

WHY THE RESURRECTION MATTERS, PART I 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12–19

INTRODUCTION

For us as Christians, we have come to **emphasise the message of the cross** as the **centre of our faith**.

In fact, the cross is now **universally seen** as the **primary symbol for Christianity**.

When we think of the gospel, we **primarily focus** on the good news of what Jesus accomplished by **dying on the cross** in order to secure the forgiveness of His people.

In many ways, the **death of Jesus Christ overshadows His resurrection** in our minds.

The cross of Christ overshadows the empty tomb of Christ.

As **one author** contends, for many Christians, “*the death of Christ is given a place of large significance but His resurrection is accounted as little more than something for His own personal convenience, His necessary return from the sphere of death back to the place which He occupied before.*”¹

In other words, many **fail to recognise the significance** of the resurrection of Jesus—many don’t realise **why the resurrection matters**.

¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 231.

Many Christians **consider it far less important** than what He **accomplished through His sacrificial death**.

We rightly celebrate the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice on behalf of His people as He died to pay the penalty of our sins, but we should not neglect to **celebrate the resurrection of Christ** as an accomplishment of equal importance.

In fact, reading through the **book of Acts** and the historical account of the **ministry of the apostles**, we find that their **message primarily focused on the resurrection of Christ**.

In **Acts 1:22**, the apostles sought a replacement for Judas so that another could join them in the **apostolic ministry of witnessing to the resurrection** of Jesus.

In Peter's **Pentecost sermon**, he proclaimed in **Acts 2:23-24**—

²³ This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of lawless 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.

He then continued to **focus on the point of the resurrection**, appealing even to **Psalms 16** to argue that Jesus' resurrection had been **prophetically predicted by David**.

In **Acts 4:33**, when Luke **summarises the apostolic message**, he recorded that they **“were bearing witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.”**

The pattern continues when we look at the **preaching of Paul**.

In **Acts 13:32-35**, Paul says in the **first sermon that Luke records**—

32 We proclaim to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers,

33 that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten You.’

34 But that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to corruption, He has spoken in this way: ‘I will give you the holy and faithful lovingkindnesses of David.’

35 Therefore He also says in another Psalm, ‘You will not give Your Holy One over to see corruption.’

Clearly then, even from this **brief survey** we can conclude that **the apostles and the early church** placed a tremendous emphasis on the good news of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

As **one author** contends, “*The resurrection of Jesus was the central proclamation of the early church.*”²

The modern evangelical church has **distorted this apostolic emphasis** by elevating the importance of the crucifixion **above** the importance of the resurrection.

² George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 40.

It has forgotten that, as **another theologian** put it,
“The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the
cornerstone of Christianity.”³

Therefore, **as we celebrate Easter** we should rightly rejoice in
all that Christ accomplished by dying on the cross but we
should also **recognise and rejoice in the significance** of His
rising from the dead three days later.

As **MacArthur and Mayhue** write, “There exists no greater
event in redemption history than the resurrection of Christ,
because it completes and validates His sacrificial death and
advances the program of the kingdom with an eternally living
King.”⁴

Simply put, you need to understand **why the resurrection
matters**.

The good news of the gospel is **not just that Jesus died**, but
that **He rose from the dead and is alive forevermore**.

Perhaps the **greatest explanation of the importance** of the
resurrection in the New Testament was written by Paul in
1 Corinthians 15.

He wanted the Corinthians to **understand why the
resurrection mattered**, both for their **present faith** and their
future hope.

³ Michael Green, “Editor’s Preface,” in *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 7.

⁴ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 320–321.

Today, the resurrection is **just as important** and it matters greatly to **our present faith and our future hope.**

Therefore, we're going to study **Paul's teaching on the resurrection** in **1 Corinthians 15:12–28** as he teaches us **ten reasons why the resurrection matters.**

We'll cover this section in **two parts** so that today we'll focus on **the first seven reasons** from **1 Corinthians 15:12–19.**

These reasons matter to our present faith.

