

If Christ be not raised

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[0 : 0 0] with me now to the chapter we partly read in first Corinthians chapter 15 verses 17 and 18 first Corinthians chapter 15 at verse 17 and if Christ be not raised your faith is vain we are getting your sins then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished Paul certainly was clear on one thing that Christianity was to stand or fall on the fact of the literal physical resurrection of Jesus Christ he was open and frank about it he faced it boldly and courageously if Christ be not risen that is putting it at its plainest Paul was mentally honest he did not seek refuge in any sort of subterfuge as we do take in these days that it could have happened without his body leaving the tomb

Paul was morally honest he could not hold to something that had no foundation in fact either Christ rose or he did not Paul was spiritually honest he could not go on believing when his faith had nothing to rest on nothing stronger than a subjective wish a desire a hope a longing no he wanted the fact of Christ's resurrection to be the foundation of his faith and so he expresses a case for Christianity and the case against Christianity in these challenging words the fact that he is the foundation of his faith is the foundation of his faith and if Christ be not raised your faith is vain your faith is vain you are getting your sins then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished three things that follow if Christ's resurrection is not historically true a vain faith a vain experience a vain hope your faith is vain for the Christian faith is deep-rooted in this your experience is vain you are getting your sins your Christian experience meant nothing and your Christian hope is vain those who sleep in Christ are perished those who sleep in Christ are perished the alternatives are there Paul doesn't shun from mentioning them he brings them into the open let us look at them tonight for a few minutes first first if Christ be not risen the Christian faith is empty it's vain it means that there was nothing supernatural about Christ nothing out of the ordinary he was a man of his day a creature of his environment he couldn't rise above his surroundings an ordinary man who lived on the ordinary levels and died an ordinary death in his birth in his life in his death he was not different he was not different from other men of his day that's on the one hand but the Christian faith claimed that he was vastly different in his birth there was a supernatural agency he was born of a virgin as if nature stepped aside to let God pass in his life he spoke as never man spake in his works he controlled nature and the ravages of disease and death itself in his character and that was perhaps the divinest miracle of all he was holy harmless undefiled apart from sinners in his death he gave himself willingly death was not his fate it was his deed it was his deed it was his self offering and the transforming faith of Christianity is this that he broke the grave open from inside and rose in resurrection life in a life over which death no longer had power others at his own bidding were brought back from death and from the grave but they came back on this side and they died again but Christ came back on the other side of death with a life over which death could have no power and that put the cornerstone on the supernatural and the divine in Christianity and in Christ's life and death that's a keystone in the arch of a supernatural Christianity and if that goes the bridge between us and God collapses it's no longer the way to the Father and the Christian faith is vain not only so but if Christ be not risen if Christ be not risen there is nothing divine about all the promises given in the Bible to that effect the scriptures contain wonderful promises of one who was to come who would conquer death and the grave promises of the stone rejected by builders promises of the stone rejected by builders would become the head of the corner promises that he would ascend up and high and lead captivity captive promises that God would not leave him in the grave to see corruption promises that made him cry oh grave

I will be thy plague oh death I will be thy destruction and the whole of the Bible is knit together by these promises giving it cohesion and unity and purpose and if Christ be not risen all these great and glorious promises are in vain and the edifice of scripture falls to pieces falls to pieces but these promises have been gloriously and triumphantly fulfilled in part already and the rest is to follow

these promises are divine given by God unfulfilled by God and they place a divine seal on the resurrection of Christ who was declared to be the son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead and there is one thing else in short if Christ be not risen we cannot regard the words of Christ himself as trustworthy he said again and again not only that he would be crucified but that he would rise on the third day he based his kingdom on this one fact and pledged his trustworthiness that it would be so that it would be so listen if it were not so

[11 : 22] I would have told you he placed the trustworthiness of his character against the possibility of deception and if the central fact did not really take place can we trust anything that Christ said or did our faith in Christ is vain this we cannot for a moment accept from moment accept we are found unfaithful all along the way and it's this or nothing and the evidence for the resurrection is so strong so compelling that we have confidence that we have confidence in basing our all on that our Redeemer lives faith in Christ is faith in the resurrection well that is what Paul insists but then he goes further and he says that if

Christ be not risen the Christian experience is vain ye are yet in your sins all that constitutes our Christian experience is built on the fabric of a make-believe we have not been redeemed and we cannot be forgiven it means that Christ has not borne our sins in his own body on the tree if he was only human he could only bear his own burden not ours and so we are still bearing our own sins Christ has not lifted from us the burden of our sins and then if Christ be not risen he did not give satisfaction for us to God for if Christ did not rise we have no evidence that God accepted his offering for sin for sin we have no receipt that the debt was paid for us we have no evidence that he has made an end of our sins we are yet bearing the guilt he did not remove the guilt of sin for us and if Christ did not rise from the dead he has not broken the power of sin in us we are still in its chains it exercises its all dominion the power of his resurrection is no longer a power in us we are yet in the bondage of sin oh let us face it frankly if Christ be not risen

