

Assurance

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[0 : 0 0] Corinthians chapter 15 verses 12 to 22 which can be found on page 1156 of the church Bibles but if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead if there is no resurrection of the dead then not even Christ has been raised and if Christ has not been raised our preaching is useless and so is your faith more than that we are found to be false witnesses about God for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead but he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised for if the dead are not raised then Christ has not been raised either and if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile you are still in your sins then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost if only for this life we have hope in Christ we are of all people most to be pitied but Christ has indeed been raised from the dead the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep for since the death for since death came through a man the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man for as an Adam all die so in Christ will all be made alive thanks okay good evening my name is Darren for those who don't know me thanks for coming along tonight so as Chris said this is one of two weeks we're going to be looking at the impact of the resurrection on our lives as believers and I thought to start with we do a little two-minute discussion exercise with one another if that's all right I know some people hate this kind of thing and but it really gets your brains engaged and so if someone were to ask you why Jesus rising from the dead was an important part of what it means to be a Christian so I how it actually impacts your walk as a Christian so Jesus came and lived the life he lived and died the death he died but didn't rise from the dead what difference would that make to being a Christian okay you can discuss this for all eternity probably which is one of the points tonight I don't know what kind of stuff you came up with but actually when I was first thought of this question in preparation for tonight I thought oh there's clearly tons of stuff and I actually had a little bit of a struggle listing the day-to-day reality of what it might be and it's so for me personally it's been really challenging looking at this and thinking oh my word it I don't even know if I could call myself a Christian I'm pretty sure we can't call ourselves Christians if Jesus had not risen from the dead and over tonight and then next week Gordon's going to be looking at transformation but tonight I'm going to look at like what the resurrection assures us of and it assures us of many many things so to begin with there'll be certain things I might seem a bit quick fire and because you can't cover everything so I'm going to focus on a few things tonight primarily what the resurrection assures us about who Jesus is about what he has done and therefore who we are as a result of that so I'm going to quickly pray and then we'll head into that if that's okay Father I thank you for your word I thank you that when we come to read of a letter to a group of people two thousand years ago that we don't just relegate this to history but actually we wrestle with the same things today as human beings of what it means when death enters into our human reality and what does it mean that you are still with us and still reign and so I pray as we engage with this kind of concept that we don't just see it as a concept that is in a philosophical reality but a truth that impacts

each and every single one of us and the whole world in which we live in help us to be people who worship you as the resurrected Christ amen so in this passage I'm going to use this first Corinthians 15 as a bit of a leap into other parts of the Bible so but I think it's an important passage to start with because Paul is writing to a group of people who live in a culture which they're clearly saying as verse 12 says there is no resurrection from the dead there is no life after death and that's exactly quite similar to our culture there is most people I engage with would say it's completely irrational to think there's anything beyond this life let alone a physical reality beyond this life I work as a chaplain one day a week well it's like an afternoon a week at Glasgow City College and we had a kind of chaplain's meeting one day with every single faith and all faiths and no faiths as they like to say represented around the table and a pastoral situation had come up with a student and the student's first point of contact was the humanist chaplain because that's the go-to chaplain but this issue the person had involved death and the humanist chaplain in their moment of real honesty said we don't really do death though and so she was stuck for answers and she didn't know how to help the student beyond well death has happened that is it and she was very caring of the individual but in terms of the questions this person had about death itself the humanist chaplain was very up front with I can't give this person the answers they're looking for and eventually this girl ended up going to the catholic priest because she had a catholic background and he ended up working with her and I was quite struck with her kind of integrity I suppose in that moment of thinking and saying actually when it comes to this part of life we don't actually have a lot to say here beyond it happens and that is it and one of the things that Paul seems to say quite quickly I mean if you read through this passage and meditate on it um a bit longer he he's implying that life is kind of meaningless without the resurrection he says we'd be pitied among all people if this is not true um and so in verse 20 uh just to affirm the fact that Paul clearly does believe the resurrection is a real thing but now

Christ has been raised from the dead and he is the first fruits of those who are asleep so in other words in being persuaded that Jesus is risen from the dead this idea of first fruits means Jesus is the first picking of this harvest which means there is a harvest to come of he is the first of the resurrection of a new resurrected group of people which is the church is the body of Christ it's each and every single one of us without the first fruits there is therefore no resurrection to come for each and every single one of us and what I'm going to do is just I'm going to quickly read eight things I observed and we're not actually going to go into them but I just think I'm going to read them and see how they settle in you because I think if you took these eight things away from what it means to be followers of Christ I think it quite quickly goes there's nothing really to follow anymore so here's just some reflections I think you see in first Corinthians 15.

