

1 Corinthians 15:4

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[0:00] I'm going to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 15. It's on page 961 in your New Church Bible. If you go to Red Square.

You can see. You can visit Lenin's tomb. See his body there. And it's interesting. If you know anything about our country.

Or Christian. Country so to speak. There's the Christian tradition. You have cathedrals. You have churches. You have universities. You have schools. You have hospitals. All that bear the name. And are constructed to honour our Lord Jesus Christ. But nowhere can you go and see his bones. Nowhere can you see any evidence whatsoever. Of his body.

Why? Because absolutely central. To the Christian faith. Is our belief. And our confidence. That Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead.

[1:19] And he pays no concession to death at all. So open your Bible if you haven't already. To 1 Corinthians 15. And over this Easter. We've been looking at the for that. Of 1 Corinthians 15.

If you weren't here on Good Friday. Shame on you. But email the church office. And you can get the recording. So look with me at verse 3. For I delivered to you.

As of first importance. What I also received. That Christ died for our sins. According with the scriptures. That he was buried.

That he was raised on the third day. In accordance with the scriptures. And that he appeared to Cephas. To the twelve. And to more than 500 brothers.

And so today we're bringing it into that. We're going to look at the third that. The third bullet point. In this succinct statement. Of the gospel. That he was raised.

[2:16] From the dead. According to the gospel. Now notice. Jesus was truly dead. He was not revived. He was not resuscitated.

He was so dead. That he was buried. He did not faint. And then kind of come back. Come to it. In the coolness of the tomb. No. Those who put him to death.

They were professionals. And they made sure that he was dead. He was dead and buried. And verse 4 tells us. That he was raised. From the dead. Now.

Of course. Jesus made the claim. Didn't he? To be God. In flesh. That's not a unique claim. I could take you to Ealing Hospital. And one of the wards there.

And there are many people. That claim to be God. Or claim to be Jesus. In that ward. People. Were lunatics. Liars.

[3:12] Con men. Who claimed to be God. Well what is unique about the Lord Jesus. Is that he backed up his claim. Didn't he? With the resurrection. From the dead. No one else.

Who has ever claimed to be God. Has been raised. And the Apostle Paul. In Romans 1. Tells us that Jesus. Was declared to be God.

With power. By his resurrection. From the dead. And if he defeats. His greatest enemy. And our greatest enemy. Then he must be Lord and God.

Jesus dies. Does he? Verse 3. For our sins. To pay the penalty. For his people's sins. What evidence is there.

That this penalty. This payment. Has been received. By God his father. Against whom our sin is committed. Well it is the life of Jesus. It is the resurrection of Jesus.

[4:10] His death. Is the evidence. Of our sin. His life. Is the evidence. That our sin. Has been dealt with. Death. The Apostle Paul says. The wages of sin.

Is death. But the gift of God. Is eternal life. Through Jesus Christ. Our Lord. You will know.

Very well. That the laws of creation. Are God's norms. They are God's norms. The normal way. God does business. He created.

All things. And so. If God chooses. To interfere. In the laws of creation. To suspend. The laws of creation.

For example. By stilling a storm. With a word. He does it then. By ceasing the world. To rotate. On its axis. Or perhaps. Healing a blind man. A woman. Or somebody who is suffering.

[5 : 06] With paralysis. Without medical attention. Or even raising the dead. If God suspends. The laws. Which are his laws. Then it is in order.

To give you and I. A deeper understanding. Of some truth. That could not be had. Without the suspension. Of those laws. That's what miracles are. They are the suspension. Of God's normal ways.

Of doing things. And when he does that. It is to tell you and I. Something. And God spends. His law of creation.

Here. So people who are dead. And buried. They stay dead. Don't they? There. But here God suspends. The laws of creation. And he intervenes. He steps in. And he raises.

The Lord Jesus. From the dead. To prove that Jesus is. Who he claimed to be. So that you can be saved. Today. By believing.

[6 : 01] By trusting. That Jesus rose. From the dead. By believing that. In your heart. And confessing. With your lips. That Jesus is Lord. Now if you look at verse 3.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. Verse 4. And now third. He was raised. On the third day. From the dead. In accordance with the scriptures. How do you think?

He was dead. For three days. He died on Friday. He was raised on Sunday. What's that about?

