

Chapter Fifteen Notes

Verses one to eleven

- There is no evidence the Corinthians had asked him any questions pertaining to this subject; rather, Paul probably found out from some of the ones who came to him that there were those in the Corinthian church who denied the general resurrection. The Corinthians did not deny the resurrection of Christ; rather, they denied the general resurrection of the dead. This belief probably came from the Greeks. When these Greeks become Christians they readily believed in the immortality of the soul but balked at the resurrection of the dead.
- Paul had preached the good news of the gospel to the Corinthians in the past. This proclamation would include the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. The Corinthians had received and accepted this teaching and had begun to stand in it. Their stand in the gospel had continued until the day Paul wrote this chapter.
- Paul now refers to the gospel as the instrument by which the Corinthians were saved. No man can be saved apart from the gospel. The Corinthians will only be saved by the gospel if they hold fast to what Paul preached. To be saved by Christ depends upon one standing firm in the gospel as it was presented by the early apostles. If the Corinthian's faith was worthless, then they would not be saved. A dead faith will save no one. All these series of clauses were designed to cause the Corinthians to affirm their allegiance to the original message preached by Paul.
- Paul gave to the Corinthians exactly what he had received. According to Paul's preaching, the scriptures taught that the Messiah would die for our sins. To preach that Jesus died would be worthless unless we, in some way, connect his death to our sins. The essential message of the gospel is that Jesus died in order to expiate us from the guilt of our sins. The reference to the burial of the body of Jesus confirms the reality of his death. Paul then referred to the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and continues to live. He was not raised from the dead to die again; rather, He is our living Savior.
- After His resurrection, He appeared to Cephas or Peter. This only gospel which refers to this is in Luke 24:34. The appearance to the Twelve is the one recorded in John 20:19-23 and Luke 24:34-43. Paul is citing the appearances of the Lord that would be the most convincing to the Corinthians. Some of Jesus' recorded resurrection appearances are omitted.

- This resurrection appearance may be the one recorded in Matthew 28. If this is not the one Paul is referring to, this resurrection appearance is not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. The major portion of those five hundred to whom Jesus showed himself alive were still living at the time when Paul wrote to the Corinthians. However, some of them had died.
- Vs. 7 mentions that the Lord was seen of his brother. This appearance is not elsewhere recorded in the New Testament. During His ministry, Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5); indeed, they considered Him to be insane (Mark 3:20-21). Shortly after the establishment of the church, James is referred to as one of the important people in the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19). Paul then mentions that the Lord appeared to all the apostles because Thomas was absent when He appeared to the Twelve.
- Paul was the last person to witness the resurrection of Jesus. He was one who from the spiritual point of view was not born at the right time because he had not been a disciple during the lifetime of Jesus. His calling to the apostolic office, which presupposed having seen Christ, could not take place in the normal, orderly, organic sequence. He was torn from his previous course of life by the powerful intervention of Christ. He was thus brought to see Christ and to his apostolic calling by a very different route from that of the other apostles.
- Paul stated that he was the least of the apostles because he had persecuted the church. His is not to be understood to say that he had less authority than the other apostles. He was comparing his past with that of the other apostles. Paul had done all he could to destroy the gospel prior to his conversion. Because of this background, Paul did not feel himself worthy to be called an apostle. Instead, he viewed himself as the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).
- Paul did nothing to deserve what God had given to him. Rather, God's grace made it possible. No one understood the subject of "saved by grace" better than Paul. Paul became exactly what God wanted him to be; hence God's grace was not shed upon him without result. He dedicated himself to his work as an apostle and he worked extra hard to compensate for what he had been. Paul hastened to add that what was accomplished was accomplished by God's grace which was with him. He never forgot the lesson in 3:6. He later argued that what God had done for him was proof that his grace was sufficient to save any man (1 Timothy 1:12-16).
- Paul and the rest of the apostles always preached the resurrection as part of the gospel. The bodily resurrection is a part of the gospel

whether it was preached by Paul or any other apostle.

