

Easter in Biblical Perspective
“The Resurrection and Gospel Integrity”
I Corinthians 15
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On this resurrection Sabbath we'll be looking at I Corinthians 15. This is God's Word. It's the truth. I Corinthians 15:1–26 says *[1] Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, [2] and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [7] Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. [8] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. [9] For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. [10] But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. [11] Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

[12] Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. [14] And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. [15] We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. [16] For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. [17] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. [18] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. [19] If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

[20] But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21] 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. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. [24] Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. [25] For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. [26] The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Here are two questions I get often. One is ‘Pastor, this miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, do I have to believe in that in order to be a Christian?’ The second question I get is ‘Pastor, even if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, I would still believe in Him, would you?’ The first question I answered this way; not only do you have to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead but you have to believe He was raised from the dead on the third day. This is so important that the third generation after the Apostles developed something from the Apostles' teaching called the Apostles' Creed that was put together as rudimentary Christianity. This is Christianity

in one hundred words or less. It is 98 in Latin. This is basically a distillation of the essentials of the Gospel.

The Apostles' Creed is as follows;

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The birth, cross, atoning death, resurrection, ascension and the second coming are all essential elements of the essential message of the Gospel. The Gospel is important, isn't it? Do you hear what the Apostle Paul is doing in I Corinthians 15? He is having some issues with this church at Corinth and he reminds them that when he was with them he preached the Gospel to them, Christ crucified, the message of the cross. He said 'I gave to you the Gospel which is of first importance.' What does that mean?

It tells us two things. One is that everything in your Bible is important. There is nothing that is non-important but there are some things that are more important than other things. In the Bible we learn about Church government but you can get that wrong and still be saved. Secondly, there are some things that are more important than other things. It is the Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation and Paul said that he delivered to them of first importance *the* Gospel, not a gospel so there is something definitive called the Gospel. You have to have the Gospel to be saved and then Paul tells us that the Gospel is that He was delivered up for our transgressions according to the Scriptures. He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. That is essential truth in the essential primary truth in all of the Bible – the Gospel. So in answer to those previous questions you have to believe that He died and was raised on the third day just like you have to believe He died for your sins on that Passover day.

So what about the second question that I have been asked? Would I still believe in Him even if He wasn't raised from the dead? I will answer this when we get to the close of this study but here is this glorious text of Scripture where the Apostle Paul is affirming the importance of the Gospel and the essential of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day as an element of that Gospel. The way Paul makes his case you know he is a lawyer and there are saved lawyers out there. Paul was one of them who was trained in the law school of Gamaliel. When you read the book of Romans you can also see how Paul builds a case for the Gospel there as well. I Corinthians 15 is no different. As he is working his way through the essentials elements and importance of the Gospel he begins to bring it to them step by step by step. He marshalls the evidences for the fact that Jesus is raised from the dead.

One of those evidences came out when I read I Corinthians 15:20a which says [20a] *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead...* This is not a wish fulfillment. We are not here today for just a religious ceremony around life springing up in the spring. We are not here for religious rites. We are here celebrating something that we actually celebrate every Lord's Day. We celebrate the resurrection of Christ. It's fine that we can take a special season like Easter and do that which is historically tied to that week of passion but this is something we celebrate every week because the resurrection of Christ is so crucial that it was declared in the last Old Testament Sabbath when He rested in the grave and then He came forth on the first day of the week. So from then on we see believers gathering on the first day of the week to give praise to

the Lord of the Sabbath in whom we rest for our salvation because He is risen. So here is this glorious truth that we say is a fact.

Now why would we say it's a fact? Paul gives us five reasons the resurrection is a fact. Number one is Paul says it's a fact because it is essential. Logically it is essential for the Gospel that Jesus would be raised from the dead on the third day. The Gospel starts with bad news because we're helpless and hopeless. We can't save ourselves, religion can't save us and we need a Savior. The good news is where there was no way God has made a way and that way is His Son Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. God send His Son to save you from your sins in this glorious truth called the Gospel and the resurrection is essential to the truth of that Gospel as a factual event in history. The way Paul gets it across is with negatives. Paul says if Christ isn't raised then what we are preaching is nothing but pure vanity. We here this word a lot in the book of Ecclesiastes where it states apart from a relationship with the Lord all is vanity ultimately. If you have a relationship with Christ then all things become useful to the glory of God and to enjoy Him forever. The word vanity that comes out of the Hebrew basically means emptiness, nothingness, with no substance.

