

Why Do We Celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ?

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[0 : 00] I appreciate your being here for the whole service and the way we're going to end this service because it is designed to be from beginning to end a time of celebrating what God has done for us in Christ, not just His death on the cross for our sins, but His victorious resurrection, His demonstration that Jesus has conquered sin, death, even defeated the devil through His triumphant resurrection.

But I want to ask you as an individual, is this truly a time of celebration for you? Everybody knows Easter is supposed to be a celebration service like what we've had, but for you as an individual, is there this sense of, feelings of, thoughts of, real joy, celebration, thanking God, praising God for what He has done for you in the death and resurrection of Jesus?

I want you to look with me, if you would, at the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 15, where the Apostle Paul explains the resurrection in the most detail that you'll find anywhere in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul helps us understand various reasons why we should truly be excited, happy, celebrating the resurrection this morning.

There's all kinds of things from chapter 1 through the end of the chapter that explains the significance of, the historical reality of, what it means that Christ arose.

[2 : 11] If you've never read 1 Corinthians 15, if you're not familiar with it, I'd encourage you to read it this day, this Easter Sunday. But right now, I want us to read together verses 12 through 20.

And what you're going to see, Paul explains the significance of the resurrection from the perspective of what we would not have if Christ had not risen.

So understand, that's how he's explaining the resurrection in these verses. Let's read it together.

Verse 12, 1 Corinthians 15. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Some in that church were saying, there's no such thing as a resurrection. People don't come back to lie.

The body certainly would not be. They were under the influence of Greek philosophy maybe. Some of them were just under the influence of unbelief. They just struggled with it.

[3 : 28] Verse 13, But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that He raised Christ whom He did not raise if it's true that the dead are not raised.

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.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. He's telling them, your family members and friends who died as Christians, they're doomed.

They've perished. There's no hope. Verse 19, If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

[4 : 45] But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. I want us to look at a couple of reasons why we must celebrate the resurrection.

We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus because it assures us of God's forgiveness. Paul states this truth, what you would consider in a negative way in verse 17.

Look at it again. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. Some translations say worthless, useless.

You are still in your sins. If Jesus Christ did not rise from the grave, what Paul is saying is, you are still guilty of sin and under the condemnation of sin.

You are separated from God by your sin. You have no hope, if Christ has not been raised, of forgiveness, of ever being made right with God.

[5 : 58] You will pay the penalty for your own sins, is what he's saying here. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is absolutely worthless, of no value.

You are still in your sins, condemned, doomed, the separation from God for all eternity, in hell. But the good news, what Paul is trying to stress from every conceivable angle, is that Christ did rise from the grave.

And so, we could just restate this from a more positive perspective like this. Since Christ has been raised, your faith is priceless.

You are forgiven, set free from the guilt and power of your sins. We are here today because Jesus Christ is alive.

You know, there are people who are involved in world religions, and their key figure, their prophet, is dead.

[7 : 12] And they know he's dead. And many people travel to see the grave, the tomb, that holds their founder's bones. But as Christians, if we choose to go to the place, the tomb where Jesus was buried, it's open.

There's nothing there because he arose three days after he died. He is alive today. He is coming back literally into this world for his people one day.

The resurrection is a historical reality. I want you to understand that. what Christians believe is not just wishful thinking.

It's not just some type of mystical religion. It's not some philosophy somebody invented. The Christian faith is based on things that really happened in time 2,000 years ago.

Jesus appeared. He died. He was buried. He arose. And he appeared to many different people in many locations over a period of time.

[8 : 30] I want you to look back up in 1 Corinthians 15. Note in verse 5 that it said he appeared to all these people. He appeared to Cephas. That's Peter. Another name for Peter.

Then to the 12. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time. Most of whom are still alive. Though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James.

And then to all the apostles last of all as to one untimely born he appeared also to me. Now these appearances to all these different people different places different geographical locations they took place over a 40 day period.

Look in Acts chapter 1. It says after his suffering he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

What happened was not just some people had some kind of dream got caught up in some excitement the emotion of the day of a couple of day period.

[9 : 42] Jesus appeared to all different kinds groups sizes of people not talking about fat and skinny and tall and short I'm talking about one or two a big crowd a little crowd over a period of 40 days.

You see the point that the Bible writers are trying to say trying to make when they talk about the resurrection of Jesus like this it really happened there were eyewitnesses who verified it you can bank on the fact that the resurrection is a historical reality but also the resurrection changed the lives of his followers.

Most of you in this room know that when Jesus was arrested his disciples scattered they were afraid they ran after Jesus was crucified and put in that tomb before they saw him before he arose from the grave they were still hiding out.

In fact some of the times when Jesus appeared to his disciples they were hiding out. They were behind locked doors when he appeared to them. But after the crucifixion after they saw the resurrected Jesus and after they were filled with the spirit of God on the day of Pentecost that you can read about in Acts chapter 2 they came out of hiding and they preached the gospel the good news about the death and resurrection of Jesus they preached it to everyone that they could find. They stood before the people they had been hiding from. They stood before the people who were responsible for killing Jesus. They stood time and time again after they were warned don't do this anymore.

[11 : 39] Stop talking about him. Don't say this junk that Jesus is alive. They still said it after they were beaten after they were imprisoned after some one of the apostles the first martyr James was killed.

the disciples they saw Jesus that changed their life especially after they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

This helps us see the Christian message it's not just a message about the cross. It's not just a message about the death of Jesus as important as that is.

it is equally about an empty tomb. The gospel that we believe if we believe it the one that we're called to share with other people is that Jesus died on the cross as our substitute to experience the death that we deserve because we're the ones who are guilty of sin.

