

## 1 Corinthians 15:12-26 — The Resurrection Changes Everything

**April 12, 2020**

Good morning CrossWinds family. He has risen! (He has risen indeed.) If you are a visitor joining us for the first time this Easter Sunday, it is great to have you. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. It should be no surprise that today we are talking about the resurrection of Jesus. We are going to see how the resurrection changes everything. It is the resurrection of Jesus that gives us hope in the tough times of life. It gives us the courage we need to face death. The resurrection is what gives us peace in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am going to pray, then we will get to work.

Father, we come before you and we thank you the grave was empty. We thank you for your good plan to send your son to save us from sin and death.

Jesus, thank you for humbling yourself to become one of us. Thank you for taking on a human body forever. Thank you for, like a sponge, absorbing on the cross all our sin then dying for our sin. Thank you for destroying death from the inside out by rising to new life after letting death swallow you. Your resurrection changes everything. That is what we celebrate this morning.

Father, we thank you for the mercy and complete forgiveness you offer to us through your Son. We ask for that mercy not just personally but we also ask for it corporately upon our country in this pandemic. We ask this time of great death would become a time where many are born again to spiritual life.

This morning, please help me to teach well and help us to listen well. In this world, where there are many voices trying to grab our attention, the one we must listen to is yours. Speak to us as we study your Word. Amen.

This week, I did a little research and discovered a few interesting statistics. The United States has approximately 327 million people. Every year, 3 million Americans die. This ensures undertakers have a recession-proof business. If we do the math, that means 8,219 people die a day.

Since the first COVID-19 death in the United States on February 29, 2020, approximately 21,000 have died from this dreaded virus in America. That is a huge number. I don't mean to trivialize this pandemic, but I think we need to keep that number in perspective. Since February 29, 2020, 357,000 Americans have died of other causes such as being hit by a truck, cancer, or simply falling down the stairs. While the coronavirus is not something trivial, since February 29 of this year, statistics say the average American is 15 times more likely to die of something beside the corona virus

Don't misunderstand my point. I am not telling you stop using hand sanitizer or to put away the bandanas we wear over our mouths in Walmart. I am simply saying that if we are willing to shut down the entire country to avoid spreading this virus in order to save lives, just realize everyone was 15 times more likely to die of something beside this virus since February 29 of this year.

Death is coming for all of us, and it is coming much faster than we realize. We may be able to protect ourselves from the virus through social distancing but we will only be able to postpone our deaths. We cannot cancel our deaths. When our moment comes, each of us will find ourselves in one of two places with an atmosphere that cannot be changed.

The good news about all of this is that Jesus came and rose from the grave. What he did on that resurrection morning changes the way we face death and what happened to us at death. Listen carefully as I read these words. Let them sink in.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the

power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Hebrews 2:14–15 (ESV)

Jesus came to free us from fear of death! That is why Jesus came and why Jesus rose. He came to turn the moment of our death from a terrifying journey to an anticipated welcome. He came to turn the worst moment of our lives to the best moment of our lives. The way Jesus changed death was by taking on a human body so he could completely identify with us, then he died for us, then he rose from the grave to conquer it for all of us. Jesus came to disarm Satan and destroy the most powerful weapon Satan has in his arsenal, the weapon of death. Paul said it this way:

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”...But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:55–57 (ESV)

If a bee that has its stinger removed, it may threaten us but it cannot harm us. In the same way, for those of us who know Jesus, death may threaten us, but it was rendered harmless by Jesus who removed death’s sting by rising from the grave for you and me.

Let’s admit it up front. For some people, the idea of Jesus literally rising from the grave is hard to believe. Maybe you are one of them. You prefer to think of the Christian faith the way a Muslim considers it. They consider Jesus and the apostles good moral teachers but they do not believe Jesus actually rose from the dead. They consider that claim a preposterous myth, not historical fact.

This morning, we are going to look at the resurrection of Jesus and why it is important that Jesus literally rose. We cannot consider Jesus and the apostles merely good moral teachers.

We will be in 1 Corinthians 15:12-26. These verses divide in half. Verses 12-19 tell us everything we lose if Jesus did not rise from the dead. Verses 20-26 tell us everything we gain because Jesus did rise from the dead. So our topic is how the resurrection changes everything about life. The first point is what we lose if the resurrection is not true. The second point is what we gain because the resurrection is true. Let's dive into our study.

