



# CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS

7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613

(319) 277-0924

[INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](mailto:INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)

[WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](http://WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)

## Jesus' Resurrection

March 16, 2025

Pr. Tim Boettger

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (ESV)

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance 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, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

---

As I was preparing this message earlier in the week, I was constantly thinking in my mind about one truth about God. As that truth kept coming to me, I looked up the passage where it is revealed to us—this truth about the nature of God. I spent a little time just thinking and praying about it.

This passage is found in Paul's letter to young Timothy—his first letter to young Timothy—and it's at the start of the letter. He's encouraging Timothy as a spiritual leader in the world, and he's sort of coaching him up. The first thing he tells him, he says:

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions and prayers and intercessions with thanksgiving be made for all people."

Paul was encouraging Timothy not just to pray for the people he was around and the people he was involved with, the ones God was encouraging him to lead spiritually. But Paul was saying to young Timothy, when you start praying, first of all, pray for the world—all the people in the world. Pray for all people with petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving.

Then he said, pray for kings and those in authority. And in doing this, he said, here's why: "That we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." Paul's first instruction to young Timothy was—pray. Pray for the world. Pray for all the people in the world. Pray for its leaders so that people could live quiet and peaceful lives in all godliness and holiness.

Then he reveals this truth about God. He says:

"This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth."

All people.

As I was praying, even before reading this text, the Holy Spirit gave me this sense, reminding me: "Tim, do you know I want everyone, everywhere, to be saved—to come to a knowledge of the truth?"

Then he reveals what that truth is. It's a very narrow, specific truth. He says:

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind—the Lord Jesus Christ."

As the Holy Spirit was reminding me of this, I was thinking: "Lord, I know that, and I understand that, but I'm preaching about the resurrection. We're in a Bible overview." I was just reminding him: "We're in a Bible overview, and we're talking about specific incidents in human history."

And I felt like, yes, the Lord said to me, "And I want people to believe—to believe."

That is exactly what he encouraged Timothy to pray for—that all people everywhere would come to a knowledge of the truth. And that truth is that there's only one mediator between God and man—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Adrian read in our lesson for today more specifics about this revelation about Christ—the specifics that are of first importance when we share with people about Jesus. Paul said this:

"I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel—the good news, the power of God that brings salvation to people—that is preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved through this message of Jesus, if you hold fast to this word, unless you believed in vain. I delivered to you what is of first importance: Christ died for our sins."

The whole Old Testament points to the coming of a Savior who would suffer for human sinfulness and pay the ultimate sacrifice for human sinfulness once and for all. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming on the scene, we read in John's Gospel, he said to him:

"Look, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

Of first importance—Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

He was buried in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb near Jerusalem—there, after he was killed on the hill of Golgotha.

And then this—that he was raised on the third day.

The resurrection. It's of first importance. It is the centerpiece of the message of the Bible—that Jesus came, he was crucified for our sins, buried in the tomb, and then supernaturally resurrected on the third day.

And God wants people to believe.

Paul wrote to the believers in Rome. It's recorded for us in Romans, chapter ten, verse nine:

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

This is what God is wanting for all people everywhere—to come to a knowledge of the truth. That Jesus is Lord. That he was crucified for our sins. That God raised him from the dead.

The problem with this is, it's just not something we naturally believe in. It's not something that's part of our everyday lives. You might say it's outside of the human box—the human norm. The resurrection is outside of most of our boxes in life. It's not something we easily come to say, "Hey, that's true. That's true. I know it to be true."

Usually, we believe things that are inside of our realm of experience, our upbringing, and our education. When you think of the human box, you think of the way a person was raised—the foundation, the culture, the things they were taught in their childhood by whoever raised them. That's sort of the base of a box.

Then you have the education that a person gets. Some people in the world get a lot of education—a lot of exposure to a lot of information and teaching.

Then you have experiences that a person goes through. These sort of form the walls of a box in a person's life. Their mind is shaped and formed by their upbringing, their exposure and education, and their experiences in life.

And then, all of a sudden, someone comes along with a revelation about something that's outside of a person's box, and they don't know what to do with it. They don't receive it right away. It's hard for them to believe.

The resurrection is like this. It's outside of most human experiences. I would guess most of us have not seen a person die, lay in the grave for a couple of days, and then come back out walking around. But that is the claim of Christianity, and it was hard even for those who were there to believe it. Even when they saw it, it was hard for them to believe it.

