

The Resurrection Changes Everything - 1

Corinthians 15

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- [0 : 00] I love Easter. Easter is my favorite holiday. I have to acknowledge Pastor John.
- ! to allow me to preach today.! All right, so Pastor Tim and I were talking this week, and we thought maybe it would be a good idea to use just a couple minutes of each sermon when I'm preaching to introduce you to my family and give you a little bit more of our history.
- So this has been a big week for us. We moved to Dubuque from Florida. We get settled with the Roths at Kent and Terry's house. They've been wonderful.
- They've loaned us their car because ours broke down. Ours is now at Brian Smith's house getting some TLC. And on Friday, we had our sixth grandchild.
- So that is Micah. He's with the Tom Selleck mustache and his wife Alexis. Their fourth anniversary will be on our 38th anniversary in August. And then that's Emma Ray.
- [1 : 33] And there's a close-up. Isn't she cute? I think we've done pretty well. So we're pretty proud of her.
- So Micah is our third son. We have four kids all together. He is 31. I don't remember. They all blend together. I'm just happy if I get their name right.
- Oh, he's 30 now. So he listens to this. I'll hear about it next week. So they've been married, like I said, for three and a half years.
- This is their first child. If you think about it, pray for Micah and Alexis. Like all first-time parents, they feel like they've been given this very fragile little bundle. That if they do anything wrong, they'll ruin her for life.
- And, of course, those of us who have multiple kids know God makes them pretty doggone resilient. Micah is proof of that. He survived being number three. So that's Micah, and we'll introduce you to more of the Hopkins family as the weeks go.
- [2 : 37] So turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15. Years ago, I went to Emmaus Bible College.
- The first sermon I ever gave was in my homiletics class. Bible College, you have to use fancy terms. That's speech class in any other college. And my very first sermon was out of 1 Corinthians 15.
- Only the Lord would orchestrate things that my first sermon here would be on Easter Sunday and it'd come full circle back to 1 Corinthians 15. God is so good that way. So let's pray and then we'll get into the passage for the day.
- Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for your love for us, your mercy that never fails, that is new every morning, and that is ours because you were willing to sacrifice your son for us.
- Father, I look at baby Emma, I think back to when Micah was in my arms just a couple days old, and I can't imagine giving up that child for anybody.
- [4 : 00] And yet you sent your son to die for us. And then you raised him from the dead. You completed his work.

You said amen to his cry, it is finished. And because Jesus was raised to new life, we have new life. God, we are so grateful for that.

God, let that truth occupy our minds every day. That we are new in Christ because he died on the cross for us and was raised again. And Lord, as we spend time in your word this morning, I pray that you would speak through your word, that you would speak through me, and that everything would fade from view.

With that glorious, glorious sight of Jesus raised from the dead, welcoming us in as his brothers and sisters, as children of our loving Heavenly Father.

Holy Spirit, I pray that you would speak into our hearts, highlight for each of us exactly what we need to take away from this message this morning. God, I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[5 : 07] Now, as we go through the sermon this morning, we've got a main passage, 1 Corinthians 15 and then Ephesians 2, but I'm going to allude to some other passages in the New Testament.

And the Old Testament. As we go through, make a note of them, because we're just not going to have time to turn there. But I think they'll be good for you to think about through the week as you look back on Easter Sunday and think about all that Christ has done for you.

So you've got your Bibles. You turn to 1 Corinthians 15. Now let me follow suit. Tim warned me. Point back there, not there, and I didn't listen.

Tim, I didn't listen to you. So 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.

For I delivered to you as of 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.

[6 : 32] After that he appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, 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 is to one untimely born, he appeared to me also.

Let me tell you a little bit about 1 Corinthians. It's the harshest letter in the New Testament. If you look at Acts 18, that's during Paul's second missionary journey.

He was sent out. He went to Corinth. He met Priscilla and Aquila while he was there. He was working as a tent maker initially and sharing the gospel in the Jewish synagogue. And as was usually the case, the people of the synagogue rejected him.

He shook off the dust off his shoes, just like we saw the last time I preached out of Mark 6, and he went to the Gentiles. And the Gentiles received him with open arms, to the point where the Holy Spirit said to Paul, Paul, do not be afraid.

I have got many people in this city. And I want you to stay here and continue to teach. So for a year and a half, Paul and Priscilla and Aquila and Silas and Timothy all worked together to share the gospel with the people of Corinth.

[7 : 43] Now keep in mind, Corinth was a horrible city. Think about Las Vegas today and then amp it up even worse. That was Corinth. And yet there were people there that were ready to hear the gospel.