So one if not even Christ is raised and this is probably the most obvious one and it's kind of the nuclear fallout option if there's no resurrection the dead as the Sadducees would have said and a lot of philosophers would have said over the ages and still say today then Christ's body is just gone it's decayed and gone with every other body or it was stolen like some other people would say and actually the therefore the explanation and the claim from hundreds of people that they saw the Lord the risen Lord is nonsense the whole testimony of the gospels are nonsense secondly preaching the gospel is therefore useless the good news is rendered no news actually it's worse than no news is bad news because it's a lie it's saying this thing that we say has happened has not happened at all so give your life to this thing that isn't true so anytime we've ever used any of our energy and any of our abilities to kind of connect with another human to say this is truth if the resurrection isn't there it's not only not true it's the opposite it's a lie faith in Christ is worthless is the third one I think you see so faith I mean sorry if this language seems a bit harsh but faith in a corpse in the Middle East 2000 years ago doesn't bring new life it doesn't bring what Gordon will go on to talk about later transformation it doesn't bring all the things that we're going to look at tonight that assures us of what Jesus does four like I kind of said already every eyewitness to the resurrection and all preachers of the resurrection over all of the past 2000 years are either deluded or liars which I don't know what you think about all the times you've sat and either listened to a sermon or read a book by somebody and have been moved in your spirit without the resurrection but where did they get that from fifth

Christianity becomes like a fairy tale about this myth of a man one day who lived in a time gone by we end up peddling kind of rumors about a thing that hasn't gone anywhere it was just a time gone by sixth all of humanity remains captive to sin so Paul's words become a pretty damning sentence the wages of sin or death as he says quite often throughout the New Testament and our world remains captive to sin still enslaved to death without the resurrection Romans 8 would have never been written it wouldn't have been placed in the Bible and if therefore we're all still captive to sin we're all still captive to death and the consequences of death which is hell itself and his final bit which I think is the most sometimes I don't know why if I think is the most damning bit he says we are the most foolish people on earth we're to be pitied this is what he says if Christ is not being raised then we are the most the most men to be pitied if you've given your life to this thing and without the resurrection then we're wasting our time he kind of says eat and drink so what else is there to do and it's not like if the resurrection is true just have a party it's just like life is a bit futile so just squeeze out of life what you can get

[10 : 45] I don't know how that sits with you I hope it sits somewhere I hope that it engages some things I know within me I think when I think of the resurrected Jesus the resurrection what assurance it brings me sometimes I can go through my day in my week taking a lot of things for granted but without the resurrection Paul points to these major major things if you were to remove them I'd have guessed none of us would even be here tonight so tonight we're going to look at assurance over the next 15-20 minutes what if this is what life without the resurrection is like what does the life that we are assured of with the resurrection what does it assure us of so Jesus having risen from the dead what's actually assure us of and I think to do that we need to go a little bit back I'm going to briefly just just talk about Genesis 15 because it's hard to be I was speaking to Gordon about this and when we were thinking about this particular little mini series it's hard to be assured of something if you do not believe in the thing you're being assured of and in Genesis 15 you see this interaction between God and Abraham where God and Abraham strike a deal as a covenant and God has given all these promises to Abraham and Abraham's question is and I'm going to summarize massively here Genesis 15 um yeah but how's that going to work so they make this scenario where they cut a lot of animals in half because that's the way you made a deal back in that time and they made this covenant so what would happen is you would cut all the animals in half as a sacrifice and two people would stand at one end of this aisle and they would walk down the middle and they're essentially saying it's like an agreement we enter into an agreement together and one party would say to the person that's made the promises it's essentially I will become like these dead animals if I do not uphold my end of the bargain so that's what Abraham would and God would have done the miraculous thing of Genesis 15 is God goes through himself without Abraham he essentially makes a covenant where he holds himself the guarantor of the own covenant itself so he essentially makes a pile of promises to Abraham and then he goes through himself and says and if you don't I will be the one who pays for this it's a in that time when most people thought that God's just made people to serve them or to rule over them or to give things to make them happy you have this picture of a God who at the core of it says essentially trust me I will make a promise with you which I kind of know you will not uphold but I will uphold it trust me in my word and that's a very beautiful picture when you actually fast forward to Jesus on the cross of God doing that very thing of God being like the animals I have been sacrificed for this promise that I give to you and so to be when we talk about assurance we talk about words like trust because as a God who can be trusted the the death and sacrifice of Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise he makes with Abraham and Abraham therefore also represents all people of God the community of God the people are building and so right at the heart when we talk about assurance of the resurrection it's not just a one-off event that happened in one moment it's actually a fulfillment of an assurance of a God who is good a God who is for his people and the resurrection is the kind of culmination of that the the holding together of it all it's more than just a death and a miracle it's a miracle that encapsulates a huge component of who God is a God who is trustworthy and says I have you I've always had you these promises are not based on you they're based on me so come and follow this so the resurrection is an entering into the fullness of that expression of who God is to who Jesus is and what he has done and it's an assurance of who Jesus is and that's kind of where I want to spend a lot of tonight

