

The Resurrection: Its Historicity, Necessity, and Sufficiency
1 Corinthians 15:12–20 | 04.23.2017 | Body Life @OBC

Be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have in Jesus Christ!

These are Peter's words in his first epistle to the elect exiles scattered throughout the Mediterranean.

And they were brought to mind this week, as I was asked last minute to perform a memorial service for our neighbor's mother . . .

As many of you know . . .

There was a tragic accident in front of Woodbridge HS on Tuesday morning.

An elderly woman was struck and killed by work truck as he turned into her path.

Certainly, my heart ached as I heard that news on Tuesday . . . but in a world filled with tragedy, my mind did not dwell on it . . . UNTIL . . . my neighbor knocked on the door Thursday to make the connection – the woman killed was her 87 YO mother.

How quickly things change . . . How suddenly death stands at our door.

What seemed like a terrible but distant tragedy became much closer to home.

And for our neighbors, **April 18** will live as a day of infamy . . . because on it they lost their beloved mother, grandmother, and gifted educator.

For all of us . . . there are dates on the calendar, holes in the family photo, holes in our hearts.

Death has touched us all . . . it's only a matter of time before it will call again.

As one Christian singer puts it . . . "we're all just one phone call from our knees."

And consequently . . . we are a people that desperately need HOPE . . . as Peter puts it, we need to be prepared to give an ANSWER for our hope.

And this answer MUST stand on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For if our hope cannot stand up to pain and loss of death . . . it is no hope at all.

Only a hope standing on the promises of resurrection is a hope that will stand.

Only a resurrection hope can comfort in the face of death.

But this requires that the resurrection be true . . . and not the stuff of fantasy!

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul reminds of why we can trust in Christ's resurrection AND why we must trust in his death & resurrection.

Apparently . . . some Xians in Corinth were denying resurrection, and therefore they were compromising the hope of the gospel itself.

As we saw last we in **vv 1–11** . . . the gospel stands on the resurrection.

Because Christ died and rose again . . . we can have assurance that all he said was true: He is God & Savior . . . his death redeems us from our guilt . . . resurrect. promises life.

Likewise, as Paul will say in **vv. 20–28**, because Christ is risen from the dead . . . we can be sure we will rise from the dead IF . . . we have trusted in him.

But this is ONLY true if the dead are raised to life – which is the point of verses 12–19.

Only if resurrection is true . . . will our hope stand in the face of grief, loss, and death!

And this was the problem in verses 12–19 . . . **READ**

Two things to notice . . .

(1) Christ is being proclaimed in Corinth. Amazingly, this is one thing the Corinthians did right since Paul departed.

While they were arrogant, immature, and divided, they cared deeply about Jesus.

To their credit . . . they continued to meet as a church (11:18) in a city renowned for its paganism and sexual immorality.

Unlike in county which has enjoyed religious liberty & Xian teaching for centuries . . . this new born church had no such foundation. And yet, they continued to preach the gospel.

But this leads to the 2nd thing

(2) The church was risking its own future because some in the church were denying the resurrection.

The source of this is unknown. It could have come in from the Greco-Roman worldview which looked down on the physical body . . . the thought of a bodily resurrection would have been horrid to the Greek intellectuals.

At the same time, some Jews (like the Saducees) also denied resurrection in general. And some might certainly have denied the resurrection of one man . . . for the Jewish hope was found in a national resurrection at the end of the age.

So this sets up the problem

In an evangelistic church . . . some Christians risked destroying the evangel . . . because they denied resurrection.

In fact . . . denial of truth is always a threat to the church.

Each of us bring beliefs and belief systems into the church that if given full room to grow . . . would undermine the gospel and in time kill the church.

This is true most especially for leaders and teachers . . . and hence the reason why elders must be sound in doctrine and pure in faith, hope, and love.

But honestly, it's true for all of us. And this is why teaching stands at the center of the church . . . B/C it's by the word . . . God protects his children from errors in the church.
and it's by the word . . . God protects his church from errors of his people.

