

1 Corinthians 15:1–58

The Resurrection: The Heart of the Gospel and the Hope of Glory

Introduction: When the Resurrection Is Questioned

The church in Corinth struggled with many problems—division, immorality, pride, confusion about spiritual gifts, and distorted theology. One of the most serious errors was the claim by some that there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul addresses this last issue with urgency because the resurrection is not a side doctrine. It is the foundation of Christian faith.

If there is no resurrection, Christianity collapses. If Christ is not risen, there is no salvation, no forgiveness, no future hope. Paul therefore brings the Corinthians back to what matters most.

The Gospel That Saves (1 Corinthians 15:1–4)

Paul begins by restating the gospel itself:

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.”

Salvation is rooted in historical truth, not philosophy or religious sentiment.

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

The gospel has three essential components:

- Christ died for our sins
- He was buried, confirming His real death
- He rose again, proving victory over sin and death

The Scriptures Paul refers to are the Old Testament. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52–53 clearly describe the suffering and death of the Messiah. The resurrection “on the third day” is foreshadowed in events such as Isaac’s near-sacrifice in Genesis 22 and Jonah’s deliverance after three days.

Eyewitness Testimony to the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5–11)

Paul lists witnesses to the risen Christ:

“He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once... After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also.”

The resurrection was not a private vision or a legend that developed later. It was publicly witnessed. Many of those witnesses were still alive when Paul wrote, able to confirm the truth.

Paul then humbly reflects:

“For I am the least of the apostles... But by the grace of God I am what I am.”

Grace did not make Paul passive. It made him faithful:

“I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

Grace produces grateful obedience, not spiritual laziness.

If There Is No Resurrection, Faith Is Empty (1 Corinthians 15:12–19)

Paul presses the logic:

“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?”

The consequences are devastating:

- Preaching becomes meaningless
- Faith becomes useless
- Sin remains unforgiven
- The dead in Christ are lost
- Believers are the most miserable of all people

If Christ did not rise, Christianity is a tragic illusion.

Christ the Firstfruits of Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20–28)

Paul declares the truth triumphantly:

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

Adam introduced death through sin. Jesus introduced life through obedience.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

Christ’s resurrection guarantees the resurrection of those who belong to Him. Death is not the final word.

Paul describes God’s ultimate plan: Christ reigns until every enemy is defeated, including death itself. When that work is complete, the Son presents the perfected kingdom to the Father, and God’s righteous rule fills all creation.

The Meaning of “Baptism for the Dead” (1 Corinthians 15:29)

Paul mentions a strange Corinthian practice:

“Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all?”

Paul neither endorses nor commands this practice. He simply exposes the inconsistency of denying the resurrection while practicing rituals that assume it. This verse does **not** establish a doctrine or ordinance for the church. Scripture must be interpreted by clear teaching, not isolated references.

Why Suffer If There Is No Resurrection? (1 Corinthians 15:30–34)

Paul appeals to common sense:

“Why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?”

If there is no resurrection, sacrifice is foolish and suffering meaningless. Without resurrection hope, the logical philosophy becomes:

“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

Paul warns:

“Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.”

False doctrine always produces moral decay.

How Are the Dead Raised? (1 Corinthians 15:35–44)

Paul uses nature as an illustration. A seed must die before new life emerges. The body that grows is different from the seed that was planted.

“So also is the resurrection of the dead.”

The present body:

- Sown in corruption
- Sown in weakness
- Sown in dishonor

The resurrection body:

- Raised in incorruption
- Raised in power
- Raised in glory

There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. The present body is suited for earth; the resurrection body is suited for eternity.

From Adam to Christ (1 Corinthians 15:45–49)

Paul contrasts two representatives of humanity:

“The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”

We bear Adam's image now—weak, mortal, earthly. But believers will bear Christ's image—glorious, eternal, heavenly.

The Mystery of Transformation (1 Corinthians 15:50–57)

Paul reveals a mystery:

“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

This transformation happens instantly:

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.”

Mortality gives way to immortality. Death is defeated forever:

“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees final victory.

The Call to Faithful Living (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Paul closes with practical exhortation:

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

Nothing done for Christ is wasted. Faithful obedience carries eternal value.

Practical Application for Believers

- Anchor your faith in the resurrection, not circumstances.
- Let grace motivate faithful service, not complacency.
- Live with eternal perspective; death is not the end.
- Remain steadfast, knowing God remembers every act of faith.

A Challenge to Believers

If Christ is risen, then casual Christianity makes no sense. Half-hearted devotion contradicts resurrection power. The risen Lord calls His people to bold faith, sacrificial love, and unwavering hope.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Jesus Christ died for your sins. He shed His blood on the cross so you could be forgiven. He rose from the dead, proving that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

If you turn to Him, trust Him, and surrender your life to Him, He will give you forgiveness now and resurrection life forever.

The tomb is empty. Death is defeated. Hope is real. Come to Jesus Christ today—and live.