

### “Christ the firstfruits...”

In this chapter Paul is telling the Corinthians some very basic things about the beliefs they were supposed to have. He was reinforcing in writing what had previously been given to them verbally by preachers, including himself, but they were forgetful... so it needed doing.

What can we say about people today who say they have been Christians for a long time, but who know next to nothing about their beliefs, their professed faith and their whole ground of being? What was new or needed reinforcing amongst the Corinthians, because of lack of written material, is now abundantly available for us today. Preachers and teachers pass on God's word daily, many books have been written, and the Bible is printed in full. There is no excuse for ignorance amidst this abundance of information. So, I ask you a question - “**Do you *really* believe?**”

Read this chapter and ask yourself, in all honesty, whether or not you truly believe what he is saying. If not, *why* not? And if you *do* believe, *why* do you believe? And if you believe, why are you so ignorant and lax? You need to know the truth about yourself, before you can say you believe, or do not believe, God's word.

Do you truly believe God exists? If you do, why do you live as you do? Why do you live as if sin was a trifle? Do you truly believe God created everything? If you do, why do you watch programmes on evolution with approval and say nothing?

Do you truly believe Adam and Eve were only two people and from those two came millions? Do you truly believe the sin committed by Adam and Eve was enough to send all people to hell? Do you truly believe each one of us is conceived in sin and so bound for hell – unless Jesus Christ saves us?

Do you truly believe that salvation is not based on anything we do or say, but only on God's will? Do you truly believe that when you were saved, it was because God chose you to be saved, even before He created anything at all?

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Do you truly believe that as soon as you were conceived in the womb you were doomed to hell – but that sometime in your life the Holy Spirit brought your spirit alive and began the process known as salvation? Do you truly believe your walk to the front of the church, or your prayer, or signing that bit of paper, did not save you, and that God alone saves because He wants to?

Do you truly believe that Jesus Christ was actually born and lived amongst men, being fully God and fully man? And that He lived a completely sinless life and this was enough for Him to save all who are elected, from hell?

Do you truly believe because you are elect and predestinated, you can never, ever lose your salvation? Do you truly believe Christ died for your sins and rose again on the third day, so that you could follow Him one day into heaven?

Do you truly believe the Holy Spirit lives in you and speaks to you, seeing everything you do and hearing everything you say? And that He even knows your thoughts?

If you truly do believe all this, friends – then why do you get depressed? Why do you sin? Why do you not listen to conscience? Why do you oppose God's word or refuse to listen to God's men who preach and teach? Why do you continue to do wrong when you know how to do what is right? If you truly believed, you would live as Enoch lived, walking with God every day! So would I.

Do you truly believe? Then prove it. That is exactly what Jesus Christ said to His followers – if you truly love me, He said, then do what I say. Simple really. Paul is challenging the Corinthians, just as I am challenging you, and myself, right now. Proof of a belief in God and all that it entails is in doing everything He says we must do. **So, do you *truly* believe?**

### Verses 1-11

1.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2.

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By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4.

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5.

And that he was seen of Cephas then of the twelve:

6.

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7.

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8.

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of born out of due time.

9.

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10.

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was

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with me.

11.

Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.”

I know what it is like to teach scripture over a long period and for those who listen to forget what has been taught. Many Bible teachers wonder why they bother! But, Paul is patient. He goes over everything again, in summary, because the purpose of his letter is *not* to browbeat the Corinthians, but to bring them back to the truth, so that they could live a life of faith based on the truth. No Christian can live fruitfully as God’s child if he is not following truth.

Without fear of contradiction I know that most Christians today live with falsity mixed with truth. That is why they are so susceptible to heresy and spiritual failure. And that is why they reject people like myself, and all who insist on truth as the foundation for Christian unity. This form of Christianity is delusional and self-destructive, and defies the Lord God, making for a weakened church and false set of beliefs.

Note that Paul says something very important at the start of this chapter: “**I declare unto you the gospel...**”

Today, with charismatic (heretical) influence at root, churches twist the gospel to suit the hearer, making it more ‘friendly’. Truth is bent to fit the ideas of a godless generation and the unsaved are asked what they want from a church.

