

Text: 1 Corinthians 15

Title: The Text of 1 Corinthians 15 with Comments

Truth: The resurrection of Jesus is solidly proven, so live like it!

Date/Location: Resurrection Sunday April 17, 2022 at FBC

The Good News

If You Really Believe in the Gospel, You Will be Saved

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-- unless you believed in vain.

The **gospel** is the good news of Jesus Christ, that He came to save sinners such as ourselves.

To be **saved** means to be rescued from the dreadful consequences of sin—in this life and also after death. It means to be brought near to God instead of being separated from Him. It means to be forgiven, justified, and given spiritual life and light.

Core of the Gospel Message

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

Witnesses of the Resurrected Christ

5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

How many eyewitnesses were there to Jesus after He was raised from the dead? At least 14 people are mentioned above, many by name or whose names are known, plus 500 more who are unnamed. We also know of two angels and several women who were first at the tomb. Peter and John ran to the tomb to see if

it indeed was empty. Of all these, eight men wrote histories or letters that preserved in the New Testament. Most of these men at some point in their writing demonstrate they knew Christ was raised from the dead. How many such *eyewitness* accounts—*written* by the eyewitness himself or herself—are there of other historical events? Take the assassination of Julius Caesar (44 B.C.) as an example. I know of a written account by an eyewitness—Cicero. There are reports, like that of Nicalaus of Damascus, who wrote it down second-hand, purportedly from some who *were* eyewitnesses. He was a Jewish historian who lived 64 B.C. to at least 14 AD. His account probably was written years after the events occurred. On this slim evidence, you have never questioned that Julius Caesar was slain in the manner commonly known. Why would you disbelieve the news of the death and resurrection of Christ, which has far stronger historical evidence?

This letter to the Corinthians was written approximately 25 years after the events occurred. The truths had been circulating by messenger all those years. The events happened within the lifetimes of many of the people reading the letter. They personally knew eyewitnesses and could verify the historicity of the events. For us, this is like events that happened in 1997: Clinton's presidency, Red Wings win the Stanley Cup, Pathfinder lands on Mars, Steve Jobs returns to Apple...

A Murderous Critic Came to Believe in Jesus

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy 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 toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

This is like some famous modern critic of Christianity changing his mind and becoming a follower of Jesus. Think of some names that might fit here, either who have already converted to Christ or who seem so far off that it is impossible. That was Paul.

Implications of Denying Any and All Resurrections

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Some so-called Christians talk like this, thinking that they are sophisticated or academically respectable in coming up with alternative unreal explanations of the resurrection of Jesus—that he did not actually die, or that he rises mystically in the heart of his followers, or that it is a plain-old myth.

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up-- if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

In fact, the opposite of the supposition is true, which means that the Christian's faith is meaningful, our testimony is true, we are not still wallowing in our sins, our loved ones who died in Jesus have *not* in fact perished eternally, and we have the hope of everlasting life, a hope which is alive (Titus 1:2, 3:7; 1 Peter 1:3). By the way, the Christian *hope* has two facets: first, the thing or event promised by God, and second, the personal feeling of confidence. We look forward to something with good reason for confidence in the fulfillment of the thing or event, because God promised it. We speak of the hope of our own resurrection of the dead, and we also have the hope of future judgment. Sinners who reject Jesus will not get away with it, and we who believe life will enjoy life with Jesus Christ.

The person who rejects Christianity has an entirely different perspective—if there is no resurrection of the dead, then he feels free to live however he pleases. I suppose he would plan to

extract the maximal pleasure or profit he could out of the opportunities that life affords, and plan that once his life candle runs out, he is done. That pleasure may be hedonism; or it may be philanthropy; or setting up the next generation for a life of ease; or wielding power over others; or somehow achieving fame; or a combination of the above perceived "good things." Maybe he even includes some religion to look good to others, or to hedge his bets.

But taking that approach to life only *seems* good because important data is missing from his thinking. A Man came, claiming to be the Son of God, promising to lay down his life for his friends and to rise again from the dead, and then hundreds of people observed that He actually did it. He taught that if you do not entrust your soul to him, at the end of your life you will crash through the guardrails and fly over a cliff into the abyss of darkness and eternal condemnation. If you ignore the eyewitness data, you will make a very bad miscalculation, just like with any math problem or real-world design challenge. Missing key data yields bad results.

Christ Has Risen from the Grave, and Everyone Else Will Too

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

Please take note that *all* shall be made alive. Even those who do not want to be. It will be managed in a very orderly fashion:

23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. 27 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be

subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Even death will be subjected to the ruling authority of Jesus Christ and God the Father.

If No Resurrection, Living the Christian Faith is Useless

29 Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?

This refers to people who were saved because of the testimony of a person who soon thereafter died. They were baptized to testify their own faith. If the baptized person believed that their friend was eternally lost and there was no resurrection, they would not be baptized. I freely grant that this argument is not convincing on its own, because people do religious things all the time that are based on falsehoods. But this objection does not work for the apostles—they would not die or suffer persecution willingly for something that they did not see, did not believe, and knew to be false. Paul was in that category—he personally saw Jesus alive after the resurrection.

30 And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? 31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

32 If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"

Here is hedonism: live for the moment because once you are dead, you are gone and you are no more. But that dogma is wrong, and dangerous to your moral and spiritual health:

33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

34 Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

For Christians, it is shameful to even contemplate a no-resurrection "version" of the faith. Christ is raised and Christianity is true, **or** Christ is not raised and Christianity is false. Those are the only two options.

Answering a Mocking Objection about the Resurrection

Objection

35 But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"

If you are of a mind that resurrection is a stupid belief—after all, science tells us *that* doesn't happen, and we know science is *always* right—then you might try to prove resurrection wrong by asking how the body is formed and what it looks like. You might object that not even God can take a dead body and make it into a living body. (By the way, do you believe evolution can take *nothing* and make it into a living body?)

Illustrations

36 Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. 37 And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain-- perhaps wheat or some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

We know natural processes like garden seeds → plants, pine cones → trees, caterpillars → cocoons → moths/butterflies. There are many strange "death" to "life" designs in God's world. Why should we be surprised that God has something like that for humanity? We are far more complex and valuable than caterpillars or corn seeds—so just *maybe* something like a death to life situation applies to us too! It does.

39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. 40 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

Character of the Resurrection Body

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it

is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

There must be a change in form to fit the change in function—from temporal to eternal.

The Instantaneous Resurrection and Transformation

Dead Christians Raised, Living Christians Instantly Transformed

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Death Defeated

54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What a great thing we have to look forward to! The universal grief of death will be banished and eternal joy with God will be the experience of those who long for it in Jesus Christ.

Resurrection is True—So Serve Christ Confidently

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Not only is the resurrection of Jesus true, but the resurrection of all of us as well. This is the meaning of Resurrection Sunday. Let us give gratitude to God for it, and live accordingly.

A year ago when speaking on this topic, I wrote this: “But I want to ask a more practical question: How would your day-to-day life look different if *you* believed there is no resurrection? Would there be a practical difference compared to how you live now? Do you live in practice the same way as you would live if there were no resurrection?

“Putting it another way, does the resurrection of Christ have an impact on how you live Monday through Saturday? In what way can people tell you believe the resurrection of Christ? How does it change your conduct or outlook on...*everything*? ... Do you handle trials differently than the world? Do you approach your work with a different perspective? Do you approach living for the Lord with a resurrection mindset...[which] guarantees that our work for Christ will be useful?”

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