

**Easter 2026**  
**1 Corinthians 15:1-28**  
**“Because He Rose”**

**Introduction**

**On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. They went in, but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes. The women were terrified and bowed down to the ground.**

**“Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men. “He is not here, but He has risen! Remember how he spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘It is necessary that the Son of Man be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day?’” And they remembered His words.**  
**Luke 24:5b-8**

First of all, let me start off by saying “Happy Easter” to you all! The tomb is empty, and we do not worship a dead god or worthless idol, but rather a living Savior! And because He lives, everything is different for those who place their faith and trust in Him. And this is exactly what I would like to talk to you about today. We have a hope in Christ that is greater than any challenges we will ever face in this life. We shall overcome, because He overcame. And that, my friends, is the message of Easter.

As we get older, we start to view this life a bit differently. For example, as I was preparing the message this week, I couldn’t help myself from thinking, “What if this was the last Easter message that I would ever get to preach? What would I want to say?” Now to some I am sure that sounds like a morbid thought, but to me it isn’t. For we never know when we are about to do our last... well anything. Therefore, we ought to live every day as if it is our last chance to do so. We must serve our Savior, while there is yet time, for we are definitely not promised any tomorrows. And the way things are going in this world today, Jesus could absolutely return at any moment. So we need to live with a sense of urgency and share the gospel every day as if it were the last chance we will ever get.

The apostle Paul was fully cognizant of the brevity of life. He lived every moment with the knowledge that his enemies were out to get him; whether it be his Jewish brethren, who despised what he had become in Christ, or Rome itself, who viewed this new Christian religion (often called *The Way*) as a dangerous sect of Judaism that was a threat to the empire. As a result of this intense level of persecution, Paul lived and preached as if every time were his last time.

**Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk — not as unwise people but as wise — making the most of the time, because the days are evil.**  
**Ephesians 5:15-16**

We too, like Paul, are living in evil days. There are, as our LORD has promised, wars and rumors of wars. There is strife and wickedness on every corner, and there is no place to escape from the filthiness that surrounds us on every side. So what is the Christian to do? We must recognize that we are indeed living in the last days, and as such, we need to obtain a sense of urgency in our dealings with this lost and dying world. We need to “redeem (make the most of) *the time*” as Paul has said. We are called to be the ambassadors of Christ in this fallen world, so we need to go about doing just that.

What if you knew that today was your last day? How would you approach your daily schedule? Would you re-prioritize your activities. Would you make one last appeal to that lost person you have been praying for? What would matter most to you, if you knew that you only had once last chance to make things right? This world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. It needs to be proclaimed boldly while there is yet time for them to repent and be saved. And we have the greatest news of all that we can share. And what is that news? It is the proclamation of an empty tomb that stands in Jerusalem! The wondrous story of The Heavenly Father’s love for the lost, Who proved this love by sending His Beloved Son to die

on a cross in our stead. And what's more, that Son didn't stay dead. He defeated death. He *ROSE!* And because He rose, we have been given an unshakeable hope in an ever tumultuous world.

So today, I want to look at a passage that I have never, for some reason, had the opportunity to preach in all my years of ministry. Oh, I have quoted verses from it many times over, but for whatever reason, I have never preached the entire passage from top to bottom, as it were, revealing its wondrous nuances and powerful message. So today, let us look together at the Fifteenth Chapter of **1 Corinthians** as Paul defends his position on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will call this message "Because He Rose"; for, because He rose, we have *Absolution, Assistance, and Assurance* in Christ. Please allow me to explain.

### **Absolution (vs. 1-19)**

**Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: 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, then to the Twelve. Then He appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, He also appeared to me.**

**For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy 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 toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, so we proclaim and so you have believed.**

#### **Resurrection Essential to the Faith**

**Now if Christ is proclaimed as 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, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith. Moreover, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified wrongly about God that He raised up Christ — whom He did not raise up, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Those, then, who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.** **1 Corinthians 15:1-19**

Because of the influence of Greek philosophy upon the early church in Corinth, some people in the church claimed to be "Christians" even though they denied the resurrection. The Greek philosophers scoffed at a literal bodily resurrection from the dead. In fact, there were many who would listen intently to Paul's preaching until he mentioned the resurrection, then they would laugh at him (**Acts 17:32**). Because of this prevailing mindset, many in Corinth were struggling with what to believe.

Paul made it perfectly clear to those who were doubting Christ's bodily resurrection from the grave: Not only did Christ rise, but any refusal to believe in His resurrection disqualifies us from the faith; "...unless you believed in vain" (**vs. 2**). To deny the resurrection is to deny the very deity of Christ, and therefore, it is to deny the faith in its entirety. There are five things that every Believer must accept as indisputable truth, or they cannot be a Believer. And they are as follows: **The virgin birth, the sinless life, the atoning death, the resurrection, and the second coming of Christ.** There are many secondary Biblical doctrines upon which dedicated Believers may choose to interpret differently, but these

five truths are not up for debate. They are either accepted as fact, or there can be no receiving of salvation. Saving faith believes in the whole gospel of Christ. Period, no exceptions.

The Word of God gave us many infallible proofs that the resurrection was in fact a genuine occurrence. Paul lists for his readers many of those proofs, that were based upon the testimonies of various credible eye witnesses to The Savior after He had risen from the dead, the apostles, many of the followers of Christ, and even Paul himself, who had met the risen Christ much later on the Damascus Road. And not only was there the witness of men, but also the witness of The Spirit Himself, Who had foretold of the Christ's resurrection through the writings of *The Old Testament* prophets.

One of the most compelling witnesses of all, to my way of thinking, was none other than James the half brother of Jesus. While The Savior was going about His earthly ministry, healing the sick and giving the blind back their sight, James thought his brother was insane (***John 7:3-5***). Now imagine this for a moment, if you will. James witnessed Jesus' miracles and refused even then to believe. So what changed this skeptic's mind? You guessed it, the resurrection! When Jesus appeared to James... well that was it for him. And in his only recorded epistle, does James list himself proudly as "*the half-brother of The LORD*"? No. He referred to himself only as "*a servant of The LORD Jesus Christ*" (***James 1:1***). You see, knowing that Jesus rose from the dead changes everything!

And here is the good news, my friends. Because He rose, we who believe are no longer "lost in our sins" as Paul has stated, but rather, we have been given absolution with The Father. Christ's death, burial, and resurrection paid our sin debt and set us free! The price for your transgressions was paid upon Calvary's cross, and the proof of its sufficiency was established at the resurrection. The best I have ever heard it described is like this: "On the cross, the debt was paid in full, but at the resurrection... the check cleared!" I just love that! Because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, we who place our faith in Him have been absolved of all wrongdoing in the eyes of heaven. We, who were once enemies of God, are now His adopted sons and daughters in Christ Jesus! And that is why the resurrection matters! Because He rose...we have *absolution*.

### **Assistance (vs. 8-10)**

***Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy 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 toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*** ***1 Corinthians 15:8-10***

If you would indulge me, I would like to circle back to these few verses, because I find a truly powerful message in them. Paul, in his listing of the eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, lists himself not only as last in order, but also least in value. In fact, he described himself in such debasing terms that the translators had a difficult time even putting down what he actually said in the original text. The KJV translates **verse 8** as "***And last of all He was seen by me also, as one born out of due time.***" While the CSB translates the last portion as "*as to one born at the wrong time*". The word that Paul actually used there is "*ektroma*", in the Greek, and it is the word used to describe a stillborn or aborted baby.

What Paul was actually saying is that he was most unworthy to be given the name "apostle" just the same as a child who was born dead would rarely, if ever, be given a name. And why did he feel so unworthy of the recognition as an apostle? Because he had severely persecuted the church of God.

But here is the good news, in spite of his unworthiness, he was chosen by God and given exceedingly great grace. And God took this unworthy man, guilty of murdering and imprisoning God's own people out of sheer hatred, and helped him to become the most successful evangelist of all time. God enabled Paul to do far more than any of the other apostles. Or as he put it, "*I worked harder than all of them.*" Why does this matter? Because those whom God chooses, God enables. That's why. Paul could have never accomplished all that he did, if it weren't for God's Spirit enabling him to do so.

So here, in my opinion, is the phrase that should matter the most to us in these verses. "*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace towards me was not in vain.*" Do not just skim over what

he said there, because there is a truth for us to embrace. Paul didn't deserve to be saved. He didn't deserve to be empowered to do such great works, and he knew it. All that he became in Christ was simply a work of God's amazing grace. The resurrected Christ appeared to him and chose him in spite of himself! And Paul was determined after receiving such a wondrous gift, that this gift would not be wasted on him. Hence his statement: "*His grace towards me was not in vain.*"

Now, here is where, as they say, "*the rubber meets the road*", as it were. When you stand before the judgment seat of Christ, will it be said of you, that all the grace you have received wasn't wasted on you? What have you done with what you have been given? And the same question applies to my life as well. What have I done with what I have been given? Was God's amazing grace... wasted *on me*?

The night before He went to the cross, Jesus told His disciples that He would not leave them as orphans (**John 14:18**). He was preparing to send The Holy Spirit, The Comforter and Guide, to be their helper. It is The Spirit that would assist them, enable them, so that they could do the work that Christ had called them to. Just like Paul, all whom Christ calls, He *helps!* We are promised His guidance, His ever present assistance, if you will. Therefore, we are left without excuse. We must, as Paul said, "*work harder than them all...*" For you see, Because He rose, you are never alone. You have all the assistance you will ever need to bear much lasting fruit. So:

**Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up.** **Galatians 6:9**

#### **Assurance (vs. 20-28)**

**But as it is, Christ has 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 also comes through a man. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.**

**But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at His coming, those who belong to Christ.**

**Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when He abolishes all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He puts all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be abolished is death. For God has put everything under His feet. Now when it says "everything" is put under Him, it is obvious that He who puts everything under Him is the exception. When everything is subject to Christ, then the Son himself will also be subject to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.** **1 Corinthians 15:20-28**

This world is in shambles. The wickedness of mankind has purchased for itself the very wrath of God. But the strife will not go on forever. There is a day coming when the earth shall be cleansed and King Jesus shall reign. And because He rose, we have the calm assurance of knowing that no matter how bad it gets down here, our time will come. As the Psalmist has so eloquently stated in regards to the day when God sets everything right:

**Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and He will act, making your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like the noonday.**

**Be silent before the Lord and wait expectantly for Him; do not be agitated by one who prospers in his way, by the person who carries out evil plans.**

**Refrain from anger and give up your rage; do not be agitated — it can only bring harm.**

**For evildoers will be destroyed, but those who put their hope in the Lord will inherit the land.** **Psalms 37:5-9**

We may all rely upon this truth. This same Jesus, the One Who was crucified, dead and buried for our propitiation, rose from the dead. And because He rose, we too shall rise. There is no power that can keep us from inheriting all that God has in store for us. Because He rose, we have the assurance of reigning with Him, in His kingdom forever!

There are seven feast days of the Jews that point to God's prophetic timetable. Three of those feasts occur in the span of one week. Holy Week, *this* week. The first is the Passover. Jesus is the ultimate Passover Lamb of God, slain so that the death angel might passover all who apply His blood to the doorposts of our hearts by faith, as it were. The second feast occurs during the entire week of Passover, and it is known as the feast of the unleavened bread. It is symbolic of Christ's perfect sacrifice, because of His sinless nature. The third feast is the feast of Firstfruits. This is the feast that honors God's provision of the coming harvest.

At the appointed time, when the first stalk of grain comes up in the fields, that stalk is plucked up by the roots and held up to the heavens as an offering to God and a symbol of the first sheaf representing the harvest that is to come. The sinless Christ was slain on Passover, but He rose again on the day of First Fruits, symbolizing the first fruit of the harvest yet to come. In other words, because He rose from the dead as the firstfruits of that harvest, we are guaranteed to rise as well, for we... are the harvest that is to come! What a beautiful picture of how God provided a way for us to be assured of our own resurrection from the dead! Our LORD is leading the way, as the "*Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith*" (**Hebrews 12:2**).

Paul shows us, with a series of convincing truths, that Jesus has defeated the grave. And now there is only one thing left for Him to destroy, once and for all:

**For He must reign until He puts all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be abolished is death.** **1 Corinthians 15:25**

I just love that verse! For you see, because He rose from the dead, He has proven that He has the power over death. And one day, when He comes to make all things new and right, death will be defeated once and for all. No longer will we have to feel the sorrow for the loss of loved ones. No more will we have to cry into the night and ask God why so many children suffer. For our God will wipe away every tear, and we will never again have to carry with us the burden of loss. How we long for the day when all the enemies of Christ and His church are vanquished forever. And because He rose, we have this assurance. **So we watch and wait for the coming day**, and we sing:

**I will exalt you, LORD, because You have lifted me up and have not allowed my enemies to triumph over me. LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me. LORD, You brought me up from Sheol; You spared me from among those going down to the Pit. Sing to The LORD, you His faithful ones, and praise His Holy Name. For His anger lasts only a moment, but His favor, a lifetime. Weeping may stay overnight, but there is joy in the morning.** **Psalms 30:1-5**

**TRUTH!!!**

***Happy Easter!***