactly what I was gonna do. I had my Gospel presentation all lined up. I wasn't even going to put the resurrection in there. I thought it was something we talked about once a year during this holiday. Or something that we put at the end of a Jesus movie.

Some of you today may be wrestling with that. You may be saying, "Well, fail me because I don't mention the resurrection. It's not that important. Is it?" Paul says it is because you can't be saved without it. Everything rests on the fact that Jesus came back from the grave. Everything's built on this. As you spend this day with your family and friends, remember that this is not just a holiday for Christians, this is Christianity. Paul says, "And if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is vain and so is your faith."

We have crosses around our necks. We display them on our churches. I think we have one somewhere in the building here. But sometimes I wonder if we should put an empty tomb up there, because our faith is built on the empty tomb as well. You can't be saved without that either. Paul says this is the Gospel, which I preach to you. Let's close and thank the Lord for this Gospel this morning.

Father, I know I went through a lot of passage this morning with our dear people, and I pray that it would be profitable for them. I pray that it would not be too much information, Lord, but I just want to get our arms around the scope of what Christ has done in the resurrection.

Lord, thank you that we will have new life one day in Him. Thank you this world is not all there is. I think we could all just list off all the sorrows that we see around us, either on the news or sorrows we experience in our day-to-day lives, but Lord, thank you that we know that through Your Son, there will be a new day coming. As the sermon says, it's Friday, but Sundays coming. Lord, it may be a dark day now, but it will be a bright day when Your Son comes back. We rejoice in that, and we can rest in that because He has already come back to life.

Lord, I pray if there's any here this morning who don't know Christ, that this passage and the things we've sung about and talked about this morning would waken their hearts. Lord, You would give them a resurrection in their soul. Show them they need a Saviour. Not only do they need a Saviour now, but they're going to need a Saviour on judgment day. A day will come when they're going to desperately wish they had one. Lord, I pray they would have one today.

For those who are saved and born again in Christ, Lord, may they rejoice in what Your Son has done for them. As we celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning, Father, may You be glorified as we remember all these things. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.