

## A VERIFIABLE FAITH

### 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-20

#### INTRODUCTION

- A. Importance of resurrection
  - 1. Chapter 15 is a refutation of the denial of bodily resurrection.
  - 2. Reasons
    - a. Christ's death and resurrection is verifiable and necessary for sin and death to be abolished.
    - b. Without resurrection, faith is useless and personal sacrifices has no meaning.
- B. Arguments for a verifiable faith in 1 Corinthians 15:1-20.
  - 1. Gospel proofs (1-11)
  - 2. A convincing argument (12 - 19)
  - 3. A triumphant Declaration (20)

#### GOSPEL PROOFS

- A. The Gospel is essential (1-2), *Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.*
  - 1. The Gospel is the message of salvation.
  - 2. It is received by placing faith in Christ alone.
- B. The Gospel is defined (3-4a), *For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day*
  - 1. Paul received the message and proclaims it.
  - 2. The components
    - a. Jesus Christ came to earth to die to pay the penalty of sin.
    - b. He died (was buried).
    - c. He rose from the dead (the payment was accepted).
- C. The Gospel is confirmed (4b-8), *in accordance with the scriptures,*
  - 1. By the Old Testament - Scriptures
    - a. Psalm 16:10, *For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.*
    - b. Isaiah 53:8-10, *By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.*
  - 2. By the New Testament believers
    - a. Peter - first male witness
    - b. Disciples
    - c. Five hundred
      - 1) Possibly, these were in attendance at the commission recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
      - 2) Most were still living and could be consulted.

- d. James and all the apostles (a body wider than the previously mentioned twelve but were distinguished by having seen the resurrected Christ, 1 Cor. 9:1, *Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?*)
  - e. Paul - the last of that group.
- D. The Gospel is supernatural (9-11), *For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Or does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was indeed written for our sake, for whoever plows should plow in hope and whoever threshes should thresh in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits?*
- 1. It is not dependent on the ability of the messenger but on the grace of God.
  - 2. It is not dependent on who the messenger is but on the work of God.

<b>A CONVINCING ARGUMENT</b>
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- A. Resurrection skeptics (12), *If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we still more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.*
- 1. There were intellectual skeptics in Athens, Acts 17:32, *When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, "We will hear you again about this."*
  - 2. There were religious skeptics in Jerusalem, Acts 23:8, *(The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.)*
  - 3. There are skeptics today.
    - a. A religious leader stated, *Suppose I came up to you and said, 'I know a man who was executed by the state. When he was dying, it got dark. There was an earthquake. And three days later the dead man got up and walked out. He could eat, walk and talk.'*
    - b. Was Jesus' resurrection just a fantastic tale or a fundamental element of our faith? 1 Corinthians 15 is a clear testimony of the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the Christian faith.
- B. No resurrection - no Gospel (13-15)
- 1. Christ has not been raised (13), *If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised;*
    - a. The resurrection of believers is tied to the resurrection of Christ in 1Thessalonians 4:14, *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.*
    - b. Life for believers is tied to the life of Christ, John 14:19, *In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.*
  - 2. The Gospel is false if Christ was not raised from the dead (14-15)
    - a. Preaching the Gospel has no value (14a), *and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain*
      - 1) The definition of the Gospel message was given in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.
      - 2) Without resurrection the message is *vain*, empty, without value, without cause.
    - b. Faith in Christ is worthless (14b), *and your faith has been in vain.*
      - 1) Jesus was an impostor if He did not rise from the grave.
        - a) Mark 16:21, *And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.*
        - b) Luke 9:22, *saying, "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."*
      - 2) Without the resurrection, one can't distinguish Christ from other religious leaders.
    - c. It is witness against God (15), *We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.*
      - 1) If the dead are not raised, we can't say that God raised Christ.
      - 2) Such testimony would be against God Who is true.

- C. No resurrection - no faith (16-19)
1. Christ has not been raised (16), ***For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised.***
    - a. In verses 14-15, Paul emphasized that no resurrection destroys the Gospel message.
    - b. In verses 17-19, his argument becomes even more personal. No resurrection makes faith in Christ of no value.
  2. Faith in Christ is worthless (17-19)
    - a. There is no forgiveness of sins (17), ***If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.***
      - 1) *Worthless*, the word at times is translated *vain*, but is not the same word in verses 10 and 14. This word means *without results*.
      - 2) A worthless faith is described as one that can't forgive sin.
      - 3) The resurrection was identified by Paul with God's validation of Christ's work of redemption, Romans 4:25, *who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.*
    - b. Those who have died in Christ have perished (18), ***Then those also who have died in Christ have perished.***
      - 1) If there is no resurrection, the dead lived a faith that has no lasting results.
      - 2) Ultimate victory would belong to death.
    - c. Those who live by faith in Christ are to be most pitied (19), ***If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.***
      - 1) Christians proclaim great hope in everlasting life.
      - 2) Christians suffer persecution, ridicule, and rejection for their faith.
      - 3) Christians sacrifice personal desires for the sake of the Gospel.
      - 4) Without resurrection, the Christian faith is without results.

<b>A TRIUMPHANT DECLARATION</b>
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- A. Jesus Christ is risen
1. There are many witnesses, 1 Corinthians 15:5-8.
  2. Peter Kreeft, in response to a skeptic's question concerning life after death, "*What do you really know about life after death, anyway? Have you ever been there? Have you come back to tell us?*" "*No, but I have a very good Friend who has.*"
- B. He is the first fruits of those who are asleep (20), ***But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.***
1. *first fruits*
    - a. It is an Old Testament concept where the first grain from the harvest dedicated to the Lord.
    - b. It signified that more was coming.
  2. Resurrection order
    - a. Jesus
      - 1) He is the example of resurrection since He is the first to rise from the dead and not die again.
      - 2) He is the guarantee that more resurrections will follow, 1 Corinthians 15:23, *But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*
    - b. Those who are asleep
      - 1) Sleep is the picture Paul paints of those who died since Jesus' resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:6, *Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.*
      - 2) Because resurrection is certain, the dead in Christ need not fear temporary separation from loved ones.

## *CONCLUSION*

- A. We have a verifiable faith founded on resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- B. The Gospel is a resurrection message.
- C. We have confident hope because of the empty tomb.