

1 Corinthians 15:1 – 58

<p><sup>15:1</sup> Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.</p>	<p>I preached you received</p>
<p><sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.</p>	<p>you believed in vain? an apostle, delivered the tradition</p>
<p><sup>6</sup> After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; <sup>7</sup> then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; <sup>8</sup> and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.</p>	<p>first appearances (the creed) later appearances</p>
<p><sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.</p>	<p>an apostle, used to persecute</p>
<p><sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.</p>	<p>God's grace did not prove vain</p>
<p><sup>11</sup> Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.</p>	<p>we preach you believed</p>

<sup>12</sup> Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?	Christ is raised  your view: no resurrection
<sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;	if no resurrection then no preaching then no faith
<sup>14</sup> and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.	
<sup>15</sup> Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.	our witness is false if no resurrection
<sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;	if no resurrection then no faith no salvation from sin
<sup>17</sup> and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.	
<sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.	your view: no hope
<sup>19</sup> If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.	
<sup>20</sup> But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.	but Christ is raised
<sup>21</sup> For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.	by a man came death by a man came resurrection
<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.	in Adam all die In Christ all will live
<sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,	Christ will raise his people
<sup>24</sup> then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.	the end – all to the Father
<sup>25</sup> For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.	Son over all
<sup>26</sup> The last enemy that will be abolished is death.	
<sup>27</sup> For 'He has put all things in subjection under his feet.'	Son over death
But when He says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.	Son over all
<sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.	the end – all to the Father

<sup>29</sup> Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead?  
If the dead are not raised at all,  
why then are they baptized for them?

<sup>30</sup> Why are we also in danger every hour?

<sup>31</sup> I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you  
which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord,  
I die daily.

<sup>32</sup> If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus,  
what does it profit me?

If the dead are not raised,

‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’

<sup>33</sup> Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’ [Greek proverb]

<sup>34</sup> Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning;  
for some have no knowledge of God.  
I speak this to your shame.

<sup>35</sup> But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised?  
And with what kind of body do they come?’

<sup>36</sup> You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;

<sup>37</sup> and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be,  
but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

<sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body just as He wished,  
and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

<sup>39</sup> All flesh is not the same flesh,  
but there is one flesh of men,  
and another flesh of beasts,  
and another flesh of birds,  
and another of fish.

<sup>40</sup> There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies,  
but the glory of the heavenly is one,  
and the glory of the earthly is another.

<sup>41</sup> There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon,  
and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

<sup>42</sup> So also is the resurrection of the dead.

if no resurrection  
why baptism for their sake?

why endure?

I die every day!

what profit?

if no resurrection  
Greek ‘wisdom’ reigns  
but no, even Greek ‘wisdom’  
turns against you

how are the dead raised?

plants: seeds to plants  
different stages of development

animals: men, beasts, birds, fish  
different flesh

cosmos: heavenly and earthly  
different glory

so is the resurrection of the dead

It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;	perishable to imperishable
<sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;	humility and weakness raised to glory and power
<sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.	natural raised to spiritual
<sup>45</sup> So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.	first Adam received life last Adam gives life
<sup>46</sup> However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.	
<sup>47</sup> The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.	natural raised to spiritual
<sup>48</sup> As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.	
<sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.	earth raised to image of Christ
<sup>50</sup> Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.	perishable and imperishable
<sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,	not all sleep, all changed
<sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.	in a moment, at the trumpet sound dead will be raised, all changed
<sup>53</sup> For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.	perishable, imperishable mortal, immortal
<sup>54</sup> But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.	perishable, imperishable mortal, immortal  victory
<sup>55</sup> O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?’	death
<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;	death
<sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.	victory
<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.	be immovable, abounding know your work is not in vain

## Historical and Cultural Background

### *The Jewish and Christian Worldview vs. the Greek Worldview*

Jewish & Christian Worldview	Greek Worldview
Our physical bodies are good	Physical bodies house the immortal soul, which wants to escape the body
Expected 'resurrection' – the renewal of the physical world, including our bodies; God's true humanity will be raised from the dead	Expected 'disembodiment' – the separation of soul from body
Caring for the poor is important	Caring for the poor is not important since the body is not important
Sexual ethics are important and are derived from the Genesis creation story	Have sex with anyone since the body is not important (extreme Epicureans), or don't get married and don't have sex because the body is corrupt (Stoics)
Death is the enemy of God's good creation; it will be overthrown in a new creation	Death is inevitable and is the end; no one comes back from the dead (cf. Homer)
History is linear, a partnership between God and humanity, punctuated by God's promises and fulfillments, moving towards God's 'happy ending', the restoration of all things	History is circular and repetitious; nothing new; no triumph of good over evil

### *God's Creation, and Humanity in Creation*

Paul quotes from Psalm 8 and Psalm 110 closely together (in 15:21 – 28).

