

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 v 1 - 26

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 0 0] Good evening and welcome to our Sunday Easter service. Again, as we did this morning, we'll greet one another with that glorious phrase, Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. Now you've got to say it to me. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. That's something that Christians have greeted one another on Easter Sunday for generations past. Really, Easter only actually begins on Easter Sunday because it's then that the majority of the disciples saw Jesus after his resurrection for the first time. Here in John in chapter 20 we read, on the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, peace be with you.

After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Well, they would be, wouldn't they? Overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Peace be with you. Our prayer and desire is as we gather together as Jesus' disciples on this Easter Sunday evening. May he stand amongst us, be present by his Spirit and speak his words of peace into our hearts and lives as well. We're going to sing one of our favourite Easter hymns, number 276 in our books. Lo in the grave he lay, Jesus my Saviour, waiting the coming day. Jesus my Lord. 276, let's stand as we sing.

Say hallelujah to that, haven't we really? He arose. We have a living Saviour, a living Lord, one who has defeated sin and death and hell for us. Let's come to him in prayer together.

Let us all pray and bring our hallelujahs to God. Oh, Father in heaven, we cannot help but find ourselves brimming over with thankfulness and appreciation and gratitude and joy as we sing of, as we think of, as we read of the resurrection of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

When we think of this incredible and wonderful thing that Jesus did on that very first Easter Sunday, that first day of the week, when death had been poured out upon him, when he had tasted the very depths of the wrath of God, when he had suffered unspeakable sorrow, pain and grief, that was not the end of him, that was not the finish of him. For he was the one and is the one who has no beginning nor no end.

[3 : 0 8] He is the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the one who is from everlasting to everlasting. And we thank you that he defeated death for us. Thank you because he lives, we live.

Because he lives, we can face tomorrow and however many tomorrow's life may bring. Because he lives, we have no longer the need to fear death. For we know that it has lost its sting. And now it is for the believer, simply that doorway into life everlasting in the presence of the Lord who loved us and chose us and died for us and saved us.

And who is our heavenly Father. Oh Lord, we ask that just as we read before of your present, presenting yourself in the midst of your disciples. So we pray that you would be present amongst us.

We pray that by your Holy Spirit, that you would indeed move and stir our hearts to greater faith, greater trust, greater joy. Lord, just as your disciples rejoiced and were filled with joy because they saw the Lord who had died and risen for them. So we, by faith, Lord, may we see Jesus and meet with you, Lord Jesus, in your word and in the Lord's Supper as well. May we know that relationship and that communion with you, which is so very sweet. And know, O Lord, that you are ours and we are yours forever and ever. Come upon us, amongst us, we pray, and exalt your holy name and glorify the Father, we ask. For we ask it all in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Amen. Do warmly welcome you this evening. So lovely to have folk from Westcliffe Congregational with us. Really warm welcome to you that we can share this Easter together. Just a couple of notices to remind you of. It's half term, or rather the end of term, so no children's clubs or mums and toddlers this week. But it's home groups on Wednesday. But because some folk are away who host the home group, there'll be a home group here on a Wednesday. So if you don't go to a home group normally, you can still come here and there'll be Bible study and prayer and fellowship together. Next weekend, Andrew, myself and John are away. Not on holiday, as was advertised in the thing. I'm away preaching next week at the church that Andrew and I were married in just over 25 years ago. So, and we haven't been there for at least about 10 or 15 years. So that'll be, that's in Bridge North in Shropshire. So appreciate your prayer for us then. Gareth Crossley will be here bringing God's Word to us.

[6 : 10] As you can see, we are going to be sharing in communion or the Lord's Supper or the Lord's Table together as part of our service this evening. And if you are a Christian, if you know the Lord Jesus is your Savior, if you know that he died for your sin and that he rose again for you, then we invite you, encourage you to share with us in this communion service as we remember Jesus and all that he did for us. If you know you're not a Christian, if you know you're not walking with the Lord, as the Bible tells us we should, then the Bible says to refrain. Don't take of the elements.

They won't do us any good. Certainly as we come with faith and trust in Jesus, as only as we come looking to him, that there's blessing to be had. And we would encourage you, please, to do that, to share with us in that way. Well, we're going to read together now from God's Word and from 1 Corinthians and chapter 15. 1 Corinthians and chapter 15. And if you've got one of the red church Bibles, that's page 1156.

Page 1156. We're going to read the first 26 verses. We're not going to read the whole chapter.

