

# 4/9/23 - 1 Cor. 15:12-28 - "A Reason to be Pitied, or Believe" (Easter Sunday)

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to turn to God's Word in just a moment, and I'd like to think about a couple different things according to the Word. Before we do, I want us to imagine that if we had a chance to travel back in time, what church might you take a visit to in the New Testament?

What church might you take a visit to? Well, let me just prod you, you know, maybe you're thinking, you're shy, you know, you don't talk in church. The pastor talks. No, we're not that kind of church.

We can interact, but maybe some of you might choose the church in Rome. I mean, that letter is pretty legit. It's full of deep theology. I mean, it was written by Paul, hand-delivered by Phoebe, and it's one of those chapter books of the Bible that have just deep doctrine and faith and theology, right? Maybe we'd go to Rome and see what's going on there. Maybe we would go to the church in Ephesus. I mean, they had clear expressions of God's grace. They seemed to be working together. They were growing well, the church in Ephesus. Maybe Ephesus. Maybe Philippi.

They were partners with Paul. They seemed to have the most deep connection with Paul than many of the other churches. But I couldn't imagine any of you sitting here today saying, I would go to the church in Corinth. It's a little bit of a Christian inside joke, but let me fill you in with a little bit of laughter. The reason why I don't think anybody would say, I know which church I would go to. Forget Rome. Let's go to Corinth because Corinth's got problems, right? It's as if Paul writes to this church chapter after chapter just addressing one problem after another. In fact, you've probably seen the meme out there. If Paul saw the church in America, it says we'd surely be getting a letter, right? And so who would want to go to church in

Corinth? I mean, we already have it here close by. From divisions and disputes in chapter 1 through chapter 4 in the Corinthian church, or gross immorality in chapter 5 and 6, or lawsuits against different believers in chapter 6, questions about marriage and purity in chapter 7, food offered to idols in chapter 8 through 10, even selfish and disorderly worship in chapters 11 and 14. And get this, even a problem with denying the resurrection in chapter 15.

[ 3 : 15 ] In each of these cases, Paul reminds the Corinthian church as messed up as they were.

And he connects their issue that they're having, whether it's with immorality or the resurrection. He connects it all to the gospel, whether it's ethical, social, or doctrinal. And today, I hope to provide the same for all of us regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So what we have today is we're going to dive into 1 Corinthians chapter 15. The sermon titled is, A Reason to be Pitied or Believe. And we're going to cover the two sections as Paul addresses two things in this passage. And so turn with us all to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. We're going to go through the passage together. And once I hear the pages stop flipping, I'll have a moment of prayer. I don't think it's going to be on the screen. I don't get bonus points today. Let's pray. Lord, we direct our attention to your word. And if our attention be directed to your word, we need to hear your voice speak. Father, till the soil of our hearts with your word, convict us, correct us according to your word. Speak to us today. Encourage us. Give us a reason to believe, not to be pitied. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So the first section is going to be looking at the reason to be pitied. And Paul begins this letter. I'm going to kind of jump back to context because I want you to hear his heart. Paul is not a bully, to say the least.

Paul begins this letter providing the insights of his vibrant role in duty, just as any minister of the gospel, myself included. I am a glorified post-it note.

I am reminding the church of the essential truths of God's word. It's my job. Glorified post-it note. And Paul says in verse 1, 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, a little note of sarcasm.

Verse 3, In other words, through the work of reminders, right? Paul is revisiting the essential truths that this body of believers either were neglecting or needed to be reinforced.

[ 7 : 05 ] And these are essential truths of the gospel. What Christ did on their behalf. Especially how it relates to the resurrection, which has a historic footing within Scripture.

The resurrection was not just something that God woke up to one day and said, I know how to fix it. Great Scott, we're traveling in time, right? Back to the future language.

No. Might this have been God's plan all along? Because if we go back to Abraham in Genesis 22, in accordance with Scriptures, it says, Then Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey, and I and the boy will go over and worship, and come again to you.

