

David Guzik :: Study Guide for 1 Corinthians 15

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND OUR RESURRECTION

A. The truth of Jesus' resurrection.

1. (1Co 15:1-2) Preface to the proclamation of Paul's gospel.

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.

a. **The gospel which I preached to you:** In [verses three and four](#), Paul will describe the *content* of the gospel. Here, he describes how the gospel can be of *benefit* to man. The gospel is only of benefit if it is **received** and if one will **stand** in it.

i. The word **gospel** means, "good news." As the word was used in ancient times, it didn't have to describe the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. It could be used of any good news. But the best news ever is that we can be saved from the punishment we deserve from God because of what Jesus did for us.

ii. The Corinthian Christians first **received** the gospel. The message of the gospel must first be believed and embraced. As Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, *For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.* ([1 Thessalonians 2:13](#))

iii. The Corinthian Christians also did **stand** in the gospel. Despite all their problems with carnality, lack of understanding, strife, divisions, immorality, and weird spirituality, they still stood for the gospel. This is in contrast to the Galatian church, who was quickly being moved away to another gospel ([Galatians 1:6](#)).

b. **By which you are also saved, if you hold fast that word I preached to you:** The Corinthian Christians had done well (they **received** the gospel). They were doing well (they did **stand** in the gospel). But they had to *continue to do well*, and **hold fast** the gospel Paul preached to them. Every Christian must take seriously their responsibility to not only have a good past, and a good present, but to determine to have a great future with the Lord also.

i. **Hold fast** also implies there were some people or some things which might want to snatch the true gospel away from the Corinthian Christians. All the more, this is why they had to hold on!

c. **Unless you believed in vain:** If the Corinthian Christians did not continue to **hold fast**, one day they might let go of the gospel. And if one lets go of the gospel, all their previous belief won't do them any good. It was as if they had **believed in vain**.

2. (1Co 15:3-4) The content of the gospel Paul preached.

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.

a. **For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received:** Paul did not make up this gospel. He **received** it (and not from man, but from Jesus Christ, according to Galatians 1:11-12), and he **delivered it**. This is not "Paul's gospel" in the sense that he created it or fashioned it; it is "Paul's gospel" in the sense that he personally believes it and spreads it.

i. "Notice that the preacher does not make the gospel. If he makes it, it is not worth your having. Originality in preaching, if it be originality in the statement of doctrine, is falsehood. We are not makers and inventors; we are repeaters, we tell the message we have received." (Spurgeon)

b. As Paul describes the gospel in the following verses, it is important to notice that this gospel is not insightful teaching or good advice. At the core of the gospel are things that *happened*, actual, real, historical events. The gospel isn't a matter of religious opinions, platitudes, or fairy tales, but about real historical events.

i. "Our religion is not based upon opinions, but upon facts. We hear persons sometimes saying, 'Those are your views, and these are ours.' Whatever your 'views' may be, is a small matter; what are the facts of the case?" (Spurgeon)

c. **Christ died:** The death of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the center of the gospel. Though the idea of glorying in the death of a Savior was foolishness to the world, it is salvation to those who will believe.

i. How did Jesus die? The Roman government executed Him, by one of the most cruel and excruciating forms of capital punishment ever devised, crucifixion.

ii. "Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering." (Edwards) What exactly was it like to be crucified? In days the New Testament was first written, the practice needed no explanation. But we would do well to appreciate just what happened when someone was crucified.

iii. The victim's back would first be torn open by the scourging, and then the clotting blood would be ripped open again when the clothes were torn off the victim. When he

was thrown on the ground to nail his hands to the crossbeam, the wounds would again be torn open and contaminated with dirt. Then, as he hung on the cross, with each breath, the painful wounds on the back would scrape against the rough wood of the upright beam and be further aggravated.

iv. When the nail was driven through the wrists, it would sever the large median nerve. This stimulated nerve would produce excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms, and could result in a claw-like grip in the victim's hands.

v. Beyond the excruciating pain, the major effect of crucifixion was to inhibit normal breathing. The weight of the body, pulling down on the arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the respiratory muscles in an inhalation state, and hinder exhalation. The lack of adequate respiration would result in severe muscle cramps, which would hinder breathing even further. To get a good breath, one would have to push against the feet, and flex the elbows, pulling from the shoulders. Putting the weight of the body on the feet would produce searing pain, and flexing of the elbows would twist the hands hanging on the nails. Lifting the body for a breath would also painfully scrape the back against the rough wooden post. Each effort to get a proper breath would be agonizing, exhausting, and lead to a sooner death.

vi. "Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals." (Edwards)

vii. Death from crucifixion could come from many sources: acute shock from blood loss; being too exhausted to breathe any longer; dehydration; stress-induced heart attack, or congestive heart failure leading to a cardiac rupture. If the victim did not die quickly enough, the legs would be broken, and the victim would soon be unable to breathe.

viii. How bad was crucifixion? We get our English word *excruciating* from the Roman word "out of the cross." "Consider how heinous sin must be in the sight of God, when it requires such a sacrifice!" (Clarke)

ix. However, we never speak of the physical sufferings of Jesus to make us feel sorry for Jesus, as if He needed our pity. Save your pity for those who reject the complete work of Jesus on the cross at Calvary; for those preachers who do not have the heart of Paul in [1 Corinthians 1:23](#), when he proclaimed the center of the Christian message: *we preach Christ crucified*.

d. **Christ died for our sins**: What does it mean that Jesus **died for our sins**? How does His death do anything for our sins? Many noble men and women have died horrible deaths for righteous causes through the centuries. How does the death of Jesus do anything **for our sins**?

i. At some point before He died, before the veil was torn in two, before He cried out *it is finished*, an awesome spiritual transaction took place - the Father laid upon Jesus all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and He bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God for us.

ii. As horrible as the physical suffering of Jesus was, this spiritual suffering - the act of being judged for sin in our place - was what Jesus really dreaded about the cross; this was the *cup* - the cup of God's righteous wrath - that He trembled at drinking (Luke 22:39-46; Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15). On the cross, Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God, who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father's fury, so we would not have to drink that cup.

iii. Isaiah 53:3-5 puts it powerfully: *He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*

iv. "Reader! *one drop* of this cup would bear down thy soul to endless ruin; and these agonies would annihilate the universe. He suffered *alone*: for the people there was none with him; because his sufferings were to make an atonement for the sins of the world: and in the work of redemption he had no helper." (Clarke)

v. And when that was accomplished (who knows how long it could have lasted?), there was no reason for Jesus to "hang around" on the cross - His work was done, He could go on now.

e. **For our sins:** Our sins were *responsible* for the death of Jesus. He did not die for a political cause, or as an enemy of the state, or for someone's envy. Jesus died **for our sins**. Jesus did not die as a mere martyr for a cause.

