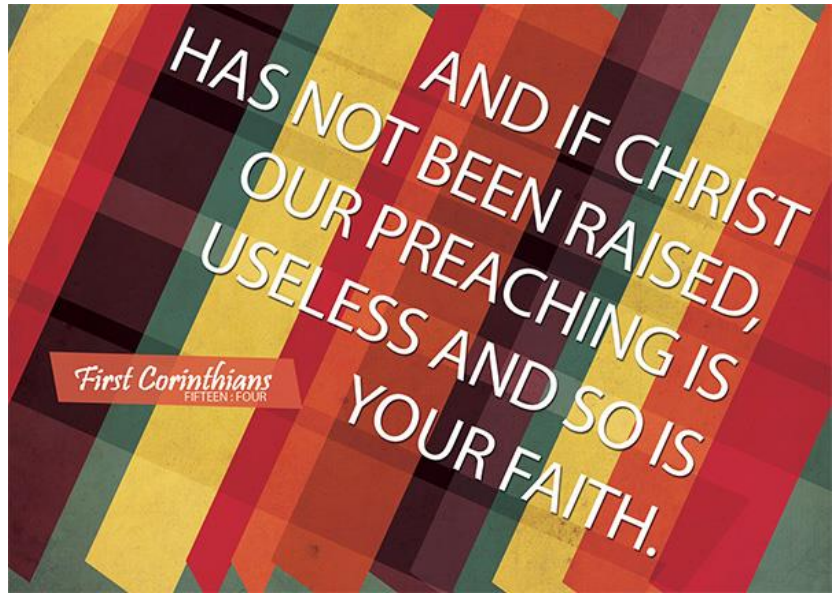


# 1 Corinthians, Chapter 15

From problems of disunity (chapters 1-4) immorality (chapters 5-6), the use of Christian freedom (chapters 7-10), and public worship (chapters 11-14), St. Paul turns his attention to a new subject on which the Corinthians need instruction – the doctrine of the resurrection. He lays the foundation for his discussion by first establishing the resurrection of Jesus Christ as attested by the Old Testament and living witnesses of the New Testament times. In two sections (verses 12-19 and 29-34), Paul dwells on absurdities that follow from the denial of the resurrection of the dead. He bases belief in the resurrection on Christ's



conquest of death as proclaimed by His resurrection and exaltation. He anticipates and answers the questions of how the dead are raised and with what kind of bodies. After a revelation-supported, declaration of faith in Christ's victory over death, he urges the Corinthians to maintain a steadfast, fruitful, and hopeful faith. **Read: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.**

1. St. Paul reminds the Corinthians of the Gospel he had preached to them in 1 Cor. 15:3-5. What are the main points of the Gospel as stated here?
2. St. Paul says that the Corinthians believed and took their stand on this Gospel. How does your life show that you also have, by God's grace, believed and taken your stand on this Gospel?
3. In addition to the prophecies in the Old Testament, St. Paul points to the testimony of eyewitnesses in declaring that Jesus rose from death. Why would the testimony of eyewitnesses be important in establishing that Jesus had risen from death?
4. St. Paul says that he was "untimely born" (1 Cor. 15:8), which probably refers both to how he became a Christian and how he became an apostle. Think about how you became a Christian, either by being baptized as a young person or an adult. Read **Ephesians 2:1-5**. Whether or not your conversion was similar to that of many others, in what respect do you think it might be said that every conversion is untimely or unnatural?
5. St. Paul says that everything he is has come about as the result of God's grace, God's unmerited favor. How does 1 Cor. 15:9-11 help explain grace?
6. Where in your own life do you find God's grace most clearly evident?