and it's assurance of who he is not just uh in what I've said there but it's very public assurance of who Jesus is so the resurrection um I've pro when I became a Christian in my second year of university I say I explored world religions that's kind of an exaggeration I had a dalliance with a few when I was trying to figure out what I was up to the one of the things has genuinely always struck me about Jesus was he was very out in the open relative to a lot of other world faiths whereas a kind of secret guru hidden away or a man who's given a special special message the resurrection is a very public demonstration of a God who in his resurrection walked among the people he ate with them he talked with them he hung up with them with hundreds of people it wasn't hidden away it wasn't like he raised and disappeared he raised and publicly announced I am here look look at the new life it's a very physical representation of the new life in that he embodied it and walked among his disciples and that's a very important thing for all of us in our faith is that the resurrection is a historically based event it is not again a hidden thing it is a very public and historical one and I found this from a little I can show you this later I meant to put in a slide but I forgot this is a table this table that shows you the reliability of the gospels relative to all the other people in world history we take as fact so for example Julius Caesar who ever does anybody here not believe in Julius Caesar why do we not believe in Julius why do we believe in Julius Caesar history yeah we'll go with history um so Caesar the first recorded um date we have of something about recording who he was it's 900 AD where Caesar was around the earth in the year 100 BC that's a 1000 year gap and we have 10 copies from that time of something that talks of Caesar a 1000 year gap we have 10 copies of something and we kind of take it as fact now we have more put on that of course and I'm not a history lecturer if there's somebody out there who's like got a degree in history and like that's nonsense mate but generally this source that I have and I can share it with you at the end if you want um Aristotle first recorded thing we have about him 1100 AD like in terms of a written thing that we have that says it talks about who he is but he was around 384 BC we have 40 copies that's a one that's nearly one and a half thousand year gap between the guy and what we have the new testament the story of Jesus the resurrected Jesus who walked the earth a 100 AD 100 maybe the earliest you can ask Martin or Andy or Gordon they'll tell you more accurate stuff if this is off there's a gap of five to 30 years at the most reliable between Jesus being around and recordings of the new testament communities he talked about his resurrection and we have five and a half thousand copies of manuscripts of different forms that talk about I'm sorry if I'm

I'm laboring that point. But I suppose given the time this was written in and given the way that the culture worked, to have this much testimony, and that's just biblical, let alone extra biblical, who talk about this resurrected Jesus community, who saw this thing and lived in response to it, that actually, historically, I've personally found when I was coming to faith, it's kind of overwhelming evidence to make you think, was a whole area of the world deluded for a period of time?

You can make of that what you want. But more than that, it assures us of some major things about who Jesus is. So not only was He real, but the resurrection brings to life these titles that Jesus was given and used of Himself throughout the Scriptures. And four in particular, that Jesus was and is, and I think that's important when we talk about the resurrection. It wasn't just He was, He also is still these things, the Son of God, which again is an obvious one we use all the time. So Romans 1, 4, and who, Jesus, through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. So the resurrection assures us that we can look at Jesus and go, He wasn't just a random guy or even the best man that the world has ever seen. He was God Himself. He was the Christ, so Acts 2, 36, therefore let all Israel be assured of this. This is Peter's sermon post-Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit has come, the resurrected Jesus has ascended to heaven, and this is one of the first messages that Peter finds himself proclaiming to the people of Israel. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah. So not only is He the Son of God, but He's the Messiah, the Christ, the King. He is ascended and sits at the right hand of God as ruler today, fully in charge, fully sovereign of God's kingdom, of God's whole creation. So He sits as the Son of God, but He also sits as King, which is, I guess, at the heart of the things that we rail against, I rail against, and the sin I still commit is, I want to be King.

