

# Six Gifts of the Resurrection

## A Celebration of the Risen Christ

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March 27, 2016; April 4, 2021

### **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 what I meant by saying that we should love God for Who He is and *not* simply for what He gives us. And I told the lady,

*"It's like a 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, that you understand that I don't play down God's Efforts to satisfy my Longings. Because I don't see any Conflict between a God, Who lives to glorify His Own Worth- and a God, Who lives to satisfy my own*

*heart's desire. And so, I told her- The very Essence of my Theology and the Heartbeat of my Ministry is this sentence:*

The best way for me to glorify God- is by  
truly delighting in Him.

*Because when a person genuinely delights themselves in Jesus- then whatever Jesus demands of that person is no longer a Burden. It is not a Problem and it's really not even a Sacrifice. When I learn to find the fullness of my own Joy in God being glorified- then obeying God- actually becomes a Joy; and a Privilege; and a Blessing; and an Honor. You see, human beings don't mind doing what pleases them. And if we are truly saved- then making much of Jesus- is what pleases us. And that is how serving; and obeying; and following after Jesus- becomes the very Source of my own Joy.*

Now you may think I was just being silly with that Woman. But about 1700 years ago- one of the smartest people, who- ever walked this earth- a guy named, Augustine said,

*“Love God and do what you please”*

Now over the Centuries- many people have taken that Statement as an excuse to sin; or as 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 Pleasures 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 you love God and the Ways of God.

So, to the man who has truly experienced the Miracle of the New Birth- 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. And that's not something he does for a few hours on Sunday- but something that is the Foundation of his entire life; the Fountain of his deepest Loves, Wants, and Desires; and the very Source of his Joy and 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 radical “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 from **1Corinthians 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 he is putting 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 we would see the risen and living Jesus as the *Answer* and the *Solution* to those Longings. And in doing that- we all will *genuinely* delight ourselves in Jesus Christ. And in turn- Jesus will be glorified.

Now I didn't make up these Longings or get them from any extra- biblical book. They come straight out of the Passage that our dear brother Reese 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 **1Corinthians 15:12-19**- the Apostle Paul says there are six things that would be in utter shambles if Christ had not risen from the dead.

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

Now all six of these six things would be true if Jesus had *not physically* and *literally* and *bodily* risen from the dead. And this is serious stuff- 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 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, 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 Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ- precisely because *their* Preaching has *nothing* to do with the Bible; or with Christianity; 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 a Sermon or a Teaching to be true. So, if you can believe something; and trust in 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 have a dead and a risen Christ- in order to be true. And those Teachings that do *not* require that Jesus be sinless; and murdered; and for Him to 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 and glorifying Man- doesn't need Jesus to die; and it certainly doesn't need Jesus to rise again.

But biblical Christianity *requires* that a sinless Lamb be slain; and His spotless Blood be shed. But it also *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**

**1Corinthians 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 Teaching of the Apostles all be in vain without the Resurrection of Jesus- but even more importantly- if Jesus did not rise from the dead- the Bible says right here that 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 Repentance for teaching contrary to inspired Scripture. And if they repent- wonderful. But if they don't- they should be condemned- *personally*- as a false Teacher; 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 to be saved- is to "accept Jesus into their hearts". 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 they are referring to what the Apostle Paul said in **Romans 10:10a**

**for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness ...**

... and I agree with that.

But, because we are living in a time of great Compromise- we have to acknowledge that according to **Romans 10:9** that we just read- it is *not* enough to simply "accept Jesus into our hearts". 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- in other words, we have to *truly* believe- that what the Bible teaches about the physical, literal, and bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is true. 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 first 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 physically died on the Cross.

But even if we believed all of that- we would still not be trusting in the real Jesus- unless we also believed in the Jesus, Who was physically, 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. And you have to believe it is true and then you put all your Hope and all 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 the multitudes; and not simply the Savior Who died and shed His Blood. We have to put our Trust in the Savior, Who lived a Sinless life; and Who died a substitutionary Death on the Cross; 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 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, Signs, 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.

It wasn't until Peter preached the first Christian Sermon on the balcony of that Upper Room and included what David wrote in **Psalm 16**- that anyone understood what David meant. So, please turn with me to **The Acts 2:22-32**.

Now 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 it was then that God the Holy Spirit gave Peter the correct interpretation of **Psalm 16:8-11**. So, let's read what Dr. Luke wrote that Peter said in **The Acts 2:22-32**:

**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.**

But in **1Corinthians 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**

#### **1Corinthians 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 Writings. For example:

- Around AD 50- Matthew or Levi the tax collector- wrote the Gospel Account that bears his name. And in that Account- 5 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, Isaiah, and the others- who also wrote in vague terms in the Old Testament- using signs and symbols and types about the Resurrection- many hundreds of years before Jesus was even born.

So, the Issue of the Resurrection is not some obscure theological point. It is a central Theme throughout the entire Bible.

So, what Paul is saying here in **1Corinthians 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 comprises the majority of the entire Bible- then the whole Bible would be a Lie and completely Untrustworthy- about ANY Issue.