Hebrews 11.19 connects a dot that this was God's plan. Hebrews 11.19 says, He considered that God, Abraham considered, that God was able even to raise his son Isaac from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

This was God's plan. Even in Jonah, Jonah 1.17, it says, And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

[ 8 : 44 ] Moving ahead a little bit, Jonah 2.10, And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon dry land. Jesus himself connects the dots.

In Matthew 12.40, For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the hearts of the earth.

So, in verse 12 of chapter 15, it says, Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

In other words, without the resurrection, our faith is wasted.

We're shipwrecked, hopeless. And not only that, if you've been a Christian for any amount of time, it would be unfortunate, I believe, for believers to actually hold a thought that our hope in the gospel is just for our lives now.

[ 10 : 09 ] That you picked up a Barnes & Noble book that seemed to sound pretty good of living your best life now. And this is all there is. After that, it's up in the air.

The gospel of life enhancement, maybe. But we have to remember that God has been establishing a narrative of hope, not only hope in this life, but a hope in the life to come, eternal life.

We're not just marrying Jesus for His money, as gold digger Christians might do. And you see, hope that is attributed to our lives today really isn't hope.

This world is broken in sin. And there's things that you can do to make it better, but man, Christ has really made your life better, not only here today, but also for tomorrow.

Even if this life were stripped from us, a hope that is eternal. So hope that is only attributed to our lives today is not hope, but it's hopelessness. It's utter hopelessness.

[ 11 : 18 ] Jesus Christ wasn't raised for your life improvement plan. He wasn't. I'm not saying that it doesn't improve your life, but that is not the only central focus of the resurrection.

And we see in verse 13 something else is brought in. So verse 12, 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. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain.

Right? We're even found as misrepresenting God because we testified about God that He was raised, whom He did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised.

Is anybody else like, all right, Paul, we get it. All right, He's been raised, right? But this was a legitimate problem in the Corinthian church.

[ 12 : 24 ] There wouldn't be hope for Christ. There'd be no hope in preaching. And actually, in verse 15, I'd be just preaching lies to you.

There's no hope in faith, no hope for the dead. You can tell grandma and grandpa who were tried and true believers that. Well, so long. Have fun.

That's all you get is the dirt and decay. All of us have this life and this life only to live and to hope for if Christ had not been raised.

For some of us gathered today, I think I may have just succinctly described the basis of your life. No hope for Christ. No hope in preaching.

No hope in faith. No hope in the dead. No hope in life. All we have is here and now. And we'll die and be forgotten.

[ 13 : 30 ] Back in 71, John Lennon actually penned and papered a song that reads like this. Imagine there's no heaven. It's easy if you try.

No hell below us. Above us only sky. Imagine all the people living for today.

The lyrics of that song actually get one thing right. If you are imagining no heaven or no hell below with people living for today, you just described hell on earth.

And yes, John, he was a dreamer. Friends, if the tomb was empty and even secular historical evidence declares that to be true, this can only mean one thing according to the gospel.

Christ is the one whose scripture pointed to. That Abraham pointed to. Jonah pointed to.

[ 14 : 59 ] And the sequence of faith began with anticipation of dozens and dozens of predictions of God's plan to restore.

Anticipations of dozen predictions. Incarnation of Jesus Christ in a manger. humiliation upon the cross. The exaltation of his resurrection.

Verification by hundreds of eyewitnesses. And even the deportation of him ascending away. What happened?

History. History happened. This isn't made up. It's history. history. If the tomb was empty, the throne is occupied.

According to scripture. Because that is the promise. All dominion would be given to Jesus. Jesus is alive.

[ 16 : 10 ] this is not a reality of truth or error. Hear me this morning.

It's not a reality of truth or error of investigating who may have stolen the body. Could this have happened or this have happened? Trust me, it's been looked into.

There's nowhere that the body could have gone. Okay? It is not a reality of truth or error. It's a reality of belief or unbelief.

