

**1Cor. 15:1** Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

**1Cor. 15:2** By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

As Paul begins to close his letter, he is led to again affirm the message of the gospel. Verse 34 seems to indicate that Paul was concerned that there were those in the church at Corinth that did not possess saving faith. The *gospel* is the message of Jesus' redeeming work on the cross as defined in verses 3-4. Paul assures them that his message has not changed; it is the same message he first presented to them. The message they had received for salvation, the foundation upon which their new life in Christ is established.

"if ye keep in memory" – This is one area in which I think the KJV translators tried to facilitate understanding and ended up making it more difficult. After looking at the Greek, I think the better translation would have been: "if ye possess...." In looking at the Greek for "in vain," I found the following: "idly, i.e. without reason (or effect):—without a cause, (in) vain(-ly)." This made me think of the following verse.

**James 2:17** Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

**James 2:18** Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

**James 2:19** Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

I added the surrounding context to explain that belief that doesn't effect change in one's life is dead faith, as James put it. If you truly possess faith in God, there will be evidence in your life.

You cannot use this scripture to teach that someone can lose their salvation. Scripture does not contradict itself, and Philippians 1:6 is clear that one who possesses saving faith is sealed with the Holy Spirit of God and is kept by the power of God. You can't be more securely sealed or more powerfully protected.

**Eph. 1:13** In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, **ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,**

**Eph. 1:14** Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

"sealed" = to stamp for security or preservation

**1Pet. 1:3** Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

**1Pet. 1:4** To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

**1Pet. 1:5** Who are **kept by the power of God** through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

"kept" = to mount guard as a sentinel...figuratively, to hem in, protect

**1Cor. 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;**

**1Cor. 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:**

Paul is careful to note that he is delivering the gospel message just as he had received it, and in his letter to the Galatians he is very clear in stating that he received it from Jesus Christ.

Gal. 1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

Gal. 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

This section of scripture is often referred to as “the gospel in a nutshell.”

1. Christ died for our sins according to the scripture.
2. He was buried.
3. He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures.

The whole of scripture is full of this truth. When Adam and Eve sinned, an innocent animal had to die to provide them a covering. The curse of sin is death. The whole sacrificial system was established to impress upon men that God would only provide forgiveness according to the righteous judgment of sin, and this forgiveness required the death of an innocent lamb without blemish being sacrificed to atone for one’s sins—an obvious picture of the gospel message.

One of the more specific scriptures regarding the death of the Messiah is found in Isaiah 53.

Is. 53:5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; **and with his stripes we are healed.**

Is. 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and **the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

Is. 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: **he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter**, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Is. 53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for **he was cut off out of the land of the living:** for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Jesus didn’t just fall into a faint, “he was cut off out of the land of the living.”

His burial was referenced in the psalms.

Psa. 16:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Jesus also taught that He would be buried.

Matt. 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

This verse in Matthew also implies from the reference to Jonah, that after three days and nights in the earth, He would return to the land of the living.

**1Cor. 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:**

**1Cor. 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.**

**1Cor. 15:7** After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

**1Cor. 15:8** And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Paul is careful to document that there were many witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. First, he was seen by Cephas/Peter and then by the 12 disciples together (this would seem to include Matthias). After that, he was seen by over 500 at one time, most of which were still alive at the time Paul wrote this letter. He was also seen by His brother James and all of the apostles; this would seem to indicate that all those named as apostles in the New Testament were part of that 500+ and probably part of the group of 120 followers who waited in the upper room for the baptism of the Holy Spirit as detailed in Acts 1. Paul was specific in positioning his vision of the resurrected Lord as distinct and separate from those who saw Him before He ascended.

"born out of due time" – In looking for help on this phrase I found this quote from JFB.

*Greek*, "the one abortively born": the abortion in the family of the apostles. As a child *born before the due time* is puny, and though born alive, yet not of the proper size, and scarcely worthy of the name of man, so "I am *the least* of the apostles," scarcely "meet to be called an apostle...."

**1Cor. 15:9** For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

**1Cor. 15:10** But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed upon me was not in vain*; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

I believe Paul was filled with remorse for his persecution of those who followed Jesus, "the church of God," and was extremely grateful for the privilege of serving as an apostle. Although we know through his teaching that he clearly understood that he was a new creation in Christ, he still had to deal with the flesh—as do we all until we shed these bodies of flesh. He felt his past clearly established him as unworthy and as the least (less worthy of honor) among the apostles.

