

## **For the Love of God**

The Church at Brook Hills – Part 2

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## **THE CHURCH AT BROOK HILLS – PART 2**

### **1 Corinthians 15**

If you have Bible, and I hope you do, turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15. Before we dive into the Word, I want to share with you a few important details concerning the days ahead for the church, and for me. First and foremost, for the church: I have spent this last week on a retreat with our staff and then with our elders, and words cannot express how grateful I am for God's grace in them, and how confident I am in God's grace in them. This church is loaded with leadership, with gifts and grace far beyond what any one church deserves, and I have complete confidence in how this church will be led in the coming days.

Which leads to the question: How will The Church at Brook Hills be led? Well, in the short-term, in light of the leaders (and preachers/teachers of God's Word) that He has entrusted to this church, I don't believe it is at all necessary to try to find somebody from outside Brook Hills to lead us during this time. And I say "us" because my family and I will likely be around much over the next few months, which I'll explain more in a minute.

But in the short-term, during the months ahead in which there is no Senior Pastor, we have set up an Interim Leadership Team comprised of five of our pastors. That team will be led by Dennis Blythe, our Executive Pastor, who, truth be known, has already been leading this church behind the scenes in innumerable ways up to this point. But things will not all be on his shoulders. He will share that responsibility of leadership with two other pastors on staff and two other pastors not on staff. The two other pastors not on staff will be Keith Anderson, who is the Chairman of our Elders, and Warren Beason, the elder who oversees the Personnel Team in our church.

And then, the two other pastors *on* staff that will be a part of this Interim Leadership Team will be Jim Shaddix and Matt Mason. And these two brothers will be sharing the bulk of the teaching and preaching responsibilities, starting next week. Matt, as you know, is our Worship Pastor, and Jim is our Pastor for Teaching and Training, and, as most of you know, Jim has served as Senior Pastor at previous churches, and for that matter, has served many churches in interim capacities over the years. When I moved to New Orleans to study under Jim, he was serving in this way for many churches, and as I travel, I still meet people in all kinds of different places that were led well by Jim during interim leadership times. So these five brothers together will form an Interim Leadership Team that serves, of course, alongside the rest of our elders and staff.

And in all of this -- now this is key -- in all of this, things won't change altogether that much in this church, because the mission of the church, and everything the church is doing, continues. You see a whole list of things on the back of your Worship Guide that are still taking place. We, as a church, are still glorifying God by making disciples of all nations, gathering together every week, meeting together in small groups, sharing life, spreading the gospel, giving and going here and around the world. We've got a team right now in Vietnam proclaiming the gospel and training church leaders. The mission continues. The fundamental difference is that I won't be preaching the Word, but even there, you are used to hearing Jim and Matt preach, being fed the Word by them, and I look forward to being

fed the Word by them in the days ahead. So, the mission continues, and these five men will serve as an Interim Leadership Team in the short-term.

Which then leads to the search for a new Senior Pastor in the long-term. The bylaws of our church actually spell out pretty specifically how this process works, and the elders have already started work on forming a Senior Pastor Search Team made up of elders as well as other leaders and members in our church. According to our bylaws, this Senior Pastor Search Team must be approved by the church, so you have ownership in this process. And in the days ahead, hopefully even a few weeks from now, the elders will present to you a potential Senior Pastor Search Team for you to affirm as a church, and then that team will get started with their task.

Now, one other important note for the church. It is likely that at the same time the church votes on a Senior Pastor Search Team, we will also vote on a potential amendment to our bylaws that will allow for elders who are currently scheduled to rotate off of the Elder Council to continue serving until a new Senior Pastor is in place. Basically, to make a long story short, out of our 37 elders, about 15 of them are scheduled to rotate off next year, and I don't believe that it would be healthy or wise for 15 of our current pastors to rotate off of the Elder Council during a time when there's no Senior Pastor. So, the elders are working on a temporary amendment to our bylaws that will make it possible, for the sake of healthy pastoral continuity during these days, for elders who are currently serving to have the option to continue serving until a Senior Pastor comes. So, that's three logistic updates for the days to come: An Interim Leadership Team made up of Dennis Blythe, Jim Shaddix, Matt Mason, Keith Anderson, and Warren Beason. And then a Pastor Search Team that will be voted on by the church, along with an amendment to allow for current elders to continue serving in that capacity until a new Senior Pastor comes on board.

