

1 Corinthians 15

Resurrection

PREFACE

God's Word contains the answers to all of life's problems and needs. As we apply God's Word to our daily lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens us, our faith grows, and our lives are transformed.

But for many the bible is a complex book, too huge to tackle.

By selecting important chapters of the Bible (20 from the Old Testament, 20 from the New Testament) and focusing on them, I hope to encourage you to get into God's Word. To help accomplish this, I have prepared a visual memory aid for each key chapter. The aids are purposely *weird* in order to increase retention. Each aid has three elements:

1. The *book* of the Bible
2. The *chapter*
3. The *theme* of the chapter

By studying the memory aid several times and focusing on it, you will recall the image and consequently the book, chapter and theme.

Remembering these key chapters will enrich your daily life. It will also help you to relate God's Word to others. As you write greeting cards or speak with people, you will be able to apply God's Word directly to their problems or needs.

At times, you will be unable to speak directly to a person. Send them a Key Chapter booklet! They are designed for sharing!

Each Key Chapter booklet is presented in the same format:

1. *Background* for the chapter
2. *Key verses* of the chapter
3. *Thoughts* on the theme of the chapter

Bible classes and small study groups will find the third section helpful for discussions. The *thoughts* will provide a variety of applications upon which to reflect.

God will not let his Word return void (Isaiah 55:11)!

He will bless you abundantly as you meditate on his Word (Psalm 119:48)!

He will enable you to be a blessing to others as you spread his Word (Genesis 12: 2-3)!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Paul R. Schroeder

Explanation of the Memory Aid

1. The BOOK of the Bible:
One Corinthian column = **1 CORINTHIANS**
2. The CHAPTER:
The *number* formed by the shape of the butterfly's antennae = **CHAPTER 15**
3. The THEME:
The butterfly symbolizes *resurrection* = **RESURRECTION**

1 CORINTHIANS 15: BACKGROUND

The central pillar upholding all Christian theology is Christ's resurrection from the dead. His death was necessary for our forgiveness, but it would have been meaningless without his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15: 13-19).

The ancient city Corinth was defeated by Rome in 146 B.C. One hundred years later Julius Caesar rebuilt the city. It became the capital of the Roman province Achaia and was famous for its wealth and luxury—also for its drunkenness and immorality. (See 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10).

Paul had received some bad news from Corinth. The young church there had all kinds of problems—bickering, jealousy, lawsuits, sexual immorality, and more. Even Paul's appearance, speech, apostleship, and honesty were under attack (2 Corinthians 10:13). So he sent this first epistle to them from Ephesus about A.D. 55. It didn't solve all the problems, so he made a hurried trip in person. Then he followed that visit with a stronger letter (2 Corinthians). Paul was so anxious to get their response that he rushed to meet Titus (who carried the letter) at Macedonia instead of waiting for him to come to Troas, where Paul was then living. The news was good. The letter and visit had brought positive results. (Paul later paid a final visit to Corinth, recorded in Acts 10: 1-4).

Paul wanted desperately to defend this young church from every form of dissension. He wanted to unify and restore them. So he focuses them on Jesus. In the first nine verses of his first letter, Paul refers to Jesus *nine* times.

It is not unusual, then, that in chapter 15 Paul holds up the central teaching about Jesus: *His Resurrection!*

KEY VERSES OF 1 CORINTHIANS 15

Verses 3-4

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

A clear statement of the Gospel: Christ died. He rose. Faith in him saves. .

Verses 5-7

And that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Christ physically appeared and revealed himself. There were eyewitnesses.

Verse 9 -10a

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.

Paul never forgot that it was only by God's grace that he was an apostle. He continues that thought in verse 10.

Verse 20

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

After considering how futile the Corinthians' faith would be if Christ had not risen, Paul gloriously announces the *fact* of Christ's resurrection. He also assures them that *they too* will rise from the dead because of Christ's victory over death (1 Corinthians 15:23).

Verse 21-22

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Paul reviews humanity's problem and the solution—sin and forgiveness. He also explains the source of sin: the first Adam. But forgiveness came from the *second* "Adam": Jesus.

Verse 25-26

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Death has been defeated.