But the resurrected Jesus is King today. When we sing, we don't sing of a dead King who did a great thing a long time ago, and we live in memory of that. We sing of a King who is alive today and reigns today, and we live under that authority. He is Savior. 2 Corinthians 5, 21, God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. If we had any doubt about what Jesus did on the cross, the resurrection ends that. Jesus could have said, I die for your sins, and then I die, and then stay dead. The resurrection proves He did it. He came back and told you, it's done. It is done. It is finished. His final words before He dies and then comes back.

[21 : 37] Without the resurrection, Jesus could have just said these amazing things. He'd be like me saying to Tom, I'll die for your sins, but then dying, then how would you... There's a crazy statement to say if I was just a human, but the resurrection brings it to life, literally.

And then He, in the end of Peter's sermon in Acts, He uses this phrase, the author of life. So, Peter says in Acts 3, 15, you killed the author of life, but God raised Him from the dead, and we are witnesses of this. Now, the author of life, I think, can mean a lot of things, but in God creating all things, the thing that came into His perfect creation through sin was death. And the irony is, in killing the author of life, He then defeats death itself.

The first victory that Jesus essentially proclaims in His resurrection is death is defeated now. I've gone through the process and come out the other end. No other human does that unless they're God Himself. He comes through the process of death and says, it's done. It's defeated.

The greatest thing that every single human has to live with, the greatest enemy we all have, the one thing we will all face, the one thing I know me and my peers never talk about. I mean, I'm maybe liberally including myself in a younger generation, but we think we're indestructible.

We think we can do anything. We think we're the author of our own life. If the resurrection says, this man, Jesus, this God, is the author of life, and therefore, He defeats death at the same time, the greatest fear that most people have at some point is what happens when everything's taken away, ultimately when it's all taken away, and the resurrection assures us that is not the end of the story. There's a huge hope that actually when we look at the world and we look at death and evil and disease, the resurrection says, no, this is not the final word on all of this. There is something new to come, and I, Jesus, am the resurrection. I'm the first fruits of this. Jesus says in John 11, 25, which Chris read at the start, actually, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die.

[24 : 09] This is foolishness to the world. Paul talks about that a lot, and this is foolishness. Why would you believe something like this? You just told yourself this. The reason we can believe something like this is because we look at the resurrection, and Jesus says, look, I've done it.

I have gone before you. I've gone through the pain for the sin for you. I've also gone through the death before you, so you do not need to live through and die into an eternal, endless death, into a new life that I bring you through.

Lastly, I think I'd like to just briefly touch on, because Gordon's going to go into this more, it assures us of who we are. So, the resurrection doesn't just assure us of who Jesus is, but this language of being new creations ourselves. So, 2 Corinthians 5, 17, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come, the old is gone, the new is here. This is a pretty amazing, for me, aspect of the resurrection. You come... He says, you come with me in this death, but you also come with me in this resurrection. You have a new life now. You live a new way. You think a new way. You act a new way. And he's writing to the Corinthians who, from what I understand of that culture, were very much about getting rid of the physical. It was all about, let's get the soul to a better place.

Where Jesus resurrects in a physical body, he does really mundane things like eat fish and hang out with his friends and tell stories. And he is affirming that this thing that God has made, that through the fall at Eden, has been restored in a new way. And that that happens internally.

It happens externally as well. And now, obviously, if you're anything like me, you can have moments where, like, well, if that's true, I do not see it. I assured that my dad was in France doing a tour of the World War II beaches a couple of weeks ago, and he was telling me literally every single thing he'd learned, which was quite a long process. But one of the things that was interesting was he was talking about how when VE Day happened, victory over Europe, the status of Europe was victory.

[26 : 15] That was the status of Europe. But France had pockets of resistance for a long, long time until the Allies fully did what they had to do. And actually, I think that's the way I can live as a Christian. I can focus on the pockets of resistance, which is my sin. But my primary identity as a resurrected believer in Christ is victory has been won. This is the new status.