f. **He was buried:** We don't often think of the burial of Jesus as part of the gospel, but it is. The burial of Jesus is important for many reasons. It is proof positive that He really died, because you don't bury someone unless they are really dead, and Jesus' death was confirmed at the cross before He was taken down to be buried (John 19:31-37). Jesus' burial is also important because it fulfilled the Scriptures which declared, *And they made His grave with the wicked; but with the rich at His death* (Isaiah 53:9). Jesus was buried in the tomb of a rich man (Matthew 27:57-60).

g. **He rose again:** This truth is essential to the gospel. Why, if Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and remove our guilt, why is the resurrection of Jesus so important?

i. Although Jesus bore the full wrath of God on the cross, *as if* He were a guilty sinner, guilty of *all* our sin, even being made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21), He Himself did not become a sinner. Even the act of taking our sin was an act of holy, giving love for us - so that Jesus Himself did not become a sinner, even though He bore the full *guilt* of our sin. This is the gospel message! That Jesus took our punishment for sin on the cross, and remained a perfect Savior through the whole ordeal - proved by His resurrection.

ii. For this reason, He remained the *Holy One* (Acts 2:27, 31-32), even in His death. Since it was incomprehensible that God's Holy One could be bound by death, the resurrection was absolutely inevitable.

iii. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is not some "add on" to a "more important" work on the cross. If the cross is the *payment* for our sins, the empty tomb is the *receipt*, showing that the perfect Son of God made perfect payment for our sins. The payment itself is of little good without the receipt! This is why the resurrection of Jesus was such a prominent theme in the evangelistic preaching of the early church (Acts 2:24, 3:15, 4:10, 13:30-39).

iv. The cross was a time of victorious death, a negative triumph. Sin was defeated, but nothing positive was put in its place until the resurrection. The resurrection showed that Jesus did not succumb to the inevitable result of sin. The resurrection is proof of His conquest.

h. **He rose again the third day:** The fact that Jesus **rose again the third day** is part of the gospel. Jesus was a unique case. He did not or will not rise at some "general" resurrection of the dead. Instead He rose **the third day** after His death. This also demonstrates Jesus' credibility, because He proclaimed He would rise three days after His death (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19).

i. Because of the reference to **the third day**, and because in Matthew 12:40 Jesus refers to *three days and three nights*, some have thought it necessary for Jesus to spend at least 72 hours in the grave. This upsets most chronologies of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and is unnecessary, being unaware of the use of ancient figures of speech. Eleazar ben Azariah (around the year 100 A.D.) said: "A day and a night make a whole day, and a portion of a whole day is reckoned as a whole day." This demonstrates how in Jesus' day, the phrase *three days and three nights* did not necessarily mean a 72-hour period, but a period including at least the portions of three days and three nights.

ii. "According to Jewish reckoning, 'three days' would include parts of Friday afternoon, all of Saturday, and Sunday morning." (Mare)

i. **According to the Scriptures:** Because this idea is so important, Paul repeats it twice in these two verses. Jesus' work for us didn't just come out of thin air; it was planned from all eternity and described prophetically in the Scriptures.

- i. The plan for His death is described in places like [Psalm 22](#) and [Isaiah 53](#).
- ii. The plan for His resurrection is described in places like [Hosea 6:2](#), [Jonah 1:17](#), [Psalm 16:10](#), as well as the scenario in [Genesis 22](#), where Isaac, as a type of Christ, is "raised" on the third day of their journey, at the beginning of which Abraham had reckoned his son dead.
- iii. Admittedly, the Old Testament understanding of resurrection was shadowy; many passages look to a bleak existence after death ([Psalms 6:5](#), [30:9](#), [39:13](#), [88:10-12](#), [115:17](#); [Isaiah 38:18](#), [Ecclesiastes 9:4-5](#), [10](#)); yet there are other passages of hope and confidence after this life ([Job 19:25-27](#); [Psalm 16:9-11](#); [73:24](#)).
- iv. Remember though, that it was Jesus, not the Old Testament, which *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel* ([2 Timothy 1:10](#)).

3. ([1Co 15:5-8](#)) Concrete evidence of Jesus' resurrection.

And that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

a. No one saw the actual resurrection of Jesus. No one was present in the tomb with Him when His body transformed into a resurrection body. If someone were there, perhaps in a brilliant flash of light, they would have seen the dead body of Jesus transformed, and virtually vaporize out of the grave clothes. Perhaps it would be something along the lines of the way a body was transported on the old Star Trek series; the molecules would alter, and the person could pass through a solid object, and re-assemble themselves into a solid person. We know that Jesus could do this after His resurrection; He could miraculously appear in a room that had all the doors locked and the windows shut. Yet He was no phantom; He had a real flesh and bone body.

i. Though no one saw the actual resurrection of Jesus, many people saw the resurrected Jesus. Paul now calls forth these witnesses to the resurrection, to establish beyond all controversy that Jesus was raised from the dead in a resurrection body.

b. **He was seen by Cephas:** Jesus made a special resurrection appearance to Peter ([Luke 24:34](#)). We are not told much about this visit, but we can assume there was some special need for comfort and restoration in Peter that Jesus ministered to.

c. **Then by the twelve:** This probably refers to the first meeting Jesus had with His assembled disciples, mentioned in [Mark 16:14](#), [Luke 24:36-43](#), and [John 20:19-25](#). This was the meeting where Jesus appeared in the room with the doors and windows shut, and breathed on the disciples, giving them the Holy Spirit.

i. When Paul writes **by the twelve**, he uses the term as a figurative title. At the first meeting of the resurrected Jesus with His disciples, Thomas was absent and Judas had killed himself. But they still were known as **the twelve**.

ii. "Perhaps the term *twelve* is used here *merely* to point out the *society of the apostles*, who, though at this time they were only *eleven*, were still called the *twelve*, because this was their *original number*." (Clarke)

d. The meeting of Jesus with **over five hundred brethren at once** isn't detailed in the gospels, but is suggested by [Matthew 28:10, 16-17](#). During the time after His resurrection, but before His Ascension, Jesus seemed to meet with His followers on many different occasions.

i. **Of whom the great part remain to the present** is compelling testimony of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. Paul is saying, "Go ask these people who saw the resurrected Jesus. There are not a handful of self-deluded souls; there are literally hundreds who saw the resurrected Jesus with their own eyes. They know Jesus rose from the dead."

ii. There really were five hundred followers of Jesus before His Ascension, though [Acts 1:15](#) mentions only the 120 who were in the Jerusalem area. Jesus met with these 500 followers in the region of Galilee. They *knew* Jesus rose from the dead.

iii. We sometimes sing: "You ask me how I know He lives; He lives, He lives inside my heart." But that is not the best way to prove Jesus lives. He lives because the historical evidence *demand*s we believe in the resurrection of Jesus. If we can believe *anything* in history, we can believe the reliable, confirmed testimony of these eyewitnesses. Jesus rose from the dead.