It's a wonderful chapter, an incredible chapter, but we're going to read just the first 26 verses. And then a little later on, we're going to close in on one section of this chapter. And by God's grace, seek to understand and apply God's Word to our lives. So 1 Corinthians 15, beginning at verse 1.

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you've taken your stand. By this gospel, you are saved.

[8 : 05] If you hold firmly to the word I preached to you, otherwise you have believed in vain. 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 that he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve.

After that, he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles, and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No. I worked harder than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether then it is I or they, this is what we preach, this is what you believed. 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 then 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 firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn, Christ the firstfruits, then when he comes, those who belong to him.

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

[10 : 58] The last enemy to be destroyed is death. We thank God for his faithful word. Please, if you could, open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15, to the passage that we read just a few moments ago.

That will be a help to you as we pick out some of the arguments here, some of the points here that Paul is making. I wonder if you sent any Easter cards this year, or whether you received perhaps an Easter card this year.

One of the best ways to understand what everybody else thinks about Easter outside of the church is to go into a card shop and look in the Easter section, and you'll see all sorts of different cards.

You'll see, of course, cards with fluffy chicks on the front, or furry bunny rabbits, or Easter eggs, of course. And inside, some sort of a wish or a greeting, wishing you a happy Easter, or sending you Easter greetings.

Frequently, of course, on those Easter cards, there's a sense of a spring motif, a thought about spring and Easter going together. The thought of leaving behind the dreary winter, and spring coming with all the signs of new life.

[12 : 15] And so there may be daffodils and flowers and so on. If you look carefully, you'll find the religious section within the Easter section. And, of course, in there you'll get maybe a picture of a lovely countryside church, or you might get a picture of even a cross upon it, or it's saying an Easter prayer.

Something along that, some wishful thought, and some religious expression. I don't know about you, but I haven't seen an Easter card which has got an empty tomb on the front, or that says the words, Christ is risen.

If we were to look just at the cards in the card shop about Easter, we would conclude that the resurrection of Jesus isn't really all that important. Resurrection of Christ is, well, quite insignificant.

Bunnies and chicks and eggs win hands down over Christ, the cross, and the empty tomb. And so that raises a very important question. Does it really matter that Jesus was raised from the dead?

Is it really that important to the Christian faith, whether we believe or believe not, in the real and physical resurrection of Jesus? After all, Christian leaders, even church leaders, over the years have spoken about Jesus being figuratively raised from the dead, or sort of spiritually being raised from the dead.

[13 : 41] Does it really matter that he was truly, physically, in body, raised from the dead, never to die again? Absolutely.

I hope you were with me there on that. Absolutely. Absolutely. It's absolutely imperative, because every single writer in the New Testament stresses the factual resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

And that's why we're in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, because the whole of this chapter, this 58 verse chapter, is all about stressing the vitality, the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Paul is making the point, and hammering it home as he does, that we cannot pick and choose about the resurrection of Jesus. His whole message is the trustworthiness, the dependability, the uncertainty that Jesus Christ died and rose again.

Why does Paul feel the need to be able to be so hammering home this truth? Well, because in Corinth, along with many other problems that it had, as every church does, there's no perfect church.

[14 : 54] If you belong to one, you better leave before you spoil it. In this church, there was all sorts of problems. And particularly, there were problems from false teachers, people who were saying things and teaching things which were not in agreement with Paul, the apostles, and the rest of the Bible.

And one group of people were saying there was no resurrection. No resurrection at all. We can see that there in verse 12. But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you, that's some people in the church at Corinth, say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

They were going around saying, oh, there's no resurrection. This world in which we live, this life is all that there is. When you're dead, you're in the ground. That's the end of you. Sounds familiar today, doesn't it?

That's the end of it. There's no future life. There's no resurrection from the dead. Their teaching sounds very similar to some of the people that Jesus met when he was teaching.

There was a group within the Jewish religion called Sadducees. They didn't believe in the resurrection, so that's why they were Sadducees. That's one of John Wallin's jokes.

[16 : 08] Sadducees. They didn't believe in the resurrection either. In fact, they had an argument with Jesus and tried to trip him up with some silly questions. But Mark 12 tells us that they said there is no resurrection.

Well, how's Paul going to deal with that false teaching about the resurrection? Is he just simply going to slam it and say that's wrong because I'm Paul the apostle and I'm telling you I'm right?