Well. He died. For a portion. Of Friday. Didn't he? And he was dead.

And buried. All of Saturday. And he was dead. For a portion. Of Sunday. Like Jonah. Jonah was in the belly. Of the fish. For three days. So the Lord was dead.

For three days. According to the scriptures. Which scriptures. Do you ask? Well the New Testament. Quotes the Psalms. More than any other book.

[6 : 55] Of the Old Testament. And the one Psalm. That is quoted. More than any other Psalm. In the New Testament. Is. Let me know. Look at that.

Thunderous response. That comes back. Isn't it? Psalm 110. Psalm 110. You were all going to say that. I know just were nervous. In case I embarrassed you. Now that is the Psalm. Which says.

The Lord said to my Lord. Sit at my right hand. He's a priest forever. In the order of Melchizedek.

He's a priest forever. I will make your enemies a footstool.

For your feet. And the very Psalm. That tells us. That the Lord Jesus. Was coming. And though he dies. He will rise. But notice verse 4.

Tells us. That Christ. Was raised. It's very important that is. Christ was raised. He did not raise himself.

[7 : 52] Isn't that fascinating? He did not raise himself. He was passive. God. By his power.

Raised the Lord Jesus. From the dead. God raised him. Now I put to you. That the resurrection of. The Lord Jesus. Is not as prominent. In our thinking. As the death. Of Jesus.

People walk around. Don't they. With crosses. On their necks. And on their lapels. You don't see people. Walking around. With empty tombs. Around their neck. The empty tomb.

Is not as prominent. It is not as central. To us. But I want you to look. At these three bullet points. Again in verse. In 1 Corinthians 15.

Because they make up. The Christian gospel. Jesus is death. For your sin. His sure death.

[8 : 48] And burial. And his bodily. Resurrection. It's a bit like marriage. There's three parts to marriage. In Genesis 2.

It tells us. A great doctrine of marriage. It says marriage is about a husband. Leaving his mother and father. And a wife. Leaving their mother and father. And cleaving.

To their spouse. A husband. Leaves his mother and father. And cleaves. To his wife. And the two become one. There's three elements. There's a leaving.

There's a cleaving. And there's a becoming. One. Becoming united. Now if you take away. One of those elements. Either the leaving home.

The cleaving to. The life partner. To their spouse. And the becoming one. You take away. One of those three legs. And you don't have marriage. Anymore. You take one of them away.

[9 : 45] And you don't have marriage. You take away. One of these. That. In 1 Corinthians 15. And you do not have. The Christian gospel.

Christ. Died for our sins. Christ. Christ. Was. Buried. Christ. Was raised. On the third day. According to the scriptures.

Because death. Could not hold him down. Death. Had no grip. On the Lord Jesus. Because the power of death. Is what? The power of death.

Is sin. Isn't it? But he had no sin of his own. To pay the penalty for. He paid the penalty for my sin. For his people's sin.

For our sin. And God raised him up. To show that the penalty was entirely accepted. It has been paid. Perfect life.

[10 : 47] Given for the sins. Of his people. The fourth bullet point is verse 5. Paul doesn't leave it there. Does he? Paul doesn't leave it there. And it is absolutely essential.

Paul says. When you came into this building this morning. Don't leave your brain at the door. Think. Don't leave your brain at the door. We don't believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Because it suits us. We believe this truth. Because it is based on evidence. So look at verse 5. And that he appeared to see. First to Peter.

Then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time. Most of whom are still alive. Most of whom are still alive. Most of whom are still alive. Most of whom are still alive. Most of whom are still alive. What's he saying to the Corinthians? He's saying go and see them. You can go and talk to them. They are men. And women. They are unbelievers. And they are believers. The resurrection is not a trick.

[11 : 47] It is not a nice little piece of magic. It is not a spiritual resurrection. He was seen. They talked to him. Talk to the witnesses. Go and see them.

They sat down with him. And they saw him eat broiled fish. They saw the imprint. Of the nails on his hands. Go and talk to the witnesses.

There is some objectivity here. So when the apostle Paul. Who was a very reluctant convert. Goes into the Areopagus. The Greek centre of all academic endeavour.

And kind of spiritual. Philosophical speculation. He stands up. And he uses the word proof. Proof. God has given proof.

