



OUR RESURRECTION

Part 13 of 1st Corinthians

Pastor Mark Driscoll | 1 Corinthians 15:12-34 | April 02, 2006

A brush of idealism paints the 1st-century church as a nostalgic example of community and perfection. The congregation in Corinth, however, was anything but ideal. Rather than sharing their possessions, the Corinthians would sue each other to get more stuff. Rather than eating meals together, the Corinthians would cut in line during communion to get drunk off the wine. And rather than communal singing, the Corinthians had communal sex. I'm A.J. Hamilton with Mars Hill Church in Seattle. In this sermon series, Pastor Mark Driscoll teaches on the letter known as 1 Corinthians, which the Apostle Paul wrote to untangle the many moral and theological knots the Corinthian church created.

In addressing their sin, Paul provides some of the richest theological sections of the entire New Testament. After listening to the following sermon, e-mail any questions or comments to feedback@marhillchurch.org. To automatically receive Mars Hill audio programming, subscribe to our podcast available at marhillchurch.org. And now, here's Pastor Mark with "Our Resurrection", the thirteenth sermon in a series, "Christians Gone Wild: 1 Corinthians."

We have been going through 1 Corinthians, and the book does have some order; it opens with the cross and it ends with the empty tomb. In the middle Paul answers a series of questions, trying to untangle some theological knots in the church at Corinth, and so it's not necessarily in chronological order. So what I'm going to do for the next few weeks is jump forward to 1 Corinthians 15. It is perhaps the most lengthy treatment of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in all of Scripture, so felt it was appropriate to examine that chapter over the course of a few weeks leading up to Easter. So if you've got a Bible you can go to 1 Corinthians 15:12-34. If not, you should've gotten a Loop Notes on the way in, which will also have the verses. I'll go ahead and pray, and we will get right to work.

So, God, we ask today as we prepare for the coming of the Easter season that the resurrection of Jesus would be central on our hearts and minds. For those who perhaps are unconvinced, I pray they would be convinced. For those who are convinced, I pray they would live in light of the resurrection of Jesus with a hope of eternity and the forgiveness of since in the present – and so, God, as we study, for this to become a reality for us as a people. We invite the Holy Spirit to teach us, lead us, guide us, instruct us, and to take the words of Scripture, which he has inspired to be written, and illuminate and apply them to us. We ask this in Jesus' good name. Amen.

Well, as we get into it today we'll be dealing with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, his crucifixion and resurrection being the most important event in two parts in all of human history. And there is a rumor afoot that Christians don't agree on anything, and Christians do agree, amazingly, on the most important things: that Jesus lived, that Jesus died, that Jesus rose. It doesn't matter if you ask a Catholic, a Protestant, or an Orthodox Christian. Whatever their team may be, whatever denomination or tradition, whatever language, tribe, color, tongue, race nation, translation of the Bible, theological persuasion, every Christian answers, "Yes, Jesus lived. Yes, Jesus died. Yes, Jesus rose." We all agree on that.

Secondary and additional matters we will disagree over, but on that we are well unified, because that is the essence of what it means to be Christian: the worshiping of the resurrected Jesus Christ as the only God. And as we get into it today, I want to help you to see why this is exactly, exactly what history proves to be the case, and proves to be trustworthy and true and reliable and good. And so before getting into the text, let me just summarize some of the primary lines of reasoning why we believe that Jesus rose from death; in fact, why we know that Jesus rose from death.

The first is that Jesus lived. This is a historical fact, incontrovertible. In Jesus' day, it was Greeks, Romans and Jews that were the primary cultural groupings where he was. They all have historians that do not even believe that Jesus Christ is God that do testify that he in fact lived. And so obviously, he did live. It's incontrovertible historical fact. Second fact in the line of reasoning is that Jesus died; that Jesus died in a brutal way on a cross; that he suffered a ruthless beating. If you've seen the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, it's a very accurate portrayal of the beating that Jesus endured; would recommend it for you all in this season of Easter. Jesus nearly died from that.

He then was crucified – nailed to a cross – literally died on that cross; breathed his last. A professional executioner stated that he was in fact dead. To assure us of that, a spear was run under his rib cage into his heart sac, causing his heart to literally burst wide open. Water and blood come pouring out of his heart through his side. Jesus was most certainly dead. He then was buried, and when he was buried he was wrapped in a hundred pounds of spices and linen – basically a sort of mummified state, is how we would see it. He was laid in a cold, empty tomb; no medical care, no treatment. He would've suffocated if he'd lived through the fact that he didn't even have a heart.

This is what's so curious is that religions like Islam say that Jesus didn't die – between the beating, the crucifixion, and the suffocation, he died. I mean it takes a miracle as big as the resurrection to assume that he did not die. So Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus was buried, and then three days later, Jesus

rose from death – Jesus told us repeatedly during his life – it’s recorded in Scripture – “I will die, and three days later I will rise.” He made that guarantee. He said, “I am God, the only way to eternal life, come down from Heaven to forgive sin.” He declared these things, and he said, “If you disbelieve me, wait till I rise from death. That will prove that I am God; that I have come to die, to take away sin.

“And I will rise to give newness of life. If you don’t believe me, just wait and see. The facts will speak for themselves.” Three days later, after his death, just as he promised, Jesus did rise, and the evidence for this is overwhelming. First of all, there is eyewitness testimony that includes people like the doubting Thomas who said, “I won’t believe it till I see it. I wanna see the scar in his side. I want to see the scars in his hands. Jesus was my friend. I want to look him right in the eye, and I want to be sure that he really did rise from death.” And Thomas was convinced he in fact saw that Jesus had risen from death.

