

(1 Corinthians) Overview to Chapter 15

by Brian Brodersen

Paul addresses the resurrection denial in the Corinthian church, emphasizing the importance of the resurrection of Christ and the consequences of denying it.

Duration: 58:42

Scripture: Psalm 16:10, Isaiah 53:5-6, Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:30-31, Romans 6:5, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Topics: "Gospel Message", "Resurrection Power"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the true meaning of the gospel as good news. He highlights that the gospel is a message of God's love, mercy, and grace, and it offers a way for anyone to have a relationship with Him. The preacher explains that sin caused a separation between humanity and God, but Jesus came to die for our sins, as prophesied in the scriptures. Through His resurrection, Christ initiated a chain of events that will ultimately lead to the destruction of death and the restoration of God's kingdom. The primary focus of the gospel is on grace and mercy, although judgment is also a part of the message.

Transcript

We come to chapter 15. We come to more or less the final issue that the Apostle is having to deal with in this church that he had actually founded. Now as I pointed out to you from the very beginning of our study, this epistle is primarily a corrective epistle.

This was a church that was planted by the Apostle Paul and nurtured in the early stages by the Apostle Paul. But after his departure from the church, they quickly began to drift into all kinds of error. And so Paul, in writing this epistle, wrote it to correct them and to turn them back to a sound view of the faith.

The first issue that he had to deal with was their love of human wisdom. Then he had to go on and sort of rebuke them for their tolerance of sinful behavior. Then he had to address the wrong views that they had of marriage and sexual relationships.

He then had to talk to them about their abuse of Christian liberty. Then they had also wrong ideas about women's role in the church. They were careless in their participation in the Lord's Supper.

They were competitive and misusing the gifts of the spirit. And now finally, they were denying the resurrection. And that's what this 15th chapter is all about.

So this was a church that had a lot of problems, to say the least. But yet, because of the problems, Paul was able to write this epistle that is primarily corrective. And this has served to correct the church on throughout the successive generations of church history.

And as I pointed out to you when we began our study, I think that this epistle is in some ways the most relevant to the current situation that the church find itself in at the end of the 20th century. Very relevant. And I think as we've gone through, you have yourselves noted the relevance.

So now we come, as I said, to sort of the final issues that the apostle is going to deal with in this entire 15th chapter is taken up with Paul correcting their wrong views about the resurrection. And so this is what he says. Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel, which I preach to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved if you hold fast that word, which I preach to you, unless you have believed in vain.

For I delivered to you, first of all, that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures. So you see, they were denying the very concept of resurrection. They were denying the fact that that there is a resurrection at all.

And what Paul is going to go on to show them is that if their position is accurate, then Christ himself did not rise from the dead. And if Christ did not rise from the dead, then their whole faith in him is without any basis whatsoever. So that's how Paul is going to argue against them for the validity of the resurrection.

Now, as he's building up to his point, he mentioned certain things that I think are important for us to pause for a moment and consider. First of all, he talks about the gospel that he declared to them. Now, the word gospel means good news, and I think that we as Christian people need to keep that in mind always.

The gospel is the good news. The message that we have to share with other people is good news. It's the most wonderful message that anyone could ever hear because it's the message of God's love and God's mercy and God's grace and God's willingness to receive anyone that's willing to come into a relationship with him.

But so often I think we ourselves forget what the very term gospel means. And sometimes we see Christian people who are presenting what they believe to be the gospel to people, but yet. It doesn't seem like it's good news, it's really more just sometimes rantings and ravings and threatenings and warnings of judgment and things of that nature.

Well, there certainly is a judgment aspect to the message, but. The primary point of the message is one of grace and mercy, and so, Paul, he goes on and he actually lays out for us the gospel that he preached, he said, for I delivered to you, first of all, that which I also received that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, that's where the gospel begins right there. The gospel begins with Christ dying for our sins.

Now, Christ is Messiah, and you see what happened is. Way, way back in the beginning of human history. Man sinned.

And because man sinned, the relationship that he was created to enjoy with God was broken, that relationship was broken. And so man and God, instead of living in harmony with one another, man and God were separated from one another because of this sin issue. But God.

Wanted. That relationship restored, and so God promised way, way back in the very dawn of human history, God promised that he would send a redeemer into the world, he would send somebody into the world who would undo the effects of Adam's sin, who would remove the barrier that had been erected between God and men. He would send someone who would be able to reconcile man to God.

