

Eye Witness Good News

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[0 : 0 0] pray first. Father, as we come to your word now, we thank you. We thank you you gave us a book because we can think about it. We can look at it and read it and remember it.

You didn't just give us the oral tradition, though we thank you for that. We see that happening throughout the Old Testament. But then you caused Moses and others to write it down. And then you came to the New Testament. You caused the apostles to send letters and to write the history of Jesus. You had it written down so that for all generations, we can read the history.

We can read not a myth, but the narrative of what you have done for our salvation and for your glory.

So, Father, help us to turn to the book now. Speak to us as we open it because it is powerful, because it's your words given through humans, but it's your words. So, therefore, they have power to transform our lives, to open our eyes, to heal us and help us. So, Lord, grant your servant, unworthy though he is, to preach this word. Who am I that you should give me this honor and privilege?

Bless it to your people's hearts. May everyone here be transformed. May no one leave this room untouched by your word and by the worship of the living God. We are in your presence, and we reverence you. We stand in awe of you. In Jesus' name. Amen. Let me thank the praise team and the choir and the band. Wow, y'all. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Brother Daniel, our music director, and Brother Kosh's assistant, thank you so much. Brother Janice, our choir director, appreciate you. Amen. We even had a guest guitar player, an old friend of our church, Anthony Griggs, who's over there giving that solo. You saw the horn section over here.

[2 : 0 0] I wish I could play. Thank you, horn section. Anyway, thank you. Thank you, Henry Crutcher on the Hammond. Man, we just, we're blessed here with so many drums and everything. All right, I'm done.

I'm sorry. I got carried away. Here it is. First Corinthians 15, 11 verses. We're going to follow though. Watch this. Here we go. Paul speaking. Now 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. 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 500 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. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am.

And his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not in vain. Though it was not I, but the grace of God that is in me. Whether it was I or they, so we preached, and so you believed. Amen. That is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Amen. I grew up watching eyewitness news. CBS. In Philly, it was Channel 3. I remember as a kid, watching this news, eyewitness news. It was always so encouraging. It was like, wow, the guy, the announcer spoke with such authority. It was eyewitness news. Why did they call it that?

Even as a kid, I thought about that. Why did they call it eyewitness news? And I realized what it meant. Because eyewitness accounts of what happened are the most reliable. You know, they were saying, we interviewed people who saw the event in question take place. That's what they're saying. It's also true in our court system. Have you noticed that? The court doesn't want to know what you think about the event. It wants to know what reliable witnesses saw with their own eyes or heard with their own ears, as you promise or swear to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So help me God.

[5 : 17] That's how we know what really happened. Eyewitness accounts. And notice I said reliable witnesses. Reliable. If you were drunk or a criminal or even a very immature like a child witness, your witness could be discredited possibly.

But if you were reliable, you were awake, alert, you had your glasses on. In my case, I had my glasses on. And you could see or you heard with your own ears what took place.

They considered you reliable. We do so today. Our criminal justice system is based upon eyewitnesses.

Eyewitnesses. Our news is supposed to be based. Help me, Jesus. It's supposed to be based on eyewitnesses' accounts, not what the journalist thinks happened. Come on, somebody.

Now listen, the gospel of Jesus is not based upon hearsay. My uncle's cousin told me she saw and heard. That's not what the gospel is based upon. The gospel is based upon reliable eyewitness accounts of seeing Jesus die and or alive again after he died.

[6 : 47] So here's the question. Are you willing to believe the eyewitness good news and what it means?

If not, what is your reason for rejecting the eyewitness accounts of what happened?

What's your rationale? If you do believe, then you can know that your faith in Jesus eyewitness is based upon good, solid evidence. Eyewitness good news.

Now listen, this chapter, just so you know, this chapter in the Bible is one of the greatest chapters in the greatest book, the Bible. Aside from the actual record of the events of Christ's resurrection recorded in all four gospels, this chapter is the resurrection chapter in the Bible.

Here, 58 verses of spiritual truth where Paul talks about the gospel of resurrection, the necessity of the resurrection, the nature of the resurrection body, and the power of the resurrection. We can't cover all that. We're just going to cover a little part of that. But that's what this chapter does. It lays down the doctrine or theology of resurrection. It's hugely important.

