

Six Gifts of the Resurrection

March 27, 2016

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

12 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;

14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

15 Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;

17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

To the Glory of God

Several years ago- I received a phone call from a dear woman who regularly listens to the radio broadcast and she asked me to explain about how that we should love God for Who He is and not for just what He gives us. And I told the lady

"I think I know what you mean. It's like marriage: you shouldn't marry a woman for her money. You should marry her for who she is, not for what she has. So it is with God. We should love Him for Who He is, not for the material benefits He may give us."

"But I need to make it clear," I said, "that you understand that I don't play down God's Efforts to satisfy my longings. Because I don't see a conflict between a God Who lives to glorify His Own Worth and a God

Who lives to satisfy my own heart's desire. In fact, the very essence of my theology," I said, "and the heartbeat of my ministry is this sentence:

The only way that God could ever be glorified by me
is when I truly delight myself in Him.

Because when a person has genuinely delighted in Jesus, then whatever Jesus demands of that person is no longer a burden, it is not a problem, it is not really even a sacrifice. It is actually a joy and a privilege and a blessing and an honor, because we humans do what we love, and if we are truly saved, then we love Jesus. And, therefore, serving and obeying and following after Jesus is the very source of my joy.

About 1700 years ago, Augustine said,

"Love God and then do what you please"

... and many people have taken that statement as an excuse to sin, or an excuse to live their lives for no other goal other than to please themselves. But that is not what Augustine was talking about at all. The Bishop of North Africa was working out the important connection between our own desires and true genuine Biblical Salvation. And what he was getting at is, if you are saved, if you truly love God, if you have been born from above, then your nature has been radically and eternally changed by the Sovereign Act of God to the point that you now hate sin and love God and love the ways of God.

So, to the man who has been truly regenerate, loving and serving and obeying God and doing "what you want" is the same thing. Because, the saved man wants nothing more than to love and honor and glorify Jesus Christ. That isn't something he simply does for a few hours on Sunday, but something that is the foundation of his entire life, and the foundation of his deepest loves and wants and desires, and the very source of his joy and complete satisfaction.

So, because that is true, whenever I see God at work in the Bible to satisfy my soul, I also see Him at work to glorify His Own Name at the same time. Because, you see, the greatest news in all the world is that God has designed a universe in which God's Own "God-centeredness" is the foundation of my own infinite joy.

Our Longings and the Centrality of Jesus

Now the reason that I begin this Sermon with this statement is because it is so important for what I see happening in this Passage of Scripture of **1 Corinthians 15:12–20**. I see the Apostle Paul proclaiming the Good News that the Resurrection of Jesus satisfies at least six of our deepest needs and longings.

But in doing this-, Paul is not putting us at the center; no, no, no- that is a terrible mistake, and oftentimes even blasphemy. The Apostle is putting Jesus at the very Center, and God Who raised Him from the dead at the very center.

So my prayer for us this morning is that we would all feel these six longings that I believe are rooted in every human heart, and that you would see the risen and living Jesus as the *answer* and the *solution* to those longings, and that in doing so you will genuinely delight yourself in Jesus Christ, and in turn, Jesus will be glorified in you.

Now I didn't make up these longings or get them from any extra-biblical book. They come straight out of the text that our dear brother Andy has just read to you. So let me try to show you how they became very clear to me.

"If Christ Has Not Been Raised . . . "

In **1 Corinthians 15:12-19**- the Apostle Paul says there are six things that would be in utter shambles if Christ did not rise from the dead:

1. Preaching Would be in Vain (**1 Corinthians 15:14b**)
2. Our Faith Would be in Vain (**1 Corinthians 15:14c**)
3. The Apostles Would be Found to be False Witnesses (**1 Corinthians 15:15a**)
4. We Are Yet in Your Sins (**1 Corinthians 15:17**)
5. Those Who Have Already Died are Simply Perished (**1 Corinthians 15:18**)
6. The Apostles are the Most Miserable People Who Ever Lived and Should be Pitied (**1 Corinthians 15:19**)

Now, all six of these things would be true if Jesus had *not physically* and *literally* and *bodily* risen from the dead. And this is serious stuff, and so we need to understand just how vital the Resurrection of Jesus really is by understanding exactly how the Bible answers all six of those dilemmas.

