

1 Corinthians 15:1-34: Why You Must Believe in the Resurrection

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Introduction

- https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/37855338/michael-jordan-flu-game-sneakers-auctioned-138-million - The kind of story that inspires us - someone overcoming tremendous odds to bring about a tremendous victory.
- The story of Jesus is infinitely better than the story of Michael Jordan leading his team to victory in spite of terrible sickness.
- Jesus led us to victory by overcoming death. The reality of the resurrection is the greatest victory in human history because it paves the way for your resurrection.
- If you are lacking in hope, [1 Cor. 15](#) is for you. If you are beat down by life, [1 Cor. 15](#) is for you. If you are discouraged, [1 Cor. 15](#) for you. If you are struggling with purpose, [1 Cor. 15](#) is for you.
- The resurrection of Jesus is NOT something to think about only on Easter Sunday. The resurrection of Jesus is the defining doctrine of our faith that we need to reflect on often. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, there would be no Christianity.
- We are coming to the climatic conclusion of [1 Cor. 15](#), and in Paul's concluding words, he focuses us on the resurrection of Jesus. This is the most extensive teaching about the resurrection in the NT, and it is life changing.
- It is essential that you believe in the resurrection. I want to show you three reasons why you must believe in the resurrection.

You must believe the resurrection because of the evidence for the resurrection.

- Paul has written about many issues in 1 Corinthians, but the issue of the resurrection is most important. We might have doctrinal disagreements in the church (e.g., tongues, eschatology, etc., but we cannot disagree about the resurrection of Jesus.) In these first few verses, Paul reminds the church of the evidence of the resurrection.
- You were saved because of the resurrection. (vs. 1-2) The Corinthian believers did not doubt the resurrection of Jesus. That's not the issue Paul is addressing in these verses. The church stood on the resurrection - in a culture where they were persecuted for their faith, they did not waver in their belief of the resurrected Lord. The resurrection saved them, and us, from sin and death. We will be in the eternal presence of God some day because of the resurrection.
- The resurrection is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets. (vs. 3-4) The Old Testament promised a Messiah that would be far more than an earthly ruler. The OT promised a Messiah who would save our souls by dying an atoning death and then rising from the dead ([Isaiah 53:5, 11](#)). vs. 3-4 a succinct summary of the Gospel. Jesus was buried. He was really dead, and He really rose on the third day. It's a simple, concise message, but it's this simple, concise message that changes lives.
- The resurrection was verified by eyewitnesses. Paul reminded the believers that the resurrection was not a fanciful myth. In the various temples, the Corinthians heard lots of myths about various gods, but the resurrection of Jesus was not a myth. It was a historical reality. 1 Corinthians was likely written in the early 50s A.D., around 20 years after resurrection. If true, there were still people alive who witnessed the resurrection. As if Paul is saying, "Go talk to them. Go talk to Peter. You know him. Let him tell you."

- Not only were there eyewitnesses to the resurrection, these were eyewitnesses who were willing to die for the resurrected Lord. Would you die for something that you didn't believe? The apostles died as martyrs. Further, for over 2,000 years, the church has given testimony to the resurrection. 2,000 years later lives are still being changed by the resurrected Lord.
- vs. 9-11 - Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus ([Acts 9](#)). Paul giving his testimony. He had been transformed by the resurrected Lord, and even though he was not one of the original 12, he had been so changed by the resurrected Lord that he saw himself as someone who labored even harder than the twelve. He was willing to go to the ends of the earth with the Gospel.
- **You don't lack in evidence for the resurrection.** Paul gives just a small sampling of evidence. If we had time, we could talk much longer about evidence for the resurrection. Evidence is not the issue.
- **But, you may lack in faith.** For many, even with the staring us in the faith, we don't want to believe. Why? You're not convinced that the resurrected life Jesus offers is worth it. You think that what this world offers is better than what Jesus offers.

You must believe because the resurrection guarantees your redemption.

- **vs. 12-13** - Paul gets to the issue at Corinth. It wasn't that the believers in Corinth doubted the resurrection of Jesus. They absolutely believed that Jesus rose from the dead, but some in the church didn't believe that they would rise from the dead.
- To some, it didn't make sense. It was foolish to think that there dead bodies would some day come out of the ground. Perhaps their souls would live on, but resurrected bodies? They didn't believe that.