[8 : 17] Now, the reason Paul wrote it is because some people in this church, he wrote to a church in called Corinth, in a city called Corinth. And it seems some of the Christians have begun to doubt that they would rise, that they begin to doubt resurrection. And if they begin to doubt their own resurrection, that means they also died at the resurrection of Christ. And if that happens, then they've destroyed their faith. And so Paul, an apostle, writes to them to encourage them, to remind them, hold it. I know people came into the church saying stupid stuff, and I know the culture doesn't want to believe this, but you know the truth. He's reminding them what they know. He's reminding us what we know. Verse 12, if you have your Bible in front of you, verse 12 is the big idea of the entire chapter. Now, if Christ is proclaimed, is raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? That is the big idea of the entire chapter. Okay? So Paul said, get this, and everything I'm saying comes around this. How could you say? If Christ, what are you saying?

So I got three points from these 11 verses. I'll try to make them clear. You'll be on the screen, I think. First, we are told to remember the gospel. Verses one and two. I'm going to read it again, so just so you hear them.

I 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.

He's reminding them. The word gospel, as you all know, means good news. It is not something that saves you and then moves on to something else. The gospel, and so you can do your own thing. You know, you know, people walk the aisle and they say, I believe in Jesus, and then they go on and do what they want. That's not the gospel. The gospel grabs hold of you. The truth, the power of God grabs hold of you, and then throughout your life, you hang on to the gospel. That gospel keeps you going. It carries you.

It carries you. Notice he says, first of all, the gospel was preached. In other words, it was good news that had been announced to them. People would say, don't preach to me. Well, that's exactly what we need. That's exactly what we have to do. Preach, that's what Paul says. I preached, I announced.

[11 : 01] That idea here is that he was a herald. The idea of preaching was that the king would send a herald with a message for the people. And the herald would come to the people and say, hear ye, hear ye, thus saith the king. That's later language, of course, but that's what happens. The herald brought a message, and the people would gather and hear the message. They didn't even get to ask questions.

They said, the king is speaking to his herald. We must listen to the herald because he speaks from the king. Paul comes. That's what preaching is. Paul comes, and preachers should come if they bring the word of God. They bring a message from the great king, and everyone should listen, including the herald. So he's announcing, he's proclaiming, he's preaching good news from God sent by God in the name of Jesus. To ignore the good news is to ignore the king who sent it. Now, what is to be done with this message of good news? How do you respond? He says, it is to be received. Watch the engine text. It is to be received. This means the gospel that God sends to us is to be taken to heart and trusted. Now, most of the Corinthians and most of us in this room have done that. We've trusted in the good news. This is done by faith. It means faith. What is faith? I mean, people get crazy when they talk about faith in the Bible. People who don't understand the Bible get crazy. They say, faith is believing something you can't prove. Anybody ever hear that before? Anybody? That's crazy.

That's not Christian. That's not Bible. Here's what faith is. It's trusting your weight on something. It's committing yourself to something. Now, that's not a fake chair. I know that's a real chair. I trusted a real chair. Not something I couldn't prove. I trusted a real chair, solid as a brick. And I sat on it because I knew it would hold me up. That's Christian faith. That's what it means to receive. You receive by trusting your life to what God has said through Jesus. Because you believe the message. You believe God spoke.

And it's not merely mental assent. You know? Well, I believe. Sure, I believe. I had a guy with the Penn, when I went to Penn State, had a guy, his name was Marinko. Yeah, his name was Marinko.

And he said to me, I was trying to talk to him about Jesus. He says, oh yeah, Kevin, I know Jesus. Yeah, man. He calls me Marinko and I call him Jesus. He knew of Jesus. Mental assent. He was joking probably, but still. He knew facts about Jesus.

[14 : 04] He had heard, maybe Sunday school, maybe some other things. He heard some facts, but the facts didn't impact him. See, to receive is to believe, is to trust. It means I'm grabbed by it.

I'm grabbed by the truth. It's trusting. It's giving myself to this understanding, to this knowledge, and holding on to it. Yeah. Third thing, the gospel that you received is to be, he says, stood upon, in which you stand. The gospel is firm foundation. It's like this, this, this board I'm standing on.

