

## INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! Happy Easter! This most certainly will be an Easter unlike any before it in history!

If I haven't met you yet, my name is **SLIDE "Chris Bar"** Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here. If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians 15. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet and literally Google search 1 Corinthians 15.

## INTRODUCTION

So, this is going to be a little different as far as Easter's go...

But because it's Easter, that means we're going to be talking about the resurrection.

It's one of only two weeks on the calendar when I absolutely have to preach on a specific topic. Right?

- Like, on Christmas I gotta cover Jesus' birth.
- And today I gotta cover his resurrection.

Luckily we are right in the middle of this sermon series through the book of 1 Corinthians, and in 1 Corinthians 15 we find the most comprehensive treatment on the Resurrection in the Bible.

So, let's dig into the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15. We're going to actually do verses 3-11 first, and then circle back to verses 1 & 2 at the end of our time. 1 Corinthians 15:3

## **SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3a**

**[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:**

### **EXPLAIN: DISAGREEMENTS**

So, the Apostle Paul is the guy who wrote this letter to the Corinthian church, and he's also the author of more than half of the New Testament in our Bibles.

- So, this guy was pretty legit.
- And he wrote on a ton of different things,
- but he just said that he's about to give us
- what is most important.

The things **of first importance**. Which means that we can disagree on a whole slew of stuff, ok?

- We can disagree over things inside the church:
  - Should we baptize infants or believers?
  - Should we use grape juice or wine in communion?
  - Should we sing contemporary worship music or historical hymns?
- We can disagree over theological topics:
  - Is it predestination or free will?
  - Is it divine sovereignty or personal responsibility?
  - How do the end times work?
- We can disagree over ethical issues:
  - Should Christians side one way politically?
  - Should Christians watch certain shows or movies?

- Should Christians drink alcohol?
  - I actually know a pastor who says
  - that drinking beer is fine,
  - but light beer is sinful.
  - So, take that as you will!

You see, all these things can be discussed and debated, and some are actually important things. But Paul is saying here that what he's about to cover is of first importance!

- We can get everything else right...
- we can get every single secondary and tertiary issue correct...
- but if we get what is of first importance wrong...
- well, we're in big trouble.

So, let's see what he says is of first importance.

### **SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4**

[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

### **EXPLAIN: THE GOSPEL**

So, there you have it! What is of first importance? Well, Paul just gave you a summation of the Gospel message...the good news.

- Jesus Christ died for our sins.
- He was buried.
- And on the third day, he was raised from the dead.

So, listen to me:

if you don't believe these things are true...you aren't a Christian.

**SLIDE 1** JESUS DIED for your sins. We call this the atonement. And it is a central tenet of the Christian faith.

- Christ died on the cross,
- absorbed the wrath of God,
- carried away the shame of mankind,
- opened a way of reconciliation of us to God.

I mean, the importance of Jesus' death cannot be overstated.

Then, **SLIDE 2** JESUS WAS BURIED. Now this little phrase is here to reinforce that he actually died.

- There have been numerous theories over the last 2000 years
- to attempt to deny that Jesus actually died,
- but that he rather passed out or somehow survived.
- But the Romans were experts at crucifixion.
- They pronounced him dead.
- They pierced his side with a spear just to make sure.

Jesus actually, physically died and was buried.

And then **SLIDE 3** JESUS WAS RAISED on the third day.

And if there are two movements **of first importance**...

- it's the cross and the resurrection.
- The death and the resurrection.
- These ideas are inseparably linked to one another.
- All Christians believe that God raised Jesus from the grave
- on the third day.

But, this one is a little harder to believe, right?

- He died...ok.
- He was buried...I'm following.
- He rose...now wait a second...that don't really happen.

But, Paul doesn't just leave us hanging here. He's not like,

- *"Jesus rose from the grave...trust me."*

No, Paul cites three sources of authority to back the claim that Jesus actually physically rose from the tomb.