But because Paul also wrote **1Corinthians 15:20** that says that Jesus *did* rise from the dead- then the Apostles are found to be true and faithful witnesses. And that means that all they said; and all they wrote- is a reliable and trustworthy Testimony about EVERYTHING pertaining to a Life of Godliness- and *not* simply the Resurrection.

#### **4. You Are Yet in Your Sins**

##### **1Corinthians 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*- then your sincerity or your passion about that thing- makes whatever you believe in- to be true. And to those people- it really doesn't matter what it is that you believe in. It is true and it will come to pass- 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 has been *confiscated* and *perverted* to be defined as some sort of “cosmic power” that is able to twist God’s Arm behind His back- so that you can get *whatever* your heart lusts after- *regardless* of whether it is God’s Will or not. Just believe and you can have it all. And God’s Will is irrelevant.

But the Bible doesn’t teach that. Never has; never will. When the Bible talks about Faith- there is only one Object of that Faith- the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is NEVER used in the Bible to acquire Wealth or material Goods. In the Bible- Faith is always used so that lost people will be saved; and for saved people to become more godly.

And God desires that we have Faith- so we may believe and not doubt God or what God has said. Yet because we are fallen- we don’t already possess the Faith we need to be saved. So, we must be graciously *given* or *granted* the “Gift of Faith”. And God has gone to great lengths to give us this Gift of Faith. And He bears long with us as we struggle to believe. And that is because God is gracious and merciful and infinitely more willing to redeem us than He is to condemn us.

False Teachers, on the other hand, have no patience with anyone who doubts. They are quick to condemn and ridicule anyone who they sense don’t believe the way they teach. So, for example, if you are sick and not healed; or if you are suffering and are not delivered- it is the false Teachers who say you simply didn’t have enough Faith.

Another aspect of false Teachers is they can’t stand to be questioned about anything or held to account. They honestly believe they have risen above any Accountability; and that no one has the right to question anything they teach. They have spoken- and it is up to you to accept what they say- without hesitation or question. And they act like this- NOT because of the truthfulness of what they teach- but simply because of who they think they have become.

Yet nowhere in the Bible does it say that we are to accept 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.

So, here is a Test to always remember. Divine Truth doesn't mind your examination of it. Truth doesn't fear your questions; or your doubts; or your analysis. Because if God said it- it will stand any test that is thrown against it. If

something is true- it is ALWAYS true and it will always be true. So, Truth can withstand anything that tests it.

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 to provide a “Question and Answer” time every month. Why? Because I *want* you to think. I want you to ponder; and I want you to examine and ask questions- so you may learn.

Dear friends, you need to know that this is not a hobby with me. I am deadly serious about what I’m doing here in this Church. And I am working as hard as I know how- to equip you for two things:

1. I want you to know what you believe
2. I want you to know why you believe it

... so that your faith will not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the Power of God (**1Corinthians 2:5**).

You see, I believe that Christianity is intelligent. Christianity is NOT about “blind faith”. The only people who promote “blind faith”- are the Cults. Christianity is about Truth; and Historical Events that really happened. Christianity is about real people; who did real things for God. And Christianity is about a real God- Who is really a Sovereign King; and Who really intends to bless believers with unspeakable Joy; and Who really intends to damn unrepentant rebels with horrific Punishment.

And that means it is very wise to have Faith and to believe. It is smart to trust in a God, Who can’t lie. Yet God does NOT expect you to believe for nothing. And so, God has gone to great lengths to give us ample Reason and ample Evidence to trust in Who He is; and in what He alone has done.

You see, the Bible teaches that Disbelief is NOT about a lack of information. Disbelief is the result of a darkened and hard heart. And that is why God will judge all unbelievers and why God said in both **Psalm 14:1** and **Psalm 53:1**:

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

So, *true* Faith; *genuine* Faith; *biblical* Faith is a Gift from God. And Faith is a Treasure to have- because it allows you to learn the *simplicity* of Jesus Christ; and to put your Hope and Trust in a God Who has *earned* your Trust.

For example, the God, Who has earned my Trust said that if I will confess my Sins- He is Faithful and Just to forgive my Sins; and to cleanse me from all Unrighteousness (**1John 1:9**). So, Faith *empowers* me to believe that God is NOT a liar; and that what He said about my Sins- is true.

But Faith also *empowers* me to go ahead and actually DO what He said to do- so I may receive what He said I would receive. And so, *in* Faith- *by* Faith- and *through* Faith- I go ahead and confess my Sins. And I confess them *openly*- out loud. And I do what others in the Bible did: I name my Sins and describe them- in all their hideous detail. And most of the time- I confess my Sins only to God. But there are other times when I obey **James 5:16**; and I swallow my Pride; and I confess my Sins to my brothers and sisters.

And then Faith gives me the Hope that because I did that- in, by, and through Faith- that God will now do what He said He will do- and forgive me; and cleanse me from ALL Unrighteousness (**1John 1:9**).

Now there are times when my moment of Confession is very sweet and beautiful. And I feel God's Presence; and I feel His merciful Hand upon me to give me Courage and Hope that He is with me; and has forgiven and cleansed me. And I cherish those times.

