

The Necessity of the Resurrection  
1 Corinthians 15

**Introduction**

He is Risen! A blessed Resurrection Sunday to each of you. How wonderful it is to gather together this morning, even if it is remote electronic technology, to celebrate the hope we have because of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from the dead. I know that this day is more commonly called “Easter Sunday” - but “Easter,” according to Webster, refers to a “feast that commemorates Christ’s resurrection,” and I am not here to celebrate eating, but the resurrection itself! Those of you who know me know that I enjoy eating, and a good meal can satisfy my stomach, but only the hope I have in the Lord Jesus Christ can satisfy my soul, and what a wonderful hope we have because of the resurrection. This morning we read from the Gospel of John the story of Jesus’ Resurrection. Please now turn to 1 Corinthians 15 as we consider the eternal importance of the most significant event that has ever happened in human history.

**The Purpose of 1 Corinthians**

Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthian church to correct several problems that were occurring among them. Some of the problems they were facing were extremely serious. The Corinthian believers were proud, arrogant and divided between each other. They thought themselves to be models of Christianity, but in truth they were, as one commentator put it, a catastrophe! The problems in that church included tolerance of sin within their midst that even the pagan Gentiles would not commit. They could not resolve their own conflicts so they were bringing lawsuits against one another before the pagan judges. Amazing, but they had to be told to stop committing sexual sin with the temple prostitutes. Paul had to counsel them concerning marriage, the use of Christian liberty and proper behavior during the worship services. They thought themselves to be spiritually superior because the many spiritual gifts in operation within their congregation, but their selfishness and improper use of them resulted in them being divided by them instead of unified. But the problem that would seem to be the least likely to occur and yet also the most serious was their confusion concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Someone was teaching them that there was no resurrection from the dead and some of them were falling under the influence of that heresy. That is the issue that Paul addresses in chapter 15.

**A Brief Summary of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)**

Paul begins with a brief summary of the gospel message. Follow along as I read verses 1-11

1 Corinthians 15:1, *Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; <sup>7</sup> then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; <sup>8</sup> and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. <sup>11</sup> Whether then [it was] I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

**The Facts:** Paul begins by saying he is going to tell them the same gospel message that he has preached to them previously and he then briefly recounts the core facts of the gospel in verses 3 & 4. First, Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Second, Jesus was buried. Third, Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures. In verses 5-8 Paul then lists some of the various people that saw Jesus after His resurrection. There was Cephas (Peter), the rest of the apostles, to more than 500 eyewitness at one time, then to James, the brother of the Lord, and then finally to Paul too. Both the Old Testament (Deut. 17:6; 19:15) and the New Testament (Matt 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Ti. 5:19; Heb. 10:28) confirm that it is by the mouth of two or three witnesses that the truth is to be established. Paul cites 3 individuals, a group of 11 and a group of over 500 as eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. They had believed this gospel message whether it was preached by Paul or someone else.

**Faith:** The same is true for us. It really does not matter who told us the gospel. The importance is that we believed the truth of it and have placed our faith in the correct Jesus who did the correct work of atonement for our sin. I have said this many time before, but it bears mentioning again since it is such a crucial issue in our time due to the many in our nation who preach a perverted gospel. Faith must be placed in the correct object in order to bring salvation. Many have faith in faith and believe that will save them. Their faith is in the act of believing itself instead of in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Others believe in a different Jesus than the Jesus of the Bible. Salvation is by God's grace through faith (belief) in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible. That Jesus is described as the one who is God in human flesh, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died voluntarily as the sin sacrifice, was buried, and then rose again from the grave on the third day, and who is now at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us, and who will return in the future to take us to be with Him in heaven forever. Any other Jesus is false and those believing in a false Jesus will be condemned to eternity in Hell by God.

### **Denials of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12)**

In verse 12 Paul begins to address the specific heresy concerning the resurrection that had been taught among at least some of the Corinthians. Paul states, *"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?"* In many ways it seems absurd that Paul would even have to address this question. How could anyone involved in a Christian church question the resurrection of the dead? Yet, when we examine what is often taught and believed in some churches across America and around the world, we find the same problem still exists today. There are many ridiculous things that people who are professing Christians will believe because someone told them it was so. It is not uncommon for people to neglect comparing what they are taught to the gospel itself much less the rest of the Scriptures. There are many churches that claim to be Christian, but they deny the resurrection.

There are many theologically liberal churches that do not teach the resurrection of the dead because they do not believe that Jesus was resurrected. Some hold to the theory that Jesus "swooned" at the crucifixion and did not die. He simply regained consciousness in the coolness of the tomb and then came out. Of course, they cannot explain the blood and water that came out of Jesus' side when the Roman soldier, who was surprised that Jesus was already dead, pierced Him with his spear to make sure that He was dead. Neither can they explain how any man could suffer what Jesus did and then recover. Jesus was beaten and severely scourged resulting in such blood loss that He collapsed carrying His cross. He was then crucified and had a spear stuck into His side. He was placed in a tomb with a cloth over His face and then wrapped up and left without food or water. Yet, according to this silly theory, Jesus was able to get out of His burial wrappings, roll the stone away from the tomb and then overpower trained armed guards.