Jesus appeared for 40 days to crowds upwards of 500 people at one time. 500 people saw him alive after many of those same people witnessed his crucifixion. He was alive and well. He ate with people. He spoke. He taught. He was available. People touched him; verified that this was in fact true; that he physically rose from death. This includes the testimony of his own mother, who worshiped him as God; his own brothers, who worshiped him as God following his resurrection. They did not see him as God prior to his resurrection. Your mother, worshiping you – your mother spanked you. She knows you’re not sinless and pure. She knows it, right?

Your brothers – your two kid brothers, worshiping you as God; what does that take? It takes a miracle; that takes a resurrection. Not only that, it includes those who were eyewitnesses that were Jesus’ enemies, and enemies of Christianity, like the apostle Paul, who writes this very letter declaring Jesus rose from death. Now, he didn’t always believe that. He believed that Christians were worshiping a false God, and that they were disobeying and dishonoring the Ten Commandments; that they were worshiping a false God. And so he gave his life to murdering Christians, and he went from a murderer of Christians to a pastor of Christians.

What does that take? A miracle. What was that miracle? The resurrection. It would be no different than today if we go home and turn on the TV, and Osama bin Laden is on saying, “I am so sorry. Jesus came down, said to knock it off, he’s God. I burned the Koran, but I’ve been reading Galatians and I really feel bad about my legalism. And I’m gonna be planting bin Laden Bible Church here in the Middle East; would love you all to come, and I’ll lay hands and pray over you. And for all the Christian families that I’ve caused grief for, please come and accept my apologies. Let’s break bread and take communion together to remember the forgiveness of sins.”

You would say, “Something happened. Something unforeseen occurred.” Yeah – Jesus came down and smacked him around. That’s exactly what happened to Paul. Jesus came down, said, “I really am alive. You really are wrong. You need to change teams and now be a pastor, not a murderer, of Christians.” So the evidence is unbelievable; hundreds of people at a time. Enemies, friends, families, all saw him, and said, “Yes, indeed – he did die, and he is alive.” What happened then is that people began worshiping Jesus as God, and if you were an orthodox Jew, to worship any God but the real God would get you in hell. So they needed incontrovertible evidence to worship Jesus as the one true God. That evidence was the resurrection.

Christians started practicing baptism, which is showing that Jesus lived, died, was buried, and rose to cleanse me from sin, and that one day, like Jesus, I will die and be buried, but I too will rise like Jesus. Christians began partaking of communion to remember the body and blood of Jesus; that he died and rose to take away their sin, to love and forgive, to embrace them. Additionally, at this time we know from history that the tomb of Jesus was not enshrined. When someone who is holy or dearly loved dies, people visit that tomb to memorialize them – to leave flowers and cards and gifts, to sing songs, to weep, to leave commemorative memorabilia of that person’s life.

And that didn’t happen at Jesus’ tomb. Why – because he wasn’t there. There was no reason to go to the tomb. If you wanted to see Jesus, you could just go see Jesus. You didn’t need to go to the tomb. He was no longer there; he was very much alive. Additionally, Christians started meeting on Sunday. Jews had forever met on Saturday, and all of a sudden these Jews who saw that Jesus was the fulfillment of their longing and their Old Testament Messiah started disobeying one of the Ten Commandments, no longer worshiping on Saturday, but instead moving their day of worship to Sunday, because that was the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And then lastly, Christianity comes into existence where today billions of people on earth gather to worship Jesus Christ as the only true God. He is the most worshiped, revered person and God in all of human history. Christianity is the largest religion in the history of the world. All of which is in his wake, and by God’s grace, we are a part of. Those are the lines of reason and evidence. And if you say, “Well, I don’t believe those lines of reason and evidence, then what you must come up with is some other explanation for all of these effects; some other cause for all of these effects. How do enemies of Jesus become worshipers of Jesus? How did Jesus’ own family members? How did total strangers? How do his sworn opponents come to worship him as God?

How do non-Christians just telling the news of the day say that he lived and died – Greek, Roman and Jew? How in the world do you get billions of people to worship Jesus, to start doing so on a Sunday, to practice baptism and communion in his honor, if you don’t have an empty tomb? And some say, today it is popular for some to say, “Well, that was a myth fabricated by his followers,” and the question is: for what purpose? What did they gain? They were homeless, beaten, hated, and murdered – there’s no incentive. There’s no motivation to tell that kind of lie. Additionally, they believed that if they were lying they would go to hell. So who tells a lie that gets you homeless, hated, beaten, murdered publicly, and sent to hell?

No one conjures up that kind of lie, and if it is a lie, multiple people telling it simultaneously don’t all continue to tell it without one of them recanting to save their own skin. Yet none did, and men like Peter were crucified upside-down saying, “It is in fact true, and I will die for this truth.” That being said, Christianity is founded on the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You take away the resurrection of Jesus, there is no Christianity. There is no faith. There is no eternal life. There is no hope. Paul was writing to a church of young Christians in a hip, cool, urban city like ours, who had

all went to college and had a lot of perspectives. Took world religion classes, and lots of isms, you know – post-modernism, pluralism, perspectivism.

