

## **If Christ Be Not Risen 1 Corinthians 15:12-19**

### **Introduction:**

1. Paul is dealing in this chapter with the issue of the resurrection of the dead. Some in the church at Corinth were teaching that there was no physical resurrection of the dead.
  - The Sadducees taught this. **Acts 23:6-8**
  - They could have been Jews with a Sadducees background or pagans in the church at Corinth that were teaching that there was no resurrection of the dead. vs. 12
2. In verses 1-11, Paul dealt with the historical validity of the resurrection of Christ.
  - The resurrection of Christ is not simply a philosophical idea whereby His Spirit lives on in our memories.
  - It is a reality of history. You can prove it. You could go into a court of law and use the laws of authenticity that validate historical events, apply those same rules to the resurrection, and come away with historical certainty that He raised from the dead.
  - Someone may debate what that event **means** (and only God's Word defines the meaning), but there is no denying the **facts** of it.
3. In verses 12-19, Paul is now moving from the historical validity of the resurrection to a very rational approach to the resurrection.
4. It seems that these people were not necessarily denying **Christ's** resurrection, but rather the physical, bodily resurrection of believers. Paul reasons in verse 13, "*...if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.*" cf. vs. 16
5. Paul then will rationally lay out for them the implications of this. Paul basically says in this passage, "You don't believe in the resurrection of the dead? Then Christ is still dead. If Christ is still dead, here is what it means to you."

### **First, it means that our preaching is vain. vs. 14**

1. The word "vain" means "empty, worthless, meaningless."
2. Paul had preached Christ in Syria, Asia, Israel, Europe, and Greece. If Christ be not risen, Paul says that it is all a waste of time.
3. I spend hours preparing messages from God's Word to give to you. If Christ be not risen, I might as well quit and go sell cars, and you might as well stay home and watch TV. Let's just shut the doors of the church and go home.
4. The resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of our faith and it is what separates Christianity from all other religious systems in the world. It is not a religious system, but a faith built on the historical fact of the resurrection.
5. But if Christ is dead, there is no reason to have a missions program, WTB, outreach events to our community, etc. Our preaching is worthless nonsense.

### **Second, it means that our faith is vain. vs. 14, 17, 19**

1. The Corinthians had received Paul's gospel and trusted Christ as their Savior. Paul tells them in no uncertain terms that if Christ is still dead, they are still in their sins.

2. A dead Savior can't save anybody. If Christ is dead, then we are still dead in our sins.
3. Christ was made sin on the cross and answered sin's penalty. Christ bore our sins, but the Bible says that when He returns, He will return without sin. **Hebrews 9:28**
4. In between these two events, Christ put away sin. The sin that was placed on Him was done away with (**Hebrews 9:26**). His death paid all the penalty of sin and satisfied the righteous justice of God. Now God can look at us in Christ and declare us righteous.
5. Turn to **Romans 4:24-25**. In order for God to declare us righteous and just, Jesus had to be raised from the dead.
  - How do I know that Christ's death was satisfactory to the Father and that my sins have been forgiven and fully paid for? What is the receipt that says, "Paid in full?"
  - The receipt that God puts in your hand is the resurrection of Christ. Christ was raised up with receipt in hand, and all of His righteousness can be given to me because He was delivered for our offences, and raised up to prove that it was enough!
6. If He is not risen, do you know whose death He died? He died His own death, and death still holds Him and we are still in our sins. But look at verse 20.
7. If your belief system only gives you hope in this life and can't give you a **sure** hope beyond the grave, then get rid of it; it's no good. vs. 19

**Third, it means that the Bible is full of false witnesses. vs. 15**

1. Paul says, "We have all testified (vs. 5-8) that Christ rose from the dead and that we have seen Him with our own eyes. If He is dead, then we are all a bunch of liars."
2. There are those who have proposed a fraud theory concerning Christ's resurrection. They say that the disciples were a bunch of conspiratorial liars and the resurrection is a hoax.
3. But from the beginning, the claims concerning Christ were public, and any evidence for Jesus' resurrection was open to investigation and challenge. All the enemies of Christ had to do to stomp out Christianity forever is simply produce the body of Jesus.
4. They had the political power and motivation to do it, but could not. Nor could they successfully silence the multitude of witnesses.
5. The same men who were cowering behind closed doors for fear of the Jewish leaders were now powerfully and publicly proclaiming Christ after seeing the risen Christ. These men eventually gave their lives for their conviction that they had seen the resurrected Christ. **Acts 1:3**

**Fourth, it means that our loved ones who died are forever perished. vs. 18-19**

1. If Christ be not risen, then there is absolutely no hope beyond the grave. The dead in Christ have perished never to be seen or heard from again. They are gone into nothingness.
2. It means that all you have is what you have in life right now. What a miserable thought! What a black hole of despair. One day you will just die like a dog.
  - Just eat, drink, and be merry; for tomorrow we die. vs. 32

3. And all of that would be true except for the fact that Christ **is risen** from the dead! He is alive and there will one day be a judgment day in which every person will have to look Christ in the eyes. **Acts 17:31**
4. Our loved ones are not perished if they died in Christ. They are alive; more than we are! How do we know? Because Christ is alive - He is risen from the dead!  
**1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14, 16**