## **AUTHORITY 1: THE SCRIPTURES**

First, he said twice that this was **in accordance with the Scriptures**.

So, Paul does not have a specific verse in mind here, but what he's referring to is the entire Hebrew Bible, or what we call the Old Testament.

And he's bringing up the fact that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the messianic prophecies in the Old Testament.

## ILLUSTRATION: COINS/TEXAS

Statisticians have done the work to try to figure out the statistical chance that one man would fulfill all the Old Testament Messianic prophecies (which some have numbered in the hundreds).

And they came up with this illustration:

- the chances of Jesus fulfilling 8 of the messianic prophecies,
- not all of them, just 8.
- Would be like filling the entire state of Texas
- with silver dollars two-feet-deep.
- Marking one of them with a sharpie.
- And then sending in someone blindfolded,
- to dig around, and find the correct coin.

That's just like the chances of Jesus fulfilling 8 of the prophecies.<sup>1</sup> Can you imagine the chances of him fulfilling them all?

## TRANSITION

Paul says, don't take my word for it. Take the word of the Scriptures. That's the first source of authority Paul points to. The second is in verse 6:

### **SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 15:6**

[6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

## AUTHORITY 2: THE WITNESSES

Paul pointed to the authority of the scriptures. But then he pointed to the authority of some eyewitnesses.

- He says that Jesus appeared to more than 500 at one time,
- and most of them are still alive.
- He's like, *"don't take my word for it...go ask some people!"*
  - *There are a bunch of eyewitnesses still alive!"*

And there is consensus amongst historians, which almost never happens,

- but they all agree that 1 Corinthians
- was one of the earliest books written in the New Testament,
- and that it was certainly written
- when many of these eyewitnesses were alive.

You don't say,

- *"hey go check with all the hundreds of witnesses,"*
- if there's a chance that they would check and deny your claims.

## TRANSITION

So, he defaults to the authority of the scriptures, the authority of eyewitnesses, and then one more. Verses 5 and then 7-11

### **SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 15:5, 7-11**

[5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

[7] Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. [8] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. [9] For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the

church of God. [10] 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, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. [11] Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

### **AUTHORITY 3: THE EXPERTS**

The third source of authority he points to is the Apostles. The expert spiritual authorities of their day.

This was like saying,

- *“You don’t believe the scriptures?”*
- *You don’t believe the eyewitnesses?*
- *Well, what about the experts?*
- *Cause they agree about this resurrection thing as well.”*

And these are the most compelling witnesses to me.

- Paul mentions Cephas (that’s Peter),
- James,
- and then he talks about himself.

### **PETER**

Peter was just up and down and up and down during the three years he followed Christ.

- He had this one brilliant moment where he confessed Jesus as the Messiah,
- but only four verses later Jesus calls him the devil.



- When Jesus calls you the devil...
- it calls into question your legitimacy...
- Peter talks big, but never is able to follow through.
- In fact, at the last supper he told Jesus
- that he would die before he even betrayed him!
  - And later that night he denied
  - even knowing Jesus three times.

What could have possibly happened

- that turns this frightened, arrogant man
- into a main player in the early church,
- who in the end is no longer afraid
- but preaches with power,
- leads with authority,
- and even allows himself to be crucified upside down?

He believed the resurrection!

## **JAMES**

Second, James. Now, James was the half-brother of Jesus. I say half-brother because he was born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus was born. So, Jesus is the big brother.

And there was a time during Jesus' life, in the Gospel of Mark chapter 3, where his mother and brothers approached him and legitimately thought he was out of his mind.

- But after Jesus' death,
- James goes on to worship Jesus as God.
- He becomes the main leader in the Jerusalem church,
- and dies a martyr's death,
- never recanting that his brother was in fact, the Messiah.

Question:

- what would it take for you to believe that your sibling was divine?
- What would it take for you to believe that your brother was sinless?

