

Some Corinthians were apparently questioning if there would be a future, physical resurrection of the body. Perhaps they had been influenced by the common Greek perception that the soul was immortal but the body would not be resurrected (cf. Acts 17:18, 32). They may have thought that being resurrected with Christ (cf. Romans 6) was all that there was. But Paul taught that there will be a future, physical resurrection of the body.

Some today might also deny any resurrection (future or historically of Christ), but even more might think that it is just not important. They think that each can believe as they want, if that is good for them. But Christians should not accept this “it doesn’t matter” mentality. The resurrection was an essential part of the gospel preaching (cf. Acts 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 13, 17, 24, 25, 26).

I. *The argument for resurrection (15:12-13)*

If there is no resurrection, then Jesus Christ also was not raised. To deny a future resurrection on the basis of principle, that is, that it cannot happen or need not happen, is to deny the historic resurrection of Jesus. This simple argument has two important presuppositions.

1. *Jesus is not only God but also fully human.* Only because Jesus had a fully human body, does His resurrection depend upon the possibility of human resurrection.
2. *Normal human existence includes a body.* It is abnormal for a human to exist as a spirit without a body. The necessity of Christ’s resurrection presumes that it was necessary for Him to have His body restored, so that He could, without penalty, exist as fully “normal” man.

Some have lost the hope that we are given in the resurrection. Eternal life includes eternal existence in a body. (The exact nature of those bodies will be explained later in the chapter. But consider the character of Jesus’ body in Luke 24:39.)

Christ was raised and for that reason we also will be raised. The alternative of no resurrection would leave us with dire consequences.

II. *The consequences if there were no resurrection (15:14-19)*

1. *The effect on Paul’s preaching:*

- a. If there were no resurrection, then Paul’s preaching was useless, i.e., “empty” or “without purpose” (v 14). If the resurrection is taken out of the gospel message, then there is nothing left that has any value. Even to preach good morals would be useless, if there were no resurrection.
- b. If there were no resurrection, then Paul’s preaching also was false testimony (v 15). Paul would have been claiming that God had done something which he had not done. That would be blasphemy. He would have been a liar.

2. *The effect on our faith:*

- a. If there were no resurrection, our faith is useless because we are still in sin (v 17). The death of Christ paid the penalty of sin (death). Life is the proof that it was paid. If Jesus were not raised from the dead, then the conclusion must be that the wages of sin were not adequately paid. We would still be in sin.
- b. If there were no resurrection, our faith is useless, because all who are dead are lost (v 18). The dead would remain dead, but more importantly, they would be spiritually lost, having died in sin, without forgiveness.
- c. If there were no resurrection, our faith is useless, because there is no future hope (v 19). Without the resurrection, there is no good future after death. We would be separated from God and without reward. Paul says we would be pitiful. Why would he have gone through hunger, cold, hardship, shipwreck, and beatings if there were no future hope. What a waste it would have been.

There are at least two conclusions to be drawn for our lives today.

(1) *Our faith is based upon real, historical fact.*

In a world that says you cannot know or cannot communicate, Christians should stand out as a light in the darkness. There is a God who can communicate and He has communicated. We are not left with just feelings. God communicated with us through His Son, Jesus Christ and has communicated with us accurately through the Bible. We can know about the real historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is knowable and it is important. Our faith is tied, not to our feelings or an inward experience, but to the cold, hard fact of the resurrection. Paul saw proof of the resurrection in the witnesses to it, not in inward feelings. Cf. 1 John 1:1-2.

(2) *Our lives as believers today have significance because of the future.*

If there is no future – no future as the Bible describes it – there is no sense in the Christian life. The Bible teaches that all will be resurrected, some to everlasting life,, others to everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2). There will be a time of judgment and of reward.

It makes sense to turn to Jesus and to follow Him whole-heartedly. We sacrifice today to gain in the future. We suffer today so that we may rejoice in the future. The future gives meaning for the way we live today. Consider the “heros of faith” in Hebrews 11 who suffered torture and death, mistreatment and deprivation all because they were looking toward a future hope. If there were no resurrection, they would not be heros of faith, but victims to be pitied.

But there is a future. As verse 20 will say: “But now Christ has been raised from the dead.” There is reason to hope. There is reason to live now in light of the future.