And I would also like to draw your attention to the first part of verse 20 as Paul reverses the entire argument when he says:

1 Corinthians 15:20a

But now Christ has been raised from the dead,...

So let's look at those six things one by one to determine just how this impacts us today:

1. Our Preaching Would Be in Vain

In **1 Corinthians 15:14a**, Paul says:

and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain...

So Paul says here in the first part of verse 14 that if Christ has *not* been physically risen from the dead, then all preaching is entirely in vain. It is utterly worthless and a complete waste of time. And that means that every single sermon from every single preacher about every single topic that has ever and will ever be preached in our day is also all in vain, if Jesus did not rise from the dead. *That* is how important the Resurrection is to the Gospel and to our Salvation.

Let me restate this again so you don't miss this. Without the physical and literal and bodily Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the Bible says that all preaching is useless and a complete waste of time.

So, please do not buy into the statements by people today who teach that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is only a *minor* part of the Gospel and something you can either take or leave with no effect on your soul.

The Apostle Paul says here that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is prime, it is central to Biblical Christianity, and without it God's men don't have anything to preach about.

And that should tell us volumes about what many people are preaching about today, because while the Apostle Paul said that *his* preaching would be in vain without the Resurrection being true, much of what is being preached today in the modern Church could go right on being preached and taught and celebrated *without* the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ precisely because so much preaching today has nothing to do with the Bible or with Christianity or with Redemption or with Salvation or with the Risen Christ.

So here is the benchmark for every sermon from every preacher on the face of the earth. Jesus has to die and rise from the dead in order for that sermon or that teaching to be true. So if you can believe something and accept it and then go and do what the preacher is teaching *without* Jesus dying and rising from the dead, then it is *not* of God and you are deceived.

What Paul and Peter and James and John and the other New Testament writers taught and preached and wrote down must first have a dead and then a risen Christ in order to be true. Those teachings that do *not* require that Jesus be murdered and rise on the third day are all false and they are all wrong and they do *not* reflect genuine Biblical Christianity.

So we must know that a "Man-centered Theology" that puffs up the importance of Man and glorifies what we do doesn't need a dead and risen Christ. A Theology that has Man at the center, that is all about making much of Man, that talks about building up Man and glorifying Man, doesn't need Jesus to die, and it certainly doesn't need Jesus to rise again.

But Biblical Christianity absolutely *requires* that a sinless Lamb be slain and His spotless Blood be shed, and it *requires* that this same dead Lamb be risen from the dead by the Glory of the Father.

But then Paul goes on to answer his own dilemma by saying in verse 20 that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, and so because Christ *has* risen, therefore, our preaching is *not* in vain. So because Jesus Christ is alive right now, we have *much* to preach about, and true Gospel preaching is *very* valuable, and Biblical preaching is *very* useful to us today.

2. Your Faith Would Be in Vain

1 Corinthians 15:14 says:

and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

Now here Paul teaches that not only would the preaching and Doctrine of the Apostles all be in vain without the Resurrection of Jesus, but even more important, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, the Bible says right here, our faith is also vain. And this statement goes back to the Truth that without the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, no one can be saved. Please turn with me to **Romans 10:9-10:**

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Now what this Passage teaches very clearly is that if anyone denies or rejects the physical, literal, and bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead they are *not* saved, they are *not* genuine believers, and they are *not* Christians. The Bible says they are yet in their sins.

And we are allowed by the Authority of this Passage to also say that anyone who teaches that The Resurrection of Jesus is a myth or that it is irrelevant or that it doesn't affect Salvation is teaching false doctrine, and they should be confronted and called to repent for teaching contrary to inspired Scripture. And if they repent, wonderful, but if they do not, they should be condemned and their teaching should be condemned as heresy.