iv. Through the years, there have been many objections suggested to the resurrection of Jesus. Some say He didn't die at all, but just "swooned" on the cross and revived in the tomb. Others say He really died, but His body was stolen. Still others suggest He really died, but His desperate followers hallucinated His resurrection. A plain, simple understanding of these evidences of the resurrection of Jesus destroys all of these theories, and shows they take far more faith to believe than the Biblical account.

v. "I suppose, brethren, that we may have persons arise, who will doubt whether there was ever such a man as Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte; and when they do, - when all reliable history is flung to the winds, - then, but not till then, may they begin to question whether Jesus Christ rose from the dead, for this historical fact is attested by more witnesses than almost any other fact that stands on record in history, whether sacred or profane." (Spurgeon)

e. **He was seen by James**: This would be James, the brother of Jesus, who is seen as a prominent leader in the church in [Acts 15](#). Significantly, in the gospels, Jesus' brothers are

hostile to Him and His mission ([John 7:3-5](#)). Yet in the first chapter of Acts, Jesus' brothers are among the followers of Jesus ([Acts 1:14](#)). What happened to change them? Certainly, this meeting of the resurrected Jesus with His brother **James** had some influence.

f. **By all the apostles**: Refers to a few different meetings, such as in [John 20:26-31](#), [21:1-25](#), [Matthew 28:16-20](#), and [Luke 24:44-49](#). There may have been many more meetings, which are not described in the gospels. These meetings were important in proving to the disciples that Jesus was who He said He was. At these meetings He ate with them, comforted them, commanded them to preach the gospel, and told them to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit after His Ascension.

g. **Last of all He was seen by me also**: By saying **as by one born out of due time**, Paul may be saying that he did not have a three year "gestation" period as the other apostles; he came on the scene suddenly.

i. Others think Paul uses the term *ektroma* (which means, "abortion, stillbirth, miscarriage"; it speaks of an untimely birth with "freakish" associations) because the Corinthians were so consistently depreciating his stature as an apostle. They considered him truly a *paulus* ("little") apostle, but Paul will glory in his weakness.

h. The cumulative testimony of these witnesses is overwhelming. Not only did they see Jesus after His death, but they saw Him in a manner which revolutionized their faith and trust in Him.

i. The changed character of the apostles, and their willingness to die for the testimony of the resurrection, eliminate fraud as an explanation of the empty tomb.

ii. Why didn't Paul mention the appearances of Jesus to the women at the tomb as evidence of Jesus' resurrection? Probably because a woman's testimony was not received in law courts. It was true, and it was good evidence for the apostles at that time, but it was not evidence the world of that day would accept, because it came from a woman.

4. ([1Co 15:9-11](#)) Paul's testimony of grace.

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me*. Therefore, whether *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

a. **For I am the least of the apostles**: Paul would argue hard for his apostolic credentials, because he knew he had to be respected as an apostle. But he had no desire to compete with other apostles for the "Most Valuable Apostle" award. He would gladly say, **I am the least of the apostles**. In fact, Paul believed he was **not worthy to be called an apostle**.

i. For some, this would just be spiritual sounding talk, which showed more pride than humility. But Paul meant it. He regarded himself as **the least of the apostles** because he **persecuted the church of God**. Paul always remembered how he had sinned against Jesus' church. He knew that he was forgiven; yet he remembered his sin.

ii. Paul felt - rightly so - his sins were worse because he was responsible for the death, imprisonment, and suffering of Christians, whom he persecuted before his life was changed by Jesus ([Acts 8:3](#); [9:1-2](#), [Galatians 1:13](#), [Philippians 3:6](#), [1 Timothy 1:15](#)).

iii. "This was literally *true* in reference to his being chosen *last*, and chosen not in the *number* of the *twelve*, but as an *extra* apostle. How much pains to some men take to make the apostle *contradict* himself, by attempting to show that he was the very *greatest* of the apostles, though he calls himself the *least!*" (Clarke)

iv. There are worse kinds of sin; sins that harm God's people are especially grievous in God's eyes. Are you guilty, now or in the past, of harming God's people? "[God] remembers jests and scoffs leveled at his little ones, and he bids those who indulge in them to take heed. You had better offend a king than one of the Lord's little ones." (Spurgeon)

b. **But by the grace of God I am what I am:** Paul gave **the grace of God** all the credit for the change in His life. He was a changed man, forgiven, cleansed, full of love when once he was full of hate. He knew this was not his own accomplishment, but it was the work of the grace of God in him.

i. The grace that saves us also changes us. Grace changed Paul. You can't receive the grace of God without being changed by it. The changes don't come all at once, and the changes are not complete until we pass to the next life, but we are indeed changed.

ii. "You see that the mark of a child of God is that by the grace of God he is what he is; what do *you* know about the grace of God? 'Well, I attend a place of worship regularly.' But what do you know about *the grace of God*? 'I have always been an upright, honest, truthful, respectable man.' I am glad to hear it; but what do you know about the grace of God?" (Spurgeon)

iii. "'By the grace of God' we not only are what we are, but we also remain what we are. We should long ago have ruined ourselves, and damned ourselves, if Christ had not kept us by his almighty grace." (Spurgeon)

c. **His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all:** Though grace made Paul was he was, Paul still **labored** with grace, so that it wouldn't be given **in vain**.

i. Conceivably, if Paul would not have worked as hard as he did, the grace of God would still have been given to him, but in some measure it would have been given **in vain**.

Grace, by definition, is given freely. But how we receive grace will help to determine how effective the gift of grace is.

ii. Grace isn't given because of any works, past, present or promised; yet it is given to *encourage* work, not to say work is not necessary. God doesn't want us to receive His grace and become passive.

iii. Paul knew that God gives His grace, we work hard, and the work of God is done. We work in a partnership with God, not because He needs us, but because He wants us to share in His work. Paul understood this principle well, writing, *For we are God's fellow workers* (1 Corinthians 3:9).

iv. Many Christians struggle at this very point. Is God supposed to do it or am I supposed to do it? The answer is, "Yes!" God does it and we do it. Trust God, rely on Him, *and then get to work and work as hard as you can!* That is how we see the work of God accomplished.

v. If I neglect my end of the partnership, God's grace doesn't accomplish all that it might, and is therefore given **in vain**. Later, in 2 Corinthians 6:1, Paul pleads that we might not receive the grace of God in vain: *We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.*

d. **I labored more abundantly than they all:** Paul here is comparing himself to the other apostles. He was not shy about saying he worked harder than any of the other apostles. This is not to say the other apostles were lazy (although some of them may have been), but Paul was an exceptionally hard worker.

e. **Yet not it, but the grace of God which was with me:** Paul was honest enough to know and say that he worked hard. He was also humble enough to know that even his hard work was the work of God's grace in him.

i. If you were to ask Paul, "Paul, do you work hard as an apostle?" He wouldn't respond with that falsely spiritual, "Oh no, I don't do anything. It's all the work of God's grace." Paul would say, "You bet I work hard. In fact, I work harder than any other apostle." But then he would not dwell on it, but simply have the inward knowledge that it was all the work of God's grace in him.

d. **Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed:** Whether Paul or one of the other apostles brought the message, the result was the same. They preached the resurrection of Jesus, and the early Christians believed the resurrection of Jesus.

i. The verb **we preach** is in the present continuous tense; Paul is saying that he and the other apostles *habitually* preach this message.

