

## Our Faith Depends on It

1 Corinthians 15:12-34

### Introduction

**Hypothetical:** A thought experiment. Why do what is right? What determines what is right? Social arrangement? Malleable over time? Why be kind? Empathetic? Altruistic? What would you do if no one was looking and you *knew* you wouldn't get caught?

- Baby at the well experiment (Buddhism, human goodness, false premise). Lots of people do bad things when no one is looking. Lots of people harm children. Lots of people would sacrifice an innocent child to save themselves.
- If God isn't real, if he didn't die for our sins and rise from the dead, and if we don't have any future judgment or reward to contend with, then you can do whatever you want now. It doesn't matter.

**Without** the resurrection, our faith is meaningless, Christ is powerless, and our behavior doesn't matter. **But since the resurrection is real**, our faith is essential, Christ is sovereign over everything, and our lives are transformed.

<sup>12</sup> Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. <sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. <sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? <sup>30</sup> Why are we in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup> I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! <sup>32</sup> What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." <sup>33</sup> Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good

morals.”<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The Resurrection is Essential to Our Faith (vv. 12-19)

<sup>12</sup> Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. <sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

**Theological Error:** This idea it doesn't matter what you believe, it only matters what you do (which is a belief called “salvation by works”) is fundamentally not true. Because what you believe drives what you do (and what you do shows what you really believe).

- I don't know exactly where the error comes from, but there is something floating around that caused some Corinthians to deny the resurrection of the dead (not primarily about Jesus' resurrection but about *their* resurrection).
- <sup>12</sup> Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? Their issue is not primarily about Jesus' resurrection (though it implicates that), it is primarily about *their* resurrection.
- Paul shows that our future resurrection is intimately tied with the reality of Jesus' resurrection.
- **Because Christ has been raised, then we will be raised.**

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>12</sup> Εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς κηρύσσεται ὅτι ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγήγερται, πῶς λέγουσιν ἐν ὑμῖν τινες ὅτι ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν; <sup>13</sup> εἰ δὲ ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν, οὐδὲ Χριστὸς ἐγήγερται. <sup>14</sup> εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς οὐκ ἐγήγερται, κενὸν ἄρα [καί] τὸ κήρυγμα ἡμῶν, κενὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν. <sup>15</sup> εὐρισκόμεθα δὲ καὶ ψευδομάρτυρες τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι ἐμαρτυρήσαμεν κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι ἤγειρεν τὸν Χριστόν, ὃν οὐκ ἤγειρεν εἴπερ ἄρα νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται. <sup>16</sup> εἰ γὰρ νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται, οὐδὲ Χριστὸς ἐγήγερται. <sup>17</sup> εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς οὐκ ἐγήγερται, ματαία ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν, ἔτι ἐστὲ ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν, <sup>18</sup> ἄρα καὶ οἱ κοιμηθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ ἀπώλοντο. <sup>19</sup> εἰ ἐν τῇ ζωῇ ταύτῃ ἐν Χριστῷ ἠλπιτικότες ἐσμὲν μόνον, ἐλεινότεροι πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐσμὲν. <sup>20</sup> Νυνὶ δὲ Χριστὸς ἐγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀπαρχὴ τῶν κεκοιμημένων. <sup>21</sup> ἐπειδὴ γὰρ δι' ἀνθρώπου θάνατος, καὶ δι' ἀνθρώπου ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν. <sup>22</sup> ὡς περὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ πάντες ἀποθνήσκουσιν, οὕτως καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ πάντες ζωοποιήσονται. <sup>23</sup> ἕκαστος δὲ ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι· ἀπαρχὴ Χριστός, ἔπειτα οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ, <sup>24</sup> εἴτα τὸ τέλος, ὅταν παραδιδῶ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί, ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν. <sup>25</sup> δεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸν βασιλεῦειν ἄχρι οὗ θῆ ἅπας τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ. <sup>26</sup> ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος. <sup>27</sup> πάντα γὰρ ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ. ὅταν δὲ εἴπῃ ὅτι πάντα ὑποτέτακται, δῆλον ὅτι ἐκτὸς τοῦ ὑποτάξαντος αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα. <sup>28</sup> ὅταν δὲ ὑποταγῇ αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, τότε [καί] αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς ὑποταγήσεται τῷ ὑποτάξαντι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, ἵνα ἡ ὁ θεὸς [τὰ] πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν. <sup>29</sup> Ἐπεὶ τί ποιήσουσιν οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν; εἰ ὅλως νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται, τί καὶ βαπτίζονται ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν; <sup>30</sup> τί καὶ ἡμεῖς κινδυνεύομεν πᾶσαν ὥραν; <sup>31</sup> καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποθνήσκω, νῆ τὴν ὑμετέραν καύχησιν, [ἀδελφοί,] ἦν ἔχω ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν. <sup>32</sup> εἰ κατὰ ἀνθρώπων ἐθνηρομάχησα ἐν Ἐφέσῳ, τί μοι τὸ ὄφελος; εἰ νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται, Φάγωμεν καὶ πίωμεν, αὔριον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν. <sup>33</sup> μὴ πλανᾶσθε· Φθείρουσιν ἦθη χρηστὰ ὁμιλία κακαί. <sup>34</sup> ἐκνήψατε δικαίως καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε, ἀγνωσίαν γὰρ θεοῦ τινες ἔχουσιν, πρὸς ἐντροπὴν ὑμῖν λαλῶ.