Paul, though, upholds no such thing. He **declares** the gospel! He **gnorizo** the Gospel – certifies it to be true, makes it known, to his hearers. Paul does not make his message fit fickle minds or unsaved ears. He simply tells them what God says, unadulterated, to those who will remain in their sins, hard as nails and unyielding.

A preacher must not accommodate unsaved sensitivities when he speaks. God says the unsaved will go to hell. He says they *must* listen and obey; they *must* be saved and *must* follow the path of righteousness whilst on this earth. It is a fact that telling this to the unsaved will not save a single one of them – but the message is put out like that because it is how God wishes it

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to be given.

Those who are predestinated will listen, take heed, and be saved. Those who are not elect will not listen, will harden their hearts, and reject God. The message, the Gospel, must, then, be told as it is given in scripture. No allowance must be made for the whims or desires of the unsaved. The predestinated will 'accept' Jesus Christ as Saviour, but do not be fooled by this language. They can only accept because their spirits have *already been made alive* by the Holy Spirit, and not because they have chosen Christ themselves. They may only 'choose' after they have been regenerated, not before. In other words, they are drawn irresistibly by God to His pre-chosen goal.

Thus, we must never, ever 'offer' the Gospel to anyone. We are not hawking spiritual wares like Romanist priests and salesmen! We are telling people the stark truth – that without Christ they will enter hell and stay there for ever and ever! The charismatic/Pentecostal idea of altar calls, signing decision cards, etc., is all nonsense that contradicts scripture and God's plan of salvation and is the same, in principle, as Roman Catholic means of 'conversion'... and just as apostate.

Paul says he declared the Gospel which he had previously preached to the Corinthians. It is true the Gospel is 'good tidings' – but only to those who are elected to salvation. The idea that the Gospel is good tidings to all men is a fallacy, because those who will reject God and enter hell see the Gospel as vile and without worth! To such people, the Gospel is like a filthy stone that trips them up (a 'stumbling block'). They prefer their sin to eternal salvation. Somehow, and we do not know how, this rejection is linked with not being elect, and their hellish destination is deserved. But, to us who believe, the Gospel is joyous news of supreme importance.

The Corinthians, says Paul, heard and accepted the Gospel when he preached it to them and they now lived as Believers (albeit with flaws). This same Gospel led to their salvation. In verse 2 we see the words "*... ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached...*" Some take this to mean we can lose our salvation, but the text is not saying that. Look at the structure of the text. It says if the Corinthians held fast (

**katecho**

) to what Paul preached – that is, they believed truly in the Gospel – then they were saved.

But, if they heard what he said and rejected it, their outward confession of faith was "in vain", **ei ke,**

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without purpose (false). However, yet again, Paul is using a rhetorical form of speech, so he was comparing what would be the case if they were not saved. This is evidenced by Paul's constant allusion to them as his brethren.

What did Paul base his preaching on, and his demand that the Corinthians accept what he said as truth? He bases it all on his own personal knowledge, given by Christ Himself at Damascus. He 'delivered', **paradidomi**, or commanded by way of preaching, exactly what he had himself been commanded to accept by Christ.

Paul repeats what he had been given, that Christ died for our sins, as was shown in scripture (the Old Testament in this case). Note Christ did not swoon and then revive – he died, **apothnesko**, mortal/violent death.

Christ was actually buried, **thapto**, buried, interred, and 'rose again' the third day. Christ **egeiro**; was brought back to life from the 'sleep of death', and appeared before hundreds of people. He did this on the third day (something we cannot discuss in this study, but which means 'on' and not necessarily 'after' three days; bearing in mind that a 'day' here is the time between sunset and sunrise, rather than a strict 24 hour 'clock' time, such as midnight to midnight). This, too, was foretold by scripture.

