

# He is Risen!



## Be strong & unmovable

2 discussion guides on 1 Corinthians 15

for All Saints communities  
April/May 2023

## **1 Corinthians 15 : Background & context**

In his first letter to the church in Corinth, written around A.D. 55, Paul points out a number of areas of life where the new believers were not living in a way consistent with the gospel message. He challenged them on their internal divisions, lack of sexual integrity, self-centred attitudes and finally, in chapter 15, their confusions around the resurrection.

Most people in Paul's time were influenced by Greek thinking which believed that the physical body was inferior and corrupt, while the soul or spirit was divine. So some in the church concluded that the resurrection was merely spiritual and were saying that the idea of a bodily, physical resurrection was a ridiculous concept (15:12). (However, the idea that bodies are essentially debased, and thus physical resurrection is impossible, is contrary to both Old Testament views of the body and to the gospel of Christ.)

Paul insists that the bodily resurrection of Jesus is an indispensable part of the gospel :-

- it stands on hard facts.
- it has far-reaching consequences.
- it is of critical importance.

Paul emphasizes to the Corinthian Christians the important link between the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and their own future bodily resurrection. Therefore, as they believed in the resurrection of Jesus, how could they then deny the future bodily resurrection of believers?

He teaches that the resurrection is

- Jesus' victory over sin and death;
- the source of life and power for us in the present, and
- the promise of future hope for the whole world.

# Study 1 : Of first importance

1 Corinthians 15: 1-34

**FOR STARTERS** : How do you think of your body - as amazing, useful, flawed, frustrating or ..... ?

## **DIG IN:- Read 15:1-11**

1. What does Paul remind the believers of? (vs 1-2)
2. What 3 key facts about the gospel are “of first importance”? (vs 3-4)
3. How does Paul show that the resurrection of Jesus is factual and true? (vs 5-8) Which of these do you find most convincing?

[Optional 4. In verse 10, what contrast is presented between grace and effort?]

## **APPLY:-**

5. In these 11 verses, Paul has presented key facts about the gospel and then shared the effect that seeing the risen Christ has had on him (vs 9-11).

Imagine that an interested friend wants to know more about your faith. Using Paul’s framework as a model,

- What facts about the gospel would you mention to them?
- What effect has coming to faith in Jesus had on you? What personal example(s) of God’s grace in your life would you share?

Split up into groups of 2-3 and share your answers with one another.

Pray that this will be a “dry run” for when you have an opportunity for a conversation like this with someone who is not a believer.

**DIG IN :- Read 15:12-34     The certainty of Resurrection**

Locate all the “ifs” in verses 12-19 and 29-34.

6. What problems arise for the Corinthians, for Paul, and for us, if there is no resurrection of the dead, according to
- verses 13,16
  - verses 14,17
  - verse 15
  - verse 18
  - verse 19

Having described the utter gloom if there is no resurrection, Paul declares “but Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.” (v20) This changes everything.

[Optional : 7. How does Paul make his main point that Paul in verses 20-28?]

v20-28 is essentially saying that Jesus has paved the way for us into resurrection life. Where He goes, we will ultimately go; for where the Head goes, the body must follow. Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded, creating a new ‘race’ of humanity who will one day be free from sin and all its consequences.

8. Paul shows the Corinthians that the way they live, and the way he is living, is inconsistent and absurd if there is no resurrection (vs 29-34)

How differently would Paul live if he stopped expecting the resurrection of the dead?

**Note : verse 29**“being baptised for the dead”

No one really knows what was going on in this practice. Many solutions have been suggested. It may be that some were being baptised on behalf of a dead person to secure, as if by magic, the benefits of baptism for the departed friend. Paul mentions this simply to highlight that they are not acting consistently: why would they bother with this ritual if there was no coming resurrection?

**Tip :** Why not read this chapter in the “The Message” version by Eugene Peterson, for a fresh look at Paul’s argument for the resurrection.

**APPLY:- (Choose one of these questions to think through and discuss)**

9. What one truth from 15:1-34 would you like to remember and take to heart this week? Write it down to help you to recall it :-

10. When have you felt that life was futile? How can the truths in this passage help you have hope and courage when those feelings come?