<p>Psalm 8</p> <p><i>For the choir director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of David.</i></p> <p><sup>1</sup> O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!</p> <p><sup>2</sup> From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength Because of Your adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;</p> <p><sup>4</sup> What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?</p> <p><sup>5</sup> Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!</p> <p><sup>6</sup> You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet,</p> <p><sup>7</sup> All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field,</p> <p><sup>8</sup> The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.</p> <p><sup>9</sup> O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth!</p>	<p>Psalm 110</p> <p><i>The LORD Gives Dominion to the King. A Psalm of David.</i></p> <p><sup>1</sup> The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'</p> <p><sup>2</sup> The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, 'Rule in the midst of Your enemies.'</p> <p><sup>3</sup> Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.'</p> <p><sup>5</sup> The Lord is at Your right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.</p> <p><sup>6</sup> He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.</p> <p><sup>7</sup> He will drink from the brook by the wayside; Therefore He will lift up His head.</p>
---	---

### *Death as the Enemy*

In the biblical story, sin is the problem internally corrupting human nature, and death of all sorts is the symptom (Gen.2:17). Paul quotes from / alludes to Hosea 13:14 – 'O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight' – which in Hosea indicated God announcing the political death of the Northern Kingdom of Israel as a national entity. But Paul reverses the statement, mocking death, in an ironic reversal of its original meaning (1 Cor.15:55 – 56).

*The Resurrection of Jesus in Irenaeus and Athanasius*

‘Therefore, as I have already said, He caused man (human nature) to cleave to and to become, one with God. For unless man had overcome the enemy of man, the enemy would not have been legitimately vanquished... But the law coming, which was given by Moses, and testifying of sin that it is a sinner, did truly take away his (death’s) kingdom, showing that he was no king, but a robber; and it revealed him as a murderer. It laid, however, a weighty burden upon *man, who had sin in himself*, showing that he was liable to death. For as the law was spiritual, it merely made sin to stand out in relief, but did not destroy it. For sin had no dominion over the spirit, but over man. For it behooved *Him who was to destroy sin*, and redeem man under the power of death, that *He should Himself be made that very same thing which he was, that is, man*; who had been drawn by sin into bondage, but was held by death, so that *sin should be destroyed by man*, and man should go forth from death. For as by the disobedience of the one man who was originally moulded from virgin soil, the many were made sinners, and forfeited life; so was it necessary that, by the obedience of one man, who was originally born from a virgin, many should be justified and receive salvation. Thus, then, was the Word of God made man, as also Moses says: ‘God, true are His works.’ But if, not having been made flesh, He did appear as if flesh, His work was not a true one. But what He did appear, that He also was: God recapitulated *in Himself* the ancient formation of man, that *He might kill sin*, deprive death of its power, and vivify man; and therefore His works are true.’

Irenaeus (130 – 200 AD), *Against Heresies* 3.18.7, emphasis mine; see also 2.12.4; 3.18.1; 5.1.3

‘Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough; but when once transgression had begun men came under the power of the corruption proper to their nature and were bereft of the grace which belonged to them as creatures in the Image of God. No, repentance could not meet the case. What – or rather Who – was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as we required? Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing?... Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death instead of all, and offered it to the Father... This He did that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned to corruption, and *make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection*. Thus He would make *death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire*.’

‘The supreme object of His coming was to bring about the resurrection of the body. This was to be the monument to His victory over death, the assurance to all that *He had Himself conquered corruption* and that their own bodies also would eventually be incorrupt; and it was in token of that and as a pledge of the future resurrection that He kept His body incorrupt.’

