

1 Corinthians 15

1 Corinthians 15.1-11

V1 – This chapter is about a very serious false doctrine that was being taught at Corinth

-**What was the doctrine (you can find it in v 12)?** That Jesus was raised from the dead, but that we will not be raised

-In v 1-11, Paul gives us an overview of the gospel (in a very brief form)

-**How did Paul emphasize the seriousness of this issue?** Notice his firm language in v 1:

-made it known to you

-preached to you

-you heard it

-you used to stand in it...

-Four very powerful statements there

-So Paul was very emphatic about this issue

V2 – **How does that emphasis continue?** They were saved by that same message (the gospel)

-**Was their salvation conditional?** Yes (Once Saved Always Saved is a very strange doctrine today)

-**How could they remain saved?** By holding fast to the gospel

-**If they did not hold fast, then what would Paul say about them?** It was all a waste of time

-**Had Paul ever warned other people about falling away?** See *Acts 20.26-31* (to the elders at Ephesus)

-Also remember *Rev. 2-3* – Several of the Seven Churches of Asia were warned to repent or else have their candlesticks removed

V3-8 – The "Four Cardinal Principles of the Gospel"

1. Christ died for our sins (See: *Matt. 20.28, Acts 20.28, Titus 2.14, 1 Peter 2.24, 1 John 2.2*)

-We were bought with the blood of Christ

V4 – 2. Jesus was buried – this is recorded in all four gospels

-**What is the significance of the burial of Christ?** That he died; he was not just in a coma

-**Who buried Jesus?** Joseph of Arimathea (*Matt. 27.57-66*)

3. He was raised on the third day

-**Who raised Jesus from the dead?** The Holy Spirit (*Romans 1.4 and 8.11*)

-**What Old Testament passage was a foreshadowing of the burial of Christ for three days?** Jonah and the big fish (sea creature) (*Matt. 12.40*)

V5 – 4. Jesus was seen after the resurrection

-**Who was the first apostle to see Jesus?** Peter

-Notice "12" – a general term (since Judas was no longer among the apostles)

-**Who first saw Christ after the resurrection?** Mary Magdalene (*Matt. 28.1-8, Mark 16.9, Luke 24.1, 10*)

V 6 – **To whom did Jesus appear next?** To over 500 disciples

-**Why is Paul going over these facts?** Because he is giving proof about the resurrection of Jesus; he is leading up to his main point in this chapter

-In other words, you can check this out by asking some of those who saw Jesus after his resurrection

-**What had happened to some of these 500?** Some had fallen asleep (died)

V 7 – **Which James is this referring to?** James the half-brother of Jesus Christ (not the apostle James)

-The apostle James was killed in *Acts 12*; James the half-brother of Jesus became a great leader of the church in Jerusalem, so he would have been the one who could have verified what Paul was saying here

-**But why is James referred to as an apostle, and why "all the apostles," considering v 5?** Because the word "apostle" can be used to mean "one who is sent out"

V 8 - **Significance of "last of all"?** Paul's humility

-He was untimely born (same Greek word for a miscarriage)

V 9 – **Why did Paul have such a low opinion of himself?** Because he persecuted the church (the death of Stephen in *Acts 8*, jailed Christians, etc.) – **Read Acts 7.57-8.3**

V 10 – **Applications to us today?** Many of us can say the same thing, because we have come so close in our lives to denying the faith and turning our backs on God

-But maybe someone had faith in us and encouraged us to keep going and we pulled our lives together again

-Or maybe some event was so bad that we got our lives straightened out

-And so it is because of the grace of God that we are here today

-If we are rich, if we have certain talents, if we have a good job, let us give credit to God and his grace and forgiveness

-For Paul, it took getting stopped on the road to Damascus for his life to get straightened out

-**How did Paul deal with God's grace toward him?** He did not waste it (in other words, he picked up the pieces of his life and got things turned around)

-Paul worked harder than all the apostles, but it was not his power, but the power of God that did it

V 11 – **Did it matter to Paul who preached these principles of the gospel?** Not at all

-**Why was this a good statement to give to the church at Corinth?** Because of their divisions over preachers

1 Corinthians 15.12-19

V 12 – **Were they saying that Christ had been raised from the dead?** Yes

-**But what else were they saying?** That nobody else would be raised

-**Why would people want to believe that?** No definite answer, but maybe because they wanted to live sinful lives, maybe because of Gnosticism, etc.

