

The Certain Hope of the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15

We can do a lot for ourselves. We are a wealthy culture — arguably the wealthiest in the history of the world. We tend to be independent in caring for ourselves, providing for ourselves, making our own decisions, choosing our own path. But you know what we can't do? We can't *un-dead* ourselves. Not a one of us. Death is the universal enemy. Have you asked yourself *why*?

Death entered the world and every human heart through the rebellion and disobedience of our first parents. God calls that rebellion and disobedience “sin.” He created Adam and Eve to live and flourish in communion with him in a covenant of obedience. He gave them all they needed for life, prohibiting one fruit tree in the garden. He warned them that if they disobeyed, the penalty of that sin would be death. They sinfully disobeyed the God who made them and gave life to them, and they died. We have all been dying since that day because we all sinners, like they were — we have not loved God with all our heart; we have not obeyed what he commanded. They did not escape the penalty of sin, and neither can we. — Not on our own. And that's where the good news of the Gospel enters; in the Gospel we can move from death to life. Here it is at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:1–4 — 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,

PRAY

Here, in the most significant chapter on the resurrection in the whole of Scripture, we begin not with Christ's resurrection, but his death: Christ died. If the apostle Paul had put a period there we might well ask, “What does that have to do with me?” But there's no period there. I delivered to you as a first importance, what I also received: that CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS according to the Scriptures. He did not die for *his* sins — As the holy Lamb of God he had no sin. He lived a perfect righteous life. But he became a **substitute** for all who turn to him in faith, paying **their** sin penalty. Christ died for our sins. That's substitute language. For our sake God the Father made Jesus his Son to be sin — he who knew no sin — so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor.

2

5:21) He died as a substitute for those who believe, was buried, and was raised on the third day as the Victor and Eternal King for those who believe him. This is the Gospel. It's what Easter is all about! If you hear nothing else, you've heard the best news that there is for all of humanity. We can be made right with God, but not through our own efforts. God sent a substitute so that we can live, and he calls us to turn from our sin, and believe in him. The rest this morning is details — but they are glorious details! I want our faith to be strengthened, our worship of the Risen King to be enflamed, our hearts transformed by grace, and our daily walk to be empowered by the resurrection this morning. So let's prayerfully look at **10** aspects of the resurrection so that our faith, worship, hearts, and walk are transformed with resurrection power.

1. The resurrection of Jesus gives victory over sin. v 17 — And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Paul is making an upside-down argument about our spiritual condition if Christ had remained in death's grip. Many in the 1st Century were denying that Christ was raised from the dead in spite of the hundreds of eye witnesses. Others would allow the Christ lived, but only in a spiritual sense. They said there was no bodily resurrection, but he simply came back as a living spirit. The consequences of those, as Paul says, is that we remain in our sins. But because our substitute has been physically raised, we are not still in our sins.

The term "in our sins" packs a double deadly punch. The first is the **penalty** that is required for all sin. We've already addressed that. The wages of sin is death — separation from God under the eternal condemnation of his holy wrath. But there's another punch — the **power** of sin. If we are still in our sin, our minds and our affections are enslaved to continued rebellion against God. Our thinking is benighted so that we cannot value or choose the beauty and life and goodness of God, but only choose what produces more death in us — spiritually, relationally, physically. This is the power of sin.

But Christ is risen! and you are no longer in your sins! The penalty of sin has been paid. There is therefore now condemnation for those in Christ! The power of sin has been broken. We are free from the bondage and tyranny of dead rebellion and ruinous desires — all through the resurrection of Christ who conquered these! Oh Christian, believe this! Crown him as your captain in temptation's hour! Fight what would destroy you with the truth that your conquering King has raided the domain of darkness, drug you out, and set you free to choose life and walk in resurrection power.

