

1 Corinthians 15:1-20 (Teaching)

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- [0 : 0 0] Morning. I'm going to take a little break from the Gospel of John this morning. And talk a little bit about resurrection.
- I'm normally not one to stick with holidays, I guess as a theme. But I felt like we could and we should do this this morning.
- So I don't know how much teaching we'll do, how much talking about it that we'll do. But if you all flip with me to 1 Corinthians in the 15th chapter, one of my four favorite chapters in all of Scripture.
- John 14, Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15 and Galatians 3 are my four favorite chapters. Paul, in the beginning of his letter, this letter to the Corinthian church, Paul kind of begins with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians in chapter one.
- This is where we find the often quoted verse. It says, the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us they're saved. It's the power of God.
- [1 : 2 0] So he begins this letter talking about the crucifixion and he continues with that talking about the crucifixion. And then of course he graduates on into other things that the Corinthian church themselves were going through.
- But the crucifixion of Christ is what begins the letter. And then we get towards the end of the letter. There's only 16 chapters in 1 Corinthians and in the 15th chapter we see Paul talking about the resurrection.
- I don't think that that's accidental, I don't think it's coincidental that the first several chapters were about the crucifixion and things pertaining there.
- Then we get to the resurrection toward the end because Paul has told them about the crucifixion. These people remember he was writing to a group of believers. They were called a church.
- He was writing to the church in Corinth. And so they had heard the gospel, which is we'll read here in just a little while, in a nutshell the death of the burial, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- [2 : 2 4] And you all have heard me say there's a lot more to the gospel than that. But they had heard about these things and they had believed them. So they were believers in Jesus Christ.
- And Paul was writing to them. But here evidently some folks have come into the church that did not believe in the resurrection. Now whether they were Sadducees, whether they had been convinced by Sadducees, whatever the case was, even some of the Gnostics had this belief at that time.
- Folks it's no different now. You go from, even helping from one Baptist church to another Baptist church, you'll find some different beliefs as far as Scripture goes.
- Not everyone believes exactly the same, but we must believe in some core things. We must believe, first of all, that this book is true. We have to believe that, that every bit of it's true.

We have to believe in a virgin birth. We have to believe in a perfect sinless life of Jesus Christ. We must believe in the death. We must believe in the resurrection. We must believe in the ascension and in the coming again as Jesus Christ has judged over all the world.

[3 : 34] These are core things that we must believe, but folks the resurrection of Jesus Christ is paramount. It is paramount to Christian belief because we could have the death without the resurrection, but where would that leave us?

It leave us without hope. Paul writes about that here in 1st Corinthians 15. It would leave us completely without hope, and there are people out there right now in sects of so-called Christianity that do not believe in the bodily, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And they will fall back on the Scriptures that say, well, the Bible says without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. And it does say that, and I believe that. Jesus Christ died for us.

Jesus Christ died for our sins. He shed His blood for us. But if there had been no resurrection of Christ, Christ wouldn't have been who He said He was.

He would not have been God. He couldn't have been God. And we would be sitting here this morning wasting our time in church had Christ not risen from the grave.

[4 : 49] I praise God for the birth of Jesus Christ which we celebrate at Christmas time because without the birth there could have been no death. And without the death there could have been no resurrection. And with no resurrection, you and I would be hopeless, hopeless without a resurrected Savior.

If He was still a dead Savior, folks, it would have done us no good. 1 Corinthians 15, I'm going to start reading in verse 9. We're going to go through several verses here and we'll back up to the beginning of the chapter here in just a little bit.

So 1 Corinthians 9, Paul writes, for I am the least of the apostles that I am not meat to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

Paul here calling himself the least of the apostles. Paul really being the only apostle that did not begin with Jesus at the very beginning of his ministry.

Christ, we all know the account in the book of Acts that Christ called Paul out and called him into ministry, called him into salvation on the road to Damascus.

[5 : 53] But Paul did not spend the time with Jesus Christ as the 12 did, or as it had been reduced after the crucifixion to the 11 because Judas Iscariot killed himself.

But Paul did not spend those first years with Christ. He is the only true apostle that did not do that. But he calls himself the least of the apostles that I am not meat to be called an apostle because he tells why, because I persecuted the church of God.

