

## **The Guarantee of Our Salvation**

### **1 Corinthians 15:17-19**

We are here today to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and for Christians, this is a really big deal. Our Savior isn't dead like the prophets and gurus of other religions. He did die to pay the penalty for our sins, but he isn't dead anymore – he rose again. His grave is empty and this morning I want to remind you of why we celebrate.

It seems like it's fairly often that we hear about some kind of major accident or natural disaster. It's the kind of things that happen when the sirens go off – things like car accidents, injuries, fires and tornadoes. These things happen at times and create huge problems and major expenses. You might end up with huge hospital bills because of an injury or have to replace an expensive vehicle. If there's damage to your home or a complete loss the price tag can reach into the tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The expenses can be staggering and leave you with crippling debt for years or even a lifetime. Yet most of us don't spend a lot of time worrying about how we're going to pay for them if they happen to us. Why is that? Chances are you have some kind of insurance policy that will cover the expenses if one of those things happens. There's health insurance, hazard insurance, and auto insurance, and while none of us enjoys paying the premiums, we do appreciate knowing that if something happens, we have coverage. If the premiums are paid, that policy is our guarantee.

This morning I want us to see the greatest insurance policy we've ever received. As bad as fires, tornadoes and injuries can be, there are far greater dangers that we face in this life. There's the danger of sin and condemnation. There's the danger of Satan and spiritual forces of evil that are trying to destroy us. And there's the danger of death that we're reminded of as we get older or go to the funeral of a loved one.

These are far greater dangers than the ones I mentioned earlier and there are no insurance companies with policies to cover them. They can't because there's nothing they can do. They can't remove sin and guilt, they can't stop the prince of darkness, and they can't keep us from dying.

But there is One who can, and this morning I want to remind us how he has done that and given us an awesome guarantee.

When it comes to the danger of sin and condemnation, we have a big problem. All of us have sinned. When we look at the moral law of God that's revealed in the Bible – things like the Ten Commandments, we can all see that we have violated it. We have disobeyed on many different levels. We haven't loved the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We haven't loved our neighbor as ourselves. We've sinned and gone astray and we can see that clearly. We can also see that because of our sin there will be judgment and condemnation. God's justice requires that our sins be punished. They can't just be swept under the rug and forgotten. And this is a terrible problem for every human being.

But the central message of the Bible is that God has provided a solution to this problem. He did so by sending his Son to pay the penalty for our sins. That's what he did when he suffered and died on the cross. At the cross Jesus took all our sin and guilt upon himself and when he died, our sin and guilt died with him – it was totally removed.

Colossians 2:13-14 says, *“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup>by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”* Rather than sweeping our sins under the rug, he nailed them to the cross, and because he did that, our judgement and condemnation has been removed. Through faith in Christ, our sins are totally forgiven – past, present and future. So that's the first danger he's covered.

The second is the danger of Satan and the spiritual forces of evil that are trying to destroy us. The Bible is clear that we are in the midst of a spiritual battle. There are rulers, authorities and cosmic powers of darkness waging war against mankind to keep us from God so that we perish in our sins and face condemnation. If you look at the world from a biblical lens, you can see the schemes of the devil being carried out in various ways, keeping mankind in spiritual darkness.

But praise be to God – we have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of light. Christ broke the power of Satan to keep us from God in the same way and at the same time as he removed our sin and condemnation, and that was through his death on the cross. Col. 2:15 says that by nailing our record of debt to the cross, God “disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Christ.” Hebrews 2:14 says, “*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.*” So Christ defeated Satan on the cross in the same way that he defeated sin and condemnation.

But we have a third danger that we face and that is death. When Adam and Eve turned to sin, Romans 5:12 tells us: “*Sin came into the world... and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*” Ever since Adam, we have inherited these bodies of death – bodies that are subject to disease, aging and ultimately death. And even though when we’re young and healthy we might feel invincible, eventually we get to the point when we realize the clock is ticking. This body isn’t going to last forever. That means this life isn’t going to go on forever. At some point we’re going to die and that’s a terrible problem.

But here again we see that God provided coverage through Christ’s death on the cross. When Jesus died on the cross, he broke the power of sin and broke the power of Satan, and because of that, he also broke the power of death. Death is the consequence of sin and normally, death would bring us face to face with judgment. But because Jesus died on the cross and defeated sin and judgment, he also defeated the power of death. So for those who are in Christ, the death of these bodies is not the end, nor does it lead to judgment, instead it is through death that we pass from this life to the next. We shed these earthly bodies and go to be in the presence of God where we will await our new heavenly bodies when Christ returns.

Through Jesus, God has given us coverage for all these dangers. Jesus even went so far as to pay the premiums for us his death on the cross. But now I

want us to think about: Where is our guarantee? How do we know this coverage is certain?

I spent a lot of time this week studying different Scripture passages about the resurrection of Christ and its significance in our lives, and there's one that kept tripping me up. It comes from 1 Corinthians 15. Because of some false teaching that rejected the Christian claims of a future bodily resurrection, Paul ends up writing about what would happen if that were true and specifically what it would mean if Christ hadn't risen from the dead. He writes in 1 Corinthians 15:17-19: "*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*"

Have you ever struggled with those verses? I have, and I did again this week. At face value, they don't make sense to me because they seem to place dependence on the resurrection for things Jesus already accomplished at the cross. What makes sense is if Paul would have said: "And if Christ did not die on the cross, your faith would be futile and you would still be in your sins." The whole Bible points to his death on the cross that removes our sins and gives us eternal life. So why does it sound like Paul is saying Christ's resurrection does that?

I came across an explanation that I think is a good one. It comes from a theologian named Wayne Grudem: "*By raising Christ from the dead, God the Father was in effect saying that he approved of Christ's work of suffering and dying for our sins, that his work was completed, and that Christ no longer had any need to remain dead. There was no penalty left to pay for sin, no more wrath of God to bear, no more guilt or liability to punishment - all had been completely paid for, and no guilt remained. In the resurrection, God was saying to Christ, "I approve of what you have done, and you find favor in my sight."*"

So Paul isn't saying that the resurrection pays the penalty for our sins – it's Jesus death on the cross that does that, but the resurrection is God's guarantee that the price has been paid. By raising Christ from the dead, God was saying "The price has been paid in full." Our coverage is guaranteed. In

Christ there is salvation from all the dangers of sin, condemnation, Satan, hell, death, and the grave! And that's why we have every reason to celebrate this Easter morning! Christ is risen! Our hope is secure! We have all the insurance we need!

The only question that remains is if you are part of this agreement? The Bible says that the only way to receive salvation is through faith in Christ. It is through faith in Jesus that we are united to him in his death and resurrection and become partakers in everything he's accomplished for us. Have you put your faith in Jesus?

Faith in Jesus means beginning a new way of life. A life where you turn from your sin and follow him. Many of you have come here this morning having already made that decision, but maybe you haven't. How are you going to deal with the dangers I've talked about this morning? Jesus has already paid the price, and his resurrection is the guarantee. And if you're ready to turn to him, you can do that right now in the quietness of your heart, by simply putting your faith in him.

I'd like to ask for us to bow our heads and close our eyes... If you are ready to give your life to Christ and put your faith in him, you can say a simple prayer like this...