And all throughout the Old Testament history, God was revealing that this person was going to come and this person became referred to as the Messiah. Messiah means anointed one. And Christ is just the Greek for the Hebrew Messiah.

So the people were in anticipation of the Messiah. They were in anticipation of this, this Christ, this anointed one who was going to come and in their understanding, he was going to come and he was going to deliver them from the oppression that they were living under. But what the Old Testament scriptures revealed is that he would come and he would deliver them from the greatest oppression and that would be the oppression of sin.

And so Paul says, this is what I deliver to you, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures. This is the thing that separates us from God. This is the thing that makes our lives miserable.

This is the thing that causes people to become despondent and even despair of life. It's sin. And we can say this today.

This is an absolute fact. Every problem in the world today is either directly or indirectly related to sin. You see, because before the entrance of sin into the world, life was perfect.

God lived in harmony. God and man lived in harmony with one another. There was a perfect world, a perfect environment.

There was no such thing as hostility or hatred or violence. There was no such thing as pain or crying. There was no such thing as sickness or disease or death.

None of those things even existed. But those things were all introduced into the world because of sin. Now, Jesus came into the world to die for our sins, and that's what the scripture said he would do.

So God put forth this picture of this redeemer who would come and then he began to give us details on what it would be that he would accomplish when he would come. And some of the things that we are told about him. Were things that.

Spoke of a great kingdom that he would bring this glorious, eternal kingdom, this kingdom that would be marked by righteousness and peace, this kingdom that would be marked by the absence of hatred and death and destruction and all of those things. That's one aspect of what he would come to do. But that would, in a sense, be the fruit.

First of all, he would have to lay a righteous foundation and that would be. What he would accomplish by giving his life for sin. And so the Old Testament prophets spoke of the Messiah who would come and be this wonderful king who would rule the world in peace and righteousness.

But they also spoke of him as one who would come and be rejected and who would bear the sin of the world upon himself, who would suffer and die in the place of people. Most notably, it was Isaiah who was given the privilege of declaring those things about the Messiah in Isaiah, chapter 53. We read there that

he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.

But the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. And so you see, Paul, his gospel is that Christ died, first of all, for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. This is what the scripture said would happen.

And then that he was buried and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures. So all of this that Jesus came and did was actually foretold hundreds and in some cases even thousands of years before he ever arrived. For Isaiah prophesied of his death there 700 years before his birth.

But David, even further back than that, he prophesied of his resurrection a thousand years before his birth. For you will not leave my soul in the grave, nor will you allow the body of your holy one to see corruption. So you see, Paul is pointing them back to the scriptures as being the basis for everything that he was preaching.

Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures. He was buried and he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures. And that he was seen by Cephas.

And then by the 12, Cephas is another name for Peter, it's actually the Aramaic name. For Peter, he was seen by Cephas, then by the 12, after that he was seen by over 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remained to the present, but some have fallen asleep. So you see, they're saying there is no resurrection.

Paul's saying, I preach to you that Christ rose from the dead. Not only did I preach to you that Christ rose from the dead, but Peter saw him and the 12 apostles saw him. And then over 500 brethren.

Saw him at one time. And then he adds this, he says, of whom the greater part remain to the present, some have fallen asleep, a few of those 500 that saw him have since fallen asleep, but the vast majority of them are still alive. So you see, they're saying there is no resurrection.

Paul is saying, in essence, I can find four hundred and ninety five people that will testify there is a resurrection because they saw the resurrected Christ. That's the case that he's building. And now he says, and after that he was seen by James.

And this James here is not James, the brother of John, but this is James, who is actually the half brother of Jesus himself. He appeared to James individually, and then he said, and last of all, he was seen by me also as one born out of due time. Now, the tragedy with the Corinthian church and Paul was that once he had founded the church and spent time with them and left, false teachers came in and began to not only corrupt their understanding of the gospel, but they began to sow seeds of resentment toward the apostle himself.

And they began to say about the apostle Paul that he was not a true apostle because he wasn't one of the original band, and they began to try to undermine his authority. And Paul is aware of this, and that's why he refers to himself as one born out of due time. You see, what they were probably arguing is that, oh, Paul's apostleship isn't legitimate because he wasn't one of the original followers of Jesus.