Even though Paul had been forgiven by God for his sin of persecuting the church, it still weighed on Paul. I am not saying that he dwelt on it.

I am not saying that he just carried it around all loathsome and woeful or anything along those lines and none of us should do that with our sin. If our sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ, they are cast into the sea of forgetfulness, they are cast as far as the east is from the west.

God remembers those sins no more. They don't matter how bad you've been, how wicked you've been, or how evil you've been, who you've been with, or what you did while you were with them.

[7 : 07] God has forgotten about those sins, and we are the ones that hang on to him. And Paul gives evidence here that he did the exact same thing.

Paul is acting no different than what I do. I think on past sins, I think of stuff I did when I was 20 years old, and I was denying God and denying the Bible. And even further back in that, on into my 10 years, and on up into my 20s, I think of some of the ungodly things that I've done, and sometimes it pops in my head that God really forgave that.

Yes, he forgave that, but it still dwells on me. God erases the sin. He might not erase the sin from our memory, but he erases the sin, and prays God that it's the sin that he erases, and not my memory.

Because then what appreciation would I have for Jesus Christ? What appreciation would I have for God forgiving my sin if I couldn't remember what he had delivered me from?

But Paul here has the same struggle that you and I have. He's remembering his sin of persecuting the church, verse 10, but by the grace of God, I am what I am.

[8 : 14] And every one of us can say that. It is by the grace of God that we are what we are. What are we? We're heirs to God, and we're joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

We are born again children of God. We have been cloaked and covered in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are children of the Most High God.

We are servants to the master of this universe. That's what we are, but it is by the grace of God that we are those things.

And it is only by the grace of God because you didn't deserve it, nor do I deserve the grace of God. We don't deserve salvation. We don't deserve redemption.

We didn't deserve to be reconciled to God, but Christ made it possible that these things could take place, that we could be reconciled. It's by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

[9 : 19] And His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain. Folks, the grace that God has bestowed on each one of us sitting here in this sanctuary this morning, and each person in the world over, the grace of God has been bestowed on us is not in vain.

It is not in vain. Christ gives us His grace. We have the grace of God for a purpose, and it is not just so we can sit on a churchhouse pew, and it is not so that we can, you know, once in a while go to church, or once in a while proclaim the goodness of God, or once in a while spit or utter out a prayer of some kind, the grace of God is given unto us to glorify God, and to uplift the name of Jesus Christ and everyone that has been redeemed back to God by the blood of Jesus Christ.

We have this grace and He has given it to us for a purpose, and that is to bring Him glory. So if we are bringing God glory with our lives, it is not in vain that God has given us that grace.

It is not in vain. God did not die in vain for me, and if you are here born again, He did not die in vain for you. He died with a purpose, and that was to glorify the Father.

But the grace of God, or I am sorry, but I labored more abundantly than they all. It almost sounds like Paul is bragging there, don't it? That is not what he is getting at at all. He is not saying, I labored more than they did.

[10 : 48] He is not saying I should get more backpats, or I deserve better or more pay, or anything along those lines. But I labored more abundantly than they all, talking about the other apostles, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Paul is saying I labored more abundantly than they all. Paul put up with more things than the other apostles did. Paul put up with more persecution from more people.

I mean, I understand that the original apostles, all but John, were martyred, and martyred them, was attempted on the apostle John, didn't quite go over.

When he was dipped in boiling oil, it didn't kill him. But all the original twelve, save Judas Iscariot, were martyred. I understand that, and I am sure they suffered some persecution, but not to the extent that Paul did.

Paul, when he says I labored more abundantly than they all, and then he goes on to say, but the grace of God, not I, but the grace of God which was with me, he is saying I couldn't have done what I did without the grace of God.

[12 : 02] Jesus Christ says himself in the Gospel of John, that without me you can do nothing. And what Paul is saying here, when he says yet not I, but the grace of God was with me, all the labor that I poured into the ministry, all the suffering that I have done, all the preaching that I have done, all the witnessing that I have done, it is the grace of God that has allowed me to do these things.

And folks, it's no different with us. It is the grace of God which allows us to do that. And when the grace of God comes into our life and salvation comes into our lives, we should have a want within us to labor for God and to serve God and to glorify God and to magnify the name of Jesus Christ.