### **What do we lose if the resurrection is not true?**

**We lose the hope of our resurrection, if Christ wasn't raised.**

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 1 Corinthians 15:12–13 (ESV)

In Corinth, there were some folks that were fine with the idea of Jesus rising from the dead, but they couldn't comprehend that they would also rise from the grave. After all, they never saw anyone rise from the dead. When people died, they were buried and turned into mulch. When people died, they went to the graveyard but they never came out of the graveyard. They figured Jesus rose from the dead because he is God. They could accept that. But we are not God. Certainly we won't rise from the dead. When we die, we will decay and push up daisies. Rising from the dead is something only God can do.

At first their conclusion sounds right but Paul told them they needed to rethink their logic. Jesus was not just fully God. Jesus was also fully man. Jesus didn't just appear to be human. Jesus was a literal human. Jesus sweat. Jesus grew tired. Jesus was thirsty. Jesus was hungry. Jesus felt pain like you and me.

The reason Jesus left heaven and was born to Mary was to become one of us and *completely identify with us in every way*. That is the big "E" on the

Jesus eye chart. The only reason Jesus left heaven and took on a human body was so he could completely identify with us. He left heaven to become one of us. He left heaven to save us. Jesus died and rose from the dead not for his sake but for our sake. Jesus died for our sin. He didn't die for his sin. He rose to give us life. Paul said it is impossible for Jesus to rise from the dead without realizing that all who have faith in Jesus will also rise from the dead.

Our resurrection and Christ's resurrection are connected. The reason Jesus took on a body, died for our sins, and rose from the grave was so we could live. You can't have Jesus rising from the grave without those who have faith in him also rising from the grave. Please understand that we do not die and simply decompose. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, we will also rise from the dead.

The world wants you to think about life differently. The world wants you to think this life is all there is. Get as many toys as you can while alive. Have as much fun as you can while alive because after we die, everything stops.

Paul said, "That is absolutely not true." As Christians, we must remember this life is only the beginning. Just as Christ rose from the dead, as Christians, we will also rise from the dead. Once a life begins in the womb of a mother, death does not bring that life to an end. Death only transitions life. It doesn't end life.

**We lose the Christian faith and the church.**

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:14 (ESV)

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, that means the church, the gospel message and the Christian faith are completely useless and a total waste of our time. Everything about the church and our faith is not based on Jesus dying. It is

based on Jesus rising. People died on Roman crosses all the time. It is Christ's rising from the dead that makes a difference. If Christ didn't rise from the dead, we have nothing. There is no reason to worship Jesus. There is no reason to pray to Jesus. There is no reason to sing to Jesus. That would mean Jesus was just another dead man. If Jesus didn't rise from the grave, there is no reason to read our Bible. There is no reason to trust the Bible. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we should be someplace else on Sunday, certainly not in church. If Jesus did not rise, all the reading of our Bible is meaningless. All the preaching of the apostles was useless. If Jesus didn't rise, all the beatings, imprisonments, and suffering faced by Paul and the other apostles was all for nothing. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, all the effort Christians put into living their lives for Jesus is for nothing. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, the church is a joke and we have no hope.

### **We lose the truth about God.**

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. 1 Corinthians 15:15 (ESV)

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then those who claimed Jesus rose are actually liars and deceivers. If Jesus' body simply decomposed on a rubbish heap or was eaten by dogs, as some claim, that means the apostles and hundreds of others that claimed to have met the resurrected Jesus were lying through their teeth. It means they pulled off the largest deception the world has ever seen if Jesus' resurrection is based on fiction instead of fact.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, yet the apostles and hundreds of others claimed Jesus rose and they met him, talked with him and spent time with him,

that would mean hundreds of people were not simply mistaken about the truth. It means hundreds of people deliberately told bold-faced lies and intended to deceive the world.

In addition, all the apostles, and many others, were tortured to death or to the edge of death for claiming Jesus rose from the dead. None of them recanted their claim that Jesus was alive. People will die for something they believe to be true, but people will not die for a lie they know to be false. Let that sink in. People will die for something they believe to be true but people will not die for a lie they know to be false.

In addition, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, it would make the stories of lives changed by Jesus a complete fabrication. In the movie Unbroken, we see the true story of Louie Zamperini, a man whose life was changed by Jesus. As an American P.O.W. tortured by the Japanese, he came home from the war filled with hatred for his Japanese captors. When he was introduced to Jesus and became a Christian, Jesus changed his heart. Louis went from hatred and anger toward his former captors to love and compassion toward them. As he experienced forgiveness from Christ, he found the strength to forgive them like Christ forgave him. He even returned to Japan to help the Japanese people. Where did this supernatural change come from if Jesus isn't alive?

