

THE CONSEQUENCES OF DENYING THE RESURRECTION

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12–19

Introduction

the consequences of denying the resurrection of the dead are terrible, so terrible that Paul repeats some consequences to drive home the awful tragedy (v. 13 cp. v. 16; v. 14 cp. v. 19).

- I. Some persons deny the resurrection (v. 12).
- II. The first set of consequences (vv. 13-15).
- III. The second set of consequences (vv. 16-19).

I. 1 Corinthians 15:12 Denying the Resurrection

Some persons deny the resurrection of the human body. It is perfectly understandable how natural man can question the resurrection. (The answers to these objections will be given throughout the discussion of this chapter.)

- => Some persons have lost arms, legs and other body parts in wars and accidents; and their body parts have remained in other parts of the world. Because of this fact, the resurrection is preposterous to some natural minds. How could their bodies ever be raised as a whole?
- => Other persons believe the soul of man is immortal, but that the body is only for this earth: it is the source of sickness and disease, pain and hurt, sin and evil, death and corruption. Therefore, it is impossible for the *same body* to be raised up. Such an idea is preposterous.
- => Still others spiritualize the resurrection saying such things as it takes place at death, or took place at Jesus' resurrection, or involves only the character and personality of a person.

Not understanding and disbelieving the resurrection of the human body was a problem for some in Paul's day, and the misunderstanding and unbelief had even seeped into the church at Corinth. Unfortunately, the same can be said about some in the church even today. There are professing believers who just do not understand or believe in the resurrection of the human body.

The point is this: if we deny the resurrection of the believer's body, some very significant things result. It affects some things we do. There are some severe consequences that affect the whole Christian faith and everything that we believe.

II. *1 Corinthians 15:13–15* *Consequences of the Denial of Resurrection*

The first set of consequences. If we deny the resurrection, four severe consequences immediately happen.

1. To deny the resurrection would be to say that Jesus Christ is not risen. The point is this: it is absurd to argue that God cannot raise up a dead body; He has already done it. He has already raised up a Man, the Man Christ Jesus. Paul declares loudly and clearly to every person who questions and disbelieves the resurrection of the human body: “Suppose there can be no resurrection of dead bodies. Do you know what this means? If there cannot be a resurrection — if God cannot raise dead bodies — then it means that the resurrection of Christ never took place. A terrible consequence!”

The point is clearly stated: since a resurrection has taken place, the resurrection of the Man Christ Jesus, a future resurrection can take place. God can raise up bodies in the future just as He raised up the body of Jesus Christ.

2. To deny the resurrection (either of Christ or of us) means that our preaching is useless. The word “useless” (*kenon*) means empty, groundless, void of all truth and meaning. How does denying the resurrection of the body make our preaching meaningless? There are two ways.
 - a. The message we preach is the gospel (*good news*) of the resurrected Lord who has been raised to give us the glorious privilege:
 - => of living forever in the presence of God.
 - => of having a personal face to face relationship with God.
 - => of being made perfect and serving God face to face in a new heavens and earth.

There are no ways *disembodied spirits* can serve God. What is a disembodied spirit anyway? It takes a *body*, a whole and real person to serve God. If we are not to be whole and real persons then we cannot be alive and serving God. The only way we can live with God eternally is for God to resurrect our bodies and make them perfect by changing their corruptible nature into an incorruptible nature.

Therefore, to deny the resurrection of Christ or of believers is to deny what we preach. Our preaching of the resurrected Lord and of our living forever is empty and meaningless. We may as well be doing something else; there is no need to preach a false hope.

- b. The message we preach is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for our sins and rose again conquering death for us. The fact that God raised Him from the dead is the glorious proof that He is the Son of God, the proof that God accepted His sacrifice for our sins (Rom. 1:4). If Christ did not arise, then it means that God left Him in the grave, that He is no more than what other men are, a man doomed to die and remain in

the grave forever with all other men. But if God did raise Christ up from the grave, then it means that death is conquered and that He will raise us up to live forever with Him.

The point is this: if there is no resurrection — no resurrection of Christ and no resurrection of us — then the consequences are terrible. Jesus Christ is not the Son of God. What we are preaching is empty and meaningless. We may as well keep quiet.