And so Paul was there delivering the truth. So a church was planted. He wrote 1 Corinthians. But that church had some problems, like all churches do.

And they needed some correction. And so he was dealing with division in the church. He was dealing with abusive gifts where people were lording over.

Oh, my gift is better than your gift, so I get a higher place. The wealthy were showing off their wealth at the expense of the poor. The Lord's Supper had become kind of a drunken party. Can you imagine that?

And so there was all these different things that Paul had to correct. So he took them to the woodshed. And he corrected them. And so, like I said, it was a very harsh letter.

[8 : 36] But here he brings them back to the gospel. He's going to remind them of all the good things that they have in Christ. He reminds them, hey, guys, I took you to the woodshed because I love you.

And then he's going to remind them that God loved them. And the magnitude of that love by looking at the resurrection. Side note, two things that are important to know about 1 Corinthians 15.

Number one, if you're looking for a passage in the New Testament, you're talking to somebody, you want to give them a quick summary of the gospel, it's right here. The passage I just read, those first eight verses of 1 Corinthians 15 are a nice, quick, clean summary of the gospel that you can share with somebody.

The other thing is this is the crowning argument explaining why the resurrection matters. Why, as I titled this sermon, the resurrection is everything.

Everything is everything to us. It's the most important thing that we need to remember. It's the basis on which we stand. So Paul says to the Corinthians, I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached.

[9 : 43] So he's reminding them what they'd already heard. Of course, he was in the city of Corinth sharing the gospel with them. They responded to that. And so he's reminding them.

Let's talk about what they did when they heard. First of all, they received it. Here's one of the verses I want you to remember for the rest of the week. John 1, 12.

But as many as received him, to them he gave the power or the right to become the children of God. But to all who receive him, he gives the right to become the children of God.

What a privilege. But we have to receive what God is offering. Jesus' work on the cross is ours when we accept it, like any gift. On your birthday, June, we'll probably get some presents today.

They're not hers until she takes them and opens them and takes possession. That's true of all the promises that we have in Christ. We have to receive it. And so Paul reminds the Corinthians, I preached this good news to you.

[10 : 48] You received it. Then he goes on to say, in which also you stand. Do you remember the story from the Sermon on the Mount? It's the very last part of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7.

And this I want you to remember through the week as well. Jesus tells a parable of two houses. One is built on bedrock. The other one is built on sand. That's the imagery that Paul is referring to here in 1 Corinthians 15.

That gospel that the Corinthians heard, that they received, it became the foundation upon which they stand. All of life, all of life, all of your life, all of my life rests on that bedrock.

This message that Jesus died for your sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again. That's the rock on which you stand. And as you face the trials and difficulties and challenges of life, this is the place you need to go back to.

This is the solid rock on which you stand. The gospel message. It's not your intelligence. It's not your bank account. It's not your family. It's not your intelligence.

[12 : 00] It's nothing that you bring to the table. It's this. Everything else is sand. So the Corinthians heard it. They received it. And it became the basis for their lives.

They were able to explain to their circle of friends who hadn't come to Christ yet, this is why I've changed my life, because of this solid rock on which I stand.

Nothing else is sufficient other than this. It is this bedrock. And then he says, by which you are saved.

You are saved from what? Of course, we're saved so that we know that when we die, we will go to heaven. Apart from Christ, your destiny is hell.

It's punishment. Because our sin deserves punishment. God wants perfect perfection in his presence. He has wrath, anger at our sin.

[13 : 00] That our destiny is hell. But when we hear and receive and stand on this gospel, we're saved. But you know what?

That's not the whole gospel. I want you to really wrap your head around this. The whole gospel is not just that we go from a destiny of hell after death to a destiny of heaven after death.

No, no. New life begins the day that you accept Christ. Your new life begins that moment. For me, it was January 27, 1980. I heard the gospel.

I responded to it. And new life began. The Holy Spirit immediately began working in my life. I had no expectation of being here, standing in front of a group of people, sharing the gospel.

But God knew better. New life begins. That's salvation. You have somebody in your corner. You have the Holy Spirit guiding you through life, telling you how to live, giving you hope, giving you direction.

[14 : 06] That's salvation. Unless you have believed in vain, Paul goes on to say, if you hold fast the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

Now, is Paul saying we can lose our salvation? No. No. Now, if you've accepted Christ, you were held firmly in his hand. Romans 8 reminds us of that.

The last few verses of Romans 8. Jesus in John 8 says the same thing. I hold you and my Father holds you in our hands.