And he claims to have had this vision of Christ on the road to Damascus and all, but, you know, that's questionable. But Paul acknowledges that, yes, his conversion was out of the ordinary. He wasn't converted during the public ministry of Christ, but he did see the resurrected Christ.

He came as one born out of due time. And this particular phrase is interesting in the Greek. It's actually the term that could be translated miscarried or aborted.

So it's a bit of a derogatory sort of a reference. And these are the kinds of things that Paul was aware that they were saying about him. And so he takes that to himself.

He acknowledges that, yes, indeed, my conversion was different. It wasn't according to the normal experience or the experience, at least that the others had had, but. That did not take away from the validity of it.

And so now he's going to go on for just a moment and he's going to argue for his own apostleship. He acknowledges, as they were probably saying, for I am the least of the apostles. Who am not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

So Paul is acknowledging things that they might have been saying behind his back. He said, I'll be the first to agree that I myself am the least of the apostles and I'm not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church. And you remember the story Paul was persecuting the church.

He was enraged against those who were following Jesus and in his. Indignation toward them, he had gone to the high priest and he requested permission from the high priest to go to Damascus because he heard that there was a Christian community developing there among the Jewish people and he requested permission to go to Damascus and to arrest these Jews who were blaspheming according to his understanding of the law and to bring them back to Jerusalem for trial and imprisonment. And the high priest gave him permission and then it was on that road to Damascus as he was approaching Damascus that suddenly a light brighter than the midday sun shone upon him, struck him.

He fell from his horse and a voice came and said, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, who are you? He said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. And there he was converted on the road. But he lived with the remembrance of his animosity toward the Christians, and he lived with the consciousness of his unworthiness of his apostleship.

So he acknowledges all of that himself, but then he adds this, he said, but by the grace of God, I am what I am. And you know what Paul said about himself, there is absolutely true of every Christian who preceded Paul and everyone that followed him. Whatever we are, whatever we become.

For God and whatever we do to his glory or for the expansion of his kingdom. We all at the end of the day have to say, I am what I am, by the grace of God. I didn't make myself into this, it wasn't because of my own human potential and capabilities and things like that, but it's all because of God and his grace and his mercy.

And Paul goes on to talk about the fact that he labored, he said, his grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all. And indeed, Paul did, when you look at the record of that early history, you find that Paul was the most active of the apostles. He was the one who had the great passion to get the gospel as far as he could.

And the others, of course, they did what they did also, and they did what they did by the grace of God. But Paul excelled them all, if you notice in your New Testament, the majority of the New Testament was written by Paul. The others contributed with the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, we have the epistles of Peter, the epistle of James, Jude, John.

But the vast majority of the New Testament was written by this man, the apostle Paul. And he acknowledges that he said this is a plain fact. Everyone knows I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God.

Which was with me, so there again, he recognizes I was just doing what God was empowering me to do. Not exalting himself above anyone else, but just acknowledging the work of God's spirit in and through his life. And then he says this, therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Now. He's going to go on to deal more thoroughly with this whole subject of the resurrection. First of all, he's sort of reminding them again of his credentials.

He's reminding them of the fact that they're in the faith because of his efforts, along with the efforts of Apollos and Peter and others. They were all working together. He said, whether it was I or they, we preached, you believed.

Now, let's get back to the subject. Now, if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead and that's what I'm preaching, Paul said, that's what Peter preached. That's what Apollos preached.

How do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead, but if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. You see, they had embraced this false teaching, but they did not carry it to its logical conclusion. And so often that is the case with false teaching, because if you carry false teaching to its logical end, you see the absurdity of it so often.

But it's amazing how people they will embrace something that isn't accurate, but they will not follow it through to its end. To see the absurdity of it. I did an interview recently on the radio with a man and he had embraced false teaching in regard to certain things.

And the particular thing that he was emphasizing was that a Christian ought to always be healthy. And a Christian should never be sick under any circumstances. And if a Christian is ever sick, it's a lack of faith on their part or it's because of demonic activity and the Christian needs to be delivered from the demonic influence in order to, you know, recover health and so forth.

And, you know, as we were sitting there talking and, you know, we were on the air part of the time and then we'd go off the air and we'd still continue our conversation. And, you know, he was very insistent on this thing that Christians ought to never be sick. And I said, well, OK, let's follow that reasoning to its logical end.