I've got a brother...and I tell you what...it's take an awful lot for me to start worshipping The Lord Matthew Martin.

- He would literally have to be murdered,
  - I would have to witness that he was truly dead,
- and then he would have to come back from death,
  - and I would have to witness THAT.
- Then I might consider believing he was divine.

THAT JAMES BELIEVED IN THE RESURRECTION IS ASTOUNDING!

## **PAUL**

And finally, Paul brings himself up.

- He was the least of the apostles.
- He persecuted the church.
- He had a hand in killing Christians.
- Until Jesus got a hold of his heart.

- And listen, that wasn't a good career move for Paul.
- He was on the up and up in Jewish society.
- And yet, he changed the course of his entire life
- upon being convinced of the resurrection of Jesus.

## TRANSITION

Paul says: The death and resurrection of Jesus can be confirmed by:

- the authority of the scriptures,
- the authority of hundreds of witnesses,
- and the authority of the spiritual experts of the day.

So, what does that mean for us? Well, let's go back to verses 1 & 2.

## **SLIDE** 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1–2

[1] Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, [2] and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.

## EXPLAIN: PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

Paul is writing all these things to remind them of their beliefs! And he does this in three ways.

## PAST

First, he says I remind you of the gospel **which you received**.

- Now, that's past tense!
- There is a moment when each one must receive the gospel—
- the death and resurrection of Jesus—as true.

I was 16 years old when I first believed in the gospel.

- There is a past event of belief.
- Maybe it was when you were 5...
- or when you were 45...
- or when you were 75.
- But there was a moment when you received the gospel.

And I fear all too many people, who receive the gospel, bank on that one event as the thing that assures that they're saved.

- Much of evangelical church culture is obsessed with
- decision-oriented
- conversion-focused Christianity.
- But Paul doesn't simply leave this belief in the gospel
- in the past.

## PRESENT

No, he says: the gospel, which you received, **in which you stand**.

Now, that's present tense.

- **Your belief in the gospel begins at a point,**
- **but the proof that you made that decision**
- **is the position you are in now.**

Goodness, I meet so many people who have, at one point in their life, believed in the gospel.

- Maybe it was as a child, or as a teen.
- They went to VBS, or church camp,
- and they had some sort of experience
- which led them to believe the gospel...
- maybe even get baptized.
- But then they just drifted away.

And Paul is reminding the Christians at Corinth,

- who had drifted away from faithfully following Christ,
- that this isn't just about some event in the past...
- but belief in the gospel is an ongoing present reality.

The difference between saving faith and superficial faith has nothing to do with the intensity of emotion at the beginning...but with its duration over time.

## FUTURE

But then Paul gives a third reminder. He says: I preached the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved.

Paul uses a Greek tense here which refers to both a present process and a future reality. So, it's kinda like Paul is saying this:

- You WERE saved.
- You ARE saved.
- And you are BEING saved.

I hope you're seeing this,

- but salvation...
- belief...
- it's a process...
- it's progressive.

## WARNING

And Paul adds a little warning at the end of verse 2.

- He adds **IF**...you are being saved **IF you hold fast**.
- And he throws this last little category of **vain belief** in there.
- His point is that we must hold fast to this belief until the end
  - or it is in vain!

**Faith that fades, no matter how luscious its first fruits, is not saving faith.**

Listen:

- praying a prayer to ask Jesus into your heart,
- even if it's followed by a flurry of emotion and religious fervor,
- is not proof that you are saved.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

**[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,**

## CONCLUSION

### SLIDE 4 JESUS DIED AND ROSE FOR YOU.

- The scriptures point to this truth.
- The witnesses corroborated this truth.
- And the spiritual experts proclaimed this truth.

So, I know many of you believe this.

- But some of you don't believe.
- Maybe at one point you did, but you've drifted away...
- Hey, maybe you've never believed the gospel at all.
- You've never received Christ.