No, of course. Whenever Paul and all the New Testament writers deal with a problem, an issue, they always carefully explain why we must believe, why this is important.

And they base their truths, their teachings upon facts. Not ideas, not fancies, not some dreams that other people may believe in.

And so Paul counters this teaching by showing, first of all, the devastating result if we believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

[17 : 06] If we don't believe in the resurrection, he explains that we lose everything in our salvation. That everything hangs upon and hinges upon the fact that Jesus is alive.

In our day and age when we're told it's unreasonable to believe in somebody being raised from the dead. We're scientific. We can't believe in that unless it's proven.

Well, it has been proven. It is science fact, not science fiction. And Paul explains why. So why, first of all, what would happen if we started teaching there is no resurrection and that Jesus wasn't raised from the dead?

Well, Paul says if you start going down that line, and this is important for us because whenever we're faced with false teaching, we need to recognize just like sin, it may start smallish, but it'll always grow.

It'll always be a slippery slope downwards. It'll always bring us to utter destruction and ruin. He says if you start saying that Christ was not raised from the dead, then what you're saying is this.

[18 : 14] The Bible is useless and untrustworthy. That's what he says, doesn't he, in verse 14 and 15. 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 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.

Paul has argued very early on at the start of chapter 15 that actually Jesus' resurrection is according to God's promises, according to the Scriptures.

Did you pick that up in verse 3? What I received, I passed on to you of first importance, primary importance, primary significance. What?

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. He's talking about the Old Testament. God's Word throughout the Old Testament spoke about and speaks about resurrection.

[19 : 19] It speaks about the resurrection of Jesus, and it speaks about resurrection as a whole. It's not just a New Testament belief. It's something that goes all the way through the Bible.

On that Pentecost Sunday, as Peter stood to preach before the people, he explains the fact that Jesus died, but he explains that Jesus had to be raised again, because King David had promised and prophesied it would happen in Psalm 16.

In Psalm 16, we read, You will not let, sorry, God, he says of God, You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful ones see decay.

Peter argues convincingly, David wasn't talking about himself because David died and his tomb is still here with us in the city. He was talking about the Messiah, Christ, about Jesus.

And then we find resurrections happening all over the place. Elijah and Elisha, those two great prophets of God, through one of the most wicked times in Israel's history, both witnessed these miracles of raising people from the dead.

[20 : 34] And there's a wonderful episode, and I'd encourage you to read it sometime, in 2 Kings 13. After Elisha had died and been buried, some men threw a dead man's body onto his bones, and he was raised to life.

Not Elisha, but the man who'd been dead. It's a wonderful picture of God's power to give life from death. We go back to Abraham, the father of the faith, the one whose example of believing and trusting God is the example we're to follow.

He also was someone who believed in the resurrection. In Hebrews 11, verse 19, we're told, Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead.

And so the scriptures point to, the Old Testament scriptures point to, the Messiah being raised from the dead, and the reality of the resurrection of the dead.

And so if we say that Christ wasn't raised from the dead, then what can we believe in the Bible, in the Old Testament, to be true? But Paul particularly is concerned about his own teaching and preaching, and not just his own, but that of the apostles as well.

[21 : 50] In one sense, if Jesus has not been raised from the dead, Paul argues, then we're a bunch of liars. Notice what he says there. More than that, verse 15, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, literally liars about God.

For we've 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.

The apostles taught from the very beginning in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In fact, they staked their lives upon the fact that Jesus was risen from the dead.

They were put to death simply because they would not give up this teaching that Jesus had been risen from the dead. We go back again to that day of Pentecost as Peter begins to preach.

In Acts chapter 2, verse 32, he says this, God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of it. In his next sermon, in chapter 3, verse 15, he says the same thing.

[23 : 04] You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. Later on in chapter 4 and verse 10, Know this, you and all the people of Israel, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

And we can go on, chapter 5, every chapter, every sermon, the central theme, the culminating message is this, Christ is risen from the dead.

And again, the apostle Paul as well. In chapter 17, he speaks about God raising him from the dead. Chapter 13, verse 30, God raised him from the dead.

Were they all wrong? Were they all mistaken? Is the Bible trustworthy? Is the teaching of the apostles to be depended upon? Is it just their word, perhaps we might say?

You know how some people have that sense where they feel like their word is authority. Well, I've said it, so it must be true. I've said it, therefore you have to accept it, or you cast doubt upon my character.