-**Did the majority of the Corinthians believe this?** No, just "some"

-Then why did Paul get so upset about it? Because it was a dangerous doctrine; it could spread (remember *1 Cor. 5*)

-Paul: False doctrines must be nipped in the bud; otherwise, the results can be disastrous for the local congregation

V 13 – What is Paul's basic argument? That Christ was raised; therefore, we will be raised also

-So the whole argument was going to be based on the resurrection of Christ from the dead

V 14-19 – The consequences of not believing in a general resurrection of the dead

V 14 – What would that say about the preaching of Paul and the other apostles? It was all a waste of time

-What else would have been in vain? The belief of the Corinthians in Jesus Christ (because what would be their hope?)

V 15 – What else would it have proven? That Paul lied and that they were all false witnesses

-Because so many people had seen Jesus Christ after the resurrection

V 16 – What else would it have proven? That Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead

V 17 – Next consequence? Their faith would have been worthless

-The consequences of that? They would have still been in their sins

V 18 – Next consequence? That the dead in Christ would have perished (in other words, no eternal life)

V 19 – Final consequence? Our faith would have been worthless

-Paul made such a logical argument here – so much of what we believe as Christians is based on the resurrection of Christ from the dead

-Today, many people like the teaching of Jesus, but don't believe in his miracles or his resurrection

1 Corinthians 15.20-28 – The benefits of the resurrection of Christ from the dead

V 20 – What is the attitude that people in the world have today toward death? They are terrified of it

Read Heb. 2.14-15 – We have been delivered from the terror of death because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

-What is good about "first fruits"? They are the best (no worms, no disease, no bruises, etc.)

-In what sense was Christ the first fruits? He was the first of many who were to come after him

-Were there resurrections before Jesus?

1. *1 Kings 17* – raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath (by Elijah)

2. *2 Kings 4* – son of the Shunammite woman (by Elisha)

3. *Luke 7.11-17* – son of the widow of Nain
4. *Luke 8.40-56* – Jairus' daughter
5. *John 11.38-40* – Lazarus
6. *Acts 9.39-42* – Dorcas
7. *Acts 20.9-12* – Eutychus

-Also: Enoch (*Gen. 5*) who never died, and Elijah (*2 Kings 2.11*) who was taken to heaven in a whirlwind

-So in what sense was Jesus the first fruits? The first one never to die again

V 21 – Who is subject to death today? All the children of Adam; that is, all of us – we inherited death (not sin) from Adam

-But in whom shall we all be made alive? Jesus Christ (a beautiful verse)

V 22 – When will the resurrection of the dead take place? At the second coming of Christ

-Until then, for the dead, the saved will be in Paradise, and the lost will be in Tartarus (*2 Peter 2.4* – See *Zondervan Bible Dictionary*, p. 303b)

V 23 – What will be the order at the second coming? The dead in Christ will be raised first (*1 Thess. 4.13-17*)

-Then will come the general resurrection of the dead (*John 5.28-29, Acts 24.15*)

V 24 – What else will happen at the end? All authority will be abolished (civil, religious, political, etc.)

V 25 – What else will occur? All the enemies of Christ will be punished in the lake of fire and brimstone

V 26 – The last enemy to be abolished? Death

-What will happen to death? It will be thrown into the lake of fire (*Rev. 20.14*)

V 27-28 – The final order of the universe will not occur until the second coming; then all will be subject to Christ, who will be in subjection to the Father

1 Corinthians 15.29-34

-How do misunderstandings in religion come about? People do not know the Bible well enough and do not compare a confusing passage with other passages that are easier to understand

V 29 – "Baptism for the dead" – The Mormon Church teaches that there can be "proxy baptisms" for dead people, and those dead people will then be saved

-They have had proxy baptisms for Columbus, George Washington, millions of other people

-See *National Geographic*, April 1975, p. 440 – photo of Mormon microfilm files on millions of people and their ancestry

-Their goal (through the study of genealogy) is to have a baptism for every person who has ever lived

-In most cities, genealogy societies are operated by the Mormons

-Read *Spiritual Sword* magazine, Oct. 1975, p. 30

Other passages which contradict Mormon doctrine:

- *Romans 2.6, Romans 14.12, 2 Cor. 5.10, Revelation 22.12*

-Read the *Sweet Commentary on Revelation* (by Raymond Kelcy), p. 73

Two interpretations of v 29 that do not violate other Scriptures:

1. People can be baptized in memory of someone dead (because of that person's influence, whether good or bad)
2. People can be baptized for their own death (looking forward to and preparing for one's own death)

V 30 – Why bother with being persecuted if there is no resurrection of the dead? No reason

V 31 – In what sense did Paul die daily?