It's firm. I'm standing on it. It's something you are to stand on with your life and continue to stand upon it. You are giving a place to rest your life when you stand upon the gospel.

It's a secure position. But there's a warning here. I got to, I got to tell you, because it's right there. I can't, I can't ignore it, right? He says, by which you are being saved, verse two, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. You see, to hold fast means to keep a firm possession of something. Let me help you. Like you hold on to your money.

Okay. Some of you hold on to your money so tight that it becomes white by the time we get it out your hand. You know, holding on to something tightly, grip of steel. Back in the day, the Kung Fu grip.

[15 : 50] You're holding on because this thing is so important. You can't let go. This person is so important. You can't let go. Now, listen to this. Now, here's a, here's a, here's a, here's a, here's a, no charge for this, but here's a, listen to this. If you're holding fast to this gospel, rest assured it is because God is holding fast to you. Because I get weak, y'all. Sometimes my grief, grief, I got doubts, y'all. I have doubts from time to time. Sometimes they kick me hard. Sometimes fear grabs me. I got to be honest.

But then he's holding me. Like when your children are crossing the street, right? You know, when you, y'all got, some of y'all got children. I remember I got four of them, man. I'm the little girls trying to cross the street with four little girls. Squirrel, car, everybody. Wind, leaf. And so you say, hold my, hold daddy's hand.

Hold mommy's hand. But here's what you're doing. Y'all got kids. Here's what, here's what you're really doing. You say, hold my hand. What do you do? Because you know their grip could slip.

They get distracted. So the real deal here is you are holding their hand. That's what's happening in the gospel. Yes, we don't hold firm to what we believe, but if you're holding firm, if you are holding firm in the faith, it's only because you are being gripped by the living God. He's holding on to you. And I'm so glad because Kevin Smith will be gone. All right. We got that done, right?

Next thing I want you to notice. Now we're told the content of the gospel in which we are to remember and hold fast. The content. What's the content of the gospel? This is the biggest part of this section.

[17 : 50] Well, not the biggest, but it's a good part of this section. Verse three. It's an important part. The other part is something else, but verse three is it. Here it is in a nutshell. I delivered of you as a first importance that 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. That's the gospel in a nutshell. We can say more about the gospel, but we can't say less than this. Okay. This is the heart of the gospel. Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. Scriptures here means the Old Testament. The Old Testament predicted the coming of Christ.

I talked to my Jewish friends and I say, listen, I want to take, I want to show you in the Old Testament how Christ was being predicted. The prophets were talking about him to come. But first of all, let's deal with this point. What is he died for our sins? The word sin here means missing the mark. It's like shooting an arrow. I did archery in college. And I remember shooting arrows and I remember missing the mark.

Missing the whole target sometimes. And I got better, y'all. I hit a few bullseyes, but that's not us. Sin means we missed the mark of God's bullseye. God's bullseye means you're obeying him in thought, word, and deed. Your whole life is in obedience to God. But here's the problem with all of us.

We can't shoot straight. Here's the even worse problem. All of us by nature don't want to shoot straight. We want to do it our way. We want to be Frank Sinatra's. We all want to do, we all sing that same song. It's been, he'd been gone and dead for years, but we still singing his song. I did it my way. And that's all of us. We're all born that way. We're all born crooked. We're all born with a bad aim. God says, bullseye's here. We're shooting the wrong direction.

That's what it means to be a sinner. It means that we're not doing life God's way. We don't even want to. We don't even believe he exists sometimes. So there is no way. We just do our life the way we want to, the way we feel. How's that working out for you? We mess up some, we do some messed up stuff.

[20 : 32] We all do because we just want to do it our way. And if left to our way, we'll make a mess of our entire lives. Some of you have. It's only by the grace of God that you're here today.

It's only by the kindness of God that you still breathe. Because you did some crazy stuff. Or worse, crazy stuff was done to you.

And here you are in your reasonably right mind. You look beautiful, by the way. Y'all look good. Y'all look good. Sin is missing the mark. We're all guilty. We're all guilty. We all owe a debt to God.