There are others that teach that Jesus was not physically resurrected, but merely His spirit manifested itself to people. In other words, it was His “ghost” that was seen by so many. Yet they cannot explain how this “ghost” was able to cook, eat and drink with the disciples or how Mary was able to hold onto Him so that Jesus had to tell her to let go (John 20:17).

Then there are the many people who identify themselves even as ‘evangelical’ who believe in reincarnation. They have come to believe the teachings of the eastern mystical religions such as Hinduism that the soul transmigrates from one body to another body in continuing cycles. They think they have lived before in a previous time period. I hope you understand that reincarnation is in complete contradiction to resurrection and they are mutually exclusive. Either the soul has one body that will be resurrected or the soul is a free entity and the various bodies it inhabits will all decay and be permanently destroyed. Either one or the other is true, but not both. Scripture clearly declares that resurrection is true.

### **If There Was No Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:13-19)**

With these things in mind we can see the importance of Paul addressing this problem in the Corinthian church. There were people who were doubting the resurrection from the dead. Paul address the issue throughout the rest of the chapter in a series of logical steps.

Verse 13 *“But if there is not resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised.”* In other words, if you deny that there is a resurrection from the dead, then you must also conclude that Jesus was not raised from the dead.

Verse 14 *“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.”* In other words, if Jesus was not raised from the dead, then Paul and the others that had taught them the gospel were false witnesses and false teachers. Paul is challenging them to recognize the fact that someone was lying to them. It was either them or the ones that were telling them that there was no resurrection of the dead.

Verse 17. *“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.”* It is the resurrection which proves Jesus overcame death which is the penalty of sin. If there is no resurrection, then there is also no forgiveness of sins through Christ.

Verse 18. *“Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”* If there is not a resurrection, then those who have died in Christ had a false hope. They were not saved and have instead perished. They are separated from God and lost forever.

Verse 19. *“If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. Without the resurrection from the dead, Christianity is a false religion and those following it should receive the pity of others. Paul’s argument is that it is foolish to follow Christianity if you reject the resurrection from the dead. If there is not a hope in a life to come, then of what purpose would there be to both set aside the pleasures of this world and suffer the scorn and persecution of others. People who would be so foolish to do this should invoke feelings of sorrow and compassion in those who are wiser. But Paul’s arguments do not stop here, for he goes on to affirm again the truth of the resurrection in verses 20-28.*

### **Affirming the Truth of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)**

Verse 20-26, *But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.* <sup>21</sup> *For since by a man [came] death, by a man also [came] the resurrection of the dead.* <sup>22</sup> *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.* <sup>23</sup> *But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming,* <sup>24</sup> *then [comes] the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.* <sup>25</sup> *For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.* <sup>26</sup> *The last enemy that will be abolished is death.* <sup>27</sup> *For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, “All things are put in*

*subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.<sup>28</sup> And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.*

Paul’s argument is simple. He declares again the truth that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. He then goes on to explain that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the example of what will happen to all of those who believe and follow Jesus and that future resurrection will occur when Jesus returns (παρουσία / parousia). That particular event is described in more detail in 1 Thessalonians 4 and other passages. Paul goes on here to point out that after the resurrection, Christ will rule and will finally even abolish the last enemy, death, which Revelation 20:14 says will be thrown into the lake of fire along with Hades and everyone whose name is not written in the book of life. Jesus has the authority to accomplish all of these things.

### **Life without The Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:29-34)**

In verses 29-34 Paul simply shows the foolishness of living for Christ if there is no resurrection of the dead. Why make such sacrifices. You might as well live as a hedonist and pursue sin, which some of them were doing, so Paul warns them about keeping company with those who lead them astray from the truth.

### **The Nature of the Resurrection Body (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)**

In verse 35-49 Paul answers the hypothetical question someone would ask about the nature of the resurrection body. *But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?”<sup>36</sup> You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;<sup>37</sup> and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.<sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.<sup>39</sup> All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one [flesh] of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.<sup>40</sup> There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the [glory] of the earthly is another.<sup>41</sup> There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.<sup>42</sup> So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable [body], it is raised an imperishable [body];<sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;<sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual [body.]<sup>45</sup> So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam [became] a life-giving spirit.<sup>46</sup> However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.<sup>47</sup> The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.<sup>48</sup> As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.<sup>49</sup> And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

Let me condense all of this into a simple statement: Your resurrection body will be a real body, but it will not be like the one you have now. (There can be a hardy “AMEN” to that!). The resurrection body will be a heavenly body as opposed to an earthly body. It will be a spiritual body that is physical yet with more ability than one that is just flesh and bone. The Apostle John described it well 1 John 3:2, “*it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.*” We do not know the exact make up of the resurrection body, but we do know that it will be an imperishable, heavenly body like that of Jesus Christ after His resurrection. After the resurrection Jesus could be seen and was seen by many (1 Cor. 15:5-8). He could be touched (John 20:17; 27). He could eat (Luke 24:42,43; John 20:13-15). He could appear suddenly (John 20:26). He could also disappear suddenly (Luke 24:31).