If Jesus didn't rise, that would make Billy Graham the greatest liar of history, not one of the greatest men of God in history.

If Jesus didn't rise, that would mean the character of Jesus' apostles were thoroughly evil. If the apostles were blatantly lying about the resurrection, we can

not trust anything else they say. When people are willing to lie in big things, they will lie in small things and in all things. When we look at the disciples' character, it is sterling not stained. It would be inconceivable for them to claim Jesus rose and for it not to be true.

### **We lose forgiveness of sin.**

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 1 Corinthians 15:16–17 (ESV)

The resurrection of Christ proves the death of Christ was effective payment for our sin. It proves that he wasn't just another person dying on a Roman cross for no good reason. The resurrection proves Jesus was God dying for our sins on the cross because only God could die then conquer death by coming back to life. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, he was no different from any other man in the ancient world. Our sins are not paid. The guilt of our sin still hangs around our neck. We are not forgiven. We still look forward to facing judgment. We are still facing eternal damnation.

This is what Paul said in Romans: Without forgiveness for our sins, the longer we live, all we do is rack up a longer list of sin that God will punish us for after our deaths.

Some of us have seared our consciences so much that we do not believe there is judgment for our sin after death. We think we can get away with sin because we will never pay for sin. If that is you, I ask you, would an eternity without justice for sin be fair? Answer this question. When Mother Teresa and Osama Bin Laden died, would it have been fair for them to enjoy the exact same experience in eternity? Mother Teresa spent her days saving thousands of lives.



Osama Bin Laden spent his days killing and taking thousands of lives. Wouldn't it be wrong for them to have equal eternities after death? If there is not judgment for sin after death, we should do all we can to live for the maximum amount of pleasure in this life and it doesn't matter what we need to do to experience that pleasures. If there is no judgment after death, we should cheat, steal, and lie if it brings us more pleasure. If there are no consequences for sin, why not enjoy sin?

That is not the way life works. There are consequences for sin. Each of us instinctively knows that after death we face judgment. That is why we instinctively experience fear, repulsion, shame, and self-loathing when we sin.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, that means we are still in our sin and have no forgiveness. That is a terrifying thought.

**We lose the hope of seeing our loved ones.**

**Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 1 Corinthians 15:18 (ESV)**

Sleep is a euphemism for death. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, that means every saint in the Old Testament who died looking ahead by faith in anticipation of Jesus coming has perished. This means every New Testament believer that has died placing his or her faith and trust in Jesus to forgive his or her from sin and to experience eternal life was not saved. These believers also perished.

This means when Grandma who was on her deathbed telling her children not to cry because when she breathed her last and closed her eyes she would open them to see Jesus and things would be OK, she was completely wrong.

Grammy was a deceived fool. When Grammy died, her body rotted. When Grammy died, she faced judgement. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, Grammy is toast. She doesn't have a hope and a prayer. She will never see her loved ones in a joyous reunion when after death comes judgment.

That means all the times Grammy trusted in Christ, prayed to Christ, and read her Bible to know Christ were completely useless.

If you think the universe is a product of chance and there is no such thing right and wrong and there is no such thing as judgment, that means Grammy lived as a fool. Instead of living for Christ, she should have been having a party for entire life as if she was Hugh Hefner at the Playboy Mansion, if this life is all you get.

**We lose a life of following Jesus because we were fools for following Jesus.**

**If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 1 Corinthians 15:19 (ESV)**

Paul just came out and said it. If Jesus did not literally rise from the dead, and we are following a dead guy from 2,000 years ago, Christians are a bunch of nut cases. Really. Think about it. Christianity would be pointless. We would be fools living a lie. If Jesus is just another dead man, he can't help us with eternal life. Jesus also can't help us with this life. It would a waste of time to pray to Jesus. It would be like talking to the air. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, it would be pointless to look for comfort from Jesus. It would be pointless to find help in anxiety from Jesus. If Jesus didn't rise, the Christian life is a joke. We are a bunch of losers.

If Christ is not alive, there is no reason to study the Bible. If Christ did not rise, every sermon preached is a waste of time. If Jesus did not rise from the grave, what we see here and now in this life is all there is to life.

