*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 16 - 21

*First Corinthians Chapter Fifteen*

**Monday, March 16 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

*“Christ was raised from the dead”*

While some in Corinth were denying the resurrection, they were almost certainly not denying life after death; virtually everyone in the ancient world believed in that. Rather, they would have been disputing the Christian doctrine of *bodily* resurrection and endorsing one of the more Greek forms of belief that limited the afterlife to disembodied immortality of the soul. Therefore, Paul reiterates (“let me remind you of the Good News I preached to you before”) the fact of Christ’s bodily resurrection.

Christ’s death and resurrection are inseparable, bringing us to the very center of the Christian faith. When Paul was on trial for his life before the Jewish leaders, he summed up the charge against him as his “hope in the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:6; 24:21; 26:6-8). Given that our modern culture is influenced by the skepticism of all things supernatural, Christians need to be ready to defend both the *possibility* and the *need* for bodily resurrection.

*It is belief in the Good News, Lord, which has saved me. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 17 1 Corinthians 15:12-19**

*“If there is no resurrection of the dead . . .”*

The main point of these verses is that if there is no coming bodily resurrection of all Christians, then Jesus himself was not bodily raised, and that makes Christianity futile. Paul continuously repeats this thought from several different angles in these verses. The upshot is that if there is no bodily resurrection, all of these are the result: both the preaching of the apostles and the faith of the Corinthians are useless (v. 14); Paul and his companions are liars (v. 15); all humanity stands condemned because of their sin (v. 17); and, those who have already died, including believers, are eternally lost (v. 18). As a result, Christians are most deserving of others’ pity or compassion, since they have given up much for the sake of an empty promise (v. 19).

Paul does not permit a perspective on Jesus that views him merely as a good, moral teacher or on Christianity that considers it simply an admirable collection of proverbial truths about how to live. If the resurrection is false, Christianity is worthless for, if Christ was not raised, death, the penalty for sin, is not conquered. We remain dead in our sin.

*Because of your resurrection, Lord, though I die, I will live forever. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 18 1 Corinthians 15:20-28**

*“Christ has been raised from the dead”*

Wonderfully, Christ has been raised bodily and has thus set into motion an unstoppable chain of events that will culminate in the universal demonstration of the absolute sovereignty of God. Verses 20-22 describe how Christ’s bodily resurrection guarantees the future bodily resurrection of all believers, just as the “firstfruits” of a harvest heralded a much larger crop to follow. Paul points out the parallel between Adam’s sin leading to the sinfulness of all humanity and Christ’s resurrection leading to the resurrection of all his followers. Because Christ, as fully human, represented the entire human race in bearing its sin, he is able to apply the benefits of his death and resurrection to all who will accept them.

After the resurrection of believers at the time of Christ’s return, “the end” or goal of human history will arrive. Christ will have destroyed all opposition to his reign in the universe – both human and angelic (i.e., demonic) – and death itself will be destroyed so that God’s people will never again have anything to fear.

*Just as I follow you in this life, Lord, I will follow you into eternity. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 16 - 21

*First Corinthians Chapter Fifteen*

**Thursday, March 19 1 Corinthians 15:29-34**

*“If the dead will not be raised . . .”*

Paul goes back to arguing the absurdity of denying the bodily resurrection, and the basis of his first argument, baptism for the dead, is easily the most puzzling. Early church historical documents allude to such a practice among certain sects of believers, in which living believers were baptized on behalf of those in their group who had died without being baptized. Paul neither condemns nor condones such a practice but argues for its irrelevance if Christ is not raised. In other words, those who are baptizing people on behalf of the dead contradict their own theology that denies the resurrection.

Next, Paul turns to his own experience. Why should he continue to tolerate hostility from others and risk his life for the sake of the gospel if there is no hope of resurrection? And, if this life is all there is, people ought to “eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” But he immediately proceeds to reject such logic, since Christ has in fact been raised. In fact, those who deny the resurrection make for “bad company,” corrupting the faith of believers.

*Accepting your resurrection, Lord, affects every aspect of my life. Amen.*

**Friday, March 20 1 Corinthians 15:35-44**

*“How are the dead raised?”*

“How are the dead raised?” was probably not so much a genuine question but a way of mocking the whole notion of bodily resurrection. In response, Paul uses the analogy of seed and plant. By being buried in the ground, the seed seemingly dies, and it certainly decomposes. Yet on that very spot new life emerges, totally different in appearance from the seed, and yet somehow the mature plant retains the identity of the seed. In fact, the world is filled with different kinds of bodies that God has created. So why should it be thought incredible that he could create still one more kind – a resurrected human body?

There yet await for believers resurrection bodies that will be far more glorious than our present ones. Unlike our current bodies, these new ones will be fitted for eternity, never again to die or be limited by sin or impotence. Whereas human bodies in this world are animated by merely physical life, believers will one day have bodies that will be fully empowered by the eternal life of God.

*I have a natural body, Lord, but you will raise me with a supernatural body. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 21 1 Corinthians 15:45-58**

*“We will all be transformed”*

Believers who have shared in the finite, fallen likeness of the first Adam can look forward to sharing in the kind of perfect humanity Jesus (the last Adam) embodied, but only after this life, when Jesus comes back again. Frail, mortal humanity cannot survive in God’s eternal and perfectly holy presence. Therefore, it must be transformed. The secret that Paul is revealing here is that believer’s bodily resurrections will occur when Christ returns. Not all Christians will die first, since some will be alive when he comes back. But all will undergo whatever transformation is necessary to give them their glorified bodies. This change will take place instantaneously not gradually.

Paul ends the chapter by emphasizing the practical implications of Christ’s bodily resurrection and, consequently, that of believers. Therefore, we should remain unswervingly committed to the teaching of the Bible and totally dedicated to the work of the gospel which is purity of life and the faithful exercise of service in Jesus’ name.

*I praise you, Lord, for in you sin and death have been defeated. Amen.*