Why? Because God gave us a reason to rise from pity to be the ones worth pitying to the ones who have hope.

The ones who were once dead to come to life. The ones who were once in unbelief as we all once were. We've come now to believe Jesus is alive.

[ 17 : 18 ] And this is hope. And so we get to a part in his letter to the Corinthians and he gives a reason to believe in verse 20.

It says, but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who had fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has also, has come also, the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

But each in his order, Christ the first fruits, and then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Verse 20 says, Jesus has been raised.

Jesus Christ has been raised. And Paul says that this is the first fruit of those who had actually fallen asleep. Yeah, there's hope for grandma and grandpa in the ground. There's really, really good hope.

[ 18 : 29 ] Actually, there's a greater hope, according to 1 Thessalonians, that they're going to rise first and be with Jesus first before you and me, breathing on this earth. And Paul says it's the first fruit for those who have fallen asleep.

It's the first in a sequence of events. And you see, for all who have died before Jesus Christ, if Jesus Christ had not been raised, there would remain for them no hope.

It would just be death and decay. And therefore, in verse 21 and 22, if sin and death followed, was a fruit of Adam's rejection of God's Word, so too forgiveness and life followed Christ's obedience to God's Word.

Isn't that fancy? See, the true and better Adam, as we just sang. What Adam failed to do, Christ the second and better Adam, he did it.

He obeyed God's Word. He fulfilled the law. What is your reason to believe? Because Christ lives, all who believe in Him live and will dwell with Him.

[ 19 : 49 ] Jesus Christ is coming back for His church. You can provide every reason you desire of why you deny this truth here today or even on the live stream, but you have no reason to claim that God has not given you a reason to believe.

Right? So my resistant friends of the truth of the gospel, I want you to pay close attention. knowing you might not know me from Adam, but I love all of you the same.

Verse 24 says, then comes the end. Listen. When He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power, verse 25, for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

the last enemy to be destroyed is death. Verse 27 basically indicates all things will be in subjection in the end to God.

That's how the story ends. God will destroy sin and death. death. The church can yell amen.

[ 21 : 21 ] That's pretty good. Let's try a little bit louder. God will destroy sin and death in the end.

Amen? Amen. And if in Adam we are born into sin, this means that if you did not give an amen just now, the future for you is not so bright.

And this is the most loving thing that I can tell you today. Because in the end, if you are not grafted in by God destroying Jesus Christ on the tree, God will destroy you.

God is all powerful. He's infinitely holy, incomparably holy, and righteously just. There's bad news though.

If God's wrath did not hesitate to fall upon His Son, Jesus Christ, don't expect your attempts to please God, to exempt you from His wrath falling upon you.

[ 22 : 43 ] The good news of the gospel is that despite our rebellion, God sent a substitute on our behalf upon the cross. And the payment to disarm sin was accepted at the resurrection.

Transaction complete. Here's your receipt. It's been paid in full at the resurrection. Death could not hold Him. So if the wrath will not hesitate to fall upon you as it did for Jesus Christ, God's grace in Christ will not hesitate to acquit you.

It will not hesitate to acquit you as it did for Paul, as it did for the Corinthians, as it did for believers of all time, even within our room today.

There is grace to be bestowed. And the Bible says to simply just repent of your sin. Let go of your sin and cling to Christ.

And within this embrace you will find hope, you will find peace, you will find grace. Amen? Jesus Christ is alive, so come alive today if you are not in Christ.

[ 24 : 11 ] Wake up from your drunken stupor and do not go on sinning as verse 34 will be indicated to the Corinthian church. So as we close, God's grace, speaks for all time.

God's grace speaks in the past, the present, and the future. But His grace does have an expiration in the end.

In Christ, our past is justified by grace, our present is being sanctified and set apart, being made holy, and our future will be glorified by grace.

Why? Because Christ is the first fruit of God's grace. He's the first fruit. This is good news. Jesus is alive, and for that, all of us today have a reason to believe.

Let's pray. to help.,