

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19

INTRODUCTION

Paul reminded the Corinthians in the opening 11 verses of the evidence surrounding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Corinthian church had no problem believing that Jesus has been raised from the dead otherwise they would not have been Christians. However their problem was in believing some of the implications of Jesus resurrection mainly the fact that they too would be raised.

Paul's argument is very clear if Jesus was raised from the dead then resurrection from the dead is clearly possible but on the other hand if people in general cannot be raised then Jesus could not have been raised either (v 12). The two resurrections stand or fall together there cannot be one without the other. Furthermore as we will see Paul says that without the resurrection the gospel is meaningless and faith is useless.

It seems strange to us that some believers at Corinth could accept Jesus resurrection and yet not accept the general resurrection of people. The pagan philosophies and religions of the time was the cause behind the confusion of the Corinthians. Some believed that the soul was good but the body was evil and the soul longs to be released from the imprisonment of the body. Therefore for such people death brought release so why would one want to imprison the soul again in a new resurrected body? Some at Corinth probably held this view before their conversion and we all know how hard it is to change views that have been ingrained within us.

Paul after stating a very simple truth in verse 12 goes on to give the consequences for us if there is no resurrection.

1. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THERE BEING NO RESURRECTION (vs. 13-19)

Paul wants to show in these verses that the resurrection is not only possible but also essential to the Christian faith by giving seven consequences that would result if there were no resurrection. Now Paul separates these consequences into two groups.

a) Theological Consequences (vs. 13-15)

i) Christ would not be risen (v 13) - The first and most obvious consequence of there being no resurrection would be that not even Christ would have been raised from the dead. Now the implications of Christ not being raised are too serious to even think about for without the resurrection, Christ's life would have been a failure, for death would have defeated him just like every other person. Sin and Satan would have won and salvation would be impossible for sinners. In which case the future would be bleak for everyone living on the earth for all that would await them would be hell and eternal judgement.

So you see Paul insists that without a firm belief in the resurrection then unbelievers will have a field day with the Christian faith for it would be like every other religion in that it could not deal with man's ultimate problem the problem of the sinful human heart.

But praise God Christ has been raised, he has died for sinners and he has been victorious in securing salvation for all that will believe in him. Therefore Christian your sins are forgiven through Christ, your salvation is assured and your future is secured in heaven.

Sinner I can call on you tonight knowing that you can receive God's forgiveness no matter what sins you have committed you can be made pure and you can start a new life with Christ. I can do

that because of Jesus Christ who has lived, died and been raised again in order to secure salvation for all who will repent and believe.

ii) Preaching of the gospel would be useless. (v 14) - Now this is the second consequence of there being no resurrection. What would be the point of preaching the gospel for the word gospel means good news but there is no good news in preaching about a dead Saviour. In fact Jesus would not be a Saviour at all if he were dead and not raised. Such preaching would be useless completely meaningless.

At the heart of the gospel is a Saviour who died for our sins in fulfilment of the Scriptures and was buried but was raised again in accordance with the Scriptures (vs. 3-4).

Therefore apart from the resurrection, Jesus could not have conquered sin, death or hell and those three great enemies would forever be our conquerors. Without the resurrection the good news would be bad news there would simply be nothing worth preaching about for without the resurrection the gospel would be a hopeless message of meaningless nonsense.

Unless our Lord conquered sin and death making it possible for sinners to be saved and to follow in his victory then there simply is no gospel to preach. But thank God Christ has been raised and there is a general resurrection for all people and therefore we have a wonderful message to preach.

Jesus has conquered sin and death and hell and therefore the only way of escape is through faith in Christ. Because he died and rose again all who believe in him have also died and be raised to newness of life in Christ. This is a wonderful message and perhaps you have not yet understood it or taken it in.

Let me urge you today to do that and to ponder this message and to come to acknowledge that because of Christ's death and resurrection you too can die to sin and judgement and be made alive to Christ and to eternal life. It takes the same resurrection power to do that but God can do it because he has demonstrated his power through raising Jesus from the dead.

Christian let us not be shy or embarrassed to proclaim this truth, let's get the good news out. Let people know that Jesus is alive today and is willing to forgive sin and grant newness of life to all who come to him.

iii) Faith In Christ Would Be In Worthless (v 14 & 17) - Faith in Jesus Christ would be of no value if Jesus were not risen because we would be putting our trust in a dead person who had no power to conquer the same enemies that conquer us. Our faith would have no purpose for a dead Saviour cannot give life.

What would be the point in seeking to live a holy life or seeking to serve God if at the end of the day that God was in effect powerless to save? We would be better to put our faith in ourselves or in some other great man for they would have as much power and effect on us as a dead Christ.

We would be considered foolish by the world for putting our faith in Jesus and the world would be right for we would have believed for nothing, lived for nothing and died for nothing.

But thank God our faith is not in vain, for Christ is raised and is alive and is victorious therefore our faith in him is faith in the risen victorious Saviour who will save us from our sins and take us to his Father in heaven. Therefore when things are difficult and hard for us and when we are wavering in our faith because of the circumstances of life, remember whom it is that you are putting your faith in. He is the risen Saviour and the glorious Lord who has died for our sins and was raised for our

justification. Our faith is not without effect for that faith is the faith that secures our salvation through Christ and even that faith is not even ours but it is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8).

iv) All Witnesses To And All Preachers Would Be liars (v 15) - If there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead then every person who claimed to have seen the risen Christ would be liars. Every person who preached that Jesus is raised from the dead would also be liars including Paul and the other Apostles who made such claims.