Now many people in the modern Church believe and teach that all that a person has to do is to "accept Jesus into their hearts" and they are saved. And I understand what I think they mean when they say that. What they are *trying* to say is that:

- ✓ Salvation is not complicated
- ✓ Salvation is not encumbered by a bunch of man-made rules and legalistic regulations

✓ We cannot earn our own Salvation

... and I agree with that. But, nevertheless, because we are living in a time of great compromise we have to acknowledge, beloved, that according to **Romans 10:9**, that we just read, it is *not* enough to simply "accept Jesus into our hearts", but we have to actually "confess" something very specific about Jesus being God Almighty in human flesh out of our mouths, and we have to believe in our heart what the Bible teaches about the physical, literal, and bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, because both that confession about Christ's Deity and that belief in the Resurrection is absolutely *necessary* for Salvation.

So we see that there is more to being saved than simply "asking Jesus into your heart". You first have to define Who Jesus is, *Biblically*, not through legends or man-made teachings or personal experiences.

In other words, we must categorically reject the "jesus" of the Mormons, and the "jesus" of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the "jesus" of the Muslims, and the "jesus" of the Christian Scientists, and the "jesus" of the modern Jews, and the "jesus" of our modern secular American society, who all teach *another* "jesus" – who is *not* the Jesus of Scripture.

So we first must learn about and trust in the Jesus Who is fully God and fully Man at the same time in the same body without conflict or contradiction, and we must trust in the Jesus Who was born of a virgin and Who lived an absolutely sinless life. We must trust in the Jesus Who preached perfect Sermons using Perfect Words, and the Jesus Who took upon Himself all the Wrath of God against all our sins and Who died on the Cross.

But even if we believed all of that, we would still not be trusting in the Biblical Jesus unless we also believed in the Jesus Who was physically and bodily and literally raised from dead and Who is coming again with Power and great Glory.

That is the Jesus we must trust in, not some other "jesus" that people have invented. The Jesus Whom God raised from the dead by the Glory of the Father is the Jesus that must be trusted in by faith if we are going to be saved.

So you have to trust that what the Holy Scriptures say about the Resurrection actually happened, that it is true, and you put your hope and your trust in the Savior Who is *risen*, not simply the Savior Who

lived and did great things, or the Savior Who healed and fed, and not simply the Savior Who died and shed His Blood, but the Savior Who lived a Sinless life, and Who died a substitutionary death, and the Savior Who was raised up from the dead on the third day, *that* Jesus.

So our faith in Jesus must be the *right* faith in the *right* Jesus, and not a Jesus that has been fabricated by Man, or a Jesus that has been made popular in the culture, or a Jesus who has taken on *some* but not all of the characteristics of what the Scripture says the real Jesus has.

So without the literal, physical, and bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul teaches here that your faith in any other "jesus" is absolutely in vain.

But, then notice that **1 Corinthians 15:14** also says that your faith in the *real* Jesus would also be in vain if the *real* Jesus didn't rise from the dead. So even if the real Jesus only lived a sinless life and died, if He stayed dead, then He is still not the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies which said that Messiah would not stay dead. For example, turn in your Bibles and read with me **Psalm 16:8-11**:

8 I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely.

10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

11 You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Now at the time that King David wrote this Psalm, he didn't have a clue what this meant. David saw Jesus from afar, and David only had symbols and signs and types and shadows of Jesus his entire life. And for 1,000 years after David wrote this nobody could figure out what David was talking about either.

But now please turn with me to **The Acts 2:22-36**. And we need to remember that **The Book of the Acts of the Apostles** was written by Dr. Luke about a year after he finished his Gospel Account, sometime around AD 61, and in **The Acts 2**- Luke is describing for a Roman dignitary named Theophilus, and us, a time when the Apostles were

endued with Power from on High in the Upper Room, and God the Holy Spirit gave Peter the correct interpretation of **Psalm 16:8-11**. So let's read what Luke wrote that Peter said in **The Acts 2:22-36**:

22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know —

23 this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

24 "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

25 "For David says of Him, '*I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN.*

26 '*THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE;*

27 '*BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.*

28 '*YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.*'

29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

30 "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that *GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE,*

31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that *HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.*

32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

34 "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: '*THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,*

35 '*UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.*'"

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified."

