

Empire Church of the Brethren  
Sunday Service Sermons

05 April 2026

The Meaning of the Resurrection

Text: "If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

1 Cor. 15:32

Do you visit the grave of your loved ones dearly departed?

I have begun going by the graves of my parents and grandparents.

I am not sure why but it might be for that day is coming for me to go be with them.

I have not done this often because I know that they are not there but in heaven.

But recently I have gone by.

My parents grave markers were covered in dirt by gophers.

I took tools and dug them out and cleaned them up.

I felt good about doing this.

Seemed to show respect.

The graves of our loved ones have been marked and kept through the years because of what they contain, the bodies of our loved ones.

We feel that we show respect and love by going by and making sure it is kept up nicely.

How different from the tomb of Jesus.

It is famous, not for what it contains but for what it does not contain, for it is empty.

The best news the world had ever received was spoken by the angel on the first Easter morning when he said concerning Jesus, He is not here: he is risen."

What does the resurrection mean to us?

It gives meaning to all of the Christian life.

If Christ is not risen, then we will not be raised.

And if we will not be raised, all is lost.

In this difficult passage, Paul declares that without the resurrection, baptism is meaningless, sacrifices for the cause of Christ are meaningless, and moral restraint is meaningless.

This means that the resurrection not only had eternal significance but also practical application to our lives.

These practical meanings of the resurrection can be seen in the series of four questions that Paul asked in these verses.

Without the resurrection our sacrifices are useless.

Verse 29 is one of the most disputed passages in all the Bible.

There are more than fifty different interpretations of it.

Some say that it refers to baptism by proxy; that is one person can be baptized for another.

This is the belief and the practice of Mormons today.

Some say that it refers to being baptized because of someone else.

For example, a loved one's death may cause another to repent and follow the Lord in baptism.

The correct meaning is that baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

If there is no resurrection, then baptism is a meaningless ritual.

Without the resurrection our morals are groundless.

Paul then speaks of the dangers, hardships, and sacrifices he made for the cause of Christ. He speaks of "fighting the wild beasts" and then says, "I die daily."

This is a strong expression of the danger of death he daily encountered.

Paul's argument was this: hardships, dangers, and sacrifices are meaningless if there is no resurrection.

Being a Christian was risky.

In fact, the Christians were the only people in the first century outside the praetorian guard who believed in anything strongly enough to die for it.

That is why the gospel swept the world.

Christ still calls on us to sacrifice for him.

Missionaries must leave home for foreign countries.

Christians in countries like India, Sudan, and China are often killed or imprisoned for their faith.

Businessmen often suffer when they stand for what is right.

It is without apology that we ask people to sacrifice for Christ.

But these sacrifices have no meaning if there is no resurrection.

Without the resurrection our morals are groundless.

Paul continues his argument: Not only are baptism and sacrifices meaningless, but so is moral restraint if there is no resurrection.

Some people have always lived without restraint.

The philosophy of the Epicureans was, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

Many live by this hedonistic philosophy today.

The person who lives without restraint is a fool.

Jesus told the story about such a man in *Luke 12:13-21*.

He prepared for a life of ease but his soul was demanded of him and he was lacking.

We must watch our company if we want to live the right kind of life.

Paul warns that wrong companions corrupt a person's morality.

The call for moral restraint and holy living is meaningless if there is no resurrection.

The poignant message of Paul in this passage is that without the resurrection, baptism is meaningless, our sacrifices are meaningless, and our moral restraint is meaningless.

An old Indian chief heard the gospel story for the first time.

He said, "The Jesus road is good, but I have followed the Indian road all of my life and I will follow it to the end."

One year later he was close to death.

At this point he said to the missionary who stood by his bed. "Can I take the Jesus road now? My road ends here!"

All other roads "dead end" at the grave.

The way of Christ is the way of life.

Today and forever!