Of the coming judgment day. By raising Jesus Christ from the dead. There is proof. Absolute proof. Now there is such a thing.

[12 : 45] A scientific proof. Isn't there? Scientists here this morning. You do your experiments. Experiments. And you do your experiments again. And again. You repeat them. Don't you?

And then you conduct your research. And you get the results. And give your findings. But if you go out today. And on St Mary's Road. There is a car accident.

And you have to go before the court. Regarding that car accident. The judge is not going to say. Well let's take those cars apart. And let's smash them into each other again.

And we will do that a number of times. Right. And you can see what happens. He wouldn't say. Let's repeat the accident. Would he the judge? He wouldn't do that. And then we will draw conclusions.

What would he do? He would say. Tell me what you saw. He would say. Were there witnesses. That saw it. Tell me what the witnesses saw.

[13 : 44] You see. We draw a conclusion. And a distinction. We draw a distinction. Between scientific proof. And evidence. And legal evidence.

And proof. Don't we? We do that. You are willing to accept that. And legal evidence. And proof. That is precisely what the apostle Paul. Is talking about in verse 5. Don't talk to any of them. And you will find that there are 400 or 500 people. Who have been to a funeral. But they haven't actually found the corpse. Where it was laid. They have actually seen him. And they have talked to him.

And noticed that this man has made no concession to death. And you would have to give some objectivity to that. Isn't that his five objective? See Paul is backing up the claim.

Look at what he says in verse 7. Then he appeared to James. And then to all the apostles. James his own half brother. The Lord's own half brother. And the author to the letter of James.

[14 : 46] And that caused James conversion. And then verse 8. Last of all. As to one untimely born. He appeared also to me. I saw him.

I was abnormally born. Paul says. I had a shorter gestation period. Than the other apostles. I wasn't with Jesus for as long as they were. That's what he's saying.

But I saw him. On the Damascus road. I met him on the Damascus road. And Paul confirms. It's what the Christian faith is about. It is about objective facts. And then he says. Let me tell you my story. Verse 9. I didn't even deserve to be called an apostle. Because I persecuted the church of God. Verse 10. But by the grace. By the undeserved kindness of God. I am what I am. And his grace. Towards me. Was not in vain. On the contrary. I worked harder than any of them. Though it was not I. [15:44] But the grace of God. That is with me. Whether then it was I or they. So we preach. And so you believed.

Don't tell me. Paul says. It's just worshipful thinking. Don't tell me. That I was walking along the Damascus road. And I really hoped. That I'd meet Jesus of Nazareth. I wanted to persecute him. I wanted to kill his followers. Don't tell James. His brother. That he wanted to see Jesus raised. He was a reluctant convert. I was a reluctant convert. I'm telling you. I saw him. He appeared to me as one abnormally born. Says the apostle Paul. Let me ask you for a moment. How do you explain the resurrection. Of Jesus of Nazareth. How do you explain it? It may be that you've dropped in here today. And if you have. It's really great that you're here. But I often hear people say.

[16:42] Well Christianity is brainwashing. Is it? Well please. Explain to me. Explain to me.

The resurrection. Of Jesus. Here's the evidence. Legal proof. Don't attack. The credibility. Of 1 Corinthians.

I can show you. I can talk with you after. About the manuscript evidence. That backs up. The credibility. Of this letter. I think that many people. Who argue. That Christianity. Is brainwashing. Are really saying. It doesn't suit. My moral position. I'd actually. Rather. That Jesus. Wasn't Lord. And for some of you today. Maybe that's where you're at.

You'd rather it. That he wasn't Lord. You'd have to change your life. And you don't want to do that. How do you explain. The fact. That Jesus. Was crucified. That he was buried.

[17:37] That he was raised. From the dead. That somebody said this week. Putting the mental back. Into fundamentalism. How do you explain it? That is what it's all about.

The gospel. Here is the gospel. Sin. Separates me from God. From a holy God. God. And God. In Christ. Came. And took the fine. And took the penalty. For my sin. Being death. Upon himself. God showed. That the payment. For my sin. Was accepted. And the resurrection. Is my receipt. I am totally secure.

About my past. Though I'm not proud of it. It has been swept away. The cross of the Lord Jesus. Has taken it away. And I am forgiven.