Our text says this:

"On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they..."

This is Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James—who's also the mother of Jesus—James being the half-brother of Jesus, and the other women with them.

"They went to the tomb, taking the spices with them that they had prepared."

Jesus died on a Friday. The Sabbath came on a Saturday. They didn't do anything on a Saturday. So, in order to anoint the body, they had to wait until Sunday morning to do this. This was normal for them—to go put spices and perfumes on the body so the smell of the body wouldn't just radiate so much.

So they went to the tomb Sunday morning with the spices they had prepared. It says:

"They found the stone rolled away from the tomb."

The Scripture tells us that a stone was rolled there, a seal was put upon it, and guards were placed there. The religious leaders of the day were nervous that something might happen to the body of Jesus, and all the disciples knew this.

So to see the stone rolled away, and no soldiers present, had to be confusing to these ladies. But they saw this, and they went in.

"They did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."

This is the empty tomb.

We spoke last week about the cross being the most recognized religious symbol in the world. Some people think it ought to be the tomb because in the tomb is the validity of all the Scriptures. If the empty tomb is not true—if the resurrection is not true—then all the rest of the story falls apart. It all hangs on the relevance and the truth of this empty tomb.

What really happened inside that tomb some 2,000 years ago?

What were these ladies experiencing when they saw the empty tomb?

They were perplexed.

The Bible says they were perplexed—just like I was when I saw the Grand Canyon for the first time, and I knew that just some little simple stream couldn't have created that.

They were perplexed.

Then it says:

"Behold, two men stood by them with dazzling apparel."

We talk about the Bible being the account in human history of what is visible, what is tangible, and also the unseen story that's going on behind the scenes. Every once in a while, these two come together, and God in the invisible breaks through to the visible.

That's what we have happening here.

"Two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. As they were frightened, they bowed down their faces to the ground, and the men said to them:

'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but he is risen.

Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, crucified, and on the third day rise again."

And they remembered his words.

It doesn't say they believed.

It says they remembered his words.

Returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to the rest—to the apostles.

So here you have the first encounter with the resurrection. They're perplexed. They're confused. They're frightened. They're encouraged by a supernatural experience. And then they leave, wondering what this was all about.

They start to tell some of their close friends about this, and the friends respond this way:

"These words seemed to them, the apostles, like an idle tale."

Or, as some versions say, like nonsense.

"They did not believe them."

But remember—salvation comes through belief.

Yet, they did not believe.

It is hard for human beings to accept something that's outside of the norm for us. It's hard for us to do that. As a matter of fact, faith does not come easily to us. Trust in the unseen does not come easily.

But it says Peter—the one who had denied Jesus, had seen him do miracles, had walked on water—this Peter was curious.

He wondered what was happening.

"He ran to the tomb, stooping and looking in. He saw the linen cloths by themselves, and he went home, marveling at what had happened."

The disciples are getting into wonderment.

It's a great place to be, friends.

God has created you and me with the ability to wonder and to marvel, to question, to doubt, to think, to be a little confused at times. When we get into this stage, it's actually a good stage to be in because this is the breeding ground for the expansion of our box, the growing of our faith, and the accepting of new things—being open to learning.

So God is dismantling their boxes a little bit at this point, and they don't know what to do with it.

But Peter goes home wondering and marveling.

John says in his Gospel that he was actually running with Peter—and that he actually beat him to the tomb.

John says that when he went into the tomb with Peter, he saw the empty tomb.

And this is the first recording we have of this.

John said, "He saw it and believed."

He believed.

They had both been told what the angels had said.

Peter was perplexed and wondering.

But John believed.

Everyone has their own faith journey. We never know when a person is going to come to faith and really believe.

And here, John believed.

We read at the beginning that God is wanting all people everywhere to come to a knowledge of the truth.

And that truth includes the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus—God's only Son.

As a matter of fact, John said he wrote his whole book for this purpose.

This was inspired by God for this.

He said at the end of his book:

"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing, you might have life in his name."

This is not biological life, friends.

All the people who hear this are biologically already alive.

The Bible speaks of being born again—being born once of water biologically, but then being born of the Spirit through faith—into a new person, into a new creation, a new creature in the world.

This is not about Christianity. It's not about behavior modification or human attempts to live up to God's moral standards. Christianity about God is coming to us in our failures, touching us, calling us to believe. And when we believe, we're born into a supernatural life. We become new creatures with new natures and new identities. We're transformed from the inside out.

