

1 Corinthians 15

Good evening and thank you so much for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to 1 Corinthians 15? We only have 2 chapters left, and we'll move on to 2nd Samuel on Wednesday nights starting here in a couple of weeks.

Back in Acts 17, Paul was at the Areopogus, or "Mars hill" in Athens. It was there that Paul masterfully presented the gospel to the Greek philosophers, even quoting their own Greek poets. Paul engaged the Greek thinkers in ways that captured their hearts and their minds, until a very specific part of the Christian truth shocked his listeners. **Acts 17:32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."**

If you recall the city of Corinth wasn't far from Athens, and Corinth was greatly influenced by Greek thinking. Remember Paul had earlier rebuked the Corinthian Christians for taking great pride in their so-called "knowledge."

And based on Paul's writings here in chapter 15, the Corinthian Christians were allowing the worlds influence around them to shape their opinions about the resurrection.

Paul goes back to basics with the epicenter of Christianity-the miraculous resurrection of Christ from the dead.

We're going to study verses 1-41, and the title of tonight's message is New Bodies

Let's pray

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, The message of the gospel is both simple and profound. It can

be expressed in as little as 5 words-Jesus died and rose again. Or the gospel can be expounded into 16 chapters-Romans.

Notice, despite all of their problems with carnality, strife, immorality, and weird spirituality, the Corinthians still stood for the gospel.

2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. Hold fast implies there were some people, or some things which threatened to snatch the true gospel away from the Corinthian Christians—perhaps Paul's referring to false teachings like Gnosticism.

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, In Hebrews 10 the author explains how Jesus' sacrifice is superior to the sacrifices prescribed in the Law of Moses. If you recall, the OT law was a shadow of the good things to come—the law merely pointed forward to something better—namely Jesus.

The sacrifices for sin that the Law of Moses required were incapable of perfecting those who offered them. This is why the sacrifices had to be offered continually and repeatedly—they weren't able to achieve the righteousness of God.

All the OT sacrifices pointed people toward to One who would be able to take away sins by the shedding of His own blood. Jesus, the perfect sinless lamb of God, died for our sins. But of course that's not the end of the story.

4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

It's wisely been said that if the cross is the payment for our sins, the empty tomb is the receipt, showing that the perfect Son of God made the perfect payment for our sins.

When you read the book of Acts you'll notice the frequency in which the resurrection of Jesus was a prominent theme in the evangelistic preaching of the early church Acts 2, Acts 3, Acts 4, all mention Jesus' resurrection.

The resurrection showed that Jesus didn't succumb to the inevitable result of sin. The resurrection is proof of His victory.

Paul is now about to list out the evidence for Jesus' resurrection. Though no one saw the moment of the actual resurrection of Jesus, many people saw the resurrected Jesus.

5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. Jesus made a special resurrection appearance to Peter in Luke 24.

Then by the 12 refers to the first meeting Jesus had with His assembled disciples, mentioned in Mark 16 and Luke 24. This was the meeting where Jesus appeared in the room with the doors and windows shut, and breathed on the disciples, giving them the Holy Spirit.

6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. This meeting of the resurrected Jesus with five hundred brethren isn't detailed in the gospels, but it is suggested by **Matthew 28:10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."**

After His resurrection, but before His Ascension to heaven, Jesus physically met with His followers on many different occasions.

And most of them were still alive at the time of Paul's writing this. That's why Paul says "Go ask these people who saw the resurrected Jesus. There are literally hundreds who saw Him with their own eyes. They know Jesus rose from the dead."

Paul continues...

7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. This is James, the brother of Jesus, who initially refused to believe in Christ, yet became a prominent leader in the church as seen in Acts 15.

But it wasn't just James, in the gospels, we see that all of Jesus' siblings were hostile to Him and didn't believe in Him as the Messiah. Yet in the first chapter of Acts, Jesus' brothers are among the followers of Jesus gathered in the upper room after His ascension **Acts 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,[fn] with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.**

What happened to change Jesus' skeptical siblings? Certainly, the meeting of the resurrected Jesus with His brother James and likely all of His siblings had a role in their following of Him.

8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. By saying **as by one born out of due time**, Paul may have meant that he didn't have the three-year period of walking with Jesus like the other apostles. Or perhaps Paul meant that he had become an apostle after the Twelve had become apostles

The cumulative testimony of all these witnesses that Paul points out is overwhelming. Not only did they see Jesus after His death, but their lives were completely changed.

The changed character of the apostles, and their willingness to die for the testimony of the resurrection, can only be explained by 1 reason-Jesus is alive.