**What is Heaven?:** In so many ways we are functionally gnostic in our concepts of heaven. We think of little disembodied souls, floating on clouds, and angels playing harps (e.g., **body bad, soul good**).<sup>2</sup> We are soul and body!

- “Salvation [more accurately] is not [in the end] ‘going to heaven’ but ‘being raised to life in God’s new heaven and new earth’ (Wright).
- Heaven is living life that’s truly alive, it’s life that begins now and lasts forever in God’s creation perfected without sin.
- In heaven we will still be human, but in bodies transformed like Christ after his resurrection.

**Resurrection Matters:** Here’s the problem with this thinking, if dead men don’t rise, then Christ didn’t rise, and if Christ didn’t rise we have a much bigger problem. <sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised... <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.

- **Liars:** <sup>14a</sup> And if Christ has not been raised <sup>14b</sup> then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain <sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.
  - They’ve been lying. They’ve been promising something about God that isn’t true.
  - Your faith is in vain Useless faith (e.g., understanding adoption because you adopted a cat; I’m sure “Scratches is great” but it’s not the same).
  - **Be careful to never lie about God.** I hope, whatever shortcomings I have, no one will ever say that I lied to them about God.
- **Powerless:** <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. If Christ hasn’t been raised then your faith is powerless. If he hasn’t defeated sin and death, then you are still “dead in your trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1) and a slave to sin (Rom 5:6).
  - This is why Jesus can’t be just a religious teacher or moral example, if that’s all he is then you are powerless, you are stuck in your sin forever, you can’t change.
    - You and I are a complex person formed by our heritage, experiences, genetic makeup, and upbringing. But we are not consigned to only those things, the gospel clearly teaches us that, **by the power of the gospel, we can change.** If not now, when Christ returns. You are not simply a collection of chemicals that **determines** your destiny. You are a person made in the image of God who, by his power, can be made new and transformed to be like Christ.
  - Without the gospel, we are only left to our human strength (e.g., workout forever, still die). But with the gospel we have the power of the risen Lord.
- **Lights Out:** <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If Christ hasn’t been raised, then those that have died are not with God, they will not be raised at the last day, it’s just lights out.
  - "Some day you will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of East Northfield, is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now; I shall have gone up higher, that is all, out of this old clay tenement into

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<sup>2</sup> Cremation? Beauty from ashes. Dust to dust. No jigsaw puzzle so hard God can’t solve it.

a house that is immortal—a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint; a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. I was born of the flesh in 1837. I was born of the Spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit will live forever” (D. L. Moody).