The risen Christ was then seen by Cephas ('stone' - Peter) and then the twelve Apostles together. Later, he was also seen by over 500 Believers at the same time. It has been argued that Christ was merely 'perceived' or 'seen' by the mind, because the believers wanted desperately to see Him. But, this is not what is said. The text specifically uses the Greek word **optanomai**, and this means to look at, to allow one's self to be seen, to appear. The term 'vision' can be used in translation, but its meaning is literal.

Paul says that as many of those witnesses were still alive, his account could be easily verified. Some witnesses had died, but most were still alive. This suggests Paul had met them all at some time... and why not? Do you think that over 500 people who saw Christ literally after He had died and rose again, would just carry on as usual? No doubt they met together many times to talk about this magnificent and crucial miracle! If people today continue to meet together on the anniversary of battles, or school annual dinners, surely the greatest miracle of all would be remembered by those who had seen it themselves?

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After appearing to over 500 Believers, Christ then appeared to James, and then again to all the Apostles. We are left in no doubt from the narratives that this was an actual appearance, not merely a dream or an hallucination. Then, finally, Christ appeared personally to Paul, “as of one born out of due time”. That is, **ektroma**, an untimely birth, an abortion. The meaning of this is not quite clear to us, but it could refer to his sudden conversion on the road to Damascus, which was like an unexpected abortive birth; or to his suddenly joining the ranks of actual witnesses to the risen Christ. It could also refer to his being a true witness to the risen Christ outside of the time that others saw Him, many years before, and so a sudden addition to the Apostles.

It is possible that the latter is meant, because he starts verse 9 with the humble words “*For I am the least of the apostles...*”

in authority and significance. This turned out not to be the case, as we now know. Paul believed he was

“*not meet*”,

or not worthy,

**hikanos**

, to be called an Apostle. He says this because of the way he persecuted the Church before Christ took Him for His own preacher of the Gospel. Paul felt the weight of his past, for he actively chased after Believers, from place to place, accusing them of heresy and causing them to be tortured, killed, or displaced.

In a sense Paul’s position is a great encouragement for it shows us several things: firstly, though we may have been doomed by our own actions and great sins, God begins our lives afresh at salvation. Once saved, He remembers our sins no more and so we can begin anew. Secondly, it shows that it is God Who chooses us, and not we who choose Him. How else could such an evil man as Paul possibly come to Christ?

Thirdly, when we are saved we should never think of ourselves as superior to any who remain unsaved: we were once as they are, and were chosen by God; we may not boast about this, for we could do nothing to warrant salvation by our own merits. Fourthly, no matter how vile we might have been, God will use us for His own purposes, making us into His own envoys, glorious and holy. There is, then, hope for us all.

As Paul correctly says, he is now what he is (an Apostle, saved and redeemed) solely by God’s grace (favour) and not by anything he is of himself. Paul the man is unworthy, but as a child of God he is priceless and blessed, so God’s gift to him of salvation was not foolish or without

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cause.

Because of his awful past, Paul was driven to minister even harder than others. We should not see this as a mindless task done to somehow put things right, but as the tireless, loving, ministry of a man who knew what it was like to hate Christ and to persecute His people. That is how he could rebuke the Corinthians and yet still love them dearly as his brethren. How could he put them to one side when he himself was a far worse man than them all at one time? This is why he ministered without ceasing. This is why he wanted the Corinthians to listen and to put into practice what he was given by God to preach.

Another point is brought out by Paul in this text – that though he laboured more than others in the ministry, all his energy and work came from God, not from himself. It was by God's grace, not by his own efforts. How modern preachers and teachers need to remember that! Even if they reach the academic height of a doctor of theology, they do so only because God has given them the ability and gift to do so. If they preach with great effect, drawing thousands and seeing many saved, it is only because God has elected it to be so and given the message and the Spirit to enable the preaching or teaching to be effective. I do not care how great a preacher is; he is only as great as God makes him to be.

Sadly, many accept the accolades for their own minds and labours, and allow men to put them on pedestals. They start to think they are *themselves* of value... look at how many people praise them! See how their peers think they are wonderful and talented! Hear so many call them to speak at conferences! Watch how many books they write! This is nothing but human pride. It is God Who gives the increase, not us. It is He Who gives the gifts and the effectiveness. Therefore, it is God Who must receive the praise, not us.