You cannot lose this great salvation. But you may have gone through a phase. One of the men who most impacted my life as a young man in my 20s, early to mid-20s, was a man named Mike Douglas.

Mike was led to Christ by a guy who was going through a phase when they were in high school. This guy got all fired up about Jesus and was sharing the gospel and led Mike to Christ.

[15 : 09] Mike's an elder at the church that we attended back when I was in my 20s, and he's still an elder there. He's a godly man. He's led multiple people to Christ. Well, he ran into that guy at, I think, their 20th high school reunion.

He said, hey, look at me. And this man said, you believe all that stuff? That was just a phase. That's not real. It's a myth. That's believing in vain.

Make sure from the heart that you have truly put your trust in what Christ did for you on the cross. That you've heard, received, stood, and then you are saved.

Does that make sense? That's where we're looking. You know what I haven't told you? What is this good news? What is it, actually? The gospel is Christ died for our sins.

We were dead in trespasses and sins. He was buried. One of the hymns that we sang this morning talked about even the angels were looking and seeing. He's dead.

[16 : 13] Certainly the disciples, they were hiding in the upper room for fear of being attacked by the Jews. This Messiah that we thought we trusted, he died.

That wasn't the plan. Now, he told them the plan. But if you've read the gospels, you know the disciples didn't listen very well. But he was buried and then he rose. You know it to say, he is risen.

Let's try that again. He is risen. Okay, one more time. And say it like you mean it. Like it touched your life. He is risen.

Absolutely, he is risen indeed. And that Sunday morning, all the hope was fulfilled that they saw was in Christ.

So now let's go forward to, we're going to skip a few verses in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 12. Now, if Christ has preached that he has been raised from the dead, how does some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

[17:17] This is a common problem. That someone coming back from the dead is just too much. We can't accept that. If you know your book of Acts, in Acts 17, Paul was in Athens.

He went to the hill, Mars Hill, where all the philosophers like to gather. And at Mars Hill, he was sharing this idea of a savior and of sins forgiven.

And the people thought, oh, that's interesting. We haven't heard this before. Cool. Tell us more. But then, then he said, yeah, Jesus died for your sins. Okay, we understand the idea of sacrifice.

And then he was raised from the dead. And the philosophers said, oh, no, time out. No, no, no, no, no. No, we don't buy that. No. And they denied it. And many of them walked away from him.

But some believed. We have that problem today. People just can't wrap their head around the resurrection. There are even people who name the name of Christ, who just reject the miraculous, including Jesus' resurrection.

[18:16] Jesus has to have been raised, brothers and sisters. He has to have been. Look at the consequences. Now we're going to skip down to verse 17.

And if Christ has not been raised, so if that belief is true, that resurrection just never happened. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless.

You're still in your sins. Why is that? Because if Jesus died like a man, then he's nothing more than a martyr. There are plenty of martyrs through human history, but their impact on us is minimal.

Maybe an example. That's about it. The resurrection, I've heard said, was God's amen to Jesus' statement, it is finished. It is finished.

And God raised him to new life. And because he was raised to new life, that is proof that the work of Jesus on the cross was effective for each one of us who puts his trust in Christ.

[19:20] Romans 4.25. Another one for you to write down. Jesus died because of our sins. He was raised because of our justification.

And then the next verse, chapter 5, verse 1, says, we have been justified by faith. When we put our trust in Christ for his finished work on the cross, we are declared righteous.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5.21, that he who knew no sin, Jesus knew no sin, became sin on our behalf.

He took everything that you've done, that I have done, on himself. He became sinner on our behalf. That we might have the righteousness of God in him. That's the good news.

That's justification. All the goodness and righteousness of God has now been given to our account. There's no better news in the world.

[20 : 19] But it's all proven at the resurrection. A couple of quick things about the resurrection. We're going to pick up the pace a little bit. First of all, the resurrection, this is something for you to just keep in your mind when people say, I don't believe it.

Did you know that of all the things that we know for certain that happened in ancient history, nothing has more evidence than the resurrection of Jesus? Nothing. There are many men over the centuries who have attacked Christianity on the basis of the resurrection because they thought, if we can prove that the resurrection didn't happen, the whole thing falls apart.

Even non-believers know that. You know what happened to those guys? They got saved. God has such a sense of humor. C.S. Lewis.

Josh McDowell. Lee Strobel, who wrote The Case for Christ, if you've got Netflix, I think it's still on there. There's a great documentary about his coming to Christ.

But he attacked the resurrection specifically to persuade his wife that her faith in Christ was a waste. He's a pastor now. And he's written multiple books about the importance of the resurrection and the rock-solid basis for our faith.