But in **1 Corinthians 15:20** we see that Paul said that Christ *has* been raised from the dead, and that means that our faith is *not* in vain.

3. The Apostles Would be Found to be False Witnesses

1 Corinthians 15:15

Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

Now the “we” here in verse 15 does not represent *all* believers everywhere for all time, but rather the Apostles. The Apostles were the very first witnesses of Jesus Christ and they testified that God raised Jesus from the dead in their Epistles.

Around AD 50- Matthew or Levi the tax collector- wrote the Gospel account that bears his name, and in that account, five separate references of the Resurrection are given especially in Chapter 22 which goes into great detail about the events surrounding the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Around that same time, AD 50, the Apostle Peter commissioned a young man named John Mark to write down all that Peter saw and heard concerning Jesus, and he, too, went into great detail about the Resurrection in **The Gospel according to Mark**, especially in chapter 16.

The Apostle Paul commissioned a Gentile physician named Luke to write a third Gospel account around AD 60, and in that account Luke quotes Jesus teaching many aspects of the general resurrection to His disciples, and then Luke also goes into great detail about Jesus’ Resurrection in Chapter 24.

Also, Luke quotes Paul and the others teaching about the Resurrection in his other New Testament Book, **The Acts of the Apostles**, that he wrote about one year after he wrote his Gospel account.

Around AD 56- the Apostle Paul wrote what is probably the greatest letter ever written, the masterpiece of both Theology and Literature, called **The Epistle to the Romans**, and in that Book Paul goes into tremendous detail about the Resurrection and Salvation.

Around AD 64 the Apostle Peter wrote his first Epistle and talked much about the Resurrection of Jesus.

An unknown writer wrote the Epistle to the **Hebrews** around AD 68 and he also discussed the great impact that the Resurrection made on the world.

Finally the Apostle John wrote his Gospel account, his three Epistles, and his prophecy about the last days, and he, too, went into great detail about the Resurrection.

And then we have King David and the prophets Samuel and Isaiah and the others who also wrote in vague terms using signs and symbols and types about the Resurrection many hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. So the theme of the Resurrection is not some obscure theological point, it is central throughout the entire Bible

So what Paul is saying here in **1 Corinthians 15:15** is that if there was no Resurrection, then all those who said that there was a Resurrection are all liars, and the many, many words and paragraphs and chapters that they wrote about the Resurrection are all false and are not trustworthy, and they are unreliable and not worth the paper they are printed on. And since that is the majority of the Bible, then the entire Bible would be a lie and would also be untrustworthy and false.

But because Paul also wrote **1 Corinthians 15:20**, and because Jesus Christ *did* rise from the dead, then the Apostles are found to be true and faithful witnesses, and all that they said and all that they wrote is very reliable and it is a trustworthy testimony about everything pertaining to life and godliness, and not just the Resurrection.

4. You Are Yet in Your Sins

1 Corinthians 15:17

and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

Now we live in a very mystical age today where people teach that as long as you sincerely believe in something, *anything*, that it is your sincerity or your passion about that thing that makes whatever you believe in to be true. And it really doesn't matter what it is that you believe in, it is true as long as you believe in it enough.

And the extension of that false teaching is the root from where we get all sorts of aberrant teachings that we hear all the time like:

- ✓ You may be physically healed, if only you believe enough
- ✓ You can win this football game, if you believe enough
- ✓ You can have that new car or that house or even that new wife, if you believe enough

And so the concept of genuine Biblical faith is now been confiscated and perverted to be defined as some sort of cosmic power that is able to twist God's Will behind His back so that you can get whatever it is your heart lusts after, regardless of whether it is God's Will or not. Just believe and you can have it all.

