

1 Corinthians 15 and the Resurrection Part 2 – If No Resurrection?

(1 Corinthians 15:12-20)

INTRODUCTION:

1. 1 Corinthians 15 is a chapter dedicated to the importance of the resurrection in the gospel of our salvation as well as in the life and hope of all Christians.
2. From the chapter itself we know at least some of the Corinthians had stopped believing in the message of the bodily resurrection. Why they had done so is a mystery!
 - A. Was it worldly influence?
 - i. The common view of the Greeks was that death liberated the soul *from* the body.
 - ii. This was likely the cause of the Greeks derision toward the gospel in Athens (Acts 17:32 – “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer....”).
 - B. Was it false teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus who Paul said taught “that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18)?
 - C. Was it a misunderstanding of the nature of the resurrection? Did they believe that the resurrection from death in sin one receives at baptism (Rom. 6:3-4) was all that there is?
3. Whatever the reason, it was fatal to their spiritual life and Paul had to address it aggressively to ensure that the Corinthians had not *believed in vain* (15:2).
4. To address this Paul presents certain consequences produced by rejecting the resurrection of the dead that I would like to address this morning, which I will present in three categories.

BODY:

I. If no resurrection, then no resurrected Christ:

- A. Text: 15:12-13 – “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, not even Christ has been raised”
- B. Paul first shows that to preach Christ’s resurrection is to preach the resurrection of the dead.
 1. Christ’s resurrection and our resurrection go hand in hand.
 - a. For on the one hand Paul declares that if it has been preached that Christ was raised, then how can anyone say the dead will not be raised (15:12).
 - b. One the other hand, if we will not be raised, **then Jesus has not been raised** (15:13).
 - i. Jesus was a man, a human (Phil. 2:7-8).
 - ii. If mankind is not raised, then Jesus the *man* is not raised.
 - c. So, the two events cannot be separated.
 2. If the dead are not raised, then the very purpose of Christ’s resurrection is lost. Jesus was resurrected so that we can be resurrected.
- C. Side note: Paul here makes a case for the authority of the gospel preached by the apostles.
 1. Paul argues that since the gospel message *states* that Jesus was raised from the dead, there is no basis, no authority, for one to teach there is no resurrection of the dead.
 2. We must believe and teach what the gospel *says*, nothing more, nothing less.
 3. Paul stressed this emphatically (Gal. 1:8-9 – “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”)

II. If no resurrection, then no gospel preaching:

- A. Text: 15:14-15 – “and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. ¹⁵ Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.”
- B. If Christ is not raised...
 1. The gospel message preached by the apostles is *vain, empty* (15:14).
 - a. *Every* word spoken by the apostles is meaningless, invalid, and without substance!
 - b. For, a gospel without Christ’s resurrection is powerless.
 - i. It cannot provide hope to free anyone from the prison of sin and death!
 - ii. Without that power and hope, **the gospel is no longer good news!**

2. If Jesus has not been raised, our faith produced by that gospel is vain, empty, worthless, as well (15:14).
 - a. This, of course, is the logical conclusion because biblical faith results from hearing the gospel preached (Rom. 10:17; Acts 8:12; 1 Cor. 1:21, etc.).
 - b. So, a gospel message that is a sham produces faith that is a sham!
 - c. Faith in a gospel that is a sham has far-reaching consequences.
 - i. All those of faith in the O.T. and Hebrews 11 who trusted God while the world opposed, persecuted, mistreated, and killed them, lived a wasted life of needless pain and suffering...*if the dead do not rise!*
 - ii. All those who have suffered and died for Jesus wasted the short life they had...*if the dead do not rise!*
- C. If there is no resurrection, the apostles are *false witnesses* who purposely preached a false and misleading message (15:15).
 1. Their message from the first centered on God raising Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:29-32 – “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. ³² This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.”).
 2. If Christ has not been raised, then the apostles **are** false witnesses.
 - a. For, a gospel without the resurrection makes the apostles unscrupulous liars worthy of death for their testimony!
 - b. For, the sin of bearing false witness against one’s neighbor was condemned as far back as the 10 commandments (Ex. 20:16).
 - c. But, if there is no resurrection, to preach that God raised Christ, as the apostles have done, was to bear false witness **against God!**
 - i. Paul is saying they had accused God of doing something He did not do!
 - ii. And that is not an enviable position to find oneself. For as Eli the Priest explained to his wicked sons (1 Sam. 2:25 – “If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?”...”).
 3. Thought: If the apostles were false witnesses, which means they continued to be so until their death, what gain was there in being so?
 - a. They were hounded, persecuted, rejected (sometimes even by those that had previously accepted the gospel), and eventually killed for their preaching!
 - b. Preaching the gospel was their ticket to earthly misery and pain, even a death warrant.
 - c. What could have possibly drawn them to begin proclaiming a lie, but more importantly, to continue to do so in the face of so much opposition and hardship?