[18:35] I am strengthened in the now. Because now as a Christian. I have the Holy Spirit. Living in me. And I have hope for the future. Because I know that death.

Was not the end. For the Lord Jesus. And it will not be the end for me. Listen to this. If Christianity is untrue. It is unimportant.

If Christianity is true. It is of infinite importance. The one thing Christianity cannot be. Is of moderate importance.

If the Christian gospel means anything. The Christian gospel must mean everything. Now Paul goes on. If you look at. In verse 13.

To investigate the implications. Of the resurrection. If it's not true. He says. Let's think about this. Let's play with this a bit. If the resurrection is not true. Look at what he says in verse 14. He says.

[19:34] What does this mean for our preaching? He says in verse 14. And if Christ has not been raised. Then our preaching is in vain. If Jesus has not been raised.

Our preaching is empty. It is futile. It is vacuous. That's the first thing. I don't know. Do you remember David Jenkins?

He was the bishop of Durham. It was about 25 years ago. I think he came out with. That the resurrection was the literal resurrection. I don't know. What those ministers. Who didn't believe in the bodily resurrection.

Of Jesus spoke about. But my experience is this. Those who deny. Those preachers. Those ministers. Who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Haven't actually got much to talk about at all. If you take the resurrection away. Then you have a crucified Messiah. Who is. An idealist. An idealist.

[20 : 38] He's a model. That's all he is. What else is there to say? Look at verse 15. We are even found to be misrepresenting.

God. Because we testified. Again a legal word. About God. That he raised Christ. In other words. Insane.

The second thing is. That the apostles are deliberate liars. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead. Rise from the dead. Because they say. Don't they. That Jesus rose from the dead. Verse 17. And if Christ has not been raised.

Your faith is futile. And you are still in your sins. So when Paul wrote to the Corinthians. And said. You were rebels. And you were wicked. And you were evils. And that is what some of you were. Well actually they still are. The gospel has made no difference to them. Thirdly. Their faith is futile. Their faith is a waste of time. If Jesus has not been raised.

[21 : 37] If there is no resurrection. And verse 18. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ. They have perished. They are lost. They have gone. They know.

You will never see them again. They no longer live. And verse 19. Where if in Christ we have hope in this life only. We are a people most to be pitied. Feel sorry for them. If the resurrection did not occur.

There are these five implications. But because it did occur. There are also five implications. Let me give them to you. Verse 14. Our preaching is most weighty.

And it is most useful. It is not empty. It is not futile. It is weighty. Verse 15. The apostles are not liars. They are truth tellers.

Verse 17. Our faith is not empty and futile. And vacuous. But it is by our faith we read life. And that we have life.

[22 : 37] And verse 19. We have hope in this life. And our life in the future. And we are not to be pitied.

And our loved ones who are in Christ. They are gone. No they are not. They have never been more alive than they are today.

We don't have many deaths. In this congregation. Probably will over the next few years. But we don't. But I was trying to think back.

This week. Over the last kind of nine, ten years. Remember Howard Hallett? Pam Hallett's husband. He's a brilliant pianist. He was very old and going down by the time I'd arrived.

But he would sit on stove only. Laughing away. There was John Dugan. John Dugan was a very, very elderly gentleman. He had a great cough. If you get any of my sermons from the first four years.

[23 : 36] There is always the signatory cough. Of John Dugan in each one of them. You thought he wasn't going to live to the end of the service. It was this horrific cough. That he had. There was Kath Benton.

Alan and Chris' mum. They're Chris' mum. I wasn't in church. He was housewives. This lovely lady. There was Paul Clowney. Paul Clowney used to sit there. They're just where Penetra used to sit. Where are those people now? Where are they now? Gone? I'll tell you where they are. They are never.

They've never been more alive than they are this morning. They've never been more alive than they are this morning. They're not seen by us. No. But they are alive. And they are in the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Whom they loved. Because we believe that Jesus died. And was raised. Look at verse 20. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.

[24 : 35] The first fruits of those who fall asleep. So you think of a farmer. He goes out to the field. He's plowed it. He's sown the seed. And he goes out in the next couple of months.

And he sees the first signs of fruit. He sees the first fruits coming. And the first fruits are indicative of the harvest.