We all got so many tickets we could never pay. And the way people drive in Chattanooga, we all should have a lot of tickets. But Christ died for those sins. What does that mean? Christ paid the debt.

See, we're all in debt. When we sin, that means we're in debt to God. We owe God. And we can't pay. It's like your credit card that you ran up at Christmas. And you can't pay the whole balance right now. That's why you pay that high interest rate month after month after month. And if you pay the minimal rate, it's going to take you 30 years to pay it off.

[21 : 58] It's worse with God. Our debt is so big, we have no chance. If you lived a thousand lifetimes, you could never pay the debt.

Because that's how far debt you're in to God. That's how messed up we are, how broken we all are. But Christ died for our debts. That means if you trust, if you receive him, I talked about that, if you trust in him, faith, believe in him, he pays what you owe.

Are you kidding me? I wish that somebody would do that with my mortgage. Anybody? Nobody. Nobody. Jesus pays the debt.

He goes to God on your behalf. Father, I got this. Put it on my account. Put their debt.

Put Amy's debt on my account. Put Stanley's debt on my account. Put Ethan's debt. Put Joshua, put on my account.

[23 : 11] I got this. I pay for it at the cross. The cross is that place of judgment where we, all of us, should have been there on the cross.

It is the place of execution. It's the place of death. The Bible says the wages of sin is death. We get paid for our sins. It's called death. And it's not just physical.

It's eternal. Because we committed cosmic treason. Sin is treason against God. And you know and I both know, treason means, in any country I know of in this world, that's what treason means.

It's true in the kingdom of God. But Jesus shows up. That's the beautiful thing. God, God does something himself.

The very judge does something himself so people's debts can be paid. He sends Jesus, his son, his only son, the only one like him, the eternal son.

[24 : 15] And Jesus dies for the sins of those who trust him. He dies for those who will give themselves to him. And he pays all their debts, all of their sins, past, present, and future, all paid, nailed to the cross.

And then the Bible says he was buried. You know, come on. You got to ask the question. I know what you're thinking. Avery, I know what you're thinking. Well, of course he was buried.

That's what you do with people when they die. Why does he say he was buried? To prove that he was really dead. Our Muslim friends tell us that Jesus did not die.

The Quran says that Jesus did not die. Well, then why was he buried? You don't tend to bury living people.

Unless you want to torture them, of course. The burial proves he died. No breath in his lungs.

[25 : 22] No brain function. And listen, folks. I know we're thinking, those are primitive people. That was 2,000 years ago. We have so much medical knowledge. Let me tell you something about people. People know when you're dead.

We've always known that. That's been pretty clear. The Romans were experts at putting you to death. The Romans took what the Persians invented called crucifixion and they perfected the art.

They knew how to kill you. Human beings have always been good at knowing how to kill one another. He was dead. That's why they put him in the tomb.

He was buried. And then the third day. Easter Sunday. He was raised. And according to the scriptures.

He was raised in the past and is still raised. This was a bodily, physical resurrection. Not a spiritual one that you don't see. No one knows.

[26 : 26] It's just in our minds and in our hearts. No! Bodily, physically raised from the dead. In time and space.

In history. Now here's the question. How do we know that? Were any of you there? Were any of you there? Just let me know. Were any of you there?

I just want to make sure that no one's crazy. Okay, good. All right. No, we weren't there. So how do we know? Here's what he tells us. He's going to spend the next few verses talking about that.

Listen to this. Verse 5. He appeared to Cephas. After the resurrection, he appeared to Cephas. Cephas is Peter. Remember, Jesus kind of called Peter a rock or a stone.

Peter means, well, the disciples took that as a nickname for him. And Cephas was another way of saying Peter. He appeared to Peter. Oh, then he appeared to the 12.

[27 : 26] That is the disciples. So they saw him alive. Okay. Peter saw him alive. Then the 12. Here's the big part. He appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time.

Most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen the sheep. So hold on. Get this straight. Jesus appeared to more people in this room at one time. They all saw him.

After he died, they could see him and touch him. They all saw him. And why does Paul say, and most of them are still alive?

So anybody who wanted to at Corinth could go and talk to him. He wasn't trying to hide nothing. The gospel is not based upon hearsay.