3

2. His resurrection means we have been justified — we are made right before God. I threw you a little curve — this is in Romans 4:25 — He was raised for our justification. His resurrection proves that he is who he says he is: the sinless son of God. He did not die for his sins, but for ours. Therefore, when sin's price was paid, when God's wrath against sin was exhausted, Jesus rose again to life. Had he not been who he said he was, his death would simply have paid for his own sins, and we would therefore be left to pay for ours. But his resurrection is evidence that he was the worthy Lamb of God and the payment for your sins was accepted by God. When you are tempted through some past, failure to think there is something that you need to do to satisfy your own sin, debt, remind yourself of this truth: the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead proves that the Father accepted the Son's payment for your sin and you stand right before God through his finished work.

3. The resurrection Jesus means your sinful past no longer determines your glorious future.

Consider the Apostle in vv 9–11 — he had persecuted the Lord's nascent church. He facilitated the murder of Stephen, complicit in it. He drug Christians in chains to prison. He despised Christ. But the risen Christ intercepted Paul and transformed him to be, arguably, the most significant man in the New Testament. Talk about new life in place of death! We sit here this morning under the authority of this apostle's inspired and authoritative teaching because the risen Christ changed everything in him.

What sinful act in your past do you think is of greater power in your life than the resurrection?

Certainly Paul's calling an assignment was unique. But we must recognize that Christ has defeated every aspect of death and guilt in our sinful past and equips us as new creations to give our lives to him. Assignments and gifts are different. But the resurrection guarantees a glorious fruitful future as we abide in him and his life enlivens us. If we were to look back a few chapters 1 Corinthians 6, we would see this spelled out: Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And **such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. Through his resurrection your sinful past does not determine your glorious future. Lay aside every weight and sin and look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. With eyes fixed on the ever-living King, run toward life, blessing, and usefulness.

4. Paired with #3, the resurrection empowers ongoing work in God's Kingdom. Paul was not transformed by a once-and-done encounter with the risen Lord. He lived in the power of the

resurrection. He experienced resurrection power working in Him to accomplish the what Christ called him to do. In Ephesians 1:18 ff he prays for believers that we may know what he experiences: the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand.

You may have noticed that I prefer the term Resurrection Sunday rather than Easter. The reality is every Sunday is Resurrection Sunday. The reason we gather for worship on Sunday is because the apostles establish this as the day of worship because it was the day that Christ rose. Avoid thinking of the resurrection one Sunday out of every 52. Walk and live in the death-conquering power of his resurrection every day. Begin your day by asking God to empower you with the immeasurable greatness of resurrection power that he worked in Christ when he raised him to life. This power is yours because of Christ! Don't live in spiritual weakness or poverty. Grow in prayer and power.

5. The resurrection stamps VALID on your faith. Paul again makes an upside-down argument in v 14. If Christ is not risen, our faith would be worthless because he didn't do what he promised. But we know Jesus is worthy of our faith because he did rise, just as he said, and hundreds of eyewitness saw him — including Paul. Therefore, we know that **he is able to keep what we have committed to him for eternity**. The object our faith lives again; he said he would never lose any that the Father gave him. He saves to the uttermost. When you come to Christ you come to the right person. You come to the only person who defeated death, and now lives by the power of his own building. The search is over. Faith in Christ is singularly valid based on what he says, what he did, and who he is as the one who holds all things together by the power of his word.

6. The resurrection brims with hope of the future harvest that includes all believers. v 20 — In fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. There is a harvest of resurrected believers coming, and I will be part of it, because I have entered into Christ by faith. And you will be part of it as you enter into Christ by faith. When you stand by the grave of someone you love, remember that it will become a launching pad when the living Lord returns. In that moment the body that was in the grip of corruption will be changed. As Christ was physically raised from the dead, all in Christ will join the resurrection harvest on that Day. Not one soul — even the lowliest, most unknown believer in Christ will fail to rise when he returns. ***Following on from that...***

7. The resurrection physically equips me for eternity as he designed. The bodies God gave us in creation were designed for an eternity of communion, worship, and work. Sin's curse brought about allergies, genetic malfunctions, deteriorated discs, fibrotic lungs, cancerous growths, misaligned ankle — and slow-motion death in general. In the resurrection this body will be changed so that death's curse is undone. There is a one-to-one continuity between what you see in front of you and what will be. As hard as it is to imagine at this moment, what you **will be** on that day will be glorious and full of his life.