[24 : 21] The disciples weren't simply basing what they taught about the resurrection, but on what they believed for themselves. It was upon a great weight of witnesses.

Remember, I read to you there, Peter, as he preached on the day of Pentecost, we are witnesses of it. Then again, after they healed the man who had been lame at Gate Beautiful, we are witnesses of this.

But it wasn't simply Peter and Paul who were witnesses. Paul has laid out for us a great list of witnesses here in 1 Corinthians 15. Notice that we read, verse 5, he appeared to Cephas, that's Peter's name.

Then he appeared to the 12, then he appeared to 500, then he appeared to James, then he appeared to all the apostles, and last of all, he appeared to me. Were all these people deceived?

Were all these people wrong? Were all these people just dreaming? No. These were not one or two people who thought they saw somebody who looked a bit like Jesus from the distance.

[25 : 29] They were people who sat down with Jesus, ate with Jesus, spoke with Jesus. For 40 days, he was amongst them. When we read the Bible, God does not expect us to leave our brains at the door, or to put them to one side, and to put aside reason, or to suspend our thinking.

God doesn't say, well, if you want to believe these things, you've really got to, you've got to be a bit daft. No, everything, the resurrection of Jesus and everything that we have is based upon historical eyewitness evidence, scientific fact, not fiction, not daydream.

We read eyewitness statements from people who were there, who were present, and who wrote it down. So that's the first thing. The resurrection of the dead confirms to us the authority of the Bible, the trustworthiness of the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament.

But Paul says something else. If we don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus, then our faith is useless, and we're not saved. In other words, there's no salvation outside of the resurrection of Jesus.

Verses 16 and 17. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. Verse 17. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, or empty, or vain, or pointless, or useless.

[27 : 09] You are still in your sins. Let's ask this question for a moment. What must I put my faith in to be saved?

What must I put my faith in to be saved? Or even better, who must I put my faith in to be saved? We believe, don't we, that somebody is a Christian not simply by agreeing to a list of doctrines or beliefs.

That's not how somebody becomes a Christian, by ticking a box against certain truths. Those things can't save us. If we could be saved simply by agreeing that some things are true, then of course, it's up to us, isn't it?

And we are able, maybe, to convince people these things are true, and that will make them a Christian. Just like other people are able to convince others, if we were good salesmen, and we could convince people to agree with us about certain things, and that saved them, wow, that would be great, we think.

No, we know that salvation is not about faith in doctrine. It's about faith in a person. Salvation is about faith in the person of Jesus Christ.

[28 : 33] Not just what the Bible teaches about him, though the Bible teaches us what we need to know so that we can trust in him. That's what Paul writes, doesn't he, when he writes to Timothy.

He talks about Timothy as a young boy, growing up in that lovely Christian family with his mom and his grandmother. And he says, from infancy you've known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

The Scriptures don't make us wise to salvation, full stop. They only make us wise to salvation in that they point us to, they lead us to, they cause us to, put our faith in Jesus, revealed in the Scriptures.

What we believe about Jesus is vital. What we're taught in the Bible is the means God uses to make us wise for salvation.

But saving faith is in Jesus Christ alone, his person, who he is, what he has done for us. If Jesus is not risen from the dead, then our faith is in a dead man.

[29 : 47] How many of us would put our faith in a dead man? To do anything for us? That would be pointless, wouldn't it? I mean, we express enough faith when we put our trust and faith in a living man, or woman for that matter, let's not be sexist about it.

Women as well as men can let us down. But to put our faith in somebody who's dead is absolutely useless and pointless. A dead person can't do anything for us, a dead person can't save us, a dead person can't help us.

It stands to reason. And if this Jesus, who was not raised from the dead, is someone who died upon a cross and stayed dead, then how on earth can he save us from death?

He just can't do it. If he can't save himself, he can't save us, but he is alive. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the assurance to us that he has paid for our sins upon the cross, and he has defeated death on our behalf, that he has made for us salvation with God.

Romans 4, verse 25, he was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification, for our forgiveness, for our righteousness, so that before God we could stand, accepted, received, forgiven.

[31 : 19] After all, how do you know that your sins have been forgiven? Do you feel forgiven every single day? Probably not.

How do we know that Jesus' sacrifice for our sins has been accepted by God and that there is therefore now no condemnation for us before God?