III. If no resurrection, then no salvation:

- A. Text: 15:16-19 – “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”
- B. Rejecting the resurrection nullifies the value of faith (15:16-17).
 1. Faith in a dead Christ provides no hope whatsoever.
 - a. Without the resurrection, Jesus has suffered the same fate as all others have from the beginning—the prison of death!
 - b. Everything promised and hoped for in Christ is tied up in the resurrection!
 2. Without Christ’s resurrection, **we are still in your sins.**
 - a. All those times the apostles preached of Jesus “dying for our sins” meant absolutely nothing because without the resurrection it accomplished absolutely nothing.

- b. It is only faith in a resurrected Christ that can justify sinners (Rom. 4:23-25 – “Now not for his sake only was it written that it [righteousness] was credited to him,²⁴ but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who **believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,**²⁵ He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was **raised because of our justification.**”).
 - c. So, a dead Christ is nothing more than condemned man left in the grave to decay like everyone else. For us to be justified, Jesus has to be raised from the dead.
- C. No resurrection means all who have died before are lost forever (15:18).
- 1. One of the greatest blessings about the gospel is the hope it gives us concerning death.
 - a. To the faithless, the pagan, death is the end of it all, the undefeatable foe.
 - b. Christians, however, know that death is not the end, that its sting has been removed (15:55), that it is in fact gain for the faithful (Phil. 1:21).
 - 2. But without the resurrection, which would mean Christ has not been raised, we have no hope for anyone, including ourselves.
 - a. For, it is the Son of God, Jesus, that is supposed to call the dead from their graves (Jn. 5:25-29 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.²⁶ For just as the Father has life in Himself, **even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;**²⁷ and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which **all who are in the tombs will hear His voice,**²⁹ **and will come forth;** those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”)
 - b. How can the dead hear the Son’s voice if there is no voice, if the Son’s voice has been silenced in death?
- D. If there is no resurrection, we who have hoped in Christ are to be pitied above all others (15:19)!
- 1. If in this short life we have dedicated our lives—our thoughts, time, money, and actions—to a lie, we are foolish and deserving of much pity!
 - 2. For, if there is no *resurrection*, Christians have suffered, been mistreated, and killed for nothing, having wasted the short life we have here on false and fruitless promises!
 - 3. If the dead are not raised, then we need to stop living for Christ and others and live for ourselves—for all the joy we can get in this life, whatever that might be.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. What are we to take from Paul’s words?
 - A. Are they supposed to leave us questioning our faith in the resurrection and our service to Christ?
 - i. Of course not.
 - ii. The Spirit would never leave God’s people in such state.
 - B. The answer is that Christ has been raised (1 Cor. 15:20 – “But now Christ **has been raised from the dead, the first fruits** of those who are asleep.”)!
 - i. Jesus has been raised! It is a reality. It is the very hub of the gospel message.
 - ii. He was raised as the **first fruits**, the fruit picked first to be offered to God as an assurance that the rest of the harvest would follow (Lev. 23).
 - iii. Christ’s *bodily* resurrection to eternal life is the assurance of our resurrection to the same.
- 2. Does your life reflect the reality of the resurrection?
 - A. Do you live with the knowledge that life here is not all there is?
 - B. Do you understand that death is not the end?
 - C. Do you realize that one day you will be raised to face Christ’s judgement and the consequences of your deeds, whether they have been good or bad?
- 3. If you are a sinner, and you are if you have lived long enough in this world, it is imperative that you decide today to come to Jesus the resurrected Christ in F-R-C-Bp that you might receive forgiveness of your sins and the hope of the resurrection to life with God in heaven!
 - A. It is your only hope!
 - B. Will you come right now as we stand and sing?