B. The relevance of the resurrection of Jesus.

1. (1Co 15:12-13) The resurrection of Jesus proves there is a resurrection.

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? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

a. Why has Paul so carefully proved the resurrection of Jesus? It wasn't because the Corinthian Christians believed Jesus did not rise from the dead. In fact, he makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 15:11 that they *did* believe it: **so we preach and so you believed**. Then why was it important?

i. The Corinthian Christians were not denying Jesus' resurrection; they were denying *our* resurrection. They were influenced either by Greek philosophy (which considered the resurrection undesirable, thinking the state of "pure spirit" superior), or by the thinking of the Sadducees (which thought the world beyond to be just wishful thinking). The bottom line is that the Corinthian Christians believed we lived forever, but not in resurrected bodies.

ii. Remember that *resurrection* is not merely life after death. It is the continuation of life after death in glorified bodies, which are our present bodies in a glorified state.

b. **How do some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?** The Corinthian Christians just were not thinking carefully. Some of them were denying the reality of the resurrection, while believing in a resurrected Jesus. Paul shows how the resurrection of Jesus not only proves His own resurrection, but it proves the *principle* of resurrection.

c. **If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen:** If these few Corinthians were right about the resurrection, then Jesus was still dead!

2. (1Co 15:14-19) What if there is no resurrection?

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.

a. **If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is in vain:** If there is no resurrection, then Jesus is not risen, and Paul and the other apostles have been preaching **in vain**. There is no real, resurrected Jesus whom they are serving.

b. Worse, **if Christ is not risen**, then **we are found false witnesses of God**. If there is no principle of resurrection, and if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then the apostles are *liars*.

c. Worse yet, **if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!** If there is no principle resurrection, then Jesus did not rise from the dead. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then death has power over Him and has defeated Him. If death has power over Jesus, He is not God. If Jesus is not God, He cannot offer a complete sacrifice for sins. If Jesus cannot offer a complete sacrifice for sins, my sins are not completely paid for before God. If my sins are not completely paid for before God, then I am still in my sins! If Jesus is not risen, He is unable to save.

d. Worse still, **if Christ is not risen**, then **those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished**. If there is no principle of resurrection, then the dead in Christ are gone forever.

e. Worst of all, **if Christ is not risen**, then **in this life only we have hope in Christ**, and we **are of all men the most pitiable**. If there is no principle of resurrection, then *the whole Christian life is a pitiful joke!* If we don't have something beyond this life to look forward to, why hassle with the problems being a Christian?

i. It is true that being a Christian solves many problems; but it also brings many others. Paul, (like the preacher in the book of Ecclesiastes) saw little ultimate value in life if there is only this life to live.

ii. It is true that knowing Jesus and loving Jesus can make this life better. But sometimes it will make life worse. We can appreciate some of the hardship Paul lived with, when we understand what hem means when he writes, **If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable**. Paul thought, "with all I have endured for Jesus Christ, if there is not a resurrection and a heavenly reward beyond this life, I am a fool to be pitied." Can we, in our super-comfortable age, say the same thing? Trapp says Paul can write this "Because none out of hell ever suffered more than the saints have done."

iii. Paul only applies this principle to *Christians*. He writes, **we are of all men the most pitiable**. For the unbeliever, this life alone gives them any chance at pleasure, and whatever happiness they can find now is all the happiness they will ever know. How different for the Christian!

f. See how important the truth of the resurrection is! This is not some side doctrine, to be believed if someone likes it. If you do not believe Jesus Christ rose from the dead in a resurrection body the way the Bible says He did, *you have no right to call yourself a Christian*. This is one of the *essential* doctrines of the Christian faith.

i. "Everything depends on our retaining a firm hold on this doctrine in particular; for if this one totters and no longer counts, all the others will lose their value and validity." (Martin Luther)

ii. "If Jesus rose, then this gospel is what it professes to be; if He rose not from the dead, then it is all deceit and delusion." (Spurgeon)

g. When you know what rests on the resurrection, you know why **if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.**

i. The *divinity* of Jesus rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([Romans 1:4](#)).

ii. The *sovereignty* of Jesus rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([Romans 14:9](#)).

iii. Our *justification* rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([Romans 4:25](#)).

iv. Our *regeneration* rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([1 Peter 1:3](#)).

v. Our *ultimate resurrection* rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([Romans 8:11](#)).

vi. "The fact is, that the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the blessings, from regeneration onward to our eternal glory, and binds them together." (Spurgeon)

3. ([1Co 15:20-23](#)) The resurrection of Jesus was the firstfruit of our resurrection.

But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 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. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming.

a. **Now Christ is risen from the dead:** In the previous part of the chapter, Paul has demonstrated beyond all doubt that Jesus rose from the dead, and the importance of the fact of His resurrection. Here, he simply states the fact: **now Christ is risen from the dead.**

b. **And has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep:** **Firstfruits** is the Greek word *aparche*. In the Septuagint, this word is used for the offering of firstfruits and in secular usage the word was used for an entrance fee.

i. Jesus was the **firstfruits** of our resurrection in both senses. In the Old Testament, the offering of firstfruits brought one sheaf of grain to represent and anticipate the rest of the harvest ([Leviticus 23:9-14](#)). The resurrection of Jesus *represents* our resurrection, because *if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection* ([Romans 6:5](#)). The resurrection of Jesus also *anticipates* our resurrection, because we will be raised with a body like His. "As in the firstfruits offered to God, the Jews were assured of God's blessing on the whole harvest; so by the resurrection of Christ, our resurrection is insured." (Trapp)

ii. The Feast of Firstfruits was observed on the day after the Sabbath following Passover ([Leviticus 23:9-14](#)). Significantly, Jesus rose from the dead on the exact day of the Feast of Firstfruits, the day after the Sabbath following the Passover.

iii. The offering at the Feast of Firstfruits was a bloodless grain offering ([Leviticus 2](#)). No atoning sacrifice was necessary, because the Passover lamb had just been sacrificed. This corresponds perfectly with the resurrection of Jesus, because His death ended the need for sacrifice, having provided a perfect and complete atonement.

iv. The resurrection of Jesus is also the **firstfruits** of our resurrection in the sense that He is our "entrance fee" to resurrection. Jesus paid our admission to the resurrection!

c. **By man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead:** Here, Paul is communicated the same ideas found in [Romans 5:12-21](#). Adam (**by man**) is one "head" of the human race, and all mankind was brought under death by Adam. The *second Adam*, Jesus Christ (**by Man**) is the other head of the human race, and Jesus brings resurrection to all that are "under" His headship.