In short, if Jesus didn't literally rise from the grave, we lose everything. There is no reason to be here. We have no promise of forgiveness or hope for tomorrow. We have nothing. The good news is Jesus did rise from the grave. Because Jesus rose from the grave, we don't lose everything, we gain everything.

**What do we gain because the resurrection is true?**

**We gain the guarantee of eternal life.**

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 1 Corinthians 15:20 (ESV)

The good news is Jesus' resurrection from the dead was the first resurrection, but it was not the last resurrection. We must understand what it means to be resurrected. Lazarus is an example of someone in the Bible that was brought back to life. He was revived. He wasn't resurrected. Lazarus came to life, but he died again. Resurrection is different. It is being brought back to life and given a new body, a different body, a body that doesn't get weak. It doesn't get tired. It doesn't get old. It is a body that will never die again. That is what happened to Jesus. His body came out of the grave. That is why the grave was empty, but his body was transformed into a resurrection body that will live forever. It was transformed from a body that would die to a body that will live eternally. It was transformed from a body of weakness to a body of power. It was

transformed from a body that could get sick to a body that can't get sick. That is a resurrection body.

The amazing news is Jesus was only the first fruits of the resurrection. He was just the beginning, not the ending. In the Old Testament, when the Israelites harvested crops, they were to bring the first and best of their harvest and give it to God as an offering. We read about this in Leviticus 23. The rest of the harvest could not be taken in until the first fruits offering was made. Jesus' death and resurrection was the first fruits offering to God the Father on our behalf. Once the first fruits offering was made and accepted in the Old Testament, that guaranteed the rest of the harvest was about to come. This is why it is good news Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection. He is the guarantee that our resurrection is going to be next.

### **We gain a new family tree.**

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:21–22 (ESV)

With Jesus, we gain a new family tree. Paul was talking about something called federal headship. We are experiencing federal headship right now in our country. The President has made some choices for the nation's safety. He is our federal head. As Americans, all of us need to comply with the choices of the President who is our federal head. That is the way it works. The same was true for Adam. He was the original federal head.

All of us were born as part of Adam's family tree. Therefore, we inherit the guilt of Adam's sin, which leads to our death. We also experience addiction and

power of sin, just like Adam. Because Adam is our federal head, just like Adam, we die in our sin and continue in our sin.

The good news is that Jesus came to start a new family tree. Jesus is adopting people into his family line. All who repent of their sin and trust in Jesus to save them from their sin switch family trees. Instead of inheriting death from Adam, when we are adopted into Jesus' family tree we inherit resurrection life from him. Instead of inheriting addiction to sin from Adam, when we are adopted into Jesus' family tree we experience victory over sin.

The great news is that anyone can choose to switch family trees. That is what it means to become a Christian. You can become a Christian and switch family trees this morning. All we need to do is confess our sins to Jesus and trust in Jesus to save us, then we are adopted into Jesus' family tree. Look what the Bible says.

[And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. John 3:14–15 \(ESV\)](#)

In the Old Testament, the people were dying of poisonous snakes biting them in the wilderness. God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. All the people needed to do after they were bit by a poisonous snake was look to the bronze snake held high in the air on that pole then trust God's saving words and they would not die.

Jesus said the same thing is happening today. The serpent is called Satan. He has bitten us by biting Adam so the toxic venom of sin runs through our veins. That is why we die. But God made a way for us to live. He sent his own son who died for us on the cross. God the Father says if we just look to

Jesus and trust in Jesus, we will be saved through Jesus. We switch from the family tree of death to the family tree of life. It is that easy.

I ask you, are you a Christian this morning? Have you switched family trees? It is not a hard thing to do. There is no better time to switch family trees than on Easter morning.

**We gain an eternity that gets better.**

But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:23 (ESV)

Paul told us that when we die, we do not get a resurrection body like Jesus right away. As Christians, we will get our resurrection bodies when Christ returns to Earth in power. What happens when Christians die today? The Bible gives us an answer.