Even so, it did not matter whether it was he who taught them, or some other preacher, because the praise is God's not theirs. It did not matter, also, because they all taught the same thing, and so the Corinthians *believed* the same thing. This is fundamental to all doctrine and belief – there is an uniformity of belief in true faith. It is untrue to say that we may all believe as we wish, or that there can be many interpretations. Scripture is remarkably uniform and a variety of interpretation is impossible for most of the time. That is how we can all believe the same thing.

### Verses 12-19

1.

“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is

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no resurrection of the dead?

2.

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

3.

And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

4.

Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

5.

For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

6.

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

7.

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

8.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

It seems that some of the Corinthians had been persuaded by Jewish scholars, or Greek philosophers, that a bodily resurrection was impossible. Paul was now addressing this heresy. He has already told them he and the Apostles were witnesses to the risen Christ, as were over 500 other Believers. They were directly taught by Christ and so had His exact words. So, says

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Paul, if they taught that Christ actually rose from the dead, thus giving all believers the pattern of their own resurrection, they must believe it. This was demanded in an earlier chapter, too.

How can you say there is no resurrection, when I and others have told you it is true? Do not listen to the enemies of Christ, but to His messengers! There is a very simple thing to bear in mind, says Paul: if there is no physical resurrection, then Christ is still dead! And, if He is still dead and not risen, well, we are fools to place our trust in Him (verse 14). If He did not rise from the dead, then the preaching of the Apostles is without reason and people believe without reason.

Not only that, but if it is not true, the Apostles and all preachers are liars (verse 15), 'false witnesses' (**pseudomartur**, from the root **pseudos**, meaning deceitful, false; itself from the root **pseudomai**, meaning to lie deliberately in order to deceive. Today there are many pseudomartur, the chief of whom are presently Romanists, ecumenists, and charismatics; and there are plenty in *all* types of Protestant churches, too. They are deluded men who try to influence others deliberately with their lies. We must not lend them sympathy, or give them credibility, because they are given over by God, worthless liars, ready for judgment.

If they do not listen to warnings and calls to repent, they must not be accepted as friends. They may not be prayed-with, or spoken to as fellow Believers, even if they are... a Christian who sides with a lie is to be counted as equal to the unsaved. To be in their presence if they pray or speak of scripture in their own fashion, is to condone what they do, and to open ourselves up to the same falsity and spiritual deceptions. We must remember always that Satan is behind all spiritual deception and when we consort with those who speak falsely, including deluded Christians, we can ourselves become targets for demons.

In the practical sense, this can lead to things going wrong in our lives, spiritual blackness or tiredness, or depression, a background resistance to truth that constantly fights what true preachers say, a drawing toward what is clearly unhelpful (such as sympathy for charismaticism or its adherents, often because they are 'friends'), and a general insistence on rites or traditions that have no scriptural warrant. Such folk often want to have rigid forms of worship, or types that deny freedom in Christ, with a tainted understanding of scripture. The whole purpose, in Satan's eyes, is to remove the influence of true doctrine and to replace it with his own version.

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Paul tells them that if they preach Christ resurrected, they preach falsely, testifying to something they did not witness. This means that the claim to eternal heavenly bliss is also false, making the Christian faith useless; everything about Christ and Christianity would be foolish and without substance. We would all remain as sinners, without hope (verse 17), for what is the point in believing in a mere man who died on the cross and did not make good His promise of eternal life. If Christ was not raised, then what hope is there for ordinary men? None. If it is not true, then all who had died in their belief would be lost forever (verse 18).

As Paul concludes, if our Christian hope consists only of benefits in this life, and not the next, then we are more deluded than other men and are 'most miserable', **eleeinos** – to be pitied. There is no point to life itself if there is no eternal salvation. We may as well do whatever we wish, because, when we die, there is nothing to hope for and nothing to blame us for... so, no punishment anyway.

### Verses 20-25

1.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

2.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

3.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

4.