- Paul's logic: if you don't believe that God can resurrect your body from the dead, then you also can't believe that Jesus rose from the dead. After all, Jesus had a physical body that died. And, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, your Christian faith is absolutely pointless because the resurrection of Jesus is the defining doctrine of the Christian faith.
- vs. 14-18 - Paul helps the Corinthian believers to see how futile their faith would be without the resurrection. Without the resurrection:
 - There's no point in sharing the Gospel because there is no Gospel (vs. 13, 15). No point in international missions, sharing with our neighbors, calling people out of sin, etc.
 - Walking with Jesus is pointless (vs. 15, 17). If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then He didn't accomplish anything. He's just like any other person. He may have been a great teacher, but he would have had no real power to deliver us from anything if He had not risen from the dead.
 - We are still in our sins (vs. 17). If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then He did not defeat sin. With no resurrection, sin has the last word. Sin deals the blow of death. But, since Jesus rose, sin does not have the final word. Jesus does! And the final word is that you are forgiven, and you can have life - real life, resurrected life.
 - We are to be pitied (vs. 18). To the Corinthians: if no resurrection, then you believed a lie. How pitiful is that!
 - There's no hope for those who have already died (vs. 18). Without the resurrection no hope or assurance for future life with Christ - our dead bodies would just rot in the ground. This miserable, broken world would be all there is. Praise God this world is not all there is!
- **Our entire faith depends on the resurrection.** If there's no resurrection, there's no point to anything we do as the church, and there's no point to your life. You have no real purpose. Your suffering is

for no reason. There's no joy beyond the temporary stuff of this life. There's nothing to look forward to after this life. BUT... since Christ has risen, you have real redemption. Your sins really are forgiven. You really are in a relationship with God, and you really have a living hope - a resurrected life beyond this life.

- **Our Gospel witness depends on the resurrection of Jesus.** Many of you want to see change in people you love. You want to see people you love free from addictions, marital struggles, financial hardships, etc. AA, Dave Ramsey, or a marriage conference is not the ultimate hope for hurting people. Jesus is. If there is no resurrection, there's no real life change. The resurrection is the proof that Jesus can bring life out of death.

You must believe because the resurrection of Jesus paves the way for your resurrection.

- THIS is the point that Paul is driving home. Paul wants us to be assured that resurrection is coming for us.
- vs. 20 - Jesus is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Firstfruits = an agricultural term. When that first tomato comes in on your tomato plant, you know more are coming. Jesus is the firstfruits of future resurrection. More resurrection is coming. Your resurrection is coming.
- vs. 22 - Jesus reversed the curse of Adam. Through Adam, death came into the world. We all die because we all followed in the footsteps of Adam. We all sinned just like Adam sinned. Adam brought death to all, but Jesus brings life to all who believe. Just like sin came through one man, now resurrection comes through one man: Jesus.
- vs. 23 - 28 - Paul tells us when the resurrection will happen: at the return of Jesus. We long for the return of Jesus! On the day of the return of Jesus, everyone will finally see that He is the risen Lord who is King of all.

- On that day, Jesus will “hand over the kingdom to the Father.” OT sacrificial offerings: there was a firstfruits offering that you gave to the Lord in Thanksgiving that symbolized that everything you had belonged to God ([Leviticus 23:9-14](#)). There will come a day when God the Son will give the ultimate “firstfruits” offering to God the Father. The Son will give the Father every person that belongs to Him because of the faith of the believers.
- This will happen after Jesus has subdued all of His enemies (vs 27 quotes [Psalm 110:1](#)). While Jesus defeated Satan at the cross, you know that Satan is not going down without a fight. There will come a day when Satan’s reign of terror will come to an end. Right now, Satan seeks to kill and destroy, but a day will come when he will no longer destroy because Jesus will abolish the last enemy: death itself. It will not be possible for death to destroy. On that day, Jesus will have fulfilled the plan of the Father, and Jesus will bring honor to His Father - the One who has given all things to Christ. God the Father will be known as supreme over all.
- The church at Corinth saw the enemies of Jesus. They saw the worship of false gods, they experienced persecution at the hands of those who rejected Jesus. They longed for the day that the enemies of Jesus would ultimately be defeated. You long for that day too, and that day is coming.
- vs. 29: Baptism of the dead?(Over 40 different interpretations of this verse!) Paul not endorsing it - but obviously happening at Corinth in hopes that baptizing for the dead would help them in the afterlife. Paul just using it as an example. If no resurrection for the dead, why would you do it? Paul is not saying we should baptize for the dead. We obviously shouldn’t. (OR baptized on account of dead- their baptism is a result of the influence of believers who are now deceased with a desire to join them in the next life.)

- vs. 30-32: If no resurrection, why would Paul and other Jesus followers put their lives at risk? If the dead are not raised, they should simply drink and be merry (quote from [Isaiah 22:13](#)).
- vs. 33-34: Be careful about your theological associations. Paul warned the believers to be careful about being around people that denied the resurrection. Why would you put yourself in a position to be around people who scoff your faith?
- Paul arguing that you can believe that not only Christ was raised from the dead but that you will be raised. That's the great hope we have in life. Ask yourself two questions this morning as you think about this passage:
- **How much time do you waste worrying about this life?** We should be concerned with this life, but we shouldn't be consumed by this life. If the resurrection is true, then it's also true that the worst pain in this life is only temporary. How often do you get consumed by your temporary troubles instead of being consumed with what God has for you?
- **How can you spend more time investing in eternal life?** No investment you make into the Kingdom of God is a wasted investment. (Paul knew that.) Your investment into your own spiritual growth is not a waste. Your investment into Kingdom ministry is not a waste.
- Do you believe in the resurrected Lord? Today, God desires a relationship with you. He proves it by sending His Son to die and rise again for you. Turn to Him by faith today.