

Resurrection Reality

Acts 24:1-27

"It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day." Acts 24:21

The central distinguishing feature between Paul and his accusers is that Paul has experienced the transforming power of the resurrected Christ.

"All the old things he hated, he all of a sudden loved. All of the old things he loves, he all of a sudden hated. Everybody he used to serve, he stopped serving; and, everybody he used to be designing his plans against he was in service to. Everything completely changed, and that's how conversion operates. Christianity is not an addition to your life. It is a transformation of your life." John MacArthur Jr.

Paul went from someone who was proud, aggressive, hateful, and murderous to a man who was willing to die for those who wanted to kill him.

Easter invites each of us to consider: Do we merely "believe" in the idea of resurrection, or do our lives give evidence to the reality of it?

I. The Problem With Having a Conceptual Belief Rather Than a Transformational Belief in the Resurrection. Acts 24:1-8

"But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, **which these men themselves accept**, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust." Acts 24:14-15

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12:2

"Your dead shall live; their bodies rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For you dew is the dew of light and the earth will give birth to the dead." Isaiah 26:17

"He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord will wipe away tears from all faces..." Isaiah 25:8

What happens when you believe in life after death but you aren't truly gripped by the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Saving your life takes priority over sacrificing it for the gospel. Winning matters more than worshipping.

When You Only Have a Conceptual Belief in the Resurrection:

- You flex power rather than pursue peace.
- You flatter men rather than praise God.

"Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, in every way and everywhere we accept all this with all gratitude. Acts 24:2-3

- You falsely accuse rather than speak truth.

“For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.” Acts 24:5-6

“You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death.” Exodus 31:14

Does the reality of the resurrection of Jesus shape your life when you are in conflict with someone?

That’s the best testing ground – do you humble yourself or do you fight to win? Is saving your life more important than sacrificing your life?

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:43-45

“Ours it is to persist in loving, even if men persist in enmity. We are to render blessing for cursing, prayers for persecutions. Even in the cases of cruel enemies, we are to; do good to them, and pray for them. We are no longer enemies to any, but friends to all. We do not merely cease to hate, and then abide in a cold neutrality; but we love where hatred seemed inevitable. We bless where our old nature bids us curse, and we are active in doing good to those who deserve to receive evil from us. Where this is practically carried out, men wonder, respect, and admire the followers of Jesus.” CH Spurgeon

II. The Power of Having a Transformational Belief Rather Than a Conceptual Belief in the Resurrection. Acts 24:9-27

- **You can be Cheerful:** Paul cheerfully makes his defense against an unbalanced and unfair accuser.

“Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense.” (vs. 10)

“But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” 1 Peter 2:20-24

- **You can be Truthful.**

"You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me." (24:11-13)

- **You can be Transparent.**

"But I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God which these men themselves accept that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust." (24:14-15)

- **You can Be Ethical:**

"So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man."

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations." C.S. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*

- **You can Be Faithful:**

"After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, 'Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.'"

"Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." John 5:28-29

"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:11-15

Don't you want to be free to give your life that others might be saved rather than to keep fighting to save your own life?

Study Questions:

1. Paul says in Acts 24:21 that he is on trial because of the resurrection.
Why do you think the resurrection is such a dividing line between belief and unbelief?

2. The study contrasts **conceptual belief vs. transformational belief**.
How would you describe the difference in your own words, and where do you see that tension in your life?

3. Paul's life dramatically changed after encountering Christ.
What are some clear signs that a person has truly been transformed by the resurrection, not just informed about it?

4. The study says: "*Saving your life takes priority over sacrificing it*" when belief is only conceptual.
Where are you most tempted to "protect" your life instead of surrendering it for Christ?

5. In conflict, the study asks whether we **humble ourselves or fight to win**.
Think of a recent conflict—what did your response reveal about what you truly believe about the resurrection?

6. Acts 24 shows people using **flattery, power, and false accusations**.
Why are these tactics so appealing, and how does the resurrection challenge us to respond differently?

7. Jesus teaches in Matthew 5 to love enemies and pray for persecutors.
What makes this command so difficult, and how does the reality of the resurrection make it possible?

8. Paul demonstrates a **cheerful spirit even while being falsely accused**.
How can a deep faith in the resurrection produce joy or steadiness in unfair or painful circumstances?

9. The study highlights five marks of transformation: **cheerful, truthful, transparent, ethical, and faithful**.
Which one of these is most challenging for you right now, and why?

10. Felix responds to Paul with fear but delays repentance (Acts 24:25).

What are some ways people today “delay” responding to the truth of the gospel—and how can we guard against that in our own lives?