

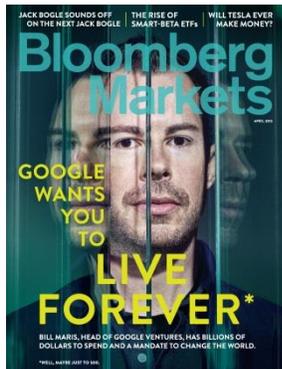
Sermon preached by Pastor Ben on 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 at Victory of the Lamb on April 5, 2015.

Series: Easter Impact
Today's Focus: Fact or Fiction?

"Easter Can Impact Anyone"

Alright, here's your choice. If you could choose between either becoming filthy rich or helping other people live a few more years, what would you choose? How many of you are thinking, "Well, it depends what other people I'd be helping? Are we talking my family and friends here or just who exactly? Who's going to be impacted?"

There's a guy named Bill Maris. Have you heard about him? He's the president and managing partner of Google Ventures. In other words Google (a company worth almost \$400 billion) gives him big bucks every year to invest however he wants. It's unbelievable. This year Google is giving him *\$425 million* to invest. What would you do with that kind of money? Can you even fathom that? Well you know where a lot of it is going? Life science companies. Intriguing huh?



Bill Maris believes that in the not so distant future, technology will transform our biology using nanobots and other machines—changing everything about how we live and die. He says, "It will liberate us from our own limitations." On his bookshelf are books about neuroscience and the future including a book called *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, which is the seminal work of futurist Ray Kurzweil. Google actually hired this guy Ray Kurzweil to help people like Bill Maris understand a world where computers surpass human biology. Wow, huh?

Interestingly in this Bloomberg article this month Bill Maris says, "We actually have the tools in the life sciences to achieve anything that you have the audacity to envision, I just hope to live long enough not to die." Did you catch that? I thought this last comment was quite revealing when he says, "I just hope to live long enough not to die."

Now friends, I'm not here today to speculate about the future of technology-meets-human-biology. And I don't know what is going to be the difference between today's science-fiction and what one day might become science-fact. But I know a few things. It's easier to say, "I just hope to live long enough not to die" when you're young, isn't it? Like Bill Maris it's not hard for me to think I've got many years ahead of me yet. The future awaits! Sometimes with the optimism of youth it's not that hard to think that in the future people won't hear the "C" word—cancer, to think that the "A" word—Alzheimer's will soon be forgotten, and that aging itself might one day be a thing of the past. Wouldn't just some of those things be nice? I'm not mocking Bill Maris for having hope that one day we'll find a cure for cancer. We're all

driven by a need to have hope. So the problem as I see it isn't that Bill Maris has books of nanotechnology and molecular biology on his shelf. The problem is that he doesn't also have a Bible.

Because here's the thing, friends. Time doesn't slow down for technology. Never has. You can pre-order the new Apple Watch starting this week and it's pretty slick, but it still keeps time like every other watch...one second after another. There's no way to slow those seconds down or get them back once they've passed. The only place it seems to me where those seconds slow down is on the basketball court where every year I keep slowing down a little more! And did you know, there's actually something on the internet called [the world death clock](#) that ticks off the global death count of 1.8 people who die around the world every second?

Time marches on and it's like death laughs at our human hopes. It's like death says, "Keep on thinking technology will be your savior, I'm still going to have the last laugh. Keep on looking to the future, and I will continue to catch some of you off guard. Keep on thinking you've got decades ahead of you, you don't need God now, and I will come after some of you in a couple days."

Friends, there's an old hymn stanza that continues to ring true year after year: *Time like an ever rolling stream soon bears us all away We fly forgotten as a dream dies at the opening day.* And the reality is that with or without nanotechnology both Bill Maris and Ben Kuerth, each of us who are about the same age, will one day die. And whether he lives to be 500 or I just live to be 50—at the moment of death, all our earthly accomplishments, the size of bank accounts, will count for nothing when we will stand before our Maker and be called to account for how we lived our lives and who we've invested our trust in.

That's why, friends, today on yet another Easter Sunday, God directs our attention not to the wishful thinking of a science-fiction future of what may or may not happen. Instead God directs us to the past. To something that actually, historically, happened. Where he asks you and me to consider the question, "Can Easter impact you?" Can what happened on that first Easter 2,000 years ago impact your next couple decades or your next couple days or however long you have to live before you die?"

Well to establish answers to these very questions is why 1 Corinthians 15 was written. It's a chapter all about Easter and the impact Easter has on many different aspects of our lives. We're actually going to dig into this whole chapter over the next 4 Sundays so think about coming back to explore this more because there's a lot more to Easter than just going to church with Grandma, the Easter bunny, and finding a basket full of candy. Today though we're going to look at the first 11 verses of 1 Corinthians 15. These verses lay the foundation of Easter facts that helps us see how **Easter Can Impact Anyone**. Will it impact you?