So those are updates on the church, and if any of that was unclear or maybe you want some more clarification, we are setting up a Frequently Asked Questions document on the church website that you can go to in the days ahead that will have all the information we have now and any more information as it develops. So make sure to go to our website to keep updated on the ways things are working during these days.

So, that's the church. Now a quick update on me and my family. My calendar, before I became the president of the IMB, was already pretty crazy this fall with travel overseas and here in North America. And what I don't want to do is move my family to a different place, and then leave them there without the support system that they have around here, while I am traveling around the world. So, instead of doing that, we've put together a plan over the next few months where I'm going to work from home here, from Richmond, VA, where the IMB is currently headquartered, and then from other places I am in the world. And then we'll re-evaluate in November what to do from there. So we will be around and want to continue to be a part of this faith family until the Lord leads us to another church in another city, whenever and wherever that is.

Then, one other thing on a personal level. Some of you have asked, "What about Radical as a resource ministry? And will you continue preaching regularly in some way? And what about Secret Church?" So, to answer those questions quickly: Yes, Radical as a resource ministry -- as a website for those resources ([radical.net](http://radical.net)) and as a ministry serving churches in the Great Commission -- will continue. And yes, Secret Church will continue. Lord willing, come next April, we'll gather together in this room and simulcast to thousands of people in churches around the world on the topic of "Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action." Obviously, in the future, we'll evaluate anything that needs to change with Secret Church, but it will continue in some way somewhere. And the plan is to host it here at Brook Hills next April.

And then, along those lines, I love to preach this Word. Without question, one of the things I'm going to miss most is preaching this Word to this body on a regular basis. But I want to continue to preach this Word regularly, and to exhort brothers and sisters here and around the world with this Word on mission. So, in the next few weeks, I'm actually going to start a podcast aimed at preaching the Word in order to encourage and mobilize people on mission. The idea is to do that in about a 30-minute teaching time that would fit more easily than my current sermons into people's morning commute or exercise routine or whatever. I want to teach the Word in such a way that missionaries around the world, with the IMB and otherwise, are encouraged and built up in what they're doing on the front lines. And I want to preach the Word in such a way that an army of men and women is mobilized to join them, here and around the world, on the front lines, praying and giving and going after the nations with the gospel. So keep an eye out – radical.net – and different social media or other avenues to subscribe to that podcast, if that would serve you in the Great Commission.

Okay, speaking of preaching, what do I preach today? In light of all that we have walked through over these past eight years in God's Word, what do I preach on this last Sunday as the Senior Pastor of The Church at Brook Hills? And I told you last week, I only want to say what God is saying to The Church at Brook Hills. So I found myself in our Bible reading this past week asking, "God, what are you saying to Brook Hills on this last Sunday that I am your mouthpiece in this place?" And so I'm reading, and I come to 1 Corinthians 15 Wednesday this week, and I read these words: Verse 1, *"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."* And I read these words, and I thought, "That's it. That is it."

Brothers and sisters, in verse 58, at the end of this chapter, Paul calls them "beloved brothers and sisters". So brothers and sisters whom I deeply love, I want to remind you -- I want to remind you -- because I don't really have anything new to say today. When I first started thinking about this Sunday, I thought, "What do I need to say that I haven't said?" And then I thought, "If I haven't said it in eight years, it's probably not worth saying!" So I've got nothing new. I just want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, the gospel which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if -- if you hold fast to the word I preached to you.

And this is what I'm praying as you come into this Sunday: I'm praying that you will hold fast to the word I preached to you. And I believe this is what God is saying to The Church at Brook Hills this Sunday, because it's not my word that I've preached to you these last eight years. It's God Word, I believe, that has been preached. It's not my gospel; it's His gospel. It's not my word; it's His Word. What we have walked through in the last eight years has been His Word, and I'm praying that it's not been in vain. And I'm praying that your faith in this Word that has been built up over these last eight years has not been in vain.