And they were all thinking, “You know, the resurrection may or may not be true. Why does it really matter? Who really cares? Isn’t it the life of Jesus, not the death and resurrection of Jesus that is really primary and paramount?” Paul seeks to address that beginning in verse 12. He says, “Here is what we lose if Jesus didn’t rise from the dead. If Jesus is dead, here’s what we lose.” “But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead,” verse 12, “how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” They were saying, “We’re not gonna rise. We’re just gonna be plant food, go in the ground, that’s the end.” He said, “If nobody rises, then how do you account for the resurrection of Jesus?”

“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 then found to be false witnesses” – liars – “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 to be pitied more than all men.”

Here is what Paul is saying: if Jesus Christ is still dead, and his bones lay in the ground somewhere, and he really did not rise, here is what we lose. First of all, you and I and everyone else will be defeated by death; none of us will defeat death. Right – death is our enemy. We hate death. That’s why we buckle up, we have airbags, we drink bottled water; we don’t want to die. We want to live. And death is our enemy. It doesn’t matter what we do; eventually it beats us. So we can prolong our life, but we can’t extend it indefinitely. Invariably, the ground wins, and we’re in it. We die, and it’s over. And Jesus is the only one who has conquered death. He has come back from death. And so if Jesus didn’t conquer death, no one will conquer death. It is impossible.

Some of you say, “Well, I may have a chance of rising from the dead.” Are you any better than Jesus? I mean none of us would say, “I’m better than Jesus. If he didn’t make it, it’s because he’s junior varsity; and varsity is here, and I will definitely beat the grave.” You will not beat the grave. I don’t care if they freeze you cryogenically, bring you out, put you in a microwave on defrost – you’re not gonna make it. You’re dead, right? You’re all gonna be metaphysically challenged – dead. And death is gonna beat you. And if death beat Jesus, death beats everybody. And if Jesus didn’t defeat death, no one will.

Secondly, if Jesus is still dead, the apostles’ teaching and preaching is worthless. It is lies. It is fable, myth, folklore, and folly. We should take our Bible – particularly the New Testament – chuck it and burn it. Waste of time, waste of energy, bunch of lies, because the whole of the New Testament is the explanation of the implications of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And if he didn’t rise, then there’s nothing to talk about. There is no Christianity. There is no church. There is no truth. There is no forgiveness of sin. There is no Heaven. There is no hell. There is no hope. There is no point. If you read the book of Acts, the constant preaching and teaching of the early church was the resurrection of Jesus, and if he didn’t rise, they’re all liars. Don’t listen to a bunch of liars.

Thirdly, if Jesus is dead, Christianity is worthless. It’s good for nothing. It accomplishes nothing. It is no hope. It is no help. Because Christianity says Jesus is God, who became a human being to identify with us; lived a sinless life in our place; died on the cross as a substitute to pay the penalty for our sins. Three days later he rose to conquer Satan, sin, and death, to forgive us, to allow us to go through the grave into Heaven forever with him. And if he’s still dead, it’s all worthless. It doesn’t matter. There’s no hope. If Jesus is dead, we’re all doomed, and Christianity is a waste of time. He furthermore says that if Jesus is still dead, sin cannot, will not, be forgiven.

The wage for sin is death. The consequence of sin is death. God is the living God. You sin, unplug yourself from the living God, you die. Unless you plug back into the living God, you are not alive. You die, and you’re dead, and you’re separated from God forever. And he is saying without Jesus there is no forgiveness of sin. If Jesus didn’t die on the cross to take away my sins, and rise to make it so, then there is no forgiveness of sin. We’re all sinners – stuck, can’t stop sinning; not perfect, imperfect; not living, dying; not connected to God, disconnected from God. He goes on to say, fifthly, any Christian who died in hope of rising like Jesus – they learned that Jesus rose from death, and if I love Jesus, I’ll rise like Jesus too.

And I’ll live forever in a new glorified body, without the stain of sin and the curse. And this’ll be wonderful, and I can go to Heaven. Paul says those people are just plain old dumb, naïve, gullible fools, who are taken by con men and crooks that told them that there was life after death, and there was hope on the other side of the grave. So your grandma, who died on her deathbed and said, “Kids, it’s okay. Don’t cry. Grammy’s going to be with Jesus, and it’s gonna be okay.” And then she died – she was an idiot. Grammy was an idiot, because now Grammy’s plant food, not with Jesus. If Jesus is still dead, then she isn’t gonna rise because Jesus didn’t rise.

She’s not gonna be with Jesus because Jesus is dead. So she’ll be with Jesus in the grave, and that is all. Grammy was an idiot; too bad for Grammy. She had her hope in the wrong place. We got our hopes up for no reason. And then he says that in addition, there is no hope beyond the grave. Right, this life is all you’ve got. Isn’t that despairing? How many of you, your life stinks, and how many, it really stinks – because those are your options in life, right? Life is frustrating, right? This is how sin shows up – it’s life is frustrating. Nothing works, right? Your phone works everywhere, except for your house and your office – this is your cell phone.

Yours doesn’t work, but the guy in front of you on the freeway, his works fine, and he can’t drive. That’s the curse, right? That’s the curse. You mow your grass, and it grows weeds, not grass. Weeds grow where the grass is supposed to grow. This is life. Life is frustrating. Your e-mail always works except for when you need it. It gets all the spam, but not the things you wanted. This is life under the earth; this is life, rather, under the sun on the earth. It’s cursed. It’s fallen. It’s frustrating. Life doesn’t work. Everything’s broken.

