

I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

XVII. Adhering To Belief In The Bodily Resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:1-58

B. Adhering To Belief In The Believer's Bodily Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-34)

I. Introduction

- A. The people Paul disciplined in Corinth lived in a city that was known for its immorality, alcoholism and worldly pursuits (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619), so the formidable influence of the city's culture on the Corinthian believers left Paul addressing "(a)berrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety" in his letters to them, *Ibid*.
- B. However, in a vision Paul received from God as he ministered at Corinth in Acts 18:10b NIV, God told him, "I have many people in this city," so Paul was to keep on ministering regardless of the trials he faced there.
- C. In 1 Corinthians 15:12-34, Paul built on his claim that Christ bodily rose from the dead to present the doctrine of the believer's bodily resurrection. We view the passage for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Adhering To Belief In The Believer's Bodily Resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:12-34.

- A. Having presented the case for belief in Christ's bodily resurrection, Paul argued that failing to hold to Christ's bodily resurrection as did some of his readers undermined the entire Christian faith, 1 Corinthians 15:12-19:
 - 1. Paul asked his readers that if Christ was preached in the Gospel of salvation that He rose from the dead, how could some of them claim that there is no resurrection of the dead, 1 Corinthians 15:12.
 - 2. Indeed, if there were no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen, 1 Corinthians 15:13.
 - 3. If Christ is not risen, the preaching of the Gospel is vain, and the faith of Paul's readers was vain, verse 14.
 - 4. If the faith of Paul's readers was vain, then Paul and his ministry team and the other apostles of Christ were false witnesses in claiming that God had raised Christ from the dead, 1 Corinthians 15:15.
 - 5. Furthermore, if the faith of Paul's readers was in vain, then they would still be unsaved, 1 Cor. 15:16-17.
 - 6. In addition, those believers who had physically died after having believed in Christ would then have eternally perished, leaving believers room to hope only in this life, 1 Corinthians 15:18-19a.
 - 7. If only in this earthly life were we to have hope in Christ, we would be of all people the "most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19b), the term "miserable" being translated from the Greek adjective *eleeinos*, "pitiable." (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 249)
- B. On the contrary, Paul affirmed that Christ had indeed been bodily resurrected from the dead, and that His resurrection was the basis for the believer's hope of the believer's own bodily resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:20-28:
 - 1. Christ is risen from the dead as the Firstfruits of the resurrection of all believers, 1 Corinthians 15:20. The Feast of Firstfruits in Leviticus 23:9-14 that occurred on the day of Christ's resurrection, which was also the third day after His death on Passover, fulfilled the prophecy of His being the Firstfruits of all believers.
 - 2. Since by the first Adam came death through his sin, by Christ, the righteous Second Adam, came the resurrection from the dead for all believers, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.
 - a. This resurrection comes in different installments: Christ is the Firstfruits at His resurrection, then Christian believers are raised at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), then Old Testament believers and saints who die in the Great Tribulation are raised at the start of the Millennial Kingdom (Daniel 12:13; Revelation 20:4-5) and believers who die in the Millennial Kingdom are raised at its end (implied), 1 Cor. 15:23.
 - b. After this comes the end when Christ delivers His Kingdom over to God the Father Who will have put down all rule, authority, and power, including death itself, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.
- C. Paul then admonished his readers to accept belief in the bodily resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:29-34:
 - 1. He argued to his readers' shame that if the mystery religion of Eleusis that held that one needed to wash for purification in the Saronic Gulf near Corinth to experience bliss in the hereafter was believed by pagans, they had more faith in a hereafter than some of Paul's readers, v. 29; B. K. C., N. T., p. 544.
 - 2. Paul added that he would be foolish to suffer as he did for Christ if there was no resurrection, v. 30-32.
 - 3. The apostle then called his readers to awake to righteousness and sin not by avoiding the company of false teachers who denied the resurrection, for bad company corrupts good character, 1 Cor. 15:33-34 NIV.

Lesson: *Since the reality of Christ's bodily resurrection undergirds the whole Christian faith, and since Christ is indeed bodily risen as the Firstfruits, we believers have assurance that we also will be raised from the dead.*

Application: *May we hold to Christ as the Firstfruits from the dead as the hope for our own bodily resurrection.*