Verses twelve to nineteen

- Since what was denied by some of the Corinthians was the general resurrection at the second coming of Christ and not that Christ had been raised from the dead, Paul's object in this section of the chapter is to tie the resurrection of Christ to the general resurrection at the end of the age.
- The death, burial, and resurrection was the planned work of the Messiah. Paul expressed shock, disapproval, and rejection of those who taught that there is no resurrection of the dead. There is an obvious contradiction here. The admission of the specific resurrection makes the denial of the general resurrection impossible.
- Paul begins to enumerate the consequences of taking the position that the dead are not raised. The first conclusion is that not even Jesus was raised if the dead are not raised. The Corinthian heresy is an important doctrinal deviation from the gospel because it takes the very heart out of the gospel.
- The gospel had, as its major core of contents, the teaching that Jesus had been raised from the dead. If Christ was not raised from the dead, the preaching of Paul and others was vain or without any basis or truth. It was based on a delusion. Another consequence from their doctrine that the dead are not raised is that the Corinthians themselves were believing a delusion. If Christ was not actually raised from the dead, the preachers were preaching a lie and the believers were believing a lie.
- Another consequence of the Corinthian doctrine is that it makes those who claimed that God raised Jesus from the dead false witness against God. One can see the terrible nature of this offense when one considers Exodus 20:16. The apostolic testimony was that God raised Jesus from the dead. If the Corinthians who said that there is no resurrection of the dead were right, the apostles were false witnesses against God.
- Vs. 16 states the same thing as vs. 13 stated; it serves both as the conclusion to Paul's argument in vss. 13-16 and as the premise for other conclusions that he draws in vss. 17-18.
- The word "vain" in vs. 14 emphasized the absence of objective reality behind their faith (i.e., they had believed a lie). In this verse, the word "vain" emphasizes that their faith is void of result. The faith that they had in Jesus produced absolutely no results for them. A Christ who was powerless to triumph over the death that comes to men as a result of sin is also powerless to save others from sin.

- Another necessary conclusion results from the hypothesis that the dead are not raised. Because Christ is not raised, men are yet in their sins. Those who have died while yet in their sins have suffered eternal damnation.
- If there is nothing beyond the grave for the Christian, he has sacrificed many bodily pleasures for no benefit whatsoever. The sacrificing of the temporary joys that the pleasures of this earth can give, the abuse to which the Christian is subjected and possible martyrdom, are all for nothing if the dead are not raised. A person who has put everything he is or even hopes to be on something that is not true, is to be pitied. They have lived under a delusion and are in for a great disappointment when this life is over.

Verses twenty to twenty-eight

- Having already argued what the effect would be if the dead are not raised and if Christ was not raised (an unreal situation), Paul now considers the case as it stands since Christ has been raised (the real situation). Jesus was the first to rise victorious over death who never had to die again. Just as the first fruits are the earnest of later harvesting, so the resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of our resurrection.
- Paul argues that all men are in union with Christ just as they were in union with Adam. Death came to man through the work of a man. The death that is spoken of in this verse is physical death, not spiritual death. Since Christ did not die spiritually, this verse cannot refer to spiritual death. As the punishment of death came to man through the activities of a man, so the resurrection from the dead had to come through the activities of a man. Jesus became a man in order that He might deliver men from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-18).
- Death came to this world through Adam. Because of his sin, every human being since Adam has had to die a physical death. Physical death has passed to all men, and there are no exceptions. By virtue of Christ's resurrection, all men will experience the resurrection (John 5:28-29).
- The resurrection will occur in an orderly fashion. Christ was the first to be raised from the dead; He was the first of the entire human race who was raised from the dead never to die again. After Christ as the firstfruits come, then will come those who are His.
- When Jesus comes again, all things will come to an end. The entire sequence of events planned by God at the creation of this world will come to a conclusion at the second coming (2 Peter 3:9-11). Jesus will come back to earth, not to set up or establish a kingdom, but to

raise His saints and then to hand over the dominion to God. Sovereignty was committed to the Son for a definite purpose. When that purpose has been fulfilled, the sovereignty will return to the original source. When the end comes, every power that opposes God will be defeated. These are the personalities that work under and in league with Satan to produce great wickedness on this earth.

- Christ cannot hand over the kingdom over the Father until every enemy is defeated. This reign began at Pentecost and will continue in His spiritual kingdom until every enemy which is presently fighting against Christ is destroyed.
- Following the defeat of Satan, death itself shall be destroyed. That means to free man from death by the resurrection of the body. This will be the last event in Christ's reign.
- All things have been subjected to Christ, even death. The argument of Paul is that the denial of the general resurrection is a denial of the lordship of Christ over death and a rejection of the Lord's plan for the consummation of the ages.
- When everything is finally subjected to Jesus, then he will voluntarily give the kingdom over to the Father and Himself be subject to the Father. The fact that Jesus, the Son, is subject to the Father does not deny His deity. When dominion reverts to the Father, he will be recognized as the only sovereign over all the universe. Therefore, the denial of the general resurrection is an assault on God's final purpose for the universe.

Verses twenty-nine to thirty-four

- Vs. 29 has over forty different positions. Most of them can be broken down into the following categories: (1) those that treat "baptism" as being used metaphorically; (2) those that understand baptism literally, but apply it to something other than immersion for remission of sins; (3) those that understand baptism to refer to vicarious baptism; and (4) those that understand the word to refer to immersion in water in order to obtain forgiveness of sins. The verse is a series of rhetorical questions which make the point that if the dead are not raised, one's baptism is absolutely nonsensical. If there is no resurrection from the dead, what difference does it make whether or not one has his sins washed away?
- If the dead are not raised, why is there the need to risk our lives every hour in order to propagate the gospel? Paul's life was threatened at Damascus shortly after his conversion, he was stoned and left for dead at Lystra, beaten and put in prison at Philippi, and fled from a mob in Thessalonica before arriving at

Corinth.