On Sunday we'll focus on the **final three reasons** from **1 Corinthians 15:20–28.**

Those reasons matter to our future hope.

Armed with **ten reasons why the resurrection matters**, you'll come to **recognise and rejoice in the resurrection** as a cornerstone of our faith as Christians.

PROPOSITION

So as we focus now on our study of **1 Corinthians 15:12–19**, we'll discover **seven reasons why the resurrection matters** to **our present faith.**

If you let your eye scan over the **first 11 verses** of the chapter, you'll see that Paul **opened with a summary of the gospel message** that he preached and the Corinthians believed.

As you see in **verse 1**—

**1 Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I proclaimed as good news to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,
2 by which also you were saved...**

It is clear that he does so in order to **introduce the topic of the resurrection** because he spends **two verses (verses 3–4)** discussing the substitutionary death of Christ and then spends the **next four verses (verses 5–8)** discussing the resurrection of Christ.

After these **introductory remarks**, he comes in **verse 12** to address the **pastoral concern** that he has for the Corinthians.

As he indicates, **at least some in the Corinthian church** were having **trouble understanding and accepting** the doctrine of the resurrection.

Look at **verse 12** and you'll see that this **pastoral concern** is the reason why Paul is going to spend the rest of the chapter **explaining the importance** of the doctrine of resurrection—

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?

We should be clear that the Corinthians were **not rejecting the resurrection of Christ**, as many in our day do.

In order to be a Christian, **one must affirm the resurrection** of Christ.

It is impossible to be a follower of Christ without believing that He lives as the One who has **power over life and death**.

As Jesus Himself declared in **John 11:25**, **“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.”**

Because Jesus Himself is the One with **power over life and death**, He **could not be held by death**, as **Acts 2:24** states—
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.

So the Corinthians were not denying the resurrection of Christ, but were apparently **struggling to understand and accept the resurrection of believers**.

Though they must have believed in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, their **backgrounds before conversion** most likely made the idea of being resurrected themselves **confusing or hard to believe**.⁵

For the **Gentile Christians**, their background in **Greek philosophy** would have played a part in their confusion.

⁵ Cf. Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 665–666.

For Greeks and Romans, one of the **most important ideas** they would have been taught by Greek philosophy is that **everything physical, including the human body, is evil.**

By contrast, they believed that **everything spiritual is good.**

This is called **“dualism”** and it was a core teaching of ancient **Greek philosophy.**

Because of this, the **Gentiles** would have considered the idea of a resurrected body **repulsive and disgusting.**

We can see that in the **response of the Athenians** when Paul preached to them in **Acts 17:32**. Luke records—

Now when they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer...

For the **Jewish Christians**, their background would also have made the resurrection of believers **difficult to accept**, though for **different reasons.**

Some may have been influenced by the teaching of the **Sadducees** who rejected **any idea of a resurrection**, as Luke records in **Acts 23:8**—

The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit...

However, Jesus had **always clearly taught** the resurrection of believers, as we read in **John 11:25**, **“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.”**

In the same way, the apostles were **very clear** that the resurrection of Jesus secured the **resurrection of all who are united to Him by faith**, as **Acts 4:2** records that the Jewish leaders were, “**greatly agitated because [the apostles] were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.**”

So In spite of the **clarity of both Jesus and His apostles**, the church at Corinth was **wrestling with doubts** about the resurrection.

This caused great **pastoral concern** for Paul who then wrote to these confused believers to **explain the importance** of the resurrection.

He wrote to teach them **why the resurrection matters.**

In the **next verse, verse 13**, Paul points out a **critical implication** to **denying the resurrection of believers—**

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

As Paul argues, if we reject the idea of people being raised from the dead, then we **ultimately have to reject the idea** of Christ Himself being raised from the dead.