The people you love die; the people you hate, they’re fine. That’s life. And what Paul says is if there’s no hope beyond this life, isn’t that sad? If Jesus

lived a life, got murdered, and died, the end, then that's life. Life stinks and then you die – the end. Paul says, "There is no hope." Don't say things like, "They're in a better place now." A hole is not a better place. That's the way that it is. And then he says that Christians are pitiful fools because they worship a dead guy thinking that he's gonna give them eternal life. Now, some of you have heard that it doesn't matter whether it's true or false insofar as religion goes, as long as it works for you. This is very subjective.

"Oh, you believe in Jesus? That works for you? That gives you hope? That makes you a better person? Oh, nice – that is so nice! I'm glad that works for you." What Paul is saying is if Jesus is dead, it doesn't work, because you die and you don't get to rise. You don't get to be forgiven. You don't get to be with God. You don't go to Heaven. The problem with religion is you don't know if it works until it's too late, right? At the end you go, "It's working. It works well. I'm in hell. It didn't work like I was hoping. I was a happy Buddhist, and now I'm a hot Buddhist. It's warm here." You know, our faith is not just for this life; it's for eternity. And forever is a really long time.

So even if your religion works a bit now – makes you feel better – if at the end, it doesn't work forever, it really doesn't work. So it's not about the subjectivity of, "It makes me feel better today." It's about the objectivity of, "Is this going to get me through the grave? Will it get me to the other side of eternity?" And if Jesus is dead, the answer is "no." If Jesus didn't pass through into eternity, then none of us will, and we're pitiful fools who have no hope, and we should just embrace the narcissism that is life. We should just embrace the inevitability that life is bleak and terrible and short and awful and painful and horrible, and we should stop medicating ourselves with false hope.

Paul says that's why it matters. If Jesus is dead, what do we lose? Everything! Hope in this life, and the promise of eternal life, and everything in the middle that truly matters to the human soul. Secondly, then, he goes on to say, "But, since Jesus did rise, what do we gain?" If Jesus didn't rise, what do we lose; since Jesus did rise, what do we gain? Beginning in verse 20: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead." Now, who's writing this – Paul, the guy who hated Christians and murdered them. Jesus came back and showed up and demonstrated that he was still alive. You are looking at the testimony of someone who hated Jesus, and he says he's alive. He was convinced, and we should be too.

"The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." The first, and the best; and "those who have fallen asleep" – I love how he explains Christians. We don't die. We nap – that's what we do. We get a blankie. We roll up on our mat for a bit. That's how it goes for Christians, right? Now, Paul says later, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," so you die, your soul – the immaterial part of your being – goes to be with God. One day he'll tell us that then our soul will reenter our body, our body will rise from death, and we will have an eternal, glorified, sinless, good – I hope taller – body to enter into God's eternal Kingdom with; that would be great.

And what he is saying is that in the meantime our body lays in the ground as if we were sleeping while our soul is with the Lord until they are reunited in the eternal state. So we don't die in the same way that people who don't know God die. Our body rests until we retrieve it with our soul. He goes on to say, "For" – verse 21 – "since death came through a man" – which man was that? Adam, the father of us all – "the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man." Which man? Jesus Christ. "For as in Adam" – our father – "all die" – all right. Adam was our father; he sinned. Now in us is the seed of rebellion, that Adamic nature that causes us to be born dead to God, alive to sin, spiritual rebels.

Some of you say, "I don't think I'm dead to God. I don't think I'm born bad. I think I'm a good person." That's how bad it is. You're deceived into thinking that you're a good person. You say, "Well, I'm not bad." Okay – are you perfect? "No, I'm not perfect." Well, God sees two categories: perfect, and sinner. You say, "Well, I'm not perfect." Well, you're in the other junk drawer as sinner; that's the one you're in. That's the one we're all born into. We're born into the box of sinner; descendants of Adam with an Adamic, rebellious nature imprinted on us – as the psalmist says, "Wicked from our mother's womb."

He goes on to say, "For as in Adam all die," verse 21 – "so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn; Christ the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come" – the end of time. Then Jesus is coming back. Everything will be straightened out – "when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. Verse 25: "First he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." He quotes Psalm 110. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." That's our enemy. Death is our enemy. "For he has put everything under his feet" – he quotes Psalm 8.

"Now, when it says everything has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him" – that's God the Father – "who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all." Here's what he's saying – let me sum it up briefly. He has a lot to say. Let me make it as succinct as I can. If Jesus died and did not rise, he answered the question, what do we lose? Since Jesus died and did rise, what do we gain? Here is what we gain: first of all, we gain a resurrection. I don't know about you – I don't like being sick. I don't like being older than I was when I felt good.

I don't like the effects of the curse where you get injured, and there's pain and surgery and debilitation. And this is the effects of sin on the body and on creation. There will be a day when we die, and then we – like Jesus – who trust in him, will rise; will get a resurrected body – what awaits us is a resurrection, which means for the Christian this life is as bad as it gets. And for the non-Christians this life is as good as it gets. So for us who believe, we look forward to eternity, and the resurrected state. No more tears. No more pain. No more sin. No more curse. No more death. No more lies. No more evil. No more funerals; none of that – gone – the resurrected state.

Secondly, we who believe in Jesus, because he did rise, belong to Jesus, not Adam. That means we believe to life. We belong to life and not death. We belong to God, not Satan. We belong to Heaven, and not hell. That we are all under Adam or under Jesus Christ; that we're born under Adam, and we're born again under Jesus Christ. That none of us is free-willing, none of us is independent. There are 27 religions and 56 perspectives and 137 ways – there is the children of Adam, who die as sinners, and there are the children of God, who die forgiven of their sin. The children of Adam go to

hell. The children of God go to Heaven. That's it. That's it.

