

## The Resurrection of Christ is Essential to Christian Faith and Hope

### 1 Corinthians 15:12-34

1 Corinthians 15:12-34: *“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? 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. 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. 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. 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? 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!” 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.*

### Background Notes

In our opening study of this great resurrection chapter, we emphasized that the Corinthian Christians didn’t doubt the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, because of their background in Greek philosophy and religious thought, some of them had doubts about the future bodily resurrection of the believer.

In order to deal with this problem, the apostle Paul used a very logical argument. If they believed in the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was fully human as well as fully God, why was the concept of the physical bodily resurrection of human beings be so hard to handle? That’s his point in verse 12. If God raised the Man, Jesus Christ, from the dead, then it’s logical that He can raise any person from the dead!

But the opposite was also logically true. If there is no such thing as the physical bodily resurrection of persons from the dead, then even Jesus Christ could not have been raised from the dead - because Jesus is a human being (v13).

Although Jesus is fully God, He is also fully human. And if Jesus was not resurrected – if He is still dead - then there is no solid foundation to the Christian faith!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The resurrection of Christ is essential to the Christian faith.

In verses 14-19, Paul listed six logical conclusions that we must come to if Christ is not risen from the dead. *“And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 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. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”*

Did you follow the six logical conclusions? For the sake of time, I'm reading excerpts from an essay I wrote some time ago about the six conclusions that Paul presents here:

- a. If Christ is not risen, our preaching is empty (v14). There is no reality behind the nice-sounding words. What authority do we have for even bothering to preach, “love your neighbor as yourself” - let alone the resurrection - if Christ is still dead? If Jesus is not living today, the message of the Bible is without authority. It's hollow. Our preaching is empty.
- b. If Christ is not risen, our faith is empty (v14). There is no foundation for our Christian faith if the resurrection of Jesus is a hoax. Pinning our destiny on the teachings and claims of a man who is dead is nothing more than wishful thinking. What guarantee do we have that there is any hope beyond the cemetery if the one who claims He can conquer death is in reality dead Himself?
- c. If Christ is not risen, we are false witnesses of God (v15). If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we are not just deluded religious fanatics who are playing church – we're downright liars! This is what we must conclude if there is no physical resurrection from the dead (v16).
- d. If Christ is not risen, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins (v17). Not only is our faith without foundation (v14), it is useless! What good is it? Does it give us salvation? No way! Not if the One who claimed He could take away our sins is still in a Jerusalem tomb. If there is no resurrection, there is no redemption and no reconciliation with God. We are still in our sins - guilty before a holy God.
- e. If Christ is not risen, those who have “fallen asleep” in Christ have perished (v18). If the resurrection is a sham, Christians who have died are forever lost. The word *perish* (v18) does not mean annihilation or extinction, but rather loss or ruin. It does not mean loss of being, but loss of *well-being*.
- f. If Christ is not risen, and if we only have hope in Christ during our earthly life, we are to be pitied more than everyone else (v19). Why? Because we have sacrificed, surrendered, suffered, labored, and hoped for nothing but an illusion. If Jesus is not alive today, we are superstitious fools. We're living in a dream world. This fantasy may give us some kind of peace of mind and hope in this life - but so what? As far as the apostle Paul is concerned, if there is no resurrection, the

most logical lifestyle would be to live it up and do your own thing! That's exactly what he says in verse 32: *"If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."* Without the resurrection of Jesus, dead Christians have perished (v18) and living Christians are to be pitied (v19).

[This whole essay - entitled "If Christ Had Not Risen" - can be found under "Devotions for Growing Christians" on our website ([www.growingchristians.org](http://www.growingchristians.org))]

Now comes the good news! *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep"*(v20). What a glorious relief! All six of those previous deductions are swept away with this one great truth! The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is proof and power of Christianity. The resurrection of Christ is essential to the Christian faith.

## 2. The resurrection of Christ is essential to the Christian hope.

At the end of verse 20, Paul taught that our resurrected Lord is the "first fruits" of those who have fallen asleep. As the early fruit is the promise of the entire harvest soon to come, so the resurrection of Christ is the guarantee that death has been conquered for every Christian. The empty tomb is the guarantee of the Christian's hope!

Verses 21-22 are not teaching universal salvation: *"For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."* Notice that *all* who are in Adam die. All descendants of Adam die because of sin. But it does *not* say that *all* shall be made alive in Christ. The proper meaning is that *all who are in Christ* shall be made alive.

The sequence of the wonderful events from the resurrection of Christ until the eternal state is revealed in verses 23-28: *"But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 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. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. 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. 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."* All of this is part of the Christian hope, which rests solidly on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As in the harvest, Christ is the "first fruits" of the resurrection from the dead. Then will come the resurrection of believers who have died, as the main part of the harvest. This will occur at the Rapture, as Paul will explain later in this chapter. Then will come the end of the harvest, when the Lord returns to this earth to set up His kingdom (v24). It may be that the resurrection of the Old Testament believers will occur at this point, along with resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs.

Verse 25 speaks of the reign of Christ during His thousand-year kingdom on this earth. Then comes the transition into the eternal state, with no more death (v26). The subordinate position that the eternal Son of God took at the time of the incarnation will continue throughout eternity (v26-27). Our resurrected Lord will remain fully God and fully Man forever. The resurrection of Christ is essential to the Christian hope.

## **Practical Application**

In verses 29-34, we have two brief practical applications

### **1. Let the obscure be subject to the clear.**

Verses 29 through 32: *“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? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 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!”*

What does the statement “baptized for the dead” mean in verse 29? We don’t know for sure - there are many interpretations of this phrase. It’s a very obscure scripture.

However, we **do** know what it **doesn’t** mean. It does **not** mean that you can save unbelievers who have died by being baptized for them. That would contradict the clear teaching of other scriptures.

So in the proper interpretation of Scripture, we must always compare Scripture with Scripture, and then interpret the obscure Scriptures in the light of the clear Scriptures. Let the obscure *be subject* to the clear.

### **2. Don’t endanger your spiritual health!**

Verses 33-34: *“Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits. Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”*

The bad or evil company in the church at Corinth was the false teachers. The sinful Corinthians were not getting rid of the false teachers, who denied the resurrection of the body and had no knowledge of God.

In the same way today, if we tolerate false teaching, we (and our churches) will be corrupted and infected. This is a biblical principle! It applies to all areas of life, and has plenty of application for all age groups. Be careful! Who you socialize with? Who are your close associates? What your church is teaching?

And be careful of your children’s spiritual health! Don’t let your kids hang out with bad company - check out their friends. Monitor their education - be aware of where their teachers are coming from and what they’re subtly teaching. Do what you can to keep your children and grandchildren from being infected with false philosophies and unbiblical worldviews. Don’t fail to communicate biblical values and a biblical worldview to them - by your words and by your lifestyle.

Don’t let bad company endanger your spiritual health!