How can we possibly think that there is no resurrection, and yet believe that Jesus was resurrected without completely contradicting ourselves?

That is why Paul was **so concerned** about the Corinthian **confusion and skepticism** about the resurrection of believers—it would ultimately lead them to **denying the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**.

As you can see, Paul **moves from the broader topic** of the resurrection of believers to **the narrower topic** of the resurrection of Christ.

In order to address the **confusion and scepticism** of the Corinthians, he explains to them **why the resurrection of Christ matters**.

Now that we understand Paul's **pastoral concern** and the **reason** he was explaining the importance of the resurrection of Christ, let's look at the **seven reasons why the resurrection matters** to our present faith.

Paul presents these **seven reasons** in a **negative form**.

He explains the importance of the resurrection of Jesus by explaining **all that would be lost without His resurrection**.

1. PREACHING WOULD HAVE NO PURPOSE (14)

As Paul writes in **verse 14**, the **first thing** that would be lost if Jesus had not been raised would be **the importance of preaching**—

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

The **Greek word** translated as “**vain**” refers to something that **is untrue or is lacking in truth.**⁶

It means to be “*devoid of intellectual, moral, or spiritual value —empty.*”⁷

In simpler terms, there would be **no point to preaching** the gospel.

When Paul speaks of “**our preaching**” he is referring to the **apostolic preaching of the gospel.**

He referred to this earlier in **verse 2** when he wrote of, “**the word [message] which I proclaimed to you as good news.**”

In **verse 3** he described it further as the message that had **been entrusted to him**, “**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received...**”

⁶ Louw & Nida, 72.10 κενός.

⁷ BDAG, κενός.

So then, Paul referring to the **gospel message from God** that focusses on the **person and work of the Lord Jesus**.

It is this good news message that Jesus **entrusted to the apostles** as **His authorised representatives**.

They then preached the gospel and as others came to faith in Christ, they **continued the practice of preaching** about Christ, as Paul instructed his protégé in **2 Timothy 2:2**—

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

However, **if there is no resurrection** of Christ then the **message of Christ is untrue**, and there is **no point** to proclaiming the good news.

As Paul enthusiastically declares in **Romans 1:16**, **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...”**

However, **if the message is false**, then it has **no power to save** and the preaching of such a message is of no value—it’s useless.

If Christ was not raised from the dead, then preaching would have no purpose.

» Preach with purpose

So then, as we consider the **first reason** that the resurrection of Christ matters, we can put it in **positive terms**—

The resurrection of Christ matters because it is the reason we can **preach with purpose**.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, and because Jesus rose from the dead there is now the same **power of God at work to save** those whom He has chosen.

Therefore, we can **follow in the line of faithful preachers** of the gospel who are encouraged in their task by the assurance that the **same power which raised Jesus** from the dead now **accompanies the proclamation of the good news**.

Because Jesus is alive, you can preach with purpose.

2. BELIEVING WOULD HAVE NO PURPOSE (14)

As Paul continues in **verse 14**, he argues that the **second thing** that would be lost if Jesus had not been raised would be the **importance of believing**—

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

Paul uses the **same word here** to describe **faith in Christ** as having **no value or purpose** if He was still dead.

Paul refers this time, however, not to preaching as having no purpose, but to the **proper response to the preaching** of the gospel.

As the good news of salvation in Christ is proclaimed, **God requires people to respond** with **repentance and faith**.

As Jesus Himself declared in **Mark 1:15**, **“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”**

As the Bible uses the term, **repentance** refers to a **changing of one’s mind and life**.

It involves at least three things:

- i. an acknowledgment that your thoughts, words, and actions are sinful and therefore grievous to God;
- ii. a sorrow for your sin;
- iii. and a decision to break with sin.⁸

⁸ Gregg R. Allison, “Repentance,” in *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 182.

The other term, **faith**, refers to **belief and personal trust**.

