

# What If?

(1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

## Introduction

➤ Many people today say they “believe in God.” Fewer of them, however, also say they believe in Jesus Christ. Even fewer people will also declare to believe that Jesus is the (one and only, incarnate) Son of God who lived a perfect (sinless) life. Fewer still will also say they believe that Jesus died (a sacrificial, substitutionary death) on the cross to save them from their sins. And even fewer will also profess to believe that Jesus Christ literally (supernaturally) rose from the dead after being in the tomb for three days. Much less are the number of people who believe all these truths, and affirm that faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior is the only means by which a person can be saved (forgiven by God, go to heaven).

✓ **Illust:** Erwin Lutzer wrote: “‘I believe in God’ is perhaps one of the most meaningless statements we can make today. The word God has become a canvas on which each is free to paint his own portrait of the divine; like [a] boy scribbling at his desk, we can draw God according to whatever specifications we please. For some He is ‘psychic energy’; for others He is ‘whatever is stronger than I am’ or ‘an inner power to lead us to deeper consciousness.’ To say, ‘I believe in God’ might simply mean that we are seeing ourselves in a full-length mirror” (*Ten Lies About God*; pp.2-3).

This caveat rings with a sobering truth: “woe to those who see themselves in a mirror and proclaim that they have seen God.”

➤ A mere profession of a “belief in God” does not indicate that a person is saved, heaven-bound, or a true Christian. To say you believe in God, without a living faith in Jesus Christ, is to merely have the faith of demons – who know (for a fact) that there is a God but consciously rebel against Him.

**James 2:19** ~ “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder [*phrissō*; to tremble with fear]!”

➤ In order for a person to be saved, they must truly receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Which means, among other things, that they truly seek to follow Jesus by obeying His commands (cf., Lk.6:46). They must have more than a vague notion of “a god”, and more than a superficial acknowledgment of Jesus (i.e., mere lip service). They must have at least a basic understanding of and belief in the Gospel – that Jesus is the one and only Son of God, and one and only Savior from God; and that He lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, and was supernaturally raised from the dead.

**1 Cor 15:1-4** ~ “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,<sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (see Rom.1:16)

➤ As is explicitly and gloriously evident in the Bible, and specifically in 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just a part of the Gospel, rather it is the completion and fulfillment of the Gospel. Without the resurrection the birth of Jesus, the life of Jesus, and the death of Jesus are all essentially meaningless – giving us no hope of salvation. Worse yet, without the resurrection God would either be powerless to fulfill His promises or a liar. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ each and every one of our lives would be without hope, without joy, without purpose, and lost in the eternal damnation of our sins. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proved His claim that He is the one and only Son of God, and the one and only Savior from God (see Jn.10:30; 14:6).

➤ Apparently, the Corinthian Christians were struggling with the notion of the resurrection (as many people are today) – not so much the resurrection of Christ (vs.1-2, 11), but the resurrection of those Christians who have died (see “*fallen asleep*”, vs.6, 18, 20 and “*resurrection of the dead*”, vs.12, 13, 21, 42).

✓Illust: “The exact views of those who said ‘there is no resurrection of the dead’ (v.12) are not clear. They may have held the typical Greek view of the immortality of the soul and rejected any idea that the body would rise. Death for such meant the liberation of the soul from its prison in the body, for the body (*sōma*), they held, was a tomb (*sēma*). They may have thought of the state of the departed as the life of the ‘shades’ in Hades. They may have rejected the thought of bodily resurrection as a reaction to some Jewish views that the body will be raised exactly as it was when it died. Or, starting from the fact that the Christian has risen with Christ (Rom. 6:5-8; Col. 3:1-4, etc.), they may have held that the resurrection life believers live now is all the resurrection there is. But Paul insists that the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead is of central importance” (Leon Morris; *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*; 15:12-19).

**1 Cor 15:12** ~ “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”

➤ To correct their false beliefs, and to bolster the biblical understanding, the apostle Paul launched a barrage of rhetorical questions – all centered upon the question: “What if Jesus did not rise from the dead?” What a horrible and disheartening thought! This visceral response is exactly what Paul’s question was intending to provoke. That is, to believe that “*there is no resurrection of the dead*” (vs.12) – that Christians will not experience a literal bodily resurrection – is tantamount to believing that Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead.