My illustration for this comes from when I was about 13 or 14 years old and I would get to go to the county fair. We didn't have a lot of money because my dad was in minor league baseball so there was a lot of month at the end of the money. I would save up two quarters when I would go to the fair. One quarter would get me into this big barrel thing where I would climb to the top to watch about 5 to 10 Harley Davidson motor cycles going at each other in this circular barrel with all the noise and danger that got me so excited as I watched them. I loved that and then after that I would go to a little booth to spend my other quarter. This lady would take a paper funnel, put it into a tub and began to move that funnel around and around the tub where pure magic would occur. It would get bigger and bigger and I would tell her to keep going to see what my quarter would get. I waited all year for this. I had just bought .25 cents worth of sugar coated air that was really nothing.

Satan keeps putting the funnel around by telling you if you have this or that or do this or that or get addicted to this or that then you'll experience this and it will make your life. Then you bite and you think 'is that all there is?' It is sugar coated air. It is nothing and not only that it kills you. There is a Savior and that's a Gospel message but if He has not risen then what we are preaching is in vain.

Paul also says that if He hasn't risen we're liars and even more than that we're self-diluted liars. More than that we're diluting others and more than that we're blasphemers for we're bearing false witness against God. More than that if Jesus isn't raised then there is no resurrection of the dead and if there is no resurrection you're still in your sins. If He is risen then I'm not living under the dominion of sin anymore but if He's not then you're still under sin's control, dominion and bondage. Then there is no hope. So clearly Paul is saying that the resurrection is essential.

Number two, Paul says another evidence of the resurrection is that it is Biblical. In the Old Testament there is prophecy after prophecy that declares Jesus would come, be born of a virgin, live a life, be rejected, would die an atoning death and would see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. He would be raised for Old Testament prophecies declared the resurrection. Old Testament narratives declare it and Jesus gives us one when He refers to His death, burial and resurrection like that of Jonah in the belly of the great fish three days (Matthew 12:40). There is also Old Testament depth about the Gospel in general. The Old Testament is the types and shadows pointing to the majesty of Christ. It is the dimly lit room of the Gospel and the

New Testament is turning the lights on to see just how beautiful that room is. It's all pointing to Christ and then in Christ it's all extolled and glorified with His resurrection.

Jesus even uses some of these Old Testament texts when He ministers to people. In Luke 24 we see the account of Jesus meeting up with two people on the road to Emmaus who were depressed about what had just happened to Jesus as He was crucified. Luke 24:27 says *[27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he (Jesus) interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.* Right after they recognized who He is it says He appeared to them in the Upper Room on that Sunday night. Jesus uses the Old Testament to explain Himself to them and how it all pointed to Him. All those things mentioned in the Old Testament from sacrifices, to priests, prophets and kings, Jesus is the fulfillment of it all for He was the ultimate sacrifice, the Prophet, the Priest and the King. Jesus is the Singer of the Psalms. So after these men were downcast, sad (Luke 24:17) and after Jesus explained Himself to them it says in Luke 24:32, *[32] They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"* The Scriptures point to Christ crucified and risen on the third day.

It is not only in the Old Testament but it is also in the Gospels. I love the honesty of the Gospels. Jesus kept telling them He was going to go to Jerusalem, be put to death and be raised on the third day but the Disciples didn't get it until after the resurrection. They were honest about this for John records in John 12:16, *[16] His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.* This is one of the great evidences of the Scriptures for if I had written one of those Gospels I probably would have admitted that I thought that would happen like He said yet Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all acknowledge they didn't understand until after His resurrection. Yet Jesus kept teaching them fulfilling what He prophesied recorded in the Gospels. It fulfills what is affirmed in the book of Acts as history. The Epistles constantly declare Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

Thirdly, evidence of the resurrection is historical. It is presented as a fact of history. The Bible records 13 appearances of Jesus – 9 to groups and 4 to individuals. Then there are the sermons in the Bible that are recorded in Acts and the Epistles that affirm the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul and Peter make a clear declaration that Christ is risen and so we see that it is historical.

The fourth evidence is it is verifiable. In other words, when He gives the list of witnesses He includes the 500 in Galilee that He will tell them to go ask. He appeared to Mary, Peter, James, Thomas and Paul says last of all He appeared to him, the one untimely born. If you want to disprove Christianity just go talk to all the witnesses that are still alive. Many would say it's a myth. No, it's verifiable by all the witnesses because their very life identifies it. It is verifiable by an empty tomb. Just weeks after the resurrection of Jesus thousands upon thousands of people are coming to Christ. In less than 25 years after the resurrection it's already spread to Europe and they say they are turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

The fifth evidence of the resurrection is that it is consequential. Look at what happens because of the resurrection. Do you know who did not believe in Jesus? His brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5). After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus we get to Acts 1 that His brothers are now believers and are there in the Upper Room praying for the presence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). It changed the life of His brothers and His Disciples who had fled in fear and now they would proclaim Christ yet most of them would die for Christ.