And we get to pass from being born in Adam to being born again in Jesus by trusting in Jesus who died for our sin, to take it away, and rose to conquer our enemy of death. Thirdly, we will live forever with Jesus in his Kingdom. See, I get frustrated on earth. If you're a Christian, you should be frustrated. See, the world is a frustrating, cursed, fallen, sinful place. Any of you who have ever complained, who have ever been disappointed, who have ever been frustrated, who have ever been let down, who have ever shed a tear, who have ever voted in an election, who have ever signed a protest or a petition – all of you with your actions agree that life on this earth is not the way that it should be; that things need to change.

Well, the good news is that there is another kingdom coming, and that kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this earth. And that kingdom is ruled by the king Jesus, who is loving, benevolent, and good, and in that kingdom there will be no sin, no death, no mourning, no weeping. And it says that God will wipe our tears, and we will never have to cry again. For those of you who are frustrated with life on this earth, it's because God has put a seed in you – a seed of anticipation for his Kingdom. Ecclesiastes says that God has set eternity in the hearts of men and women; that we long for eternity. We're never satisfied with this life.

It doesn't matter if we get married and have kids and make money and buy a house and pursue our dreams and finish our degree and obtain our career. At the end of the day, there's still something missing. That missing thing in us is eternity with God in his Kingdom. No matter how much life comes together, it's still not what we expected. It's still not what we anticipated. It's still not what we long for. It's still not what we desire, because it's still not the Kingdom, and we have yet to see the King. He says if Jesus did rise, then he's our King, and if Jesus did rise, he has now entered into the Kingdom, and he is coming again to establish his Kingdom on the earth, and that he will be the King.

We won't need wars. We won't need politicians. We won't need elections. We'll have the benevolent dictatorship of the loving Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, and the only people in his Kingdom will be people who love him, and who obey him, and who serve him, which means we can take the doors off our house, and friends can come in at any time. That we can let our children go out and play, and we won't need a fence around the yard because nothing will happen to them. It means that our loved ones can be trusted when we're not present, because they're not going to sin against us. It means that no one will die, and sin will not be committed, and the effects of sin will not be felt.

Paul says that that is the future of the children of God, who follow in the wake of the resurrection of Jesus, who trust in him alone for the forgiveness of sins. They, too, will follow behind him. He went first – firstfruits – first and best – they will be in his wake, brought into his Kingdom to experience his blessing. Paul says what do we lose if Jesus is dead? Everything. What do we gain if Jesus is alive? Everything. And then he summarizes why this matters, beginning in verse 29. "Now, if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people getting baptized for them?" We'll deal with that.

How many of you have had a Mormon come to your house? Maybe two young men, very nice, clean-cut, white shirts – (knocking) – "We'd like to talk to you." You're like, "Okay, I see it coming. I see it coming. Nice bike – okay, give me your best shot. Give me your best shot." If you ask them, what they will say is that part of their doctrine in the Mormon church is that this verse means that if you're alive and a relative dies, and they're in hell or something of that nature, that if you get baptized by proxy for them in their name, they'll get snatched out of hell, taken to Heaven, forever.

That's why they have massive genealogies in the Mormon church – so they can get all the names of all their relatives and get them out of hell, right? The question is: is that what that text teaches? First thing I would say is beware of any religion that started in America with a white guy in the Midwest, as a general rule, okay? Just as a general rule. If a white guy in the middle of the country goes, "I got a religion," do not join, okay? Just don't. There's a big debate about what this verse exactly means. It's widely debated, and let me say this: first of all, it is unclear. "Is it untrue?" No, it's true – it's unclear. "Well, how could it be true and unclear?"

There's a lot of things that are true and unclear, right? Like a whole bunch of them, right? Like I hit "send" and information goes to Cuba. That's true – and I don't know how that works. That's different for me. There's a lot that I don't understand, right? There's a lot that I don't understand. It doesn't make it untrue. It makes it unclear or hard for me to understand, because I went to public school. So what he's saying here is unclear, though it's not untrue. It is true, but it's unclear, right? That's why Paul says later – well, a little earlier, in 1 Corinthians 13, that we see dimly; that everything's not totally clear yet, in part because we're sinners and our eyesight is not all that clear.

Peter, who was trained by Jesus for three years, leader of the disciples, wrote two books of the Bible, in 2 Peter 3 says that Paul writes Scripture in his letters, and they contain things that are what – hard to understand. So if you've ever read Paul and said, "Huh?" so did Peter, the leader of the disciples, trained by Jesus, who wrote two books of the Bible – you're fine. You're in good company if you read Paul and go, "I don't get it – tongues? Predestination? Baptism for the dead? I don't get it." Peter's like, "I don't get it either." You're okay; you're in good company right? So we don't need to understand it for it to be true – it's still true.

But what we come to now is – I'm gonna give you a big word called perspicuity. That big word means when you're reading the Bible, if you have something that's unclear, interpret it in light of what is clear. And it also means do not build a doctrine on a text that is unclear; cults do that. Christians take majority verses, look at the issue, and then interpret those that are less clear in light of those that are more clear. Okay, now, what the Bible does say is it's appointed once for someone to die, and then the judgment, in Hebrews 9. So you die, you get judged, you go to Heaven or hell – that's it. It says also throughout Scripture that it is by grace we have been saved, through faith – personal faith. That we personally trust in Jesus – not that someone trusts in Jesus for us.

