



WHAT IF THERE HAD BEEN NO EASTER?

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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What If There Had Been No Easter?

SERMON REFERENCE: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2404

This is the Gospel: Jesus Christ died for our sins; He was buried and rose again on the third day. But what if death had conquered—what if Jesus had stayed in the tomb?

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 gives a tragic account of our lives without Jesus—a picture of what our lives would be if there had been no Easter. Preaching would be profitless and our faith would be foolish: “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (1 Corinthians 5:14).

If Christ is still in the grave, every preacher of the Gospel is wrong. If Jesus Christ is dead, our faith is also dead, because faith is no better than its subject.

Without the resurrection, the disciples would have been deceivers: “Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ...” (1 Corinthians 5:15). The disciples, who were tortured and persecuted as martyrs, would have had no gain preaching of Christ’s resurrection if He were still dead.

Adrian Rogers says, “A man may live for a lie, but not many men willingly die for a lie.” Without Easter, sin would be sovereign: “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 5:17)!

God cannot overlook our sin; if He did, He would cease to be Holy. We have no hope of forgiveness apart from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a result, death would have dominion: “Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Corinthians 5:18).

If Jesus had not beaten death once and for all, death would have the last word and ultimate dominion. But because Jesus Christ rose from the grave, there is life beyond death.

Finally, if there had been no Easter, the future would be fearful: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 5:19). Without the resurrection, we are a miserable people, with very little to look forward to.

Adrian Rogers says, “Jesus Christ is the one who walked out of that grave and took the sting out of sin. He took the dread out of death, took the gloom out of the grave, and He has given us a hope that is steadfast and sure.”

Life Application

Do you know who you are in Christ? Do you believe in His death, burial and resurrection?



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Here is an unthinkable question: What if there had been no Easter?
 - i) What if Jesus Christ stayed in that tomb?
 - ii) What if death had conquered?
- b) 1 Corinthians 15:12-19
- c) Jesus Christ came forth from the tomb. He is a risen Savior.
- d) But if we suppose that Jesus did not rise from the dead, there are six tragic things that would be true.

2) PREACHING WOULD BE PROFITLESS

- a) Preaching would be an exercise in futility if Christ is still in that grave.
 - i) 1 Corinthians 15:14
 - ii) Every liberal preacher who does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ should go get an honest job.
 - iii) 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
 - iv) Without the resurrection, there is no Gospel to preach.
 - v) A sermon that does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a profitless, worthwhile exercise in futility.

3) FAITH WOULD BE FOOLISH

- a) 1 Corinthians 15:14
- b) Why put faith in a dead Messiah?
 - i) Faith is no better than its object.
 - ii) A dead man can't save anyone.
- c) How do we know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God incarnate?
 - i) Romans 1:4
 - ii) Leaders of other faiths—Confucius, Buddha, Mohammad—all died and are still dead; Jesus Christ is alive.
- d) We don't put our faith in a dead Messiah. But if He's still in that grave, faith is foolish.

4) THE DISCIPLES ARE DECIEVERS

- a) 1 Corinthians 15:15-16
- b) It's one thing to be mistaken; it's another thing to be a false witness.
- c) What Paul says is, "If Jesus Christ is still in the grave, then we're telling a lie."
- d) If the disciples were liars, why would they deceive?



- i) People lie to gain something.
 - (1) The disciples died as martyrs.
 - (a) They were tortured, persecuted, humiliated, burned at the stake, eaten by lions, stoned and crushed to death.
 - (2) Hypocrites and martyrs are not made of the same stuff.
- ii) People tell lies to get out of trouble, not to get into trouble.
 - (1) A man may live for a lie, but few if any will willingly, knowingly die for a lie.
- e) The disciples were testifying that Jesus was alive, saying, "We have seen Him! We have touched Him!"
 - i) Would you say that Simon Peter was a con man?
 - (1) That John the apostle was a crook?
 - (2) That the apostle Paul was a known perjurer and a false witness?
 - (3) And that these men would die for a lie?
 - (4) Of course we would not say any of that, but if Christ is still in the grave, the disciples would be deceivers.