And this word that we have walked through is summarized in the words that follow in 1 Corinthians 15. In this chapter, Paul addresses why he is risking his life, literally, for the spread of the gospel in the world. Look in the middle of the chapter at verse 30. He says, *"Why are we in danger every hour?"* Verse 31, *"I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!"* And then he talks about fighting with beasts at Ephesus. Paul is risking his life for the spread of the gospel in the world, and he's writing 1 Corinthians 15 to tell the church at Corinth why. And that's it. That's it.

We have spent week after week for eight years talking about risking our lives for the spread of the gospel in the world. God in His Word has been calling us out of comfortable, casual,

cultural Christianity because that's not Christianity! It's not possible to believe in Christ, to believe this gospel, to stand on this Word and not live radically different than the rest of this world.

This gospel changes the way we live; this gospel changes the way we give. Our lives, our families, our futures are God's to spend for the spread of the gospel in the world, a world of urgent spiritual and physical need. I want to remind you that we live in a world where over a billion people are dwelling in desperate poverty. Almost 20,000 kids dying every single day of hunger-related diseases. People are struggling for survival without food or clean water, many of them our brothers and sisters. We have family members who are dying of starvation right now. That's urgent physical need.

Then there's urgent spiritual need. I want to remind you that over two-thirds of the people on this planet don't believe this gospel. That's four to five billion people in the world right now who are on a road that leads to an everlasting hell. And a couple of billion of those people don't believe this gospel because they've never even heard it; they've never even heard it.

So I want to remind you that we don't have time to play games in the church. And we don't have time to waste our lives in a nice, comfortable, Christian spin on the American dream. We have a Master who demands radical sacrifice, and we have a mission that warrants radical urgency. And my prayer is that you won't forget this. My prayer is that you won't drift back into a nice, comfortable, Christian spin on the American dream; don't do it, Brook Hills! I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you have stood, and you have sacrificed. And the effects have been felt all around the world, and I'm saying today, "Don't shrink back." Hold fast.

### **Three Reasons to Hold Fast to the Gospel with Radical Faith ... Because death is coming.**

And on this, my last Sunday as Senior Pastor here, I want to give you, Brook Hills, three reasons to hold fast to the gospel with radical faith. Three reasons to die to yourself daily, to not stop giving Him blank checks with your lives and this church. Three reasons to keep going to difficult, dangerous peoples and places in this city and the world with the gospel. Three reasons to hold fast to the word I preached to you. One, because death is coming. 1 Corinthians 15 is all about death and life. Look at verse 20, when Paul is talking about Christ being raised from the dead. It says,

*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, 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. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

So get the point. Every single one of us in Adam – in other words, every single one of us born in the human race – we will die. Death is our destiny. And death is our enemy. 1

Corinthians 15:26 says death is our final enemy. And this is important for all of us to remember. Death is coming.

### **Our death is coming.**

So think about what this means. One, it means that our death is coming. And I don't mean to be depressing, but I do mean to be eye-opening. We're not here on this earth for very long. We don't have a lot of time. You don't have a lot of time; I don't have a lot of time. The Bible says we're here for a little while. Life is a vapor; it's a mist. It's here one second and gone the next. Life is short. So don't waste it.

Remember John Paton? He was a missionary to the New Hebrides. He served for ten years as the pastor of a thriving church in Scotland, but then sensed the Lord leading him to move to the New Hebrides, a group of Pacific Islands filled with cannibalistic peoples with no knowledge of the gospel. His heart drawn to one island in particular, where 20 years before two missionaries had gone to this island, and both had been killed and cannibalized. The church in Scotland that he pastored, when they heard he wanted to go to the New Hebrides, did everything possible to dissuade him from going. Paton wrote, "Amongst many who sought to deter me, was one dear old Christian gentleman, whose crowning argument always was, 'The Cannibals! you will be eaten by Cannibals!'" Do you remember what John Paton said to that man? He said,

Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honouring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer."

The old man left the room, exclaiming, "After that I have nothing more to say!"