Meaning the line into Heaven is single-file. You don't get to bring someone else with you. You don't get to choose for them. They have to make their own decision as to whether or not they will love, follow and serve Jesus. So is it possible you could be baptized for a dead relative? I don't think that is

what it is saying. In fact, I'm certain that's what it's not saying. The question is: what does it mean? Well, there's a lot of – we'll now use another big word – exegetical options. There's interpretive options at this point. I'll give you my scenario. I think he's saying that they're being baptized for the dead, and I think this is what he is saying: that there were those people who lived a Christian life of faith, and that as they died they died as Christians.

They died as Christians, with hope. Paul says elsewhere that we grieve, but not like people who don't know God and don't have any hope. If you know God, and you're on your deathbed, you die differently than those who don't know God. Those who don't know God are terrified. Those who don't know God are afraid. Those who don't know God are uncertain. Those who know God wear hats and party favors, and can't wait to hear the theme song from The Jeffersons and start moving on up. They die different, right? They die different. So, what happened is I believe these people who loved Jesus said, "Jesus rose from the grave, and he took away my sin, and I'm gonna die now. And I'm gonna see Jesus, and one day I'm gonna rise."

And maybe then they even preached the gospel to those gathered around their deathbed. So Grammy's laying down, and there are all the grandkids. "Grammy, we're going to miss you, Grammy!" She said, "I'm going to be with Jesus. You kids repent of sin. You're gonna go to hell. You'll never see Grammy again." Grammy's got the gift of evangelism and a good sense of timing, because this is a wonderful opportunity to close the deal on the grandkids. So Grammy tells the grandkids, "I'm going to see Jesus. You'd better repent of sin and trust in Jesus if you ever want to see Grammy again." So all the kids are like, "Okay, Grammy," and she leads them to Jesus.

Boom! Head hits the pillow. Grammy's gone off to the eternal state. And then, years later, the kids grow up, and they go to college, and they get all full of themselves because they read books with footnotes. And they have a world religion prof who says there's lots of perspectives. And then they come to their pastor, and their pastor is meeting with them, and they tell their pastor, "We don't think that there's a resurrection of the dead." And the pastor says, "Then why did you get baptized, professing faith in Jesus, so that you, like Grammy, could rise one day and spend forever with her and Jesus? Why did you say you were a Christian? Why did you get baptized?"

"To show that your Grammy's gonna rise, and you're gonna rise, because Jesus rose? Why did you get baptized if you don't believe in the resurrection? Why do you get baptized in the honor of your Grammy who loved Jesus if you don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus?" I think that's exactly what is happening here. The second point – and it gets complicated. He goes on, verse 30: "And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I die every day – I mean that, brothers – just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained?"

"If the dead are not raised, let us eat, drink, and tomorrow we die." He quotes Dave Matthews right there in your Bible. It's a great verse. What he's saying is this: if Jesus is dead, why am I not naked and drunk? Amen? How many of you were until you realized Jesus rose from the dead? You're like, "Dang it, gotta put down the Wild Turkey and find my pants." That's what happens. If Jesus is dead, and there's no hell, and there's no Heaven, and there's no judge, and there's no eternity, and there's no judgment, and there's no consequence, what in the world are we doing? What are you doing? I mean there are beers to drink. There are naked people to run around with. There are bad guys to shoot. There are bodies to hide. There are things to do.

Forgive your enemies (raspberry) – not if there's no hell. I will lock them in my house, unplug the lamp, and (buzzing sound) just because I can. There's no hell, except for my house. That's how it would go for me. I promise you, now, if there's no hell, I'm different. Right? Right now this isn't a church. This is a different place if there's no hell, right? How many of you truly – it's hell that keeps you from doing certain things, right? It does. Hell is a big motivator, you know. "What, are you trying to scare the hell out of me?" Yeah, we are trying to scare the hell out of you, and you out of hell. That's what we're trying to do.

"Are you saying it's gonna be hot?" Yeah – forever. "Oh." Find your pants. What he's saying is this: why go to church? Why give 10 percent of your income? Why pray? Why read your Bible? Why forgive your enemies? Why get married as a virgin? Why stay faithfully married? Why? Why not shoot your dog, and your kids, and your wife, and her dog, and her kids? Why not? Well, if you don't believe there's a consequence eternally, then you will think to yourself, "I can do whatever I want. As long as I don't get caught, it doesn't matter." I was at Disneyland this week with my oldest three kids, and there was a kid who was a junior high kid – you know, future mass murderer as far as I could tell. He was wearing a T-shirt that said, "It's not a crime if you don't get caught."

And he was in front of us in line, and I went to the back of the line, because I've got my three kids. I'm thinking, "I don't want to see him field-test that philosophical worldview here at Disneyland." "It's not a crime unless you get caught." If there's no hell, guess what? It's not a crime unless you get caught. As long as you can get away with it, nobody catches you, no harm, no foul, no consequence. And if you don't think that God knows all things, and God's gonna judge you in the end, and Heaven and hell are on the line – whether or not you repent of sin or you continue with a life of sin, I assure you this: you will sin like crazy.