But that is a perversion of true genuine Biblical faith because God does not want us to simply exercise blind faith in whatever the cat drags in through the front door. The only people who want you to believe what they say without thinking or without analyzing what they are saying and without holding them accountable to Scripture are false teachers who are trying to deceive and manipulate you.

Listen, Divine Truth doesn't mind your examination of it. Truth doesn't fear questions or doubts, because if it something is true, then it can stand up to your questions, and it can withstand all your doubts and all your fears and all your unbelief, and remain true.

The only people who get angry when you ask them questions and who then threaten you with Divine Wrath when you don't understand what they are saying are the people who have no Truth in them anyway.

Even God Almighty said, **“Come let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18)**, and He is the Creator! The Apostle Paul dialogued with people all the time. John Calvin asked and answered questions all week long in preparation for Sunday. And I have gone to great lengths to provide you with quality information from many different sources, and to give you solid exegesis of Scripture in every sermon, and provide a Question and Answer time every month because I want you to think, and I want you to ponder, and I want you to examine and ask, and I want you to listen and learn and believe, and be strong in your faith and not doubting so that this is real to you and not just something that you do on Sunday.

I want you to know what you believe and I want you to know why you believe it so that your faith will not stand in the wisdom of men but in the Power of God.

You see, I believe that Christianity is intelligent, it is very wise to believe, and God has given us ample reason and ample evidence to trust in what He has said and to trust in Who He is. You see, disbelief is not a lack of information. Disbelief is the result of a darkened and blind heart. And that is why God will judge all unbelievers, and why God said in both **Psalms 14:1** and **Psalms 53:1**:

The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God”.

But, true faith, genuine faith, Biblical faith is a gift from God, and a treasure to have because it allows you to learn the simplicity of Jesus Christ and to put your trust in a God Who has earned that trust.

And the God Who has earned my trust has said that if I will confess my sins, He is faithful and just to forgive me of my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. So I trust God, and I trust God because He has proved His faithfulness and has *earned* my trust, and this God that I so fully trust has said that my sins are forgiven, and so I have forever escaped God’s Wrath against my sins because Jesus paid it all.

And my trust *in* God and *for* God is growing every week, because as I ponder God’s Word and as I seek God’s Face, and as I fellowship with others who are pondering God’s Word and seeking His Face, my knowledge of God is growing and as my knowledge of the one true living God grows, my respect for God and my awe of God and my admiration of God grows, and that produces deep and abiding affection and love for God which in turn allows me to trust in Him better and deeper and easier.

So, because Paul wrote **1 Corinthians 15:20**, and Christ *has* been raised, our faith is *not* in vain. And so our faith counts for something, and our faith is real and our faith is sure and our faith is certain. And so we believe that Jesus Christ paid for all our sins and *that* is why we are no longer in our sins.

5. Those Who Have Already Died are Perished

1 Corinthians 15:18

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If Christ has not been raised, then "**those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.**"

Now I have never understood why anybody would ever be attracted to atheism. What does an atheist have to offer you? The thought that everything is accidental and random, and that nothing has any value or purpose at all really doesn't attract me at all. I think that the real value of something is found in how many people struggle to obtain it. For example, people from every nation on earth are willing to get into a row boat and cross the Atlantic Ocean, braving the raging waves, for just a chance to get to America. And that means something because they are *not* doing that to get into China or Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia or Russia or Cuba. So America is infinitely more valuable to those people than all those other nations because they see that what we have is *better* than what they've already got. Now that should *not* make us arrogant, but it *should* make us thank God and to *treasure* what God has done for us, and not seek to tear it up or lose it.

And you can go back through the history of Christianity and you can find hundreds of thousands of people who have suffered and been tortured and who have been thrown into prison and who have been beaten and maimed and persecuted for Jesus Christ and for the sake of the Gospel, and there is a common statement that comes from the lips of every one of those persecuted saints and that is that what they went through was worth it.