At the age of 33, Paton moved to the New Hebrides with his wife. The journey ahead was not easy. His wife and newborn child died within months of arriving, and Paton found himself alone, digging their graves with his own bare hands. He faced threat after threat upon his life, but in the years to come, countless cannibals across the New Hebrides came to know Christ, and the church across Scotland, Australia, and the Western world was challenged to rise up and make the gospel known among peoples who are hardest to reach.

Now I don't compare myself to Paton at all, but I do want to say to all of us: Your life changes in this world when you realize, when you remember, that you're not going to be here very long. When you remember that we all stand on the porch of eternity, and the most healthy among us only has 70/80/90 years, with trillions upon trillions of years ahead of us, we got a vapor/a mist/a short life here. None of us in this room guaranteed even tomorrow, so let's not waste today. Let's not invest our lives here in temporary trinkets; let's invest our lives here in eternal treasure. Let's not spend our lives here on fleeting pleasures and foolish pursuits; let's spend our lives here on what's going to matter forever.

### **Others' death is coming.**

Because our death is coming, and don't miss it: Others' death is coming. So it's not just about us. It's about people around us, who you work with and you live next to, who right now are without Christ and on a road that leads to everlasting agony apart from God. And none of them is guaranteed tomorrow, either. So share the gospel with them today! Share the gospel with them today, no matter what it might mean for your reputation and no

matter how radical that might seem and no matter how awkward that might feel. This is too important.

Death is coming to people right around us and to people all around the world. There's more people today being placed on funeral pyres on the Bagmati River in Kathmandu, Nepal. They died in the last 24 hours, and now their bodies are burning, and their souls are burning, and nobody ever even told them how they could be saved. Nobody ever told them how much God loved them. Nobody ever told them how God sent His Son to die for them. They never even heard before they died.

So don't shrink back into a comfortable, casual, cultural Christianity that totally forgets about them, that totally turns a blind eye and a deaf ear to people and peoples (entire groups of people) who've never heard the gospel. Don't sit back in this land where the gospel is so known and just coast it out until you get to heaven. Don't do it! Spend your life praying, and giving, and going, and getting the gospel to where it's not known so others can go with you to heaven! Their death is coming. No matter what it costs, no matter what it means for your life or your family or your budget or your future, get the gospel to them. We don't have a lot of time. Our death is coming; their death is coming. So hold fast to the gospel with radical faith and spread the gospel with radical urgency.

### **Because resurrection is real.**

Second, hold fast to the gospel with radical faith because resurrection is real. With the reality of death in the backdrop, Paul starts this chapter with the gospel. Read verses 3-8 with me:

*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.*

So here's the gospel Paul preached, that I have preached: The good news that Jesus, God in the flesh, has died on a cross for our sins, and He has risen from the dead in victory over sin and death, appearing to many witnesses (of whom Paul is one) before ascending into heaven.

Now Paul is laying a foundation here that, if we're not careful, can seem pretty elementary to us. Okay, Jesus rose from the dead, and we can almost read these verses with a ho-hum sense of monotony, thinking, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay, I know that." But think about that. Because there's nothing ho-hum about that. We're talking about a man who died, who died a violent death, the most violent death conceivable in that day. And then, after three days dead, He came to life and appeared to people. Can you imagine going to somebody's funeral, going to their burial, seeing their dead body placed in the ground. And then a week later that person physically walking up to you and saying, "Hello." That's crazy! It's crazy good; it's the greatest news in all the world: Death has been defeated! May this never be ho-hum for us. May we never forget that the reason we gather together every Sunday is not to hear this pastor or that pastor preach. The reason we gather together every Sunday is

because for the last 2000 years, Christians have come together on the first day of the week to remember that Jesus has risen from the dead, and He is alive!

Now, this is obviously a fundamental component of the gospel, but there was a problem in the church at Corinth because many of the Christians there had grown up with a Greek worldview that believed in the immortality of the soul, but not the body. So when we die, many thought, that was the end of the story for their bodies. Their soul would go on, but never to fill a body again. And as a result, many of these Christians were denying that once they died, their bodies would ever be resurrected. Instead, only their souls would live on forever.