- **Fools:** <sup>19</sup> If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. If the resurrection isn't real and it's just a metaphor for turning a new leaf, then we have no ultimate hope. If Jesus only lives in our hearts and our heads but not in *reality* then he is little more than an inspirational quote. If the resurrection isn't real then Jesus is just fantasy or sentimentality.
  - If he is not alive, “seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty, from [where] he will [return] to judge the living and the dead,” then none of this really matters.
  - If the resurrection isn't real, then you've picked the worst hobby.
  - If there isn't a final resurrection, and a final judgment, then all the wrong in this world will not be made right, it just “is the way it is.” If the resurrection isn't real, then you and I are living for a kingdom that won't be.
- When I say the resurrection is “essential,” I mean it is the essence of our faith. Without it, we don't have faith (e.g., flour out of bread; taking the water out of a pool). **Without the resurrection, we have no Christian faith, no future hope, and no present power.** But if it is real, then those who have only lived for the glory of this current age have already received their reward (Matt 6:5). **Because the resurrection is real, it changes everything.**

## 2. The Resurrection Demonstrates Christ's Power (vv. 20-28)

<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

**But If It's True:** But if the resurrection is real (and in fact it is), and Jesus is alive (and he is), then the miraculous Savior who was raised from the dead can miraculously raise us from the dead.

- His resurrection is the proof of our resurrection. His resurrection is the paves the way for our resurrection. His resurrection is an invitation for us to experience resurrected life. His resurrection guarantees our resurrection, it's the the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, the down payment of ours. Christ has been raised, so we will be raised

- <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Christ leads the way for us. He blazes a path through the valley of the shadow of death so that we can pass safely through to the other side.
- This is at the heart of the gospel, Jesus in my place. He takes the punishment I owe, pays the debt I can't pay, and dies the death I deserve to die. And in he gives me the right to be a child of God (Jn 1:12). He gives me life and resurrection.
- The resurrection of Jesus is not a crutch for the weak minded but the power we all need to have true life, life that's worth living.
  - It is **historically** true (last week, vv. 1-11) and it is both **logically** and **theologically** true. That is, it makes sense of how we were made and how we live our lives (\*sidenote\* no one doubted Jesus' resurrection at this point, they only doubted their own resurrection).

**Reverse the Curse:** Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of the end, it is the end of the age breaking into our present reality. What was destroyed by Adam is restored by Jesus, the last Adam. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

- Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Rom 5:18-19).

**Must Rule:** <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

- Christ must rule because it is what he came to do. It is not an optional aside if he has enough extra time. The ruler must rule (a lion must hunt; obligate carnivore). This is what Jesus came to do.
  - His mission was to rescue those who belong to God and destroy sin and death that held them captive. The Father sent the Son on a mission to subject all things (hence the quote of the conversation between the Father and Son, YHWH and the Lord, from Ps 110).
- Christ is Lord of all. The earth belongs to the Lord. He is the sovereign ruler (not Rome).
  - "Resurrection of the dead is a subversive belief, because it declares that God alone is sovereign over the created world." Technology is not Lord. Money is not Lord. Politics are not Lord. Celebrities are not Lord. Intellectuals are not Lord. Death is not Lord. Sin is not Lord. **Jesus is Lord.**
  - The KoG is the place where Jesus, the King rules and reigns "on earth as it is in heaven."

- “No matter how strong the powers of earth and hell may seem, no matter how much the Christian may fear that the wicked will triumph, at the climax of history it is Christ and none other who reigns and *must* reign” (Stott).
- The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Death was not God’s purpose, it is an enemy. The reign of Christ is not completed until death is conquered. Death is actually scared to death. “Death” is terrified of Christ. Therefore death doesn’t scare us. “Death holds no terror because [Jesus] is the Living One who has conquered death and holds it in his power” (Mounce). **Evil has an expiration date.** “As the God-man, [Jesus] has defeated death. [He] proclaims his victory over sin, death, and hell—not only in heaven and on the earth but also under the earth. Jesus is King everywhere, including the stronghold of the enemy.”