Because the measurement of the rightness of your argument is *not* in how many people are willing to live by it, but how many are willing to die for it. The strength of an argument is not in how many are willing to live well by it, but who, by believing in what it teaches, can suffer and die well.

Atheism doesn't offer anyone anything. It is a vacant, vapid, shallow, silly, and useless belief in nothing, which really doesn't take a lot of intelligence to invent. And that is why you never see any atheists on the street corner passing out tracts; they've got nothing to offer anybody. By and large atheism is a religion of very wealthy and very arrogant and very self-righteous and very lazy people who see nothing for which they are willing to devote themselves to, and who have never

suffered and who have not paid any price at all for what they say they believe in. And the one true living God of the Universe calls them "fools".

But you ought to be there when they die. And you ought to read about some of the world's most famous atheists and what they said right before they died. How they scream and would give all that they won for just one more minute in this life. And then you ought to sit by the bed of an utterly unimportant believer and observe the peace and the joy as they slip into God's Presence.

To believe that those who die simply perish is to deny a full 40% of Scripture, and it is to *disbelieve* the very Purpose of Jesus shedding His Blood. But Paul teaches here that since Christ *has* been raised, the dead in Christ have *not* perished.

You see, my friends, it is precisely because this world is *not* our home, and it is precisely because our Treasure is in Heaven, and it is precisely because this time down here now is *not* our best life, that gives us such hope and peace for the next life where we have a home in Glory Land that outshines the sun!

6. The Apostles are the Most Miserable People Who Ever Lived

1 Corinthians 15:19

If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

Now I have heard many people over the years use this statement to try to convince lost people to trust in Jesus. They would say something like:

“If after we die- You find out that the Bible was true- you have lost everything. But if I find out that this whole thing was a myth- then what have I lost? I have lost nothing because I have lived a good life and I was happy.”

And that is probably the dumbest statement I could think of for anyone to say to somebody. Paul would have never made a statement like that. To Paul it was all or nothing. Paul's logic was:

If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

Either the Bible is true or it isn't. Either the Resurrection happened or it didn't. And yet the Bible declares clearly and repeatedly that the Resurrection *did* occur, and that our eternal Salvation depends on it. And so, men like Paul are sent out by Jesus and they stake their entire lives on that Biblical claim. And they are persecuted, and they suffer and they struggle and they fight against the pull of this world precisely because of that claim to clearly and boldly and repeatedly state that Jesus rose from the dead.

And so, if that is a lie, and Jesus is still dead, Paul said, we Apostles, above all the other people on the face of the earth, should be pitied; not *admired* and *not* held in high esteem, but pitied.

But, in verse 20, Paul says that since Christ *has* been raised, the opposite is true and the Apostles are not to be pitied at all, but they are to be envied and admired.

Stating the Negatives in Positive Terms

Now what really made the lights go on for me, and what showed me the Good News that six of my deepest longings were being met here by the Resurrection of Jesus was when I tried to go back and restate each of these six statements in *positive* terms. So far-, we have used negatives: "preaching *not* in vain . . . faith *not* in vain . . . etc." But now we need to see what God has really done for us in raising Jesus from the dead. We see this when we turn all these negatives statements into positives.

So I'm going to switch the order around this time because when the Resurrection starts meeting our needs, there is a kind of pattern that fits our experience. And I want to follow that pattern as we look at each of our longings being satisfied.

1. We Are Forgiven for Our Sins

First, from **1 Corinthians 15:17**, instead of saying negatively that we are *not* still in our sins, we can say positively that because of the Resurrection we are forgiven for our sins.

And I put this first as the basic need and longing of our hearts because if God holds our sins against us, and we all have sinned!, then

there is no hope of anything else from God. The foundation for every other blessing from God is that God won't hold our sins against us. Everything hangs on forgiveness.

