

WORD OF TRUTH

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Issue 5

THE NECESSITY OF THE RESURRECTION

“Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15: 12-14).

Once again I am drawn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. The first ten verses of this chapter are often called *“the gospel in a nutshell”*. Because Easter Sunday is near, we are hearing many things in the media and elsewhere regarding the subject of the resurrection. I recall that in 2006, one of the things that caught my ear was a radio skit on the PBS program, *Prairie Home Companion*. In the comedy skit, a man and wife were talking. He brought up going to church tomorrow since it was Easter. He said “after all, that’s when He rose from the grave”. Her answer was **“Well, I have my doubts”**. While this was a radio play, this is the position so many take on this subject -- “I have my doubts”.

If **you** doubt He arose, **you** doubt the **core** of the Christian faith. You might as well not claim to be to be a Christian if you haven’t settled **this** issue. I am not speaking here of someone that is very new as an inquirer in the faith, or one who has never heard the gospel. But there are some, who have attended church for years and been involved in **many** church activities and events, may have graduated from a Christian school, got married in the church, and even professed faith, yet **doubt the resurrection!**

Well, you are not alone. The apostle Paul, who wrote the letters to the Corinthians to help them with the same problem, spoke from experience. He had doubted. As Saul of Tarsus, had even **hated** Christians and persecuted

them for teaching that Jesus was alive again. He thought he was serving God by doing so. **Yet God revealed the truth to him!** On the Damascus road he was knocked down and blinded for a time. He knew it was the Lord whom he had fought against that brought him to his knees. The same Jesus he persecuted had been crucified, dead and buried. At first, he wasn't buying into "**the myth**" some Jews were preaching that Christ was raised. **Now he knew He was alive!** Later when his eyes were opened he became the mighty apostle Paul. Now he is writing to the people of Corinth, **and all of us** in this magnificent chapter on the resurrection.

He questions particularly why some in the church say there is no resurrection of the dead. We could ask this today. One of the doctrines that all Christendom **claims** to believe in their various creeds is the resurrection of Christ. Catholic and Protestant, Orthodox and Coptic, Fundamentalists, Evangelicals and Liberals, Calvinists and Arminians -- **All claim to believe this!** Yet like the wife in the skit, **many doubt it.**

You see the doctrine of the resurrection is **not** a ritual just to be remembered at Easter time. We observe the resurrection every Sunday, really **every time** the local church meets to worship Christ, who **is** risen from among the dead. When I was in Russia. I saw some of the colorful ceremonies of the Russian Orthodox Church, which generally does not preach the true gospel, but has a formality. One of their rituals on Easter is when the priest says several times "**Christ is risen**"; the people give a response "**Christ is risen indeed!**" It is their ritual. **Yet this must be our heart response if we are real Christians!**

Paul says in verse 13-14, "***But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain.***" (KJV with phrasing modified). Can you grasp what he is saying? If the teaching of the resurrection is untrue, Christ is not risen, and He is still dead! That also means that all the apostles preaching **and all the preaching before and since is vain!** In other words, as it says in the Amplified Bible, **it amounts to nothing!** For those who were preaching in the Old Testament times who were looking for Messiah, and Christ and his disciples who preached with Him while He walked on the earth, as well as those who now preach of his saving grace and his glorious return in the future, are all **deluded** if He is not risen.

To summarize: Paul goes on to say in verse 15 we are **false** witnesses because we testified that He lives.

He says in verse 16: if the dead stay dead forever, Christ is still dead.

Verse 17: if that is so, you are still dead sinners.

Verse 18: all those who have died before now, believing in Christ are deluded too- they are still dead.

He sums up this line of thought so marvelously that we ought to remember the following verse every day!

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Most miserable! Jean Valjean in the great Victor Hugo novel *Les Miserables* was not as miserable in all he went through as the apostle would be, or as you and I would be, **if there was no resurrection.**

But, thank God, Hallelujah! There **is** a resurrection. Christ **is** risen, and we who have been born again will also be raised from the dead (If indeed we must keep our appointment with death). ***“And as it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).*** Some will not have to die, but will be alive when He comes as Paul points out in verses 51-55 of this glorious 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians. I **urge** you to read it all. I trust and pray it will bless you.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and became the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20).

For further study I recommend:

Who Moved the Stone? – Frank Morison – Zondervan reprint-1987
Originally published in the 1800’s. Mr. Morison had been himself a skeptic, a doubter. He set out to prove the resurrection false and proved it true instead! **A valuable resource!**

Evidence That Demands a Verdict- Josh McDowell -Nelson References 1999. A more modern apologetic originally written for college students. It has become a helpful tool. Get the most updated edition if possible.

Why I Believe- D. James Kennedy- W Publishing Group 1999