That reasoning tells us that a Christian should never die of a disease. If a Christian should never be sick and a Christian certainly could never die of a disease. And his response was, we have a good point there.

You see, he'd never taken the time to just think the whole thing through. And that's exactly what was happening here in Corinth. They were saying, oh, there is no resurrection.

Paul says, I want you to think this through. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And that's the whole message that we're preaching to you.

He says, and if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up. If, in fact, the dead do not rise, for if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

And if Christ is not risen, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins. Those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. You see, Paul cuts them no slack at all on this. He just says to them, look, if there is no resurrection, then you have no basis for your faith whatsoever.

Because if there is no resurrection, then Christ did not rise and our preaching is in vain. And we're actually false witnesses of God. Because we're saying God raised Christ from the dead.

But if there's no resurrection, then, of course, Christ couldn't have been raised from the dead. So he's showing them the absurdity of their position. And then he says this, and I think this is so significant.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. Now, this is pertinent to us today because there are people in what is recognized as the church. Who also deny the resurrection of Christ, there are people in positions of authority.

In what is recognized as the church, who teach unequivocally that Christ did not rise from the dead. They're very adamant about it. They're very certain that just given enough time, somebody is going to find the grave of Jesus outside of Jerusalem somewhere.

Some have even gone to the point of saying, well, you know, his body was consumed by dogs and disposed of blasphemous statements they're making. But you see, the absurdity of it is they're denying the resurrection of Christ, but they're holding on to Christianity. Paul said you couldn't do that.

If Christ did not rise, then our faith is worthless. If Christ didn't rise from the dead, then the Christian faith ought to just cease to exist. There is no basis for it.

Everything that Jesus taught hung upon whether or not he rose from the dead. He himself made those kinds of claims. So, in other words, you see, you can't have a Jesus that didn't rise from the dead and still hold him in esteem, as C.S. Lewis said.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then he was a liar or a lunatic, and you can't have it any other way. So those who want to deny the resurrection of Jesus but still hold on to him as some sort of a noble person, a person who had great moral insight and understanding, a person who is to be emulated and, you know, just a great example of humanity, you really can't have it. Because Jesus did say some profound things, but he also lied if he didn't rise from the dead because he said he was going to rise from the dead.

He was extremely deluded because he said he was equal with God if he didn't rise from the dead. But you see, he himself always pointed to the resurrection as the final confirmation for everything that he claimed. And so you remember when he was cleansing the temple, he came into the temple and he saw God's people being exploited, taken advantage of financially.

He saw how the priesthood had become so corrupt and they were actually ripping off the people. And as he saw this, he became angry over what was happening in his father's house. And you remember, he took that that whip and he went through and he cleansed the temple.

He turned over the table of the money changers and he chased these the charlatans out of the temple with his whip. And then sometime later, the the priesthood, they they regathered and they approached him and they said, by what authority do you do these things? And he said, destroy this temple and in three days, I'll raise it again. And he was speaking of his body.

They didn't even understand what he said. They turned and they said, oh, it's taken 46 years to build this temple. He said he's going to raise it in three days.

But he was speaking of his body, destroy this temple and in three days, I'll raise it. That will be the proof of my authority. The resurrection will be the proof of my authority.

And then as Jesus went on in his ministry to his own followers, he told them that they were going to go to Jerusalem. And contrary to what they thought, they were thinking they were going to go to Jerusalem and Jesus was going to set up the kingdom. He said, no, we're going to go to Jerusalem.

The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men. They're going to beat him. They're going to pluck his beard.

They're going to crucify and kill him. But on the third day, he'll rise again. So you see, Jesus pointed to the resurrection as being the thing that would validate his earthly ministry and prove that he was indeed the one that God promised to come into the world.

And so Paul understood that perfectly to the point that he said, if Christ didn't rise from the dead, then we are pitiful people as Christians. If it's in this life only that we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. That indirectly shows you, in a sense, Paul's view of the Christians experience in this world.

It's far from success and prosperity that we're hearing so much about today. Paul understood that this world was going to be a difficult place for Christians to live in. That's why if Christ didn't rise from the dead, Christians ought to be pitied.