And in Corinth . . . the natural aversion to the body and a general denial of the resurrection endangered the gospel . . . and with it . . . the future of the church.

So . . . what does Paul do?

He teaches . . . And he teaches with the utmost logic.

Indeed . . . if you wonder whether if Xianity is logical . . . look no further than **vv 12–20**

It's a masterpiece of logic and argumentation.

Verse 12 sets up the problem. . .

Verse 13 and 14 make two IF-THEN statements

If there is no resurrection in general . . . then not even Christ is raised

If Christ is not raised than our preaching is in vain . . . and your faith is in vain

Verse 15 picks up this first IF-THEN statement . . . and draws the conclusion that IF Christ has not been raised from the dead, THEN we who have preached him alive are misrepresenting him – lit. we are “false witnesses”

Verse 16–17 repeat verses 13 and 14, almost verbatim.

This stresses the point Paul is making. The only change between vv 13–14 and vv 16–17 is that Paul points both barrels at the Corinthian's faith.

If Christ has not been raised, then your faith empty and worthless.

And worse, you are stuck in your sins.

So why does the resurrection matter? B/C there is no salvation, no forgiveness without. Christianity is not a Cross Only Religion. It is a Christ Only Religion.

But it is a Christ Crucified, Buried, Raise, and Reigning.

Thus, as **vv. 18–19** conclude . . . if there is no resurrection, we who proclaim Christ are most of all to be pitied. Why? Because it is just a farce.

If there is no resurrection . . . then there is no judgment, no God, no nothing.

Just go eat, drink, live for pleasure . . . for tomorrow we will die.

But there is a resurrection. And this changes everything.

And . . . this morning as we continue in 1 Corinthians 15 . . . we need to see three things about the resurrection.

First, the resurrection is **historical**.

It is a fact attested by numerous historical evidences and is thus reliable.

Second, the resurrection is **necessary**.

It is the only way one passes from death to life.

And the bedrock of all Christian hope.

Third, the resurrection is **sufficient**.

Meaning, that in the resurrection we find a well spring of life!

And all of our hopes and fears can find comfort and strength in this truth.

How Do We Know Christ Rose from the Grave?

Let me answer this in two ways.

First from data outside of 1 Corinthians 15; second from data in 1 Corinthians 15.

First, William Lane Craig¹ summarizes the evidence for Christ's Resurrection in Four Facts.

Fact 1: After His crucifixion, Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea in a tomb.

As the Gospels testify, Jesus' burial was by an historical figure named Joseph, from Arimathea, who was associated with the Sanhedrin.

The specifics of this testimony are too great to be a legend. For instance, it could easily be disproven if this man never existed . . . or did the unthinkable

No priest would defile himself w/ a dead man's body on the day before Passover, unless he was convinced Jesus was the Christ. The details therefore wouldn't be fabricated ... so they must be true.

It also proves that the location of the grave was known, setting up a second fact.

Fact 2: On the Sunday after the crucifixion, Jesus' tomb was found empty by a group of his women followers.

Again, in Israel's patriarchal society, the testimony of women was not valued.

Therefore, that Jesus' resurrection is first reported by women was shocking. And only adds credibility to the story. If the apostles sought to write a false report, this fact would not have been included.

So women came and found Jesus tomb empty, as did Peter and John. To date, the bones of Jesus have never been found. And they never will. His bones are in heaven!

Fact 3: On multiple occasions, and under various circumstances, different individuals and groups saw Jesus alive after His death.

This is reported by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. All Gospels record the eye-witness testimony to the resurrection of Christ.

Even more they record the testimony of men and women who expected a general resurrection at the end of the age. . and would not have believed a man accused on a tree could be messiah . . . UNLESS . . . that man actually arose from the grave

Fact 4: The original disciples suddenly and sincerely came to believe Jesus was risen from the dead, despite having every predisposition to the contrary.

So . . . these are four general evidences bear witness to the historicity of the resurrection.

¹ Craig, W. L. (2007). Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead? In *The Apologetics Study Bible*, 1729.

But there are even more evidences in 1 Corinthians 15 itself.