**1 Cor 15:12-19** ~ “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. <sup>15</sup>We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

➤ To cement his point about the resurrection of the dead, Paul raised several terrible – unthinkable – consequences of not believing in Christ’s resurrection. He stated these in the negative (“*If Christ has not been raised*”, vs.14, 17), which underscores the importance of the positive (“*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead*”, vs.20; see vs.4). We can identify eight all-important, life-altering, truths that stem from the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

### Since Jesus Christ did rise from the dead:

#### 1. Jesus Christ is not dead (vs.13, 16)

➤ While this is almost too obvious to point out, it needs to be understood. For Christianity is the only major religion in which the “savior” (or “god”) physically rose from the dead – not Mohammad, Buddha, Krishna, Confucius. It is good for us to know, and to be reminded of the fact, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ means that Jesus did not remain dead.

Paul’s immediate point here is that if there is no resurrection (for those who are in Christ), if the “resurrection” is a myth or fantasy, then Jesus remained dead after His crucifixion and remains dead even today: “*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ... <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised*” (vs.13, 16).

➤ This must have shaken the Corinthian believers to the core. Paul had pinned them into a logical and theological corner. To believe that Christians will not be resurrected to eternal life, is to believe that Jesus Christ was not resurrected from the dead (you cannot have one without the other).

**1 Cor 15:20** ~ “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

**1 Cor 6:14** ~ “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.”

**2 Cor 4:14** ~ “knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.”

**John 6:44** ~ “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”

**John 11:25-26** ~ “Jesus said to [Martha], ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”

➤ To surrender to the pagan notion that there is no resurrection for those who are in Christ, is to abandon the essential doctrine that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. However, as we have seen, there is insurmountable evidence that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead – just as He said He would (1Cor.15:3-4; Act 1:3). The Bible tells us that Christ’s resurrection was a full Trinitarian act – God the Father (Gal.1:1; Col.2:12), God the Son (Jn.2:19; 10:18), and God the Spirit (1Pet.3:18; Rom.8:11) were all involved in raising Jesus from the dead.

**Rev 1:17-18** ~ “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last,<sup>18</sup> and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’”

## 2. The preaching of the Gospel is not *“in vain”* (vs.14)

➤ Secondly, the resurrection of Christ means that the preaching of the Gospel is not in vain: *“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain”* (vs.14). As we have already seen, without the resurrection of Christ there is no Gospel – no Good News of salvation. Therefore, to preach the Gospel (with a dead Savior) is the epitome of vanity. The Greek word (*kenos*) translated *“in vain”* (vs.14) literally means “to be empty”, and figuratively refers to that which is without meaning or purpose.

**1 Cor 15:10** ~ “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain [*kenos*]. ...”

**1 Cor 15:58** ~ “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain [*kenos*].”

➤ If there is no resurrection not only would those who preach be preaching in vain, but also those who listen would be wasting their time. Preachers would be reduced to the category of snake-oil salesmen – false teachers and false prophets – peddling a useless and deceitful message.

✓ Illust: “Without the resurrection the good news would be bad news, and there would be nothing worth preaching. Without the resurrection the gospel would be an empty, hopeless message of meaningless nonsense. Unless our Lord conquered sin and death, making a way for men to follow in that victory, there is no gospel to proclaim” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*; 15:13-15).

➤ However, since Christ has risen from the dead, the preaching of the Gospel is the most important message that can be proclaimed! Most of the apostles suffered persecution and died as martyrs for preaching the resurrection of Christ. Throughout the centuries, countless Christian men and women were arrested, tortured, and killed for believing in and proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Since Christ has been raised, the Gospel is absolutely worth living for and dying for.

### 3. The Christian's faith in Christ is not "in vain" (vs.14)

- Thirdly, since Christ indeed has been raised, the Christian's faith in Christ is not in vain. Paul used the same Greek word (*kenos*) to describe the vanity of believing in a dead savior as he did of preaching about a dead savior: *"And if Christ has not been raised ... your faith is in vain"* (vs.14). Without the resurrection of Christ, Christianity is a fraud, Christ is a liar (or lunatic), and those who profess a faith in Christ are delusional. To have faith in a dead savior is tragically meaningless.
- If Christ had not risen from the dead, every Christian who has ever professed a faith in Christ would have believed in nothing and for nothing. And (if Christ had not been raised) those who were martyred for their faith, would have foolishly died for nothing. If the Gospel is a sham, those who believe it are deceived. If the Gospel is empty so is the faith of those who believe in it.
- Since Christ has indeed risen from the dead, the Christian's faith is not in vain!