**Read: 1 Corinthians 15:12-34.**

7. Some of the Corinthian Christians questioned the resurrection of the dead. How does Paul summarize his argument for the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15:14-19?
8. If Christ had not been raised, what effect would that have had on your faith?
9. If Christ had not been raised, how would it affect your celebration of Easter?
10. St. Paul refers to Christ as the firstfruits (v. 20). **Leviticus 23:9-14** provides the background of this expression. In what sense is Christ called the “firstfruits” because of His resurrection?
11. St. Paul writes that Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. Then he writes that the last such enemy is death. When Christ comes again in His power and glory and raises all the dead, there will be no more dying; death will be a thing of the past. How is Christ now reigning until that even takes place?
  - a. Colossians 1:18
  - b. Colossians 3:15
  - c. Hebrews 8:1-2
12. Although Christ is God and is coequal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He placed Himself under God the Father to bring about our salvation (Philippians 2:1-11). How is Christ’s humbling Himself in this way an encouragement to you?

**Read: 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.**

13. St. Paul tells of what our bodies will be like after the resurrection.
  - a. What three comparisons does he use to illustrate our resurrected bodies?
  - b. What can we learn from 1 Cor. 15:36-38 regarding our bodies after the resurrection?
  - c. He returns to the comparison between Adam and Jesus that he first raised in 1 Cor. 22-23. What does he draw from this comparison in 1 Cor. 15:44b-49?
14. Since the natural, perishable body cannot inherit the kingdom of God, Christ will change our mortal bodies when He returns in glory at the end of time. What do we learn about this change in 1 Cor. 15:50-52?
15. St. Paul concludes this chapter by encouraging those whom he loves to stand firm and to give themselves fully to the Lord’s work. What is the connection between the resurrection of Christ and his words of encouragement in 1 Cor. 15:58?

16. Is it possible to be a Christian and not believe in the resurrection? Why?

**<sup>3</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. *What does this mean?***

A denial of any kind of resurrection also denies that Christ rose. If no flesh rises from the dead, then Easter didn't happen either. The consequence of denying Christ's resurrection, in turn, is that gospel preaching is vain and Christian faith is vain. St. Paul demonstrates that denying the doctrine of man's resurrection logically leads to denying the fundamental doctrine of Christ's resurrection. When that doctrine is lost, the entire message of salvation is lost. Deny one doctrine of Scripture, and you will, if you follow it out, deny other doctrines of Scripture as well, for Scripture is a web of truth.

**Closing Prayer: Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense (LSB 741)**

1 Jesus Christ, my sure defense  
And my Savior, now is living!  
Knowing this, my confidence  
Rests upon the hope here given,  
Though the night of death be fraught  
Still with many\_an anxious thought.

2 Jesus, my Redeemer, lives;  
Likewise I to life shall waken.  
He will bring me where He is;  
Shall my courage then be shaken?  
Shall I fear, or could the Head  
Rise and leave His members dead?

3 No, too closely I am bound  
By my hope to Christ forever;  
Faith's strong hand the Rock has found,  
Grasped it, and will leave it never;  
Even death now cannot part  
From its Lord the trusting heart.

4 I am flesh and must return  
To the dust, whence I am taken;  
But by faith I now discern  
That from death I shall awaken  
With my Savior to abide  
In His glory, at His side.

5 Glorified, I shall anew  
With this flesh then be enshrouded;  
In this body I shall view  
God, my Lord, with eyes unclouded;  
In this flesh I then shall see  
Jesus Christ eternally.

6 Then take comfort and rejoice,  
For His members Christ will cherish.  
Fear not, they will hear His voice;  
Dying, they will never perish;  
For the very grave is stirred  
When the trumpet's blast is heard.

7 Laugh to scorn the gloomy grave  
And at death no longer tremble;  
He, the Lord, who came to save  
Will at last His own assemble.  
They will go their Lord to meet,  
Treading death beneath their feet.

8 O, then, draw away your hearts  
From all pleasures base and hollow;  
Strive to share what He imparts  
While you here His footsteps follow.  
As you now still wait to rise,  
Fix your hearts beyond the skies! Amen.

**Sources:** God's Word for Today: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 1997), LifeLight: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 2007), Luther's Works (CPH, Fortress), Concordia Commentary: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 2000), People's Bible Commentary: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 1992).