- The idea in vs. 31 is that Paul was continually renouncing his own life to preach the gospel; hence, if the situation arose in which he must lay down his life for Christ, he was perfectly willing to do so. Therefore, he was able to write that he dies daily because every day he was determined to lay down his life for Christ, if necessary. Paul's basis for protest was his boasting of what God had accomplished through him at Corinth. A denial of the resurrection would also deny Paul of the reward which he had from his work in Corinth.
- Paul now asks of what profit it was if he fought with wild beasts at Ephesus and there was no resurrection. Paul not only did good for himself, but he risked his life to tell others of the salvation that men can obtain after death through Jesus Christ. If there is no resurrection, there is no reason for sacrificing to propagate the gospel. The final quote of Paul in vs. 32 demonstrates the inevitable moral result of denying the resurrection. If there is no resurrection, there is no reason for a person to live righteously; they might as well live a hedonistic life.
- Paul warns them to avoid the teaching of some among them who were trying to persuade them to believe that there was no resurrection of the dead. Whoever persuaded them to deny the resurrection would deceive them. We ought to always be careful not to associate with those who teach false doctrine because it might lead us to do the same.
- The Corinthians were being intoxicated by false doctrine; therefore, they needed to "sober up" lest they be led away into sin. The people who claimed to have superior knowledge actually had no knowledge of God's word. Their ignorance brought peril to their own souls and the souls of others. They were not excused because they were ignorant; nor were they to be given greater toleration for this reason. This doctrine was false and would lead to apostasy; they could not be tolerated! They should have been ashamed of themselves.

Verses thirty-five to forty-nine

- Having already shown that the resurrection of Christ is an essential article of the Christian faith, and that Christ's resurrection is the Christian's guarantee of his own personal resurrection, Paul is now ready to answer the objections raised by those in Corinth who denied the possibility of a bodily resurrection.
- In vs. 35, Paul introduces two specific objections raised by those at Corinth who denied the resurrection. The first question asks how

the body can be raised. Those who denied the resurrection could not conceive the possibility that God would raise the dead body of a man. The second question raises a question with reference to the kind of body which the raised will have. Apparently, the ones raising the objection were able to see the possibility of man having only a material body as he presently possesses. Hence, they could not imagine the resurrection of the fleshly body, nor would it have been something they desired.

- The Corinthians were considered fools or irrational men because they denied the possibility of the very same thing happening to man that they witnessed occurring daily in nature with reference to God's creation. In the plant kingdom, the seed must be buried in the earth and begin to decompose before new life can begin.
- The seed that is sown in no way resembles the plant from grows from it. The oak does not resemble the acorn. Neither can we expect that our resurrection body will be exactly like the body that we lay in the tomb. We do not sow the body that will eventually grow; we sow the seed from which the body will be produced.
- The type of body which comes from the seed is determined and fixed by God. God gave each plant the specific things that it needed for survival; it has a body fitted to its needs. Similarly, God will provide a resurrection body in accordance with the needs of that time. We cannot look at this body and know the nature of our resurrection body, but we can know that God will give us the appropriate resurrection body.
- Vs. 39 argues that God gave to each part of creation a body in accordance with its own peculiar needs. All the beasts of the world are suited to their environment. Therefore, our resurrection body will be vastly difference from our physical, earthly body, but will be fitted for our needs throughout eternity.
- The celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars, planets, etc.) have a different glory from the bodies which exist here on the earth. The heavenly bodies also have separate glories within themselves. Glory means "brightness, splendor, or radiance." God gave to each a body just the right proportion of glory. If God can give a body to each of his creations that suits both their needs and his glorious plans, he is perfectly capable of providing the kind of body that we will need at the resurrection.
- In vs. 42, Paul now makes a direct application to the resurrection body and begins to distinguish it from the mortal body that is laid in the grave. A body that has been sown there will be raised one day like a seed, when it is planted, will spring forth in a new form. A corruptible body which rots and returns to the dust from which it

came is placed in the grave, but an incorruptible body will never decay.