[21 : 35] And now here's the great news. You ready? But now... I can't say it without tearing up.

But now Christ has been raised. But now Christ has been raised from the dead. The first fruit of those who are asleep. What we see in him.

1 John 3. We don't know what we will be like, but we do know that we will be like him. Because we will see him as he is. Moses could not see the glory of God unveiled without being destroyed.

In Ephesians 3, Paul prays that we could be strong enough to bear the presence of Christ in our lives. But Jesus is the first fruits. And his transformation will be our transformation.

And we will be able to stand in the presence of God. We will see him with unveiled face and see our Savior.

[22 : 44] Because Jesus went first. That is the good news. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ. All will be made alive. That is our hope. We have new life in Christ.

New kind of life. New hope for life. New strength for life. New answers for life. All of that in Christ.

Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 2. Now time doesn't permit me to do this passage anywhere near what it deserves.

But there are some things that I want to highlight there that Paul goes into in greater depth than he does in 1 Corinthians 15. I am only going to read the first verse here because I want to remind you.

[23 : 44] You were dead in trespasses and sins. Dead. What can a dead person do to change their situation? Nothing.

You were dead in trespasses and sins. If you are not in Christ, I'm going to talk about that in a minute. You're dead. You may think that you're alive. But my friend, you were not.

You were dead in trespasses and sins. The sins that you have done are enough to put you to death. And the sinner that you are by nature.

Both of those are these two verses I don't have time to read. Your sin nature and your sin activity have resulted in your death. But don't worry.

I'm not going to leave you there. So now verse 4. I'm going to try and experiment. Hopefully nothing catches fire.

[24 : 43] Watch this. Is that cool or what? But God. The two most important words. That's the shortest summary of all the truth of the Bible.

But God. Because the but erases everything that came before it. But God. But God. Being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us.

We've got to stop there. Being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us. Now keep in mind. Romans 5.8. But God demonstrates his love for us in this.

While we were still sinners Christ died for us. So we were still in our sin. And what did Paul say here? In 2 verse 1. We were dead. We were helpless.

That's when God exercised his love for us. I want you to picture something in your mind. That won't make sense right away. Have you ever seen a big loom? Like a commercial loom.

[25 : 47] And it's got the strings that are vertical. That's called the warp. And then this thing I think it's called bobbin shoots back and forth. That's the weft.

The warp is the part of the fabric that gives it stability. That gives it strength. Psalm 136. You should spend some time in there this next week too.

See, I'm giving you a lot of homework. But you hired me so now you're stuck. I'm going to give you homework every week. Psalm 136 is a visual picture of a loom.

Every verse says something about God or something that God did. And then the next phrase, and the steadfast love lasts forever. The steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting.

So it says a statement, the steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting. Another statement, the steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting. You were in slavery in Egypt because he's writing to a Jewish audience in Psalms.

[26 : 51] You were slaves in Egypt but the steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting. God delivered you from Pharaoh. The steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting. You were dead in trespasses and sins.

The steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting. everlasting. Jesus was raised from the dead. The steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting. You're facing challenges in your life. I know there's some who are dealing with cancer or just getting older. My eyes are terrible. We have family troubles. Life is hard. The steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting. That's what Paul is referring to. But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved. By grace, you don't have to do anything. There's not a set of rules you need to keep. All you need to say yes, that's all you have to do is say yes to the offer that Jesus is making to you. He says to you, I died for you.

Will you accept me? Will you accept that sacrifice? And all you have to do is say yes, and you enter into that new life. Even though we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved and raised us up with him. Notice it's past tense.

We are already there. We are already there and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That's the second time Paul says that in Ephesians.

He says it in Ephesians 1-3 as well. We are already in the heavenly places in Christ. We're there now. If you are in Christ, you are a member of his family.

[28 : 48] Emma has not met me yet. The new baby Hopkins. But she's in my heart. She has a place that's a cure in the Hopkins family. If you're in Christ, you are already in the heavenly places. And someday, you'll get to enjoy all the inheritance completely that goes with that. More good news just keeps coming.

So that, I love this verse. We're going to camp here for a minute. So, even when we were dead in our trans, oh wait, and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, check this out. So that in the ages to come, he might show us the surpassing riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

So, sometimes I use the pulpit to, you know, to grind an ax. There's something I've read or that's kind of gotten under my skin. I'm going to give you one of those today. So, somehow Facebook got news that I'm the new pastor here at Tri-State. I've joined the team with Pastor Tim and Pastor John. And I've been getting all this stuff about how to make me a better pastor.