The great harvest that is to come. And so here in verse 20. Paul uses exactly the same expression. When Christ was raised. He was raised number one. Number one of millions that will be raised. Because they are in Christ. And do you understand. That the resurrection of Jesus. Is God's personal guarantee to you.

God puts his reputation on the line. He says your sin is forgiven. You can stand. You do stand before him clean.

[25 : 33] And it is his personal warranty. His personal guarantee to you. That he raised his son. The Lord Jesus from the dead. And so he will raise you.

If you have trusted upon him. He seeks his reputation on it. It is his guarantee to you. I don't know if you have been to Rome. It is a magnificent city.

And it has got pretty much everything. That 20th century religion has got to offer. And my aunt there. We used to go there quite a bit. When I was a child. And as you go around. You see all the saints.

And you can see all the relics. And they focus on the images. And the mother of Jesus. But if you go to Rome.

Well make sure that you go down to the catacombs. And you leave the 21st century expression of religion. And you go down to the 1st century expression of religion.

[26 : 29] And in the catacombs where the Christians met. And where they buried their dead. What do you find there? What do you find scratched on the walls? You find the Greek word ichthys.

Jesus. Christ. God's son and our saviour. You find scratched into the wall. Jonah and the whale. Three days he was in there.

Like our Lord. You find a cross etched into the walls. That is 1st century Christianity. That is ancient Christianity. And when you come back to the 21st century.

There is a distinctive difference. The art of the 1st century catacombs. And the art of Rome. The art of the 1st century. Revolved around these four truths.

These four facts. That Christ died for our sins. According to the scriptures. That he was buried. But on the third day.

[27 : 26] He rose again. According to the scriptures. And then he appeared. I quite like the film. I'm gladiator. And on the back of the DVD film.

I'm gladiator. It says it's painstakingly realistic. It is one of the most unreal films of all time. I don't know whether you've seen it. Often in the film.

Very often. Russell Crowe is about to die. And when he's about to die. He is this image of him floating. Off the ground. You might remember it.

Of him floating off the ground. Being taken into the bliss. Of the next world. Where his beloved has gone before him. It is very unreal. But actually.

That is the typical British view. People do not believe in justification. By faith alone. Through grace alone. People actually don't believe.

[28 : 21] That they're justified. By being good enough. British people believe. With the film of the gladiator. All you have to do is die. And you'll be good enough.

Because you're going to the big man in the sky. Him upstairs. People in our country. Believe in justification by death. I've never taken a funeral.

But the family of the bereaved. Haven't said to me. Oh, he's in a better place now. Is he? I've never visited a family. Who've lost a loved one. And they've said. Well, his suffering is over now.

Is he? They believe in justification by death. And it is a lie. It is a lie. Don't think.

Please don't think. You can come this morning. And give a kind of nodding acquaintance. To these truths. And then go away. If Christianity means anything. It means everything.

[29 : 19] So when you're growing up. When you're little. Sometimes you're little here. You think that life is simple. And being a Christian is difficult. Becoming a Christian is difficult.

Life is simple. No. Life is simple. And becoming a Christian is difficult. But do you know when you grow up. Do you know what you learn? Life is very difficult. And becoming a Christian actually is very, very simple.

What is becoming a Christian? It is coming to the resurrected Lord. Who's risen from the dead. And it is saying three things. It's saying number one. I'm sorry.

I'm sorry. Smallest child here knows what that is. The second thing. That becoming a Christian is. It's saying thank you. The smallest child here this morning knows that.

And the third thing is saying please. The smallest child here knows what to say. It's saying sorry. It's saying sorry God.

[30 : 19] I've ignored you. It's saying sorry. I've lived life my way. It's saying thank you. Thank you God that you sent Jesus.

To die for my sin. And to be raised again. As your receipt. As the payment. And it's saying please. Please come into my life. And live your life. And be in control of my life. It's so simple isn't it.

And yet some of you will not humble yourself to become like a little child. Because that's what it is to become a Christian. It is to say sorry.

It is to say thank you. And I'm going to say please. Please do not go away. With a nodding acquaintance to these truths.

[31 : 24] Thinking you've done your debt. You've paid your due for Easter. Make them everything for you. Because this is what life is about. Yeah it's primitive.

It's real. It is authentic. It is apostolic. It is biblical Christianity. Sorry.
Thank you. Please. Let's bow in prayer.