

The Resurrection

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, turn with me today to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. When we come to Easter, typically preachers can do one of two things.

You can go to the Gospels and you can get the narrative story and you can rehearse that. Or you can go to the Pauline Epistles, especially chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, and you can see the significance of the resurrection.

And this morning, I want us to take that approach and look here at 1 Corinthians 15. In fact, every believer in this room ought to know this. You ought to write it in your Bible where you can see it if you don't already know this.

The greatest word anywhere in the scripture on the resurrection, the premier chapter is 1 Corinthians chapter 15. It is the definitive statement about the resurrection that the Apostle Paul makes.

In this, he's going to drive three truths home that I want you to make sure you recognize today. In fact, you ought to memorize these if you possibly can, these three truths that come to us from 1 Corinthians 15.

[1 : 05] The first is the Christian non-negotiables. Have you ever thought about that? There are some things in the Christian faith that are just absolutely non-negotiables.

I told you a few weeks ago, I was coming up Highway 8 one Sunday to church, and I had noticed before there were a lot of signs of churches along the way, and so I began to count.

We took about a four-and-a-half-mile stretch, and we counted 17, and this morning I counted them again, and actually they've added a sign now since I was last. And there are 18 churches, and they're all stripes and flavors.

They're Methodists, and there's some Church of Christ, and there's some Reformed Baptists, and Baptists of every flavor. And, you know, there are more Baptists in Pickens County than there are people.

Y'all do know that, right? And so as I saw those signs, it reminded me of a sad truth, and that is we have difficulty getting along, don't we?

[2 : 02] I mean, we will divide over so many things. And I want to tell you just a sad truth, as I get in this first point this morning, and that is there are some things over which we shouldn't compromise, and Paul's going to give us three of those things.

But I meet a lot of believers who have failed to recognize that people can still hold the Scripture as being authoritative in their life, believe it with all their heart, be conservative in the sense that they believe that this is God's Word, and whatever it says, it is true, but have a difference of opinion about what it means.

Do you understand that? And a lot of us, especially those of us in the conservative camp, we have a tendency to forget that. We think, no, if you're really conservative the way I'm conservative, you interpret every passage exactly the way I interpret that passage.

But I want to tell you something. There are a lot of issues out there over which good, strong, conservative, Bible-believing believers can look at a passage, and one interprets it one way, and one interprets it another.

And I want to tell you something. For us to get all divided about all those kind of issues is foolishness. The Apostle Paul says there are three things that are non-negotiable.

[3 : 21] And he wants to drive that point home, and he does so very effectively. Look at chapter 15 and verse 3 and 4. And this is what Paul says.

For I passed on to you as most important. Underscore that. It's a superlative phrase. Most important.

What I also received. Now, before we even delve into that, let me just tell you this. We live in a country that is just consumed with something being the greatest.

It's not good enough for something to be just real good. We want something to be the best, don't we? And so we take these little poles in town, and we say, this is the best place to go get a hamburger.

This is the best place to get a cup of coffee. Here's the best dentist in town. Here's the best whatever in town. Even in churches, I've seen cities that say, here's the best church.

[4 : 22] And that's just kind of crazy to even get involved in that kind of discussion, right? But we'll do it because we love superlatives. When I was a kid, if you were the goat, that was a bad thing.

You know, somebody said, he's the goat, man. That man, he sat on the bench. He warmed the bench. He was not a good player. But today, the goat is the best guy on the team, right? Or the best guy who's ever been on the team.

It's the greatest of all time. We've made that little acronym as though we needed another acronym, you know? Here's the greatest of all time. Then we argue about who's the greatest. But we all know this.

In the end, because we use that superlative greatest, there can only be how many? One. Now, we may disagree who that one is, but we all understand there can only be one greatest, actual greatest.

And when Paul says, this is the first importance, guess what? There can't be a second or third or a fourth most important. It's only one.

[5 : 20] And so Paul says, here is what is of utmost importance. In other words, you can't debate these things. I want to tell you, if you don't believe these things, or you're in a church that doesn't believe these things, go find you another church.

Go find you another pastor. Here's what he says, for I passed on you as most important what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

Now, if you want to be divided over something, if you say we'll go start another church for people who believe this, those are the issues over which it ought to principally be.

The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. That's something you cannot be a Christian. You are not a church if you don't hold to those three truths according to the apostle Paul.

Now, let's look at those statements individually just real quickly for a second. What does he mean when he says, it is of first importance that you believe that Jesus died for our sins?