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8 (ESV)

Paul told us we go home to heaven to be with Jesus, which is a place we would rather be.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Philippians 1:21–24 (ESV)

Right now Christians die and go directly into the presence of Christ in heaven. Paul described being with Christ in heaven without our bodies as far better than being apart from Christ here on Earth with our decaying bodies. Right now, the moment Christians die, they experience a vast improvement compared to life on Earth. Even though our bodies are laid to rest in the ground, our spirits

are with Jesus, which Psalm 16:11 describes as a place that is fullness of joy. As Paul said, “I would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

While our spirits are with Christ in heaven, something the Bible describes is there is a time when heaven gets better. When Christ returns to Earth, he will bring us with him. At that time, he will resurrect our dead bodies from the earth and transform them into resurrection bodies, just like his resurrection body. He will reunite our spirits with our resurrection bodies. We will be with Jesus, perfect in spirit and perfect in resurrection body forever.

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:15–18 (ESV)

When Jesus returns, not only will he bring the dead Christians with him and give them their resurrection bodies but those who are still alive when Christ returns will find their earthly bodies instantly transformed into resurrection bodies. Since Christ rose from the dead, we have a future where we will be with Jesus. We also have a future that will get better when Jesus returns and we get our bodies back.

**We gain victory over all of God’s enemies.**

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 1 Corinthians 15:24–26 (ESV)

Paul said, “Then will come the end.” The end is the Greek word *telos*. It means the consummation, the goal, the fulfillment of all things. When Jesus

returns, he will not just give us our bodies back but he will destroy every rule, authority and power. Those are terms for various ranks and powers of angelic beings. In this context, he is talking about different ranks and powers of demonic beings. All the hordes of demons gathered against Jesus will be conquered by Jesus, this even includes Satan. Jesus will put an end to all of God's enemies. Jesus will hold complete dominion and authority over every demonic power. He will not just conquer Satan but he will render harmless Satan's greatest weapon, the weapon of death.

This is described in the book of Revelation, chapter 19. In that chapter, Jesus is described as the rider on the white horse who is faithful and true. He judges and makes war. He leads the armies of heaven. He has a sword from his mouth which he uses to strike down his opponents. That means the only weapon Jesus needs for battle is his spoken word. His word has that much power. Jesus will cast the beast, the false prophet and ultimately Satan into the bottomless pit and he will remove their influence from God's creation forever.

According to Revelation 21, after Jesus destroys all of God's enemies, he will turn to us and wipe away all our tears, putting an end to all crying and pain.

Since Jesus rose from the dead, he will beat Satan and destroy death, the most potent weapon in Satan's arsenal. The amazing part is when Jesus conquers all of God the Father's enemies, we get to participate in the victory. We are on the winning team!

**We gain a resurrected creation.**

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who



subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Romans 8:19–21 (ESV)

At the end, Jesus does not just save us from the consequences of our sin. Jesus does not just give us resurrection bodies. Jesus does not just give us the privilege of participating in his final victory over Satan and all God's enemies. Jesus will give us an entirely new creation. Jesus will not just resurrect our bodies. He will resurrect our planet. It is not just our bodies that are in bondage to sin, but the entire planet that is in bondage to sin. That is why we die. That is why there are earthquakes, tsunamis, poisonous snakes, cancer, and yes, plagues like COVID-19. God did not create our planet to be filled with death and destruction. In Genesis, we read God created our planet very good and free from sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, they didn't just bring death and destruction to themselves, they introduced death and destruction into all of life.

Jesus' resurrection is so powerful and his authority so great that after we get our resurrection bodies, Jesus will give us a resurrected planet. The book of Revelation also tells us Jesus will combine heaven and earth together and we will live with Jesus in our resurrected bodies on a resurrected planet, completely free of suffering, sin, and pain forever. That is what we look forward to gaining, all because Jesus' resurrection is true.

## **Conclusion**

My friends if the resurrection wasn't true, we lose everything. There would be no reason for hope, no gift of forgiveness, and no reason for the church. Thankfully the resurrection is true. We don't lose everything. We gain everything. We gain forgiveness of our sin. We gain eternity with Christ. We gain resurrection

bodies. We gain participation in Christ's victory over all of evil. We even gain a resurrection planet on which to live with Jesus forever.

This morning, all of this can be yours if you have switched family trees. Earlier, I told you we all start out in the family tree of Adam. Jesus offers to adopt us into his family tree, the family tree of resurrection life. Have you looked to Jesus? Have you trusted in Jesus to save you like the Israelites looked to the bronze snake? When the Israelites were dying of snake poison all they needed to do was look and trust and they were saved. Today, we are dying of sin poison. All we need to do is look to and trust in Jesus and we will be saved.

If you haven't done that in your life, from the bottom of my heart I ask that you would do that this morning. The resurrection is true. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain.



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