



## Week 16/18 (GOD'S CHURCH): 05/09/21

“The Basis of Faith” by the Rev'd Adam Lowe

*Bible Passage: 1 Corinthians 15:1-34*

All throughout the letter to the Corinthians, *as we've witnessed the church #unfiltered*, Paul has been addressing problem-after-problem in the life of the Corinthian church.

- **issues** in leadership; **division** between believers; **competitiveness** about gifts; **unchecked** sexual immorality; **drunkenness** at the Lord's Supper; *and disorder* as they gather as God's people.
- Yet as we arrive at the final chapters of the letter, *instead of winding down*, Paul is actually been building up to the most significant issue of all, (he's saved the worst for last): they're confused about:
- *the historical resurrection of Jesus; and the future resurrection of the dead.* Indeed, that's still very common today.
- Some of the Corinthians think that there will be no bodily resurrection; *that it will just be some sort of spiritual reality;*  
Some of the Corinthians think that the final resurrection has already occurred. *that the final end has arrived and they've already made it.*
- But as we'll see, Paul says no: Jesus has been raised physically, and when he returns, the dead will be physically raised too. *There is a now and not yet.*
- **It's a phenomenal claim.**
- The resurrection era has begun, but it will not be made complete until the Lord Jesus returns.

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1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to **remind you** of the gospel I preached to you [this isn't new news: he's reminding them of something they already know], which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. (vv.1-2)

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- Paul is going to immediately unpack what he means by the 'gospel', but right at the heart of it, is understanding the true nature and implication, of Jesus' resurrection that it would take a grip on our lives and remap everything.
- Note Paul isn't reminding them of some sort of concept to believe in, but something that has happened in history - an event - to anchor our lives to.
- *News that was preached. News which they received.*

*News by which they are saved. News to be held firm.*

- The resurrection is not an optional extra. Without it, everything is in vain. With it, our lives have a purpose and our future is secured. //
- *If you're not yet a follower of Jesus, you might have all sorts of objections to Christianity, you can start in all sorts of places, but here's the thing: start with the resurrection. Because if it didn't happen, then none of the other questions matter.*
- But if it did happen, then the resurrection of Jesus isn't just an event in history, BUT: it is **the event** which should shape and map every aspect of your life, it is **the event** which shapes and maps the future of everything.

So we'll look at this chapter over two weeks, *but first up, we see:*

- The **certainty, centrality, and consequence** of Jesus' resurrection.

## CERTAINTY | VERSES 3-11

**부활의 확신 | DÖ TH DE JOT DE RÖT** First, the **CERTAINTY**

**of Jesus' resurrection.** *Verse 3...*

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3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

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*When Paul uses the phrase "for what I received I passed on to you as of first importance", he's saying this is critical news that I've passed on to you (I'm not the author of it), but I've passed it on in the very condition that I received it, with the expectation that you would pass it on in that same condition without change.*

- *The language the Paul uses is an ancient technical way of saying that this is what he's doing. It's a bit like in modern writing when quoting another source you indicate it with a reference.*
- And what's really amazing is that we can have a confidence that this early creed, preserved for us in verses 4-8, existed way before Paul wrote the letter.

- *In fact, it can be dated as early as within 18 months of Jesus' death, as per James Dunn - one of the most significant scholars on the matter - and certainly no later than 5 years after Jesus' death.*
- Either way: we can be certain that this idea wasn't Paul's invention, but was what the very first Christians reported to be true.
- That's the method of transmission that Paul is referring to. **It's early.**

But the substance of what Paul passes on is even more extraordinary.