What guarantee do we have that actually when we stand before God on the day of judgment, he won't condemn us and judge us for our sins, our feelings, the promises of God's word, faithful though it is, the words of our pastor, or of a friend, or the assurances that we tell one another.

No, the guarantee that we have is that God raised Jesus from the dead. And one says God publicly put up a notice before the world to say that what Jesus had done on our behalf has been accepted by God and that he is well pleased with the atoning sacrifice that he has made for our sins.

Here's what Paul writes in Romans in chapter 8 when he asks this very question, who's the one who condemns us? Who's the one who condemns us? No one, he says.

[32 : 37] Christ who died more than that, who was raised to life. God's justice, God's wrath against your sin and mine has been completely, totally, forever settled.

And the proof of it, he raised Jesus from the dead. If he didn't raise him from the dead, we've got no assurance our sins are forgiven.

And if he didn't raise Jesus from the dead, who is it who keeps us in the Christian life, who keeps us saved today? If our salvation is not simply something of the future, but is a present reality in our lives today, how do we know that we shall be kept safe?

How do we know that we shall make it to heaven to stand before God justified and pardoned? The reality is this, it is only because Jesus lives today that our salvation is certain today.

That we can face tomorrow, we can face the trials and difficulties, that we can deal with anything that comes our way knowing that Jesus lives to save us.

[33 : 56] Yes, he died to save us, then he rose to save us, but he still lives today to save us because he's risen from the dead. This is exactly what the writer of the Hebrews says in chapter 7, verse 23.

Therefore, speaking of Jesus, he is able to save us, I like the AV, to the uttermost, completely, to the nth degree, because he always lives to intercede for them, his people, you and I.

He ever lives to mediate God's grace into our lives. He ever lives looking to bless us, to sustain us, to strengthen us.

Our faith is not in, if I can put it this way, what Jesus did 2,000 years ago alone. Our faith is in what Jesus is doing now. It's the person, not just the event.

He is a present reality, a present saviour. Why? Because he died and rose again, never to die anymore.

[35 : 03] So Paul says, if you want to get away with the resurrection and the resurrection of Jesus, then basically your faith is empty because it's in a dead man and your faith is futile. You're still in your sins because you've got no guarantee that the sacrifice he paid for you has been accepted.

Thirdly here, Paul even makes it more personal, more tender to the hearts of his, sorry, to his readers. Then those also, verse 18, who've fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

What a terrible thought, isn't it? Isn't that how the world feels? Isn't that really the emptiness of those without Christ when they face death?

I've lost them. I've lost them forever. Never going to see them anymore. Never going to hear their voice.

Never going to know their touch. If Jesus hasn't beaten death, if he hasn't been raised, what hope is there for those who've already died?

[36 : 08] That's what he's saying here. Then those who've already fallen asleep in Christ are lost. Talking about believers, not unbelievers, but believers. But isn't it wonderful how the New Testament, and Paul particularly, talks about death in this very tender way, fallen asleep in Christ.

You see, the wonderful thing is even when we physically die, we're not outside of Christ. It's not when we die that somehow, in some way, that relationship with Christ has come to an end and we're separated from, no, he says, they've fallen asleep in Christ.

They're still in Christ as much as you and I are who are physically alive. More so, wonderfully, for they're in his presence. And fallen asleep has that picture of blessing, doesn't it?

To fall asleep is a lovely thing. It's not a fearful thing. Who fears falling asleep? Unless you're sitting on the edge of a cliff and that could be a bit dangerous. Don't do that. That's not a good idea.

But when we fall asleep, it's lovely, isn't it? You get into your bed and you, oh, for the Christian, that's death. It's not to be feared. It's not to be anxious about.

[37 : 21] Our present standing before God is based upon Jesus' resurrection and our future hope is based upon his resurrection as well.

Paul isn't saying, don't talk about death. You know what it's like when you speak to people, they'll talk about somebody passing on or passing away or they're no longer with us or some other expression, but they won't ever say they've died.

because that's not polite, is it, in our society to speak about death. They've passed over. They've passed on. They're not with us anymore.

They've passed away. It's not that Paul is saying, let's not mention death, but he's saying, death for the Christian is transformed. How is it transformed? It's only transformed by the resurrection of Jesus.

That's the only thing that makes a difference. As he says later on in that wonderful verse, in verse 56, the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, but he goes on, where, O death, is your victory?

[38 : 25] Where, O death, is your sting? The sting has been taken from death for the believer. That sting which is so painful, that sting which is so intense, that bite of death, which is so horrifying, has been withdrawn.