I'd proclaim the same message of first importance to you this morning as Paul did nearly 2000 years ago.

- JESUS DIED AND ROSE FOR YOU!
- And listen: if Jesus died for your sins...
- THEN HE IS FOR YOU!
- Anyone who dies for you IS FOR YOU!

What you believe about the death and resurrection of Jesus are the MOST important things you to believe.

- Beer or no beer: we can talk later...over a beer.
- Predestination or free will? We'll handle that another time.
- Is it ok for Christians to watch Tiger King?
  - Listen, that's show is messed up...
  - no one should watch that.

But today this I proclaim to you is the only thing that matters:

- that Christ was crucified for the redemption of sinners
- that he was buried in the ground because he was actually dead
- and that God the Father brought him back to life
- and that same power is available to those who believe.

And if you aren't a Christian, I'd just offer what's on the table:

- Jesus died and rose for you.
- Won't you believe that?
- He is for you!
- Won't you finally say yes to Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

Maybe one of the purposes behind why all this COVID-19 stuff is happening,

- is so that you would be wherever you are,
- tuning in right now,
- to hear the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Won't you put a stake in the ground and believe right now?

If you do say yes to Jesus today, would you let me know?

- There should be a button on your screen that says you committed your life to Jesus.
- You can email me.
- You can fill out a connect card.
- Goodness, I just want to be able to follow up with you this week, celebrate with you, and help you with next steps.



And for those who do believe,

- there will be no condemnation,
- no judgment,
- nothing that will be able to separate us
- from the love of Christ Jesus.
  - Not isolation...
  - not quarantine...
  - not a virus...
  - not fear...
  - not anxiety...
  - not depression...
  - not even death!

He is for you! And this can be most clearly seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray.

## **COMMUNION**

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- First, every week we celebrate communion—The Lord's Supper—
  - We take a little bit of bread and juice, two common elements given to us by Jesus to represent his body and blood sacrificed for us.
  - When we eat and drink, we are remembering his sacrifice, and proclaiming once again that we believe in him as our Lord and Savior.

- If you are a Christian here today please get your communion elements ready, as we'll all take communion together.
- If you are NOT a Christian, we ask you to abstain from taking communion, as this ordinance means you are a believer...and you are welcome at Fathom even if you are not.
- Second, we normally give of our tithes & offerings as a community. And this is still needed.
  - Church, even though we are not meeting physically, we are still practicing first fruits giving.
  - We give our first and our best because in Christ Jesus God gave us his first and his best.
  - So, if Fathom is your home church, and you regularly give in the offering boxes, please go to **SLIDE** [fathomchurch.org/give](https://fathomchurch.org/give) or click the link at the top of the screen marked "Give" and give online.
- Third, the staff and elders are here to pray for you, and we are committed to continue this. So, if you have any prayer needs, please click on the screen and submit a prayer request, or go to **SLIDE** [fathomchurch.org/prayer](https://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- And finally, we always end with singing praise and worship to our God. Singing is an unbelievably important part of our gathering, and even as we are scattered in this season, let's continue to worship through song together.

So, I'm going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we'll take communion, and then we'll sing:

## 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

### SLIDE Communion 1

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

### SLIDE Communion 2

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

### SLIDE Communion 3

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let's sing together.

## **BENEDICTION**

Well, thanks church for gathering with us. We will be online next Sunday, as well, same time.

If you're on our email list, you have an email waiting for you in your inbox, with all the links from this morning's service.

Remember, if you said yes to following Jesus this morning, please reach out to me, as we want to love and serve you well.

I'll leave you with this benediction from the Hebrew scriptures:

### **SLIDE NUMBERS 6:24–26**

[24] The LORD bless you and keep you; [25] the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; [26] the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Happy Easter, Fathom. I love you. Have a great week!

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<sup>i</sup> <https://12stone.com/watch/unscripted/probability-jesus-fulfilling-prophesies>