This is who we are, your adopted children into this new family. Not because of anything we have done, but because of what He has done. That leads to, as Paul talks about in Philippians, this new work that has begun in you, which we are assured God will carry through the Spirit to completion one day. I know I can focus on, well, if that's true, what would this, this, and this?

But it's such a me-focused reality. I think that's what the resurrection does. It breaks me out of me into a new me, which is kind of a paradox in some senses. But I know I can get focused on a narrative within the Scripture that starts, say, at Genesis 3, I've sinned and I'm bad, and ends at Jesus dying.

And actually, that can weirdly all be about me, my badness, and I'm still not doing the right things. As opposed to the whole biblical narrative, which is God, His creation is good, and He will redeem it again. And actually, if you look at these titles of Jesus, Jesus is God, He is ruler, He is dealt with sin, and He has defeated death. That's a reversal of everything you see happening in Genesis 3, where I become God, I try to be ruler, I therefore become sinful, death enters the equation.

The resurrection bats them all back in order, and reclaims, resurrects the whole of God's purposes. For me and you and for the whole world, and leads us into completely new understanding of what it means to be followers of Christ, but also of what is to come. And that's the way the biblical narrative ends. But I say it's an ending, it's a beginning. It's looking at the church and the new creation where heaven and on earth are kind of mysteriously gone, and this new place, which is physical, this resurrected place. And when you read Revelation 21 and 22, it speaks of a lot of the hope that we have about the way we want life to be and go. It says, yes, these hopes that you have are not ridiculous. They touch to something, I think, of what it means to be created in the image of God.

[28 : 45] And the resurrection shouts to those things, yes, come with me in the new resurrected reality of who we are becoming, and we will be assured because of what Jesus has done first. This will happen.

It brings a degree of rest. All the work that I do in my heart and my soul and my life to justify hundreds of different things, the resurrection, I think, stops me in my tracks and says, sometimes, what are you worrying about? Look, look at what's to come. I have secured this for you.

Live in the reality of this. And in the times where I turn away from that and go, that's a great idea, however, I'd rather do this here today in my way, well, actually, I live out with the resurrected reality. I'm not saying I'm not kept in God's adoption at that point, but I can live out of sync with this new life that God has called each one of us to and to cure us for each one of us.

The resurrection is our hope, and it's a hope that is concrete and it won't disappoint. These words can seem, I feel, sometimes for me, quite trite when I get so focused on here and now.

The resurrection, I think, does this beautiful thing where it takes what I experience in the here and now? And where there's pain and where there's hurt, it says, yeah, this is not the way things are supposed to be, but lifts my eyes out of it at the exact same point and says, but new life has now come.

[30 : 21] And this new life leads to the reclamation of all things. The hope our world deeply needs, the hope I deeply need. And it's not a hope as in a fickle, oh, I really hope this happens one day.

It says, look to the resurrected Jesus who's alive today in these roles. And it allows me to say things like Jesus is with me because he is still the son of God. He is still the savior. He is still the king, and he is still the author of life. And it affirms the whole spectrum of creation, which God therefore shouts over it, my king says this is mine. Live in a way that will restore it to the fullness of who he is today for each one of us. So I'm going to pray, and then the band are going to come up. Yeah. Father, I thank you that the sign that you give us through the resurrection is more than a sign. It is a vision and a truth of what life can be, often the life that we hope for, and that Jesus acts as not just a pointer, but the bridge itself into that life.

Father, where there's places in our heart and in our life and in our communities even, where we could be mocked easily for thinking we believe this type of thing, would you help us to consider actually what is life like without these things? It's to be pitied.

Help us not to be people who are pitied, but actually live in the joy and the hope of the new life that you bring us through the resurrection, a new life that is here now today, but also is still to come in its fullest expression. And when we think of that, when we meditate on that, would you allow us to worship you as a response? In gratitude, because who of any of us, even the best of humans cobbled together could not make this happen. The best of what we offer is nothing in comparison to a God who goes before us and says, trust me, the call has always been to trust you, Lord.

So help us to trust you, Father, and to worship you as resurrected brothers and sisters who live in the new life, and help us to call that new life out in one another, to live in a way that honors you and loves our neighbor well. I ask that in Jesus' name. Amen.