1. **Biblical Evidence.** . . . the Hebrew Bible bore witness to the fact that a Messiah would come to life.

While this mystery was hidden to the Jews during the OT, as the mystery of the gospel was revealed to Paul . . . he can point to the Old Testament and say Christ arose on the third according to the Scriptures. In fact, we read earlier Ps 16, which Peter also applies to Jesus

2. **Apostolic Evidence** . . . Paul sites six groups of people in vv. 3–8 to whom Jesus appeared.

Importantly, Paul doesn't just list them to pad his stats. Rather, each of his stats have a story

First, **Peter** is the timid denier of Christ . . . who upon seeing the risen Christ is restored and empowered to proclaim Christ within earshot of the place where he denied Jesus.

Next, the **twelve** are the ones who scattered when Jesus was crucified. They are the ones who locked themselves in the Upper Room – scared to death of what would happen next.

Yet, what happened next can only be explained by Christ's resurrection. With Holy Spirit power, they bore witness to Christ's resurrection until many of them died for the message.

Next, the **500** who saw Jesus at one time is an argument against some personal experience or hallucination. Jesus was seen and verified by a congregation larger than that in Corinth.

Paul invites doubters to seek out and listen to these witnesses. To be sure, we don't have the luxury of speaking to them. But . . . we do know the testimony of **Paul/James**

First, Acts 9, 22, 26, Galatians 1 and 1 Timothy 1 all recount **Paul's** testimony—how in the midst of his sin, the resurrected Christ confronted and converted him. **Paul's** conversion is one of the greatest evidences of Christ's resurrection, as is the conversion of James.

Likewise, **James and Jude too** questioned and even mocked their brother's messianic claims. In John 7, we hear them tempting Jesus to go and prove himself. They didn't believe.

Sometime later, after his death—an execution that showed him to be an accursed man—his brothers all believed. **How could this be . . . unless Christ rose from the grave?**

So the **Scriptural evidence** and **apostolic evidence** bear witness to a Risen Christ . . . so does

3. **Church Evidence** . . . that is for 2000 years . . . the risen Christ has continued to prove his power and presence by sustaining and even flourishing churches around the world.

To be sure . . . not all buildings with the title church are Christ's people . . . but I would suggest the counterfeits confirm the reality of true churches . . . people like the Egyptian Ekk

Two weeks ago, a bomb shattered their church in Alexandria . . . and yet the next week the church was filled with men and women worshiping Christ.

What explains the power of the church to multiply against military regimes and violent hatred?

The answer . . . Jesus is alive . . . and he is sending his Spirit and his Word to rescue his sheep and gather his flock.

And . . . any church who gives themselves to him . . . will be sustained and strengthened, even as Satan and his allies attack.

Altogether . . . we have great reason to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sure . . . it is not scientific, DNA evidence. But historical data never is!

The Bible is historical eye-witness testimony.

And when put to the test . . . these witnesses prove reliable.

Which means . . . a previously dead man walked out of a tomb on Easter Sunday

And he offers such life to anyone and everyone else . . .

Indeed, you must ask yourself . . . what do you do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ ??

If you DENY the resurrection . . . how do you make sense of these eye-witnesses?

Are you so sure of yourself. . . you refuse to hear the testimony of these men & women?

If you DENY the resurrection . . . I would challenge you to consider it again.

If you ACCEPT the resurrection . . . what impact does it have on you?

How has it changed your life?

How does your life look different than those who deny the resurrection?

What are you doing today that you wouldn't do if the resurrection was false?

What might the resurrection say to your fears of danger and death?

How might it move you to risk for Christ?

What might the resurrection power of Christ do in your life, if you daily you meditated on its reality?

If you BELIEVE in the resurrection . . . I would challenge you to consider how its reality impacts you . . . for if it has no impact, **then why is it necessary?**

For What is the Resurrection Necessary?

This question is the one most directly answered in verses 12–19 . . .

First, consider what is lost **if resurrection is lost**.