What about Peter? Here is a traitor and yet the resurrected Jesus not only brings him back with repentance but rebuilds him so that when he opens his mouth thousands are going to come to Christ. Then there is the Apostle who says he was untimely born. He wasn't born to be there from Christ's baptism to His resurrection which was the criteria when they replaced Judas Iscariot as one of the Twelve. They had built this into the profile of an Apostle as a historical fact. Paul says he was untimely born but he was a witness to the resurrected Jesus. Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus as the risen Savior. Then He appeared to Paul later in the wilderness which we see in Galatians 1. Paul also says in Galatians 1:11–12, *[11] For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. [12] For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Let's not dismiss this for do you know who Paul was? Paul was the Osama Bin Laden of his day. Paul was a religious terrorist. He hated Christians and killed them. Paul ended up being the greatest evangelist and church planter that ever lived. Paul even says he persecuted the church. Paul says the risen Christ is the one who changed him. So the resurrection is a fact. It is essential, Biblical, historical, verifiable and consequential.

Paul is asking if people are having trouble believing in the generation of Jesus, His death, burial and resurrection on the third day. He basically says it requires a greater miracle not to believe His resurrection on the third day. One has to suspend human sanity and rationality not to believe in it. One would have to dismiss hundreds of hundreds of witnesses, facts and all of it for it takes a greater miracle for one to dismiss the fact of the resurrection than to embrace the fact that the living God can bring His Son from the dead to announce a Savior has come and salvation is offered.

There are multi-faceted results of the resurrection of Jesus but I'll only give you three of them. One is the resurrection affirms His claim of who He said He was. This is what God says the results of the resurrection are not what I say or this church says. I want you to see what the Bible says the results of the resurrection are by looking at Romans 1:1–4 which says *[1] Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, [2] which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, [3] concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [4] and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

In other words, when the Spirit of God brings forth Christ from the tomb it is a declaration with power and He is exactly who He claimed to be. This isn't just a man descended from David. This is the Son of God who humbled Himself to become a man, a humiliation not of subtraction but a humiliation of addition. He didn't quit being God when He humbled Himself. He took upon Himself humanity and this One who humbled Himself in the exaltation from the tomb now has declared and revealed Himself to be who He said He was, the Son of God having come in the flesh.

Number two, the resurrection affirms what He came to do. Romans 4:23–25 says *[23] But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, [24] but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, [25] who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.* The Bible says that Jesus came to do the will of the Father and that was to save His people from their sins for all eternity. He went to the cross and died to pay for all the sins for all His people for all eternity. It was not a martyr's death. It was an atoning death. He was delivered up for our transgressions.

Movies and passions plays cannot portray this. First of all they get fascinated with the physical death of Jesus and it was an agonizing death but some Christians have died worse physical deaths than crucifixion. The agony of His death was not the execution of it but the heart of it. The agony is seen on the cross in the words Jesus spoke in Matthew 27:46, *[46] And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* It is there that Christ is drinking to the last drop the unendurable cup of wrath that He asked the Father if it could pass from Him but not His will be done but the Father's will be done. The answer to Jesus from the Father was 'No, Son to redeem My people You must drink it to the last drop.' When He does this He gives us an unfathomable cup of life and joy.

How do I know? He is risen. It wasn't a talk game but it was an end game. He was delivered up because of our transgressions. He was raised because of our justification. The resurrection was God's shout at what His Son came to do and claimed to do which is done and He has seen the travail of His soul. He is risen and I'm satisfied. Not only do we know the depth of His agony but we now know who put Jesus to death. There is a bestselling book out now called 'Who Killed Jesus?' but the book is wrong. It wasn't political intrigue or zealotry or Romans or Jews nor me. I provided an occasion which was my sin but the Bible is clear on who put Jesus to death. The Father crushed His Son in your place to pay for your sins with relentless, unmerited, unstoppable love and He is risen victorious over sin, death, hell, the grave and Satan. He is risen for our justification. His resurrection declares He has won the victory and defeated sin, death, hell, the grave and Satan and that is what it shouts!