I remember a friend of mine and Mark knows him as well, Neil Stewart, some of you know him as well. I remember hearing him preach on this and he was saying, you know, when we're out and you're having your picnic and you've got your jam sandwiches and all that and then all the wasps come, don't they?

And you're trying to get rid of the wasps and you're chasing the wasps and in the end it spoils your picnic. Why? Why? Why are we chasing the wasps away?

It's because they sting us. If they didn't have a sting, would you be bothered about a wasp? No. Would girls go, ah, screaming down around the field because they saw a wasp?

No. The sting's gone. And so it is with death. The sting's gone. It's just, it's an annoyance, yes. It's something that we don't particularly like. But it's not the same because Christ is risen.

[39 : 36] Christ is risen and has conquered death. Then we can expect to live with him. We can expect to live with him.

Our union with Christ means that if he lives, we live. If he dies, we die. That's what being in Christ means. It means we are, we are more than conjoined twins that are joined together and that depend upon one another's supply of life.

we are united with Christ in such a way that only if he dies, do we die. Only if he is lost, are we lost. And if he lives, we live and never die.

We're united to him completely. There's one last thing that Paul brings out here. in one sense, if Christ has not been risen from the dead, what is the point of living as a Christian in this day and age?

He says it there, doesn't he, in verse 19, if only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. If there's no future hope, if there's no future resurrection, what's the point?

[40 : 54] If we're only living in this life to follow Christ and there's nothing to come, what's the point? We might as well live like everybody else. We might as well get drunk, we might as well sleep around, we might as well take drugs, we might as well steal, we might as well have nothing to do with Christians, we might as well eat, drink and be merry.

If tomorrow we die and that's the end. Oh yes, of course, we know that these things bring with them all sorts of other consequences like broken marriages and unhappy lives and so on and so forth and destruction of society but realistically, what's the point of being a Christian and denying yourself every day and taking up the cross and following Jesus?

What's the point of going without, of suffering reproach and scorn from the world? What's the point if there's no resurrection? No point.

But if there is a resurrection and Christ has been raised from the dead, there's every reason to live the Christian life today because it's not in vain. It's not pointless. It is point filled.

Because Christ has risen, this life is not all there is. It's only a passing pilgrimage, a sojourn, as Peter calls it. We're just camping. Camping's fine, isn't it, when there's sunny weather and everything else and even if it's raining a bit.

[42 : 13] But you don't want to live in a tent all your life. In fact, we're not going to. We're passing through. This is just temporary. The eternal, the living, the lasting is in heaven. For the unbeliever, this life is the best they can ever hope for.

Who thought of that? For the unbeliever, this is the very best existence they can ever hope for because for them they pass from death into the second death.

Eternal, everlasting, separation, distress, sorrow, grinding of teeth. But for us, dear friends, it's entering into the presence and the joy of Jesus, our living Lord.

And when he comes, he's going to bring with himself a new resurrection body. Not these bodies that won't do as they're told when we try and tell them they can't have that cream cake.

Not these bodies that are filled with aches and pains and struggles and tears and heartache. but a new body, a different body, a resurrection body made to enjoy God for eternity.

- [43 : 24] Listen to how Paul describes it later on in this chapter, verse 50 and following. I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will all be changed.

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true.

Death has been swallowed up in victory. 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. How? Through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose again.

- [44 : 35] Dear friends, let me ask you, this evening, this Easter Sunday evening again, do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? Then you're standing on sure and certain ground.

Whatever the world throws at you, whatever life brings your way, whatever struggles you may endure, however hard it is for you to live for Christ in the place where you are, you can't be moved.

As Paul said right at the beginning, I want to remind you of the gospel, that's including the resurrection of Jesus, which you received and on which you've taken your stand.

This life is not all there is. But this life, with Jesus raised from the dead, living and walking with us, what can it do?

Where's its sting? Where's its bite? Where's its sorrows and trials? They are all swallowed up by the fact that I have one who lives and reigns with me, for me, and I shall be with him one day too.

- [45 : 57] Dear friends, let's sing together of this Jesus, this Saviour, as we prepare to come and remember him in this Lord's Supper.

248. Man of sorrows, what a name for the Son of God who came, ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah.

What a Saviour. Let's stand and sing 248. And as we bring the song to an end, if those who are going to serve would come to the front, please. Amen. Say the words of grace.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen.