

The Risen Christ is our Hope
1 Corinthians 15:9-19

Good morning,

Lecrae said, *“If I’m wrong about God, then I wasted my life. If you’re wrong about God, then you wasted your eternity.”*

There was a discussion I read on the web the other day that kind of went like this: I believe Jesus is God in the flesh.

I believe that the Bible is the word of God. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and that only through faith in Him and His perfect sacrifice can I be saved from my sin.

The reward for my faith will be eternal life with Jesus in Heaven.

But what if I’m wrong? What if I have fooled myself to believe all that I profess?

What if the Bible is wrong and Jesus never existed? Or maybe He was just some guy who lied about being God and taught some amazing things.

Well, the simple answer is that I will continue to do what I believe Jesus would do.

I have the Bible to show me examples from His life that I can use as benchmarks in mine — even if the Bible is wrong.

I will still endeavor to do the right thing. And when I die, no harm no foul, I just wasted some of my time trying to live

Please open your Bibles to *1 Corinthians 15* as we continue on in the verse by verse study of this letter from the Apostle Paul.

Last time in *1 Corinthians*, Paul spoke about the meaning and the history of the Gospel.

Jesus, God the Son, came to earth as a baby, to grow up and take the cross in our place, so that we could have forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and new life through His **sacrifice**.

We learned about two historical, essential doctrines to the Christian faith mentioned within the verses from last time:

- 1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*
- 2. He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*

Then Paul spoke about Eye witness testimony.

There were actually no eye witnesses during the Resurrection of Christ, but there were many **sightings** of the Resurrected Jesus.

There is more than enough evidence within ancient writings and eye witness accounts to prove that Jesus is who He said He is and that He died, was buried, and rose on the third day.

But even with all of the irrefutable evidence available to people today; that evidence alone will not save a single person.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. NKJV

A person has to place their trust in Jesus and what He did on the Cross in order to be saved!

Today Paul continues teaching on the Resurrection of Christ in a courtroom like teaching and tells us the risen Christ is our hope!

I. Not worthy.

Read ***1 Corinthians 15:9***

It is odd that Paul says here, ***“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle”***, because he previously defended his rights as an Apostle back in...

1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

1 Corinthians 9:2 If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. NKJV

In ***1 Corinthians 9***, Paul was explaining how he laid down his **rights** as an Apostle and was asking the Corinthians to let go of their rights and exercise love above their liberties.

Paul asked, “*Am I not an apostle?*”

The original Apostles had a special commission to lay the foundation of the church and Paul had built this church.

In *1 Corinthians 9*, Paul asserted his authority as an Apostle because of the need for respect for the office of an Apostle.

But now in *1 Corinthians 15* Paul is actually showing **humility** at the thought that the Lord would use him in the ministry.

Guzik said, “*For some, the statement **I am the least of the apostles** would just be spiritual sounding talk, which showed more pride than humility.*

“*But Paul meant it. He regarded himself as the least of the apostles because he **persecuted** the church of God.*” (Guzik)

Prior to salvation Saul later Paul, was a Pharisee of the highest rank and had all of the power and authority the flesh desired.

Saul persecuted the early followers of Jesus because they claimed Jesus was the long-expected Messiah.

The Jewish leaders thought the belief Jesus was Messiah was a fable that should have ended with His crucifixion.

When Peter and others were on trial for preaching about Jesus a Pharisee named Gamaliel, told the other religious leaders in...

Acts 5:38 And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;

Acts 5:39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest you even be found to fight against God." NKJV

Saul was a good Pharisee who knew the Bible and sincerely believed that the Christian movement was dangerous to Judaism.

So he hated Christians and felt justified in persecuting; in fact, he felt he was doing God's work by chasing off these people who talked about Jesus Christ who had risen from the dead.

Saul, later Paul felt justified in doing Christians harm until one day, on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus...

In his own words, Paul said in *Acts 22:6*, "***Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.***

Acts 22:7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

Acts 22:8 So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

Acts 22:9 "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.

Acts 22:10 So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' NKJV

Adam Clarke said, “*This was literally true in reference to his being chosen last, and chosen not in the number of the twelve, but as an extra apostle.*”

“*How much pains do some men take to make the apostle contradict himself, by attempting to show that he was the very greatest of the apostles, though he calls himself the least!*”

Paul had a healthy amount of repentance along with memory of past sin; mixed with a healthy amount of **thankfulness** towards the Lord for His grace and the call to ministry in Paul’s life.

II. Grace makes me worthy.

Read ***1 Corinthians 15:10-11***

Paul understood that apart from the grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, he was not worthy to serve the Lord.

But by the grace of God I am what I am

Paul credited the Lord’s Grace for the change seen in his life.

Paul was **transformed** by the Grace of God from the murderous, persecutor Saul, into the Christ loving, Gospel preaching Apostle Paul.

He was changed, forgiven, cleansed, into a useful vessel of love for the Lord instead a man who was full of hate.

The grace of God that saves us is also the Grace of God that changes us; if you have really received the grace of God; it will certainly **change** you.

The changes will take time, but they will come here and now, and ultimately one day once we are in heaven.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. NKJV

Thomas Constable said, *“Paul’s apostolic calling was a gracious gift from God.*

*“The giving of God’s grace proves vain when it does not elicit the appropriate **response** of loving service.” (Constable)*

Paul responded to God’s unusually great grace to him by offering back unusually great service to God.

God saved Paul by grace, and Paul served God by God’s grace.

Paul said, ***and His grace toward me was not in vain...***

The proof that God’s grace in Paul was not in vain, was the fruit that came from Paul’s ministry.

Notice the partnership Paul had with the Lord, serving Him. It was the Grace of God which made Paul who he was in Christ, but Paul still *labored abundantly* while serving Jesus.

As a Christian, you become a new creation who needs to rely fully on the Holy Spirit in order to do anything of eternal value, but we are still to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to Christ.

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. NKJV

It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure, but we should work hard for the Lord in response to all He has done for us, because we love Him!

1 Corinthians 15:11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. NKJV

It didn't matter whether it was Paul or another Apostle that preached the Gospel the praise for the results belong to the Lord.

All of the Apostles preached the Resurrection of Christ and the early Christians believed the Gospel of Jesus and were saved.

In ministry, the results are the Lord's issue and we should never take the credit for the good things the Lord does.

Our responsibility is to be obedient to what the Lord calls us to do and leave the results up to Him.

He is the One who should receive Glory for any salvation or transformation we witness from preaching the Gospel.

Paul said apart from the Grace and forgiveness of Jesus, he was not worthy to serve the Lord, but Grace made him worthy.

III. Jesus is the proof there is a Resurrection.

Read *1 Corinthians 15:12-13*

Here again, we come to an essential belief within historic Christianity; the **bodily** Resurrection of Christ.

There were some Corinthian Christians believed Jesus rose from the grave, but not bodily, because of the Greek philosophy.

Jesus, foretelling of His upcoming crucifixion said in *John 2:19* ***Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. NKJV***

If Jesus did not rise from the dead bodily then scripture is wrong; we read where Jesus appeared **bodily** to His Disciples

John 20:24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

John 20:25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

John 20:26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

John 20:27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

John 20:28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" NKJV

Don Steward said, *"From the accounts in Scripture we can see that Jesus' resurrection was bodily.*

We discover this two ways. First is Jesus own testimony. Jesus made it clear that he was not a disembodied spirit.

Second, the things that Jesus did. He did things only a person having a body can do.

Jesus walked, He showed His disciples the prints of the crucifixion on His body, He breathed and ate.

Consequently both His words and His deeds testify to the fact that His resurrection was bodily."

- People Recognized Him after His Resurrection
- Jesus Talked With People after His Resurrection
- Jesus Invited People To Touch Him after His Resurrection

- Jesus showed His scars to the Disciples after His Resurrection
- Jesus ate food with His Resurrected body

One of the greatest proofs for Jesus' bodily Resurrection was a non-believer named Saul who was persecuting the Church...

Jesus appeared bodily to Saul, (later the Apostle Paul) and commissioned him to the work of the Gospel.

If these Corinthians were right and Jesus had not risen from the dead; Jesus is still dead and that would be **devastating** for us.

IV. What if there was no Resurrection?

Read *1 Corinthians 15:14-19*

Paul answers the question of so what in *1 Corinthians 15:14*, saying if Christ is not raised, then your faith is also empty.

Faith means believing and trusting what the Lord has said and saving faith means to trust what Jesus did on Calvary's cross.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then your faith (trusting that He can save you from your sins) is empty and void of the **power** to save you.

The bad news keeps coming if Jesus did not bodily raise...

If Christ is not risen, then we are found false witnesses of God.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then the Apostles are liars and the Gospel (Good News) isn't good news at all; it is fake news and you are still stuck in your sin and bondage.

- If there is no principle of resurrection, then Jesus did not rise from the dead. (Guzik)
- If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then death has power over Him and defeated Him. (Guzik)

If death has power over Jesus, He is not **God**. (Guzik)

- If Jesus is not God, He cannot offer a complete sacrifice for sins. (Guzik)
- If Jesus cannot offer a complete sacrifice for sins, our sins are not completely paid for before God. (Guzik)
- If my sins are not completely paid for before God, then I am still in my sins. (Guzik)

Therefore, if Jesus is not risen, He is **unable** to save. (Guzik)

Notice, *1 Corinthians 15:18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. NKJV*

If this face is true, then every time we have a funeral for a believer, we should be completely devastated, because there is no eternal life for the Saints who have died.

Jesus and Paul refute that negative belief. *John 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*

John 14:2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. NKJV

Paul also said in *1 Thessalonians 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. NKJV

Re-read *1 Corinthians 15:19*

If the Resurrection isn't true and this life is all there is we are hopeless and pitiful.

C. H. Spurgeon said, *"If Jesus rose, then this gospel is what it professes to be; if He rose not from the dead, then it is all deceit and delusion."*

*"The fact is, that the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the blessings, from regeneration onward to our eternal glory, and **binds** them together."* (Spurgeon)

V. Conclusion.

C. S. Lewis's 'Liar, Lunatic, Lord' argument elicits important questions about Jesus and scriptural interpretation.

Josh McDowell said, “If Jesus knew He was not God, then He was lying. But if he was a liar, then He also was a hypocrite, as He told others to be honest, whatever the cost.”

Was Jesus a Lunatic? So if Jesus wasn't a liar, is it feasible that He only thought He was God?

Is Jesus Lord? Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter responded, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:15-16).”

Like Peter, we can decide to believe that Jesus made truthful claims about being God.

The Bible tells us that we each must choose for ourselves whether or not to accept Jesus as Lord — and be held accountable for our decision.

So why wouldn't we accept Jesus? His actions validated His words. His resurrection proved His deity.”

Lecrae said, “If I'm wrong about God, then I wasted my life. If you're wrong about God, then you wasted your eternity.”

I believe in the divinity of Jesus.

I believe that the Bible is the word of God. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and that only through faith in Him and His perfect sacrifice can I be saved from my sin.

My reward for my faith will be eternal life with Jesus in Heaven.

But what if I'm wrong? What if I have fooled myself to believe all that I profess?

What if the Bible is wrong and Jesus neither existed or He was just some guy who lied about being God and taught some amazing things?

Well, the simple answer is that I will continue to do what I believe Jesus would do.

I have the Bible to show me examples from His life that I can use as benchmarks in mine — even if the Bible is wrong.

I will still endeavor to do right. And then I will die, no harm, no foul, just wasted some of my time trying to live right.

OK, now let us look at this from the other side.

What if I am not a believer and have never asked God's forgiveness. Besides being hopeless and missing the benefits of the Christian life here...

According to the Bible, without true faith, you cannot be in God's presence, so when you die, you cannot go to heaven.

So there are eternal consequences for lack of belief.

But the historic proof even amongst non believing historians like Josephus prove Jesus rose from the Grave.

The best news ever given is that we can be saved from the punishment we deserve because of what Jesus did on the cross.

Jesus came so that we could have forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and a new life through His sacrifice.

For the person who receives His free gift of Salvation, there is no more shame or condemnation because our account has been wiped clean by His blood.

That would be good enough if the good news stopped there, but it doesn't. Those who have Christ are also given peace.

And Jesus' Resurrection is the proof that he is who he said He is and we can have forgiveness of sin and eternal life with him by accepting his free gift.