It would be simply impossible to accept that such people were not wilfully lying but were simply mistaken because of the sheer amount of people who claimed to have seen risen Christ. Remember 500 people claimed that they saw him all at the same time. If Jesus was not alive then all these people have wilfully set out to deceive others by spreading lies around that Jesus has risen from the dead and they have seen him.

All these witnesses would have had to conspire together to deliberately spread around the rumour that Jesus was alive. Of course Paul's argument is really quite silly and he knows that but that is what it would mean if Jesus had not of been raised from the dead which is where the Corinthians failure to believe in a personal resurrection would ultimately lead.

Now if the apostles had lied about something as vital as the resurrection then how could they be believed about anything therefore the New Testament would just be a bunch of writings from deceitful and wicked men? So you see all New Testament truth stands or falls together based upon the resurrection.

But there is another implication here as well. All those who witnessed the resurrected Christ would have preached a lie to others and they would have been maligned, imprisoned and many of them martyred for what? It would be for proclaiming a lie.

Although Paul does not mention it here but by implication if there is no resurrection then Jesus himself lied or at best was tragically mistaken because he spoke of his death and his resurrection on many occasions.

But of course Jesus is the Son of God and never lied and all those witnesses and apostles spoke of what they actually saw. They proclaimed what they knew was true and they willingly suffered and died for that truth. Therefore all their writings can be trusted and depended upon and we can have complete confidence in God's word as a consequence.

Therefore we can seek by God's grace to live our lives by the principles that are recorded for us because we know that the eyewitnesses of the resurrection spoke the truth and therefore all their writings can be trusted.

b) Personal Consequences (vs. 16-19)

Paul now gives what may be described as three personal consequences that would result if there were no such thing as resurrection from the dead.

Of course all these consequences like the four we have already looked at have theological consequences but these three listed here state more directly how believers would be affected if there were no resurrection, which is why I am describing them as personal consequences.

i) We Would Still Be In Our Sins (v 17) - If the dead are not raised then Christ has not been raised and therefore there would be no forgiveness for sin (vs. 16-17). Believers in Jesus would as a result be no better off than the unbelieving world. For Christians would be like every other human

being they would still be in their sins. They would be no better off than the murderer or rapist or hardened criminal who have no time for God.

We would be no better off than the other religions in the world that worship dead gods. Sin would hold us in its grip with no hope of escape, we would continue to be its slave and ultimately we would face the eternal consequences of our own sin.

But we thank God that Jesus did rise from the dead and conquered sin and therefore is able to forgive all that seek this forgiveness. Christ has died to take our place and our sin, he has taken God's wrath upon himself so that we do not have too and the resurrection is the proof that his death accomplished salvation for his people.

The great tragedy is that although Christ has died and been raised and offers forgiveness and new life there are so few who take up this wonderful offer of forgiveness. Far too many who want to go their own way and live their own lives and who this Easter will not pause and think for one moment about the death and resurrection of Jesus. However those of us who are Christians must be careful here in case we take for granted this wonderful forgiveness granted to us by Christ. We can almost think that we deserve such forgiveness, which of course is completely false.

We can live as if we have not been forgiven living for ourselves and failing to thank Him for his salvation through Jesus Christ. But as we approach Easter let us pause and think again about the wonderful salvation that is provided for us through Jesus Christ and as a result let us live in humble service before him with thankful hearts.

ii) Those Christians Who Have Died Would Be In Hell (v 18) - The phrase fallen asleep was a common term used of believers for death. This is because for believers death is like falling asleep in this world and waking up in the eternal presence of God in heaven. It is a painless experience and one that is refreshing for the believer.

However if there was no resurrection then Christ would not be raised and every true believer in the Old and New Testaments would have perished in hell forever. This is a dreadful thought but praise God it is only a thought because Jesus has been raised; therefore every believer is in heaven and not hell. This is because their sins have been forgiven through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So you see how every core truth depends on this truth of the resurrection.

Every Christian who lives today does not need to fear death or hell for although we will experience physical death we will never experience eternal death. Even physical death is no more than falling asleep in Jesus. I am so thankful for this truth for before I was a believer I lay awake at nights in fear of death and hell.

But now because I know Jesus has been raised then I have nothing to fear, Jesus has taken my hell he has conquered death and I can point to the resurrection for assurance of these things. So can you if you are a believer in Jesus Christ. Our eternal destiny is assured because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

iii) We Would Be People To Be Pitied (v 18) - this point is very obvious in the light of all the other consequences that we have already mentioned. If our hope in Christ is for this world only then we are indeed to be pitied. In truth without the resurrection and the blessings of salvation, which it brings then Christianity would be pointless and pathetic. We would have no Saviour, no forgiveness, no gospel no meaningful faith, no life and no hope for eternity. But thank God, Jesus did rise from the dead and we should be envied rather than pitied. However because of sin and its effects on people sinners fail to realise what we possess in Christ.

Many people still pity us because they think we are wasting our lives in following Christ but how wrong and foolish such people are. Sinners are to be pitied because they are living for sin and self. They are controlled by their own sinful nature and are following the ways of the devil without even knowing it.

But Christians are not to be pitied for just think what we have and are as a result of Christ and his resurrection. We have forgiveness, justification, the work of the Spirit, we are adopted in God's family we have joy and peace and ultimately along with many other blessings we have an eternal home with our Saviour in heaven.

All of this comes to us because of Jesus his death and his resurrection on behalf of his people. No we are not to be pitied for Paul immediately continues with verse 20 "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

Hallelujah

Amen