i. "Men admire the man who is first to discover a new country ... Oh, then, sing it in songs, sound it with voice of trumpet to the ends of the earth - Christ is the first who returned from the jaws of death to tell of immortality and light." (Spurgeon)

d. **In Christ, all shall be made alive:** Does this mean everyone is resurrected? Yes and no. All will be resurrected in the sense that they will receive a resurrection body, and live forever. Jesus plainly spoke of both *the resurrection of life* and *the resurrection of condemnation* ([John 5:29](#)). So, all are resurrected, but not all will receive *the resurrection of life*. Some will receive the *resurrection of condemnation*, and live forever in a resurrected body in hell.

i. "But though this text doth not prove the general resurrection, (being only intended of believers, that are members of Christ,) yet it doth not oppose it. But that the *all* here mentioned is no more than all believers, appeareth not only from the term *in Christ* in this verse, but from the whole following discourse; which is only concerning the resurrection of believers to life, not that of the wicked to eternal condemnation." (Poole)

e. **Each one in his own order:** It would be strange, and inappropriate, for us to receive resurrection before Jesus. So, He receives resurrection first as **the firstfruits**, and then we receive it **afterward ... at His coming**.

i. The **coming** of Jesus described here uses the Greek word *parousia*. This word can simply mean a person's presence (as in [Philippians 2:12](#), *not as in my presence only*). But when it is used of Jesus, it has special reference to His Second Coming (as in [Matthew 24:27](#)).

ii. If Jesus is **the firstfruits** of our resurrection, does that mean He was the first one raised from the dead? What about the widow's son in the days of Elijah ([1 Kings 17:17-24](#)) and Lazarus ([John 11:38-44](#)) and Eutychus ([Acts 20:7-12](#)), among others? Each of these were resuscitated from death, but none of them were *resurrected*. Each of them were raised in the same body they died in, and were raised from the dead

to eventually die again. Resurrection isn't just living again; it is living again in a new body, based on our old body, perfectly suited for life in eternity. Jesus was not the first one brought back from the dead, but He was the first one *resurrected*.

4. (1Co 15:24-28) The resurrection of Jesus leads to the resolution of all things.

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.

a. **Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father.** In [Ephesians 1:10](#), Paul reveals God's eternal purpose in history: *that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth - in Him*. Paul wrote of the "gathering together" of all things in Jesus, or of the "summing up" of all things in Him. Here, in 1 Corinthians, he looks forward to the time when all things are resolved in Jesus Christ and He presents it all to God the Father, giving glory to the God who authored this eternal plan of the ages.

b. **When He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power:** For now, God has granted a measure of **rule** and **authority** and **power** to men, to Satan, and even to death. But all that is temporary. Jesus will take His rightful place as *the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords* ([1 Timothy 6:15](#)). After the resurrection, God will finally resolve all of history according to His will.

i. "In raising Christ from the dead God has set in motion a chain of events that must culminate in the final destruction of death and thus of God's being once again, as in eternity past, 'all in all.'" (Fee)

c. **He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet:** Paul here refers to the 1,000 year reign of Jesus described in [Revelation 20:1-6](#). After that time, there will be a final, Satan inspired rebellion ([Revelation 20:7-10](#)), which Jesus will crush and finally and forever **put all enemies under His feet**.

i. The expression **under His feet** is an Old Testament "figure for total conquest." (Mare)

d. **The last enemy that will be destroyed is death:** Death will be present during the millennial reign of Jesus ([Revelation 20:9](#); [Isaiah 65:20](#)). But afterward, death will be abolished. It is truly the **last enemy that will be destroyed**.

i. Paul reminds us of something important: death is an **enemy**. When Jesus came upon the tomb of Lazarus, He *groaned in the spirit and was troubled*, and *Jesus wept* ([John 11:33, 35](#)). Why? Not simply because Lazarus was dead, for Jesus would raise

him shortly. Instead, Jesus was troubled at death itself. It was an **enemy**. Today, some are told to embrace death as a friend, but that is not Biblical thinking. Death is a defeated enemy because of the work of Jesus, an enemy that will one day **be destroyed**, and therefore an enemy we need not fear. But death is an enemy nonetheless.

ii. The destruction of death was shown at the resurrection of Jesus, when *the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many* ([Matthew 27:52-53](#)). "When at the Redeemer's resurrection many of the saints arose and came out of their graves into the holy city then was the crucified Lord proclaimed to be victorious over death and the grave ... these were but preliminary skirmishes and mere foreshadowings of the grand victory by which death was overthrown." (Spurgeon)

iii. If death is destroyed, why do Christians die? "Death since Jesus died is not a penal infliction upon the children of God: as such he has abolished it, and it can never be enforced. Why die the saints then? Why, because their bodies must be changed ere they can enter heaven ... Saints die not now, but they are dissolved and depart." (Spurgeon)

iv. "Death is not the worst of enemies; death is an enemy, but he is much to be preferred to our other adversaries. It were better to die a thousand times than to sin. To be tried by death is nothing compared to being tempted by the devil. The mere physical pains connected with dissolution are comparative trifles compared with the hideous grief which is caused by sin and the burden which a sense of guilt causes to the soul." (Spurgeon)

v. "Notice, that death is the last enemy to each individual Christian and the last to be destroyed ... Brother, do not dispute the appointed order, but let the last be last. I have known a brother wanting to vanquish death long before he died. But, brother, you do not want dying grace till dying moments. What would be the good of dying grace while you are yet alive? A boat will only be needful when you reach a river. Ask for living grace, and glorify Christ thereby, and then you shall have dying grace when dying time comes." (Spurgeon)

e. **But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted:** Paul reminds us that the Son will not someday be superior to the Father. The relationship of *Father* to *Son* will be eternal: **the Son Himself will also be subject to Him.**

i. Those who deny the deity of Jesus say this verse proves their point. They take the submission of God the Son as "proof" that He must not be equal in deity to God the Father. But the submission of Jesus to the Father doesn't come from any inherent inferiority. Instead, it comes from the administrative order of the Godhead. A *Son* is always in submission to His *Father*, even if both are "equal" in substance.

ii. "The son of a king may be the equal of his father in every attribute of his nature, though officially inferior. So the eternal Son of God may be coequal with the Father, though officially subordinate." (Hodge)

iii. "The Son's subjection to his Father, which is mentioned in this place, doth no where prove his inequality of essence or power with his Father; it only signifieth what was spoken before, that Christ should deliver up his mediatory kingdom to his Father." (Poole)

iv. Simply put, God the Father will always be God the *Father*, and God the Son will always be God the *Son*, and for all eternity they will continue to relate to each other as *Father* and *Son*.

f. **That God may be all in all:** Here, Paul refers to God the Son's desire to glorify God the Father through all eternity. Importantly, each person of the Trinity desires to glorify another person of the Trinity. The Son glorifies the Father ([John 17:4](#)), the Father glorifies the Son ([John 17:5](#)), and the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son ([John 16:14](#)). This aspect of the nature of God is something God wants us to walk in, having a concern for the glory of others, and not our own ([Philippians 2:3-4](#)).