5) SIN WOULD BE SOVEREIGN

- a) Sin has won.
- b) 1 Corinthians 15:17
- c) All of us have sinned. There's not a one who has not sinned.
- d) We are all sinners by birth, by nature, by practice, by choice, and we have no hope of forgiveness apart from the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - i) God cannot just overlook our sin.
 - (1) If God were to cease to judge sin, God would cease to be holy.
 - ii) God never lets sin go unpunished.
 - (1) Your sin will be pardoned in Christ or punished in Hell, but it will never be overlooked.
- e) But if Jesus Christ is still in the grave, it means that God did not accept the sacrifice of Calvary.
- f) How do we know that Jesus Christ was not just a religious fanatic? How do we know that God accepted the sacrifice of Calvary?
 - i) The resurrection.
 - (1) Romans 4:25
 - (2) No resurrection, no Savior. No Savior, no forgiveness. His death without His resurrection cannot save anybody.
- g) If Christ is still in the grave, we have no hope of Heaven because we are yet in our sins, and the wages of sin is death.
 - i) Romans 6:23
 - ii) Ezekiel 18:20
- h) If anything had had been lacking in the life of Jesus that would have corrupted His sinless atonement, God the Father would have left Him in the grave.



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6) DEATH HAS DOMINION

- a) 1 Corinthians 15:18
- b) If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, life is nothing but a cruel joke.
 - i) Those who have died have perished and we will never be reunited with them.
 - ii) All we can look forward to is dying, being cremated or covered with dirt, letting greedy microbes eat away at us, and that's it.
 - iii) Something as wonderful as a human life and as glorious as the bond between humans has no lasting meaning; all we can look forward to is dying and going back to the ground.
- c) Death does not have dominion! Christ is risen!
 - i) Those that have fallen asleep in Christ have not perished. (I Thess. 4:14) He is alive.
 - ii) How great to know that there is a God who, in the form of man, the Lord Jesus Christ, grappled with the iron bars of death and is victorious.

7) THE FUTURE IS FEARFUL

- a) 1 Corinthians 15:19
- b) A wise man once said, "If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, nothing really matters. But if Jesus Christ came out of that grave, nothing but that really matters."
- c) Without the resurrection, we're just poor, deluded fools and the future is fearful.
- d) Jesus Christ is the one who walked out of that grave, resurrected.
 - i) He took the sting out of sin.
 - ii) He took the dread out of death.
 - iii) He took the gloom out of the grave.
 - iv) He has given us a hope that is steadfast and sure.
- e) All of us will eventually die, if Jesus doesn't return first.
 - i) You can know and be sure of where you are going when you die.

8) CONCLUSION

- a) Do you know where you are going?
- b) Do you know who you are in Christ?
- c) Have your sins been forgiven?
- d) Are you sure that Jesus Christ is in your heart?
 - i) Preaching is profitable
 - ii) Faith is feasible
 - iii) The disciples are dependable
 - iv) Sin has been subdued
 - v) Death has been defeated
 - vi) The future is fabulous
 - (1) We know where we are headed.
- e) The truth of the ages is that Jesus Christ came out of that grave.
- f) Jesus lives. The question is, do you?

SERMON OUTLINE



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- g) You may have existence, but you don't have real life until you know the Lord Jesus Christ.
- h) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- i) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



What If There Had Been No Easter?

SERMON REFERENCE: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Take God's Word and find if you would First Corinthians chapter 15. An unthinkable question; what if there had been no Easter? What if Jesus Christ stayed in that tomb? What if death had conquered, if there'd been no Easter?

Well, the apostle Paul deals with that question here, beginning in verse 12. Listen to it, First Corinthians chapter 15 verse 12 through verse 20, "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen? And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."

The greatest escape artist of all time was a man named Harry Houdini. He died in 1926. Some of you may never have heard of him. But he was the sensation of his time. It seemed there was no way to imprison Harry. He would be put in the best jails; in a few moments he would be out. They would put handcuffs on him; they seemed to fall away. They would sew him up in canvas bags; out he would come. They would rivet him in huge milk cans, but out he would come. He would be sealed in boilers and welded in; out he would come. He would be put in a coffin, chains around that coffin, dump it in the river, out he would come. Some thought he had supernatural powers. He had the flexibility of an eel. He had the mind of a genius. He had the lives of a cat. Fullton Oursler said, "That man could escape from anything but our memories." But in October, 1926, Harry Houdini died.