Verse 33-34

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

Shape up! Our faith will be revealed in the quality of our life and conduct.

Verse 36

How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

Paul shows that just as seeds are transformed after they are planted, so our bodies will be transformed and glorified when they are raised from the dead. We see the cycle of “death to life” all around us in nature. (Read also verses 42-44, where this though is continued.)

Verses 51-53

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed---in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

Some details are given about Judgment Day. Those who are alive when that day comes will not die but be instantly transformed into their “new”, glorified body.

Verse 57

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The problem of death is solved. Through Jesus Christ, the victory!

Verse 58

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

With such assurance of victory, we are able to abound in doing the Lord’s work. Our work is not in vain. Christ rose. We too shall rise.

THOUGHTS ON THE RESURRECTION

Day 1

In his first letter to Corinth, Paul lists six appearances of Jesus after his resurrection. The Gospel accounts list several additional ones. Here are the 11 appearances of Christ prior to his ascension:

1. Women returning from tomb (Matthew 28:9, 10)
2. Mary Magdalene (John 20: 11-18)
3. Disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-32)
4. Peter (Luke 24:34)
5. Disciples except Thomas (Luke 24: 36-43)
6. Disciples with Thomas (John 20: 26-29)
7. Seven disciples by Sea of Galilee (John 21: 1-25)
8. Eleven disciples in Galilee (Matthew 28: 16-20)
9. More than 500 in Galilee (1 Corinthians 15:6)
10. James (1 Corinthians 15:7)
11. The apostles at the ascension (Luke 24: 50-51)

St. Paul says he also saw Christ (1 Corinthians 15:8) (See Key Chapter booklet *Act 9: Paul*)

* * *

Jesus rose on the third day, Jews regarded parts of days as being a day. Therefore, part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday counted as three days.

* * *

The resurrection of the dead is taught not only in the New Testament but also in the Old: Job 19: 25-26; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2. (See Hebrews 11:9).

* * *

On Judgment Day everyone—not just believers—will be raised from the dead. Unbelievers also will be raised (John 5:28; Acts 24:15).

* * *

The resurrection of Jesus proves that our sins are forgiven (Romans 4:25)

* * *

Jesus proved his divinity by his power over death (John 2: 18-19; John 10:18).

Day 2

First fruits from the harvest were offered to the Lord to confirm that the entire harvest was his. Christ rose to confirm that all of God's children will rise (1 Corinthians 15: 20-23).

* * *

Christ rose on the first day of the week—Sunday. It was on the first day of the first week that God commanded light to shine out of darkness. Now Jesus, the Light of the world, had risen and would shine forever. The early Christian church began to celebrate Sunday as the Lord's Day (John 20: 19, 26; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). Christians continue today to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus each Sunday.

* * *

Notice the resurrection theme of the noisy bones in Ezekiel 37.

* * *

You are not a Christian if you deny the death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:14, 16-17). (See Key Chapter booklet *Romans 8: Salvation*).

* * *

Paul had many gifts and talents (2 Corinthians 11: 22-29). Yet he humbles himself (1 Corinthians 15:9) and boasts in his weaknesses (2 Corinthians 11:30).

* * *

Jesus, who is victorious over death, will have the victory over all things. At his second coming he will eternally destroy death by casting it into the Lake of Fire. In Revelation he is pictured as doing this from the great White Throne (Revelation 19: 11-21; 20:5-14).

* * *

Bad companions lead to bad conduct. We are influenced by those we associate with (1 Corinthians 15:33). Fellowship with those who doubt can lead us into doubt.

* * *

1 Corinthians 15:55:: Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? These words are often spoken at the graveside during Christian burials. Here in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul quotes from Hosea 13:14. The "sting" was sin, which Christ has removed by his death and resurrection.

* * *

Neither the sacrifice nor the sufferings we endure are worthy to be compared to the glory we shall receive in eternity (Romans 8: 18).

Day 3

Little in history has been more faithfully attested to than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many testified under threat of punishment and even death.

* * *

In Adam we fell; in Christ we rise.

* * *

Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica to give comfort and instruction. Apparently, some were disturbed by the fact that Christ hadn't returned yet. What about their loved ones who died before he returned? Paul answers their question in a beautiful manner. (See 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18. These words have brought comfort to many bereaved.)