Note: The Sword of Damocles – a sword suspended by a human hair over Dionysius (look up details)

-Read 2 Cor. 11.23-33 – a list of the perils that Paul experienced

V 32 – Description of Paul at Ephesus? See *Acts 19.23-41* – riot there

-Figuratively, because:

1. It was illegal to make a Roman citizen fight animals in an arena
2. No-one survived a fight with wild animals

Animals (figuratively): Demetrius, followers of Diana (or Artemis), the people of Ephesus who were in the riot

-The citizens of Ephesus believed: Eat, drink, and be merry; you only go around once in life

-Known as "carpe diem" (pronounced: car-pay dee-im) (Latin meaning: Seize the day or live only for today) – Go for all the gusto you can – You only go around once in life

V 33 – A quote from the Greek poet Menander (a line from one of his comedies)

-Other Scriptures where Paul quoted from ancient poets and writers:

-*Titus 1.12* – a line from the Cretan poet Epimenides (6th century BC)

-*Acts 17.28* – a quote from another ancient poet Cleanthes: "For we also are his offspring"

-or possibly from Aratus, a Greek poet born in Cilicia (the province where Paul was born)

-What is the opposite of v 33? Bad friends lead us astray

-Bad friends might have been the source of the false doctrines at Corinth on the subject of the resurrection

-Who should our best friends be? Christians

V 34 – An incorrect knowledge of God had brought on this false view of the resurrection of the dead

1 Corinthians 15.35-42

(Paul digressed in v 20-34; now he gets back to the theme of this chapter)

V 35 – The real cause of disagreement at Corinth? How can human flesh be raised again?

-People with bodies that were dismembered, or blown apart, or cremated, or lost at sea, or eaten by wild animals

-Now we see the real question (the prelude was v 1-34)

V 36 – First principle? An object "dies" before it can come to life again

"You fool" – foolish because you can see this principle every day in the natural world

V 37 – Second principle? You don't expect to reap what you sow (at least in appearance)

-Compare: a grain of corn and the corn stalk, or a watermelon seed and the fully grown watermelon

-Pass around a 5x8 card with different kinds of seeds taped to it; ask people to try to figure out what kind of plant comes from each seed (very difficult to do)

-Or a mustard seed and the mustard tree, or an acorn and a 100 foot tall oak tree

-To get a stalk of corn, do we plant an old stalk of corn? No

-The "old body" is in sharp contrast with the "body which is to be"

V 38 – God made all kinds of "bodies" (living things)

-Example: God designed the water melon seed to make a watermelon

V 39-41 – Examples of v 38: God has made all types of creatures in the world

-God is not limited to one type of body

V 40 – Example: Compare the glory of the stars with the glory of the human body

-Many examples of this could be given

1 Corinthians 15.42-49

V 42 – Now the application!

-When we die, the old body is "planted" – it is buried at death

-It is "sown" perishable," but raised imperishable

V 43-44 – Three illustrations?

1. It is sown in dishonor, but raised in glory

2. It is sown in weakness, but raised in power

3. It is sown natural, but raised spiritual

-Paul doesn't tell us how God will do this, and we couldn't understand it anyway

-How does God change a pine cone into a pine tree, or an egg into a chicken?

V 45 – The difference between Adam and Christ is the difference between the old body and the new body

-The "soul" is lower in quality (or position) than the spirit

-Adam became a soul, but Christ was a spirit

V 46-49 – We have been "earthly" in this life, but we will be spiritual in the next

V 47 – First man = earthly, second man = heavenly

-Read 1 John 3.2 – no clear picture as to what this new body will be like

We are now modeled after Adam, but then (at the resurrection) we will be modeled after the

spiritual body of Christ

1 Corinthians 15.50-58 – One of the greatest Scriptures in the entire Bible

-Now Paul tells the Corinthians how to obtain glorious eternal life

V 50 – Jesus to Pilate: *My kingdom is not of this world (John 18.36)*

-In other words, a spiritual kingdom

-Kingdom of God = "heaven" in this verse

V 51 – Problem in *1 Thessalonians 4*: **What about the dead who die before the second coming?** They will be raised first

-Question here? What about those alive at the second coming? Answer: They will be changed

V 52 – Order at the second coming:

1. The announcement of Christ's return (very short time, in a moment)
2. The dead Christians will be raised and changed
3. The living Christians shall be changed
(same order as we see in *1 Thessalonians 4.15-17*)

V 53-54 – **What has to happen? Read Isaiah 25.6-8**

V 55 – A quote from *Hosea 13.14* (in the Septuagint)

-With what Paul has been saying, death has lost its terror – **Do you agree with that?**

V 56 – **What makes death a terror?** Sin in our lives

-*Romans 7.5* – The Old Law frequently caused people to sin

V 57 – **The source of salvation?**

V 58 – **Conclusion?** Keep working hard; don't give up

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