- The body that is laid in the tomb is despised. The word dishonor means "disgrace, shame." It is a humiliation in contrast to glory. The dead body has nothing of which it can be proud. It soon begins to stink and becomes an object that we despise. Our resurrection body will be a glorious body; it will be honored. Man's body is a physical body, one which is subject to death and decay the same as is any other kind of physical body. Whereas the body that is laid in the tomb is fitted for earthly, animal existence, the spiritual body is fitted for spiritual life -- a life in which the spirit predominates. A spiritual body is a body suited for the spiritual world that God has planned for mankind. All men will receive this kind of body. Just as certainly as we have a body adapted to life in this world, so also shall we have a body adapted to life in the world to come.
- Through Adam, all men have become living souls. We receive a "living soul" (a body fitted for life in this world) from Adam; we receive a "life-giving spirit" (a body fitted for life in the world to come) from Christ. All men receive both inasmuch as all who are born will be raised from the tomb (John 5:28-29). The fact that Christ is referred to as the last Adam shows that there shall never come another person who sustains a relationship to the human race such as that which Christ sustains. Jesus is God's final offer to save mankind.
- The physical body will precede the spiritual resurrection body. There can be no resurrection body except there be first a physical body. Since Adam was made from earth, his body was fitted for life in this world. The body that we have derived through Adam is this animal, earthy body. Jesus is an uncreated being. Because He is from heaven, He has a spiritual body adapted for existence there. Hence, bodies are presently in existence that are different from earthy bodies and fitted for life in a different environment.
- Every man who has a natural, physical body is earthy. When the resurrection of the dead occurs, we will be given a heavenly body like Jesus. Paul then concludes in vs. 49 with a summary statement. We need to be careful to understand that heavenly does not refer to salvation. It is simply a descriptive term that refers to our resurrection body. Since all men shall be raised from the dead, all men shall receive a body of this nature. The ones receiving that resurrection body will be separated into two groups, one living forever in heaven and the others living forever in hell. Both, however, will possess a resurrection body.

Verses fifty to fifty-eight

- Having already answered two objections, Paul now considers a third possible objection, "What will happen to those who are alive when the Lord comes?" The transformation from a natural to a spiritual body must take place regardless of whether or not death occurs.
- Our earthly (natural) bodies are not suited for eternal life; our earthly bodies cannot participate in that heavenly kingdom. The reason is that flesh and blood are corruptible (i.e., they do not last forever). The kingdom of God never ends; it endures forever. Our present bodies are not capable of enjoying eternal happiness in heaven. Therefore, a transition must occur.
- Paul revealed the mystery that he knew the Lord was coming again, but did not know when. Not all people will be dead when Jesus comes again. This passage is discussing the same situation as that of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.
- The word "moment" refers to a particle of time so small that it cannot be divided. The word "twinkling" suggests rapid movement. Therefore, this great change in our bodies will occur in no more time than it takes to blink an eye. This change will occur at the second coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16). When the last trump is sounded, the dead will be raised with their new bodies. The body that comes out of the grave will differ from that which was laid in the grave. Both the dead and the living must undergo a similar change. Therefore, the body that is raised will have already been changed. At the same time, we who are alive at Christ's coming will experience a change in the nature of our bodies.
- Our body that is subject to death and decay must be changed into a body which will not decay. This figure of speech implies that we maintain our personal identity even through our change. The same person will inhabit both bodies. Our new bodies will not be troubled with death ever again.
- In vs. 54, Paul reiterates what will happen when Christ comes again and emphasizes that when these events occur, they will do so in fulfillment of what is written in scripture. John 10:35 tells us that scripture cannot be broken. Paul then quotes from Isaiah 25:8 to show that God will ultimately win the victory over death. When death can no longer assault the living and when those who have already died are risen from the dead, then death will have died. Man wins the victory over death through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Paul personifies death by means of a quotation from Hosea 13:14. This lyrical victory hymn expressed the air of triumph in Paul's mind

as he penned these words. Death is the punishment for sin. Because Adam rebelled against God by transgressing His commandment, death passed upon all of humanity. Hence, sin is what brought death into this world and gave it power. Death uses sin as its stinger. Through sin, death seemingly won the victory over man. If God had not given a law, sin could not be regarded as a violation of the law. Therefore, the strength of sin is the law.

- Our salvation comes not by our own works, power, or might, but through Jesus Christ. Our Lord won the victory for us by not allowing sin to have any place in His own life and then by offering His own life as a sacrifice for the sins of man. Hence, He defeated sin and death. Death could not hold the Lord in its power. Jesus is giving us the victory everyday as He both defeats sin by granting remission of sins to man and paves the way for our glorious resurrection from the dead.
- Because of the preceding facts, Paul now admonished the Corinthians. They were to be steadfast which suggests someone who takes a position and does not waver from it. Steadfastness is possible because of one's assurance of the future resurrection. "Unmovable" again means to take a position in the service of God. The "work of the Lord" is the work that the Lord wants us to do. "Abounding" means that we are to try to do as much as we can for the Lord. The attitude of accomplishing as little as we can by with doing is foreign to the spirit of the gospel. The Christian is a person who is constantly doing all of the work of the Lord which they can possibly do. Because we know that our labor is not in vain (i.e., without result), we will persevere in the Lord's service. If there were no resurrection, all our service for the Lord would have been wasted effort.