### **FINALLY**

Paul drums home this truth: If Jesus didn’t really rise from the dead, then He didn’t really defeat death, sin and the devil; and we are believing a hopeless lie.

However, Jesus DID rise from the dead. This proved He really was the Son of God and that all His claims and promises are true.

To understand and believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus gives us His power for living in the present and certain hope for the future.

## Study 2 : Be Strong & Unmovable 1 Corinthians 15: 35-58

### **FOR STARTERS :-**

**Either:** When you were a teenager what did you least like about your body?  
What kind of body did you want to have?

**Or:** When have you thought, “What’s the point...? (*...of being nice; ...of trying to act with integrity; ...of attempting to build bridges with XX; .. etc*) What situation were you facing?

Introduction: Paul has made a strong case that the bodily resurrection of believers is certain because Jesus was raised bodily. The gospel rests on this truth.

However, some in Corinth were struggling with this concept. To them, physical matter just seemed incompatible with eternal life. How can bodies that age and decay exist in the Kingdom of God? Paul explains that resurrection doesn't mean the re-animation of a corpse, but the transformation of physical bodies into glorified ones.

### **DIG IN :- Read 15:35 – 49 Different body types**

To help the believers understand what a resurrected body will be like, Paul gives examples of different kinds of structures or ‘bodies’ that they are familiar with.

1. In verses 36-41, what illustrations from nature help to answer the questions raised in verse 35?
2. In what four ways will our resurrection bodies be different from the earthly bodies we now have? (vs 42-44) Think about and describe the implications of these differences.

3. In verses 45-49 the comparison between our present natural bodies and our future resurrection bodies continues, by contrasting the bodies of Adam and Christ.
  - What is the main point of this comparison?
  - What do we receive from each 'Adam'?

**APPLY:-**

4. What are your emotions as you reflect on, and begin to grasp, the truth of verse 49 more fully:  
"Just as we are now like Adam, the man of the earth,  
so we will someday be like Christ, the man from heaven"  
*(New Living Translation)*

**DIG IN:- Read 15:50-58      Resurrection is the final victory over death**

Paul concludes his argument for the resurrection of believers with a magnificent passage in which he points triumphantly to the future hope of all Christians.

5. What will happen to believers when the last trumpet is blown to announce Jesus' return?
6. What will we be celebrating on that day?
7. Paul ends with an exhortation to action in verse 58.
  - How does this verse answer your question "What's the point?" in the *For Starters* section?
  - What is 'the work of the Lord' in your day-to-day life?
  - What should be your attitude to your tasks if you saw them as 'labour in the Lord'?
  - Why is the Christian's work for the Lord not 'in vain'?

***APPLY :- (Choose one of these questions to think through and discuss)***

8. Read, and re-read verse 58 slowly and thoughtfully.  
Which part of this verse is most meaningful to you and why?  
Does it require from you some practical action, or change in attitude?
9. How has this chapter changed your view on death?
10. Reflect upon the implications for you of Paul's teaching about resurrection in this chapter.
- What do you find most comforting?
  - What do you find most challenging?
  - What do you find most motivating?
- Share what you have discovered with one another.

[Optional : Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18]

***FINALLY***

The whole gospel – the Christian hope of salvation, eternal life, and the Kingdom of God – rests on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This chapter emphasizes the certainty of resurrection and of the transformation of all believers. Paul describes the resurrection body as characterised by glory (radiance, splendour). It will also be filled with power. These are qualities also ascribed to God, which believers will somehow share. While having continuity with the natural body, the spiritual body will be quite new and, in fact, will bear the image of Jesus Christ (15: 49).

Because the resurrection of Jesus is real, our future is secure and magnificent. Though we still face death, we have nothing to fear from death. We still grieve when loved ones die, but we also know that what awaits those who know and love Jesus is more real and more wonderful than we can possibly imagine. Death isn't final – it's just the beginning of a whole new perfect order of life, to be spent with our Lord and His people.