Paul knows that it is only by the grace of God that he is privileged to serve as an apostle. Frankly, it is only by the grace of God that any of us are privileged to serve the Lord in any capacity. Grace, the unmerited favor of God—I've always heard it defined as being given what we don't deserve. We are all born sinners deserving of death, yet He has chosen to gift us eternal life through Jesus Christ His Son if only we will accept that gift. The only way to earn eternal life is to live a perfect life, and we have all fallen short; we have all sinned. It is only through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ that is ours through faith, a gift, that we can look forward to that privilege.

Paul could also matter of factly state that God's grace was not bestowed upon him in vain. In other words, Paul gave great evidence through his selfless ministry in spite of great persecution of possessing saving faith. No one could accuse him of having dead faith. He unapologetically states that he has worked harder than any of the rest of the apostles in his service to the Lord. (And we

know this to be true since he is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.) I love the Greek for the word *grace*, “the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life,” which we know is the Holy Spirit. Paul was also acutely aware that he could do nothing in and of himself; it was the work of the Holy Spirit in and through Him that deserved all the credit. Paul was just the willing yielded vessel.

These are very instructive words from Paul. He was humble yet aware and confident in his ministry. He knew how he measured up among the other apostles, but he didn’t demean their service. He was just making the point that he was more motivated because of his past persecution of these very believers. I am reminded of these verses in Luke.

Luke 7:42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, **which of them will love him most?**

Luke 7:43 Simon answered and said, I suppose **that he, to whom he forgave most.** And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Paul knew His weakness, and he knew in Whom his strength lay. He didn’t presume to try to minister in the flesh. He was grateful and honored to serve the Lord.

**1Cor. 15:11 Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.**

This is a summary statement emphasizing that whether Paul or one of the other apostles, they were all preaching the same gospel message—the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ--that brought the Corinthian believers to saving faith.

**1Cor. 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?**

I had to read through this verse several times. It would seem that Paul is trying to understand how some in the Corinthian church could believe that Christ rose from the dead and yet deny the truth of resurrection for anyone else.

**1Cor. 15:13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:**

**1Cor. 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain.**

Paul seems to be saying that either resurrection is true or it isn’t. If Christ rose from the dead, then there should be no reason to deny that He could raise others from the dead. If Christ did not rise from the dead, then the gospel message that Paul and the other apostles and followers of Christ are proclaiming is useless and their faith is useless. God’s word is either true or not. Jesus either rose from the dead or He did not. If your faith is based on a lie, you will be disappointed.

This is a hard truth for many to accept. I believe that many in this world give credence to false religions because of the people who are sincere in their belief concerning these religions, but they are sincerely wrong. Truth is not relative no matter how the so-called intelligentsia try to present it as such. Truth can have only one foundation, and that foundation is found in God and His word. Man’s understanding of truth can change, but the truth itself never changes.

**1Cor. 15:15** Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

**1Cor. 15:16** For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

**1Cor. 15:17** And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

**1Cor. 15:18** Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

Paul is stating that He and the apostles and other followers of Christ are liars if Christ did not resurrect from the dead to new life. If God raised up Christ from the dead, He will raise up those who follow Christ. Paul is stating this truth as an either-or situation—

- If Christ was resurrected to new life from the dead, then believers can look forward to the same.
- If Christ was not resurrected to new life from the dead, then believers have no hope of eternal life.

Now he applies his reasoning to those in the church at Corinth—If Christ did not rise to new life from the dead, your faith is useless and you are still in sin. Those believers who have already died are doomed for eternity.

Paul is obviously repeating himself, but he is driving home the point that the gospel message hinges on the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without it, our faith is empty.

**1Cor. 15:19** If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Sobering truth in this verse. Reminder—it is addressed to those who are living by faith in God. No matter how successful, prosperous, healthy, influential, or secure your life may be, if this is all there is, we are most miserable. Why? Because we are counting on so much more. We can enjoy life here and still understand that the eternal life to which we look forward will far surpass that experience. If we are among those who are not so fortunate here, there is no source of comfort to which we can turn for strength and encouragement. Our lives would be no different than all those who follow false gods/ religions today. To those who like Paul and the apostles face persecution and ridicule for their faith, their existence will consist of much misery with no hope of eternal deliverance.

