

# JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEATH OF DEATH – 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28

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<sup>20</sup> But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. <sup>24</sup> Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. <sup>28</sup> When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

I had an awesome opportunity this last week as a pastor. I was given a call from a gentleman, whose mother had just passed away. His mother, Anna Bischoff, was one of the founding members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Benson. As such, her and her husband had a burial plot here in Benson. So last week, they had the funeral service in Glendale, and then came down here to Benson for the graveside committal service, they asked me to lead that latter service.

Why was it such an awesome opportunity? Not only because I had not done a graveside committal service, but I could be reminded, and I could remind those present of the belief we have as Christians. the belief in the resurrection of the body. Because at a graveside committal service, we are committing the body into the ground, but we are also reminded that one day, that body will rise. It will rise because of what we heard from 1 Corinthians just a few minutes ago. It will rise because JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEATH OF DEATH. Where once, death had final say, where once, death was the final resting place, Christ our King has now conquered death. JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEATH OF DEATH:

1. It shows his love
2. It shows his power

(1)

It is really these two points that Paul was wanting to share with this Corinthian church. Just to give you a summary of this congregation – it was a congregation that had factions, a congregation that was abusing the Lord’s Supper, a congregation that showed pride in “overlooking” a gross act of sexual immorality, a congregation which fought over the little things, but could be apathetic to God’s Word. Yea, we could probably look at our church and see that it’s not perfect, it has some of those qualities of the Corinthians, but certainly not like the Corinthians.

And so Paul's letter to the Corinthian church was a letter of response, a response of how they were to act as individual Christians, and how they were to act like a Christian congregation. Remember, Paul had established the church in Corinth, some were Jews – who had heard about the coming Messiah from the Old Testament, others were non-Jews – who hadn't heard about the coming Messiah. This may have been part of the challenge with this particular congregation, but certainly it wasn't an excuse for their behavior. Paul's letter was a letter of instruction to these people on how to act as Christians.

But Paul didn't want this to be a letter of laws – do this, don't do that, because that is not what the gospel is all about. The gospel was what Paul wanted people to focus on. And the heart of the gospel is found in this very chapter, chapter 15 (also referred to as the great resurrection chapter in the Bible). No Christian acts the way they do because they have to, Christians act the way they do because of what has already been done for them in Christ. It is the resurrection of Christ that gives Christians the motivation, that gives us hope.

And really, the resurrection of Christ, takes us back to the very beginning. It was the very beginning that Paul wanted to take the Corinthians to. If you remember back in the beginning God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After creating them, he gave them one command. He gave them the command of **“Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...for on the day you eat of it you will die!”** That word “die” would resonate throughout all of history. We know the story of what happened. Adam and Eve ate from the fruit of that tree and they died, not physically right away, but they would die. The entire chapter of Genesis 5, which goes through the genealogy of the human race, has this theme – “Adam lived this long, then he died, Seth lived this long, then he died, Enosh lived this long, then he died.”

Death was to be the end, it was the result of sin, death was not something to be looked forward to. There was a finality to death. That's what every race of humans has come to realize. Once a person dies, there's no coming back. Which is what makes Jesus so different. He did come back from death. And as Paul says, this will not be an isolated occurrence - **“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive, but each in his turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”** The only way this can happen, the only way death can give us up, is if someone conquers death.

But death cannot be conquered in a usual way. You cannot swing a sword to slay it. Plenty of people have tried to conquer death, either by eating and exercising, medical advances, freezing their bodies, but all have eventually succumbed to death. Those who have avoided death can only be found in science-fiction or comedies. But Christ, the God-Man who created the universe was around before death ever claimed its first victim. He not only showed his power in conquering death, but he also showed his love. JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEATH OF DEATH.

Christ showed his love in bringing about the death of death. By his resurrection from the grave he pried death's cold fingers not only off of his own body, but also off our bodies as well. How did he do this? He connected us to his resurrection, his victory. This is the whole point Paul is making to the Corinthians. **“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man...As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”** It was his love for sinful human creatures that prompted God to make a promise to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden – a promise of a Messiah to bring about the death of death.

This is why Christians no longer view death as the end, we no longer view death as permanent. Just as that message is true for the Corinthians of Paul's day, so it is true for Christians of our day. Just think for a moment how we would view death if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, if he didn't promise that we would rise from the dead? Death is scary as is, but without the promise of the resurrection at the end of death, it's downright scary. We wouldn't know what would happen after death, and that prospect scares people – and so people invent stories and ideas of what happens to calm their anxious minds.

Sometimes we just get so used to thinking about life after death as a Christian, we forget what it's all about to not expect a life after death. And yet that's the prospect facing many people today. They think they know what happens, but they aren't sure. As a Christian, we know that JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEATH OF DEATH, and that by his love he invites us to a life with him.

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But JESUS CHRIST AS THE DEATH OF DEATH shows us another thing as well. It shows us his power. A power that no one else has, a power that is above all other power. But it's not just some mystical power that has no basis in reality, it is a power that rules over all. To compare his power with ours, look at this example. If you went to the doctor and he said you had a terminal illness and only had one year to live, what would you do? I think many of us would fight against that diagnosis and fight against the illness. Any maybe you might have the power, the drive to outlive your prognosis, but eventually, you would die. Then Jesus walks into that same doctor with the same terminal illness. But instead of just fighting against it, he would just remove the illness from his body, and that would be that.

OK, so maybe that's a simple example. But it's realistic in the fact that Jesus can do more than we can, he can do things no one else can. Paul was telling the Corinthians that to show that Christ not only has the power over our lives (what he has been telling them in the whole letter), but that he also has power over their deaths. Because Jesus resurrection is not just about something that happened a long time ago, it's about something that will happen in the future as well.

During the last four weeks, we have been in the season of the church year called End Times. During that time we have looked at a Christian's response to the end of the world. We pray that God would keep us faithful to his Word, mindful of the judgment, watchful for our triumph, and now, joyful in Christ our King. Christ's resurrection was the first bookend of resurrections. At his coming, the remaining resurrections will take place, and that will demonstrate Christ's power even more over death.

The Corinthians needed to hear that Jesus had this power. It is the power to motivate and encourage in Christian living, it is the power to know that whatever the circumstances, Christ does reign. The same holds true for us – when we wander or when we are scared, Christ has this power. Not only a power over life but a power over death. So even if someone threatens our life because of our faith, we need not be afraid, because JESUS IS THE DEATH OF DEATH.

And when that last day comes, when Jesus will come in his royal procession, he will put a final end to death. I look forward to that day, when death has no power. There's a show that began this fall called *Forever*. In it, the main character, Henry Morgan, is unable to permanently die. He can get shot, stabbed, poisoned, feel all the pain of death, but when the moment of death comes, he is "re-born" in water, but not as a baby, but as the same 35 year old man with all of his memories intact. Death has no power over

Henry Morgan. We may not have that same condition physically, but we face a similar fate in eternity. Because of Jesus, death has no power over us. Yes, one day, we will all die. But because of Christ our King, that will not be the end. Because Jesus, by his love and power, showed himself to be the Lord of death. Amen.