

What truths would you die for? What truths are so central that to deny them would be to lose Christianity?

Certainly, at the center of the list would be the subject before us in this study, the resurrection. Our text is 1 Corinthians 15...

In the book of 1 Corinthians Paul addressed a series of problems that were plaguing the church at Corinth. What were some? Divisions. Need for church discipline. Abuse of spiritual gifts, especially tongues. In chapter 15 he moves to yet another subject, the resurrection.

There's more to life than we see with our eyes. Death is not the end. But just how important is the resurrection, and why? Paul addresses three aspects related to the subject of the resurrection in chapter 15, the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of Christ's people, and the nature of the resurrection body. We believe in all three aspects.

I. We must believe in the resurrection of Christ (1-11).

The resurrection is central to the message known as the gospel. In the first eleven verses Paul relates three things about the gospel (which we investigated closely a couple weeks ago).

A. The gospel is what Paul preached (1-2).

Read verses 1-2.

Q: What's true of the gospel from these verses?

B. The gospel is what Paul received (3-8).

Paul didn't make up the gospel, but received it. Read verses 3-8.

Q: What are the ingredients of this message that Paul received and preached?

C. The gospel is what Paul cherished (9-11).

Read verses 9-11.

Q: How did Paul view himself? Why did he cherish the gospel so much?

So the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to our faith. To be a Christian a person must believe that Jesus is no longer dead, but alive as the result of conquering death and receiving a glorified body.

In the next verses Paul moves to a related subject. If we believe that Christ was raised, then...

II. We must believe in the resurrection of Christ's people (12-34).

Verse 12 indicates that some people in Corinth were saying some dangerous things, "But if it is preached that Christ has been raised...how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

Q: What exactly were they saying? They weren't denying Christ's resurrection, but ours...

A. Some deny it (12-19).

What happens to Christians after they die? We don't know what exactly they were saying. I doubt they taught cessation of existence. Perhaps due to Platonic thought they said we just become spirits, floating on clouds, etc (this type of thinking is alive

and well today). Does it really matter to say we believe that our bodies will be raised? Is it really all that serious to deny the resurrection? Yes, here's why.

If there is no resurrection...seven things are true.

1. *Christ hasn't been raised (13).*

Greek dualism said that matter is evil and the spiritual is good. "God doesn't bother Himself with the physical and material, but wants to get rid of it," the Greeks said. Why then did Christ become a man? And why did God raise up His body from the grave? If we deny the reality of resurrection, we have a dead Savior. If that's true...

2. *Our preaching is useless (14a).*

Q: How so?

3. *Your faith is useless (14b).*

Q: Why is the believer's faith useless if the resurrection of Christ didn't occur?

4. *We are false witnesses (15).*

How so? Because that's the message Paul preached and delivered to us.

5. *We are still in our sins (16-17).*

We needed a perfect substitute, not a phantom, but a real human being who could take our place and reverse the curse Adam brought on the human race. But if Jesus wasn't a man, or if He was a man but remained dead, then we don't have a sufficient Savior.

6. *The dead in Christ are lost (18).*

According to Paul there can be no life beyond the grave if there is no resurrection. Those who die have "perished" [KJV] without the resurrection.

7. *We are to be pitied (19).*

Do you think most American Christians would agree with verse 19? We seem to get pretty attached to this world and this life. Life may be rough here, but we still cling to it. Two questions...

Q: What's Paul's point here?

Q: Why is it we don't seem to cherish the life to come as much as Paul did?

B. Paul affirmed it (20-28).

1. *Christ has been raised (20).*

Q: What does the term "firstfruits" indicate?

Q: Why does the Bible use the phrase "fallen asleep" to refer to death?

2. *Christ's people will be raised (21-23).*

According to verse 22 all in Adam die. Paul then says that in Christ all will be made alive. Does that mean everyone will experience the resurrected life with God in heaven? What is the qualifier for the second "all?" IN CHRIST

Q: When will we experience resurrection, according to verse 23?

What will happen after that? Notice the word "Then" at the beginning of verse 24. *Then...*the end will come. And what will happen at the end? In other words, what is the goal of history? This is a great, perspective-giving verse...

3. *Christ will hand the kingdom over to the Father (24-28).*

But Christ will do some things after He returns to earth and before He hands the kingdom over to the Father. What things? Paul mentions four...

⇒ Christ will reign (25a).

Q: Is Christ reigning now? Yes, but His reign is incognito. When He returns He will set up His throne on earth (see Rev 19-20).

⇒ Christ will subdue all enemies (25b).

Q: What are some of these enemies?

Here's the last enemy...

⇒ Christ will destroy death (26).

⇒ Christ will be made subject to the Father (27-28).

Q: What do these verses indicate about God's ultimate goal for the future?

C. Paul reemphasized its necessity (29-34).

1. If it's not true, why are people baptized (29)?

This is a difficult verse to interpret. It's meaning seems rather straightforward. Apparently, some people were being baptized in the place of others who had died unbaptized. But why this was happening we don't know. Paul's mention of it doesn't mean he approves or condones, but merely says the practice helps make the point that belief in the resurrection is vital.

2. If it's not true, why do we endanger ourselves (30-32)?

Q: Was Paul exaggerating when he said he faced danger "every hour" in verse 30 and that he died "every day" in verse 31? No. He lived with constant danger.

Q: What did he say we might as well do if the resurrection isn't true? V 32

3. Since it is true, beware of those who say it's not (33-34).

Q: What do the words "stop sinning" in verse 34 indicate about our beliefs? To believe error is just as much a sin as to engage in some sinful activity. We tend to downplay this, however. How so? In our age we say that what a person believes is his own business. I have no right to impose my beliefs on you, nor you on me.

"Truth is up to the person," we're told. But is that statement true? If it's up to the person, we can't know for sure!

Guard your mind. Don't play around with false teaching. The fact is, false beliefs always end up yielding ungodly actions.

Discuss: What are some examples of this?

Finish the statement: If it's true that we are going to live forever with glorified bodies, then...