## **The Confidence of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50-59)**

That is our hope. Jesus conquered death and those of us who have been saved from our sins by God's grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ have been given this hope of conquering death too. This hope is not a "hope so," a wish or a dream. It is a confident assurance of what the future will bring because of God's promises. Paul describes this starting in verse 50.

*"<sup>50</sup> Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. <sup>55</sup> O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; <sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, who give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

## **Conclusions**

Death's victory and sting is taken away because Jesus has triumphed over sin and death and has given to us forgiveness and life. A poem by Elwood McQuaid entitled, *Death Meets His Master*, well describes this.

Father Time met pale King Death Sittn' by a tomb. **"Hello, old friend, I guess your're here To seal somebody's doom."**

*"You might say that,"* sly Death replied, A smile slid up his face. *"Inside reposes that Jesus man Who said He'd save the race."*

*"And you, Time, why you stoppin' here? Don't you have things to do?"* **"I come each day to draw the veil And let the mornin' through."**

**"Say, why you watchin' jus' one grave, With all your vast domain?  
Looks like you'd be out ramblin' 'round An' smitin' folks with pain."**

*"Well, this one's somethin' special, He challenged me, they say.  
Said He'd rest here just three days then stir and walk away."*

*"Now I'm the conqueror you know, They don't talk up to me.  
When I steps in to cut 'em down It's for eternity."*

**"I sure can testify to that,"** Responded Father Time.  
**"I ain't seen one shake off the dust Since you been in your prime."**

**"Well, I got other things to do, I must be on my way.  
I'll see you when I come back by To make another day."**

So whiskered Time went up the hill To bid the sun to rise. 'he left Death standin' by the tomb Lookin' strong an' wise.

Next Day, Time ambled by again, **"An' how are things?"** he queried.  
*"Kinda quiet,"* Death replied, *"I'm startin' to be weared."*

*"I won't be here when you come by About this time tomorrow.  
I'm anxious to be on my way An' spread some grief and sorrow."*

Now Father Time was quite surprised When he came back to see  
Death a-quiverin' on the ground In frightful agony!

His eyes were set, his throat was marked, His clothes in disarray.  
It wasn't difficult to see That Death had had his day.

**“What happened, Death?”** asked Father Time, **“What makes you look so bad? I've never seen you shake this way Or seem so scared and sad.”**

Death pulled himself up on a rock A-lookin' sick an' humble.  
Hung his head an' wrong his hand And Time could hear him mumble.

*“Was sittin' here before the dawn About to take my stroll.  
When all at once this whole wide world Began to reel and roll.”*

*“That rollin' stone jumped off the door An' skipped on down the hill.  
Then everything grew dark and quiet, Seemed like the earth stood still.*

*“I saw Him standin' in the door, He didn't move or speak.  
Just looked at me an' all at once I felt so tired and weak.*

*“He came and got a hold on me An' threw me to the groun' .  
Put His foot here on my neck Then took my keys an' crown.*

*“Two angels came to talk with Him, They glistened like the sun.  
He said, ‘The plan's all finished now, Redemption's work is done.’*

*“As they passed the garden gate I heard Them say, just then,  
He's settin' free my captives And givin' gifts to men.”*

Time and Death met once again Off yonder by the gate.  
**“It's good to see you,”** said Old Time, **I've wondered “bout your fate.”**

*“I'm just a lowly servant now, There's little time to roam.  
I just push open this old gate And help the saints get home!”*

Elwood McQuid

That is our wonderful hope because of the resurrection. What you believe about resurrection affects your life. Life apart from the hope of the resurrection leaves little left except the hedonism described verse 32, *“If the dead are not raised, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”* What point would there be except to live for the pleasures of the moment because it all ends at death. That is the way many people do live. Their lives are temporal and ultimately meaningless. But life lived with the confidence assurance of the resurrection has eternal purpose and meaning as Paul concludes in verse 58, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”* If you do not have this hope, then talk with myself or one of our church leaders. We would love to introduce you to the Lord Jesus Christ and a life lived with a confident assurance of victory over death. If you do have this hope, then praise the Lord and tell someone else about it. He is risen! Don't keep such good news to yourself!