**1Cor. 15:20** But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept.

Paul quickly follows that horrible thought with the truth. Christ has risen from the dead. He became the firstfruits of all those that have died as followers of God in faith. In looking for some thoughts on *firstfruits*, I found some interesting thoughts in Eerdman's dictionary.

“...The first of the seasonal produce from the soil. It was considered to be intrinsically holy, the possession of God....The very first sheaf of grain harvested was to be transferred to God by the elevation ceremony before the Lord.”

I thought that painted a beautiful picture of the resurrection of Jesus. He was the first man to be resurrected from the earth to a glorified body. He was/is holy in nature, completely possessed of God. He was elevated to the throne of God to establish God's blessing on the rest of the harvest, the body of believers.

**1Cor. 15:21** For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

**1Cor. 15:22** For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

It was through the man Adam, the progenitor of the human race, that all men are condemned to both physical and spiritual death. Through the willing sacrifice of the perfect man, Jesus, mankind now has the opportunity to gain victory over death through the resurrection. Just as surely as those birthed through Adam in the flesh are condemned to death, those who are reborn in the spirit by faith in the resurrected Christ will experience a resurrection to new life.

**1Cor. 15:23** But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Paul is emphasizing that there is an "order" to the resurrection of man to eternal life. This is a reference to sequence or succession. Christ is the firstfruits, all other men/women of faith will be resurrected at His coming. ~~We know from other scripture that this coming will be in two parts and will include two groups of believers. He will first come to receive the believers who comprise the church and take them home to the Father (as promised in John 14), all other believers will be resurrected when He returns to rule as King.~~

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

John 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

John 5:29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Rev. 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

(4/11) I received another one of those "surprise insights" during my study of Hebrews. Note the following excerpt from that study:

**Heb. 11:39-40** And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

As the writer closes this chapter, he makes a point of noting that all these people singled out for their faith died without having received “the promise.” I believe this to be a reference to resurrection to a glorified body and eternal life with the Father. In God’s sovereign plan He has determined that people of faith under both the old and new covenants will be resurrected together. Well, this just adjusted my thinking regarding the resurrections as I have been taught. In looking over my notes on my topical study of this subject, I realized I again had made assumption according to previous teaching without really opening my eyes to possible error. I think most assume that the Old Testament saints will be resurrected after the tribulation because of their reading of Daniel 12:1-2. In reading it with new eyes, I now see that the reading allows for their inclusion in the rapture of the body of believers. They are the dead “in Christ” (cf 1Thessalonians 4:16) just as surely as are those in the church, since He is the person through whom all men of faith were redeemed. [end excerpt]

David Guzik made a couple of important points that I hadn’t thought about.

“The Feast of Firstfruits was observed on the day after the Sabbath following Passover (Leviticus 23:9-14). Significantly, Jesus rose from the dead on the exact day of the Feast of Firstfruits, the day after the Sabbath following the Passover.”

“The offering at the Feast of Firstfruits was a bloodless grain offering (Leviticus 2). No atoning sacrifice was necessary, because the Passover lamb had just been sacrificed. This corresponds perfectly with the resurrection of Jesus, because His death ended the need for sacrifice, having provided a perfect and complete atonement.”

**1Cor. 15:24** Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

**1Cor. 15:25** For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

**1Cor. 15:26** The last enemy *that shall be destroyed is death.*

I believe the end being referenced in verse 24 is a reference to the end of the millennial kingdom when Satan and his rebellious army have been defeated once for all. It is at that time that all evil spiritual forces will be condemned to the lake of fire for eternity. It is at that time that He will be able to present His kingdom to the Father as full of those who have freely chosen to serve Him for eternity. The kingdom will not have one citizen who is an enemy of God or of His chosen people (the body of believers). I thought it was interesting that “death” is described as an enemy. Why? Death came to man as a result of sin, and sin is what came between the fellowship of God and man. Once sin is eliminated, death will be eliminated as well. With the destruction of death, there will be no enemy to man left in creation. With sin and death destroyed, the Father can once again freely fellowship with man as He did with Adam and Eve in the garden.

**1Cor. 15:27** For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

**1Cor. 15:28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.**

These are hard verses. In doing phrase searches, Psalm 8:6 was the only verse I could find with like wording, and the context there is concerning man in general.

Psa. 8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

Psa. 8:5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Psa. 8:6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet:

In Adam man proved unworthy of the dominion given him, but in Jesus, the perfect man, man could once again qualify for that position of authority. Paul clarifies the obvious—In putting all things “under his feet,” the one investing that authority, God the Father, is excluded.