But there are other occasions when I feel nothing. And that really used to bother me. But I have learned that me feeling God's Presence or not- has NOTHING to do with the truthfulness of His Word. And so, Faith leads me on- to Hope and Trust that what God has said is true- *regardless* of whether I feel something or not.

But there is yet another part of Faith that we need to know. Because you see, my Faith- my ability and desire to trust *in* God and in what He has infallibly spoken in Scripture- is growing stronger every week. So, 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- I am growing in both Grace and the Knowledge of Jesus Christ (**2Peter 3:18**).

And as my Knowledge of the one, true, living God and His Grace grows- my Respect for God; and my Awe of God; and my Admiration of God also grows. And as those three Aspects get stronger- they produce a deep and abiding Affection and Love for God in me. And that Love produces in me- a Desire to please Jesus; and to obey Jesus; and to be near to Jesus- which in turn, allows me to trust in Him better and deeper and easier.

Now I said all that about Faith- because Paul wrote in **1Corinthians 15:20-** that Christ *has* been raised from the dead- and therefore- our Faith is *not* in vain. And that means that our Faith counts for something. And so, our Faith is real; and it is sure; and it is certain. And that is why I can believe that Jesus Christ paid for all my Sins; and why I am no longer in my Sins.

## **5. Those Who Have Already Died are Perished**

### **1Corinthians 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 anybody? The notion that everything is accidental and random; and that nothing has any Meaning or Purpose at all- is not attractive to me. And so, I have to wonder about the mental condition of anyone who is proud that they don't believe in anything; and who think their life is random, accidental and therefore, unimportant.

Because you see, 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 and sharks and starvation- just for a chance to get to America. And that means something- because they are certainly NOT going to that length to get into China or Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia or Russia or Cuba. So, those people are testifying loud and clear that America is infinitely more valuable than all those other nations. Now that should *not* make us arrogant. But it *should* make us thank God. And it should make us *treasure* and *value* and *appreciate* what God has done for us in this Country- 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 (millions?) who have suffered; and who have 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: They all said- it was worth it!

You see, 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 because of it- but who, by believing in what it teaches, are willing to suffer and die because of it.

And 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; very arrogant; very Self- righteous; and very lazy people- who see nothing more important than themselves for which they are willing to devote their time and energy and money. They have never known anything for which they are willing to suffer. And they have never paid a price for what they say they believe in. And that makes those people to be poor and tragic and very sad people. 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 in terror and how they are willing to give all that they own- for just one more minute in this life. Because this life- is all they have.

But then you ought to sit by the bed of an utterly unimportant believer and observe the Peace and the Joy and the Beauty 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 for why Jesus shed His Blood. But it is to also reject the Reason God raised Jesus from the dead. Because 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 because our Treasure is in Heaven; and because this time down here is *NOT* our “best life now”- that gives us such Hope and Peace for the next Life- over there- where we have a Home in Glory Land that outshines the Sun!

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

### **1Corinthians 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 with all due respect to people, who have said that- that is probably the dumbest and the most unbiblical Statement anyone could say. Paul would have never made a Statement like that. Because to Paul- Christianity was “all or nothing”. And here is Paul’s logic:

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

So, 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 the Biblical claims. 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 **1Corinthians 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 we have in God- hangs on Forgiveness.

But 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 on the Cross (**1Corinthians 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 He literally purchased our Acquittal and our Justification and our Forgiveness- forever! And since that 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- because Sin is 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. And 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 that 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? So, we must know that Forgiveness was appropriated and it was made Real- by and through- not only Christ's Death- but also His Resurrection.

## **2. Our Faith Is Well-Founded**

Second, from **1Corinthians 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 *ever* 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- that Longing is satisfied by the Resurrection of Jesus. The Death of Jesus proves God's Love for us. And the Resurrection proves God's Power over every enemy of Life. And so, there really *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 **1Corinthians 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. It doesn't take any strength 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's easy. And it takes no Courage at all. But it *does* take Courage and Strength 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, “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, “What the text book says about what is wrong with people and how to fix them- is incorrect- and the Bible is infinitely better suited to help people than Psychology.” That *does* take Courage.

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 so, 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 narrow Statement.

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 **1Corinthians 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 because He 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 to be pitied- it is positively enviable! **2Corinthians 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, “*My life was all in vain; it was empty, pointless, useless, insignificant and pitiable.*”

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

### **1Corinthians 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!'*” So, I beg all of you- Don't waste your life! Let me tell you that the experts are wrong. And this Life is not Good simply because Life is long. No! Life is Good because it is deep and wide; and because God allows us to experience the full range of all that God has for 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 and an invincible Spirit- 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 us to live; and *however* much money God may allow us to have; and *however* many friends we may have; and *however* many experiences we may go through- our lives will be a complete waste of time- unless Jesus has been 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 **1Corinthians 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! And 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 the 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 forever!

And in raising Jesus from the Dead- God gave us eternal Forgiveness! And God glorified Jesus as the all-sufficient Forgiver! And God gave us a Friend to count on. And He glorified Jesus as being utterly reliable. And He gave us guidance and unchanging Truth. And God 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 God 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.