Now he had experimented with contact with the dead, necromancy, clairvoyancy, fortune telling, and he felt that all of these were fakers, and he would expose them and they hated him. But he still wondered: can anyone truly escape from death?

He told his wife, gave her a secret code word, that, "On my birthday, I will try to contact you. Sensitize your mind. Be ready for a contact." They had a code word. She, on his birthday, would light a candle and sit before his picture. One year he did not contact her. Two years. Three years. Four years. Five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. On the tenth year, she extinguished the candle and never tried again. Old death held Harry. He did not escape.

Jesus went into the tomb. He stayed there three days and He walked out like a butterfly bursting from a cocoon. Leaving the grave clothes in that tomb, Jesus Christ came forth. He is a risen Savior. He did what Harry could not do. But the question comes, a thing unthinkable. Suppose Jesus Christ is still in that grave. Suppose Jesus did not rise from the dead. I want to tell you six tragic things that would be true if Christ is still in that grave.



Number one; **preaching would be profitless.** What we're doing today would be an exercise in futility. Look if you will in First Corinthians 15 verse 14 here, of our text, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain." Folks, you're wasting your time. I am wasting my time. If Jesus Christ is still in the grave, this is a very profitless thing that we're doing now. Preaching is vain. It is empty if Christ is still in that grave.

Every liberal preacher who does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ ought to go get an honest job. Let me tell you what a preacher said, it's amazing. He said, and I quote, speaking of Jesus, "His body lies in a nameless Syrian tomb, but His deathless Spirit goes marching on." Somebody ought to call for that man's credentials. Jesus Christ is alive, or that man is an imposter and he is a fake and a fraud, and has no business in anybody's ministry. This is the Gospel; that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and rose again the third day. And without that the man has no gospel to preach.

I heard of a time back when haircuts were 50 cents, back in the olden days. A preacher went in the barbershop and got a haircut, and he started to pay the barber. The barber said, "No, that's all right. You're a pastor. I'm not going to charge you." The pastor said, "No, I want to pay." He said, "No, I will come listen to you preach and I'll take it out in preaching." The pastor said, "I don't have any 50-cent sermons." The barber said, "That's okay. I'll come twice." I want to tell you that a pastor that does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as far as I am concerned, is a profitless, worthless exercise in futility.

Number two; not only is preaching profitless, but if Jesus Christ is still in the grave, **faith would be foolish.** Listen again to First Corinthians 15 verse 14, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Why would that be? Well, why put faith in a dead Messiah? You see, faith is no better than its object. A dead man can't save anyone. Our faith in Jesus Christ is not worth anything if Jesus Christ is still in the grave. How do we know that He is the Son of God? How do we know that He is God incarnate? In Romans chapter 1 verse 4, the Bible says, "He's shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." Confucius died; he's dead. Old Buddha died; he's dead. Mohammad died; he's dead. Jesus Christ is alive. He's alive.

A teacher asked the students to write an essay on the greatest living man. One student wrote an essay on Jesus Christ. The teacher said, "Son, that's a good essay, but I said living man." The student said, "Teacher, He is alive." He is alive. We don't put our faith in a dead Messiah. He's, "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead," Romans 1 verse 4. But if He's still in that grave, preaching is profitless, faith is foolish.

Number three; **the disciples are deceivers** if Jesus Christ did not rise. Look if you will in First Corinthians 15 verses 15 and 16. Paul goes on with his argument and says, "If Christ be not risen; Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised." Now notice what he's saying. Look again in verse 15, "We are found false witnesses." Now get the whole thing. Paul is not saying, "If Jesus is still in the grave, then we're mistaken." It's one thing to be mistaken; friend, it's another thing to be a false witness. What Paul says is, "If Jesus Christ is still in the grave, then we're telling a lie."



Now you have to ask yourself this question, therefore. Were the disciples liars? Were they deceivers? If so, why? Why would they deceive? Why would they lie? Well, you say, "People lie for gain." What gain did they have if Jesus Christ is still in the grave? How did they die? They died as martyrs. They were tortured, they were persecuted, they were burned at the stake, they reddened the mouths of lions, they were stoned, they were crushed, they were humiliated.