So in this chapter, Paul asks them, "Do you realize what you're saying? Do you realize the implications of what you're believing?" Look at verse 12:

*Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

### **If Jesus wasn't raised from the dead ...**

In essence, Paul is saying, "If you don't believe in the physical resurrection of your body, then you are saying Jesus Himself didn't physically rise from the dead." And then he asks, "Do you realize the implications of that? What if Jesus didn't rise from the dead?" And I put in your notes four unavoidable conclusions that Paul comes to. These are really tragic consequences if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead. In other words, Christian, hear this; member of The Church at Brook Hills, hear this: If Jesus is still dead, then our faith is futile and we stand guilty before God. Your faith is in vain, verse 14. Your faith is futile, verse 17. It's pointless; it's worthless. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, you've staked your entire life for eternity on the decomposed corpse of a Jewish carpenter 2000 years ago.

And even worse, verse 17, you are still in your sins. You say, "Well, I thought it was Jesus' death on the cross that provides forgiveness for my sins." And indeed, the cross is where we see that He died for sin in the place of sinners, but the resurrection is where we see that His sacrifice has been accepted by God on behalf of sinners, and God has raised Him to life to show that all who trust in Him will have life forever with Him. Romans 4:25 says: "Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins, and He was raised to life for our justification." And so, if His resurrection is not a reality, neither is our justification, and we stand guilty before God.

And then, keep following the implications here. If that's the case, then our message is false and our mission is destructive. What we preach is vain, Paul says in verse 14. It's not true. We're spreading lies, which makes our mission destructive. Verse 15: "We are even found to be misrepresenting God!" That's huge. We're spreading falsehoods about God. Church at Brook Hills, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then we're spreading lies all around Birmingham and all over the world. We're defaming and dishonoring God Himself.

And as if that's not enough, it keeps going. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then those who have died in Christ have been damned before God. Paul says in verse 18, "Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished," and the word he uses there for "perish" is more than just physical death. Physical death is what Paul means when he says "those who have fallen asleep in Christ." And it all makes sense when you put it together: If Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, then Christians who have died were not forgiven of their sins. They were guilty before God, and as a result, they're now experiencing eternal damnation, the everlasting punishment for sin.

And then, Paul concludes, for his own life, and for the lives of other followers of Christ: Radical, sacrificial, risk-taking faith [like we talk about all the time] is to be pitied in this world. Verse 19, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." This leads him eventually down to verse 30, which we read at the start when Paul references the danger he experiences on a daily basis, and the suffering he endures for the spread of the gospel in the world. And he says, "If Jesus isn't risen from the dead, then I am wasting my life."

Verse 32, "What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" If there's no resurrection, if this life is all there is, then eat, drink, and be merry. And that makes sense! If this world is all there is, Brook Hills, then live it up and make the most of this world while you still have time. A self-indulgent, self-consumed lifestyle focused on temporary pleasures and temporary pursuits makes total sense if this life is all there is. And radical, sacrificial, risk-taking faith in a dead Jewish rabbi who deceived all his followers makes absolutely no sense.

Remember Pascal's Wager? Blaise Pascal's theory, simplified, was that it's better to be a Christian than a non-Christian in this world solely because of the chances. Pascal said, "If you live your life as a Christian on earth, and you later come to find out that Christianity is not true, then you won't have lost a lot because, after all, you'll have lived a good moral life of loving and serving others. But," Pascal said, "if you live your life as a non-Christian in this world, and in eternity you discover that Christianity is indeed true, then you'll have lost everything, and you'll spend all of eternity in hell. So when you play the chances, it's worth it. It's a lot wiser to be a Christian." Paul could not disagree more.

You see, what Pascal said might be the case if all that was involved in Christianity was living a nice, decent life of loving and serving others, which is how the majority of Christians in Birmingham today view their lives. And if that's Christianity, then what Pascal said makes sense. But that's because Birmingham Christianity falls so short of biblical Christianity. Because biblical Christianity is about laying down your life with radical, sacrificial, risk-taking faith in Christ. It's about spreading the gospel, it's about embracing suffering, it's about going to hard places, going to needy places, going to dangerous places among dangerous people, it's about forsaking possessions, it's about sacrificing comforts, it's about taking risks in radical faith, and all of that only makes sense if Christianity is true. That kind of lifestyle only makes sense if Christ is risen from the dead.