Sermon Notes - April 12, 2020  
The Necessity of the Resurrection - 1 Corinthians 15

**Introduction**

**The Purpose of 1 Corinthians**

1 Corinthians is a letter of \_\_\_\_\_

They were \_\_\_\_\_, arrogant & divided

Problems included tolerance of flagrant sin, lawsuits, sexual immorality, legalism & abuse of Christian liberty, proper use of spiritual gifts

They were confused about the \_\_\_\_\_

**A Brief Summary of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)**

Jesus died for our sins, was buried and was raised from the dead on the \_\_\_\_\_ day

There were many \_\_\_\_\_ of the Resurrected Jesus – vs. 5-8

Faith must be in the correct \_\_\_\_\_ - Faith in faith does not save

Faith must be the Biblical Jesus one who is: \*God incarnate, \*sinless, \*who died as a \_\_\_\_\_ sacrifice for sin, \*was buried, \*was raised from the dead, \*ascended to Heaven and \*will return for His people

**Denials of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12)**

Professing “Christians” who deny the resurrection:

Theological Liberals – the “\_\_\_\_\_ theory”

Mystics – the “\_\_\_\_\_ theory”

Evangelicals – who believe in \_\_\_\_\_

**If There Was No Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:13-19)**

\_\_\_\_\_ was not raised – vs. 13

Paul, etc. are \_\_\_\_\_ witnesses – vs. 14-16

Your faith is \_\_\_\_\_ – vs. 17

The dead have \_\_\_\_\_ / are lost – vs. 18

We are to be most \_\_\_\_\_ – vs. 19

**Affirming the Truth of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)**

Jesus has been resurrected, and He will resurrect those who believe & follow Him

This will happen at His \_\_\_\_\_ – vs. 23f (Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4, etc.)

Jesus will rule and finally even \_\_\_\_\_ death – vs. 25f (Cf. Revelation 20)

Vs. 29-34 – The foolishness of living for Christ if there is no resurrection

**Life without The Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:29-34)**

If there is no resurrection, self \_\_\_\_\_ is foolish and hedonism & sinning make sense

## **The Nature of the Resurrection Body (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)**

It will be a real, \_\_\_\_\_ body, but not like the perishable one we have now.

1 John 3:2 – it will be like \_\_\_\_\_ body

After the resurrection, Jesus could be seen, be touched, \_\_\_\_\_, suddenly appear or disappear

## **The Confidence of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)**

Mortal & perishable will become \_\_\_\_\_ and imperishable - death will be swallowed up in victory

## **Conclusions**

*Death Meets His Master*, buy Elwood McQuaid

What you \_\_\_\_\_ about the Resurrection affects your life

Without hope of resurrection, hedonism & sin seems wise, but \_\_\_\_\_

Hope of resurrection gives confident assurance to faithfully \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord - 1 Cor. 15:58

## **KIDS KORNER**

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

**Young Children** - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch.

**Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up. 2) Count how many times "resurrection" is mentioned. Talk with your parents about the importance of Jesus' Resurrection in your life.

## **THINK ABOUT IT!**

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others.

From Friday Night: What is the context of John 10? Shepherding was common in ancient Israel and the Pharisees were supposed to know the Hebrew Scriptures, so why were they blind to what Jesus taught? Are there people like that today? How was a shepherd a "door" for the sheep? What is the salvation being offered? What are the differences between a good shepherd and a hireling? What is the relationship like between a shepherd and his sheep? Who are the "other sheep" in verse 16? Why does Jesus' authority over His own life and death show He is no mere human? Can people control when they die? Explain. Can people control what happens to them after they die? Explain. What evidence demonstrates that Jesus was in control of His death - even while on the cross? Jesus lay down His life for His sheep? How does that save people and how does a person become one of His sheep?

From Sunday Morning: What is the meaning of the word, "Easter"? Why did Paul write 1 Corinthians? What are the facts of the gospel? What is the proof of Jesus' Resurrection? What must you believe in order to be saved from your sin? Describe the Biblical Jesus. Why is the "swoon theory" of Jesus' resurrection absurd? Why is the "ghost" theory of Jesus' resurrection absurd? Why are reincarnation and resurrection mutually exclusive? What are the ramifications to you if Jesus was not raised from the dead? Why should the Christian be pitied if Jesus was not raised from the dead? What are the ramifications of Jesus' resurrection to you? When will the Christian be resurrected? When will Jesus abolish death? Where will he put it? What else will be put in the same place as death? What kind of life would you live if there was no resurrection? Why? What is the nature of the resurrection body? Describe what you do know? What would you like to know about it but cannot until you are resurrected? What is our confident assurance of resurrection? How does the resurrection affect your thoughts & feelings toward death? Since the resurrection is true, what kind of life should you live? Are you living that way? If not, what needs to change? When will you change it? How do we know that our work for the Lord is not in vain?