**Gal 2:20** ~ "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

**Phil 3:8-11** ~ "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ<sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith –<sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,<sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

### 4. The witnesses of Christ have not lied (vs.15)

- Fourthly, if Christ did not rise from the dead, those who proclaimed His resurrection are liars. *"We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised"* (vs.15). This would be certainly true of the apostles (who claimed to see Christ resurrected, and who faithfully preached that Jesus rose from the dead), but also of the hundreds of people who claimed to that they saw Christ resurrected (Acts 1:3) and all the Old Testament prophets as well.
- The Greek word translated *"misrepresenting"* (vs.15; *pseudomartys*) is more literally rendered "false-witnesses." Namely, if Christ did not rise from the dead, the apostles are guilty of falsely testifying about God or against God. For Christianity is not essentially a religion of good virtues and morality. Christianity is grounded in the truth that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. If He did not, then Christianity is a lie and those who proclaim a risen Christ are liars.

This, by the way, would incriminate Jesus as well. For He clearly and repeatedly declared that He would rise from the dead (see Matt.16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; Jn.2:19; 10:18). If Jesus was, at best, delusional and, at worse, a liar.

### 5. The Christian's faith in Christ is not "futile" (vs.17)

- The fifth consequence of Christ not being raised would be the futility of the Christian's faith: *"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile"* (vs.17). This point is essentially synonymous with what is said in verse fourteen: *"And if Christ has not been raised, then ... your faith is in vain."* There is, however, a distinction here that I think is worth noting. Whereas *"vain"* (*kenos*) means "empty or without purpose", *"futile"* (*mataios*) carries the idea of being "useless or without effect/benefit." Both words underscore the worthlessness of believing in a dead savior – one who promised to rise from the dead but did not.

However, *“futile”* carries the extra meaning of being fruitless or unprofitable. Not only is faith in a dead savior meaningless (vanity), but it is also useless (futility). That is, there is no benefit to it whatsoever. It does no good. It does no one any good. In fact, it could be argued that it is detrimental. For it is living a lie which is not helpful and can only be harmful.

➤ This flies in the face of the all-too-popular “Christless Christianity” in America today. This represents those people who like Christian values, Christian morals, and Christian virtues but do not love, worship, and/or obey Jesus Christ. Such people value the Christian religion but not Jesus Christ. They attest that even without a believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Christian life is still a “good life.” They are horrifically deceived, and this deception has horrific consequences. For they are religious but not saved.

Likewise, there is no benefit to a person who puts their faith in a dead savior. They are merely wallowing in and peddling lies. They are merely ambassadors of a false religion, living a sad delusional life to the detriment of self and others.

## 6. Christians are not “still in [their] sins” (vs.17)

➤ Sixthly, the resurrection of Christ shows us that Christians are not still in their sins: *“And if Christ has not been raised ... you are still in your sins”* (vs.17). If Jesus remained physically dead then we remain spiritually dead. Now some may ask, “Isn’t it Christ’s death that paid the penalty for our sin?” The answer, of course, is yes. But this did not happen apart from the resurrection. Jesus’ death bore our penalty for sin (Rom.6:23) and through His resurrection He conquered the power of sin and death. Without the resurrection Jesus’ death would be meaningless, in that it would not have accomplished that for which it was intended. If Christ was not raised from the dead, sin would be an unconquered foe and death would be victorious.

**Rom 4:25** ~ “who was delivered up [*paradidōmi*] for our trespasses [*paraptōma*] and raised for our justification [*dikaiōsis*].”

**Rom 5:10** ~ “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”

➤ Without the resurrection of Christ there is no actual forgiveness of sin (just divine sentiment). Both Jesus’ death and resurrection worked together to grant us the complete forgiveness of all our sin – to pay the full penalty of sin and grant to us spiritual (eternal) life. They are inextricably linked together. You can’t have one without the other, and so to deny one is to deny the other. In effect, Paul is saying if there is no resurrection in your future than there is no forgiveness in your past!

