

1 CORINTHIANS 15.12-34

The Resurrection (2)

Intro: Paul began this discussion of the resurrection by focusing on Christ's resurrection in vss. 1-11. Christ's resurrection (His body!) was at the heart of the gospel (vss. 1-4) and had been confirmed by a host of witnesses (vss. 5-8). Furthermore, Christ's resurrection had changed the course of Paul's life (vss. 9-10) and the lives of the Corinthians (vss. 1-2). All of this was a given, acknowledged by both Paul and the Corinthians. However, starting in vs. 12 the apostle turns his attention to the problem: the Corinthians' denial of their own resurrection!

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CORINTHIAN DENIAL (VSS. 12-19)

1. If no resurrection, Christ is not raised! (vss. 12-13)
 - » Note again vs. 4. His body was buried, it was His body that was raised. Paul must be speaking about the body!
 - » "To deny the general resurrection is to deny that Christ was raised. The two stand or fall together." (Robert Harkrider)
2. If Christ was not raised, preaching and faith are vain (empty) (vss. 14-17)
 - » Note that Paul says both his preaching and their faith would be vain (vs. 14)
 - » Both would be vain because they would still be in their sins (vs. 17)! "Faith in Christ is a fruitless exercise if the result is you are still in your sins." (Leon Morris)
3. No hope for something after this (18-19)
 - » Note the contrast between "fallen asleep" with "perished" in vs. 18.
 - If Christ was raised from the dead and the believer is awaiting a resurrection, then death is not something to dread. It is "falling asleep" indicating a future hope, see 1Thess 4.13-14; Phil 1.21-23.
 - But if Christ was not raised, and thus the believer is not raised, then death is

perishing!

- » And if our only hope is for this life, what a pity! (vs. 19) "Faith in Christ brings persecution and a lifestyle of self-denial of fleshly lusts, 2Tim 3:12; 1Pet 2:11. Why live this way if the hope of future glory is merely a false promise? The logic is clear and undeniable that if one believes Christ arose, he must believe in the resurrection of the dead." (Robert Harkrider)

CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED! (VSS. 20-28)

1. You will note that the word "if" is found 7 times in vss. 12-19, indicating that Paul is only entertaining a hypothetical situation. "If" the dead were not going to be raised, then Christ was not raised, and "if" Christ was not raised then there is no hope! But in this passage Paul returns to the facts of the matter: Christ WAS raised, and we will be too!
2. He is the first-fruits! (vss. 20-23)
 - » "The first fruits point us to the first sheaf of the harvest, which was brought to the temple and offered to God (Lev. 23:10f.); it consecrated the whole harvest. Moreover, first fruits imply later fruits. Both thoughts are to the point here." (Leon Morris)
 - » Paul then makes a comparison between Adam and Christ. Since Adam's sin resulted in death for all (see Genesis 3.19), then by Christ's resurrection all will be raised! Remember, the resurrection of all men is a Biblical doctrine (John 5.28-29), but in this chapter Paul is focusing on the believers, thus Paul says "all will be made alive."
3. The kingdom will be handed over (vss. 24-28)
 - » This passage stresses the completion of God's plan / Christ's work, the restoration of man to God. It is at the resurrection that all things are completely subjected to God

and the Kingdom is given to Him. But, if no resurrection, God's plan failed!

- » This passage also stresses the abolishment of death! The resurrection of the body God created would be the final defeat of death. The Corinthians had said there would be no resurrection, but Paul said there would no longer be any death!

THE RESURRECTION IS ESSENTIAL FOR CHRISTIAN PERSEVERANCE (VSS. 29-34)

1. "What will those do who are baptized for the dead?" (vs. 29)

- » A tricky verse, but to take this verse as apostolic approval for vicarious baptism (such as the Mormons practice) is to ignore the rest of what the Scriptures teach, i.e. baptism was a result of an individual's faith and repentance (see Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).
- » "I believe there are at least two plausible explanations of the baptism to which Paul refers. One is that the apostle has in mind immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16). If the dead are not to be raised, why are these baptized with regard to the dead? That is, why are they baptized with a view toward their dead, if, in fact, the dead are not raised? The other view is that Paul refers to a baptism of suffering. The Bible does speak of certain ones being immersed in sufferings (cf. Macknight 268). For example, in Mark 10:38, Jesus asked James and John if they were able "to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" Again, in Luke 12:50, the Lord said, "I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!" In both instances the immersion is in sufferings. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul may refer to brethren who are overwhelmed with severe trials. Why do these willingly endure suffering with regard to the dead, or in expectation the dead will rise? If the dead are not raised, their perseverance is

meaningless. This second interpretation conforms to Paul's statements about his own hardships suffered with a view toward the resurrection." (David Owen)

2. Paul & others who are in danger every hour (vss. 30-32)

- » If there was no resurrection, why did Paul endure all that he endured? He specifically mentions his trials at Ephesus (where Paul wrote this letter). See Acts 19:23-41; 2 Cor. 1:8-11.
- » But "if" the dead are not raised, the only sane course of action would be to live just like the rest of the world, cf. Isa 22:13.

3. A call to sobriety (33-34)

- » They needed to consider the effect their associations were having on their theology (vs. 33). If they denied the resurrection to fit in with prevailing Greek thought then they needed to reconsider what was most important.
- » Rather they should become sober-minded in their thinking regarding the resurrection (vs. 34). If they did so they would stop sinning. Their denial of the resurrection was itself a sin, and had probably influenced much of their sinful behavior which Paul had previously addressed. "For doctrine leads to conduct, and unsound doctrine in the end must lead to sinful behavior... The error with which Paul is concerned arises basically (as do so many others) from a lack of real knowledge of God." (Leon Morris)