5. ([1Co 15:29-32](#)) More reasons to believe in the principle of resurrection.

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!"

a. **Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all?** What was being **baptized for the dead**? It is a mysterious passage, and there have been more than thirty different attempts to interpret it.

i. The plain meaning of the original language is that some people are being baptized on behalf of those who have died. Paul's point is "If there is no resurrection, why are they doing this? What is the point if there is no life after death?"

ii. Significantly, Paul does not say, "we baptize for the dead," but asks **what will they do who are baptized for the dead**, and **Why then are they baptized for the dead?** Therefore, Paul is referring to a pagan custom of vicarious baptism for the dead. "Paul simply mentions the superstitious custom without approving it and uses it to fortify his argument that there is a resurrection from the dead." (Mare)

iii. Paul certainly does not *approve* of the practice; he merely says that if there is no resurrection, why would the custom take place? The Mormon practice of baptism for the dead is neither Scriptural nor sensible.

iv. Paul's point is plain: "The pagans even believe in the resurrection because they baptize for the dead. The pagans have the sense to believe in resurrection, but some of you Corinthian Christians do not!"

v. Clarke said of this verse, "This is certainly the most difficult verse in the New Testament; for, notwithstanding the greatest and wisest of men have laboured to explain it, there are to this day nearly as many different interpretations of it as there are interpreters."

b. **And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?** If there were no resurrection, why would Paul place his life in jeopardy for the gospel? The way Paul lived his life all-out for the gospel was evidence of the truth of the resurrection.

i. Most of us are so concerned about living comfortable lives here on earth that our lives give no evidence of the resurrection. Paul lived such a committed Christian life, people could look at him and say, "There is no way he would live like that unless there was a reward waiting for him in heaven."

c. **I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily:** Paul will boast a little here. His boasting is both **in you** (that is, in the Corinthian Christians) and **in Christ Jesus**. What will Paul boast about? That he does **die daily**.

i. Vincent on **I die daily**: "I am in constant peril of my life." Paul's life was lived so on the edge for Jesus Christ that he could say **I die daily**. His life was always on the line; there were always people out to kill him. An example of this is in [Acts 23:12-13](#), when more than forty men took a vow that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. With enemies like that, no wonder Paul could say, **I die daily!** And this is his boast!

ii. It is important to understand that when Paul says, **I die daily**, he is not speaking of the spiritual identification he has with the death of Jesus. He is not speaking of the spiritual putting to death of the flesh. He is writing of the constant imminent danger to his physical life. It is important and useful for a Christian to daily reckon themselves dead to sin with Jesus Christ (as in [Romans 6:11](#), *Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*). But to use this statement **I die daily** to support that truth is wrong, because in context Paul is writing about the danger to his physical life.

iii. How can we die daily? Spurgeon says how in a sermon titled *Dying Daily*. First, by carefully considering every day the certainty of death. Next, to put your soul, by faith, through the whole process of death. Third, hold this world with a loose hand. Fourth, seriously test your hope and experience every day. Next, come every day, just as you did at conversion, to the cross of Jesus, as a poor guilty sinner. Sixth, live in such a manner that you would not be ashamed to die at any moment. Finally, have all your affairs in order so that you are ready to die.

d. **I have fought with beasts at Ephesus:** The book of Acts does not record an instance when Paul faced wild animals in an arena. It may simply be unrecorded, or Paul may be using the term **beasts** figuratively, in reference to his violent and wild human opponents (as he faced at Ephesus in [Acts 19:21-41](#)).

i. Paul faced all of this for the sake of the resurrection of the dead, both Jesus' resurrection and the believer's. Though at the time of his writing 1 Corinthians it was still future, Paul's whole arrest, imprisonment, and journey to Rome as done for the sake of the resurrection of the dead ([Acts 23:6](#), [24:15](#) and [21](#)).

e. **If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."** Paul's third proof for the resurrection in this section is also compelling. If there is no resurrection, then there is no future judgment to consider. Then life is lived only "under the sun," as is considered in Ecclesiastes.

i. The ancient Egyptians, at the end of a big banquet, would often escort a wooden image of a man in a coffin around the tables, telling people to have a good time now, because you'll be dead sooner than you think. If there is no resurrection, and no future judgment, then we may as well have the best time we can right now - and Paul was a fool for putting himself in such discomfort and danger for the sake of the gospel.

6. ([1Co 15:33-34](#)) Knowing the truth about our resurrection should affect the way we live.

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.

a. **Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."** Where did the Corinthian Christians get their strange ideas about the resurrection, ideas Paul has spent this chapter trying to correct? They got this bad thinking by associating either with Jews who did not believe in the resurrection (such as the Sadducees) or by associating with pagan, Greek philosophical types, who did not believe in the resurrection ([Acts 17:31-32](#)). It was bad enough that these associations had affected their thinking on an important matter like the resurrection, but this **evil company** could corrupt far more.

i. This speaks to the vital need described in [Romans 12:2](#): *do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*. The Corinthians, by their keeping of **evil company**, were being *conformed to this world*, and they needed to be *transformed by the renewing of your mind*. Christians must let the Word of God be their guide for thinking, not the **evil company** of this world.

ii. Through much of this book, Paul has dealt with the moral problems of the Corinthians: envy, divisions, pride, immorality, greed, irreverence, and selfishness. How much of this

has come in because of their keeping of **evil company**? Their problem with the resurrection was an indicator of the source of their moral problems also.

b. **Evil company corrupts good habits**: This is not a quotation from the Old Testament, or even from the words of Jesus. Paul quotes from an ancient, secular comedy play, *Thais*, written by Menander. Menander, though a pagan, was telling the truth and Paul (more properly, the Holy Spirit!) had no problem quoting a pagan who did tell the truth at a particular point.

c. **Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God**: For a Christian to resist God's process of transformation by the renewing of our minds is to neglect the knowledge of God. To remain willfully ignorant of the truth is **sin**.

C. The nature of the resurrected body.

1. (1Co 15:35) What is the nature of the resurrected body?

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"

a. **Someone will say**: Paul presents what may either be an honest question, or a foolish question, depending on how it is asked.

b. **How are the dead raised up?** This is a question Paul doesn't really answer in the following verses, because the answer is obvious. God raises the dead. As Paul said to Agrippa in Acts 26:8, *Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?*

c. **And with what body do they come?** This may be a foolish question (*Foolish one*, 1 Corinthians 15:36), but it is a question Paul will answer.

2. (1Co 15:36-38) The analogy of the seed.

Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain; perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

a. **Foolish one**: In the literal Greek, it is even stronger: *Fools!* "A hard knot must have a hard wedge, a dead heart a rousing reproof." (Trapp)

b. **What you sow**: Here, Paul says our bodies are like "seeds" which "grow" into resurrection bodies. When you bury the body of a believer, you are "sowing" a "seed" which will come out of the earth as a resurrection body.

i. "Truly it is never a pleasant sound, that rattle of the clay upon the coffin-lid, 'Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes,' nor to the farmer, for its own sake, would it be a very pleasant thing to put his grain into the dull cold earth; yet I trow no farmer ever weeps when he sows his seed." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Dear friends, if such be death - if it be but a sowing, let us have done with all faithless, hopeless, graceless sorrow ... 'Our family circle has been broken,' say you. Yes, but only broken that it may be re-formed. You have lost a dear friend: yes, but only lost that friend that you may find him again, and find more than you lost. They are not lost; they are sown." (Spurgeon)

c. **You do not sow that body that shall be ... But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each see its own body:** When you plant a wheat seed, a big wheat seed does not come up. Instead, a stalk of wheat comes up. So, even though our resurrection bodies come from our present bodies, we should not expect that they will be the same bodies or just "improved" bodies.

i. Some mock the idea of resurrection. They say, "Here is a Christian's body, lying in a grave with no casket. The atoms in the body are taken up in grass and eaten by a steer, and the steer is slaughtered and another man eats the meat and takes the atom into his body. Where does that atom go in the resurrection?" But God does not need every atom of a man's body to make a resurrection body. Since every cell of my body contains the DNA blueprint to make a whole new body, God can no doubt take one atom of my dead body and make a glorious resurrection body out of that old blueprint.

3. (1Co 15:39-41) The analogy of living and heavenly bodies.

All flesh *is* not the same flesh, but *there is one kind of flesh* of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds. *There are* also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. *There is* one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for *one star* differs from *another star* in glory.

a. **All flesh is not the same flesh:** There are all different kinds of "bodies" in God's creation. But there are **also celestial bodies**. Our resurrection body will be a heavenly (**celestial**) body, suited for life in heaven, not only life on this earth.

b. **All flesh is not the same flesh** explains why animals do not rise in the resurrection. "Man's flesh only is informed by a reasonable and immortal soul, not so the flesh of other creatures: and hence the difference." (Trapp)

c. There are different **bodies** or structures in the universe (**sun ... moon ... stars**), and each is created with its own **glory**, and is suited to its own particular environment and needs. While our present bodies are adapted for the environment of time and earth, our resurrection bodies will be adapted for the environment of eternity and heaven.

d. **There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory:** many have taken this to mean there

will be different degrees of glory for believers in heaven. "Whether there are degrees of glory, as it seems probable, so we shall certainly know, when we come to heaven." (Trapp)

4. (1Co 15:42-44) Comparison of the two kinds of bodies.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. *The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

a. Paul gives four contrasts between our present body and our future resurrection body: corruptible against incorruptible, dishonor against glory, weakness against power, and natural against spiritual. On all counts, the resurrection body wins!

i. What happens to the dead bodies of Christians before the resurrection? "As in the mean time their very dust is precious; the dead bodies consumed are not so destroyed, but that there is a substance preserved by a secret influence proceeding from Christ as a head. Hence they are said to be dead in Christ, who by rotting refineth them." (Trapp)

b. **Raised in incorruption ... raised in glory ... raised in power:** Our resurrection body will be glorious!

i. "There is nothing more uncomely, unlovely, and loathsome than a dead body; but it will not be so when it shall be raised again, then it shall be a beautiful, comely body. We shall rise in a full and perfect age, (as is generally thought,) and without those defects and deformities which may here make our bodies appear unlovely." (Poole)

ii. "Three glimpses of the body's glory were seen, in Moses' face, in Christ's transfiguration, and in Stephen's countenance." (Trapp)

iii. "The resurrection will cure all infirmities. At Straford-le-Bow were burned in Queen Mary's days, at one stake, a lame man and a blind man. The lame man after he was chained, casting away his crutch, bade the blind man be of good comfort, for death would heal them both; and so they patiently suffered." (Trapp)

iv. "Luther saith the body shall move up and down like thought. Augustine saith, they shall move to any place they will, as soon as they will ... Whether they shall have that power as to toss the greatest mountains like a ball, yea, to shake the whole earth, at their pleasure, as Anselm and Luther think, I have not to say." (Trapp)

v. "The righteous are put into their graves all weary and worn; but as such they will not rise. They go there with the furrowed brow, the hollowed cheek, the wrinkled skin; they shall wake up in beauty and glory." (Spurgeon)

5. (1Co 15:45-49) The two Adams and their bodies.

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. *As was* the man of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and *as is* the heavenly Man, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

- a. The first perfect man, **Adam**, gave us one kind of body; the second perfect man (Jesus, the **last Adam**) can give us another kind of body. He is **a life-giving spirit**.
- b. We have all borne the image of the first **Adam**, and those who put their trust in the **last Adam** will also bear His resurrection image. From the first **Adam**, we all are **made of dust**, but from the **last Adam** we can be made **heavenly**. For believers, the promise is sure: **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man**.
 - i. **Philippians 3:21** repeats Paul's theme: *Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*
- c. Since we will **bear the image of the heavenly Man**, the best example we have of what a resurrection body will be like is to see what Jesus' resurrection body was like.
 - i. It was material and could eat (**Luke 24:39-43**), yet it was not bound by the laws of nature (**Luke 24:31; 36-37**).

6. (**1Co 15:50-53**) The need for the resurrection.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

- a. **Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**: Paul is not saying, "material things can not inherit the kingdom of God," because Jesus' resurrection body was a material body. **Flesh and blood**, in this context, means "our present bodies." Jesus' resurrection body was not some "pure spirit" body, but a material body described as *flesh and bones* (**Luke 24:39**) instead of **flesh and blood**. This may seem like a small distinction to us, but it must be an important distinction to God.
- b. **Nor does corruption inherit incorruption**: The word **corruption** does not mean moral or ethical corruption, but physical, material corruption. These bodies which are subject to sickness, disease, injury, and one-day decay, are unsuited to heaven. **Corruption** cannot **inherit incorruption**.

c. **I tell you a mystery:** A **mystery** is simply a thing to be understood by spiritual, rather than by merely human perception. Paul will tell the Corinthian Christians something they could not have known by reason or research. They could not have known this unless God revealed it to them.

d. **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed:** Since **sleep** is a softer way of describing the death of a believer, Paul is telling us that not all Christians will die, but there will be a "final generation" who will be transformed into resurrection bodies at the return of Jesus before they ever face death.

i. Does **we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed** mean that Paul predicted Jesus would come in his lifetime? Barclay says yes, and simply points out that Paul was dead wrong here. But Hodge recognizes that Paul isn't necessarily referring to only believers of *his* day with **all**; it is a word that properly embraces all believers, over all time. Secondly, it was right and proper for Paul to live as if the coming of Jesus was imminent, though he did not in fact know when Jesus would return. When writing Scripture, Paul was infallible, but not omniscient.

