



**Idea:** Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected so that you might be made alive.

**Intro:** It's Easter Sunday! This is such a great holiday, and there are several reasons for that like candy, new clothes, family lunch, and Egg hunts. The one thing, however, that makes Easter so wonderful is Jesus. His death, burial, and resurrection are what we celebrate on Easter. Eggs, bunnies, and candy are good, but they are not what Easter is about. Easter is about life being resurrected out of death. It is about God the Father loving humanity – loving you – so much He sent His Son to die on a Roman cross. It is about God the Son getting up out of the grave and rising above death. Easter is about people coming alive in Jesus Christ.

We often refer to Easter as Resurrection Sunday. Many of us are familiar with the clear teaching about Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 that says,

*“3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”*

We know that Jesus was crucified, buried in a tomb, and resurrected on the third day. But do we know why? Why did Jesus have to die? Not long ago I had a conversation with a person about this very question. The individual had no doubts about the authenticity of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The only question posed to me was, "Why?" Here is the way the question was stated to me. "I have never understood why Jesus had to die. Why did He have to go to the cross?" Perhaps, like this person, you too have never understood why Jesus had to die on the cross. Consequently, because you don't understand why He died, you can't fully comprehend or appreciate His resurrection. Yet, these historical events are the very foundation of our faith. They are the content of our confessions and songs. This morning we sang these words:

"Our savior displayed on a criminal's cross  
Darkness rejoiced as though heaven had lost  
But then Jesus arose with our freedom in hand  
That's when death was arrested and my life began."

"By Your spirit I will rise  
From the ashes of defeat  
The resurrected King, is resurrecting me."

"Oh, to see my name  
Written in the wounds,  
For through Your suffering I am free.  
Death is crushed to death;  
Life is mine to live,  
Won through Your selfless love."

Why did Jesus have to die? The Bible answers this question for us.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

**Inquiry:** Theologian Erich Sauer has written, "The present age is Easter time. It begins with the resurrection of the Redeemer and ends with the resurrection of the redeemed."

Between lies the spiritual resurrection of those called into life through Christ. So we live between two Easters, and in the power of the first Easter we go to meet the last Easter.”

The last Easter to which Sauer refers is the bodily resurrection of those who are in relationship with Christ. This resurrection is Paul’s subject in 1 Corinthians 15.

Corinth was a Greek city, and the Greeks did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. When Paul had preached in Athens and declared the fact of Christ’s resurrection, some of his listeners actually laughed at Him (Acts 17:32). Most Greek philosophers considered the human body a prison, and they welcomed death as deliverance from bondage.

This skeptical attitude had somehow invaded the church and Paul had to face it head-on. The people misunderstood the relationship between the body and soul of a person. The Greeks believed the body to be evil and the heart good. Jesus taught that it was the heart/soul of a man, which corrupted him (Matt 23:25-28). In other words, it doesn’t matter how clean, polished, or well behaved a person may be on the outside because on the inside there’s nothing but death and decay (Eph 2:1).

Paul’s instruction on the bodily resurrection teaches us that because of Jesus’ bodily resurrection, sinners who are spiritually dead and far from God are awakened and brought to life in Jesus Christ. There is a resurrection of the person’s spirit to be followed one day by his or her body. In this discussion of the believer’s bodily resurrection, Paul touches on the spiritual resurrection of one’s spirit, and we find here the answer to our original question, “Why did Jesus have to die?”

## **1. Humans are sinners, and the just penalty for sin is death.**

Paul contends, “*Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*” Those

who have fallen asleep aren't taking a nap. They are dead. Thus, Christ died because every human being dies. Why is death in everyone's future? The answer is sin.

The Bible says that God told Adam in the Garden that he could eat from every tree but one, which was forbidden. God told Adam that if he ate from it, he would die (Gen 2:16-17). Well, you probably know the story. Satan came in the form of a snake and tempted Adam and Eve to eat from that tree. They took the fruit and ate it. Immediately, the warning from God became a reality. Shame flooded their souls. They tried to cover their mistake. And when God graciously pursued them, they hid in the bushes (Gen 3:1-9). Adam and Eve's spirits, which were once alive to God, were now dead. God's warning that they would die was true. Adam and Eve died spiritually to God and eventually died bodily.

Adam's sin has been passed down through every subsequent generation to every person who followed him. Likewise, the judgment against his sin has been passed down to every person. *"For as in Adam all die..."* The judgment placed upon Adam has been placed upon you and me.

You may say, "Well, that is not fair!" Is it not? Every thing else about us that makes you and I human we inherited from Adam. We are all from one race, the human race, and the first human was Adam. His sin broke God's original design. Thus, everyone who followed was born into this world a broken, sinful person. We have inherited Adam's sin nature and punishment. He transgressed the Law, and we too have transgressed against God's Word. We get what we deserve.