Athanasius (296 – 373 AD), *On the Incarnation* 2:8 – 9; 4:22, emphasis mine

## Questions

1. The introduction in 15:3b – 7 appears to be a creed, and most scholars think it reached a fixed form very early on. If that's true, then what does that show?
  - a. The early Christians valued the resurrection of Jesus a lot, and wanted to be sure they passed it down well.
  - b. Notice that Paul says he was the last person Jesus appeared to. This might have raised some doubts about him in other people's minds. We'll see that Paul comes back to this issue.
2. What would you title each chiasmic structure?
  - a. 15:1 – 11: The Resurrection and How You Came to Believe
  - b. 15:12 – 20: We Are Witnesses to the Resurrection
  - c. 15:20 – 23: Jesus is a New Humanity
  - d. 15:24 – 28: Jesus Will One Day Reign Over All
  - e. 15:29 – 34: If Jesus Is Still Dead, How Do Our Lives Make Sense?
  - f. 15:35 – 42a: Will Our Resurrected Bodies Be Real?
  - g. 15:42b – 50: Jesus is a Life-Giving New Humanity
  - h. 15:50 – 53: Our Perishable Bodies Will Become Imperishable
  - i. 15:54 – 58: Death, the Last Enemy, Will be Defeated
3. How does Paul compare Jesus and Adam? What is the significance of that comparison?
  - a. Both Adam and Jesus are a source of humanity
  - b. Adam became a living soul (15:45) yet corrupted human nature and passed it on to us. That's why Jesus had to become a life-giving spirit.
  - c. What does Paul mean when he says that, 'If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is worthless, and you are still in your sins' (15:17) The resurrection of Jesus saves us, not merely his death
    - i. Notice that this is part of 15:12 – 20 about being witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. Paul's main point is that he is representing God accurately (v.15). On either side of that, he draws out the implications of Jesus' resurrection, which are also related to promises of God in Scripture.
    - ii. In v.13 – 14, if Jesus was not really raised, then Paul's preaching and our faith are in vain. In v.16 – 17, faith is worthless and we are still in our sins.
    - iii. The symmetry is powerful. The preaching of the gospel announces the resurrected Jesus. The immediate implications are that preaching it is necessary and intrinsic, and that faith in this Jesus raised to new life brings about in us spiritual power over sin, because Jesus has a new humanity and we can share in his.
  - d. Illus: Harry Potter killed the piece of Voldemort's soul in himself. Then he came back without it, cleansed of it, so he could defeat the Dark Lord.
  - e. Illus: Read quotes from Irenaeus and Athanasius
4. What about v.56a, that the sting of death is sin?
  - a. Paul uses the term 'sin' in different ways to mean (a) wrong action; (b) the corruption of human nature that influenced the wrong action; (c) a foreign power. Which sense best fits here?
  - b. I would argue (b), or a combination of (b) or (c). Since the problem with Adam was that he corrupted human nature and passed that problem on to us (as in v.21 – 22 where Paul says that 'For since by a man came death... For as in Adam all die'), and the stress on shared resurrection with Jesus is presented as a solution to our mortality and death, it fits that the problem itself was a corrupted nature.
  - c. The sting of death is sin in the sense that death works its way into us through our corrupted nature. Death stings us through sin.
  - d. Note that we might be familiar with the phrase 'the wages of sin is death' from Romans 6:23. That is also true, of course.
5. And v.56b, that the power of sin is the law?
  - a. Probably the simplest explanation is to reference Romans 7, where Paul says that the tenth commandment provoked in him all kinds of coveting. God offered Israel the Sinai Law, they accepted, and it provoked a resistance from within each Israelite.
  - b. The purpose of God was to give Israel a way to diagnose the problem within human nature. It wasn't arbitrary or malicious. It was so they would understand the cure: Jesus.