3. To deny the resurrection of Christ means that our faith is useless, that it is empty, groundless and meaningless. If Christ is in the grave, then our faith is in a dead man, and no dead man can save a living man. We are doomed, for we are following a mere man, a man who is still dead and lying in a grave. Our faith is empty, groundless and meaningless.
4. To deny the resurrection of Christ means that we are bearing a false witness, that we are deliberately lying. Very simply, the apostles bore strong testimony that Jesus Christ had been resurrected from the dead. If He did not arise, then they were liars. They were either lying or simply bearing witness to that which they had seen.

Now note the point, the last clause of the verse: if the dead do not arise, then Christ is not raised. This is clearly seen. Jesus Christ died; He was dead and buried in a grave:

=> if the dead can be raised, then Christ arose.

=> if the dead cannot be raised, then Christ did not arise.

If God can raise up the dead, then the very first person He would raise up would naturally be His own dear Son. And if He raised up His own Son, then He is bound to raise us up since His Son died to free us from death.

Acts 2:23-24 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Acts 3:14-15 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

Acts 4:33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.

Acts 10:39-41 "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen – by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

Acts 17:2-3 As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,” he said.

Rom 1:4 And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 Cor 15:4 That he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Eph 1:20 Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

1 Pet 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

III. 1 Corinthians 15:16–19 Consequences of the Denial of Resurrection

The second set of consequences. In this particular set of consequences four severe things are said to happen if we deny the resurrection of the dead.

1. To deny the resurrection would be to say that Christ is not raised. If Christ arose, then we too shall arise just as He arose; if Christ did not arise, then we will not arise.

Paul is simply saying that what happened to Christ will happen to us. If He arose, then being resurrected is possible. He is our Saviour: therefore, we too shall arise. If He did not arise, then being resurrected is not possible; He is not our Saviour. Therefore, we shall not arise. The resurrection of Jesus Christ goes hand in hand with our resurrection. He arose to conquer death and to blaze the way for us, for our whole being — body and spirit — to be raised and to live forever with God.

2 Tim 2:8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.

2. To deny the resurrection (either of Christ or of us) means that our faith is futile (*mataia*). The word means fruitless or futile; that is, we are still in our sins. If Jesus Christ has not risen from the dead, then He is still dead, still in the grave; therefore, there is no redemption, no forgiveness of sins.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

1 John 2:1-2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

3. If Jesus Christ did not arise from the dead, then dead believers have perished. If believers are not to be resurrected, Jesus would be no more than any other *human* being. He would be powerless to penetrate the other world, the spiritual dimension of being. He would know no life beyond the life of this world. He, just as all other men have always done no matter how great their philosophy, would have perished in the ground of the earth. Therefore, all our loved ones who have gone on before are perished. They are nothing more than decayed flesh and bones lying in a cemetery. They have ceased to be, for if there is no resurrection, then Jesus Christ has not risen. A horrible consequence!

Note that deceased believers are “asleep in Christ.” This does not mean *soul-sleep*, but simply that they are at rest in Jesus, resting from all the pain and suffering, trouble and corruption of this world.

3. If there is no resurrection, then we are to be pitied above all people. Why?
 - => Because believers are hoping in a false belief and philosophy. They are believing a lie, and they shall experience great disappointment.
 - => Because believers are expecting the super-spiritual power of God to help through the trials of this life, and if there is no resurrection, then God does not love us, and His power is a farce and a lie. It will not be present to help the believer through life.
 - => Because the righteousness and strength and godly lifestyles of believers are misunderstood and opposed: therefore, the true believer suffers for Christ throughout life.
 - => If there is no resurrection, no hope for salvation and eternal life, then the believer is suffering for nothing.
 - => Because the true believer denies himself, giving and sacrificing *all he is and has* in order to reach and minister to a world reeling in desperate need and death. If there is no resurrection, then the believer is wasting his life and money.

Acts 5:41 *The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*

Rom 8:16-17 *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit, that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

2 Cor 1:7 *And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

2 Tim 2:12 *If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.*

Heb 11:24-26 *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.*

1 Pet 4:12-13 *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

1 Pet 5:10 *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ■*