Now listen to me! Hypocrites and martyrs are not made of the same stuff! People tell lies to get out of trouble, not to get into trouble. A man may live for a lie, but few if any men will willingly die for a lie if they know it's a lie. These people are saying, "Listen! We have seen Him! We have touched Him! We have handled Him!" Are you going to tell me that Simon Peter was a con man? That John the apostle was a crook? That the apostle Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament, was a known perjurer and a deceiver and a false witness? And these men would die for a lie? Of course not. But if Christ is still in the grave, preaching is profitless, faith is foolish, the disciples would be deceivers.

Now let's look at the next thing. If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, **sin would be sovereign**. Sin has won. Notice in First Corinthians chapter 15 verse 17, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." All of us have sinned. There's not a one who's not sinned. Who in this congregation can say, "I've never sinned?" Not a one. But if Jesus Christ is in the grave, you are a sinner by birth, by nature, by practice, by choice, and you have no hope of forgiveness apart from the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God cannot just overlook your sin. If God were to cease to judge sin, God would cease to be holy. If God were to merely overlook sin, God would topple from His throne of holiness. God never lets sin go unpunished. Your sin will be pardoned in Christ or punished in Hell, but it will never be overlooked. But if Jesus Christ is still in the grave, that means that God did not accept the sacrifice of Calvary.

How do we know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? How do we know that Jesus Christ was not just a religious fanatic? How do we know that Jesus Christ was just someone with a martyr complex, who happened to get crucified and that's it? How do we know that God accepted the sacrifice of Calvary? The resurrection. The Bible says in Romans 4:25, "He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification." "Living He loved me, dying He saved me, buried He carried my sins far away. Rising He justified freely forever." No resurrection, no Savior. No Savior, no forgiveness. His death without His resurrection cannot save anybody. He was delivered for our offenses, the Bible says, "He was raised for our justification."

But if Christ is still in the grave, none of us have half a hallelujah's hope of Heaven because Christ is still in the grave, and we are yet in our sins. And, "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die." Ezekiel 18 verse 20. Now, if anything had been lacking in His beautiful life, in His sinless atonement, God would have left Him, the Father would have left Him in the grave.

Alright, next: If Jesus Christ be not raised, **then death has dominion**. Look if you will. Not only is sin sovereign, but death has dominion. Look in First Corinthians 15 verse 18, "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished." Do you have a loved one, a father, mother, brother, sister, child? Forget it. They're gone. They've perished. That's it. It is over. Death has dominion if Jesus Christ is still



in that grave. Life is nothing but a cruel joke. All any of us can look forward to is: getting sicker, finally winding down to the grave, being cremated or covered with dirt, letting greedy microbes eat away at our flesh, and that's it. That's it! Death has dominion! The dead hath perished! Are you going to tell me something as wonderful as a human life, something as glorious as the bond between humans, has no more meaning than that, just to die and back to the ground, and that's it? That's what we're looking forward to?

I've preached many funerals. I tell you, the hardest thing for me at a funeral is to stand by the casket and watch the loved ones come and look upon that lump of clay before they close the casket.

I was at a funeral. The beautiful flowers were there all banked up. I walked around and looking at the flowers, I saw one beautiful bouquet. You could tell it was done by the grandchildren. This was an elderly man, a saint on this earth, a dear member of this church. And on the floral offering it said, "To Pop-Pop." Pop-Pop. That's what they called him, "Pop-Pop." And I thought of the grandchildren having to say goodbye to grandpa, "Pop-Pop."

And I stood there, as is the pastor's habit to do as people come by, and I saw that precious widow, these people who'd walked together for more than a half a century. And I watched her. She's a lady of great faith. This was not despair. But she walked up and laid her hand on his sleeve and touched him and patted it a couple of times and turned and walked away. And I thought to myself, "Is that it? Is that all there is to life? Pop-Pop is gone and he's gone? The husband is gone, and he's gone after those years, that marvelous creature, down to the dirt, down to the earth?" No! Death does not have dominion! Christ is risen! Those that have fallen asleep in Christ have not perished. He is alive.