How is the Resurrection connected to our forgiveness? Isn't it the Death of Jesus that takes away our sin, because He bore our sins and took our judgment (**1 Corinthians 15:3**)? Yes. But the connection with the Resurrection is very important. **Romans 4:25** puts it like this:

He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

So, this means that by His Death, Jesus paid the penalty for all of our sins and purchased our acquittal and our justification and our forgiveness, forever! And since the achievement of the Cross was so complete and the Work of our Justification so decisive, God raised Jesus from the dead to validate our forgiveness and to vindicate his Son's Righteousness and to celebrate the Work of Justification!

Everybody in this room this morning needs forgiveness, that is the great equalizer of all humans, no matter how rich or how poor, or how educated or how uneducated you might be, we are all sinners who deserve God's Wrath and are in need of the forgiveness of sin.

And deep inside, even when we don't want to think about it, we long for that forgiveness. We long to be accepted by God. And we fear the alienation that our guilt brings. That is the single biggest reason why people run away from God; they know they are guilty, and they are afraid of God and His Judgment.

But Paul says, because Christ rose from the dead, we are no longer in our sins. And this is the first and most basic longing of our hearts. So just how much is eternal forgiveness worth? How priceless is it that we can be forgiven by the One Who is determined to Judge us? That forgiveness was appropriated and made real by and through, not only Christ's Death, but also His Resurrection.

2. Our Faith Is Well-Founded

Second, from **1 Corinthians 15:14**, instead of saying *negatively* that our faith is *not* in vain, we can say *positively* that because of the Resurrection, our faith is well-founded. Or, to put it more personally,

because of the bodily Resurrection of Jesus there is Someone we can trust, absolutely.

You see, dear friends, I believe that deep in the heart of every person is a longing for someone that you can count on through thick and thin. Someone who is absolutely trustworthy. Someone who, if you put your faith in Him, it won't be in vain. He won't let you down. He will always be there. And we long for this because we were made for it. God put man and woman in the Garden of Eden to glorify God by trusting Him for everything they needed.

And that need has never changed, in spite of our fallen condition. And now that we are saved and are no longer in our sins, this longing, too, is satisfied by the Resurrection of Jesus. The Death of Jesus proves His Love for us, and the Resurrection proves His Power over every enemy of life. And so, there *is* Someone we can count on. There is Someone Who is absolutely trustworthy, and there is Someone Who will never let you down. Jesus is alive to be trusted. Paul said in **Galatians 2:20**:

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

3. The Apostles Preach What Is True

Third, from **1 Corinthians 15:5**, instead of saying *negatively* that the Apostles are *not* false witnesses about the Work of God, we can now say *positively* that because of the Resurrection, the Apostles preach what is absolutely and categorically true. They are *not* false witnesses about God. They are reliable and trustworthy witnesses, and what they wrote in sacred Scripture is trustworthy and reliable as well.

Our young people are being taught today that there is no Absolute Truth; that there is nothing out there that has *always* been true and that always *will be* true, even if people don't like it or know it. Our children have grown up to believe that everything is relative.

But we must understand that it takes no courage to do what everybody else is doing, or to say what is popular, or to go along so that you will fit in with the crowd and everybody will think well of you; that takes no courage at all. But it *does* take courage to publicly agree with

the Divine Absolute Truth of Scripture and not be ashamed of it, *especially* when everyone around you *disagrees* with you. That *does* take courage.

It is a rare teenager today who has the courage and the independence to say, for example, in a high school health class that premarital sex is wrong, that it is sinful and destructive for *everybody*, not just those who *think* it's wrong. Or to say that Homosexual activity is sinful and destructive, and it is sinful for *everybody*, and not just those who *think* it's wrong. It takes courage for a psychology student to speak up and say that what the text book says about Christianity is wrong.

You see, without the conviction that there are "Moral Absolutes" that can be shared and taught and learned and made the basis for Society, the only end will be anarchy where everyone does what is right in his own eyes. Therefore, the need for unchanging, Absolute Truth is a deep need of the human soul and human society, *especially* when it is unpopular. And Jesus came into the world to boldly say,

John 14:6

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

And then God raised Him from the dead to *validate* that amazing and very restrictive Claim.

