



RESURRECTION

OPENING COMMENT

Paul addressed many of the Corinthian church's weaknesses throughout this first letter, but he ends by addressing that which is of "First Importance". Even though the church was struggling with unity, sexual immorality, legal battles, improper worship, and a myriad of other issues, Paul sees their misunderstanding of the resurrection and its implications as something of primary importance. In his mind, if the Corinthian church does not get this right, then they should be pitied.

READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:1-58

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.



¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

²⁹ Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? ³⁰ Why are we in danger every hour? ³¹ I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ³² What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." ³³ Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." ³⁴ Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

³⁵ But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶ You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed



its own body. ³⁹ For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ⁴¹ 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.

⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 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. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 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 imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?"

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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



UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. After addressing many of the issues in the Corinthian church Paul turns back to the Gospel. What is revealed about Paul's understanding of the Gospel in verses 1 and 2?
2. Paul talks about the gospel as a process of "being saved" as being conditional. What is that condition?
3. What does Paul underline as of "First Importance"? (vs. 3-6)
4. Summarize these different sections: vs 12-19, vs. 20-26.
5. Verses 27 and 28 can seem a little confusing. Paul is clarifying what it means for God to place "all things" under Christ, while reminding the Corinthians that God is under no one (not even Christ). How does this section culminate?
6. In context, how would you understand vs. 29?¹
7. Summarize Paul's argument in vs. 35-49.
8. Paul's argument culminates with victory over death. When does this occur? (vs. 54)
9. What is the resulting encouragement in this life to the Corinthian church? (vs. 58)

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. How confident are you in the historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus?²
2. Paul insists that all things have been put under Christ's feet (vs. 27-28). How should this reality inform our attitude toward Christ?
3. In verses 30-34 Paul argues against the Corinthian belief that they should make the most of this life. At the root, this belief discounts the reality of a future hope with Christ and negates Paul's suffering for the Gospel throughout his missionary endeavors. Where have we followed the Corinthian mistake in our current context? How has that hindered our Christian witness?
4. How does Paul expounding on the resurrection body inform our understanding of heaven?
5. How does vs 50 inform Paul's instruction to the Corinthians in vs 58?

¹ In light of Paul's teaching in Romans 6:3-5 it is most likely that Paul is suggesting that there is no point in participating in Baptism at all if there is no resurrection. Another, more unlikely, interpretation is that Paul is referring to a Corinthian practice of being baptized for loved ones that did not do so before their death. This second interpretation is challenging because it is an erroneous practice that Paul would surely have taken issue with and corrected when he had the chance.

² This text is one of the foundational text used by scholars to corroborate the historical resurrection of Christ. See Gary Habermas and his minimal facts thesis where he uses this text and Galatians chapter one to show the historical reliability of the resurrection accounts.



6. How might a correct understanding of the resurrection (both Christ's and our own) work as a witness to those we work with, live beside, and live with?
7. How are you engaged in the work of the Lord?

BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Psalm 8:6 – Paul quotes this Psalm when talking about everything being placed under Christ.
2. Isaiah 22:13 – quoted by Paul to emphasize the futility of hedonism.
3. Isaiah 25:8 – Prophecy on the end of death. Quoted by Paul here in our passage.
4. Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 – The resurrection accounts of Christ.
5. Galatians 1:11 – 2:10 – Paul's historical account of his conversion and confirmation of his mission to spread the gospel to the gentiles.
6. Revelation 19-22 – a picture of Christ's return and the resulting fellowship with God and end of death.

CONCLUSION

Like Paul, our emphasis and motivation should be centered on the resurrection of Christ and, as a result, our future resurrection. Our response to this world and its ideas and longings, should be driven by our understanding of what the resurrection has accomplished. Our good works and worship should be motivated by the historical and future resurrection reality. Our understanding of death and its defeat should flavor our disposition towards this life and the sufferings we face. In short, the resurrection is of First Importance.

SHARE & PRAY

LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three-fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

