**BEING THE CHURCH**

**“Believe in the Resurrection” - 1st Corinthians 15**

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“Being the Church”. We began this series 15 weeks ago, and each week we studied a chapter of Corinthians to learn about “Being The Church” that God wants us to be. Paul, in his writings to the church in Corinth that he planted a few years prior, addressed several key issues, gave them clear instructions and taught them many things, including;

* The importance of Unity
* God’s wisdom over Human knowledge
* Dealing with Immorality
* Marriage and Relationships
* Idolatry
* The Lord’s Supper
* Spiritual Gifts
* And The Ultimate Importance of Love

In this second-to-last chapter of 1st Corinthians, he presents a truth that is so important, so vital to our belief, and so central to our doctrine, that if it weren’t true our entire faith would be worthless, and we are the most pitiful people on earth.

### The Resurrection of Jesus!

### Chapter 15 is the longest chapter in the book of 1st Corinthians and arguably the most important. We will study key verses in the chapter but will not read it through its entirety like we normally do, (I encourage you to do that yourself this Easter weekend and we will study it thoroughly in our midweek Bible Study). But we will ask God to speak to us through this chapter and help us not only celebrate this day, but galvanize the importance of the resurrection in our hearts.

### Today, we want to ask, AND answer these questions;

### Why is the Resurrection so important to us?

### What if it didn’t really happen, or I don’t believe it did?

### What happens if I DO believe?

**1st Corinthians 15:1-4 “**Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **2**By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

**3**For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4**that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,”

**This is what we believe!**

*[I was recently elected to the Board of Trustees of the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association. My first task was to be part of a small committee to rewrite their Statement of Faith, which was originally done by our board 152 years ago.*

*In it we list all the things we believe about the core values of our faith, including;*

*Salvation, Sanctification, Humanity, Prevenient Grace and others.*

*The most important thing we wrote in the statement of Faith, is that we believe in the Lordship of Jesus. The most important things that we believe about Jesus is;*

*That He died for our sins, and that He rose from the dead.*

*No Christian Statement of Faith, Doctrine or Creed would be complete without firmly stating the belief in Jesus’ Death and Resurrection.]*

But Why?

What if you believe that Jesus was a good man, a wonderful teacher, a powerful prophet and maybe even a 1st century Miracle Worker, but he died and remained dead just like everyone else, but his “spirit” is basically just His legacy that remains alive through His teaching and followers?

What’s wrong with just believing that?

There are two important things we all need to understand and believe about the Resurrection, and it’s very important that we believe them, because if we don’t believe, we cannot know God and will *spend eternity in hell.*

*(I know that sounds severe, but that’s why this is so important)*

Here’s why the Resurrection is so important to all that we believe:

1. Because of the resurrection, everything that Jesus claimed is confirmed.
2. Because of the Resurrection, He defeated death and entered into eternal life, so we can too**.**
3. **Because of the Resurrection – Jesus’ claims are confirmed – If Jesus didn’t rise it would have invalidated everything he said.**

 **1 Corinthians 15:14-20 “**And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. **15**And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can’t be true if there is no resurrection [of the dead]. **16**And if there is no resurrection [of the dead], then Christ has not been raised. **17**And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. **18**In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! **19**And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.**20**But in fact, Christ **has** been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

Josh McDowell wrote that Jesus was either; “*A Liar, Lunatic, or Lord.”* The Resurrection proves that He is Lord.

In other words, Jesus plainly said multiple times, “ *I will suffer and die, and after three days I will rise again*”. If that did not happen, then he was either lying to His followers, or so delusional that he convinced himself that it would happen.

But that fact that it DID happen shows that He is Lord of all, even over the power of death.

When you do a study of historical facts, to determine the veracity of historical claims, there are certain criterion that historical archaeologists use to determine if someone actually existed, and or if events actually took place. Things like; Direct or Indirect Historical Evidence, Corroboration of written eyewitness accounts and many other things. In fact, on the basis of written historical data alone, there is more evidence that *Jesus rose from the dead*, than that *Julius Caesar ever existed*. (The earliest discovered written proof of Julius Caesar is dated at 500 years after his death.)

The apostles, along with 500 others “witnessed” Jesus as being resurrected from the dead. He along with many others actually went to their death for holding to the belief in this fact. We have no reason historically to doubt that Jesus rose from the dead, then we do any other fact of ancient history that we rationally believe.

1. **Because of the Resurrection – We can have Eternal Life -** Jesus conquering death by rising from the grave assures eternal life for those who believe.

*But what if He didn’t rise from the dead, OR you don’t believe?*

**1 Cor 15:17-18** **“**And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. **18**In that case, *all who have died believing in Christ are lost!”*

This is what I want you to ponder today.