Christ has not lifted the burden of sin that has crushed us Christ has not removed the guilt of sin that condemns us Christ has not broken the bondage of sin that enslaves us and we know it is not true we know that we have been redeemed we have experience of forgiveness and the peace which passes our own understanding we have been emancipated and delivered from the sin that had enslaved us we know it and therefore we know that our own we have been emancipated and delivered from the sin that had enslave us we know it and therefore we know that our experience is not vain Christ is risen he has delivered us from sin and the last thing that Paul says if Christ be not risen the Christian hope is real they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished that is our dearest hope those who lived in Christ died in Christ oh what a blessed reality not changing their environment at all they lived in Christ they lived in Christ and in Christ they died that was a constant factor that gave permanence and reality to all they had that death no matter in what form it came it was only asleep even when Stephen the first martyr was stoned to death and a cruel barbarous death it was yet the New Testament said that he fell asleep he saw Christ enthroned at the right hand of God and Christ closed his eyes in sleep but if Christ be not risen we shall not awake on the other side our sleep is eternal our hope of seeing Christ will not be fulfilled and that is our dearest hope to see him face to face it was his face that first brought us on pilgrimage and his servants shall serve him and they are promised that they shall see his face and if that promise is not fulfilled the journey is in vain life has no meaning no ending our hope of being leckon will not be realized we know we are promised that we shall be leckon when we shall see him as he is it is the goal of our journey the pinnacle of our hope that when we meet Christ will meet him as mirror that will reflect his glory his image completely

and if that hope be not realized all the prayers all the sighing all the holy endeavour of the days and years will have been gone for nothing our hope of being leckon shall not be realized oh friends it is impossible our hope of eternal fellowship with Christ will be dashed will be dashed there is no fellowship beyond the grave if that is so it is an empty void friend every instinct of our redeemed nature rebels against the very thought rebels against the very thought they who live in Christ shall die in Christ and they who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with them and our blessed hope that has inspired us and enable us bear the burden of bereament and of trial and of sore tribulation it's this that we shall be a lekkah and that we shall see him as he is friend will never know never deal that it's our anchor in triumph it's our refuge in death it's our blessed sustaining confidence as we face an unknown eternity a hope that will never be put to shame so you see the Christian hope of our resurrection would be a nepti dream men have been following a will of the wisp that leads nowhere

no wonder

Paul concludes if in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable why?

[21 : 45] we are jokes to hallucination we are victims of trickery we have believed something that cannot happen and that is of the end for which God has made us and then he strikes the note of a sure triumph even on the verge of the grave but now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept so the risen Christ is the first sheaf of a great harvest the pledge of all that is to come the patron of what we shall be like what we shall be like when we are risen with him friend we are not following an empty dream not a will of the wisp we got the risen manhood of the Lord of glory as a patron of our resurrection body the bodies of our humiliation shall be fashioned like into the body of his glory what a prospect

Christ is risen and it puts joy confidence and victory into our faith do we not believe do we not behave as if it were true we don't behave surely as if we didn't have a living saviour within the veil in studying the epistle to the Hebrews recently I was struck with this fact that the Hebrew Christians had one big stumbling block they were accustomed to the ritual of the Old Testament worship they were accustomed to the services of the temple the appearance of the high priest the animal offerings on the altar and the priest once again entering within the veil for them that was a visible tangible matter of their faith but now they say the black all that is gone and what have we we have this that Christ has passed through the veil of the eternal heavens to remain our advocate and our high priest in the presence of God and we have access to him on a higher plane than ever we could have in the earthly temple below it lifts our religion from the material to the spiritual from the temporal to the eternal and seeing we have a high priest within the veil let us all last our profession that with the writer to the Hebrews clarion call for those who felt ready to stumble seeing we have a great high priest within the veil

Jesus Christ the righteous let us hold fast our profession friends that is the call of today to you and to me our high priest lives our high priest lives and you remember when the is light priest within the veil nobody could see him there but they could hear the bells on the edge of his garments ringing as he moved within the holiest of all and the sound of the ringing bells told them our high priest is alive and our great high priest through the rent veil entered into the presence of God and the joyful sound of the gospel the bells of glad tidings are ringing out to us telling us that our high priest is still alive friends let us hold fast our profession without wavering may God grant that it be so
Amen