And so I'm calling you today, Church at Brook Hills, to live your lives and to lead this church in such a way that it only makes sense if Christ is risen from the dead! Don't live your lives and lead this church just like the rest of the world, focused on the possessions of this world, prioritizing the comforts and securities of this world, such that the only difference between you and the world is that you believe you'll go to heaven when you die. Don't live like that! Don't do it! Paul says, "Pity the way I'm living, pity the risks I'm taking, pity the sacrifices I'm making, pity the suffering I'm enduring. Feel sorry for me if Jesus is not risen from the

dead." Oh, may the same commentary be said about my life and your life and The Church at Brook Hills.

### **Because Jesus was raised from the dead ...**

Or think about it this way: Maybe it'd be helpful not just to think about the implications if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead. Let's turn each of these around and think about the implications that exist because Jesus was raised from the dead. So we've thought about the implications if the resurrection of Christ is false. But it's true! Paul says in verse 20: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead!" That's one of the greatest "buts" in all of the Bible. It's like Paul brought us down to consider the tragic consequences if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, and then he brings us right back up to say, "But thankfully that's not true." He is risen.

And, because Jesus was raised from the dead, Christian brothers and sisters whom I love, our faith is well-founded and we stand forgiven before God. Indeed, our faith is not futile in this room! It is well-founded; it is extremely well-founded. Oh, to non-Christian friends in this room, please hear this: Every single one of us in this room needs forgiveness before God. Every single one of us has rebelled against God, and our greatest need is to be restored to God.

And the good news is that God has made a way for this restoration to be a reality. He has sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins, and He has raised Him from the dead in victory over sin and death. And so I urge you, today, maybe for the first time, to trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. There is no better, wiser, more secure, more eternally secure place to found your faith than in the risen Christ in whom, and through whom, you can stand forgiven before God today. And when you do trust in Christ, Christians, for all who have trusted in Christ, know this: We stand forgiven before God! Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins and He was raised to life for our justification!

So in light of this, hear this! Our message is true and our mission is urgent. We have seen and we know the One who's conquered death. And He's conquered death, not just on our behalf, but on behalf of sinners around us and sinners around the world. And those sinners are dying, and you and I have only got a short time. So give your lives telling people that Jesus has risen from the dead and do it with urgency! And do it with boldness, because you know that those who have died in Christ now dwell with God. That all who have gone before us and have trusted in Christ, though they have died, they're alive! I wish my dad could be a part of this journey that I'm walking, but it's good to know that even though he died, today he lives. He is dwelling with God.

This reminds me I have nothing to fear in this life, because to live is Christ and to die is gain. So I give my life, and you give your life, even lose your life, with radical, sacrificial, risk-taking faith in Christ, knowing that that kind of faith is not to be pitied in this world? No! Radical, sacrificial, risk-taking faith is to be envied in this world. When you know that Jesus is risen from the dead, then no matter where He leads and no matter what it costs, radical, sacrificial, risk-taking faith in Him is the most enviable life in this world, because it's not in vain. Your life will not be in vain when you live it with radical faith in Christ. So live that way. And die that way. Hold fast to the gospel I preached to you because resurrection is real, and because you know there's so much more to come.

## Because of where all history is headed ...

This leads to this last reason to hold fast to this gospel with radical faith: Because of where all history is headed. I want us to go back to verse 24, which we read earlier, because this is where I want to leave us. I want to leave us with the outline of history that the Bible gives us here. Paul is talking about the end, when Jesus returns, and he says Jesus will “deliver the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

### **At this moment, Jesus has dominion over all things.**

And I just want you to get a biblical perspective on what is going on in the world right now, and what’s going to happen in the world in the future. I put it in your notes: At this moment, Jesus has dominion over all things. At this moment, Jesus is risen from the dead, and He is reigning over everything. Think about His words right at the beginning of the Great Commission that we say to one another every week: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

Now how did that happen? How (or why) was Jesus given all authority in heaven and on earth? How did Jesus become the victorious King with dominion over all? He became the victorious King through radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience to God. He lived a radically sinless life, He died a sacrificial death, He took the ultimate risk by staring death in the face, and He rose from the dead in victory over it. And as a result, He reigns. He has dominion over all things.