“when all things are subdued unto Him” – When sin and death have been destroyed forever at the end of the millennium with the destruction of Satan and his last rebel army.

I believe that the last half of verse 28 is making a distinction between Jesus the Son of God and Jesus the perfect man. As Jesus, Son of God, the perfect man, He will humbly place Himself and His kingdom in subjection to the Father. As Jesus, Son of God, Divine Creator, He will ever be equal to and in complete unity with God the Father and His Holy Spirit. Even as I type it, I don't really understand it. I believe it was God in the fullness of His triunity that fellowshiped with Adam and Eve in the garden, and I believe it will be God in that same fullness with whom we will have fellowship for eternity.

“that God may be all in all” – I think this is an exclamation point on the perfection and purity of our eternal existence. God will indeed be the complete focus of the life of each one that is part of His eternal kingdom and will, I believe, continue to be a part of each one of His children through His indwelling Spirit.

**1Cor. 15:29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?**

It's obvious that Paul is making reference to people who are living being baptized on behalf of loved ones who have died. In context, the subject has been the resurrection of Christ and in turn of believers who die. I think it is significant to note that in no other scripture is this taught to be an appropriate practice. I decided to look at a few commentaries, and I believe David Guzik made some good observations.

“The plain meaning of the original language is that some people are being baptized on behalf of those who have died. Paul's point is "If there is no resurrection, why are they doing this? What is the point if there is no life after death?"

Significantly, Paul does not say, "we baptize for the dead," but asks what will **they** do who are baptized for the dead, and Why then are they

baptized for the dead? Therefore, Paul is referring to a pagan custom of vicarious baptism for the dead. "Paul simply mentions the superstitious custom without approving it and uses it to fortify his argument that there is a resurrection from the dead." (Mare)

Paul's point is plain: "The pagans even believe in the resurrection because they baptize for the dead. The pagans have the sense to believe in resurrection, but some of you Corinthian Christians do not!"

**1Cor. 15:30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?**

In this verse Paul is referencing the persecution they face from their testimony and their preaching of the gospel. It is certainly foolish to jeopardize one's safety if the gospel is not true—if there was no resurrection of Jesus from the dead and no future life for the believer.

**1Cor. 15:31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.**

In the expanded Greek translation by Wuest this verse reads:

"I am daily in danger of death by my glorying about you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The CJB words it this way:

"Brothers, by the right to be proud which the Messiah Yeshua our Lord gives me, I solemnly tell you that I die every day."

Both of these translations make the connection to the previous verse clearer. Paul lives each day with an awareness of the possibility that he might be killed for preaching the gospel message, an act that brings him much joy through the fruit God is giving him in converts.

**1Cor. 15:32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.**

Nowhere in scripture does Paul tell us that he fought in the arena at Ephesus, and he was quite specific in a couple of places to detail his persecutions.

2Cor. 11:22-27 Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; *In* weariness and painfulness, *in* watchings often, *in* hunger and thirst, *in* fastings often, *in* cold and nakedness.

1Th. 2:2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

2Tim. 3:10-11 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

The Greek for *beasts* makes reference to figurative use for an encounter with furious men. I believe this is what Paul is referencing here. Whether in reference to wild beasts or angry men, the point is that Paul's actions were useless and of no benefit to him if there is no resurrection to life after death. One might as well enjoy the temporary fleshly pleasures of life to the fullest if death is final with no hope of resurrection.

**1Cor. 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.**

The CJB is clear and is supported by every other translation I checked.

Don't be fooled. "Bad company ruins good character."

The Greek for *communications* is a reference to companionship. Every good parent tries to teach their children that discernment in the choice of friends is very important. Every honest adult will admit the importance of that instruction. I couldn't help but think of the scripture's teaching that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." (Galatians 5:9; based on Jesus' teaching as recorded in Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:21) Peer pressure is a powerful influence—either for good or for bad. Sadly, there are far more people who will influence us for bad than there are those who will influence us for good as based on the teaching of scripture.

Matt. 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

I am reminded that the context is the teaching of the resurrection. Paul is evidently making reference to false teachers who have infiltrated the Corinthian church and are teaching that there is no resurrection.