Number three, the resurrection affirms what He promises to finish. Romans 6:4–5 says *[4] We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.* Here is the Old Testament pointing to Jesus for here comes Jesus the High Priest with the atonement that will put to end all atonements. He not only brings the lamb but He is the Lamb. He is the Atonement. At the cross the Passover Lamb of God is slain and then He rises to redeem us and take that offering into the Holy of Holies. He brought the offering to the Mercy Seat and there was the throne.

So why does Jesus come out of the grave? It is to ascend into the heavens, the Holy of Holies and enter in to present the sacrifice for us. There He sits upon the throne and dispenses His grace and mercy, the risen Savior. Then I am assured He lives. Because He lives I can walk out of the tomb of sin and be born again. Because He lives I can walk away from the shame of sin in justification, the tomb of sin in regeneration, the practice of sin in sanctification, the presence of sin one day with glorification and that's because He lives and is risen. Those are the results of the resurrection.

Here's the takeaway. The resurrection of Christ on the third day is essential to the integrity of the Gospel, because His exaltation from the grave (His resurrection) affirmed His humiliation to the grave that has secured our emancipation from sin's dominion to the praise of His glorious grace. Philippians 2:5–11 says *[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every*

knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We see the humility of Jesus for 33 years to the grave and then exaltation. Then came that morning! Then came victory. Then came the declaration that our Savior had won the victory for His people. He humbled Himself into the grave. God exalted Him from the grave. He is ascended into heaven and therefore we now walk in the triumph of Christ, our Redeemer. We are now emancipated from sin's penalty. The shame of our sin is gone. Romans 8:33–34 says [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* [34] *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* The power of sin is also broken. The practice of sin is being eradicated. The presence of sin will be removed one day. This is a glorious liberation that Christ gives to us and declares in His resurrection.

So now let me answer the lady's question from the beginning of the study – even if He wasn't raised from the dead I'd still believe in Jesus, wouldn't you? No, if Jesus isn't risen I wouldn't believe in Him. It won't take me long to find someone who would say they could save you and promise to deliver you. Most of them usually get elected to political offices. The fact that He claimed to be the Son of God and died for my sins doesn't warm my heart to Him but the fact that He is the Son of God and put Himself in my place, He is risen, I surrender to Him because He is Lord and Savior. If He hadn't risen I wouldn't surrender to Him any more than to a deranged man in the hospital room but this is the Savior the Lord of glory. He has done a glorious work to save us from our sins.

Do you remember the moment when Jesus is in front of the grave of Lazarus? Jesus waited days on purpose. Jesus stands in front of that grave in righteous anger against death and He weeps in compassion for its consequences in humanity. Then He says 'Lazarus come forth!' If He hadn't called Lazarus by name when He said 'come forth' every grave would have emptied in the whole world. Lazarus came forth from that place for Jesus is going there to take his place but He won't stay in that place. He'll leave that place and so now He says 'Sinners come forth, for I took your place. I have defeated sin, death, hell, the grave and Satan. I'll set you free. I'm coming again to destroy sin, death, hell, the grave and Satan. I'm preparing a place so that where I am you may be also.

My dear friends, if you haven't come to Him you must come to Him. He will save you. He lives to love you into eternity but oh what judgment awaits for those who would say 'no.' Do you see what it cost God to save us? What judgment would await those who would say 'no' to the One who took our place that we might have life? Hear the risen Savior say 'come forth, I took your place and now I've prepared a place where you can be with Me forever.' Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments You have allowed us to be in this Your Word. Thank You for our Savior in whom we are saved, Christ alone. If you are reading this today and you've never made that commitment to Christ I give you an earnest invitation to put your trust in that Savior. Please allow us to walk with you into a forever life with Christ. Father, would You now give Your people the joy of their Risen Savior for they have One who comes from the grave and declares victory. It declares who He is, the Son of God. It declares He has done what He came to do and it declares that He will fulfill what He has promised. Father, we don't give Him first place in our life simply but we now give Him our life. We lay down our rebellion in sin and put

our trust in Him. Crown Him the Lord of life who came from the grave. Crown Him with praise and glory forever in Christ alone, Amen.

Power Point

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND GOSPEL INTEGRITY

I. The Reality of the Resurrection of Christ

II. The Result of the Resurrection of Christ

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The Resurrection of Christ on the third day is essential to the integrity of the Gospel, because His exaltation from the grave affirmed His humiliation to the grave and has secured our emancipation from sin's dominion to the Praise of His glorious grace.