1. **Christ is not risen from the dead** (vv. 13, 16) . . . by general principle; if resurrections are denied, then Christ's resurrection cannot remain true.
2. **Preaching the gospel is empty** (v. 14a)... if preaching depends on the resurrection, then all preaching about Christ is invalid. Even Jesus' ethical teaching is invalidated because in the Sermon on the Mount, he speaks of truths dependent on resurrection

How does the meek inherit the earth, apart from resurrection (Mat 5:5)?

Why store up treasures in heaven, if death means you can't enjoy them (Matt 6:19)?

3. **Faith in the gospel is empty** (v. 14b, 17) . . . if resurrection is denied, then all that Jesus said about resurrection is false. And faith in him is futile.
4. **The apostles are imposters** (v. 15) . . . they have falsely represented God and led people to give their lives for a make-believe Savior.
5. **There is no remission of sins and guilt remains** (v. 17) . . . without the resurrection, there is no justification . . . for in Christ's resurrection God has declared him innocent; his resurrection vindicates him and justifies all who believe in him . . . but if there is no resurrection . . . then we are hopelessly stuck in our sins.

If there is no resurrection . . . there is no forgiveness. No forgiveness before God. No forgiveness between one another. Again, the ethical teachings to forgive all fail, because there is no power to forgive.

Only when sins are nailed to a cross does a family have the power to forgive their loved ones murderer . . . only when they believe that God will raise him from the dead, and justice done . . . can they have power to give grace.

But if there is no resurrection . . . there is no forgiveness, no peace, no hope.

6. **Death is a certainty and all who have died will perish** (v. 18) . . . This is the inevitable sad ending for every person if resurrection is denied. Loved ones lost will remain in the grave. And though we will join them in death, we will not see them.

For all these reasons . . . Paul makes his final point in verse 19 . . . **READ**

7. So . . . if there is no resurrection . . . We delude ourselves as fools who have no hope beyond this short life (v. 19) . . .

If there is no resurrection . . . there is no hope in the face of death.

Paul's Magnificent Contrast

→ **But** if there is a resurrection . . . oh then, everything changes!

And that's the point Paul is driving towards. He makes this tight, logical argument to bring us to verse 20 . . . where he says ... **READ**

Next time we will pick up the meaning of first-fruits – a glorious truth that reminds us that our resurrection is secured by Christ's resurrection . . . that his resurrection, in fact, is not part of a different resurrection harvest . . . but the first produce of the coming resurrection.

But that's for next time . . . this time . . . I want to return to all the negative statements Paul just made and turn them around . . . to the effects of the resurrection.

That is to say . . . BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION . . .

1. **Christ is raised from the dead** . . . which means, he is ruling and reigning on the throne of God, where he will certainly return and resurrect all those who have trusted in him.
2. **Preaching the gospel IS fruitful.** Raised to life, X is not passively sitting back to see what will happen in the world – he continues to call his sheep and build his church with his Word.
3. **Faith in the gospel is the key to life.** Faith in Christ promises forgiveness of sins and friendship with the Maker of the Universe and Redeemer of Humanity. Thus, nothing is more important than uniting yourself to the risen X by faith.
4. **The apostles are the most important spokesmen in the world.** Their message surpasses everything else—past, present, future. More than modern counselors, coaches, or consultants, the apostles have the words of life, because they are witnesses to the risen Christ.
5. **Sins will be forgiven and death will be defeated.** There is no other successful way to deal with sin and death.

If you are grappling with guilt, shame, remorse . . . the resurrection offers hope.

If you are craving justice and peace . . . the resurrection promises that God has put a man on the throne who will day make all things right.

6. **Death is a defeated foe.** All who die in Christ only “sleep.” Because of the Res. Christians have the unswerving hope of waking when the Son rises.

7. **We undeserving heirs have hope now and forever.**

It is not folly to believe in resurrection . . . it is folly to reject it.

For a day is soon coming when Christ the resurrected Lord will return to claim his people, establish his kingdom, and make all things new.

When that day comes . . . those awaiting his return . . . will be raised to eternal life.