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

The first part of this can be summarized with the phrase, *I want to remind you of the gospel*. Friends, what's the gospel? Do you know? It's the good news. The good news about what? Well honestly there's not a lot of good news out there in our world today it seems, is there? Instead we hear about wars, we hear about beheadings and bloodshed, plane crashes. We hear about protests and political fighting. And how about in your personal life? Perhaps you keep hearing bad news about your blood pressure from the doctor. Or maybe you might get phone messages from debt collectors, or text messages that are emotionally abusive, or bullied with words by others who are mean and harsh.

But the gospel is a message of good news about peace. Not a peace where everything's going to work out just the way you want, but a peace that you can have even when things don't. Peace between you and me and the almighty God who made us. A peace that was established when God's very own Son, Jesus Christ, willingly took our place as one of us, took upon himself our sins, died our death upon the cross, and cried out, "It is finished."

You know there are many things on my to-do list in life that are my unfinished business. I have grand plans I'd like to see through to the end. Perhaps you have too. Or maybe just some simple things like one day having enough time to read a book from cover to cover. Yeah, anybody? But the good news is that the greatest plan ever made—your rescue from sin's clutches—has been accomplished! The monumental task of defeating Satan and his accusations—check it off the list! The weighty responsibility of securing your eternal glory—Done!

That's why the apostle Paul says, *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

This is the foundation of what Christians believe. There was a real, historical person named Jesus of Nazareth who died on the cross. He was buried. His tomb was sealed. It was guarded by highly motivated professional Roman soldiers. These facts are historically verifiable and beyond debate. But only the Bible gives us the reason why. And this is why Paul says it's a matter of first importance. In other words this is vital to know. *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*

Did you know this? 750 years before Jesus was born the prophet Isaiah, among many others, in the Old Testament Scriptures foretold what's Christ's death would accomplish. He said *5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Isaiah 53:5-6

But that's not all!

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Any of you hear in these verses an echo of the Apostles' Creed that Christians all around the world have recited for a very long time? That's because these are the core, central truths of Christianity. And at its very heart is the fact that on that first Easter Sunday the tomb was discovered empty. Jesus was raised from the dead... just as he predicted... just as the Scriptures foretold... and just as he then appeared to hundreds of people both publically and privately over a time frame of 40 days before he ascended into heaven.

What we have recorded in the New Testament is the eye-witness testimony of the people who saw and heard Jesus after his resurrection from the dead on Easter. Peter (Cephas). John. Matthew. Mark. Luke. These guys were there. They talked with the people who were there. And their eye-witness testimony was circulated widely in the church at a time when many of the eye-witnesses were still alive. In other words the implication here in what the Apostle Paul is saying is that if you had some questions about Easter or about Jesus, if you were skeptical, you could go talk to these people yourself.

And speaking of this guy Paul—the author of this letter 1 Corinthians...he's sure got an interesting story. Now I'm guessing perhaps some of you are here today perhaps because you're doing someone a favor. Someone invited you and you felt obligated to come or maybe you sort of got dragged here to church. And maybe even you don't really think much about Jesus, church, or Christians.

Well the thing is this guy Paul didn't either, at first! In fact he was foremost in trying to destroy the church. He was the ringleader of persecution against the church, the kind of guy who would've perhaps been at home in a group like ISIS, who thought he was doing God a favor by getting rid of Christians. But then he met Jesus Christ alive and he realized how wrong he'd been even if when he felt he was most right. And after being baptized, his life would never be the same! In the peace of having his sins washed away, with the confidence of having a brand new identity as a forgiven child of God, with the joy of knowing heaven was his home not because of anything he had done or could possibly do but purely, completely, freely by God's grace...Paul went to work telling people about Jesus! His message? *"Believe*

in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). This is the message that the Corinthians believed. This is the message that has impacted billions of people to this day. And this is the message that has the power to impact you too.

The apostle Paul had deep seated views. He was dedicated in his opposition to Jesus and the church. But Jesus ultimately changed the course of his life and along with it his eternal destiny. There is no other way to explain all that apart from the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Friends, if you could choose between either becoming filthy rich or helping other people live a few more years, what would you choose? Well the good news is that the impact of Easter is bigger than either one of the options.

You see, in investing Google’s money, Bill Maris hopes that his bets will ultimately pay off. “We aren’t trying to gain a few yards,” Maris says. “We are trying to win the game. And part of it is that it is better to live than to die.” Well friends, because of Easter, Jesus turns this kind of thinking on its head because just like the Apostle Paul once said in light of the resurrection, *“To live is Christ, to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21).

Why? Because the victory has already been won! Technology might one day help you to live longer here on earth, but only Christ’s victory on Easter opens up the possibility of living forever in heaven! Easter can impact absolutely anyone, because what Jesus Christ has accomplished impacts everyone! And that means YOU! Amen.

My Next Steps

Point to Ponder: Technology might one day help you to live longer here on earth, but only Christ’s victory on Easter opens up the possibility of living forever in heaven!

Treasure to Share: *³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).*

Action to Take: Don’t let Easter only impact you for a day. Return next week as we continue our journey through 1 Corinthians 15 to grow in your faith so it impacts you for eternity. Take to heart both the promise and the warning found today in Scripture: *By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.* (1 Corinthians 15:2).