Now he goes on to affirm, but now Christ is risen from the dead. And has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep, for since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

But each in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards, those who are Christ at his coming. Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God, the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and all power. For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet.

The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. Now, you know, even today. You find people have greatly misunderstood the main purposes for the coming of Jesus.

And people today will argue against the validity of the claims of Christ, saying that, you know, what did Jesus do? He didn't bring peace. He didn't solve the economic problems of the world. He hasn't done away with poverty or hatred or, you know, racism, all of the problems that we're faced with today.

People will say, well, Jesus couldn't have been who he claimed to be because he didn't deal with these things. Well, he did deal with those things, but presently in an indirect way, he dealt with those things by changing individual hearts, which changes attitudes, which does away with those kinds of things. But you see, what they fail to realize is that Jesus had greater things than those that he had to deal with.

Man is guilty constantly of looking at merely the material and the external. And putting greater importance upon these things than actually ought to be put upon them. You see, the more serious issues and the most serious issue of all is the issue of death, isn't it? I mean, that's the most serious issue facing the human race today, and no one has ever come up with any solution to that.

I mean, let's face it, for humanity, that's a problem that we don't even dare to try to tackle. What can we do? Death rate is 100 percent. You see, Jesus came to deal with the problems that men could never deal with.

But as I said, as he comes into a life and he changes a heart, well, he does deal with these other lesser problems as well. You could talk to many people who were formerly racist and had no intention of ever not being racist. But because of what Christ did in their heart, they could no longer be a racist.

It wasn't possible. People who were oppressive and abusive, violent because of what Christ did in their life, they could no longer be that way. People who were living under the power of drug addiction or alcohol addiction, things like this that had brought complete destruction, devastation to their lives.

How do you explain the transformation in their life? It's because Christ came into their life, changed them from the inside out and altered then their outward behavior. Now, you see, this is an absolute fact, if the entire world was converted to Christ, the world would be a much more wonderful place than it is. You'll say, oh, no, that's not true, because there are churches all over and people eat.

Christians have been guilty for centuries of oppressing and slavery. The Christians did all that and so forth. Well, wait a second, the whole understanding of Christianity was unfortunately lost very early in the history of the church.

And yes, oppression has gone on throughout history in the name of Christ, but be certain of this, no one who is truly a Christian could oppress somebody else. It's contrary to everything that Jesus did. So if people were oppressing others in the name of Christ, they were contradicting everything Jesus taught them.

Yeah, we can look at the church and we could blame the church for all kinds of problems in society. But we must recognize this, that not everyone who attends a church is a Christian. And the whole idea of Christian nations and things of that nature, Jewish people today, for example, still live under the impression that the Holocaust was an act of the church.

It was an act perpetrated upon the Jewish race by Christians, because most Jewish people can't make a distinction between a genuine Christian, someone who is a biblical Christian, a born again Christian and someone who is what you might say, a cultural Christian. You see, in the mind of of Jewish people, Germany was a Christian nation. After all, didn't Martin Luther come from Germany? Wasn't the Reformation centered in Germany? Germany was a Christian nation.

And that's where six million Jews perished. Therefore, in their mind, Christians slaughtered six million Jews. But do you think for one moment the Nazis were Christians? Well, if they were, it was their own

version of Christianity that they invented apart from the Bible.

They certainly were not Christians. Hitler was as opposed to Christ as any man's ever been the true Christ, the biblical Christ. But there are all kinds of things that go on in the name of Jesus today that actually have nothing to do with him.

Now, if I refuse to read his word and come to understand who he is, and then I see people who are saying they're Christians and they're doing these things and I equate that with Christianity, I'm the one who's making a mistake. You know, people have often said to me, oh, I can't believe that because this Christian did that and that Christian did this. And I say, you know what? God never called you to look at what Christians do.

God called you to look at one person in history, and that's his son and that's the standard and that's the one that will be the standard that you're judged by, not what this other person did. But yet, going back to our point here, Jesus came to deal with the real problem, the great problem, the problems that nobody else could address, primarily the problem of death. And so the last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

It's interesting in the book of Revelation in chapter 20, verse 14, we find these words and death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death that statement ends. The present creation.

And as we move from that statement to the very next, John says, behold, I saw a new heaven and a new earth. And so Paul makes this statement, John affirms it in Revelation, the last enemy to be destroyed is death, for he has put all things under his feet. God, the father, has put all things under the feet of Jesus.