Now one group of witnesses of the risen Jesus is conspicuously missing from Paul's list here. Do you know who it is? It's the women.

Why didn't Paul mention the appearances of Jesus to the women at the tomb as evidence of Jesus' resurrection? Probably because in that day a woman's testimony was not received in courts of law. Sadly, the world of that day would reject any testimony that came from women.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Because I persecuted the church, I'm the least of the apostles," says Paul.

Now there's an interesting progression regarding this view Paul has of himself. Later on, he would say, **Ephesians 3:8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,**

And finally at the end of his life, he would say, **1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.**

The longer Paul lived, the more aware he became of his own sin in light of the beauty and grace of Jesus.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. When we first became Christians, many of us looked at works—Bible study, prayer, service, tithing—as ways to get God to respond to us. But as we grow in faith, we come to understand that our works are the inevitable response to the goodness and grace God has already lavished upon us.

When I consider that I'm going to heaven, that my sins are forgiven, that God has given me His Word, and that the Holy Spirit lives within me, how can I not serve Him wholeheartedly?

Paul gave the grace of God all the credit for the changes in His life. He was a changed man, forgiven, cleansed, and full of love when he used to be full of hate. He knew this wasn't anything he did of himself, but it was the work of God's grace in him.

An understanding of the grace of God results in our works for God. But to be clear the works are a response to God, rather than a means of getting God to respond to us.

The whole fallacy of "seed faith theology"—where people are told to give money, offer prayers, or engage in service in order to get something back from God—is a contradiction of the scriptures. We do our works for God because of what God has done for us!

11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. Whether Paul or one of the other apostles brought the message, the result was the same. They preached the resurrection of Jesus, and the Corinthians believed the resurrection of Jesus.

So why, if the Corinthains already believed in the resurrection, why did Paul go through all of this? Like a defense attorney laying out the details of his case, Paul now shows how the resurrection of Jesus proves there is also a resurrection of our bodies.

12-13

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. The Corinthian Christians did not deny Jesus' resurrection; they denied our resurrection. Evidently false teaching had crept in and convinced many of them that we live forever, but not in resurrected bodies.

Remember that resurrection is not merely life after death; resurrection is the continuation of life after death in glorified bodies, which are our present bodies in a glorified state.

14-15

14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. If there is no principle of resurrection, and if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then the apostles were liars.

16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! **SHOW THIS** Paul lays out his logic piece by piece:

-If there is no principle of resurrection, then Jesus did not rise from the dead.

-If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then death has power over Him and defeated Jesus.

-If death has power over Jesus, He is not God.

-If Jesus is not God, Jesus cannot offer a complete sacrifice for sins.

-If Jesus cannot offer a complete sacrifice for sins, our sins are not completely paid for before God.

-If my sins are not completely paid for before God, then I am still in my sins.

-Therefore, if Jesus is not risen, He is unable to save. **CLOSE PIC**

What a horrifying thought! Praise God we are NOT still in our sins!!!

18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. If there is no resurrection, then the whole Christian life is a pitiful joke! If we don't have something beyond this life to look forward to, why hassle with the problems in being a Christian? Of course, this life is not all there is!

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. The Jews celebrated Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month on their sacred calendar. Jesus died on the day that Jewish fathers killed the Passover lamb, which was a Friday that year.

In Leviticus 23, we see that the Jews offered a sacrifice of first fruits the day after the Sabbath (Saturday) following the Passover, namely, Sunday. This was the day that Jesus arose.

Fifty days later, on Pentecost, they presented another offering of new grain that they also called an offering of first fruits (Lev. 23:15-17). The first fruits that the Jews offered following the Passover were only the first of the crops that they offered later.

Paul explains this as a comparison the fact that other believers would rise from the dead just as Jesus Christ did. He used the first fruits metaphor to affirm that the resurrection of believers is absolutely inevitable.

21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. Paul gives another example: Adam and Christ.

Adam was the first man in the old creation, and, like him, all of his descendants die physically. Christ is the first Man in the new creation, and, like Him, all of Christs descendants (His sons and daughters by faith) will live physically. Obviously Paul was

referring only to believers as descendants of Christ. Both Adam and Jesus were men.

Again we see that our resurrection will be a physical resurrection, not some spiritual type of resurrection. Physical resurrection is as inevitable for the sons of Jesus Christ (believers) as physical death is for the sons of Adam (humans)

Does this mean everyone who physically dies will be resurrected? Yes.

Jesus plainly spoke of both the resurrection of life and the resurrection of condemnation **John 5:28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.**

So, all are resurrected, but not all will receive the resurrection of life. Some will receive the resurrection of condemnation, and live forever in a resurrected body in hell.

