

The cross and resurrection

Why are Jesus' death and resurrection central to Paul?

Paul announces that Jesus died for sins and was raised, grounding forgiveness, reconciliation, and future hope in God's action. He treats the resurrection as an event with witnesses and as the foundation of Christian life.

The message Paul received

First Corinthians 15 distinguishes a message Paul received and passed on from the appearance he personally reports. It names witnesses and groups associated with appearances of the risen Christ. This is early Christian testimony, not a modern transcript of interviews. Its importance can be examined historically while clearly separating what the letter records from the further historical argument for the truth of the resurrection.

Biblical references: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Sources: 1co-15

A death with saving significance

Romans 3 presents Christ's death in relation to sin, redemption, and God's righteousness. Second Corinthians 5 connects reconciliation with God's action in Christ and a transformed way of seeing others. Paul uses several complementary images rather than a single mechanical diagram. Christian explanations of atonement emphasize substitution, sacrifice, victory, and reconciliation differently; a useful introduction preserves the range of the texts.

Biblical references: Romans 3:21-26 · 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Sources: rom-3, 2co-5

Resurrection is indispensable

Paul does not treat resurrection as an optional symbol for optimism. His argument in 1 Corinthians 15 says that without Christ's resurrection, Christian proclamation and hope collapse. The promised future is transformed bodily life, not simply the survival of an inspiring memory. The seed illustration emphasizes both continuity and transformation; it does not provide a scientific description of the process.

Biblical references: 1 Corinthians 15:12-23 · 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Sources: 1co-15

The shape of a cross-centered life

Philippians 2 connects Christ's self-giving with the community's humility and care for others. This application must not turn the cross into permission for leaders to exploit vulnerable people. Paul calls the whole community away from status competition. Read the historical testimony and its ethical implications together: the risen Lord whom Christians worship is the one whose self-giving overturns their patterns of pride.

Biblical references: Philippians 2:1-11

Sources: php-2

Sources

- [1co-15] 1 Corinthians 15, World English Bible Classic (public domain). Chapter linked for contextual reading; this guide contains original explanation, not Scripture quotations. <https://ebible.org/eng-web/1CO15.htm>
- [rom-3] Romans 3, World English Bible Classic (public domain). Chapter linked for contextual reading; this guide contains original explanation, not Scripture quotations. <https://ebible.org/eng-web/ROM03.htm>
- [2co-5] 2 Corinthians 5, World English Bible Classic (public domain). Chapter linked for contextual reading; this guide contains original explanation, not Scripture quotations. <https://ebible.org/eng-web/2CO05.htm>
- [php-2] Philippians 2, World English Bible Classic (public domain). Chapter linked for contextual reading; this guide contains original explanation, not Scripture quotations. <https://ebible.org/eng-web/PHP02.htm>

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