But when he says all things are put under him, it is evident that he who put all things under him is accepted. Now, when all things are made subject to him, then the son will also be subject to him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all like to quote to you from a commentator named Gordon Fee on the verse that I just read to you. He said Paul's point is that in raising Christ from the dead.

God has set in motion a chain of events that must culminate in the final destruction of death and thus of God's being once again as an eternity past all in all. At the death of death, the final rupture in the universe will be healed and God alone will rule over all beings, banishing those who have rejected his offer of life and lovingly governing all those who, by grace, have entered into God's rest. You see, in eternity past, God was all in all there was perfect harmony.

In the universe, everything was submitted under the authority of God, but since the entrance of sin into the universe, there's been a rupture, the final rupture is death and that will be dealt with and then everything will be brought back to the way it was in eternity past. That's what the apostle is saying, and that is such a glorious hope that we have. That all of these things are going to be resolved and restored.

Now, Paul says otherwise. What will they do who are baptized for the dead if the dead do not rise at all, why then are they baptized for them? So the Corinthians were involved in this practice. No one knows exactly what they were doing.

They were baptizing people on behalf of the dead. What does that mean? What were they exactly doing? No one knows. Whether it was wrong or right certainly could have been very wrong misunderstanding of baptism.

But but Paul's point is simply this. You're baptizing people on behalf of the dead. But.

Why are you doing that if the dead do not rise? So he says even so, in other words, even if what they were doing was wrong, which it more than likely was, he says your action contradicts your stand on this subject. The fact that you're baptizing people on behalf of the dead shows that you actually are looking for a resurrection. So your very action is contradicting your position.

And then he says, and why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm by the boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus, our Lord, I die daily. If in the manner of men I have fought with beast at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? See, Paul's going to use his own position and what he's saying is simply this. Look, the way I'm living.

Will show you my belief in the resurrection. In other words, he's saying, if I didn't believe in the resurrection, I would not live like this. I wouldn't die daily if I didn't believe in the resurrection.

I wouldn't put my life in jeopardy if I didn't believe in the resurrection. I wouldn't have fought with beast at Ephesus. He's not referring literally to beast like in the arenas with the lions or whatever.

He's referring to the men that were opposing his work in Ephesus who were vicious and hostile toward him. But in other words, what Paul is saying is, look. If there is no resurrection, the lifestyle I'm living is really ridiculous.

He said, if there is no resurrection. Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. If there's no resurrection to live like this is foolish, he's saying, if there's no resurrection, let's just have a party, let's just get drunk, let's just glut ourselves.

Let's just live for the moment if there's no resurrection. But. If there is a resurrection.

Then all of this is worth it. Now. Let's just finish up to verse 34, then I want to go back for a moment before we finish completely.

He says, do not be deceived. Evil company corrupts good habits. You see, what happened is they're being influenced by the wrong people, that's what he's saying to him.

He says, awake to righteousness and do not sin, for some do not have the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame, you see what happened again, as I mentioned earlier, Paul had established the church, he had been there, he had taught them, he left them with a good foundation, but they allowed false teachers to come in and undermine his ministry. And not only undermine his ministry, but undermine the doctrines of the Christian faith and now under undermining this essential doctrine of the faith, the resurrection. And so he points out to them now in finalizing this point here that the problem is due to the people that you're associating with.

It's these people that have come in, they are corrupting you, so he challenges them to make the break from them. Now, before we close, going back, Paul talks about the resurrection of Christ and he gives in the text that we've looked at, he gives a variety of evidences for the resurrection of Christ. And we want to just briefly go over those again, just to lodge them in your minds.

We've looked at these on occasion, Easter time and so forth, but I think it'd be good once again to look at the arguments that Paul uses here for the validity of the resurrection. The first one is that of the scriptures. And when we're talking to people today about the resurrection of Jesus, about the validity of his resurrection, there are certain things that we can point to as evidences.

See, we just we're not just believing in the resurrection of Christ against all the evidence. Actually, there's not one shred of evidence against the resurrection of Christ, and there's a mountain of evidence for his resurrection. When somebody disbelieves the resurrection of Jesus today, they don't believe it because of any evidence, they simply believe it because that's their position.