**1Cor. 15:34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.**

Paul's warning—Wake up! (Get a grip!) Quit your sinful ways and start practicing righteous living. (Live according to God's instructions as stated in scripture.) As always, the corruption of God's truth always leads one into sin. I just watched the movie "The Timechanger" again last night. Satan and his forces are so successful in their use of deceit. Even teaching the morality established by God's word will eventually result in sin when taught disconnect from the authority behind that instruction.

"some have not the knowledge of God" – According to JFB this is a reference to "An habitual *ignorance*: willful, in that they prefer to keep their sins, rather than part with them, in order to *know God*." Once our flesh gets a taste of sin, it wants more. The more I think about it, I think that is why many who claim to possess saving faith in Christ have no interest in studying God's word. The more you know, the more you have to confront the guilt associated with disobedience to His instruction. It's easier to "enjoy" the pleasures of sin for a season if you can

claim ignorance to its being identified as sin. That also explains the success of the seeker sensitive message embraced by many “pastors” today. By avoiding preaching against sin and only teaching about God’s love, their members can remain comfortable in their sin and stay connected to their church. The “pastors” can then consider themselves successful without suffering persecution as experienced by the prophets and apostles of old. In fact, they can enjoy a very luxurious lifestyle.

Paul pulls no punches as he shares this truth. He declares this truth to the shame of those in Corinth who call themselves “Christians.”

**1Cor. 15:35** But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

This verse expresses the obvious questions from anyone regarding resurrection.

- How can the dead be brought back to life?
- What kind of body will they have?

**1Cor. 15:36** *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:*

**1Cor. 15:37** *And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:*

**1Cor. 15:38** *But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.*

It would seem that Paul is being a bit harsh with his answer, but he goes on to give a clear picture by describing the process of sowing and reaping. A seed has to die and be buried in the ground before it can be brought to life through the miraculous provision of God through nature. You can’t tell anything about the fruit that will emerge from that seed just by looking at that seed. When it produces fruit, it will produce according as God has determined it to produce—be it grain, flower, vegetable, etc. Each seed produces one plant. You can’t change the process that God has established. You can’t plant a flower to grow a flower or a stalk of wheat to grow wheat.

**1Cor. 15:39** *All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.*

**1Cor. 15:40** *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.*

**1Cor. 15:41** *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.*

Paul now goes on to explain that just as there are many types of plants, there are also many types of flesh or bodies—men are different from animals are different from fish are different from birds. He now explains that there are also different types of bodies in the heavens and on earth, and they are glorious in their own way. The sun is different from the moon, and both are different from the stars. They are different sizes and temperatures and their influence in the creation is unique.

**1Cor. 15:42** *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:*

**1Cor. 15:43** It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

**1Cor. 15:44** It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Now Paul gets to the application. The resurrection of the dead believer is no different. It is buried in the ground after death in anticipation of the future life that will emerge from that death. It is buried as decaying flesh, and will be raised to eternal life. It is buried stained and dishonored by the sin nature that it possessed, but will be raised in everlasting righteousness and glory. It is buried in feebleness of mind and body, but will be raised by the miraculous power of God to everlasting strength and vitality. It is buried as a natural body of flesh that found life in the blood, but will be raised a body of flesh and bone that finds everlasting life in the Spirit. Then he emphasizes the truth that there is a distinct difference between a natural body and a spiritual body. Jesus was raised to a spiritual body and was not limited in movement. Angels are spiritual beings that can take on flesh. I'm sure there are going to be many differences far beyond these obvious ones. A body with a spirit that is powered by the Spirit will allow us to enjoy creation to the fullest, far beyond what we can imagine.

**1Cor. 15:45** And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.

My understanding of this verse would be that Adam was created the fully perfect human being that was intended to live forever as he was—in intimate fellowship with God and with a body uncorrupted by sin. When Adam sinned, he suffered spiritual death. He was no longer in fellowship with God and his body was doomed to corruption as was his seed. The last Adam, Jesus Christ, was born in the same perfect state in which Adam was created, but with the singular ability to impart of His life-giving Spirit to restore to life every man who would accept His most loving and sacrificial gift. Having provided for their spirit to live again, He would also provide for their bodies of flesh to be renewed and once again free from corruption.

**1Cor. 15:46** Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

**1Cor. 15:47** The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven.

This section gets a little harder to me since we know that our resurrected bodies will arise from the dust of the ground. Verse 47 helps us draw the distinction between *natural* and *spiritual*. The natural man, Adam, was created from the dust of the ground and was dependent on the laws of nature as established by God for his existence; his sustenance was dependent upon God's provision through the creation on earth. The spiritual man, Jesus Christ, though willing to humble Himself and be born of flesh as a man, is a supernatural being, a heavenly being. His willing sacrifice made it possible for man to be transformed into a heavenly being. The life force of our earthly body is the blood.