His death was real. He was buried in a sealed tomb. But that's not the end of the story. Jesus arose came forth from that tomb.

[12 : 55] He came back to life. And in coming back to life being seen like he did he demonstrated he proved that the penalty for sin had been paid and God had accepted it.

Chuck Swindoll describes this in a very good way. Look at his statement. He says we know that Christ death completed the work of atonement because God raised him from the dead.

If God had not been satisfied in the death of his son the son would have remained a lifeless corpse in the tomb. When the father raised the son it represented his stamp of approval.

The resurrection of Jesus means that everyone who truly puts their faith and trust in him can have confidence my sins are forgiven.

I want you to understand if you are a true believer follower of Jesus if you are really and truly united him by faith the penalty for your sins has been paid you need to be confident of your forgiveness.

[14 : 10] You don't need to be dragging around the weight of guilt any longer because Jesus suffered what you should have suffered.

He paid the price your actions deserve. Don't be a prisoner of your past sin and guilt if you are truly trusting in Jesus.

Leave your past behind. Forget it. The penalty has been paid. Move forward with confidence that you are a child of God forgiven, cleansed.

The penalty for your sin has been paid. The power of sin has been broken. Trust him. Now if you're not a Christian I want you to understand that what I've just said to Christians this can become true about you.

But what you've got to do is you've got to come clean with God and admit your sin, your rebellion against him, your breaking of his law. You're choosing to live your way instead of his way.

[15 : 30] And if that really and truly bothers you it'll grieve you. You'll be able to sincerely express sorrow to God for the way that you have sinned against him and truly turn from that mindset way of life.

I encourage you to don't just turn from your sin but turn to God in faith. Trust that when Jesus died on the cross he died in your place taking your punishment.

Trust him. Put your confidence in him. Depend upon him for your salvation. call upon him right now to come into your life and save you.

Surrender it to him now. Let him know that from this day forward you're going to follow him. No one else, not even yourself, but he is going to be your Lord.

Now I want to remind everyone in this room, every single person, regardless of what your relationship with God is. Saving faith is continuing faith.

[16 : 41] Look where we are in 1 Corinthians 15. Look at the first two verses. Paul writes to these people, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

hear me. There are many people who could say on any Easter Sunday morning, I believe Jesus is real, that he lived in this world, that he died on a cross, he was buried in a tomb, and I believe he arose from the grave.

But you only believe that as historical facts, the truth is, you don't trust him.

You're not trusting him as your Savior. You're not committed to him as the Lord of your life. You've never really and truly repented of your sins, changed your mind, turned from sin, and put your faith in Jesus, surrendered all to him, and continued to trust him.

I became a Christian a long time ago, many years ago now. But you know why I know that he is my Lord this morning?

[18 : 24] Not because of some kind of decision I made many years ago, but because I'm trusting him right now, this moment, as my Savior.

I'm surrendered to him right now as my Lord. Truth is, I failed him on many occasions. Truth is, sometimes I am selfish, and I just choose to do what I want to do instead of what he wants me to do.

Every Christian in here, that's your testimony, isn't it? But the way that we know we really are the Lord's is because as Christians, the Spirit of God lives within us. And when we rebel, when we ignore God, when we live our way instead of his way, sooner or later, the Spirit of God convicts us, inflicts guilt upon us.

God disciplines us if we're really his children. And he does that to wake us up, to get our attention, and to call us back to himself. If you don't have that experience, if you don't understand what I'm talking about, according to Scripture, I just don't see how you could call yourself a Christian. Because saving faith is continuing faith. John 3, 16, that most everybody in this room has at least heard of, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

[19 : 55] It talks about whoever believes in him. It's not talking about believes in him one day in the past. It's talking about whoever believes in him continuously. Whoever trusts him, whoever has a relationship with him, is the one who will not perish but have everlasting life.

So I want to ask you on this Resurrection Sunday, the Sunday that we should be celebrating, can you celebrate your relationship with the risen Lord Jesus?

thank him for your forgiveness. Thank him for the eternal life that is yours now and forever. If you can, do it.

Celebrate. Praise and worship him. But if you can't, then right now, this moment, humble yourself before him, the risen Lord.

You may be a church member, you may be a church leader. You may be a church leader. Here are some other church. But if you don't have this real relationship, if there's not real life-altering faith, trust, confidence in your heart for this Lord, I encourage you right now, admit it to God, repent of your sins, put your trust in Jesus, call upon him to save you now.

[21 : 27] I want us to bow together. I want us to spend this time right now responding to the Lord as he speaks to you. That's all you need to do. Listen to him.

He is fully capable of making it clear what you need to do. You just obey him. And then, ask him to help you to take it one day at a time, one hour at a time, as you move forward from here.

After I pray, I'm going to be here at the front. If you'd like for me to pray with you, talk with you about your relationship with the Lord, I'll be happy to do that. If you know someone that you'd rather talk to, about your relationship with the Lord, and they're in this room, go and talk to them now.

Go and talk to them before the sun goes down today. This Easter Sunday, 2017, can be a day for everyone to celebrate because everyone can come to Christ if you want to and if you will the way that he says.

So let's pray. Dear God, show us how we should respond to you. Dear God, work in people's hearts who are not Christians to call them to trust Jesus.

[22 : 54] Show them that when Jesus died on the cross, it was for their sins. Help them to know it's because you love them that you sent Jesus to do that. Help them to understand, dear God, that this Jesus is not dead, but is alive.

And so, help them right now to call upon him to come into their life and be their savior and surrender their life to him as their living Lord, master, boss right now.

And in this attitude of prayer, let's just be still and quiet as musicians play. Again, I'd be happy to speak with you here at the front, pray with you you come forward during this time.