

1 Corinthians 15:12-34 Expect to Be Resurrected Falls Ch. AM 7/28/2024

If you are talking with someone who doubts, you can run 2 scenarios.

a) if the resurrection is true, there is hope on which we build our lives.

b) if the resurrection were not true, everything would be different.

A Christian named Nichole Nordeman was talking with her friend, who was doubting the resurrection, and she asked her friend to consider both possibilities. She wrote it into a song, and here are some of the words:

What if **you're** right? What if [Jesus] takes his place in history With all the prophets and the kings Who taught us love and came in peace, But then the story ends. What then?

But what if you're **wrong**? What if there's more?

What if there's hope you never dreamed of hoping for?

What if the arms that catch you, catch you by surprise?

What if He's more than enough? What if it's love?

Paul ran two scenarios in this passage.

**The fact of the resurrection of Christ, guarantees our resurrection.**

**1. The aftereffect *IF* Christ *HAD NOT* risen. (v.12-19)**

The bottom line here was that if Christ had not risen, the believers in Corinth placed their trust in a dead man, who could not save them!

Paul understood that Christianity is publicly verified, meaning that if the body of Jesus were found, it would prove Christianity to be false. Paul found it necessary to write about this, because of the false teaching that was circulating through the church over in Corinth.

Paul worked to show them that their beliefs didn't work when in verse 12, Paul wrote "*if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*" It was Paul's expression of astonishment. Since the believers were casting doubt on this concept, then Paul had to address it.

First Paul addressed it by pointing out the most obvious of consequences, that it seems the believers in Corinth were beginning to doubt. In verse 13, "*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.*"

In verse 14, if Christ has not been raised, what would that do to preaching? It would make preaching hollow. What would it do to their faith? It would make their faith empty, for they would be trusting in a supposedly-risen Savior who would actually be dead. The truth claim and the historical event of the resurrection of Christ was so central to Christianity, that if the linchpin of the resurrection were removed, a cacophony of other attached logical deductions would also fall.

In verse 15, Paul showed that the situation would become even worse. The preachers would be found to be misrepresenting God. If Paul had preached that God did raise Christ from the dead, but it had not happened, then Paul

misrepresented God.

In verse 16, Paul repeated his statement in verse 13 all over again, in order to highlight the impact of their beliefs. If they had no room for anything supernatural, no miracles, then they had no room for the best miracle, the resurrection of Jesus, and if that was their belief, then they were themselves not Christians at all!

In verse 17, Paul repeated the point about faith being empty, and then added another level of consequence - that they would still be in their sins. In other words, the death of Christ by itself alone, without the resurrection of Christ, would have no atoning effect, no redemptive effect, and no liberating effect for their guilt before God.

In verse 18, another consequence would be that those Christians who had already died and who had been expecting to awaken to a new dawn and a new day, instead had utterly perished and would never awaken at all, if Jesus did not rise.

In verse 19, the summary statement for all believers was if we only have this earthly life, we are more to be pitied than all other human beings. Why? Because of the points Paul just made – 1) that the gospel would have no substance, 2) that their faith would be ineffective, 3) that the witnesses would be incorrect and inaccurate, 4) that their sins would retain a destructive and damaging control over them, and 5) that their fellow believers, who had previously died, would be irretrievably lost. All of that would be the case only IF Christ had NOT risen again.

## **2. The aftereffect *THAT* Christ *DID* rise. (v.20-28)**

The fact that Christ did rise, assured the Corinthians that they had placed their trust in a living Savior who had saved them because He did rise again.

In verse 20, when Paul wrote “firstfruits” it meant that Christ represented them with the promise that since He arose, that they also will rise from the dead.

In verses 21-22, Paul wrote about the beginning of death and the end of death. To do this, Paul compared and contrasted Christ with Adam. Adam sinned and introduced death. But Christ came to abolish death. How? The only way to end death was for Jesus to rise. Because Jesus was raised, so all believers will be raised on the last day of world history.

There are scholars who call verses 21-22 the high point of the whole letter, because our unity with Adam leads to our death, and our unity with Christ leads to our resurrection.

This was a radically new action of God with retroactive consequences all the way back to Adam, and future consequences all the way forward to every future believer. The resurrection of Christ announced the dawn of the general resurrection to come!

The heart of the problem in the church in Corinth was the failure to grasp the central place of Christ’s resurrection for all of world history. Notice this – that in verse 21 Paul did NOT write ‘by a man came death, and by a man has also come

life.’ No! Instead, in verse 21 he wrote, “*by a man came death, [and] by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.*” This was the end of one condition of the world, and the start of another condition of the world. This was the end of the condition of the world in which there was the supremacy of death, which was first signified by Adam, and at the same moment, it was the start of another condition of the world, the condition in which there was a group of people escaping the supremacy of death, and instead will experience life again and everlasting life, a new condition which was brought about by Christ, and first signified by Christ.

In verse 23, Paul gave the sequence of events that brought an end to the supremacy of death and the inescapability of death. First Christ rose, then later all who belong to Christ would rise. In verses 24-25 Paul provided a glimpse of the future end when Christ will deliver the Kingdom of God over to His Father, after destroying every enemy.

In verse 26, in the sequence of Christ’s victorious activities, the last enemy to be destroyed would be death itself. Verse 27 showed God the Father’s participation with Christ – that God the Father was the One who put all things under the feet of Christ or all things under the authority of Christ.