*For the wages of sin is death... – Rom 6:23a*

The paycheck earned for your sin is death. We love to earn a paycheck. We love to be compensated for our hard work. Many people hope to be or believe God should reward them for their good works and sincere attempts to serve Him. The only problem with that is nothing you do can be good enough because in sin and separation from God, you are spiritually dead (Eph 2:1). Those good works you may be trusting in come from a place of death and decay. They are like filthy rags in the sight of God (Is 64:6).

The truth is Jesus had to die because humans are sinners, and the just penalty for sin is death.

## **2. God is gracious, and the free gift from Jesus is life.**

*“...by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”*

In Adam all people have inherited a sin nature and therefore will die. In Christ all who believe in Him have inherited eternal life, and shall be made alive in body and spirit.

If we can return to the Garden scene for just a moment, I want us to see the graciousness of God toward sinners. Adam and Eve had rebelled against God's command. They selfishly took something they were not supposed to have. Their sin rightly separated them from God. It flooded their hearts with shame and regret. And it ushered death into their future. Adam and Eve were under the just penalty of their sin. They had been warned but failed to heed it. God would have been just if He had brought their lives to an immediate end and started over. But that is not what He did.

God graciously came to them (Gen 3:8). Adam and Eve did their best to hide from His presence, but God

called to them (Gen 3:9). He graciously brought Adam to a place of confession and repentance (Gen 3:9-12). And He graciously provided a covering for his sin (Gen 3:21).

Adam rightly deserved the full ramifications of his sin, but God was gracious and merciful. Rather than Adam dying in that moment for his sin, God killed an animal instead and covered his sin. We see here a foreshadowing of the redemption that would ultimately be found in Christ. In the Garden the animal died so that Adam would be spared. On the cross Christ died so that you and I would be spared.

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” – Rom 6:23*

Just like with Adam in the Garden, God is pursuing you today. You are a sinner. You are running and hiding from God’s presence. You are in rebellion against the God who created you. And you deserve the full penalty for your sin. You deserve a devil’s hell. But God loves you. He desires to be in relationship with you. He loves you so much that He sent His Son to die in your place (John 3:16; Rom 5:8). When Jesus was on the cross, He was on it for you. The Bible says that your sins and my sins were laid upon Him. God the Father then exhausted His wrath on Jesus against sin. He carried the full weight and experienced the full penalty for our sin as He died in our place upon the cross.

The Bible says that Jesus was then buried in a tomb. It is here that we would normally think the story is over, but it’s not. Three days after His death, Jesus got up. He conquered sin and its ramifications (death, hell, and the grave) when He walked out of that tomb. The resurrection of the redeemer means there can be a resurrection of the sinner and ultimately a resurrection of the redeemed.

Jesus had to die because God is gracious. Today, because of the cross Jesus offers the free gift of eternal life to you. He died so that you might come alive.

### **3. New life is available, and it comes through faith in Jesus.**

*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. – 1 Cor 15:22*

Just as Adam was the progenitor of everyone who dies, so Christ is the progenitor of everyone who will be raised to life. In each case, one man doing one act caused the consequences of that act to be applied to every other person identified with him. Those who are identified with Adam – every person who has been born – is subject to death because of Adam’s sinful act. Likewise, those who are identified with Christ – every person who has been born again in Him – is subject to resurrection to eternal life because of Christ’s righteous act.

We dare not read universalism into Paul’s theology. Why? The answer is because the first “all” and the second “all” are not the same. Every human being is a descendant of Adam, and therefore the first “all” is universal. But only those “in Christ” or who have placed their faith in Jesus are His descendants. Therefore, the second “all” only applies to the redeemed.

Consequently, the new life that Jesus offers to you today as a free gift must be received by faith.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith...*  
– Eph 2:8a

The Bible says that you must by faith receive the free gift of new life from Jesus. How?...through confession and repentance.

*9 because, 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. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved...*

*13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." – Rom 10:9-10, 13*

You will never find new life in anything but Jesus Christ. You won't find it in religion, a bottle, a new job, a new relationship, or money. The only way for you to come alive is by placing your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, asking Him to forgive your sins.

**Conclusion:** On this Easter Sunday, I want you to understand what this day is about. Easter is about life being resurrected out of death. It is about God the Father loving you so much He sent His Son to die on a Roman cross. It is about God the Son getting up out of the grave and rising above death. Easter is about people coming alive in Jesus Christ.

The penalty for your sin is death, but the free gift of God is life in Jesus Christ. Has there been a time when you came alive in Jesus? Has there been a time when Jesus changed your life? If not, today can be the day you come alive. Jesus is pursuing you like He did Adam. He loves you. He wants to be in relationship with you. He stands ready to forgive your sin and change your life. The resurrected King wants to resurrect you. Will you call upon Him?

For the believer, your eyes need to be opened to the reality of sin and its condemnation, but your eyes equally need to be opened to the goodness, grace, and love of Jesus as well as the joy of knowing Him. Celebrate what the Lord has done in you and for you. Rejoice in the fact that you know Him, and recommit yourself to pursuing God.