You can go to Rome and go to the catacombs. The catacombs are those underground tunnels, more than 600 miles of these underneath Rome, dug in the soft clay, about eight feet tall, about that wide, maybe five feet wide in places, niches in the side where the pagans and the Christians would bury their dead beneath the ground. You can walk through those catacombs. There're some 60 different ones there in Rome. I've been in them on a number of occasions.

You can read the inscriptions that the pagans left there for their dead. You can see there's no hope, only despair. Listen to some of them, "Live for the present hour, since we're sure of nothing else." Here's another, "I will lift up my hands against the gods who took me away at the age of 20, though I had done no harm." Here's another, "Once I was, now I am not. I know nothing about it, and it's no concern of mine." Another, "Traveler, curse me not as you pass, for I am in darkness and cannot answer." That's pagan death.

Let me read some of the inscriptions of the Christians. How different they were. "Here lies Marcia. Put to rest in the dream of peace." "Lawrence, to his sweetest son, carried away by the angels. Called, he went in peace." "Victorious in life, victorious in peace, and victorious in Christ." What a difference Jesus makes.

How great to know that there is a God, who in the form of man, the Lord Jesus Christ, grappled with the iron bars of death and is victorious. And I'm here to tell you that death does not have dominion because Christ rose.



Now, number six: If preaching is profitless, if faith is futile; friend, if sin is sovereign, if death has dominion, then **the future is fearful.** The future would be fearful. Look if you will in First Corinthians 15 verse 19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." A wise man once said, "If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, nothing really matters. But if Jesus Christ came out of that grave, nothing but that really matters." Would you agree to that? I do. If Jesus Christ walked out of that grave.

You see, friend, without the resurrection, we're just poor, deluded fools. "We are of all people most miserable," and the future is fearful. Jesus Christ is the one who walked out of that grave, and He took the sting out of sin, He took the dread out of death, He took the gloom out of the grave, and He has given us a hope that is steadfast and sure.

And so, one of these days, if the Lord tarries, they'll be looking at you and say, "Yeah, I used to know him. I used to know her." We're gone, gone, gone. But gone where? Gone where? What is your future? Is it fearful? Not if Jesus rose from the dead.

Albert Einstein was a genius. Time magazine didn't call him, "The Man of the Year;" Time Magazine called him, "The Man of the Century." Old Albert Einstein knew so much, but he was absent-minded like a lot of people. Albert Einstein was on a train going from Princeton, in the account that I read, and the conductor came by to punch the ticket. Einstein couldn't find his ticket. He's looking in his vest, looking in his briefcase, couldn't find his ticket. The conductor said, "Dr. Einstein, don't worry. I know you bought a ticket. I know who you are, Dr. Einstein. Don't worry. That's fine, that's fine." And so the conductor went on down, punching the tickets, and he looked back and Dr. Einstein is down on his knees looking under the seat. He goes back and he said, "Sir, it's all right. Dr. Einstein, I know who you are." He said, "And I know who I am. I just want to know where I'm going."

Do you know where you're going? Do you know who you are in Christ? Have your sins been forgiven? Are you sure that Jesus Christ is in your heart? If so, then I want to tell you, friend, preaching is profitable, faith is feasible, the disciples are dependable, sin has been subdued, death has been defeated, and the future is fabulous. We know where we're headed.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. The truth of the ages is that Jesus Christ came out of that grave. Only foolishness doubts the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus lives. The question is, do you? You may have existence, but you don't have real life until you know the Lord Jesus Christ.

May I lead you in a prayer? And in this prayer, you can receive the gift of eternal life through the resurrected Jesus Christ, who was delivered for our offenses, and raised for our justification, and, "Shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." "Now is Christ risen!" Would you pray this prayer? "Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me. Thank You for paying my sin debt with Your blood on the cross. I believe it and I receive it. Now by faith I accept You into my heart, into my life as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin, cleanse me, save me. I give my life to You, and I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Now Lord Jesus, I belong to You. I will not be ashamed of You. I will live for You the rest of my life. I'm weak, You're strong, so begin now to make me the person You want me to be, and give me the strength now to make this public. In Your name I pray, Amen."



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