

## **“THE FACTS OF THE RESURRECTION”**

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

IN THE NAME of Jesus Christ, who said, “I am the resurrection and the life;” fellow redeemed:

The warning was clear: **“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die,”** Genesis 2:16-17. In Hebrew this last phrase, “You will surely die,” is literally “dying you will die.” With the fall into sin, mankind’s existence became a dead, dying existence.

And what better describes our world than dead and dying? Globally, there are 105 deaths each minute; 6,316 deaths each hour; 151,600 deaths each day; and 55.3 million deaths each year. Consider all the industries and economies related to death and dying: the funeral industry, the medical industry, the insurance industry, the mental health industry, the forensics industry, the military industry, and many more.

Even our entertainment industry is riddled with death. Death in movies. Death in TV programs. Death in novels. Death in song lyrics. According to one study, by the time a child has finished elementary school, he or she will have witnessed 8,000 murders on TV.

But the fall into sin also brought frustration and decay into our world. These too are manifestations of death. Paul wrote in Romans 8:20, **“For the creation was subjected to frustration;”** that is, to failure, worthlessness, emptiness—the thorns, thistles, painful toil, and **“dust you are and to dust you will return”** of Genesis 3.

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 1: **“Meaningless. Meaningless. Utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless. All things are wearisome more than one can say.”** This sense of meaninglessness in life—“What’s the use? Why try? It’s hopeless. I’m a lost cause.”—is what drives so many to drugs, alcohol, abuse, promiscuity, despair, and even suicide. On average, there are 117 suicides each day in the United States.

But enough statistics about death. How has death impacted you personally? How many funerals have you attended? How many obituaries have you read? How many loved ones have you lost: grandparents, mother, father, husband, wife, son, daughter, or friend? Even the death of a beloved family pet can cause severe grief.

Of course, nothing makes death more personal than the knowledge that each of us will die. Each of us. No exceptions, unless the Lord Jesus returns in our lifetime. Paul wrote in Romans 5:12, **“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.”**

You may be thinking, “Please, no more talk about death and dying. It’s Easter. Say something happy.” Yes, it is Easter. But the context of the first Easter, both biblically and geographically, was a cemetery. Nowhere does the resurrection of Jesus Christ have more meaning than amid the realities of death, drying, and a cemetery. And to know the power of Christ’s resurrection—to live in that power—comes from knowing, believing, and applying the facts of the resurrection. What are the facts?

**Fact one: Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead.** The historical Jesus of Nazareth, who “was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate;

was crucified, dead, and buried”—this same Jesus rose triumphantly from the grave on Easter morning.

Does the world believe this? No. The world assigns the resurrection of Jesus Christ as much credibility as the Easter Bunny. Recently, an atheist group called the *Freedom From Religion Foundation* posted billboards timed to coincide with Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The billboards read: YOU KNOW THERE IS NO GOD; WE KNOW YOU ARE RIGHT; and NO ONE DIED FOR YOUR SINS; JESUS CHRIST IS A MYTH.

But in God’s inspired word, the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not myth but divine fact. The resurrection of Jesus is referenced in twenty-two of the twenty-seven New Testament books. All four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—record the resurrection; and not only the resurrection itself, but at least nine separate resurrection appearances in which the risen Jesus walked, talked, ate, was touched, and in one instance, even cooked breakfast for His disciples on the shore of Lake Galilee.

The Book of Acts opens with the words: **“After His suffering, He showed Himself alive to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God,”** Acts 1:3. In First Corinthians Paul listed many who had seen the risen Christ, including **“more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time,”** 1 Corinthians 15:6.

The Bible states clearly and unapologetically that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This is a fact. As Paul wrote in our text: **“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that He was buried; that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,”** 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. And for those who

mock or deny these facts, there is another Bible passage; namely, Romans 3:4, **“Let God be true, and every man a liar.”**

**Fact two: Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be;** that is, the Son of God and the Savior of lost mankind. Paul wrote in Romans 1: **“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding His Son, who as to His human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead.”**

Some insist that Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God. But this is blatantly untrue. In John 8 Jesus told the unbelieving Jews: **“I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am.”** This was not poor sentence construction on the part of Jesus. When He said, **“I am,”** He was claiming the great name of Jehovah for Himself. In Hebrew Jehovah, or more properly YAVEH, means **“I AM.”** It is the same as saying **“I am eternal.”** That the Jews understood Christ’s claim is evident from their immediate attempt to stone Jesus for blasphemy, that is, for claiming to be God.