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

5.

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

6.

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For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

But, says Paul triumphantly, Christ IS alive and risen! Therefore, He is the ‘firstfruits of them that slept’. He is the **aparche**, superior to others and the first to be presented to God as sacred and holy. He opened the door to Heaven for all who are saved and who have died believing in Him.

“... *by man came death, by man... came resurrection...*”. The curse of death and sin came to us because Adam sinned. Now another man, Jesus Christ, brought us the way of escape: salvation and resurrection to heaven.

“... *in Adam all die*”, means that if we remain in our sins, we will enter hell. But, if we are ‘in Christ’ we are saved and will be raised again and enter Heaven (verse 22), because we have been ‘made alive’, **zoopoieo**, quickened, restored.

This arrangement is in strict accordance with God’s plan. First Christ had to be resurrected. Then, all people who were predestined to salvation right up to the time of the end of the world ( “*at his coming*”

(verse 23). This is the proper order, for Christ deserves pre-eminence as the life-giver Himself.

After that,

“*every man in his own order*”,

**tagma**

, a pre-arranged order, a band of men. From

**tasso:**

appointed or ordained in order of station or status, assigned in a particular order. In a very real sense, then, it is always ‘Christ first’.

We have here a summary of future events that counters the claims made by certain groups of Christians (and those who pretend to be Christians) that there will be a 1000 year reign, etc. For myself I have no belief in any of the millennial theories. I only believe what I read in scripture. In this text we have the phases we can expect: first, Christ will come again in the skies. He will be joined by those who believed and who will be resurrected, joining Him in the skies. Then, as verse 24 tells us, “*cometh the end*”. No 1000 year reign!

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The 'end', **telos**, is the termination of earthly life and the start of Christ's true reign – in heaven. This term does not speak of the end of time itself but of the end of a course of action; the end of Satan's rule and the start of heavenly rule. Obviously, this includes the end of time, because time only has relevance outside of eternity! Time is only for our use whilst this earth continues. It has no other purpose. So, although **telos** does not itself refer to the end of time, its actions or the end-results do.

That this is the case is found in verse 24, where we find that when Christ comes again the kingdom will be given over to God the Father, after He has subdued Satan and sin. Christ will "*put down*"

,  
**katargeo**

, destroy, abolish, all  
"*rule*",

**arche,**

or leader, e.g. of sin on earth, Satan (based on the root

**archomai'**

chief, ruler, the one who starts something). Christ will also destroy all  
"*authority*"

,  
**exousia,**

power of choice, doing whatever we please, the rule of government (of Satan and of those he manipulates). Christ will put down all "power",

**dunamis:**

in this case strength of men and Satan, their might, and their armies.

That all this refers to Satan, sin, and its followers, is evidenced in verses 25 & 26, which says Christ must reign until all His enemies are destroyed. This word 'reign' does not mean, in context, that He will be on earth physically reigning for 1000 years. It simply means **basileuo**, to exercise royal power and influence and to control what happens.

Elsewhere in scripture we discover the 'kingdom' never refers to physical reigning but to a spiritual and moral reign, as executed by One Who has the authority to do so. In scripture, it has never meant a physical reign. So, Christ will come in the skies, remove His people from the earth to be in the skies with Him, and will then take over all power for Himself, thereby destroying the power of Satan and all who follow him. This is the simple and accurate interpretation, given by the text itself. Do not believe in the theories of men!

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The 'enemies' of Christ (verse 25) are **echthros**, hated by God and hostile to Him. It is used of men who reject God and continue in their sin opposing Him, so are enemies under the command of Satan. They will be put under His feet,

### **pous**

... a symbol of the victor and the vanquished. They will not only be beaten and subdued, but they will acknowledge His supremacy in their lost state

### **Verses 26-32**

1.

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

2.

For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

3.

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

4.

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?

5.

And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

6.

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Jesus Christ our Lord, I die daily.

7.

If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die."

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All of this will occur in what appears to be a quick succession of events, with no gaps or respite. This fits other texts that speak of Christ coming like lightning, swiftly like a thief in the night, etc. No 1000 year reign.