As I was thinking about this and praying about this week, I woke up in the middle of the week in the morning, and I had a picture in my mind. I felt like the Lord was just reminding me about this. Christianity is not about improving people's behavior; it's about transforming their whole being. And that's why it's so important—a being that's separated from God, on its way to condemnation, to a being that is in communion with God, on its way to eternity with God. This is deep in our souls, and nothing in the world can provide this, but the Spirit of God can transform us in this way.

The picture that I had in my mind is of a part of nature that demonstrates this—the idea of a living creature going into a cocoon, experiencing death, but then being born into new life, a whole new way of living. And this is what God is holding out to the world, what the church has to offer the world—to deal with the root problem of human sinfulness that we talked about last week and give us a new nature that will live under the power of the Holy Spirit. And this is made available to all who believe.

It's just that simple to come to faith, but faith is hard to get. As a matter of fact, faith itself is a part of the gift of God, for we are saved by His grace through our faith, not of ourselves. This is the gift of God. And so I want to just encourage you this morning in your faith in God. Faith is that lever that opens up the power of God in our lives. When Jesus went into His hometown, when He was beginning His ministry, the Bible says He couldn't share His power there much because of their lack of faith. Our lack of faith limits God's work in our lives.

Jesus told a man that was talking to Him about some problems he was experiencing, "According to your faith, it will be done to you." We read in Hebrews 11:6 that without faith, we cannot please God. God wants to birth faith in us. He's inviting the whole world to come to believe, and that faith can grow over time—to grow in the love and faith and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, if you want to grow in your faith, I just want to give you some encouragement today. First of all, very simply, ask God for more faith. Whatever level you have, just ask Him for more. I can tell you, over the course of my life, as God has grown me in every stage of life, I come to places where I just don't have the faith to live into what He's calling me to do. And what I do is I get on my knees time and time again, and I say, "God, would you give me more faith to live into what you're leading me to do?" You plead with Him for it.

The Scripture tells us when the disciples came to believe, here's what happened: Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. We pray for this. And Paul told Timothy to pray for this because it's supernaturally revealed and supernaturally brought into a person's heart. And so, I encourage you—if you want more faith, ask God for more faith. The man who prayed with tears, "Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief. Strengthen my unbelief." Pray for more faith.

And then I would encourage you with this—just what we're doing here this morning. Expose yourself more and more to the teaching of God's Word. His Word is fuel for our souls. His Word brings faith. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," the Bible says. So when we open our minds and hearts to the teaching of God's Word, somehow the Holy Spirit brings that truth to us and opens up our eyes so that we might believe.

If we're going to grow stronger and stronger in faith, we can't do it by eating a spiritual meal once a week. And we have all kinds of opportunities through radio, podcasts, and different things to feed ourselves with God's Word. And as we feed ourselves with God's Word, it doesn't have to be enormous amounts, but we chew on it. God says He'll turn that into a confidence in Him and a faith in Him.

We pray for faith. We expose ourselves to the supernatural Word of God and let it into our hearts. And then I want to encourage you in this: Keep taking steps of obedience in line with God's Word—stretching yourself out of your comfort zone, dying to yourself as His Word calls us to, and taking steps of faith, courage, and action in your life based on the teachings of the Bible. Because if we don't do anything with it, we become hearers of the Word and not doers. Our faith atrophies and shrinks.

Faith without actions is dead. Faith is like a muscle. If we don't exercise it, if we don't stretch ourselves, if we don't take steps based on our faith, our faith will continue to shrink and dissipate. "Those who have ears," the Scripture says, "let them hear."

Let's pray together, shall we?

Father, we thank You for Your Word, which teaches us so clearly what to believe and how to live. We thank You for sending Your Son into the world to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves—to pay the penalty for our sin and deal with our sinful nature. And then we thank You for Him conquering death and showing us Your power over life itself.

Father, as we sit here today, I'm mindful that maybe there are some who haven't opened their hearts to You, and You're calling them to faith. Perhaps they would just pray along with me and say, "Lord, forgive me for my unbelief. I see You calling me now in my spirit and my soul to place my faith in You.

And so, I do believe. Lord, help my unbelief. Please forgive my sin and cleanse me from unrighteousness. Adopt me into Your eternal family. And as Your Spirit comes within me, as Your Word says, help me listen to Your Spirit and grow in the grace and the knowledge and in my faith in Your Son."

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.