[6 : 32] He's emphasizing two things. He's emphasizing that he, in fact, died. And that is phenomenal in and of itself, isn't it? Because we believe that Jesus is the God-man.

He left heaven, he was God, and he took on human flesh, fully man, fully God, and he died. On the cross that day, God, in the person of Jesus, died.

But it's equally important what he goes on to say, for our sins. In other words, no one took his life from him.

The Jewish religious leaders didn't overpower him. They didn't outmaneuver him politically. This was the plan of God before the foundation of the world.

And here's how we know this. Isaiah had prophesied this would happen hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born as a flesh and blood human being. In Isaiah 53, 6, one of my favorite verses in all the scripture, this is what it says.

[7 : 44] All we, and that means me and you and people of every age who have ever lived, all we, like sheep, have gone astray.

And here's what picture he's painting for us. Here's this path that the sheep should take. It's the path that God has laid out for us. And we understand this is what God wants of me. But guess what?

I'm rebellious against God. And I don't want to follow that path. And if we would be honest about it, every person in this room knows that there's been a time in your life where you knew exactly what God wanted.

The problem was not in knowing what God wanted. The problem is, I don't want to do that. It doesn't suit me to do that. My flesh says don't do that.

My will says don't do that. I don't want to do it. And so, in effect, we shake our fists in the face of God. We'd never be so bold as to do that. Most of us wouldn't at any rate. To shake our fists in the

face of the Almighty and say, God, no, you can't have it your way.

[8 : 45] I'm going to have it my way. But whenever we disobey him, that's exactly, in effect, what we're doing. Saying, God, I know what you said, but I refuse to do that. I won't do it your way.

And so, the scripture says, all we like sheep have gone astray. We've each one turned to his own way. We've all gone our own path and chosen to do what we wanted to do, what satisfied the flesh. And then he says this, a remarkable statement. Listen to this. And the Lord, speaking of God the Father, hath laid on him, speaking of Jesus the Son, hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Here's this holy, righteous, perfect Son of God, who God has sent to the earth for one purpose, and that is to take the sins of all humanity, past, present, and future, and place them squarely on the shoulders of his Son.

Every sin Ralph Carter ever committed, or you ever committed, God placed on his Son on the cross. And that's why Paul says, I want you to understand, this is the centrality of the Christian message, and you can't argue this, you can't debate this.

[10 : 00] If you don't believe that, you don't believe the gospel. It's not debatable that Jesus died for our sins. Secondly, that Jesus was buried.

This is really important. You may think, well, that just seems natural. If he died, he was buried. But listen, Paul's to drive that point home, and you know why? Because there were some then and now who say, he didn't really die.

He had a near-death experience. He was beaten nearly to death, but he didn't die. Paul says, no, I want you to understand, he absolutely died.

He was graveyard dead. They took him from the cross only after they were sure of his death. They stabbed him in the side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out the womb.

He bled out on the cross, and they buried him. They buried him in a borrowed tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea.

[11 : 02] And so he drives that point home. You must believe Jesus died for our sins, was buried. And here's the third and most important thing. Jesus was raised three days later.

Look at what he says in verse 4. That he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. Now, we've said that so many times.

It's become a hat to us. But I want you to think about the impact of that statement. How many of you in the last three months have attended a funeral?

Have you been to anybody's funeral in the last three? Raise your hand real high. I'm going to say how many of you in this room. Lots of folk, right? Well, I've been to several in the last three months. What if you went to a funeral this last week, and today you're getting ready for church, and the phone rings, and it's a dear friend in whom you have a lot of confidence, and they're shaking. You can tell on the phone they're shaking. And they say to you, Bob, you know the other day we went to that funeral for so-and-so? Yeah? Bob, I don't know how to tell you this, but I was getting coffee this morning in this little coffee shop, and he walked in.

[12 : 20] Who walked in? The guy we buried the other day. You know already what you would say. I mean, you're mistaken.

We were at his funeral. We saw him buried. I spoke to his wife. He's dead. He couldn't have walked in. He did. I saw him with my own eyes. I walked up and talked to him.

I asked him about it. He said after three days he came back to life. He came up out of the grave mysteriously. Well, can you imagine how hard it would be to get your head around that?

Can I tell you something? For 2,000 years, even this day, that's what the church is trying to convince the world happened. Do you see the difficulty in that? For us to go out into the world and say 2,000 years ago there was this guy who came.

By the way, he was God. And he lived a perfect life, but they still hated him and they crucified him. They nailed him to a cross. And when he was dead, they wouldn't put him in this tomb.

