

If Christ Has Not Been Raised... But He Has!

1 Corinthians 15:12–34

BIG IDEA: *If there is no resurrection of the dead, the entire Christian faith collapses; but since Christ has been raised, our hope is certain, our labor is meaningful, and our lives must be reoriented in holiness and mission.*

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND: Some in Corinth denied Christ's resurrection, while others denied the future resurrection of believers, influenced by Greek disdain for the body. Paul shows that such thinking guts the gospel, but affirms that Christ's resurrection guarantees ours and demands a transformed way of living.

1. If There Is No Resurrection, THEN Christianity Collapses (vv. 12–19)

- Paul stacks a series of “*then*” consequences to show how absurd it is to deny the resurrection of believers while claiming to hold the gospel.
- 1. **If the dead are not raised, then Christ is not raised** (vv. 13, 16).
 - **Logic:** Denying a class (resurrection of “the dead”) logically denies the instance (Christ).
 - **Application:** Beware of “spiritualizing” the faith to avoid hard doctrines; the gospel is historical and physical.
- 2. **Preaching is empty and faith is empty** (v. 14; *kenos*, “void/without content”).
- 3. **We misrepresent God** (v. 15).
 - **Application:** The apostles did not peddle inspirational ideas; they testified to an event. If no resurrection, they are false witnesses.
- 4. **You are still in your sins** (v. 17).
 - The cross saves because the resurrection vindicates Christ's sacrifice. The penalty of sin is paid (Rom 4:25). No resurrection? No justification.
- 5. **The dead in Christ have perished; Christians are pitiable** (vv. 18–19).
 - If this life is all there is, the idea that ‘you only live once (YOLO)’ is logical— “*eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*” Christianity would be a sad self-deception.

2. But Christ is Raised: Firstfruits, Order, and the End of Death (vv. 20–28)

1. **Christ the Firstfruits** (v. 20). Your future is not wishful thinking; it's tied to Jesus' already-harvested, already-raised body.
2. **Two Adams, Two Destinies** (vv. 21–22). In Adam all die; in Christ all will be made alive. “All in Christ” are those united to Christ by faith. You are either in **Adam** (death) or in **Christ** (life). Union with Christ “now” determines resurrection life “then.”
3. **The Order of God's Victory** (vv. 23–26): Christ, Believers, Kingdom of God. Last enemy: Death—not a friend, not an illusion, but a real enemy that Christ will finally destroy.
4. **“All things under His feet” and the Son's Loving Subjection** (vv. 27–28)
The perfect Son completes redemption and presents the finished kingdom to the Father, “so that God may be all in all.” The final word over the universe is God's glory filling all in all—no rival powers, no loose threads, no lingering death.

5. Because Christ is raised, your future is not “maybe”—it is scheduled:

1) Christ's return, 2) your resurrection, 3) the end of death, and 4) God all in all.

3. Live in Light of the Resurrection: Ministry, Morals, and Mission (vv. 29–34)

Paul drives the doctrine into daily life with three concrete implications.

1. **Why Do Anything Religious—If There's No Resurrection?** (v. 29).
NOTE: Paul **does not** command vicarious baptism. He simply uses a **local practice** (likely among some in Corinth) to show its **inconsistency** if there's no resurrection: *Why do that at all if the dead aren't raised?*
2. **Why Risk and Suffer—If There's No Resurrection?** (vv. 30–32)
Paul faces danger daily; he “fought with beasts in Ephesus” (likely a metaphor for hostile opponents). Without resurrection, the honest motto would be: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (Isa 22:13).
3. **Why Pursue Holiness—If There's No Resurrection?** (vv. 33–34)
Bad company corrupts good morals—ideas and influences shape us. Like altitude acclimation, your spiritual “oxygen” level changes depending on who you're with and what you breathe in—Scripture, prayer, wise friends vs. cynical, compromising, and ungodly voices.

PUTTING IT ALL INTO PRACTICE (CONCRETE STEPS):

1. **Grieve With Hope:** At memorials and anniversaries of loss, name death as an enemy and Christ as conqueror. Read 1 Cor 15:20–26 aloud in your home.
2. **Rule Over Your Fear:** Choose one anxiety (finances, health, children) and confront it weekly with biblical truth—rest it under the promise that **the end is scheduled**, and Christ will put all enemies under His feet, including death.
3. **Firstfruits Gratitude:** When you see the first snow on South Mountain or the first harvest in the fields here in the valley, pause and say: “Firstfruits.” Let creation's rhythms train your heart to expect the full harvest of resurrection. Christ is the first-fruit. Because He rose, so too will we who believe in Him.
4. **Make a New, or Next, Step This Week:** Write a name. Pray. Make the call. Invite a neighbor. Join a ministry team. Take one step you'd only take if the resurrection is true. Are you living life like you believe He is coming again? Keep showing up in your ministry lane (nursery, youth, shut-ins, teaching, outreach, serving, etc.). In a resurrection world, nothing sacrificial is wasted.
5. **Give Yourself a Holiness Audit:** Ask: “Which voices most shape my week?” Audit your inputs (friends, feeds, music, hobbies, politics, shows). Replace one harsh or toxic input with a life-giving one. Meet a believer for coffee; memorize 1 Cor 15:58 as a family. Who, or what, is speaking into your life? Does what you hear match biblical truth? Choose companions who strengthen resurrection hope. Your faith in Jesus should change you.
6. **Make space for Scripture and prayer daily; resurrection people cultivate resurrection habits.** “Because He was raised, nothing done in Him is wasted.”