* * *

Even during his earthly ministry, Christ proved he was the master over death. He raised the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5: 22-23; 35-43), the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7: 11-18), and his friend Lazarus (John 11: 17-46).

* * *

Belief in the resurrection of Jesus turned discouraged followers into enthusiastic witnesses (Luke 24: 13-35).

* * *

The resurrected Christ lives in his believers. Paul reminds us that we are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3: 16-17). We are able to produce good works because of his presence in us. (See Key Chapter booklet *John 15: Growth*.) In the Lord's Supper, Jesus gives himself to us (1 Corinthians 11: 17-32).

* * *

People have a right to deny the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But if they do, they have no right to call themselves *Christians*. You cannot be a Christian and deny these basic truths. When Christians speak of faith—it is precisely these things they believe. (See Key Chapter booklet *Romans 8: Salvation*).

* * *

Day 4

Discipleship is vastly more important than church membership. With all the emphasis placed on church membership and membership rolls, the impression can be given that being on a membership list is equivalent to being a Christian. Nothing could be more false! A person can be on a membership role and not even be a Christian.

Christ constantly warned the members of the organized religion of his day that it was not enough to pay lip service to him. He demanded *commitment!* Not everyone that said, “Lord, Lord” was going to make it; only those who backed up their confession with a sincere heartfelt commitment of their lives. Christ didn’t want hearers only, he wanted doers. His parable of the 10 virgins demonstrated that clearly. Each of the young women had lamps; each had oil; each was waiting for the bridegroom. Yet half of them didn’t make it (Matthew 15: 1-13).

We must see how far short we fall compared to what God expects. This realization should lead us to repentance. In repentance, we seek God’s strengthening and enabling power to life us up and make us more like the people he wants us to be. In repentance we reopen to the working of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual growth results.

* * *

Read what Christ says about discipleship (Luke 14:27): And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. The cross referred to here is not illness or handicaps. It is the burden that comes to us in the form of rejection, disapproval, and mockery, *because of our witness to Christ*. We often sense that a bold witness on our part would alienate us from our friends, so we remain silent. As a result, we have no cross to bear. Yet Christ says to be his disciple, we must take up our cross and suffer the consequence of a strong Christian witness to the world.

* * *

Luke 14: 33: In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Isn’t that something! We literally are to be ready to give up everything for god. Whatever we refuse to give up is really our “god”. What we refuse to part with for the sake of god has a higher priority in our life—that is what we really worship. Martin Luther was so correct when he pointed out that we are all guilty of idolatry. How we need to repent! When Jesus takes over our lives through faith, he rearranges our priorities. He is lifted up as our Lord and Savior. Our focus is realigned, and we worship and praise him as true God. As that happens, our actions become declarations of worship and praise.

* * *

Day 5

Paul preached courageously about the resurrection even when confronted by the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection (Acts 23: 6-8, Romans 8: 10-11; Philippians 3: 1-11, 21).

* * *

John 8: 31: to the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”

God assumes that we know his will. That is why he requires us to be obedient to it. Where does that leave “inactive” members? They don’t read God’s Word; they don’t attend Bible study classes; they don’t thirst after and long after God’s Word. So, how can they know (much less obey) what it says?

It’s difficult to talk about commitment and growth because weak and insecure Christians find themselves overwhelmed. Christ never “watered down” his call to obedience and commitment. We know we will fail. No one can attain perfection. He knows that too. He offers us daily forgiveness. He also enables us to *strive*, to battle against sin, and to yearn and work a more God-pleasing life. That occurs as the Law makes us aware of our sins and moves us to repentance and the gospel empowers us to act.

Christ, living fully and completely in us, actually produces the good works. St. Paul understood this and, therefore, reminded us that we could not glory even our good works because, in fact, they were the works of Christ who lives in us.

* * *

John 15:8: This is to my father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Notice that Christ wants *much* fruit. Frequently our plans and level of expectations for things to be accomplished do not reveal God’s greatness. We need to dream bigger. We need to plan bigger. We need to call on God more. God has the power to work miracles. We have not because we ask not (James 4:2).

Let’s stop talking about membership lists and church rolls. Let’s start making disciples.