Finally, when all who oppose God will be destroyed, and because the causes of sin and death will no longer be operative, the final hated condition of men, death, will also be destroyed. Death is **eschatos**, the very last thing in time (reinforcing the interpretation that the end of sin is also the end of time, as stated above) will cease to exist. Death will be no more, for **thanatos** (death) only affects the body, not the soul. As our bodies will cease to be, and we will be given new bodies fit for heaven, **thanatos** will no longer have any binding force and so it must disappear.

Only one thing cannot be put under His feet, and that is God (verse 27). This, says Paul, is 'manifest' or obviously apparent. Then, when everything is under Christ's feet and in subjection to Him, **hupotasso**, Christ Himself will submit Himself to be under the Trinity, so that God, the three-in-one, is shown to be supreme, all Persons equal and in authority. The constant call by charismatics to Jesus above all else is therefore incorrect and inappropriate, for when on this earth, Christ always referred all praise and honour back to God the Father. God must be 'all in all', **pas**, everything and all things.

And if all this is not true, why are people "baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not?" (verse 29). This text is acknowledged to be difficult, but let us look at it again. It cannot mean what Romanists take it to mean, so *that* explanation is immediately cast out. It is possible that some were baptized in the name of another, who was saved but not baptized at the time of his or her death. This would be a rather obscure thing to do, but would be a symbol only, a rite of personal praise for the deceased one, not an act of salvation.

For myself, I am thinking that the text could be taken to mean "*Why baptize ourselves – who are dead to sin – if we will not be resurrected?*"

" Bearing in mind that baptism is a symbol signifying a spiritual truth, its performance on behalf of another would not render the meaning useless, even if done wrongly. However, this is my opinion, not an absolute interpretation, which cannot be gleaned from a study of the text.

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And, says Paul, why should we place our lives in danger all the time for Christ and our faith, if there is no resurrection taking us to Heaven? Why bother when there is no reward? Only a fool would die for something that is not real.

*"I protest by your rejoicing"*, says Paul. 'Protest' is not to be used in our modern way, for it is **ne**, meaning to affirm an oath and possibly another way of saying "verily",

**nai**

. Paul is saying, then, 'I affirm that your rejoicing in Christ is worthy and that is why I put myself in danger every day.' (verse 31). Even if I fought against beasts as a martyr in the circus at Ephesus, what would be the benefit to me if I did not rise again?

Paul is again being rhetorical: we know he suffered at the hands of brigands and zealous Jews, but there is no account of him being in a circus fighting beasts. If the dead do not rise again, says Paul, we may as well eat, drink, and just live as we feel fit – have a life-long party, because we could die at any time and reap no other thing from a life of holiness.

### Verses 33-38

1.

"Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners.

2.

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

3.

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

4.

Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

5.

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And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

6.

But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.”

Do not be fooled, warns Paul. To be **planao**, is to be led astray, seduced to wander away from the true path. So, to associate, **homilia**, with people who are unbelievers, and to converse with them on their own terms, is to have ‘evil communications’, which are harmful and injurious to

*our*

souls, and meaningless to theirs. This is because such associations defile or even destroy ‘good (

**chrestos**

) manners (

**ethos**

): virtuous, fit, pleasant, customs or morals and character.

We might have to work with the unsaved and be a part of society, but we should not go farther by joining with them in any close way, because, whether we know it or not, they can harm our relationship with God and the very basis of our spiritual life. We must take our stance from God, not from those unsaved we happen to be amongst.

Obviously, some of the Corinthians were doing just that. When a Christian joins with the unsaved in this way, it harms himself and the whole local church, because his manner of life changes and so does his attitude toward God and the Christian life. He is no longer ‘as one’ but takes his cue from unsaved ideas and demands.