**Lev. 17:11** For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood....

The life force of our heavenly body is the Spirit.

**John 6:63** It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

Rom. 8:9-11 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Gal. 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

**1Cor. 15:48 As is the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly.**

**1Cor. 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.**

I really liked the wording of the NLT for these verses.

Every human being has an earthly body just like Adam's, but our heavenly bodies will be just like Christ's. Just as we are now like Adam, the man of the earth, so we will someday be like Christ, the man from heaven.

**1Cor. 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.**

We have determined that flesh and blood are descriptive of man's natural body, and this corruptible body can have no part in God's eternal kingdom. God's kingdom is pure and perfect without spot or blemish.

**1Cor. 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,**

**1Cor. 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

**1Cor. 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.**

At this point Paul gets everyone's undivided attention; he tells them that he is going to reveal to them a secret, something that God has not revealed to anyone before. The Greek for *sleep* states, "to slumber, to de cease, be dead." It's obvious that in the context of this passage the reference is to physical death. Paul is telling this body of believers that not everyone is going to die. Also in context, Paul is sharing this revelation with people who have trusted Christ as Savior. The exciting new truth—"we shall be changed....to put on immortality."

One of the first things I notice is that Paul seemed to think that he could be part of that group—"we shall not all sleep."

The next truth revealed is that whether dead or alive, the believer will be *changed*, made different. The question begs, "What kind of change?" Our mortal,

corruptible bodies will be made immortal (eternal) and incorruptible (not subject to decay or depravation).

There are so many other questions that this truth poses, such as how and when? Paul gives a general answer to both in verse 52.

- In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye – an instant, less than a second
- At the last trump – I did quite a bit of study on this in conjunction with my topical study of the rapture. (See topical study section of this website.) Suffice it to say that many scholars have given varying explanations regarding this *trumpet*. I want to share with you a few paragraphs from that study as quoted from Renald Showers that make good sense to me.

1Corinthians 14 talks about the trumpet from a military perspective, so it would appear that thought would be continued in chapter 15. In Bible times, “when they went to war, they had a “last trump” that would be blown that would tell the fighting men, ‘Your time of fighting is over. It is time for you to go home and rest.’ A ‘last trump’ ended their time in the warfare.”

There were also two trumpets related to guard duty. “They had a first trump that signaled when a man was to start his watch...then they had a ‘last trump’ which signaled that his time on guard duty was over and it was time for him to go home.” The comparison to the Christian is obvious.

“The fact that Paul, when he mentions the last trump, doesn’t explain to the Corinthians what he meant by that indicates that they understood what he meant by ‘the last trump.’ They were very familiar...with that terminology of ‘the last trump’ signals used for Roman soldiers, whether their fighting is done or their tour of duty on the watch is over for that day.”

**1Cor. 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.**

When this transformation takes place, then the child of God will realize what it means for death to be swallowed up in victory. It would seem from the human perspective that at death man meets ultimate defeat. For the child of God, however, it is the seed that germinates into victorious, everlasting life!

**1Cor. 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?**

**1Cor. 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.**

If we embrace this truth, we can face death without fear and looking forward to our future. It is our sin that subjects us to death, and it is the law that reveals how bound we are by sin.

(4/11) I found a pertinent quote while reading W.B. Riley's book, Is Jesus Coming Again?, that applies here. "At that moment those that have come out of their graves, in the full realization of their eternal conquest, will almost tauntingly ask of their defeated foe, 'Oh, death, where is thy victory?' While those that have not slept, but by the coming of Christ the Master have put on their immortality, will voice their conscious triumph in the speech, 'Oh, death, where is thy sting?' and sing their joy in the sentence. 'Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

**1Cor. 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.**

The child of God, however, has gained the victory over sin and death through the sacrifice of our "Lord Jesus Christ." This truth should motivate us to serve the Lord in spite of all the temptations the flesh and the enemy may throw our way. It should encourage us to persevere through the tough times and strengthen us to make the hard choices such commitment may require. It should fill us with such gratitude that we "abound" or are characterized by a life of service in doing the work of the Lord. There is no sacrifice that we can make in serving the Lord for which the reward will not be far greater.