It is based upon what actually happened. What people saw. Paul is saying, if you don't believe me, go and talk to some of these witnesses. Now, Paul went back to Corinth.

[28 : 23] He visited Corinth. They could ask him. He wrote three letters we know of. Two, only two we have. Paul interacted. He could get, you want names? I know.

He said, I got a few. He probably said, I got a few names. He wanted them to know. He wasn't making anything up. There was proof.

Then he appeared to James. Who's James? James is the half-brother of the Lord. Mary had other children, y'all. She was not a perpetual virgin.

She had other children. Jesus had half-siblings. James is one of them. And the thing about James and about Jesus' siblings, they didn't believe in him while he was alive.

John 7, I mean, says this. John 7, 5. For not even his brothers believed in him. So the whole time Jesus is going around preaching the gospel, healing people, and all kinds of great things, his own family, his own brothers, his sisters were going, who does he think he is?

[29 : 27] He ain't nothing but a, he ain't no savior. He's nothing but a brother. What does he think? I mean, they didn't believe in him. What changed their mind?

James saw him. And James became one of the great pillars of the New Testament church. He led, helped lead the church after that.

And then lastly, Paul says, I'm sorry, and to talk to all the apostles. That seems to be even a bigger group than the 12. Now, there were 12 called apostles who saw, who lived with Christ and saw Christ.

But then there were others who were called apostles, not like the 12, but others who, the word apostle means sent out. They were others who were sent out to proclaim the gospel.

And this was a bigger group than the 12. So we got, and then lastly, Paul says, I saw him as one untimely born, meaning he was not one of the 12.

[30 : 24] He was not with Jesus when he lived. He only saw him after he died and rose again. He appeared to me unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

Eyewitness accounts. Eyewitness. People saw him.

Not everybody. Everybody didn't need to see him. The people who needed to see him saw him, and they went and told others what they had seen, heard, and touched.

Jesus, physically, after he was crucified. And buried. He rose again. You know people are, you know people go to jail for this kind of witness and testimony?

You know this, right? Eyewitness accounts, they saw Freeman. He did it. If 500 people saw Freeman, Freeman going to jail.

[31 : 33] If just the 12 saw Freeman, Freeman going to jail. If just James and Paul and Peter saw Freeman, Freeman going to jail. Why?

Because we base everything on eyewitness accounts. Lastly, where's my clock?

Where's my clock? Lastly, what's the effect of this gospel upon those who believe? Upon those who believe the eyewitness accounts.

Upon those then who by the Spirit of God, like us, encounter Jesus. Not with our naked eye, but in our souls. We encounter Jesus because he really did come back from the grave.

What happens to you at that point when you encounter him? Paul tells us. I am least. Why am I least of the apostles?

[32 : 33] Because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them. Though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Those who believe, those who encounter this Jesus. This real Jesus. Who encounter him today. Just like Paul, are transformed. Who was Paul?

No, no, Paul was a Jew. His name was Saul of Tarsus. He was a student of one of the greatest rabbis of that day named Gamaliel. See, these are all facts, y'all.

Names and people. We have facts. We know these things. And Paul, it's even quoted in Scripture, but we know these things. Paul was a Pharisee.

Meaning he was a super Jew. He was a teacher of the law, as it were. He was somebody who believed that the Jews should be pure, should be faithful.

[33 : 33] And he was zealous. He was so tied up in Judaism that when the Christians came along, talking about Jesus being the Messiah, and the Jews said, no, he's not.

Paul said, well, if they're blaspheming, and I'm going to take care of it. And Paul began to kill Christians. It's recorded for us in the book of Acts. Paul was tracking down.

He was going to various cities, grabbing Christians, hauling them off to jail, and worse. That's what he did. He thought he was doing the right thing.

He thought he was doing God's will. Because Jesus can't be the Messiah. He was crucified. Nobody wants a crucified Savior. Savior, it's a joke.

Huge joke. An insult, actually, in those days, to say that's our Savior. It's like seeing Mickey Mouse as your Savior. Nothing good there.

[34 : 36] So what happened? How did he go from persecuting Christians to becoming the chief spokesman for Christians? He tells you.