It similarly **involves at least three things**:

- i. an understanding of the person and work of Christ to provide salvation;
- ii. an agreement that you need forgiveness;
- iii. and a decision to trust Christ to personally save.⁹

Together, **repentance and faith** are considered the **responses that God requires** of people in order to receive the salvation promised in the gospel.

However, the New Testament **often simplifies this requirement** to **simply refer to it as faith**, since genuine faith in Christ will always be accompanied by repentance.

As Paul argues, though, if Jesus is still dead then there is **simply no point to believing in Him**.

There is no purpose to faith if the One who is meant to save you **cannot save Himself and remains dead** in the grave.

⁹ Allison, "Faith," in *Baker Compact Dictionary*, 81.

» Believe for salvation

So then, as we consider the **second reason** that the resurrection of Christ matters, we can put it in **positive terms**—

The resurrection of Christ matters because it is the reason that you can **believe in Jesus for your salvation**.

God requires **your responses of repentance and faith**, but the fact that Jesus rose from the dead assures us that the **promised salvation has been accomplished**.

Christ leaving an empty tomb proves that your faith in Him will be **effective as the means** by which you will be united to Him **for the salvation promised in the gospel**.

Because Jesus is alive, you can believe in Him for salvation.

3. WITNESSING WOULD HAVE NO TRUTH (15–16)

Paul writes in **verses 15–16** that the **third thing** that would be lost if Jesus had not been raised would be **the truthfulness of the resurrection witnesses and their testimonies**—

¹⁵ Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we bore witness 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.

As you see, Paul recognises that **without the resurrection** of Christ, he and the other witnesses of His resurrection would be **“false witnesses.”**

Quite simply, they would all be **exposed as liars**.

When Paul refers to **“witnesses,”** he is referring to those who **saw and interacted** with the **risen Lord Jesus**.

As we’ve already noted, **Acts 1:22** tells us that one of the **primary tasks of the apostles** was to be **a witness of Jesus’ resurrection**.

As John wrote in **1 John 1:1-2**—

¹ What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—

² and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us.

The task of witnessing was **not confined to the apostles** exclusively, as we see from the witnesses that Paul refers to earlier in **1 Corinthians 15:5-8**—

⁵ **He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.**

⁶ **After that He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep.**

⁷ **After that, He appeared to James, then to all the apostles,**

⁸ **and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.**

Paul's logic is simple and clear, if the resurrection is false, then their testimony as witnesses must be false too—**they would all be liars.**

In **verse 15–16**, he once again **links the resurrection** of Christ to that of believers—

¹⁵ **...we bore witness 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.**

The resurrection of Christ and believers **stand or fall together**, and if there is no resurrection then Jesus Himself is still dead.

As Paul argues though, this would mean that **the witnesses were liars** and it would **be made worse** because their testimony would **not only be against reality but against God Himself.**

Their lies would misrepresent God and His work.

» Evangelise with confidence

So then, as we consider the **third reason** that the resurrection of Christ matters, we can put it in **positive terms**—

The resurrection of Christ matters because it is the reason we can **evangelise with confidence**.

While none of us are eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Christ, the New Testament describes the way the word **“witness”** came to refer **more broadly** to the **testimony of believers**, as we see in **Revelation 6:9** for example.

As Christians testify to the saving work of Jesus in their lives, they **giving “witness” to His work** in their hearts.

That is what is described in **1 Peter 3:15** when the apostle writes, **“But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...”**

Sharing your testimony is **not the same** as proclaiming the gospel, but it is **often an effective instrument in evangelism** that opens an opportunity to share the gospel with unbelievers.

The fact that Jesus rose from the dead means that you can be **bold and confident** in **sharing your testimony and the good news** of God’s saving work in Christ.

Because Jesus is alive, you can evangelise your unbelieving friends, family, coworkers, and neighbours **with confidence**.