The sobering truth to all mankind is that our bodies are not indestructible and do not last forever. Just as we were born on a certain day, of a certain month of a certain year – *we will die* on a certain day, of a certain month of a certain year. And what happens to most people is that their bodies are buried in the ground and rot in the grave.

Without the resurrection, our souls would move on from the body and enter a place of darkness, torment and eternal separation from God.

If Jesus was not raised from the dead there would be no hope for anyone, not even us.

**The Good news however, is that Jesus *has indeed* been raised from the dead.**

**1st Cor. 15:20-22** **20 “**But *Christ has indeed been raised from the dead*, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. **21**For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. **22**For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we will have everlasting life, instead of eternal death, We will have glorified bodies and will be with Him, and “be like Him” (1st John 3:2). We will dwell in paradise with Jesus in a place that He has prepared for us where there is no pain, no tears and no corruption (meaning either sin or corruptible flesh). We will spend eternity in His presence where there is fulness of joy.

**1st Corinthians 15:42-44“**So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; **43**it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; **44**it is sown a natural body, it is raised a *spiritual body*.”

In other words we are given a “spiritual body” that is imperishable (won’t age or decay). One that we will enjoy eternity in with Jesus.

This is what we are so excited about on Resurrection Sunday!

*(Peter’s celebration and proclamation on the Resurrection)*

**1st Peter 4: 3-4** **3 “**All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, ***because*** God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, **4**and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.”

(Paul celebrated as well in this chapter)

**1st CORINTHIANS 15:51-57“**Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— **52**in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. **53**For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. **54**When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” *(Isa.25:8)*

**55**“Where, O death, is your victory?
    Where, O death, is your sting?”

**56**The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **57**But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, none of that would take place. We would be judged on our sins and found guilty, with no hope for redemption. We would die, and our souls would spend eternity in “outer darkness” where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Luke 13:28). There would be eternal separation from God that can be described as anything from *a lake of fire* to *eternal torment*. Even if Jesus died, but did not rise, according to the scriptures, it would have proven that He was *not* an acceptable sacrifice for our sins and we would all be lost.

This is a very sobering truth which underscores the importance of the Resurrection.

**1st Cor. 15:20 “**But in fact, Christ **has** been raised from the dead.”

Because The Resurrection is real, the Good News to the world is that physical death is not the end of the life, but the beginning of everlasting life in the presence of God in our “Spiritual body”! (15:44)

Because Jesus overcame the grave, and *death could not hold Him*, we know that we can have eternal life.

While we may face the *physical death* of our mortal body, it won’t have the sting of hopelessness, and it won’t have victory over our eternal Souls.

***1st Cor. 15:55*** *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”*

This is why we celebrate this day over all other days on the Christian Calendar.

It’s why it gives us such tremendous joy and celebration to proclaim, “*HE IS RISEN”!*

However, there *is* bad news.

THE BAD NEWS FOR MANY,

IS THAT – YOU ARE ETERNALLY LOST IF YOU DON’T BELIEVE!

You see, all this joy and promise of eternal life in paradise is not for everyone, only for those who believe.

**Rom. 10:9-10****“***If* you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and *believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead*, you will be saved. **10**For it is with your heart that *you believe* and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”

*(…believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead you will be saved)***.**

You may say, “that seems really unfair”, “you mean that if I *don’t believe* a story about someone 2000 years ago being ‘killed on a Roman cross and remaining dead for three days, and then rising from the dead and being completely healthy’, I’m lost for eternity?”

According to the same Word of God that offers the eternal life and everlasting paradise that we’re talking about, the answer is, “Yes”!

The bible is clear that you *must believe* to be saved;

**John 1:12** “to all who did receive him, *to those who believed* in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

**Acts 16:30-31** “He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”**31**They replied, “*Believe* in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” *(Philippian Jailor to Paul and Silas)*

**John 3:13-18**“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. **14**Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15**that everyone *who believes*may have eternal life in him.” **16**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever believes* in him shall not perish but have eternal life. **17**For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **18***Whoever believes* in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe* stands condemned already because they have *not believed* in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

Easter Sunday is the greatest celebration of the year, unless you are someone who does not believe.

But you can change all that. If you do not believe, I am asking you, “to believe”.

That may sound impossible, but it is not. You simply have to acknowledge that God’s ways are higher than yours, and with child-like trust, put your life in His hands, and believe.

It may require you to “repent”, but that simply means “change your mind” (metanoia), in this case changing from “I don’t believe’ to “I do believe”.

This is what it means to believe in *Jesus as your Lord* and *Risen Savior*.

Will you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is your Lord,” and *believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, today on this special Sunday?*

***If you do this today, it will be the happiest, most joy-filled and meaningful Easter that you have ever had in your entire life.***