In verse 28, every believer who ever died, will be raised again to life by the authority of Jesus, who received that authority from God the Father. God the Father remained the supreme ruler over all things.

### **3. The aftereffect of denying the resurrection. (v.29-34)**

In these verses Paul showed the obvious inconsistencies in the teaching and practices of Christians in Corinth who claimed that there was no resurrection from the dead, but wanted to retain some of the other parts of Christianity.

In verse 29, for example, Paul addressed a custom in the church in Corinth. When someone had died without being baptized, they would baptize a still-living person as a substitute in the place of the dead person. Paul’s only point here was clear - that the church in Corinth was inconsistent. If they believed there was no resurrection, (so that any dead person no longer existed, end of story) then what gain was it to try to give a dead person any benefit from a substitute baptism? Paul was urging them to think through the logical consequences of their beliefs.

In verse 30, was Paul consistent? Did Paul think through the logical consequences of his beliefs? Yes, in verse 30, Paul asked why Paul would risk danger and persecution because of the gospel? Because the central claim was true – Jesus truly rose again and Jesus truly lives, so Paul and converts would live again!

In verse 31, Paul as a traveling missionary apostle, was putting himself in danger every time Paul entered a new city. Paul had to face potential death from angry Jews or from the authorities in each new place where he traveled. But Paul boasted with a holy pride in what Christ had done in the believers in each place as a result of Paul’s courage. The apostle was willing to lay down his life if it would

cause the message to spread. Why? Because Paul expected to be resurrected. So, yes, Paul was living consistently with what Paul believed.

In verse 32, as an example of this, Paul referred to the danger he faced in the city of Ephesus, where he was writing this letter. It seems likely that Paul was referring to both spiritual beasts and also actual wild beasts - often in the Roman Empire they put Christians in arenas with wild animals. Over in Acts chapter 19, we read that Paul narrowly escaped death during a riot in the city of Ephesus. Paul's only point here was showing them that Paul was consistent. Why would Paul subject himself to such dangers? What would be the gain? Because the resurrection was true, Paul could continue to spread the message, and even if they killed him, Paul would still rise again. But if the resurrection were not true, then Paul should not endanger himself, but rather Paul should relax, eat, drink, and enjoy himself. Paul was consistent in living out what he believed!

In verses 33-34, Paul admonished the believers in Corinth not to be led astray by those others who were within their church who doubted and doubted the resurrection. Verse 33, *"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.'"* Those who doubted and denied the resurrection were an unwholesome group of people with whom to spend time, because they threatened to lead others astray.

Here is what was fascinating about Paul's statement in verse 33: who had an influence on whom? Was it those with good morals who had a greater impact on those with bad morals? No. It was those with bad morals who ruined good morals.

Paul wrote "Do not be deceived!" Too often believers were being deceived about how much they were being influenced by the world to waste their lives by a fascination with eating, drinking, smoking, and chasing frivolous activities.

The center of their lives as Christians could not be self-gratification.

In verse 34, Paul mentioned another group – those who had no knowledge of God. Because there was so much at stake, Paul's advice was clear and forceful at end this paragraph in verse 34, *"Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame."*

Here is the basic thing – believers must not live as if there is no resurrection.

We want to escape the pain of life. We want to be distracted and even enter a sort of intoxication or lowered spiritual awareness, because of our own distractions! We like it that way! We search out distractions, so that we don't have to face spiritual truths! In verse 34, Paul says to wake up and even sober up. Everything we do in this life matters for eternity. Jesus truly is alive from the dead, and that matters for everything in our lives. The fact that Jesus is alive changes everything for this life, and it everything for eternity future.

About 1,500 years after Paul wrote this, Pastor Martin Luther, the sparking influence for the Reformation, said, that if a person does not believe in the

resurrection, "...he must deny in a lump the gospel and everything that is proclaimed of Christ and of God. For all of this is linked together like a chain...Whoever denies this...must simultaneously deny far more...in brief, [he must deny] that God is God."

About 400 years later, this was how the Orthodox Presbyterian Church got founded in 1936, after years of open and public demonstration that many ministers in the old Presbyterian denomination denied the resurrection. Our founding fathers could not abide, and it would have been shameful to stay in such a denomination. The only right thing to do was to openly declare that Jesus the head of the church used-to-be truly dead, but He is now truly alive, and He has made us spiritually alive already, and that we are committed to following Him, Our Risen Lord.

**Conclusion: Admit that we base everything on the resurrection.**

Again, we run 2 possible scenarios.

If Jesus did not rise, then enjoy yourself, because this world is all there is.

But since Jesus did rise again, then time must be used well in order to serve.

Why do we chase distractions? Because of how we feel at that moment. We feel discouraged or drained or overwhelmed. But we are not supposed to make decisions based on how we feel. Instead, we are to make decisions based on truth. We are supposed to live based on the truth of Christianity. All of our lives must be re-oriented according to the truth that what Paul and the apostles said happened to Jesus has actually happened to Jesus.

With a Risen Savior, we have no need to be overwhelmed by the storms of life or even by times of doubt. Our relationship with God was secured not by the strength of our faith, but by the power of the cross and the resurrection. We find our comfort, our consolation, our strength during the trials and burdens of life, in the living, dying, and rising again of Jesus Christ for us, in our place.

**Admit that we base everything on the resurrection.**