You see, Jesus has the right to tell us what is Absolutely True because in the Resurrection, God proclaimed Jesus to be Absolutely True.

4/5. We Are to Be Envied

Fourth and fifth, from **1 Corinthians 15:19**, instead of saying *negatively* that we are *not* to be pitied, we can now say *positively* that because of the Resurrection, we, who are saved, are to actually be envied. Our preaching is *not* in vain—it is full, meaningful, valid, valuable, and significant.

If Christ is not raised, then living for Him and doing what He says, and following His Will and trusting in His Promises is a great

delusion. And if we are deluded, then Paul said that we should be pitied like insane people who live by hallucinations.

But since Christ *has* been raised and is alive and reigns as King forever, then *all* of our obedience and *all* of our love and *all* of our self-denial is not just not-to-be-pitied, but it is positively enviable. **2**

Corinthians 4:17 says:

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

And there is in every one of us the longing that our lives be well spent, that our lives count for something, that it has significance and usefulness, and that we don't come to the end of our days and say it was all in vain, empty, pointless, useless, insignificant—pitiabile.

And Paul knows this. And so that's why he ends this whole chapter on the Resurrection (v. 58) with these Words:

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.

Not in vain! That's the longing of our lives! O Lord let not my life and the air I breathe and the days I live be misspent! Let me not come to my grave and say, "*I've wasted it!*" Do not waste your life! Let me tell you that the experts are wrong and life is not good simply because life is long. No! Life is good because it is deep and wide, and that God allows us to experience the full range of what God has for us in this life. And so I will tell you that the valleys of deep despair along with the mountain tops of indescribable victory all work together to produce in us a humility and a brokenness where we may know and love and enjoy God, and where we can tremble at His Word.

So the Apostle Paul tells us here that however long God may allow you to live, and however much money God may allow you to make, and however many friends you may have, and how many experiences you may go through, your life will be a complete waste of time without Jesus being raised from the dead.

But because Christ *has* risen our lives don't have to be a waste. So because Christ is risen and only because Christ has risen, *everything*

done in His Name, by His Strength, and for His Glory, is *not* in vain. In fact, it is *enviable* and *significant* and *valuable* and *eternal!*

6. Those Who Have Fallen Asleep Are Alive

And finally, there is the longing that we shall live forever in the fullness of Joy; that we not come to an empty end after a full and valuable life. That we not become a zero, or even much worse, that we not end our lives damned in hell forever.

And so Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:18** that because Christ *is* raised then those who have fallen asleep in Him, those who have died in faith, have *not* perished. Or positively, they are alive! They will live forever! And they live the way Christ lives. And they will enter into the Joy of their Master.

The Greatest News in All the World

So the greatest news in all the world is that God and His Son are glorified *in* us and *by* us and *through* us when we truly and genuinely delight ourselves in God, when serving God and obeying His Word, and denying the lusts of our flesh is the honestly joy and the pleasure and the satisfaction of our lives. And to make that true for us. God raised His Son Jesus from the dead to reign forevermore.

And in raising Jesus from the dead, God gave us eternal forgiveness, and glorified Jesus as the all-sufficient Forgiver, and He gave us a Friend to count on, and He glorified Jesus as being utterly reliable, and He gave us guidance and unchanging Truth, and glorified Jesus as the Foundation for Absolute Truth and Absolute Righteousness, and He gave us a life that is *not* pitiable, but *enviable*, He gave us a ministry that is *not* in vain, but that is fruitful, and He glorified Jesus as the Source and Goal of all life and all ministry, and God gave us everlasting Joy that will never end, not even by our deaths, and He glorified Jesus as the very Author of Life, the Victor over death, and the First Fruit of those who have fallen asleep.

Therefore, I urge you with all my heart this morning to lift up your heart and say with the choirs on earth and in heaven:

The Revelation 5:12

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.