And this is huge, because a lot of Christians have the idea at least in the back of our minds that when Christ returns, that’s when He’s going to reign over all the world. But that’s not what the Bible’s saying. The Bible’s saying that Jesus Christ is reigning right now. In fact, the language in verse 25 is intentional here, because Paul says, “He must reign until...” And that word “until” implies that He’s reigning now in view of something else that’s to come in the future. So at this moment, Jesus has dominion/reign over all things.

Isn’t this good news to know? It’s good news to know that diseases like Ebola are not reigning over all things, and ISIS is not reigning over all things, and neither is President Putin in Russia, and for that matter, neither is President Obama in America. Jesus is King over all kings and Lord over all lords.

So you say, “Well, what is Jesus doing then? Is He just sitting on a throne in heaven and reigning over the world with passive indifference?” And the answer to that question is, “No.” He’s working. And here’s what He is doing; it’s in your notes. 1 Corinthians 15 teaches us that Jesus is advancing His kingdom through radical, sacrificial, risk-taking children of God. Through men and women who, with radical love, are sacrificing their lives to spread this gospel all around the world. When verse 25 uses that word “until,” the Bible’s saying that Christ is reigning, and gradually, one by one, He’s putting the enemies of God under His feet.

And the picture here, even the language here, reminds us of Paul’s language at the end of Ephesians, where he talks about a battle that is raging in the world for the souls of men and women. And it’s a battle, not of flesh and blood, but of rulers and authorities in this dark world and spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. And Christ’s kingdom is advancing in this battle through children of God who are risking their lives to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. And every time a child of God takes a risk and steps out in faith to show

and share the gospel, the enemies of God are being defeated. And every time a brother or sister in Christ leads another person to Christ, the enemies of God are being defeated. And every time an unreached people group is reached with the gospel, the enemies of God are being defeated. The King who conquered through radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience to God is advancing His kingdom through radical, sacrificial, risk-taking children of God.

That's what He's doing right now in history; that's what you and I are a part of right now in history, and as He does this, He's leading us and guiding us and directing us in different ways. Eight years ago, in His grace, He led me to The Church at Brook Hills. And I have had the pure joy of partnering alongside you with this gospel in this Great Commission. And I am so thankful that He has given me this privilege. But over these last days, the King has made it clear that He has another assignment for me, and so I'm going to another position to fight this battle with, what I pray, will be radical, sacrificial, risk-taking faith in my life. And I'm standing here before you today to say, "Don't stop fighting the battle here." Hold fast to the gospel you received, in which you stand. Hold fast to the word I preached, whether God leaves some of you here the rest of your life or sends others of you out around the world.

**One day soon, Jesus will deliver over all things.**

Regardless, let's hold fast to this gospel together, knowing that one day soon, Jesus will deliver over all things. Verse 24 says "every rule and every authority and power" – including, verse 25, death itself. Jesus is going to overcome them all. One day, all the enemies of God will finally be defeated. "This must happen," Paul says, in verse 25, which is another way of saying, "This will happen." And we know this because the God of history has ordained this, and He has ordained this for His own glory. Verse 28: "When all things are subjected to him (him being Christ...the Son), then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all." That is where all of history is headed.

It's exactly what Philippians 2 says, "Every knee is going to bow and every tongue is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...to the glory of God the Father." All of history is headed toward the day when sin and suffering and war and terrorism and disease and death will all be defeated, and God alone will be worshiped and praised by a people comprised of every tribe, tongue, and nation of this earth. So hold fast to this gospel, and give your life spreading this gospel, knowing that death is coming, knowing that resurrection is real, and knowing that all of history is headed toward the day when the enemies of God will finally be defeated, and the glory of God will forever be exalted.

Verse 50,

*I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"*

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

So verse 58, the last verse of the chapter, the last verse I want to read: "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." And with that, I want to invite you to come to this table with me, where we remember this gospel, and we celebrate the Christ who died for our sins and rose from the grave. And we say to Him, "Our lives, together, are yours to spend for the spread of this gospel in the world."

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