Therefore, Paul warns, “*Awake to righteousness...*”! This is a strong thing to say for it symbolizes returning from a state of drunkenness and to become sober again,

**eknepho**

. Medicine has shown that a drunk is unable to focus or think properly and can lose his faculty of proper thinking altogether. He can do the most stupid or foolish things, and can even kill or be killed. Stop consorting with the unsaved, calls Paul, or you could end up in a sorry spiritual

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state. Do not join with the unsaved, he says, but join with righteousness. In this way you will “sin not”.

Some, he says, do not have the knowledge of God, which is shameful. I have heard many Christians boast they are ‘simple’ believers who do not delve too deeply into scriptural things. They leave all that to the pastor! Or, if challenged on a theological point, they retreat into their boast, saying they know what they believe and that is enough! Friends, this is an excuse for laziness and ineffective Christian discipleship! It also implies that your beliefs are wrong or hazy.

Every Believer is duty-bound to learn as much as he can about his faith and God’s word. His depth of understanding is directly related to his willingness to learn, for though knowledge and understanding are both gifts, they are not given to the Christian who cannot be bothered to put himself out. Those who do not put themselves out are a shame to themselves and to God, because they show they could not really care, one way or the other, about God or His word.

Paul then returns to questions asked by some of the Corinthians. How can men arise if they are dead and what kind of bodies will they have? These are legitimate questions if they are asked out of a sense of genuine need for truth, but not if they are merely argumentative or idle curiosity.

It seems some *were* being argumentative, so Paul’s response is short and curt... you fool! Modern Christians are shocked if a Believer dares to call another ‘fool’, but here Paul is unafraid to throw out such a word. He is calling the argumentative people **aphron**, unwise, fools, senseless, rash, unintelligent. I come across many folk like this! They only want to follow their own path, not God’s, so they constantly argue against sound interpretation.

This rebuke by Paul suggests strongly that Christians ought to find out for themselves if something is Biblically true before causing arguments or disagreeing with teachers called by God. He goes on to say that a seed must first die in the ground before it springs to life some time afterward into a thriving lively plant. So, he continues, the body you die with is not the body you shall have in Heaven (verse 37). Rather, your body contains the kernel of something else, just as seeds become wheat. God has given everything its own body, as He sees fit (verse 38). And inside each body is the seed that God has determined it should have.

### Verses 39-45

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1.

“All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

2.

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

3.

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

4.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

5.

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

6.

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

7.

And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.”

Everything has its own type of body: men, animals (thus disproving the claim that men are just animals), fish, birds. This is because they are all different. There are also ‘celestial bodies’, such

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as stars, which are separate and different from things of earth ('terrestrial'). All are made differently by God's design and for His own purposes.

The sun has its own purpose and 'glory', **doxa**, honour and splendour. The moon also has its own purpose and splendour (showing that it was not just a cast-off from earth in some gloomy timeless past). And each star is different from another. The argument is simply that God designed everything and everybody to be different and to have its own purpose. (Of course, this refers to what is legitimate. It does not include sinful differences).

This design is applied to the resurrection, for the body God designed for this earth. Because it has been tainted by sin, it will die and be buried in 'corruption', **phthora**; decayed and not right. But, when it is raised again, it will be in 'incorruption', **aphtharsia**, immortal, sincere, without the stain of corruption and sin. It will be impossible for this new body to decay or to experience corruption, **aphthartos**.

Our present bodies, because they are corrupted, will be buried in ignominy and dishonour, **atimia**. But, they will be glorious when resurrected. They will be buried in weakness, **astheneia**: disease, infirmity, frailty, but raised in power, **dunamis** – strong, mighty, virtuous, powerful, because they have the nature of God.

Our bodies are 'sown a natural body': **psuchikos**, being sensual with worldly appetites. But, they will be raised again as spiritual: **pneumatikos**, related to God and His instrument, belonging to the Divine Spirit. Thus, the body that is buried is nothing like the one that will be raised, even if its appearance is similar.

Elsewhere, we are told our bodies will be like that of the risen Christ in quality. We know very little, but that Christ did not need to eat to live, and that his body was solid yet able to go through time and space, and possibly even through walls, having no restriction on movement or ability. He still bore the marks of his crucifixion and yet even his own disciples did not recognize

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Him until He spoke and identified Himself. This suggests the body we die with will not be like the new one in heaven. As nothing in heaven will reflect or contain anything dead or corrupt, we may assume our new bodies will be perfect and new, without marks of age or disease.