Now, Paul says the first evidence for Christ's resurrection is that the scriptures foretold that he would rise, and this is a powerful evidence, the scriptures themselves. And let me remind you that the Old Testament, that's what Paul's referring to when he says the scriptures, the Old Testament was complete. Four hundred years before Jesus was ever born.

Four hundred years before Jesus was ever born, the Old Testament was complete. Two hundred and fifty years before he was born, the entire Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew language into the Greek language. So, you know, some people say, oh, no, some people actually argue that these things, these prophecies that we point to, they say that they were written after the fact.

In other words, what they say is that the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus, they were written by somebody after he rose from the dead. Well, that's simple to refute. The Old Testament scriptures were completed four hundred years before, if you don't believe that, go find the Septuagint version, because that was translated from Hebrew into Greek two hundred and fifty years before Christ was ever born.

So the argument that these things were written after the fact is absurd. There's no historical basis for it. There's every bit of evidence to the contrary.

So you see, Paul goes back to the scriptures and that's where we need to take people back. Here's a document that was written and completed four hundred years before Jesus was ever born. And this document is telling us about Jesus.

Telling us about the place of his birth, telling us about the time in history in which he would come, telling us about the manner of his death in detail. You know, it didn't just say the Messiah is going to die. Actually, the 22nd Psalm written one thousand years before the birth of Jesus Christ declares explicitly his death on the cross.

They have pierced my hands and my feet. They have taken my garments and they're casting lots for them. David, the psalmist there, was given the ability to see what would happen a thousand years later to his descendant, Jesus.

As he was hanging up on the cross and David wrote it down. And so when we read in the gospels there, Jesus is he's hanging on the cross. They pierced his hands and his feet.

And these soldiers are now rolling dice for his garment. But you see, in that very same psalm, the promise of the resurrection is given as well. And then in Isaiah, the promise of the resurrection is given.

And so all throughout the Old Testament, the promise was there. The birthplace of Christ, the time of his arrival, the events surrounding his ministry, the fact that he would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver, all of this stuff, it's all written beforehand. And so we can point back to the scriptures.

That's the first thing that we would point people to. The second thing is the eyewitness testimony. And Paul marshals a lot of eyewitnesses here, doesn't he? He just goes on naming people who saw the risen Lord.

Well, Peter saw him, then the 12, then the other apostles saw him, 500 people saw him at one time. Now, we all know that eyewitness testimony is the most powerful testimony. It used to be when the law meant something, at least.

Now, it doesn't matter if 100 people saw somebody do it. He must have some psychological reason for doing it, so we disregard everything that we saw. But at a time.

And properly, so eyewitness testimony is that is that is what establishes something as fact or fable. And so Paul is able to point to these eyewitnesses. These people saw the Lord, they were with him, they spent time with him.

The 500. Now, people in their zeal to disprove the Christian faith have said all kinds of amazing things about this. People have said that there was a mass hallucination that occurred.

The 500 people, they were all hallucinating. Now, you know, this is just this is just a last ditch effort to try to find some reason not to believe. But there's you know, there might be mass hallucination, but everybody doesn't see the same thing.

You know, everybody's got their own little hallucination going. If you got 500 people, you got 500 varieties of hallucination. But, you know, they've made these kinds of statements to deny the obvious.

People saw the resurrected Lord. Now, these apostles, especially. Not only them, but these apostles, especially.

They didn't only see Jesus and then proclaim that they saw him. But they died for their testimony. They were so absolutely convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead that they went to death rather than deny that claim.

Now, because of the Roman persecution that developed. The issue was over who was Lord. The Romans declared Caesar as Lord, the Christians declared Jesus as Lord, and all you had to do to spare yourself was simply deny that Jesus is Lord and admit that Caesar is Lord.

But not one of them would do it. Not one of them did it. As you study the subsequent history of the church, you find that each one of these men, with the exception of John the Apostle, died for their faith.

Paul himself was beheaded by Nero. Now, you see, if this was a fable, if they had fabricated this whole thing, you can be certain that at least one of them at the point of death would have said, you know, I want to be really honest with you. We got a bit carried away with this, but, you know, they never did that, did they? They went to their death.

And that is eyewitness testimony confirmed with their own blood. You can't get testimony any more powerful than that. Now, some people have gone and said, well, they were deluded, they were deceived.