He saw Christ. Acts chapter 9 is the story. Read it when you get a chance. He saw the risen Christ. And when he saw the risen Christ, his life was transformed.

Because you can't see Jesus. You can't encounter Jesus. The risen, ascended Jesus. Because remember, he rose and he ascended to the Father. You can't encounter him and not be changed.

That's why if you say you walked the aisle 10 years ago, if you say you signed the church card, if you say you were baptized in the name of Jesus, and yet you're not walking with Jesus, that can't be true.

Because when you see Jesus, you are transformed. That's what's happening. You're not the same person. Listen, y'all. We need to be transformed. We need hope.

[35 : 36] We are hurting. We need a real hope that goes beyond the medicine bottle. We need a real hope that goes beyond even therapy.

We need a hope that will transform us from the inside out. That will give us life. That will give us a reason for living. That will help us understand that we're not here by accident.

You didn't just happen to oops here. I'm talking about evolution, of course. No. You're a human being.

You were created in the image of God. And you rebelled against him. But he's not done yet. He sent someone to pay your debt.

And if you will trust in that person, it's only Jesus, by the way. He said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me. He's the only one who can set you straight.

[36 : 36] You can set me straight. Listen, if the New Testament is true, that means nothing else is true. That's how narrow this is.

If Jesus has truly come back from the dead, according to the eyewitness accounts, if that truly happened, that means everything else is false. That's how narrow.

Amen. Because that's what truth is. Truth is narrow. Two plus two is four. It can't be five and six, too.

If it's four, that's true. That means anything else other than that, it's not true. That's how narrow truth is. My name is Kevin Smith.

Is that true? Either it's true or it's not. It can't be Kevin Smith and Kevin Jones and Kevin Brown. That's, of course, I'm running a scam here. You know, it can't be all those things.

[37 : 33] It's either my name is Kevin Smith. True. Or it's not. That's the way truth works. Jesus says, I am the truth. And this, Paul encountered the truth.

He didn't want to believe it. You've got to understand, nobody expected Christ to rise again from the dead. Nobody expected that because dead people don't rise. Paul didn't believe it either.

He definitely didn't believe it. But all of a sudden, all of a sudden, he goes from killing Christians to being their chief spokesman.

And he paid for it. Grace makes us Christians. Grace here. He said the grace of God.

He misses grace several times there. Why grace? Grace is God's unearned, undeserved favor given to you in Christ, though you deserve the opposite.

[38 : 38] You can't demand grace from God. You can demand justice. I wouldn't recommend that. Mayday.

Mayday. Pull up. Don't ask God for justice because if he gives you justice, remember, you screwed up. Right. If he gives you justice, you have to give an account for your life to him and you don't want to do that.

Your resume stinks. Your credit stinks. You just, you just, no, don't do that. Beg him for grace. Mercy. Grace means he gives you something that you don't earn.

That you've never deserved and never will. What's the grace he gives? He saves us by grace. He transforms us by grace. He gives us hope in this life and the life to come by grace.

You don't deserve it, but he gives it. Why? Because he loves you. Oh, the magnificent love of God. That he would love messed up folk like all of us.

[39 : 45] Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. And make us his children. That's the good news. The good news is God is opening the doors of heaven to all who will trust in the one he sent to help you, his son.

And he proves that he's his son. He proved that he sent him by raising him from the dead and gave witnesses to see it. It's not like some of these other places, other things people say. It was done in a cave or done in some place in the desert and no one ever knows.

No. Time and space and history. The Bible names, dates, times. It gives history so that you and I can put our faith in what is real. Jesus is real.

And Paul encountered the real Jesus. And he was never the same. Paul Tripp, Christian counselor, says this. The resurrection promised you all the grace you need between Jesus' resurrection and yours.

If your end has already been guaranteed, then all the grace you need along the way has been guaranteed as well. Or you and I would never make it to our appointed end.

[41 : 00] Future grace always carries with it the promise of present grace. If God says you are being saved, then the path to get to that final destination is all taken care of.

Oh, you may mess up along the way, and you will. But grace holds you. Grace, grace, God's grace. Grace that is greater than all my sin.