4. BELIEVING WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTIVITY (17)

Next, Paul states in **verse 17** that the **fourth thing** that would be lost if Jesus had not been raised would be **the objectivity of our faith**—

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless...

Interestingly, Paul seems to be **pairing up the message and the response** as **first** he said that the preaching of the gospel and the response of faith would become **pointless** without the resurrection of Jesus.

Now secondly, he says that the testimony of witnesses would be **false** and the response of **“faith”** would be **futile**.¹⁰

The **Greek word** translated as **“worthless”** refers to *“being of no use, idle, empty, fruitless, useless, powerless, lacking truth.”*¹¹

If Jesus was still dead, the witness reports of His resurrection **would not represent objective reality**, and similarly, **neither would the faith** of those who believed the reports.

Paul is essentially **flipping Jesus’ words** in **John 11:25** that, **“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.”**

¹⁰ “In v. 14 the preaching was said to be ‘in vain’ and here ‘futile.’ The Greek words are not the same, but their semantic range clearly overlaps (κενός and μάταιος). Paul may have used different words simply for stylistic reasons.” Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, ZECNT, 667.

¹¹ BDAG, μάταιος.

In other words, **if Jesus was still in the grave**, then He would not be there resurrection and the life, and everyone who believed in Him would then **just die and never rise again**.

In **Hebrews 11:1**, the author **defines faith**—

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

The things hoped for and unseen are, **nevertheless, very real** in biblical faith.

What Paul is arguing then is that **without Jesus rising from the dead**, there would be **no objectivity to our faith**.

Our “**assurance of things hoped for**” would be **reduced to a subjective optimism**—nothing more than **wishful thinking** and **no more useful** than believing in the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy.

» Believe with assurance

So then, as we consider the **fourth reason** that the resurrection of Christ matters, we can put it in **positive terms**—

The resurrection of Christ matters because it is the reason we can **believe with assurance**.

Faith in Jesus is **not subjective optimism**, but the conviction that **God and all His promises are true**.

Therefore, we can have **full assurance and peaceful confidence** that **God will complete the work of salvation** He has begun in us.

As Paul wrote in **Philippians 1:6**, “**I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.**”

Since God has proven **the reality of His saving power** and **the reliability of His Word** by raising Jesus from the dead, you can have **assurance of salvation**.

Biblical assurance has less to do with your confidence in what you have done, and far more to do with your **confidence in what Christ has done** on your behalf.

Because Jesus is alive, you can believe with assurance.

5. SINNING WOULD HAVE NO SOLUTION (17)

As we look at the **end of verse 17**, we find that the **fifth thing** that would be lost if Jesus had not been raised would be the **the solution to our sin problem**—

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

This is the **most theological point** that Paul makes.

As Paul stated earlier in **1 Corinthians 15:3**—

I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures

Faith in the **dead, buried, and resurrected Christ** is the **means by which God grants** the forgiveness of sin.

The Scriptures had **long-foretold** that God would send a Saviour who would die in the place of His people **in order to pay the penalty** of their sins and **secure their forgiveness**.

In **Isaiah 53:5**, the prophet foretells the **atoning work of Christ on the cross**—

He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our peace fell upon Him...

The apostles understood, though, that there was an **essential link** between the sacrificial work of Christ and His resurrection.

In **Acts 5:30-31**, Peter proclaims to the Jewish leaders that—

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you put to death by hanging Him on a tree.

31 This One God exalted to His right hand as a Leader and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

So there is a link between the **resurrection of Christ** and His work of **providing forgiveness** for His people, Jews and Gentiles.

As Paul argues in **Romans 4:25**, Christ was “**delivered over on account of our transgressions, and was raised on account of our justification.**”

That is, **Jesus was raised from the dead in order to accomplish our forgiveness.**¹²

But as Paul argues to the Corinthians, **if you do away with the fact** of the resurrection then the **achievement of forgiveness disappears.**

So then, **the forgiveness, or the justification**, that God provides us through faith in Christ is **lost if He is still dead.**

The problem of sin is our condemnation under the wrath of God, and **without the resurrection of Christ** there is no solution for the problem of our sin.

