

Saviour:
Saviour Because of the Resurrection
1 Corinthians 15:1-11

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Text Introduction: For the last several weeks, we have walked our way through God's plan of redemption. We have stopped at major points to emphasize that salvation did not begin at the cross. Salvation began at creation. Through periods of rebellion throughout the era of the Old Testament, we continue to see God's intention to redeem people to Himself.

His passionate pursuit of us that calls us to relationship started at creation, and we continue to see it in the fall. We see this continued rebellion throughout the Old Testament as the story of Israel as a nation unfolds. The prophets of the Old Testament begin to point toward the Messiah coming—a Saviour. Most people heard this prophecy of a Saviour as a political savior rather than a spiritual Saviour. They missed that His purpose in coming was to be the One who would come to take away our greatest problem of all—our sin.

In the last three weeks, we have examined the subject of *Saviour* through the birth, life, and death of Jesus. Today, on this Easter Sunday, we have come to this culminating and obvious point that He is ultimately Saviour because of His resurrection.

Text: Now brothers, I want to clarify for you the gospel I proclaimed to you; you received it and have taken your stand on it. ²You are also saved by it, if you hold to the message I proclaimed to you—unless you believed for no purpose. ³For I passed on to you as most important what I also received:

that Christ died for our sins
according to the Scriptures,
⁴that He was buried,
that He was raised on the third day
according to the Scriptures,
⁵and that He appeared to Cephas,
then to the Twelve.
⁶Then He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time;
most of them are still alive,
but some have fallen asleep.
⁷Then He appeared to James,
then to all the apostles.
⁸Last of all, as to one abnormally born,
He also appeared to me.

⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by God's grace I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not ineffective. However, I worked more than any of them, yet not I, but God's grace that was with me. ¹¹Therefore, whether it is I or they, so we proclaim and so you have believed.

Introduction: The variety of religious belief is astounding. I have read recently about the Presleyterian Church. Yes, you heard me right. A group has formed themselves into the church of Elvis the Divine in their words. Adherents believe that Elvis faked his death and is still alive. Presleyterians are required to face Las Vegas daily and make a pilgrimage to Graceland at least once in life. You can't make this stuff up. That might be an extreme crazy group, but we really do live in an age where belief is all over the map.

Philosopher Antony Flew observed that any valid truth claim must be capable of falsification. If supporters of a position will not accept any evidence contradicting their assertion, they are merely stating an opinion. This, it seems, is what the Presleyterians are guilty of.

I am so glad that our belief has an anchor—the anchor of the resurrection. The resurrection could be falsified, but to date it has not been proven to be anything but true. Paul understood that. If we could just put one summary statement to 1 Corinthians 15, that statement might go something like this—“Everything about our Christian faith stands or falls on the resurrection of Jesus.” It is indeed as C.S. Lewis said, “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

I want you to think with me about four powerful Gospel truths that are linked to the resurrection.

The Gospel has its culmination in the resurrection.

First Corinthians 15 is a culminating point in the letter to the Corinthians. The flow of this letter to the Corinthians called in our Bibles “First Corinthians” is dependent upon questions that the Corinthian church had apparently raised with the Apostle Paul. Paul began his letter by addressing more crucial matters that he wanted to address. He addressed problems that were in the church—problems of division and problems of sin. Then, in chapter 7 Paul began to address some of the apparent questions raised by the Corinthians—things about marriage, about the church, about the use of spiritual gifts in the context of the church. The final two chapters seem to be a return to Paul's ideas. The way that I read chapter 15 is basically, “OK, let's get back to the main thing. Let's return our attention to the most fundamental belief that we have as Christians. Let's return to that foundational truth by which the whole of our belief either stands or falls—the resurrection.”

Paul began this fifteenth chapter, “I want to clarify the Gospel that I proclaimed to you.” I love the simplicity of the language here. Let's not miss the point. The Gospel is not complete until the resurrection. We have in recent weeks talked about the birth of Jesus. He came to be Saviour. He was born to die. His name means Saviour. We have talked about his sinless life filled with miracles and authoritative messages that pointed to His coming to be Saviour. People began to believe in Him and follow Him. Then, He died. We recognize the truth of Scripture, that in His death, He gave His life once and for all for our sin. Indeed, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. However, the Gospel is not complete until the resurrection. If not for the resurrection, we would simply have the tragic death of a good man.

There is a proximity between the cross and the resurrection. There is a close spatial proximity. John 19:41 indicates that there was a garden in the place where He was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb. There is a close temporal proximity. But, most of all, there is a close spiritual proximity. The resurrection is linked to the crucifixion. The crucifixion means nothing without the resurrection.

As Paul declared, “{We} have taken {our} stand on it (Gospel).”

The Resurrection has its verification through testimony.