And maybe they know something I'm not admitting. That's a possibility too. So, one of them was a whole set of sermon helps for sermons who just feel like they've run out of material. What? Are you kidding me? We could spend a year in 1 Corinthians 15. As a matter of fact, there's a preacher from the 20th century, Martin Lloyd-Jones, David Martin Lloyd-Jones. He was considered the best preacher of the 20th century, even better than Billy Graham. He spent over two months in 1 Corinthians 15. That alone. He spent six years in Ephesians. So, he was very thorough.

But the material is there. And what do we see here that Paul says in the ages to come? Now, forever, we are going to have the privilege of having God say to us over and over and over and over again, but wait, there's more. You thought that was good yesterday? Oh, that was the warm-up.

[31 : 30] Let me show you the next thing and the next and the next. God is going to be doing that forever because he's a loving father. You know how it is. You've got kids. You love giving stuff to them.

You love showering them with blessings, affirming to them how much you love them. That's what God is going to do for us forever. And there's going to be no end. It's not going to be repetitious.

And I assure you, it will not be boring at all. Isn't that great? That's what we have to look forward to. Now, there's two takeaways that I want to, as we wrap up, that I want you to fix in your mind. The first is to those of us who are believers in Christ. Think back to the beginning. Paul said, but now I deliver to you what I first preached to you. He's reminding them of the gospel. It's a good practice for us to preach the gospel to ourselves and to each other, to believers. We should be preaching the gospel to each other every day.

When life is hard, when you're just, you feel like you're beyond what you can handle, remind yourself of the gospel. When you have somebody in your circle that's overwhelmed, remind them of the gospel. Sometimes that's verbally. Sometimes it's with an arm around them and praying for them, but remind them of the gospel. Remind them that the gospel is that which they heard, that which they received. It's the foundation upon which they stand and they are saved.

These trials, it says in Romans 8, are nothing to be compared with the glory that we're going to receive. We need to remind each other of that, brothers and sisters, every day. That's why the Lord says to celebrate the Lord's Supper over and over again, because we forget. And He knows that.

[33 : 32] So preach the gospel to yourself. That's the first one. The second one, we're going to finish up the last few verses of this section of Ephesians. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we should walk in them.

Today, I want to ask you to look in your heart and be honest with yourself. Be honest before God. Have you received what God is offering to the sacrifices of His Son?

Have you received that? If the answer is no, if the answer is maybe, you need to get that straightened out. Because life, the way God designed our world to work, can only be accomplished in relationship with Him. Part of our salvation is having the Holy Spirit guide us through the hardship of life. Help us to be better husbands and wives, better parents, better employees, just better people. As He works with us and makes us to be like Jesus.

He works in our lives to fulfill everything that we were meant to be. Psychologists have found that we have two basic needs, to be secure, to be significant. Both of those are found only in Christ.

Those are fundamental needs that you have. You want to matter. And you want to be safe. Only in Christ. And then, of course, we have to look forward to that glorious day when we're in heaven.

[35 : 23] Because that's only yours if you're in Christ. So what I want to encourage you to do is if you don't know, or if you know and it's a no, but you want to receive what Christ has offered to you, catch me after the service.

Grab Pastor John. Pastor Tim, I was going to catch you and warn you, but I missed you. So talk to Pastor Tim. I don't think he'll mind. Pastor Jack, probably anyone near you in any of these seats would be happy to walk you through the simple steps to accept what Jesus is offering to you and to enter into new life. Any day that you come to Christ is a good day. But coming to Christ on Easter, what could be better than that? That would be awesome. So remember those two things.

Share the gospel with each other. Think about it. Really marinate in what the gospel means. And share it with each other. And of course, share it with everybody you meet as you go through your life. And if you don't know Christ, it's time today is a day of salvation. Come to him. Let's pray.

Father, you are so good to us, so extravagant in your love. Father, you are so free with what you offer. We were dead in trespasses and sins.

And now we have new life in Christ. We had no hope, and yet now we have hope. We had no future. We were once not a people, but now we've been gathered together as the family of God.

[37 : 13] God, all these things, such riches that you're going to spend all eternity sharing them with us. God, thank you.

Thank you for all that you do for us. And Lord, I pray for us as a body that we would truly grab a hold of this wonderful gospel with both hands and own it, that we would re-receive it every day, to stand on those promises, to see your salvation working itself out in our lives.

And Lord, if there's anyone here who needs to do business with you, who needs to receive what is being offered, that today would be the day. Lord, we pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.