If Christ is not raised, then there is **no forgiveness** and there is **no righteousness through faith.**

¹² Cf. Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 166.

» Repent for forgiveness

So then, as we consider the **fifth reason** that the resurrection of Christ matters, we can put it in **positive terms**—

The resurrection of Christ matters because it is the reason we can **repent for the forgiveness of our sins**.

As we've already noted, **repentance and faith go hand-in-hand** as the **proper responses** to the gospel.

The resurrection of Christ **proves that His saving work** on the cross was **effective in securing** our forgiveness.

The promised salvation has been **accomplished by Christ** on the cross, and God raised Him from the dead in order to **demonstrate that Christ's work had been successfully completed**.

Therefore, when **you respond to the gospel** with repentance and faith, you can **know for certain** that the offer of forgiveness is real.

If you repent, God will forgive you for all your sins because Christ paid the price on your behalf and **His resurrection proves that God accepted His payment**.

Because Jesus is alive, **you can repent from your sin** in order to be forgiven by God.

6. GRIEVING WOULD HAVE NO COMFORT (18)

As Paul continues to argue in **verse 18**, the **sixth thing** that would be lost if Jesus had not been raised would be the **comfort of those who mourn the death of believing loved ones**—

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

As Paul explains, without the resurrection and the forgiveness it secures, **believers are then left to perish** when they die.

In other words, the promise of **John 3:16** is lost if Jesus is **still in the grave**—

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

So the good news promised in the gospel is **undone** if Christ is dead—**the hope of eternal life is gone**.

To “**perish**” therefore is to suffer the **eternal, conscious torment of hell** as God **pours out His final wrath** on all who die in their sins.

Without the **forgiveness that solves our sin problem**, we can **only anticipate God’s judgement**.

When Paul writes of “**those who have fallen asleep**,” he is using a **metaphor** to describe believers who have died and are waiting for their bodies to “**wake up**” when **God resurrects them**.

There is, then, **no salvation from God's wrath** and no anticipation of resurrection and eternal life **if Jesus is not raised**.

However, Paul has **already established as much** and so there is an **additional implication** that we should consider.

Paul is pointing the Corinthian believers not only to the loss of **THEIR hope** without the resurrection, but also to the loss of **comfort that they can take** when they mourn the death of **believing loved ones**.

As he writes elsewhere, in **1 Thessalonians 4:13**—

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

That is, we **grieve the death of loved ones in Christ** differently because we have the **assurance that they are in heaven** with the Lord as they wait for the completion of their salvation for eternal life.

Without the resurrection of Christ, though, this hope is lost and **we can take no comfort in the death of our fellow believers**.

All that is left is the **hopeless agony of separation** from a loved one and the knowledge that they are **perishing in hell**.

So without Christ rising from the dead we could **only grieve like the rest** of the **unbelieving world**.

» Grieve with comfort

So then, as we consider the **sixth reason** that the resurrection of Christ matters, we can put it in **positive terms**—

The resurrection of Christ matters because it is the reason we can **grieve with comfort**.

The resurrection Christ **assures us that believers who have died** before us are **presently with the Lord**, even as they wait for the **completion of their salvation in their future resurrection** and glorification.

As Paul discussed the resurrection of believers in **1 Thessalonians 4:13–17**, he intended it to be a comfort to those who had lost loved one in Christ.

As he wrote in **1 Thessalonians 4:18**, **“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”**

Since Jesus rose from the grave, we know that **He is able to give the same life** to those who are His and that **changes the way we mourn** when a believer dies.

Because Jesus is alive, you can grieve the death of loved ones in Christ with the comfort that they are with the Lord waiting for their own resurrection.