But if they were deceived, they deceived themselves. And then they died for something they knew was a deception. Now, people are deluded at times and people are deceived and people do give their lives for a lie.

But when people give their lives for a lie, they think it's true. If these guys gave their lives for a lie, they knew it was a lie. And you don't find people doing that.

You see these young Muslim guys who, you know, will drive a carload of explosives into a compound or something and kill themselves. Well, they think that they are serving Allah. They think that they are doing the right thing.

They think that this is going to obtain a place in heaven for them. They think that. You see, they're deluded and they're operated under that delusion, but they think it's true.

You see, these men, if they went to death, they did go to death. They would go to death knowing that what they were dying for wasn't true. And you don't find people doing that.

You don't find people dying for something they know to be a lie, something they fabricated. Satan had an interesting observation of man he made before God way, way back in the time of Job. He said this, he said, skin for skin, all that a man has, he'll give for his life.

And generally speaking, that is true. A man wants to hold on to his life. And so it's not reasonable to think that these men fabricated this thing and then knowing it was a lie, gave their lives for it.

No, they gave their lives for it because they knew it was true. See, some people living in the 20th century look back and they say, oh, you know, they they made up this lie because this gave them a lot of advantage. They look at the church, what's become today.

They look at the power and the prestige involved and all of the money and all of those kinds of things. And they say, you see, that's what they were doing back then. But you have to understand the early church had none of this.

You became a Christian in the early church. You became an outcast in society. You became a Christian leader in the early church.

You became a marked man. And it was likely you were not going to carry out your ministry very long. You would be executed.

So you see people looking at things from, you know, maybe the 20th century or even further back where the church gained all of this power in Europe and all. They see, oh, yeah, these guys were. No, they weren't doing anything like that to become a Christian.

The first century was to lose any advantage in society that you might have had previously. So none of the arguments against the resurrection have any real validity, but the arguments for the resurrection are powerful. And so we have the scriptures themselves.

We have these men, their eyewitness testimony. We have their martyrdom. And then we have the multitudes of people on throughout the ages that have become Christians as another powerful proof.

Now, I was thinking about this the other day. I was thinking about the power of Christ and and his power to change a life. And I think frequently when we think of the power of Christ to change a life, we think of what Christ is able to do for the person who's down at the bottom.

What Christ can do for the for the drug addict or the you know, the derelict, the alcoholic, the whatever, you know, the person who's just there at the bottom. And yes, indeed, God is able and he has done wonderful things for people like that. And he's taken and he's transformed their lives.

And it's such a glorious thing. But, you know, if you think about it, that is not a demonstration of the greatest miracle. I think a greater demonstration of the miraculous power of Christ is to take a good man.

And convince him he's a bad man. That's the greater demonstration of the power of Christ. You see, and let me say this, because, you know, there are other movements that can boast of proof for their the validity of their movement, because look at this guy.

He used to be a drug addict. And look at him now. You go into the States and you find the nation of Islam is having a great impact in America among the black community, and they're taking a lot of these young black guys who were in all kinds of trouble and their lives are being transformed.

They're getting free from drugs and alcohol and they're giving them a purpose for living and pride in their nationality and all of this. And their lives are being transformed and cults are able to bring about to a certain degree of transformation in people's lives. So you see, when we're arguing sometimes for the validity of the Christian faith, other people can point to their examples of radical conversion as well.

But you can't find self-righteous, good people who can see that they're actually bad people truly. And humbling themselves, that's where you see Christianity stands alone. You don't see that happening.

But that is evidence, the power of Christ. The fact that, you know, so many Christians have become Christians against their own will. C.S. Lewis, what a great example.

He said when when he was converted, the night he was converted, he said, I was undoubtedly the most reluctant convert in all of England. I did not want to do this. Everything in me was against doing this.

But I was compelled by the evidence. I couldn't deny it. We could go on and on with this, but as we close.

We stand on this, verse 20, but now Christ is risen from the dead. Christ is risen from the dead, and I love what this commentator said in raising Christ from the dead, God has set in motion a chain of events that must culminate in the final destruction of death. And thus of God's being once again as an eternity past all in all.

Christ is the first fruits of those who rise from the dead and all of those who follow after him. And it's all leading finally to Christ restoring the kingdom of the Father and the universe coming back into harmony with God as it was in the beginning.

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