✓ **Illust:** “If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then sin won the victory over Christ and therefore continues to be victorious over all men. If Jesus remained dead, then, when we die, we too will remain dead and damned. ... If Christ was not raised, His death was in vain, our faith in Him is in vain, and our sins are still counted against us. We are still dead in trespasses and sins and will forever remain spiritually dead and sinful. If Christ was not raised, then He did not bring forgiveness of sins or salvation or reconciliation or spiritual life, either for now or for eternity” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*; 15:16-19).

**Eph 2:1-5** ~ “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked ... carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

<sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved”

## 7. The dead in Christ have not eternally “perished” (vs.18)

➤ Seventhly, the resurrection of Christ shows us that the dead in Christ have not eternally (and hopelessly) perished: *“Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished”* (vs.18). Obviously, without a risen Savior, the Christians who have died *“perished”* in their sins. If Christ has not risen from the dead, then there is no salvation – no eternal heavenly fellowship with God.

In their doubt of the resurrection, the Corinthians mistakenly thought that the dead in Christ were simply dead. They did not understand that those who believe in Christ – when they die – are raised to be with Christ. If there is no resurrection, however, then every believer who has ever died remains *“perished”* (*apollymi*; lost, destroyed; vs.18) – eternally condemned under God’s just wrath.

**John 3:16-18** ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish [*apollymi*] but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

**Rom 6:23** ~ “For the wages of sin is death [*thanatos*], but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

➤ In Jesus’ day, there was a group of religious people called the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection (which is why they were sad, you see). In Mark 12:18 we read that they approached Jesus in an attempt to trap Him with a question concerning the resurrection. They describe a hypothetical situation about a woman whose husband dies and she his brother, and then he dies, and this happens seven times. Then they asked, *“In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife”* (vs.23).

**Mark 12:24-27** ~ “Jesus said to them, ‘Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? ... <sup>26</sup>And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am [emphatic present tense] the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? <sup>27</sup>He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong [*polys planaō*; “greatly mistaken” or “seriously deceived”]”

➤ The Sadducees rejected the notion of the resurrection because they doubted God’s power and did not believe His Word. Therefore, Jesus told (scolded) them plainly that God is the of the living not the dead. In other words, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are presently alive with God – risen from the dead – experiencing the eternal fellowship with God Almighty. The truth of Christ’s resurrection is that all believers, both living and dead, will be alive in the presence of God forevermore!

**2 Cor 5:6-9** ~ “So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, <sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup>Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.”

**Phil 1:21-23** ~ “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ... <sup>23</sup>I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.”

➤ For the Christian, this life (on earth) is not the best life. Our hope is not in this life. This world is not our home. As the saying goes, “This life is as close to hell as Christians will ever be, and this life is a close to heaven as the (unrepentant) non-Christian will ever be.”

**Rom 8:18** ~ “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

## 8. Christians are not “to be pitied” (vs.19)

- Lastly, the eighth consequence of Christ rising from the dead is that Christians are not to be pitied: *“If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied”* (vs.19). If there is no resurrection for/of the dead, and Christ has not been raised, then Christians are the most pitiable and pitiful people on the entire planet. Because not only would we proclaim that we serve a risen Savior (who has not risen), and preach a Gospel (that is not good news), and believe in a Christ (who cannot save), and believed in witnesses (who have lied), and lived like we’re forgiven (when we’re still in our sins), but we also celebrate Christians who have died and gone to heaven (when they really are burning forever in hell)! Without the resurrection we would have no Savior, no forgiveness, no gospel, no meaningful faith, no life, no hope, no purpose, and absolutely no salvation.
- The Greek word translated *“pitied”* (*eleeinos*) means “wretched” as well as “miserable.” It carries with it the negative connotation of being a fool (e.g., an adult who still believes in Santa Clause, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy). This “pitiable” person is a laughingstock, ridiculed and reviled by the world around them. Those who put their hope in a dead savior are pathetically self-deceived.

**Rev 3:15-17** [to the church at Laodicea]: “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! <sup>16</sup>So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup>For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable [*eleeinos*], poor, blind, and naked.”

- This extremely clear in the life of Paul and the other apostles:

**1 Cor 15:30-33** ~ “Why are we in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup>I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! <sup>32</sup>What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’”

**1 Cor 4:11-13** ~ “To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, <sup>12</sup>and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup>when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.”

**2 Cor 6:4-5** ~ “... as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger”

**2 Cor 11:24-29** ~ “Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; <sup>26</sup>on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; <sup>27</sup>in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. <sup>28</sup>And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.”