[13 : 22] They sealed it with a stone. They put a group of soldiers outside to guard it because some of his disciples had said he would arise from the dead. And they were afraid they would steal the body. And guess what?

He came to life. And he gives you the possibility of living eternally as well. Now, you say that to people in our world today, and I'm going to tell you something. The vast majority are going to say, couldn't happen.

No way. And they walk away. But in the city of Jerusalem, when that message was first preached by literally the thousands, they embraced it.

And in that first century, that message spread like wildfire. And it has been spreading ever since. Listen, today there are over a billion people in our world who are worshiping just as you do today because they believe those truths.

So Paul recognizes this is a difficult thing to sell. And so we've got to give evidence to support this claim, this bold, wild claim that we make that Jesus did, in fact, arise from the dead.

[14:29] And he is alive today. And here's the good news. Every young person, every person in the room under 40 today, please hear this. It's Paul's way of saying you don't have to commit intellectual suicide to believe the message of the resurrection.

There is strong evidence to support the idea that Jesus has done exactly what he said in the scripture he would, in fact, do.

Indisputable evidence. Now, what evidence is there? First of all, he's going to tell us there are eyewitnesses to what he says occurred. Any of you ever been an eyewitness in a court case? Anybody here ever been an eyewitness? You saw an accident or maybe you saw a crime committed? You know what gets me about the world in which we live in today? I know that in America we believe in a trial of your peers by your peers and that people have to have justice. And I understand every bit of that. But I get amused sometimes because in today's world, everybody's got a cell phone, right? You all remember in Wisconsin this last year, in the last 12 months, there was an incident in Wisconsin.

[15:42] They're having a parade. And suddenly, nobody could predict it. This vehicle comes on the scene and it goes charging down the streets out of control. And it hits several people.

And it just literally runs over the top of folk. And there were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people there with iPhones. And they made pictures. And the media was there covering the event. And they actually made pictures. And they have pictures of the police who stopped the van finally and pulled the driver, the occupant, out of the vehicle. And all these folk have seen it with their own eyes.

They've got it on film. The news media has it on film. The policeman saw them. And everybody that ever talked about it, you know what they said? The person of interest who has been arrested, the suspect, the alleged criminal.

Now listen, do I think he deserves to have an attorney? Could there be some extenuating circumstances? They need to know about it? Of course. But understand this. Was he the driver?

[16:50] Of course he was the driver. And the reason we know he's not the suspected driver, everybody saw him. Right? You got it on film. You can document. He is the driver because of the eyewitnesses.

How many eyewitnesses do there have to be for someone to establish a fact, that person did what you said he did? So Paul's taking that approach.

He's not going to be concerned about chronology. And he's not going to be concerned about an all-inclusive list. He's just wanting to say, here's a good case for the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus.

And he begins by saying, Cephas. Look, if you will, at verses 5 through 8. And that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, then he appeared to over 500 other brothers, at one time, most of whom remained to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, last of all, as to one abnormally born, he also appeared to me. So he begins to call witnesses to the stand, so to speak.

[18:02] And he says, first of all, we call Cephas. Now, why Cephas first? Was he the first to see Jesus? No. But Cephas was the leader of the early church.

Now, we Baptists get a little heartburn admitting that sometimes because we know our Catholic friends say he was the pope of the first church, and we reject that idea. But listen, to not say he was the leader of the early church is just ludicrous.

He's the guy who preaches at Pentecost, and 3,000 come and are saved. He's in those councils where they ask, hey, what does it take for a person to be saved? And Peter's one of the ones giving the answers.

So he's clearly a leader in the early church. So Paul says Cephas saw him. And what do we know about Cephas?

One time we know he's not exactly a star disciple, right? The only time he seems to take his foot out of his mouth while Jesus is alive is to insert his other foot, right?

[19 : 03] He's a bumbling character. But suddenly, after Jesus' death and burial and resurrection, when he's witnessed the resurrected Lord, guess what?

He becomes a superstar preacher who preaches and 3,000 come and they receive Christ as their Savior and Lord. So he says, ask Cephas, who incidentally at the end of his life was crucified upside down.

That's how strongly he felt about the resurrection of the Lord. And then he says, there are the 12. And the 12 is kind of a nickname for the 12 disciples.

In fact, the gospel sometimes refer to these as not the disciples, but as the 12. This includes even Judas before his death. These are people who have been with Jesus and they have heard Jesus teach.