- It's the Gospel in a nutshell; it's fourfold:
- **That Christ died for our sins** *just as the Scriptures, what we know as the Old Testament, foresaw that God's king would die as a sacrifice to redeem the world;* **That Christ was buried** *that he really was dead.*  
**That Christ was raised** *that he physically rose from the dead that he didn't die again, but is permanently alive;* and **That Christ appeared.**
- **It's the ABCD of the Gospel.**
- *That Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised, and Christ appeared.*
- Not just once, but to scores of people, on many occasions, over a period of 40 days.
- To Cephas (that's Peter), to the other disciples, to over 500 people at one time.
- And not only is this list not exhaustive, *for we read of other witnesses in the Gospels such as the women who were the very first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, but Paul implies that you can ask around and fact-check him on this if you like, because whilst a few of these people have died, they've fallen asleep; most are still alive.*
- Now we can't of course go to those witnesses, but the accounts of many of the witnesses have been faithfully preserved for us in the New Testament.

But Paul continues, saying in effect, and if you want a more personal example, of the reality of this event, then you need not look further than him.

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Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (vv.7-8)

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- The phrase 'abnormally born' could mean a range of things.  
But most likely, Paul is just saying that out of all the people who are most unlikely to have become a follower of Jesus and claim that Jesus is alive, it's him. Why? Because prior to his encounter with the Risen Jesus, he went out of his way to actively persecute the Christian church. //
- *He's saying: look, you might be a sceptic, but believe me, there was no bigger sceptic than me! I didn't just not believe the news about Jesus, I persecuted those who proclaimed it.*
- But not anymore.
- Hear what Paul is saying. The Gospel is about facts.
- The Gospel is not a spiritual way of life.

The Gospel is not a religious rule to obey.

The Gospel is not a political agenda to adopt.

The Gospel is not a concept to be enlightened with.

- The Gospel is news, about **an event** for which you can be certain, that changes everything for everyone, and if you let it, will reach down and take a grip on your life.
- **Just like it did for him.**

## CENTRALITY | VERSES 12-22

부활의 중요성 | YIIC CIEL DE JOT DE RÖT

Second, the **CENTRALITY of Jesus' Resurrection.** *Verse 12...*

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12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

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*Paul is probably addressing those in Corinth who have weirdly taken on Greco-Roman idea, that the soul is entrapped in the body and that our future is not a bodily resurrection, but that there's just immortality of the soul.*

- Kind of sad that's what a lot of modern Christianity has taught as well!  
It's the disneyfication of the afterlife, we won't have bodies, we all become a star!
- But note that the claim of Christianity is that bodily physical resurrection awaits us, because that's exactly what happened to Jesus. **If we won't rise, he must not have.**
- Paul's saying that so our resurrection is so expected to be the outcome of Jesus', that if we don't rise, then that would mean that Jesus was never raised.
- *Those who don't believe that the dead will be raised aren't just tinkering with the Gospel, but they've totally misunderstood what Paul has said and what the Gospel claims.*
- It there's no resurrection of the dead, it means:
- v.14 *our preaching is useless as is your faith;*  
v.15 *we are false witnesses about God;*  
v.17 *your faith is futile as you are still in your sins;*  
v.18 *believers who have died are lost; and*  
v.19 *we are to be more pitied than anyone else.*
- Because the wages of sin is death,

Jesus' resurrection is the evidence that the price has been truly paid.

- *Those receiving the letter would've said, oh no, we definitely believe Jesus rose from the dead, and so Paul is saying:* therefore you must also believe that those in Christ will be raised, for Jesus' resurrection and ours are inextricably linked. You can't tear them apart.
  - It's why later on in verse 29 he says, if there is no resurrection, well why do people baptise for the dead. We're not sure if this practice emerged because some believers died suddenly before they could be baptised, maybe even due to famine or epidemic.
  - *Paul isn't endorsing or prescribing the practice of baptism on behalf of those who've died, but he's saying, if you don't there's any resurrection, why would you do this?*
  - **There would be no point.**
  - It's why he also questions later *having said he faces death everyday*, why would he put his life in danger, even fighting wild beasts (whatever that means!), what would he possibly gain, if the dead would not be raised?
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- No: as surely as Jesus rose from the dead, so too will all who trust in him be raised forever.
  - That's what the reference to the firstfruits is all about.