**Jesus is the Sovereign God:** He is described in Revelation as the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

- Jesus is not just the most powerful of created beings, or the most persuasive of human teachers, or the most righteous of human beings: he is God become flesh. He is God himself. When he tells you not to fear, he has the power to back it up.  $\alpha$  to  $\omega$  = A to Z. This is both theological truth and practical encouragement. **Because Jesus is God, it means he was there at the beginning and he’ll be there at the end. And if he was there at the beginning and he’ll be there at the end, we can be sure he’s in control in the middle.**
- So, “when a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don’t throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer.” (Corrie Ten Boom)
- Jesus’ sovereign power gives us full assurance which guards us against despair in the face of suffering and prevents us from compromising with the world. Trust in God inoculates us from fear even when everything around us seems to be falling apart. He is in control.
- Jesus is sovereign over everything, including your life. Are you living in complete surrender and submission to him?

### 3. The Resurrection Transforms Our Lives (vv. 29-34)

<sup>29</sup> Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? <sup>30</sup> Why are we in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup> I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! <sup>32</sup> What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” <sup>33</sup> Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” <sup>34</sup> 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.

**Why Do You Do What You Do?:** Why do you live the way you live if you don’t believe in the resurrection of the dead? God has put eternity into each of our hearts (Ecc 3:11).

- If there is no God and there is no eternity, then you can do whatever you want here and now (**nihilism**). There is no such thing as “right” and “wrong” or “justice” and “injustice”

there just *is* (maybe social convention, personal preference, etc.). “Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

- **Examples: Baptism** for the dead (not affirming it) but showing that the impulse to do this proves their hope in the resurrection (no church evidence, not theologically sound). **Suffering** for others. None of these activities matter if Jesus’ eternal promises are a sham. Without the God, why do good and, in fact, there is no such thing as good. Things just are what they are.
  - **Recycling** doesn’t matter. **Kindness** doesn’t matter. **Serving** the poor doesn’t matter. Your **legacy** doesn’t matter. **Raising** your kids doesn’t matter.
  - And almost no one lives like this because deep inside we know that God has made us for eternity. We long for the day when all will be made right. Atheists long for justice they cannot explain or justify.

**Wake Up:** If the dead are not raised, our hope, our suffering, and our faithfulness are pointless. But Jesus is raised and we will be raised to, either to eternal joy or eternal punishment. So, Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God.

- When there is an eternal God and eternal life *then* everything you do matters..
- “Too heavenly-minded to be of any earthly good.” **What if it is more true that you must be heavenly-minded to be of any earthly good?** I promise, if you’re only “earthly minded” then you’ll be of no “earthly good.”
- Without the resurrection of Jesus, there’s no freedom from sin, no final justice, and no power to do right. If you’re left to be your own Savior, then you’re sunk. If you and I are left to save the world, then there is no hope. “If you want your shackles tightened, believe in yourself. If you want them gone, believe in Christ” (Smethurst).
- But the resurrected Lord who was raised from the dead, raises us from the dead so we can be empowered ambassadors of his kingdom.

## Conclusion

Without the resurrection, our faith is meaningless, Christ is powerless, and our behavior doesn’t matter. But since the resurrection is real, our faith is essential, Christ is sovereign over everything, and our lives are transformed.

- **Live in light of the resurrection.** (1) Trust in the power of Christ. (2) Live for his eternal kingdom. We are called “to live as resurrection people in between Easter and the final day, with our Christian life, corporate and individual, in both worship and mission, as a sign of the first and a foretaste of the second” (Wright).
- “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33).
  - When we take care of the most important thing, we can live lives of significance in this world.
- Where is your trust? In yourself or in Jesus.
- Where is your hope? In this world or in his eternal kingdom.