But listen, they didn't even believe themselves that Jesus was going to be raised from the dead. They didn't go to the tomb seeking to find a risen Lord. They went to help with his burial preparation.

[20 : 14] And so the 12, he says, they are witnesses. And then he says this, there were 500 brothers who saw him at one time. And this is really important.

Get what he says. Some of them have fallen asleep. Some of them have died. Years have passed. This wasn't a few months later. Years and years and years have passed.

And now Paul writes the Corinthians and he says, remember there were 500 brothers who saw him at one time. And some of those who've fallen asleep.

But watch this. But most of them remain to this day. Now, if he had been wanting to perpetuate a lie, you know what he could easily have said?

If he's just making this up about the 500. Hey, there were 500 brothers. Everybody knows that was reported that saw him at one time. But now to be honest, it was during the time of the Passover.

[21 : 11] It was during the time of Pentecost. A lot of those folks have gone back to their homes and you can't find them now. But that's not what he says. He's inviting them to do an investigation of these 500.

And so he says, I want to tell you, those 500, almost all of them are still alive. Some of them have died. That's what you would expect over a period of 15, 20 years. Some of them have died. But many of them, most of them are still alive today.

You can go find them. They still live in the area. You can question them. Now, how many of you today, I won't even ask you how many of you are on Facebook.

It'd just be easier to say, ladies. Forgive that. Bad joke. Anyhow. Anyhow, have you ever seen anything on Facebook and you're reading it and you show it to somebody and they say, you might need to what?

Snoke that, right? You might need to check that out because maybe if it's on the internet, it's not so. Everything that comes across the internet, everything that's on Facebook is not necessarily so.

[22 : 18] So what do you do? You check it out, right? There has always been a network of folk out there since the beginning of time who are skeptical. I'm in that number.

And so when we hear things, guess what? We don't just immediately assume that's true. We go digging until we can find some proof. That really did happen. And so I'm going to tell you something. If there were 500 people who lied about seeing Jesus resurrected, don't you think there would have been some folk living at that time who would have said, eh, that's not so. That didn't really happen. And this message, instead of spreading, would have died with those who perpetuated the lies. But instead, it was true. And then he says, there's a fourth witness, and that's James, who incidentally is Jesus' own half-brother.

And what makes this interesting is this. James did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah until after his death, burial, and resurrection.

[23 : 23] But following that, he becomes so committed to Christ, he refers to himself, this is the half-brother of Jesus, as the slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then he says, the apostles, which was the disciples, but now these are men who believe in the resurrection, and they are sent out with a purpose. And lastly, he says, and I, Paul.

Now, I just want to tell you, of all the witnesses he mentions, perhaps the most notable of all is Paul himself. He puts himself last because he does that, I think, out of a sense of humility.

But maybe the best witness of all is Paul. Did Paul see the resurrected Lord shortly after his death? No. He sees him much later than that.

According to Acts chapter 7 and 8, he was a Pharisee among Pharisees who had stood there when Stephen had been called out for preaching the truths that I'm preaching this morning, and he consented to the death of Stephen.

[24 : 31] He watched, get this now, you're talking about cold-blooded murderer. He watched as Stephen was stoned to death. It's one thing for a person to die being beheaded.

It's another thing for a person to die with a firing squad, or to be hung, or to even murder someone with a knife.

But can you imagine standing there and watching as people again and again and again and again and again, for how long, I don't know, stone a man to death.

I'm telling you, you've got to be pretty cold-blooded to stand there and watch that. And he stood and watched and gave his consent to Stephen being stoned literally to death.

He watched as he dodged those stones and those boulders and rocks, and as they cut him, and as he bled, and as he stumbled, and as he fell, and then as he lay on the ground and he kept being pounded.

[25 : 36] That's how cold-blooded Paul was. And Paul then, according to chapter 8, Paul got letters from the chief priest to go to other cities and find believers because he thought this was a threat to Judaism, and to drag them out of their homes and to bring them back to Jerusalem so that they could suffer the same fate.

He's on one of those missions one day, and he goes, he's headed to Damascus, when suddenly he's struck down by a great, great light.

Can you see him as he staggers in the darkness and the blindness? And he's wondering what happens, and suddenly a voice is heard from the heavens. It's obviously a supernatural voice, and the voice says this, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he's having to process all this. And listen, he's frightened. He's struck blind. No one wants to be blind. He can't find his way. And he's processing all of this, and he asks the logical question, who is this?

And this supernatural voice from the heavens says, it is Jesus whom you are persecuting me. Why are you persecuting me?