- To suffer hardships, opposition, and persecution for a dead savior is not only pathetic but also pathological. If there is no resurrection: our struggles are pointless, our sacrifices are useless, our passions are ridiculous, our priorities are foolishness, and our hope is a mirage. *“If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied”* (vs.19). Those who believe in a dead (un-resurrected) savior are the most pitiable (pathetic) people in all the world.

## Conclusion

- As Christians, our hope is not in this life. For we know that Jesus Christ died on the cross and *“has been raised from the dead”* (vs.20; see vs.3-4) so that we could be completely forgiven and eternally with God. Christ’s death and resurrection not only changes our destiny, but our very lives. For we serve – love and worship – a risen Savior! This changes our priorities, our passions, and our perspectives – about life and death.

✓Illust: The life and death of Christopher Love is widely unknown. Born on the 1618 (in Cardiff, Wales), this young Welsh preacher's life was cut short at the age of 33. Christopher Love was converted at the age of 15, and ordained into ministry on January 23, 1644 (approx. 10 years later). Because of his political leanings and involvements, he was arrested by Oliver Cromwell's forces for his alleged involvement with a plan to raise money for the restoration of the monarchy, a charge Love denied. He, and many others, were arrested for treason (including six other prominent ministers in London – all Presbyterians – the venerable Thomas Watson being the most noted). The rest were released after six months, but Love was to be beheaded as an example to all.

On July 14, 1651, just over a month before his execution, Christopher's wife Mary wrote these words in a letter to her imprisoned husband (from the book *A Spectacle Unto God* by Dr. Don Kistler):

“I dare not speak to thee, nor have a thought within my own heart of my unspeakable loss, but wholly keep my eye fixed upon thy inexpressible and inconceivable gain. Thou leavest but a sinful, mortal wife to be everlastingly married to the Lord of glory. Thou leavest but children, brothers, and sisters to go to the Lord Jesus, thy eldest Brother. Thou leavest friends on earth to go to the enjoyment of saints and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect in glory. Thou dost but leave earth for heaven and changest a prison for a palace. And if natural affections should begin to arise, I hope that spirit of grace that is within thee will quell them, knowing that all things here below are but dung and dross in comparison of those things that are above. ...

When thou art putting on thy clothes that morning [of execution], O think, ‘I am now putting on my wedding garments to go to be everlasting married to my Redeemer.’

When the messenger of death comes to thee, let him not seem dreadful to thee, but look on him as a messenger that brings thee tidings of eternal life. When thou goest up the scaffold, think (as thou saidst to me) that it is but thy fiery chariot to carry thee up to thy Father's house. And when thou layest down thy precious head to receive thy Father's stroke, remember what thou saidst to me: Though thy head was severed from thy body, yet in a moment thy soul should be united to thy Head, the Lord Jesus, in heaven. And though it may seem something bitter, that by the hands of men we are parted a little sooner than otherwise we might have been, yet let us consider that it is the decree and will of our Father, and it will not be long ere we shall enjoy one another in heaven again” (p.1-2).

On the eve of his execution Mary Love was at the Tower prison to say good-bye for the last time to her beloved husband. With these words he comforted her:

“Be not troubled to think what shall become of thee and thine after my death, for be assured that my God, and the God of the widows and the fatherless, will not forsake thee, but will wonderfully provide for those and be comforted in this, that tho' men take thy husband from thee, they cannot take thy God from thee; and so, do not think that thou hast lost thy husband, but only parted with him for awhile, and in the meantime thy Saviour will be a husband unto thee and a father unto thy children” (p.94).

Believing that his death would glorify God he said, “I may do more good by my death than by my life, and glorify God more in my dying upon a scaffold than if I had died of a disease upon my bed” (p.125).

As he prepared to lay his head upon the block Mr. Ashe called out to him, “Dear brother, how dost thou find thy heart?” Love replied, “I bless God, sir, I am full of joy and comfort as ever my heart can hold” (p.132). Then, on August 22, 1651, Christopher Love uttered his final words, “Blessed be God for Jesus Christ” and knelt down and laid his head upon the block (p.132). He stretched forth his hands. The blade was raised and lowered. Christopher Love entered into Paradise and saw his Lord Jesus face to face (1Cor.13:12).