And it is only by the grace of God that we have that type of desire because I can promise you when I was lost, that was the last thing on my mind was uplifting the name of Jesus Christ.

But when the grace of God moves in, we should have that desire. Verse 11, therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed, so we preach, and so ye believed.

What were they preaching? They were preaching, and we'll go back and read it here in just a little while, they were preaching the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But he's saying here that he was the least of the apostles.

[13 : 30] He's saying whether they preached it, whether I preached it, regardless of who preached it, he says, therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

What did they believe? They believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And to be saved, we must come in faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we must come in repentance.

And if we have true faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, true saving faith, that will drive us to repentance because the gospel will shine its light in our lives and in the darkest, deepest crevices of our heart and show us our need for repentance.

So he says whether they or whether I were they, so we preach, and so ye believed. You believe the gospel. Verse 12, now if Cross be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some of you that there is no resurrection of the dead.

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also in vain.

[14 : 39] So Paul just said whether I or they, so we preached, and so ye believed. Then he says now if Cross be preached that he rose from the dead. And I'm positive that's how Paul preached it to the Corinthians, and that's how anybody else would have preached it to the Corinthians in order for them to believe and actually become a body of believers.

Now if Cross be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead. These are the type of people that come and say I've had a special revelation from God.

Only God, or I'm the only person on planet earth that God has showed this to me. Me and God are this type. That's the type of people that say these kinds of things.

And we must be careful of those types of things. Verse 13, but if there be no resurrection of the dead, he just has to question how is it that there are some of you that say there is no resurrection.

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And as I said in the introduction of this, if you want to call it that, if Christ is not risen folks, we are hopeless.

[15 : 47] We are hopeless. And that's what Paul is getting at here in this section of the letter to the Corinthians. But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.

If the dead cannot rise, then Christ could not have rose from the dead. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain. And your faith is also in vain.

Paul says everything that I've told you is in vain if Christ isn't risen from the grave. If he isn't risen from the dead, and not only is my preaching in vain, as I said earlier, we might as well all just go home to the house if Christ is not risen.

Because not only is the preaching in vain, but our faith in Jesus Christ is in vain if he is not risen. And that's a big if he is not risen.

Verse 15, yay, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ whom he raised not up if so be that the dead rise not.

[16 : 51] Paul here is saying we're liars if Christ is not risen from the grave, because we are attributing a power unto God to raise up the dead that he has not exercised.

And if he has not exercised it, then God must not have this power. Folks, too many times throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus said, I must be killed, but I will rise again.

I will raise again. He said, you tear down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. And he taught this to the disciples and others over and over. He said, unless the seed is sown, it's useless.

The seed must be sown into the ground in order for it to bring forth fruit, in order for it to bring forth life. Jesus painted word pictures for his disciples and told them plainly, I must be handed over into the hands of sinful man and be crucified, but on the third day I will rise again.

And Paul here is saying, if this isn't the case, then we're all liars. Again, he said, yea, and we are found false witnesses of God.

[18 : 00] Folks, if God does not have power to raise Christ from the dead, what power does he have? He did have power to do that.

He does have power to do that. The Bible testifies that it was God the Father, it was God the Son, and it was God the Holy Spirit. All of them had their parts in raising Christ from the dead.

If God does not have that power, he has no power. But I serve a God with all power. I serve a God that has power to raise from the dead. I serve a God that has power to heal.

I serve a power that has the power to turn night into day. You might say, well, Svintra, that's done by a natural course of events. It's a natural course of events that was set in motion by my all-powerful God.

If he didn't want day to turn into night or night to turn into day, it wouldn't happen. If he has no power to raise from the dead, my God's powerless, but he's not.

[18 : 59] He's not. Yea, we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up if so be that the dead rise not. Verse 16, for if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised, and if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain.

You are yet in your sins. Folks, this is why we would be hopeless without the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because even though he died and even though his blood washes away sin, the Bible plainly states here, if he had not risen from the dead, we would still be yet in our sins.

How can that be? How can that be if it says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission? If it talks about when Jesus said, this is the blood of the new covenant, He said, I lay down my life as a ransom for many, all these things, and laying down the life and the shedding of blood.

Why wasn't that enough? That was enough to cover sin. That was enough to wash away sin. But without the resurrection, Christ would not have been Christ.