One other point here to consider: if Jesus is the firstfruits of our resurrection, does that mean He was the first one raised from the dead? What about the widow's son in the days of Elijah, and Lazarus, among others?

Each of these were resuscitated from death, but none of them were resurrected. Each of them was raised in the same body they died in and were raised from the dead, to eventually die again.

Resurrection isn't just living again; it is living again in a new body based on our old body, but perfectly suited for life in eternity. Jesus was not the first one brought back from the dead, but He was the first one resurrected.

23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. The Greek word translated order (tagma) is a military one used of ranks of soldiers. Christ was the first rank, and He experienced resurrection first.

Christians are in a different rank and will experience resurrection together as a group and at a different time, at the Lord's coming

24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For now, God has granted a measure of rule and authority and power to men, to Satan, and even to death. But all that is temporary. Jesus will take His rightful place **1 Timothy 6:15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,**

25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. Christ's abolition of all other rule, authority, and power will take place when He subdues the rebels that will rise up against Him at the end of the Millennium in Revelation 20. He will also finally defeat death, and from then on no one will die. The saved will enter the new heavens and new earth with God forever while the lost will suffer everlasting torment.

Even though Jesus triumphed over death in His resurrection, we know believers still die. Therefore we must experience resurrection at some point, because we are "in Christ," and because only then, after all believers have been raised, will the final enemy, death, be subdued.

27 For "He has put all things under His feet." [fn] But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Of course God Himself is excepted; He will not be under the rule of the Son of God. The

Father is the One who will finally bring all things into subjection to Christ

28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. Here, Paul refers to God the Son's desire to glorify God the Father through all eternity. Remember, each person of the Trinity desires to glorify another person of the Trinity. The Son glorifies the Father **John 17:4** "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."

The Father glorifies the Son **John 17:5** "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

And the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son **John 16:14** He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

29 Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? The Mormons use this verse to teach that a person can be baptized in place of relatives who died generations ago. This is why they place such importance upon genealogies.

What Paul is talking about is actually quite simple. Baptism is a symbol of death, burial, and resurrection. "If Jesus is not risen," he asks, "why would you be baptized?"

30 And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? 31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. Paul says I'm risking my life every day. Why would I do this if there is no resurrection?"

32 If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat

and drink, for tomorrow we die!”[fn] Commentators are divided over the identity of the beasts at Ephesus. It could very well be that Paul was cast into the arena at Ephesus where he stood face-to-face with hungry lions, as did countless Christian martyrs.

Or, it could be Paul is talking about men who, acting like beasts, wanted to kill him. Either way, what he endured at Ephesus was all for nothing if, indeed, there was no resurrection.

33 Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”

Where did the Corinthian Christians get their strange ideas about the resurrection, ideas Paul spent this chapter trying to correct? Their views became distorted likely by associating with pagan, Greek philosophical types, who did not believe in the resurrection.

34 Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame. The

Corinthians needed to change their thinking and alter their conduct. Rather than living for the present, as their pagan neighbors were undoubtedly encouraging them to do, they needed to stop sinning and fulfill their purpose, to spread the gospel to the unbelievers who surrounded them.

Paul’s criticizing them, saying it was a shame that they had neighbors who still had no knowledge of God since they had much knowledge of God

35-38

35 But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” 36 Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. 37 And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. **SHOW PIC If you put an ugly brown**

bulb in the ground, what happens? It sends down its roots, cracks in half, and sends up greenery. **CLOSE PIC**

As the warm sun beats down on the budding plant, you know what comes forth from such an ugly bulb-**SHOW PIC** a beautiful yellow daffodil appears from what once was an odd looking brown bulb. So, too, Paul says the same thing we observe in nature will take place in the resurrection. **CLOSE PIC**

39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh[fn] of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds.

40 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. Just as we see different bodies now—those of lions, fish, and beasts; those of sun, moon, and stars—our resurrected bodies will be different from those we have now.

Our present bodies are designed for fourteen pounds of pressure per square inch, and because of this we can only travel in the air or underwater in pressurized cabins or suits.

And because our bodies are designed to take in a specific mix of air composed of 78 percent oxygen, 21 percent nitrogen, and 1 percent of assorted gases, we remain essentially earthbound.

But our eternal bodies will require neither space suit nor oxygen tank. We're going to be free to explore, soar, and do all kinds of things we can't even dream about doing today.

Right now, we inhabit ugly brown bulbs. But when we see Him, we shall be like Him.

41 There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. If you look at the sky tonight, you'll see stars shining with

different intensities. Some take this verse to mean there will be different degrees of glory for believers in heaven.

1 Peter 1: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen^[fn] you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.