- The Testimony of Scripture (vv. 3-4)
- The Testimony of Eyewitnesses (vv. 5-7)

Perhaps, the greatest proof that we have is that those who walked with Jesus believed that He both died and that He rose again. People die all the time for what they do not know to be a lie, but who would die for what they know to be a lie?

When Peter spoke of his seeing Jesus, he used concrete language. In Acts 10, we read that Peter said that he ate and drank with Jesus after the resurrection.

- The Testimony of Paul, Himself (vv. 8-10)

We talked last week about the confession of the Roman centurion who watched Jesus die. We talked about how this was a miraculous salvation. The thief on the cross who believed is also miraculous. In a sense, everyone who believes is a signature miracle of God. But, what about the miraculous conversion of Paul—one who formerly was in hearty agreement with the persecution of the church (a terrorist)? God, in a miraculous way allowed Paul to see Jesus resurrected.

- The Testimony of Other Believers (v. 11)

Further proof of the resurrection is that so many people of all different walks of life have come to a point of belief in Him. As has often been said, as the hymn writer said, “You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart.

Your testimony has its personalization in belief.

The word Gospel literally means “good news.” But, the Gospel is only good news to you if you believe. To Martha in John 11 at the raising of Lazarus, Jesus declared, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Then, he asked, “Do you believe this?” Notice about this question:

- Individual question—This is a question “for you.”
- Simple question—“Do you believe ‘this’?” Don’t think you have to know everything.
- Faith question
- Eternal question

D. L. Moody served as something of a volunteer chaplain for the Union Army in the days of the Civil War. One evening Moody was summoned to the death bed of a young soldier. The young man recounted a life of resisting God and now believed it was too late for him. He still asked Moody to help him die.

Moody explained that he could not help him die, but he could tell him what Jesus had done for him on the cross. Moody simply began to read from John 3. He came to John 3:14-15. The young man stopped him and said, "Read it again." A third time, the young soldier said, "Read it again." Moody recounted how he saw a broad smile sweep across this man's face. As Moody continued to sit with the dying soldier, he saw his lips moving. Moody bent down low to hear him repeating over and over, "Everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life." The next morning when Moody went to check on the young man, he had died. Moody asked the nurse about his new friend's countenance as he died. "Why," the nurse said, "he just kept repeating the words, 'Everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.'"

Volumes and volumes of books have been written across the ages about salvation, but when life gets to its most crucial hour, all of us need the simplicity of the Gospel. The simplicity of the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection brings a calm assurance even in the face of death.

Your belief in the resurrection has certain implications.

The resurrection is central to our faith.

Verses 12-19 list at least 6 crucial matters that all hinge on the validity of the resurrection. Without the resurrection of Jesus...

1. Our preaching is useless.
2. Our faith is useless.
3. Every witness is a liar.
4. We are still in our sins.
5. The dead are hopeless.
6. Christians are to be pitied.

All of these truths stand or fall on the validity of the resurrection. So, Paul answers, "But now Christ is risen from the dead." So, the implications of our belief are these statements in reverse.

1. Our preaching is not useless.
2. Our faith is not useless.
3. Every witness is a truth-speaker.
4. We are not still in our sins. We are in fact forgiven of our sins.
5. The dead are not hopeless. The dead are alive in Christ. The dead live again.
6. Christians are not to be pitied. Instead, all who are not believers in Christ are to be pitied, prayed for, and earnestly sought after, even persuaded to believe in Jesus. Without Him, there is simply no hope.

Acts 10:42-43 records the preaching of Peter. He concludes that sermon with these words: "He commanded us to preach to the people and to solemnly testify that He is the One appointed by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about Him that through His name everyone who believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins."

Guernsey Island is part of the Channel Islands off the coast of France. They are British Islands, but during WW 2 the Island was occupied by Nazi forces for the whole 6 years. According to a writer of that era, a reporter asked a Guernsey Islander, 'What was the most difficult experience you had during the Germans' rule?' The Islander told him, 'You know they took away all of our wireless sets? If you were

caught having a hidden radio, you'd get sent off to prison on the continent. Well, those of us who had secret radios, we heard about the Allies landing in Normandy. Trouble was, we weren't supposed to know it had happened! Hardest thing I ever did was walk around St. Peter Port on June 7, not grinning, not smiling, not doing anything to let those Germans know that I KNEW their end was coming. If they'd caught on, someone would be in for it—so we had to pretend. It was very hard to pretend not to know D-Day had happened.” (Joe McKeever Blog)

Well, friends, we don't have to pretend. We know that the Devil has been defeated. We know death has been dealt itself the death blow. That's why Paul writes at the end of this chapter, “Death has been swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?”

There ought to be some Easter grinning going on!

He is Saviour because of His resurrection! He becomes your Saviour because of your belief.

It's a belief that makes a difference in death and because it makes a difference in death, it's a belief that ought to make a difference in life.