Without the resurrection, Christ would have been a liar, and he would have made all of us liars in believing in a possible resurrection because Christ testified of the resurrection himself.

[20 : 18] And if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain. You are yet in your sins. Then they also, which are falling asleep in Christ, are perished. So he's sitting here telling these Corinthians, and I'm sure this was part of the letters that they have been writing unto Paul, questioning what happened to our kinfolk, what happened to mom and dad that died with faith in Christ.

Will I ever see them again? Will I worship with them in heaven? What are the cases? But he's telling them, not only is your faith in vain, but their faith was in vain.

You'll never see your loved ones again. You won't commune with them in heaven. You won't worship God in heaven because there's not a risen Christ. If there's not a Savior, if Christ did not rise from the grave, these are the points that Paul is making through all of this, that Christ is risen, that he is risen, but he's given them scenarios.

What if he's not risen? Then all of this would be in vain, and we would be without hope. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

What a true statement this is. If it is only in this life, this physical life that we have now that we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

[21 : 33] Folks, my hope in Jesus Christ, it began in this life 15 years ago. It began in this life when God saved my unworthy soul, but that hope continues on into eternity.

My hope is in an eternal God. My hope is in an eternal Savior. He is risen to not die anymore. We have three other resurrection accounts within the Gospels.

We have the, we have Jeres's daughter, and we have the widow of Nain. We have her son, and we have the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, but all of them were raised back to life just to die again, but Christ has not died again, nor will he die again.

I serve an ever-resurrected Savior, an eternally-resurrected Savior. Anyway, so it is not in this life only that we have hope in Christ.

It continues on into the life to come. Verse 20, but now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

[22 : 39] Now is Christ risen from the dead. So he's gone over these little different scenarios of what it would be like if Christ had not raised from the dead, but he confirms to them here, but now is Christ risen from the, from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

And that's where the previous verse about Jesus Christ being hope on into eternity. That's where that falls in. It's not an accident that verse 20 followed 19 or what was said in verse 20 followed verse 19.

Christ is the firstfruits. What are the firstfruits? One, they're what was brought to God and thanks to God. But secondly, they were the guarantee of the harvest that was to come.

Christ is now raised from the dead and he being the firstfruits. He went home to the Father and one of these days he's going to present the rest of the body.

He's going to present his bride to the Father. That is the harvest that is yet to come. It's been slowly going. As Christians die one by one throughout the ages, it's been slowly building there.

[23 : 54] But folks, there's going to be a, the hymn says a glad reunion day one day. There's going to be a coronation day one day that I read about in the book of Revelation.

There's going to, there's going to be a feast where all the saints are there. Everyone who has believed in Jesus Christ and has been saved and has been redeemed by His blood and has been vindicated by His resurrection, we will all be partaking in that Christ is now risen and He was the firstfruits.

He was the firstfruits of them that slept or them that will sleep. If a saint dies today, they'll be asleep, but they'll be asleep in Christ to be resurrected again one day.

So Paul is going through these scenarios. In verse 20, he says, but now is Christ risen from the dead. Let's go back to verse one real quick in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received and wherein you stand, by which also you are saved. We must keep that in the very forefront of our mind that the gospel at some point in our life was preached, some called men of God preached the gospel and we believed what we heard.

[25 : 16] Paul here says that the gospel which I preached unto you, which you have received and wherein you stand, by which you are also saved.

We're saved by the gospel. We are saved by the good news that man is a sinner, but God saves sinners. We are saved by that wonderful news of the gospel, by which also you're saved.

If you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. And he hasn't even gotten to the part of this chapter yet, 1 Corinthians 15. We've already read it, but he hasn't gotten to the part of our faith being in vain if Christ being not risen.

But he's telling them here that you believe the gospel when it was presented unto you, and unless you believed in vain, unless you just said that you believe. If you made a profession without true faith, then you're in trouble.

Verse 3, this is quite possibly the most important verse in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 through 20. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how the cross died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

[26 : 30] It says, I delivered that first of all to you, that which I also received, that which was also made apparent to me, that which I also believed.

This is what I delivered unto you, it says, how the cross died for our sins. We say all the time, and the Bible teaches it. The Bible teaches it, Christ taught it himself.

He said he came to seek and to save that which was lost. He said those that are not sick have no need of a physician. God knew who was sick, we read and I've gone over it several times and brought it up several times going through the Gospel of John.