Where sin did abound, Paul says, grace did much more abound. That means when sin went rampant, grace went even more rampant. And this grace goes to the whole world.

Anyone. I don't care where you're from. From West Philly in the hood like me. From wherever you're from. From Capitol Hill to downtown. To blue collar, white collar, no collar.

It don't matter. Wherever you're from. Africa, Asia, America, South America, Hawaii. It don't matter. Grace. His grace covers the world and covers all generations for those who will trust in the one he sent.

[42 : 08] Let me wrap this up. Let me, listen. When a case is proved, you don't have to keep proving it. In a court of law, when a case has been adjudicated and it's been proven, you don't get to go back and keep doing it all over again.

In news, when a news story has been proven, they don't keep telling you what they already proved. They write follow-up stories to show you what happened after what they proved happened.

Follow-up stories. Here's a follow-up story for you. Paul gives a follow-up story. Same chapter. Verses 30 to 33. He says, why are we in danger every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I die every day. What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? That's another city. He fought with them because they were persecuting him.

They didn't want to hear the gospel. If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. Paul is saying, listen, people have been trying to stop me from telling you all about this truth.

[43 : 24] Not just him, all the apostles. He says, and I'm suffering for it. I'm suffering for telling you the good news. We know Paul's story.

Stoned, whipped, beaten, poisoned. I mean, this guy went through all kinds of crazy to make sure this good news got out to the Roman world and to our world today.

He's saying this. He's saying, what's the point of me going through all of that, all of this pain and suffering, if I didn't know that Jesus rose again?

And so will I. He said, what's the point? He said, why would I do it? The apostles didn't get rich. They didn't have a mega church. They didn't get to have their private jet.

All of them except John, except one, John died horrible deaths. Because they would not stop saying that Jesus rose from the dead.

[44 : 29] Not one of them broke. I would have broke if it wasn't true. Come on, you won't die for a lie.

That you know it's a lie. Paul said, I'm suffering all the time for this, Newton, because I know for sure that Christ rose again from the dead because I saw him and I know I will rise from the dead.

Death is not the end for me. I am destined for glory. Jesus proves that life after death is real. And I know it. And I'm banking on it. I'm giving myself to it. My life belongs to him because he is the way, the truth, and the life.

And there is no other way to God but to him. He says, I can't help but tell you what I have seen and heard with my own eyes and ears.

Do you believe? If you believe the gospel, the good news, has your life been transformed?

[45 : 37] Are you following Jesus? Because that's what that does. You can't meet him and be the same. That's what he wants to do. Grace will transform you.

Grace will give you hope. Grace will pick you up. Grace will give you the reason to live and the power to die.

Because you know death is not the end for you. If you don't know that, I pray you come to know it.

I pray you come to know. If you want to know, today is a good day. If your eyes are opening even right now, that's by the grace of God, not Kevin Smith.

If it's making sense for the first time, I've seen that happen. That's because God's at work in you, not Kevin Smith. Today is the day. Will you receive Jesus?

[46 : 45] Will you believe the eyewitnesses? Will you give your life to him? And those of you who have, will you be encouraged and strengthened that your faith is not in vain?

In vain means empty to no effect. That's fake faith. That's, I call that social gospel faith.

You know, it's the way I live. It's what I do. It's my social context. It's Bible belt faith. That too often isn't real faith.

It's just tradition faith. You know, that's not going to help you. What will help you is to surrender your life to the real Jesus. And admit that you've sinned against God.

But you're trusting in him to make everything right. And then Jesus said two words to you now. Follow me. Come follow.

[47 : 45] Keep following if you're following. Faith is real. Jesus is real. Father, in Jesus' name, Lord, we thank you for your mercy and grace. We thank you that your word is true.

And you gave us this book so we could actually study it. So we could actually spend time reading it and thinking it through. And I pray that every person in this room would do just that. That they're thinking it through. That they're not blowing it off because they have some preconceived idea that they're right and everyone else is wrong.

They have no proof that they're right, but they want to believe it. Please keep people from that. Please, Lord. I live there. I know what that's like. It's death. Please, Lord, open all of our hearts to at least think about what Jesus has said through Paul here.

And may we come to see the truth of it. For Jesus' sake. Amen.