ii. "The plain fact is that Paul did not know when these events would take place, and nowhere does he claim to know. So when he says *we* he means 'we believers.'" (Morris)

e. **In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet ... the dead will be raised incorruptable, and we shall be changed:** In a single moment, Jesus will gather His people (both dead and on the earth) to Himself, for resurrection.

i. Paul expresses the same idea again: *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18)* This remarkable, instant, gathering of Christians unto Jesus in the clouds has been called *the rapture*, after the Latin word for *caught up*.

ii. There will come a day, when in God's eternal plan, He gives those dead in the Lord their resurrection bodies, and then in an instant He gathers all His people to meet Jesus in the air. All the redeemed on the earth at that time will rise up to meet the Lord in the clouds, and will receive their resurrection bodies.

iii. What of the dead in Christ before that day? Are they lying in the grave, in some kind of soul sleep or suspended animation? No. Paul made it clear that to be *absent from the body* means *to be present with the Lord*. (2 Corinthians 5:8) Either the present dead in Christ are with the Lord in a spiritual body, awaiting their final resurrection body; or,

because of the nature of timeless eternity, they have received their resurrection bodies already because they live in the eternal "now."

f. **At the last trumpet:** What is the **last trumpet**? Those who believe Jesus gathers His people after He has poured out His wrath on a Jesus-rejecting world sometimes argue that it is the last trumpet of judgment, cited in [Revelation 11:15-19](#). But this is not necessarily the case at all.

i. The **last trumpet** may not refer to the last trumpet of the seven trumpets of Revelation at all, but simply refer to the **last trumpet** believers hear on this earth.

ii. This **last trumpet** may be connected with the *trumpet of God* in [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#), but not with the trumpets of angels in [Revelation 11](#). A distinction may be made between the trumpet of an angel and the trump of God.

iii. Ironside says that the **last trumpet** was a figure of speech that came from the Roman military, when they would break camp. The first trumpet meant, "strike the tents and prepare to leave." The second trumpet meant, "fall into line." The third and last trumpet meant "march away." The **last trumpet** Paul speaks of describes the Christian's "marching orders" at the rapture.

iv. Chuck Smith points to a grammatical construction that would be different if this trumpet were the trumpet of [Revelation 11](#).

v. "This, as well as all the rest of the peculiar phraseology of this chapter, is merely *Jewish*, and we must go to the Jewish writers to know what is intended. On this subject, the *rabbins* use the very same expression. Thus *Rabbi Akiba*: 'How shall the holy blessed God raise the dead? We are taught that God has a *trumpet* a thousand ells long, according to the ell of God: this trumpet he shall *blow*, so that the sound of it shall extend from one extremity of the earth to the other. At the *first* blast the *earth* shall be shaken; at the *second*, the *dust* shall be separated; at the *third*, the *bones* shall be gathered together; at the *fourth*, the *members* shall *wax warm*; at the *fifth*, the *heads* shall be covered with *skin*; at the *sixth*, the *souls* shall be *rejoined* to their *bodies*; at the *seventh*, all shall *revive* and stand *clothed*.'" (Clarke)

g. **So this corruptible must put on incorruption:** Resurrection is a **must** for the Christian's destiny. In light of all this, how could the Corinthian Christians let go of such an important truth?

7. ([1Co 15:54-57](#)) Resurrection is the final defeat of death.

So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

a. **Death is swallowed up in victory:** A resurrected body is not a resuscitated corpse. It is a new order of life that will never die again. Death is defeated by resurrection.

i. Freud was *wrong* when he said: "And finally there is the painful riddle of death, for which no remedy at all has yet been found, nor probably ever will be." Compare that with Paul's triumphant declaration, **Death is swallowed up in victory!**

b. **O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?** Paul, knowing death is a defeated enemy because of Jesus' work, can almost taunt death, and mock it. Death has no power over the person in Jesus Christ!

i. "This is the sharpest and the shrillest note, the boldest and the bravest challenge, that ever man rang in the ears of death... Death is here out-braved, called craven to his face, and bidden to do his worst." (Trapp)

ii. "I will not fear thee, death, why should I? Thou lookest like a dragon, but thy sting is gone. Thy teeth are broken, oh old lion, wherefore should I fear thee? I know thou art no more able to destroy me, but thou art sent as a messenger to conduct me to the golden gate wherein I shall enter and see my Saviour's unveiled face for ever. Expiring saints have often said that their last beds have been the best they have ever slept upon." (Spurgeon)

iii. For those who are not in Jesus Christ, death still has its **sting**. "The sting of death lay in this, that we had sinned and were summoned to appear before the God whom we had offended. This is the sting of death to you, unconverted ones, not that you are dying, but that after death is the judgment, and that you must stand before the Judge of the quick and dead to receive a sentence for the sins which you have committed in your body against him." (Spurgeon)

iv. "Brethren, *the wicked* must rise again from the dead. The lip with which you have drunk the intoxicating drink till you have reeled again, that lip shall be used in drinking down the fiery wrath of God. Remember, too, ungodly woman, the eyes that are full of lust will one day be full of horror; the ear with which you listen to lascivious conversation must listen to the sullen moans, the hollow groans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts. Be not deceived; you sinned in your body, you will be damned in your body ... It must lie in the fire and burn, and crack, and writhe throughout eternity." (Spurgeon)

c. **The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law:** The principle of resurrection also proves that we are not under the law any longer. We are no longer subject to the penalty of the law (death), and we are set free from sin. Sin is the ultimate cause of death ([Romans 6:23](#), [Genesis 2:17](#)), and the result cannot be defeated unless the cause is defeated also.

i. Paul brilliantly links together the ideas of sin, death, and our identification with Jesus' death and resurrection in [Romans 6:1-14](#).

d. **Through our Lord Jesus Christ:** This defeat of death is only possible for those who live **through our Lord Jesus Christ**. For others, there is resurrection and eternal life, but unto damnation. If you are an unbeliever, death is not a friend, it is an enemy.

8. (1Co 15:58) Final application: how our destiny of resurrection means we should stand fast for the Lord right now.

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.

a. **Therefore ... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord:**

Because we know death is defeated and we have an eternal, resurrected destiny with Jesus Christ, we should stand firm and unshakable all the more for Him right now. We should work hard in everything now, working for the Lord, because *right now counts forever!*

b. **Knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord:** Even if your labor is vain to everyone else, and everyone else discounts or doesn't appreciate what you do for the Lord, **your labor is not in vain in the Lord**. It doesn't matter if you get the praise or the encouragement. Sometimes you will and sometimes you won't. But resurrection means **that your labor is not in vain in the Lord**.

i. "You must not only *work*, but you must *labour* - put forth all your strength; and you must work and labour *in the Lord* - under his *direction*, and by his *influence*; for without him you can do nothing." (Clarke)

ii. This should make us **steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!** We don't need to waver, we don't need to change direction, we don't need to fall, and we don't need to quit. *For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.* ([Hebrews 6:10](#)) He will show His remembrance of our *work and labor of love* at the resurrection!