[26 : 58] And he's trying to take all that in, and he goes to this home in Damascus, and for the rest of the day, he contemplates that situation. You know what he ultimately decides?

I knew that Jesus lived because all my friends told me about seeing him and hearing him preach, and the blasphemous things that he thought Jesus had said.

And then he said to himself, no doubt, and I know he died because all my friends orchestrated his death. Those Pharisees that I had such great confidence in, I sat at the feet of Gamaliel, they all told me they were the chief priests conspired, and they brought about his death.

They thought they had outmaneuvered him. Peter had said that this was all part of the plan of God, but that was just hogwash. That was covering up this failed plan going wrong.

And he said, so I know he lived, and I know he died, but they told me he didn't rise from the dead, as these believers say, but that they had stolen the body.

[28 : 07] But who is this voice from the heavens? And what is this great light? And how, why did he describe himself as Jesus whom thou persecutest?

And it all suddenly clicked in his head. He had been lied to. Jesus had risen from the dead, and that's who was speaking to him. And the only way he could be speaking to him is if he were God who had come in human flesh.

And all of a sudden, every answer fell in perfect place for the apostle Paul. And that's why he repents of his sin, and the Holy Spirit of God comes in his life and does a great, great work.

Now listen, as a result, he goes from being a murderer to a missionary. And there's something even more fascinating than that.

He goes from being one who martyred others to one who one day will be martyred himself.

[29 : 12] Will so believe these truths he has put people to death for that he now holds to himself and is willing to be martyred for. And that leads me to the next piece of evidence, and that is those who were eyewitnesses could not be bought.

Men like the apostle Paul, but listen, it didn't stop with Paul. It started with men like Stephen, who believed in the resurrection of Jesus so much so that rather than renounce their faith, they would be stoned to death, willfully stoned to death.

Men like James, who were beheaded rather than deny that Jesus had risen from the dead. A man like Polycarp, are you familiar with that name? At the end of the first century in the church of Laodicea, they had a pastor named Polycarp who would refuse to renounce that Jesus had risen from the dead, and as a result, they doused him with flammable liquid, set him ablaze, and he sang hymns as he died.

There were many, many, many people throughout the ages, and even today, literally hundreds of thousands of people who have died rather than renounced their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's a third piece of evidence, the impact the gospel has made in the lives of believers. Look at verse 9 and verse 10. In verse 9 we read, One of the greatest pieces of evidence that Jesus rose from the dead is this, the difference the resurrected Christ made in the lives of believers.

[31 : 07] How is it that Peter goes from being this bumbling disciple to being this great preacher of God's word? How is it Paul goes from being a person who martyrs people to one who is willing to be martyred himself?

Well, let me just tell you, it doesn't stop with just biblical characters. How many of you in this room right now today know a folk who you look at them and there is no answer for the change that occurred in their life other than the fact that they have trusted the resurrected Savior into their life? That's the only explanation I know for the difference I see in the Apostle Paul before Christ and after Christ. But let me tell you something, it's not limited to just people in the scripture. It's people we know.

I started to call a good friend of mine this morning and ask him if he would come with me to church, but I hated to take him out of his own church on Easter. His name is Donovan Garrett. I don't know if any of you in this room know Donovan or not.

He owns a company that paves roads. He's an ordinary working man like many of those of you in this room. I met him about five years ago when I went to be the interim pastor at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Fountain Inn.

[32 : 22] He's married to a woman by the name of Lovana. She had one boy when they married. He adopted him as their son. They've since had two other children. Can I tell you something? Donovan is one of the sweetest, most gentle Christians I've ever met.

But if you hear her testimony and his testimony, you know what you'll discover? There was a time in Donovan's life he was one of the worst alcoholics you could ever imagine.

In fact, about five, six months ago, I was asked to do a podcast and about three weeks before, he had been asked and his wife asked to come on this broadcast and to do a podcast.

And I listened to it. They had him for two sessions. And she tells about the fact that he would go to work every day of his life, hard worker, but when he would come home in the evenings, he would begin to drink.

And by suppertime, he would turn mean. And the kids would go hide in the closets from their daddy. When the weekend would come, he would drink all weekend.

[33 : 22] And she said, oftentimes, me and the children would have to get in the car and go to a local motel. We knew this fellow, she said, who would put us up in a cheap room and we would stay all weekend in the motel.

And this went on year after year after year after year until one day Donovan came to know Christ. Christ is his personal savior. And can I tell you, that day he invited Christ into his life.