In John 10:30 Jesus said, **“I and the Father are one,”** meaning one in essence, glory, majesty, and power. Likewise, in Matthew 26, when the beaten and bleeding Jesus was asked by the high priest Caiaphas, **“Tell us if you are the Son of God,”** Jesus replied, **“Yes, it is as you say.”** Indeed, it was for this very reason—His claim to be true God—that Jesus was accused of blasphemy and condemned to death. **“Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘He has spoken blasphemy. Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?’ ‘He is worthy of death,’ they answered,”** Matthew 26:63-66.

Yet, when God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, He vindicated every claim Jesus made about Himself. More than anything else—the miracles, the teaching—the resurrection of Jesus Christ proved that He was exactly who claimed to be: God the Son, God our Savior.

**Fact three: Jesus Christ accomplished what He came to do.** The very first sin and its dreadful consequences were immediately followed by the very first promise of a Savior. **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel,”** Genesis 3:15. Millennia later, the apostle John wrote in his First Epistle: **“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work,”** 1 John 3:8.

Yet, everything Jesus did, said, and suffered in our place would be meaningless without His resurrection; just as Good Friday would be meaningless without Easter Sunday. This is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins,”** 1 Corinthians 15:17.

But when God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, He was declaring in unmistakable terms that He had accepted the atonement Jesus made for our sins; that what Jesus had proclaimed on the cross was in fact true: **“It is finished.”** Salvation had been accomplished.

In resurrecting Jesus, God the Father was assuring each of us: “No matter who you are; no matter what you’ve done; no matter where you’ve been; no matter how long you’ve been away; I have saved you. I have forgiven all your sins for the sake of My son. And His resurrection is the proof.”

**Fact four: Jesus Christ told us the truth.** On at least three occasions Jesus forewarned His disciples of His impending

suffering and death. And each time He spoke of His death, He promised His resurrection. For example, we read in Matthew 16: **“From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”** He spoke nearly identical words in Matthew 17 and Matthew 20.

Yet, what were His disciples doing on the first Easter? Were they worshiping a living Lord or mourning a dead Savior? Many were hiding behind locked doors. The women who hurried to the cemetery to make final arrangements wondered, “Who will roll away the stone?” Mary Magdalene was so distraught that she confused the risen Jesus with the cemetery caretaker. After racing to the cemetery, Peter and John equated the empty tomb with ‘body theft,’ not bodily resurrection. Thomas insisted, **“Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my fingers where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it,”** John 20:25. The two disciples walking sadly to Emmaus viewed Christ’s death as a failure, saying, **“But we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel,”** Luke 24:21.

Significantly, when Jesus addressed these two disciples from Emmaus, He did not chide them for failing to recognize Him. He chided them for failing to recognize the truth of the Scriptures; the same Scriptures that you and I have in our possession. He said, **“How foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?”** And then, **“beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself,”** Luke 24:25-27.

God keeps His word, every letter, every syllable, every

“jot and tittle.” So, when He tells you that He loves you; when He tells you that He has redeemed you; when He tells you that He will deliver you and strengthen you and bring you safely from grace to glory—believe Him. For the resurrection of Jesus Christ is yet another proof that God always keeps His word. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, **“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”**

And finally, **Fact five: Because Jesus lives, you and I will live too.** Today, perhaps more than any other day, you and I are reminded of all the people that we’ve loved, lost, and miss. I think of my mother, who died in 2008; and my father, who died in 2012. I think of cherished Christian friends I’ve had over the years, some of whom died far too young. Who are you thinking of this Easter—grandparents, parents, children, spouses, friends, members of this Christian congregation?

Are there tears? Yes. But amid the tears and loss there is also an overwhelming sense of victory. For the same Jesus who rose from the dead that First Easter also declared in John 11: **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though He dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.”** And He said in John 14: **“Because I live, you also will live.”**

Dear friends, you and I will rise from the dead. You and I will be reunited with all those Christian loved ones we lost. These are facts because they are grounded in the fact of Christ’s resurrection. And to know and believe these facts is to experience the power of Christ’s resurrection.

Envision the risen Jesus standing outside of the empty tomb. Recall this image when you feel down or lonely or lost or hopeless; when you grow weary of this dead, dying world or

frightened of facing death yourself. For when Jesus Christ stepped out of that tomb on Easter morning, you and I stepped out with Him into newness of life and the certainty of eternal life.

And so, on this Easter day, we say with Paul in the closing words of 1 Corinthians 15: **“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”**

Why? Because Jesus Christ is alive. And that is a fact.