Paul says Christianity is just a dumb waste of time if we're not gonna get to go to Heaven. If this is all we got, we should be drunk and naked right now, not wasting precious time. That's the truth. That's the truth. And then he concludes in verse 33: "Do not be misled. 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" He quotes a truism from their day. "Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning, for there are some who are ignorant of God – I say this to your shame." What does he say the problem is? He says some people say, "I don't know if I believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because I have lots of academic questions. I read The DaVinci Code. I took a philosophy class. I have lots of questions, and I'm very smart."

You know what – it is really not an academic objection to resist the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the hardness of heart that at the end of the day is truly the issue; that's what he says. These people are questioning the resurrection – not denying it, questioning it, because what are they doing? Sinning. Sinning. And at the end of the day, they're left with a decision: if I believe in the resurrection, then I have to repent of sin and obey Jesus. But if I can somehow convince myself that there is no resurrection, then I don't have to stop sinning, because nothing is going to happen after I die. I'll just be plant

food, and nothing will occur to me. This is the logical outgrowth of not believing in eternal life.

And the post-modern condition is such that there is an obsession with the present, and there is an ignorance of the future. We should not have a short-term trajectory. We should have a Biblical mindset that eternity is a long time, and it is there for us all, either as God's friends or as God's enemies. In God's Kingdom or in God's dungeon; and that is what awaits us all. And so here he says the real problem is not that you're super-smart; not that the evidence isn't there, because the evidence is there. Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose. Eyewitnesses, Christian and non, all testify to these historical, incontrovertible, objective, certain truths.

Some people look at those truths and say, "But I don't believe them." What they are saying is, "I don't like them." There is a vast difference between not having sufficient information or evidence, and not having a willing heart to receive those truths. For some, these truths are like bullets off a rock because the heart is as hard as stone, and they say, "I do not believe." Or perhaps, "I just question Heaven and hell, the eternal state, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Why – "Because I like having sex with my girlfriend; because I like having sex with my boyfriend; because I don't want to forgive my enemies. I want to stay bitter, angry, vengeful, mean-spirited, and seek retribution.

"Because I don't want to stop drinking; I don't want to stop getting high. I don't want to stop being a freeloader or a loaf. I don't want to stop ripping people off. I don't want to stop doing whatever I want. I essentially want to be my own God, and I want to do whatever I want. And I don't want any other God to judge me, to sentence me, to look at my life, to evaluate it in light of some criteria that is not my own. I want to decide what is right and wrong, and I want to live according to my own judgment. And at the end, I just want to die, and I don't want anyone to have any authority over me. In the middle, I don't want anyone to tell me what to do. I don't want anyone to have any right to decide whether or not I go to Heaven or hell.

"I want to be my own God, and I want to do what I want, and I want to go where I please, and I don't want to pay any price." That's the issue. That's the issue. Paul says, "Come to your senses. You would exchange Jesus for yourself? You would exchange Heaven for hell? You would exchange slavery to sin in exchange for freedom in Christ? You would exchange holiness for disobedience? You would exchange life for death?" Paul says, "Are you that foolish? Are you that foolish? Are you that foolish to think that simply because you question the truth, or reject the truth, that the truth no longer ceases to be the truth?" He says, "You know what – bad company corrupts good character.

"You're reading the wrong books. You're listening to the wrong teachers. You're running with the wrong friends. If what you are being encouraged to believe, how you are being encouraged to behave, is to question or deny Jesus and the eternal consequences of repentance of sin and trust in him, then put those books down. Don't return those friends' phone calls. Log off of that website, stop subscribing to that magazine, and come to your senses; come to repentance. Come to Jesus." That's what he's saying. The issue is not that you're smart and have not been convinced. The issue is that you're evil, and you want to be God. That is the issue. It is not the unconvinced mind. It is the hardened heart that resists the resurrection of Jesus and the eternal life that he gives through himself alone.

The good news, however, is this: Jesus Christ is alive. That's the good news. I know everybody bought The DaVinci Code. I know it's number one. I know American loves to hear that Jesus was a nice guy, but he just died, never rose. There's no Heaven, there's no hell, there's no eternal state, there's no judgment, there's no consequence. Wrong book! The Scriptures teach – the eyewitnesses teach – not the white guy 2,000 years later – the eyewitnesses teach – the enemies of Jesus who were converted teach that he rose from death. That he is Lord God and Savior, just like he said. And the good news is that he is alive today.

You know what? You can pray to Jesus, ask him to forgive your sin and make you a Christian today, and you know what he'll do? He'll answer you, because he's alive. You who are Christian, you can pray to Jesus today, and he too will hear and answer you, because he's alive. In a little bit, we're gonna sing to Jesus, and he hears, because he's alive. As we have trouble and need in life, he's there to help us, because he's alive. As things are going well, and we're glad and we're joyous, we have someone to praise – Jesus, because he's alive. And this matters, because you know what, I have seen Jesus change my life, personally. I have gone from non-Christian to Christian. That happened at the age of 19. My whole life is different.

I've seen it change me; transform me. I've seen Jesus absolutely begin this process of remaking me into a different human being. The only reason I'm not still drunk and in bed with a bunch of gals high as a kite right now is because Jesus is alive. And that's the best life there is, and that's the one he's given me. He's changed my life. He's changed my marriage. My wife and I, when we sin, he takes away the sin. He allows intimacy and forgiveness. He gets rid of the shame and the guilt and the death and the hostility. I've seen him change both of us. I've seen him transform my kids. They love Jesus. They're obedient. They love the Lord. They pray.