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20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

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Now I'm not much of a gardener, and I'm certainly no farmer, but here's what I know.

- When you look out at your crop, and you see the first apple of the season, it's a sign, it's a guarantee of the type of fruit that follows.
- You don't get an apple, and think, I wonder if we'll get oranges next?
- Hear the news: if you want to see what your future looks like: Look at Jesus. Alive. Eating with friends. Had a real body. Yet will not die again.
- How on earth could that be possible? Because the one from heaven came to us. *v.21...*

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For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (vv.21-22)

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- Just as death came through Adam as the result of sin, Life forever comes through Jesus as the result of the forgiveness he has won.
  - So comprehensive was Jesus' victory on the cross and in his resurrection, that: because the full price for sin was paid for, its consequence, death, has been defeated, for all who trust in him!

## CONSEQUENCE | VERSES 23-34

### 부활의 결과 | CÖK YIC KE JÖT DE RÖT

But Paul says that time, the **consequence of Jesus' resurrection**, has not come yet. *v.23...*

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23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

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To those who thought the resurrection had already come, *they had what we would call an over-realised eschatology*, they conflated Jesus' resurrection and his return, Paul says, not yet: **but each in turn**.

- Whilst Christ defeated sin and death in his death and resurrection; death will not be destroyed until "the end", that is the day that Jesus returns.
- The image that Paul is using is like the sudden and grand appearing of an emperor.
- That will be the day. And this won't be any emperor, it will be the Lord Jesus himself, who will reign comprehensively over everything forever, sharing it with his people.
- It's on that day, when, all the powers of evil, of sin and death, will finally be dealt with. No more sin, no more pain, no more death.
- The bell has been rung, the era has begun, but death will not be dealt its final blow until the day that Jesus returns.

Paul says, how you understand the resurrection changes everything,

- If you don't think that Jesus' resurrection was real, or if you don't accept that physical resurrection awaits, it means that death is still in charge.
  - Paul says, if you think that way, then you may as well:
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"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

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- I read an article recently that kind of promoted that view. The TL;DR version said, look, your body isn't going to last forever, you really can't do much about it, nothing awaits afterwards, so you may as well just do whatever you want to today.
- If we're just on a trajectory from life to death, possess it now, consume it now, indulge today, *for tomorrow we die*.

- *But the Gospel says, that when you hold firm to the Good News of Jesus, you're life becomes connected to both the past even of his resurrection, and also the future promise of his return.*
  - Your trajectory is no longer from life to death, but we can have confidence that it will be from death to life.
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The second law of thermodynamics of entropy is based on the observation that everything in our entire universe is in decay. Everything is moving from order to disorder. Even our sun, which has enough fuel in it to last a few billion years, it's not going to last forever.

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- But the news of resurrection changes everything, as we await new creation.
- That the movement of our universe to disorder since Adam is no longer the case.
- Because, *Jesus' death and resurrection were like a shockwave throughout the universe*, that sets the trajectory back towards order, and it will be fulfilled when Jesus returns.
- We're not there yet. That's plain to see. But the fruit is on the tree. The resurrection era has begun. And we live in the time between the now and the not yet.
  
- It means, that every time the Gospel is proclaimed and received today, the bondage of sin and death is broken, *we're reaching forward*, in great anticipation when Jesus returns, and the dead in Christ will be raised, and new creation will be born.
- It means that death is no longer in charge.
- That we can face all sorts of trials and challenge and pain, *we might not be fighting wild beasts in Ephesus like Paul - whatever that means, but we can face the battle, enduring hardship for the sake of the Gospel*, because we're confident that it's not how the story will end.
- That there will be a day when every tear will be wiped away.
- It means how we care for God's creation matters. It means what we do with our bodies matters.
- It means living obediently that reflects that: Jesus' reigns today, *and* that there is a future which is guaranteed to come.
- **The resurrection changes everything.**