

40. Learning the Importance of the Resurrection

In our last topic, we saw some things that we want to help our physical and spiritual children clearly understand so that they can explain the Gospel clearly to others. In our topic today, we will see how to help them learn to explain the importance of the resurrection to others. We will see that there were even people in the church at Corinth that were teaching that there is no resurrection of the dead. As a result, Paul wanted all of the Christians to know how to answer those who were teaching that there is no resurrection. The Christians all believed in the resurrection of Christ or they would not have been Christians. However, some did not believe in the resurrection of the Christians.

As we read 1 Corinthians 15:12, Paul wrote, “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” Paul and those with him had clearly taught about the resurrection of Christ when they were in Corinth. The Corinthian Christians had believed in the death and resurrection of Christ. However, their understanding was limited and some were now teaching that there would be no physical resurrection of those who placed their faith in Christ. It is possible that some of the Jewish Christians in Corinth had been influenced by the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection. The Gentile Christians had been taught by their Greek philosophies that anything material, including the body, was evil. As a result, the rest of the chapter is written to help the believers know that their physical bodies would one day be raised from the dead.

Paul sounds like a lawyer who is presenting his case as he carefully explains the evidence for the fact that Christians will rise from the dead. He begins by showing the fact that if a person believed that there is no resurrection, then the resurrection of Christ would not have happened. 1 Corinthians 15:13-14 says, “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty.” Paul begins by showing seven consequences if there is no resurrection. First, in 1 Corinthians 15:16 Paul said again, “For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.” Paul wanted to make it clear that the first consequence if there is no resurrection would be that it would have to include Christ. If there is no resurrection, then Christ could not have been raised from the dead.

The second consequence, if there is no resurrection, is that the preaching of Paul and those with him would be empty words. The word that is translated “empty” means *vain, devoid of truth* or that our work for Christ would be of no purpose. Paul said of his own life in Philippians 2:12-16, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Paul wanted the Philippians to enjoy transformed lives so that his preaching among them would not be in vain or of no purpose.

Paul also wanted the Corinthians to realize that it was the resurrection that gave their lives meaning and purpose. A third consequence, if there is no resurrection, would be the fact that the faith of the Christians in Corinth would be vain or of no purpose. That is why Paul concludes this chapter in 1 Corinthians 15:56-58, “The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Paul said that the resurrection meant that their work for the Lord was not in vain either.

In 1 Corinthians 15:15-17, Paul wrote, “Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins!” Here, we see some additional consequences if there is no resurrection of the dead. A fourth consequence, if there is no resurrection, would be that all of the witnesses and those who spoke of the resurrection would be liars. People will not die for something that they know is a lie. Peter and the rest of the twelve would not be willing to die to get people to believe a lie. Yet, most of the twelve did die for their faith because they knew that they spoke the truth.

A fifth consequence, if there is no resurrection, is mentioned in verse 17 and would have directly affected the Corinthians that had believed in Christ because their faith would be futile and they would still be in their sins. The word that is translated “futile” means *it has no purpose*. 1 Peter 1:18 says, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers.” Here, we see that Peter reminds us that Christ redeemed us from our aimless conduct. That is why if there was no resurrection our lives would have no purpose because then Christ could not have redeemed us. Peter also reminds us of another key lesson here. This aimless conduct has been handed down for many generations. As a result, in addition to redeeming us from our empty way of life, the resurrection of Christ means that He has also set us free from our burdens from the past that were passed down to us by our forefathers.

A sixth consequence, if there is no resurrection, is found in 1 Corinthians 15:18 which says, “Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” Here, we see that every Christian that had already died would have perished. However, John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” We want to help our children learn how to explain to new Christians that they will never perish. John 10:27-30 says, ““My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.”” Christ taught the disciples that those who are His sheep will never perish. In addition, no one is able to take a single Christian out of the hand of Christ. Today, many Christians are afraid that they can lose their salvation. They need to understand that no one can take them out of the hand of Christ.

A seventh consequence, if there is no resurrection, is found in 1 Corinthians 15:19 which says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable...” Here, we see that Christians would have no hope and Christians would actually be the most pitied people on the earth because they would believe in a false hope. The word that is translated “hope” speaks of the confident expectation of our eternal salvation. The root word is used six times in Romans 8:24-25 where we read, “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.” Here, we see that as Christians we can wait with confidence for the return of Christ to take us to heaven with perseverance.

Because of that hope, we can wait for the return of Christ with great joy and peace in our lives. Romans 15:13 says, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Here, we see also that the Holy Spirit is the One who gives us that hope by His power. As Christians, this hope also gives us strength to serve the Lord in the present as we look forward to the future. Titus 2:11-14 says, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.” We are given the strength to carry out good works because of the fact that we have this confident hope that Christ is coming to take us to heaven.

However, we see that we do not need to deal with these seven consequences that would face us and our children if there was no resurrection. Instead, 1 Corinthians 15:20 says, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Here, we are reminded that Christ has certainly risen from the dead. As 1 Corinthians 15:6 says, “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” More than five hundred people saw that Christ was alive after His resurrection and could give testimony of His resurrection.

We also see that Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. The word that is translated “firstfruits” means *a person who is superior in excellence to others of the same class*. Romans 11:16 says, “For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches.” Christ is the firstfruits of those who are fallen asleep. John 15:1 says He is also the vine and we are the branches. The verse in Romans says that because the root is holy, the branches are also holy. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to new Christians the fact that because Christ is holy that also causes us to be holy because we are the branches. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the importance of the resurrection.