Paul continues: Adam was a living soul, a created being whose life depended on God the Creator; the second and final Adam, Christ, was a quickening spirit... that is, Christ was life-giving with divine power. What the first Adam destroyed the last Adam put right.

### Verses 46-50

1.

“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

2.

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

3.

As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

4.

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

5.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”

The created body came first and then the spiritual body (which will later be given to us who are saved). The first man, Adam, was bound to this earth and was ‘earthy’, **choikos**, made of earth, or dust, **choos**.

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But, the second Adam is the Lord from Heaven! As Paul pointed out earlier, each body is different and has a different purpose. This verse also again shows us that Jesus is God, the 'Lord from heaven'. Men will act and die as men, but Christ will remain eternally divine (verse 48).

So, that of earth will always be of earth, whilst that of Heaven will be distinct and different, of heavenly substance and quality. We were born of earth and have known the quality and nature of earth and sin, yet, one day, we will become as new, bearing the likeness of heaven with its qualities and nature.

Bear in mind that Paul is still talking about resurrection; in verse 50 he says the body we were made with cannot enter Heaven. Nor can a sinful nature be received into Heaven. Paul gives us a phenomenal statement, a mystery, or, a fact that has hitherto been hidden from men; that some will not die, but every saved person will be changed.

### Verses 51-58

1.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed,

2.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,

3.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

4.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

5.

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O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is the victory?

6.

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

7.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

8.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

This change will be swift, faster than the eye can blink (verse 51,52) and will occur when the trumpet is sounded when Christ returns. When that happens those who are dead will be raised with heavenly bodies, and those who are still alive will also be raised, their bodies being changed as they rise into the sky.

This means there will indeed be a time when Christians will be removed from the earth to the consternation of the unsaved, but they will not be made to wait very long before God summons' all men to the judgment seat. This will be done quickly and in order.

Paul reminds us our ailing sinful bodies cannot enter Heaven, so we will be given new ones, perfect and fit for Heaven (verse 53), and our mortality must be exchanged for immortality. We shall never die again and never fail or know corruption or sickness! When all this happens, quicker than it takes to blink an eye, the scripture will be proven to be true, that "*death is swallowed up in victory*"

. The meaning of this is self-evident.

Death has its sting, but when Christ returns, its power will be broken and it will sting no more. We can then ask "*O death, where is thy sting?*" Its sting, **kentron**, is its deadly ability to cause a

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man to cease living and to face a godless eternity if he is unsaved. It is the most potent weapon ever made and hits its target every time and cannot be resisted. (My late mother remembered when I explained these texts to a local Christian couple who needed comfort in the matter, when I was aged about ten. God is amazing!)

When Christ comes again death will have no hold or power, so the grave will have no terror for saved humanity. (But, for the unsaved, it is the doorway to an eternity in hell, something to be feared and dreaded. Those unsaved who wish to die have no idea what they are saying, for once dead they will know a misery unmatched by their earthly existence, no matter how sad or bad).

What makes death so potent is not death itself, but the fact that sin makes it harmful. And what makes sin so powerfully harmful is the fact that the law of God condemns it (verse 56). Death, then, is when all the horrors of a godless eternity come to one point and God's wrath is focused on the unsaved.

But, says Paul, we must thank God we will not be a part of this awful future (verse 57), because we are made victorious over death by the resurrection of Christ. He arose again, defying the power of death, and so will we, in His power and Name.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, urges Paul, because of all this, be faithful to God. Be steadfast, **hedraios**, sitting in a position of rest as one who cannot be moved; be unmovable, **ametakinetos**, persistent and resolute; and always abound in the work of the Lord; that is, exceed and overflow with what God has given you to do. Do all this because you know your ministry and work on this earth will not be pointless. Do it 'in the Lord' because one day He will return and take us up to be with Him in heaven, and will reward us for being faithful.

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