And those who scoff at his resurrection . . . will stand before his terrible judgment.

Why is the resurrection necessary . . . because everything good in life depends on it!
And this is why the resurrection is not only necessary . . . it is sufficient.

The Resurrection is Sufficient

For any and every problem we face . . . the resurrection of Jesus Christ is enough.

The logic of this truth is not difficult to see

If death is the greatest problem we face. . . and death is not prevented in any other way
Then . . . resurrection's victory over the grave . . . solves our greatest problem.

And if resurrection delivers death its deathblow by raising us to new life in Christ,
Then it follows that the same God who grants us resurrection life . . . has power for us to help us with any lesser trauma or trial.

Whether it is an unexpected death, disease, chronic pain, a troubled marriage, a rebellious child, an ailing parent, conflict with a neighbor, unemployment, SSA, or anything else that makes life painful and following Christ hard . . .

. . . Christ's resurrection grants hope that the God who raises the dead will supply you with all the grace you need to walk with Spirit-given power.

That's the logic of the resurrection, but I want you to see three places where this logic is validated and made visible in Scripture.

1. For the one whose sins are too much to bear, who is covered in guilt or shame, and wonders if God could ever love him ... this is what the **resurrection promises – new life in Christ!**

2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

The gospel does not merely repair broken people. It buries them and raises them anew. Christ's death and resurrection become their identity . . . so that sinners can stand firm in God's love.

In Christ's resurrection . . . Jesus was vindicated as being 100% righteous.
And in Christ . . . we receive this same status and same life . . . so that our old life no longer defines us . . . it is Christ and his life.

This is the first place resurrection speaks to us.

2. For the man or woman whose trials in life seem too much to bear, THE RESURRECTION PROMISES GRACE AND PURPOSE.

Listen to his words in **2 Corinthians 4:7–11** . . .

[They are foreign to our modern comfort-seeking ways . . . but that's why we so desperately need them!]

Speaking of his ministry which glorifies the Lord's resurrection power . . . he writes: But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Paul understands one way the resurrection is seen today is in the sufferings of God's people.

When we are afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down we are 'carrying in our body the death of Jesus' – **i.e., death is not just a final declaration at the end of life; it is the way we all live in this fallen world.**

But for those who are united to Christ by faith, we who suffer are NOT crushed, driven to despair, forsaken, or destroyed.

Rather, in all our weakness . . . God manifests his power . . . so that others might see Christ at work in us . . . and come to know his resurrection life.

In this way . . . Xian suffering is never purposeless . . . In fact, such suffering is designed by God to make us trust in his resurrection alone . . . and to lead others to do the same!

As Paul says . . . "So death is at work in us, but life in you."

To say it differently, we can have confidence that as we abide in Christ through the pains of death . . . he will bring resurrection life in others . . . as we share the gospel of Res Life

3. For the man or woman facing death . . . THE RESURRECTION ALONE PROMISES HOPE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH.

This is Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 15:20–28 . . . that Christ is the firstfruits of a harvest that is to be raised to life on his return.

v. 22 summarizes it best . . . **For as in Adam all die,
so also in Christ shall all be made alive.**

In Adam describes the condition of every person outside of Christ . . . without Christ death is our ultimate end.

But for those who know Christ . . . death is but a falling asleep . . . a temporary condition that will be undone by Christ's return and the final resurrection!

To anyone facing death . . . this is a certain hope.

It is not wishful thinking . . . or the stuff of science fiction, fantasy, or fairy tales.

Rather . . . it is the confession of the church.

Jesus Christ who died for sins was raised on the third day . . . to give us a certain hope of friendship with God and resurrection from the dead.

Indeed . . . this must be our confession too and the foundation of our hope.

For we do not know when death will next knock on our door . . .

Or when the Lord will call us home . . .

But we do know this . . . death is appointed for all of us sinful children of Adam.

And so . . . our hope is not found in bargaining with death or denying its existence,
Rather we cling to Jesus Christ who died and rose again.

And who has made a way for us to have life everlasting.

This is our eternal hope . . . may we never turn from it!