That continuity also means that every brother in this room will be raised as a man, and every sister will be raised as a woman. Christ's resurrection from the dead and the future of resurrection of every believer means that Satan's latest evil scheme of gender dysphoria, as it is called, is conquered in and through Christ. The bodies that he created, and gave us by Design or for his purposes and his glory. We are not free to change that, as though we could. Our gender, our sex, is fixed by our king and he superintends that forever. There is eternal hope for those who were caught in the slightest devilish doctrine. Sinful dishonoring of the body is undone, because Christ physically rose from the dead, and so takes us with him as he designed us to be. If you are caught in this, flee to Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. He can and will break those chains, strong as they may seem, and he renew your mind and equip you to live forever as he designed you, for his glory and your good.

8. The resurrection overcomes dishonoring of our bodies. As I understand that my resurrection body is designed for perfect communion and worship of God, I must avoid deadly thinking that what I do **now** with my body in this momentary life is somehow different. In light of where I'm headed, I am not to misuse my body today in the sinful service of pleasure or deliberately damage it in some way. It's the temple of the Holy Spirit. Worship of God with my body doesn't just begin **then**. It will be perfected then, but worship and service is now. I urge you, says Romans 12:1, to present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable spiritual worship today.

Consider: Sexual immorality has been around a long time; it is nothing new, though it seems ubiquitous in our culture. The great cry of the age: "My body, my choice. I'll do what I think is best." That philosophy is rooted in Greek philosophy that was summed up in the alliterative phrase: **sōma sēma**. That translates: the body is a tomb — get out of it. They perceived the spiritual to be of a higher plane, and the physical body to be a lower, more dishonorable plane. Therefore, they reasoned, since the body was to be ultimately discarded as inferior, do whatever you wanted to with

your body. Live for pleasure. Live for sex. Live for gluttony. Do whatever you want. The scripture, and the doctrine of the resurrection in particular, allows us no such distortion in our thinking. The resurrection of Christ, and our following in the resurrection harvest shows that they are highly valued by God. He equips them for eternity. Our bodies will be the home for our souls in eternity. They are not throwaway items. There is no ultimate severing of the physical and the spiritual.

Let the hope of your physical resurrection in Christ shape what you do with your body. Let it give you weapons to fight for purity and physical usefulness and health. With an eye to eternity, reject the short-sighted pleasures of vv 32–34: bad company, drunkenness, and sinning in general. Don't go to the gym for the sake of winning a weight-lifting contest. But perhaps go to fine-tune what God has given you so that we may be more useful in serving him, as fit as you can be for God's work.

Very briefly, following on from disciplining yourself to be useful with your body...

9 .The resurrection recategorizes risk — vv 30-32. Knowing that we have eternal life with Christ, and that he will raise our bodies in victory as he was raised, we are emboldened to take even physical risks in obedience to what he has called us to do. Paul was physically in danger constantly for his obedience to God, yet he was fearless because he knew the eternal power of the resurrected Lord. His resurrection provides a foundation for righteous risks that may appear foolish to those whose hope in this life only. There is certainty of eternal life and reward in Christ. The world is temporary — it's passing, along with its comforts. Any gain from the world is illusory. Aim for eternity.

10. The resurrection decisively conquers our greatest enemy. — vv 54–56

Death dies as Christ lives. Hope, meaning, and purpose only come in the resurrection of Christ as he conquered, he defeated death. *What possible difference does anything in this world make if death is the only certain outcome?* Meaning and purpose in this life are yours in Christ because he lives. Your life is tethered to his eternal life. Death is swallowed up in his victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? 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. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

PRAY