6. Both Adam and Jesus represent humanity at the top of the creation order. Humanity had fallen not only inwardly and in relation to God, but also in relation to the rest of creation. How does Paul use the quotes from Psalm 8 and 110?
  - a. Psalm 8 is a reflection on God's creation of humanity and God's special place for humanity above all other things in the physical world.
  - b. Psalm 110 is a song of prophetic hope for the Messiah from David's house to defeat Israel's enemies. Taken separately or together, the Psalms reflect the dignity of 'humanity' and the necessity for a 'new humanity' to restore humanity's original place in God's vision for the creation.
7. What is the relationship between our bodies currently and our bodies in the future?
  - a. They are connected, as the seed and plant comparison (15:36 – 38) suggests. The latter grows out of the former. The former provides the raw material for the latter. Note that the 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God' (15:50) means that our bodies will become something more physical than it is now, not something less. Our bodies will still be physical, even though we will not be 'flesh and blood' per se.
  - b. Illus: Jesus' resurrection body has scars from his crucifixion. The love and faithfulness that he expressed in his earthly life are remembered upon his body. Is that a hint for us? For the Christian martyrs, will the scars of their martyrdom be remembered upon their bodies, in glorified form? For women who gave birth to children in love and hope, will their stretch marks be remembered upon their bodies in glorified form? For sacrifices we've made for others, for the struggle for sexual purity, will those choices be remembered upon our bodies? We have a hint that it will.
  - c. Illus: It's a challenge to think this way because we haven't experienced it fully. When my kids were young, we would wrestle and tickle. Of course, I would always win! I would tell them that one day they would grow up and be just as strong as me, and maybe stronger than me, and be able to beat me in wrestling and tickling. I would see the looks on their faces. They had a hard time believing it. It's a challenge to imagine an experience that you've never had. So when someone tells you that you will one day experience it, you have to trust them. The same is true here. We have not experienced resurrection. But Jesus has. And we can trust him, to tell us about it, and to promise it to us, and to tell us the implications.
8. Finally, how does all this connect to what Paul exhorts in 15:58? 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.'
  - a. Illus: The Egyptian Coptic Christian martyrs, who died at the hands of ISIS, or Kayla Mueller, also killed by ISIS, who said:

...I remember mom always telling me that all in all in the end the only one you really have is God. I have come to a place in experience where, in every sense of the word, I have surrendered myself to our creator b/c literally there was no else.... + by God + by your prayers I have felt tenderly cradled in freefall. I have been shown in darkness, light + have learned that even in prison, one can be free... None of us could have known it would be this long but know I am also fighting from my side in the ways I am able + I have a lot of fight left inside of me. I am not breaking down + I will not give in no matter how long it takes. I wrote a song some months ago that says, "The part of me that pains the most also gets me out of bed, w/out your hope there would be nothing left..." aka- The thought of your pain is the source of my own, simultaneously the hope of our reunion is the source of my strength. Please be patient, give your pain to God. I know you would want me to remain strong. That is exactly what I am doing. Do not fear for me, continue to pray as will I + by God's will we will be together soon.

All my everything,  
Kayla

9. Application: Overview of 1 Corinthians: five essays woven together around the theme of 'the future of your body.'
  - a. If Jesus is resurrected from the dead, then he has one body and we are joined to his one body. So unity and reconciliation are important. That's what chapters 1 – 4 are about.

- b. If Jesus is raised from the dead, then we will be raised from the dead, and the choices we make now will affect the bodies we have later. That's why chapters 5 – 7 are primarily about sex and the body.
  - c. Chapters 8 – 10 are about Jesus' mission and our bodies – how we use our bodies for his mission
  - d. Chapters 11 – 14 are about worship in Jesus' corporate body
  - e. Chapter 15 is about Jesus' resurrection body and our future bodies.
10. I think 1 Corinthians will be one of the most important books for the church in the next 100 years. Why?
- a. Because our culture is increasingly into short-term thinking, and YOLO, and this life. But life with Jesus is informed by resurrection, and we need to go be rooted in the resurrection of Jesus and live in the present with great future hope for our resurrection.
  - b. Because our culture doesn't know how to integrate body and soul. So it separates body and soul in ways that hurt us. Jesus' resurrection teaches us that we will be one integrated whole, in a fresh and deeper way, healed by Jesus. So our vision of sex, friendship, healing, therapy, and politics have to be shaped by this reality.
  - c. Because our culture is drifting back into a new paganism, the kind Nietzsche described when he wanted to go back to classical pagan sources where the strong ruled over the weak. There are attitudes like that in our day – economically, politically, and relationally. But if Jesus was raised from the dead, then every person will be, too, and every person matters. Jesus restored the image of God in his own humanity in order to restore it in every single person.