His life forever changed. Now, I know that you just hear me saying this and you haven't met Donovan, but you've met people like Donovan sometime in your life. Let me just tell you this about Donovan.

If he came here today and he stood on this stage and you came up and shook his hand and looked him in the eye, within one to two minutes of conversation, you would walk away saying, I promise you, everyone in the room, you'd walk away saying, I think that's one of the sweetest, most gentle, nice human beings I've ever met in my life.

They had a play at Pleasant Grove. They did on an annual basis. And Donovan was always the one that got to play Jesus. I was there two years. I've been back since that time. And he always played Jesus.

[34 : 31] And people would come by the hundreds and hundreds just to get to go through this one part of the play and meet Donovan and talk to Donovan because he would pretend to be Jesus. But I'll tell you, he was just being Donovan.

I mean, he's got such a sweet, sweet, sweet nature. You can't believe this man could ever have been that man that they talk about on the podcast, who he was before.

You know the only thing I can make of that? That what Paul says is true in Romans when he says, Romans chapter one and verse 16, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

God has miraculously changed his life because I want to tell you something, we don't have the power to do that on our own. Let me prove it to you. How many of you in this room have ever said to yourself, I'm tired of being me.

I'm going to be somebody else. I'm going to change something about myself. I've never been somebody to be on time. So from this day forward, I'm going to be on time. I'm going to be punctual.

[35 : 36] How'd that work out for you? How many of you said, you know what? I'm tired of being fat. I'm going to lose 20 pounds. You lost three ounces.

How'd it work out for you? The truth is, on our own, there's only anything about us we can change. By the time we're adults, we're pretty much who we are.

For a man suddenly to go from being this man who they describe to the man that you see now, and for that to have been over a decade ago, God did a miracle in his life.

And God is capable of doing a miracle in anyone's life who will turn to him and trust him, but it must be the work of the Holy Spirit. Here's the final point, and I close. Our hope for life beyond the grave rests solely in the resurrection of Jesus.

Now listen to this. If Jesus did not arise from the grave, what hope in the world do you have of ever doing that yourself?

[36 : 47] Look with me as I read one final passage. Go to verse 12 of chapter 15, and I want to read through verse 19, and I close, I promise you. Ready?

Look at verse 12. Now if Christ is preached, is raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without foundation. And get this, so is your faith. In addition, we are found to be false witnesses about God.

In other words, we've been lying about God. Because we have testified about God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins. Therefore, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished.

[37 : 46] If we have placed our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone. You hear that this morning?

Listen, I'm grateful that I'm a Christian and that I have Jesus in this life. He makes a difference in my life each and every day that I live.

But I gotta be honest with you. I agree with Paul. If this is all there is, man, we're hopeless. We're hopeless.

You understand that, don't you? I mean, you pick up any history book and you see how old the earth is and how long man has been here. And you and I, the time we spend on this planet, it's about that long.

And we're gone. And I want hope that's not just for that little short period of time between the year I'm born and the year I die. I want hope beyond that.

[38 : 52] And the only hope I have is that Jesus arose from the dead because I gotta tell you something. If he didn't arise from the dead and he's God, what chance do you have?

What chance do you have? You don't have any. Our only hope is that he's opened the door for us and that one of these days, he's going to come again and he's going to raise up all those who have died in Christ.

Their spirit is already with God, but that's because of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he's done for us. If you've never trusted him as your savior, I want to give you that opportunity today.

You say, well, pastor, how would I do that? Same way those folk did in Acts chapter two. Repent of your sin, turn to Christ. Recognize God, I'm a sinner.

Listen, we talk about so many things in church. Talking with a good friend the other day about this, don't mean to extend the message, but just talking with a good preacher friend of mine the other day. And it seems like we get, we talk about so much stuff in church.

[40 : 01] A lot of times it has no real meaning in our lives at all. What really counts is this. Have your sins been forgiven?

Are you going to live eternally with God? And if not, you can settle that today by just turning to the Lord Jesus Christ and say, Jesus, I'm a sinner. I know I'm a sinner.

And I need salvation. I believe you died for my sins. And I believe by your power, I don't understand, I can't get my head around it, but I believe God raised you up into the heavens and I believe you've offered us eternal life and I want that gift of life.

Would you give me eternal life? It'd be the greatest decision you ever made. Would you do that today? Maybe you're already a church member. You know you've never really trusted Christ.

Would you do that today? Say today, I trust him. I give my heart and life to him. Just call it to him. Something like this. Lord Jesus. Lord Jesus. Thank you.