7. SUFFERING WOULD HAVE NO HOPE (19)

Finally, as Paul comes to the **end of the list** of **reasons why the resurrection matters to our present faith**, he writes that the **seventh thing** that would be lost if Jesus had not been raised would be that **we would have no hope in our suffering:**

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

As Paul argues, if there is no resurrection **then there is no hope for anything beyond this life.**

The only benefits that we would have from following Christ would be **what we receive in this life**, but Paul states that this would **leave us in a pathetic state.**

In fact, as he says, then **“we are of all men most to be pitied.”**

The **Greek word** translated as **“pitied”** means, *“deserving of sympathy for one’s pathetic condition, miserable, pitiable.”*¹³

To begin with, we would be in this **pathetic, pitiable position** because **what we believe and how we live** would be **based on a lie.**

However, Paul’s statement **goes beyond the undermining of our moral character.**

When future happiness is destroyed, all we have left is the happiness that we find in this life.

¹³ BDAG, ἄλεινός.

To begin with, Christians **restrain the indulgence** of their sinful desires in order to please the Lord.

But if there is no resurrection, **there is also no judgement** and as Paul argues later in **1 Corinthians 15:32**—

If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

In other words, there is **no longer a reason not to indulge every sinful desire self-absorbed pursuit of pleasure.**

Moreover, Christians are **not promised prosperity** by following Christ, **contrary to the damnable lies** of the prosperity preachers.

Rather, we are **promised suffering and persecution**, as Paul writes in **2 Timothy 3:12** that, **“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”**

Finally, there are **many sacrifices that a believer makes** in order to follow Christ, as He Himself says in **Matthew 16:24**—
“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

Therefore, if there is no resurrection then **all we have in this life as believers** is the **needless restraint** of our sin, **suffering and persecution** as those hated by the world, and the **sacrifices we make** that will never be compensated by eternal reward.

In short, **we are most pitiable** because if Jesus is not raised from the dead then **there is no hope to comfort and sustain us in our suffering.**

» Suffer with hope

So then, as we consider the **seventh and final reason** that the resurrection of Christ matters, we can put it in **positive terms**—

The resurrection of Christ matters because it is the reason **we can suffer with hope.**

As Jesus forewarned His disciples in **John 16:33**, “**In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.**”

Jesus overcame the world **when He rose from the grave** to leave an empty tomb demonstrating that **He has defeated the greatest suffering of all—death.**

Since He lives, He can offer us the assurance that our suffering **will not be forever** and He will bring us **relief and reward** when we ourselves are resurrected.

As Peter wrote in **1 Peter 5:10**, “**After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, strengthen, confirm, and ground you.**”

Because Jesus is alive, **you can endure suffering and persecution** with the certain hope that there is **relief and reward in the future.**

CONCLUSION

As we conclude, Paul has **armed us with seven reasons why the resurrection matters to our present faith.**

These reasons teach us the **importance of the resurrection of Christ** and help us to **recognise and rejoice** in the resurrection as a cornerstone of our faith as Christians.

On Sunday we'll look at the the **final three reasons** from **1 Corinthians 15:20–28** that **matter to our future hope.**

So as we celebrate the **saving work of Christ in His death** on the cross, let us remember to celebrate that He did not stay in the grave but **rose again to life.**

We celebrate a risen and victorious Saviour!

BENEDICTION

1 Corinthians 15:58

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

Sermon Notes

Introduction

As we study 1 Corinthians 15:12–19, we'll discover seven reasons why the resurrection matters to our present faith.

1. **Preaching would have no purpose** » Preach with purpose
2. **Believing would have no purpose** » Believe for salvation
3. **Witnessing would have no truth** » Evangelise with confidence
4. **Believing would have no objectivity** » Believe with assurance
5. **Sinners would have no solution** » Repent for forgiveness
6. **Grieving would have no comfort** » Grieve with comfort
7. **Suffering would have no hope** » Suffer with hope

Conclusion