We're in Disneyland, my 4-year-old kid keeps praying all the way through Disneyland. It's raining – "Jesus, make it not rain." And I'm telling you, then we're riding rides, because it didn't rain for a long time. And he says, "See?" Yeah, okay. All the way through, he's praying; my 4-year-old kid, praying. Praying for his brother, who's back home with Mama because he's too little to go to Disneyland. I see him thinking not just about himself, but his little brother, praying for him. I see him talking to Jesus. I see all my kids talking to Jesus. I've seen Jesus change my kids. I've seen my kids be hard-hearted, frustrated, mean, rude, evil, sons of Adam – sons of something else – and I tell them, "Go to your room and talk to Jesus."

And they come back down, "Jesus said I was wrong, and I'm sorry." And then they cry. I've seen Jesus melt my kids' hard hearts. I've seen Jesus provide for this church. I've seen Jesus grow us from a Bible study to thousands of people. How does that happen? Jesus is alive. I've seen over a hundred churches planted in our network. How does that happen? Jesus is alive. And I'll tell you the latest, greatest news – I'll save the good news for this closing story. I grew up in south Seattle, originally between west Seattle and more down by White Center, toward west Seattle. My family moved to SeaTac when I was about ten. I love this area. Went off to college, got saved at 19, came back to plant a church.

I tried to plant Mars Hill Church at this big, fat, huge, cool church building in west Seattle that's the same size as Mars Hill Ballard – 40,000 square feet,

13 to 1,400 seats. I tried to plant Mars Hill there, because that was my old stomping grounds. The church there – I preached there a few times. They said, “No, we’re not gonna give it to you. You can’t plant your church here.” It was a small, dying church. Since that time the church died. We started Mars Hill over on this side of town. A church planter went in there to plant. He joined our Acts 29 network. His daughter was a member of this church. He loves the Lord. He used to run the inn up at Western Washington University. His name is Bill Clem, a dear brother and a good pastor.

He started the church there named Doxa. They’ve done almost a million dollars worth of work on the building, because it needed a lot of renovation – still needs some. They planted a church there that’s up to just under 200 people, and his wife has been struggling with cancer for four years. Thankfully, she’s in remission, but the church and the pastor, they need a break; they need some help. And so we’ve been talking, and we’ve reached a gentleman’s agreement we’ll be drawing up legally. They’re going to shut down and just give us everything – 1,400-seat building, 40,000 square feet, a couple hundred Christians, an opportunity to start Mars Hill West Seattle for our ten-year anniversary this fall.

Multi-million dollar gift; multi-million dollar gift – they’re saying – we now have 600 people that we can identify come from west and south Seattle. We’re just gonna go after west Seattle now, in a 40,000 square foot, 13-1,400 seat building, that is zoned for church use, so we don’t have to fight any of the zoning issues. Our additional building we’re waiting to start construction on a block away, permits have been pushed out to the fall. We’ve been delayed on that. We’ve been saying, “Jesus, why are we delayed? We need seats. We want to do something big for our ten-year anniversary.” And then Jesus says, “Well, how about a free multi-million dollar building that’s already zoned for use today?” “Oh, cool – why not?”

And the question is: why does this happen? What’s the answer – the tomb’s empty. That’s it. Everything else – effect. Cause – tomb’s empty. Effect – everything else. The tomb is empty. Jesus is alive. That changes everything, does it not? Does it not? It changes our life. It changes our death. It changes our eternal life. It changes everything. And by God’s grace, as we go to west Seattle, it’ll change west Seattle, and that’s what we want to see. That’s what we hope to see. That’s what we expect to see. The question is: do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ for your sin? Do you believe that eternal life is in him alone? Have you given your life to Jesus? Are you following in his wake?

We’re gonna give you a chance to respond, to partake of communion. If you become a Christian today, take communion for the first time with the rest of us, remembering the body and blood of Jesus. And as you get up out of your seats to take communion, you’re showing that together we’re gonna rise one day out of our graves as part of the large church, the family of God, to walk into the eternal Kingdom to be with Jesus. We’re gonna give of our tithes and offerings, because we get to, not because we have to; to see the work of the message of the Gospel of the resurrection of Jesus go as far as it possibly can, to reach as many people as we can possibly serve.

And then we’re going to sing, and we’re going to celebrate. Why – because Jesus Christ is alive. He’s our God. WE worship him. He is wonderful, glorious and good, and one day he is coming again to establish his Kingdom. And that Kingdom will be marked by feasting and partying and celebration – the good time to end all good times – without sin. And so in worship together, we’re sort of practicing for the coming of the Kingdom of God. We’re getting ourselves ready for the adoration of the resurrected Jesus. We invite you to join us in that today, and I will transition us in prayer.

Father God, thank you for being a good God, a loving God, the only God, the true God, the real God, and for being our God. And Jesus, I thank you for coming from eternity into history, becoming a human being, suffering temptation, opposition, and death; for rising from death to conquer Satan, sin, and death to give eternal life; to give salvation to us, who by grace have faith in you. Jesus, it is my prayer that none would hear this message and reject your kindness; that they would not allow the hardness of their heart to destroy the eternity of their life. And Jesus, I thank you for all that you have left in your wake.

I thank you for all of the goodness you’ve done for me personally, you’ve done for my family, you have done for this church; for your continued provision and blessing. May we never deviate from the centrality of the truth that the tomb is empty, and all things are possible, because our God reigns. Amen.

You’ve been listening to the Mars Hill Church sermon series “Christians Gone Wild: 1 Corinthians”, taught by Pastor Mark Driscoll.