There at the end of the second chapter of John, how Christ knew what was in man's hearts. He knew what was within those people. He knows what's within people now. He has not lost any of his power.

But what makes it so important to cross died, one, cross died for our sins. We say all the time, cross died for me and he did, but he died for your sins.

[27 : 31] He died for your sins. He that knew no sin became sin for us. He died for our sins because if we died for our own sins, it would do us no good.

But if cross died for our sins, the perfect and spotless and blameless Lamb of God, if he died for our sins, then something could be done about it.

Because if we died for our own sins or if you died for mine or I died for yours, then you are going to make a hill of beans difference. But if cross did and he did, that's paramount.

Most important part of this verse, that cross died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Why is that so important?

Because it's not until verse four that he was buried, that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. There it is again according to the Scriptures and that he was seen of Cephas, that he was seen of Cephas then of the 12.

[28 : 29] And after that, he was seen of above 500 at once, of whom the greater part remained under this present. But some are falling asleep. After that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all, he was seen of me also.

But folks, more important than these eyewitness accounts of people that had seen Jesus Christ, Paul puts the authority of Scripture before any of the eyewitness accounts.

According to the Scriptures, it says cross died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

And the Scriptures according to the biblical account cannot be broken and they cannot be disproved. One has tried for centuries to disprove the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They've tried to disprove the Old Testament. They've tried to disprove the New Testament and it cannot be done. The Scriptures cannot be broken. And Paul puts more emphasis on the Scriptural account than he does on eyewitness accounts of people that saw Jesus Christ.

[29 : 38] He brings up the Scripture first. Folks, we have to believe this Bible. Even when we don't understand it all, I don't understand it all.

You don't understand it all. I wish I could tell you I do, but I don't. But I must believe what the Bible says and that the Bible says that cross died in my place if it teaches that he died of a curious death, a death that I should have suffered.

And he done it for me and for my sin and for doing it in accordance to the will of the Father if the Bible teaches these things, we must believe these things.

But there's so many people out there that say, I haven't really done anything that bad. I haven't sinned that much. We've got a whole world of people out there that say, I believe when that day comes that my good will outweigh my bad.

And it's already been stated this morning. There are none good. There are none good. There was even one come to Jesus in the gospels one time and said, good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[30 : 44] And Christ said to himself, why callest thou me good? There is none good but God. Of course, Christ being God when he said that. But he says there is none good but God.

And that still holds true today. The folks, Paul put more faith and more emphasis on the scriptures.

No matter who comes your way and says what, if it doesn't line up with the book, it is false teaching. It is false teaching and you flee from that.

And you run from that. If it doesn't line up with the book, Paul put more authority in scriptures that were hundreds and thousands of years old. At this point, I mean, at the time of Paul, the whole account of the Exodus was 1500 years old at that point.

And Paul was putting more emphasis on writings that were 1500 years old than he was on eyewitness accounts that had happened just a few years before this.

[31 : 46] He's not saying that Cephas or Peter was a liar by any means, but he brings up the scriptures first and if Paul did that, I promise you we need to do that as well.

Last of all, he was seen of me also as one born out of due time. When Paul says one born out of due time, we know that he was talking about his apostleship as far as that goes.

The reference there, though, is as far as Paul being born out of due time, like I've already said, he didn't spend the first years of Christ's ministry with Christ like the other apostles did, but it's kind of talking about a premature birth when he says that.

I was born out of due time. What is due time? As far as the human birth cycle goes, it's nine months. That's due time. Paul saying I was born prematurely and therefore he saw himself as the least of the apostles.

Paul referred to himself in the original writings as Paulus, which is the least. That's the Greek word for that. The apostle himself is the least of those apostles and he saw himself as one born out of due time, but nevertheless, regardless of how he saw or when he saw himself born as a believer in Jesus Christ or as an apostle for that matter, he was still a child of God.

[33 : 13] That's what counts. It doesn't matter if you've been saved a year, if you've been saved 50 years, as long you're a child of God, that's what counts because the people that were born, if they were born, if the good Lord comes back and calls us all out at one time, those that have been saved 50 years, ain't going to reach them clouds no quicker than I.

That's only been saved for a fraction of that time. Praise God.