

## WHERE WE ARE HEADED

As we work through 1 Corinthians 15, we come to a very theologically rich section. Paul is going to lay out a great deal of his thinking about the resurrection of Jesus and what that great event means. And, we have to recognize that we won't be able to unpack all the implications in one discussion!

Like a jigsaw puzzle, we want to be able to put at least some of the key pieces together in our discussion to help ensure we have a good grasp on Paul's big idea. And what is that big idea? That the reality of Jesus' resurrection is foundational to living the Christian life well. That is something that some in Corinth were apparently denying and that is something that some contemporary Christians don't seem to fully grasp.

## WALKING THROUGH THE DISCUSSION

The opening question launches the idea that we all have strategies for "putting the pieces together." (You might even consider having a couple of jigsaw puzzles out before the discussion begins to let people start working on the puzzles before you explore the various strategies we use.) What we are looking for is an awareness of how we assemble the whole picture from the pieces we have in hand. That is what we want to do as we read through the section from 1 Corinthians 15.

In this chapter, Paul is addressing some misguided thinking among the Corinthians. Some were apparently insisting that either Jesus' resurrection was not really that significant an event (it didn't really have impact on their lives) or that resurrection from the dead in general wasn't possible. Regardless of the foundational thinking, the conclusion of this unhealthy thinking was the same: Jesus' resurrection was ignored and overlooked and treated as if it hadn't happened.

Paul intends to address this error head on, but he is going to do it in two ways. As we saw in our last discussion, he first addresses this by highlighting the centrality of the resurrection in the message of the Gospel and insisting that there were numerous witnesses who could and did testify to the bodily, physical resurrection of Jesus.

The second way that Paul addresses this error is to reflect on the implications of the idea that Jesus has not been raised from the dead. This he does in a series of "if . . . then" statements. And that is the focus of most of our discussion.

As you walk through the central portion of this section, think through and grapple with the consequences of denying the reality or the significance of the resurrection. In 15:13-19, Paul raises a number of staggering implications.

If Christ has not been raised, then proclaiming the Gospel is worthless (15:14). If the good news does not really bring about the kind of changed life seen in Jesus' resurrection, then the Gospel doesn't really change us.

If Christ has not been raised, then putting faith in the Christ of that message has no real value (15:14). The benefit of sharing in new life

with Jesus is lost if Jesus never did enter into that new resurrection life.

If Christ has not been raised, then those who share the good news about Jesus actually misrepresent God (15:15). The good news includes the report of Jesus' resurrection; but if that's not true, then to announce that is what God is doing or has done misrepresents Him.

If Christ has not been raised, then those who trust in Jesus are still in their sins (15:17). Although forgiveness could be understood to be anchored in the cross, without the resurrection the power for new living in freedom from the power of sin is negated.

If Christ has not been raised, then our hope in Christ is only a "this world" kind of thing and we should be pitied (15:19) and the Gospel cannot call us to live beyond the daily grind of life (as mentioned by Paul in 15:32).

Clearly, there is much more in this passage than just these thoughts, but getting a grip on these things is of huge significance. After exploring the implications of Paul's "if . . . then's," go back and re-think what the implications for life are because Christ is risen. The picture painted is greatly encouraging!

Because Christ is raised, the proclamation of this message does matter—lives are changed through the Gospel.

Because Christ is raised, believing in the One whose life and death and resurrection is proclaimed is not worthless.

Because Christ is raised, the good news we announce represents God well—we are telling His news.

Because Christ is raised, we are not only freed from the penalty of our sins but we have been brought into a newness of life that frees us from a life dominated and controlled by sin.

Because Christ is raised, we who believe and trust in Him are those who are most to be envied! We are living for what matters most. We are given over to that which has changed the world!

Although we might not struggle with teaching or thinking about the resurrection in quite the same way that the Corinthians did, many Christians seem to lose touch with this foundational truth: Jesus is risen from the dead and that reality changes all of life!

We struggle with "life issues" without regard for the Gospel, acting like the message of His resurrection is of no real practical help. We wonder what it is that God is doing in our lives and in the world, living as if the resurrection is not central and defining for understanding what God is up to. We stumble over our own struggles with sin and the sin we see in others, failing to grasp the magnitude of the life-changing power that comes into our lives through the resurrection.

Although the resurrection is real and true and life-altering, we can end up living like some in Corinth had been living—like the resurrection of Jesus doesn't really matter.

We will be looking at 1 Corinthians 15:12-34

### INITIAL THOUGHTS

Do you have a strategy for putting together a jigsaw puzzle? Do you start with the edges? The corners? A particular section? What is your internal "logic" for solving a puzzle like that?

### REFLECTING ON THE TEXT

As we walk through 1 Corinthians 15:12-34, let's try and look for the implications of Paul's lists of "if . . . then's" and put together his "puzzle pieces." Some in Corinth were saying either that Jesus' resurrection didn't matter or that resurrection from the dead wasn't really true. *If* that view was right, Paul says that there are huge ramifications for the Christian.

From 15:13, what is the implication if it is true that there is no resurrection from the dead?

From 15:14, what are the implications if it is true that Christ has not been raised?

From 15:15-16, what are the implications if it is true that Christ has not been raised?

From 15:17, what else would be true if Christ has not been raised from the dead?

From 15:18, what would be the sad conclusion to this line of thought (that is, if Christ has not been raised from the dead)?

### BUILDING BRIDGES INTO LIFE

*We know* that Jesus has been raised. So, the implications of these "if's" *are not true*. Reflect on Paul's "if . . . then's." Seeing that the "if's" are not true, what *is true* about those who put their faith and confidence in the *risen Christ*?

Where do you slip into living as if the resurrection of Jesus isn't true? Where do you find yourself acting like the resurrection doesn't really change life all that much?



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