

# THE DEATH OF DEATH

## 1 Corinthians 15:20-24

### INTRODUCTION

Easter Weekend

Good Friday - service focused on death of Christ

Easter Sunday – His resurrection

**Heb 2:14-15 – “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; <sup>15</sup> and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”**

One blessing flowing from the open tomb of Jesus is that God removes heartbreak and replaces it with hope. Easter and the resurrection of Jesus is an initial step in His campaign to throw open doors of hope for people who will trust in Him.

It is His resurrection power that has impact on how we are able to withstand trials and challenges, how we can rejoice and encourage each other, and how we can walk daily as Christians.

### READ 1 Corinthians 15:20-24

**Proposition:** Paul gives **3 Truths** surrounding the Resurrection

1. **Promised Rescue**
2. **Powerful Redeemer**
3. **Perfect Result**

**So That:** We will view death differently. Outside of Christ, there is no hope. In Christ, there is absolute certain hope.

**1<sup>st</sup> Truth** surrounding the Resurrection ...

**I. Promised Rescue 15:20**

Point – Hope! Every human is born a sinner, in hostility and rebellion against God. But when God’s grace and mercy falls on someone and He rescues them and adopts them into His family, they become a joint heir in Christ. One of the blessings that God bestows on His children is a promise of rescue – even from death itself.

- A promise that is certain.
- A Promise that is wonderful promise.
- A Sign.
- A Guarantee.

Proof – **15:20** – **“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”**

**“But now”** – emphatic contrast to 6 “ifs” in vv. 12-19

**“Christ has been raised from the dead”** – historical fact

- it is not a legend or a myth
- it is an historical event that cannot be denied
- **vv. 5-8** tells us He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the Twelve, then to more than 500 brethren at one time, then to James, then to all the Apostles, and finally to the one untimely born, Paul himself.

**vv. 1-4** defines the Gospel

- one cannot be a believer without believing in the resurrection of Christ

**Rom 10:9** – **“if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”**

- belief in the resurrection is at the heart of the gospel
- that belief is at the center of what makes someone truly a Christian

back to v. 20 → **“fallen asleep”** – in scripture, God reserves that to describe the passing of His children because from a Biblical

perspective, we understand that even though their body is dead, that is only a temporary thing

- even here, Paul is pointing to the promised rescue that God has for believers

“**first fruits**” – vivid imagery

- this term has a rich Old Testament history

Before the Israelites harvested their crops they were to bring a representative sample, called the **first fruits**, to the priests as an offering to the Lord.

**Lev 23:9-11** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Feast out of 7

- **Precedes** the harvest – The full harvest could not be made until the first fruits were offered – as a demonstration of faith
- **Consecrates** the harvest – sets apart so that the future harvest is also focused toward God
- **Guarantees** a future full harvest

The imagery Paul is using here in 1 Corinthians 15, so it is with Christ. Jesus is pictured here as the **sacrifice**

- He precedes you in His bodily resurrection
- He consecrates you
- He guarantees your resurrection, makes your resurrection certain

**Illustration:** A little town in Maine named Flagstaff was scheduled to be flooded as part of a large lake for a dam that was going to be built. In the months before it was to be flooded, all improvements and repairs in the whole town were stopped. What was the use of painting a house if it were to be covered with water in six months? Why repair anything when the whole village was to be wiped out? Week by week, the whole town became more and more decrepit, more and more rundown. A newspaper article described it this way: “Where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present.” In the reverse way, because we have

absolute faith in the future, we have power here in the present to live joyful lives, to love one another and to move on.

**Application:** Through the resurrection of Christ, we have been given certain hope. We have been rescued from the clutches of death, from the fear of death and from slavery to sin.

**Promised Rescue...**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Truth** surrounding the Resurrection ...

**II. Powerful Redeemer** **15:21-22**

Point – Resurrection Power! → God’s Theological Parallel.

Proof – **15:21** – “**For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.** <sup>22</sup>**For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.”**

You might notice in v. 21 the word “*came*” is in italics.

- this means it was added when they did the translation

There are no verbs in this verse to emphasize the strength of the nouns: “**man**,” “**death**,” “**resurrection**.”

- literally – “by a man death, by a man also resurrection of the dead”
- “**by a man**” – man is the agent, source, cause, reason for “**death**”

**15:22** – “**For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.**”

- v. 22 is very similar to v. 21. These two verses are almost identical.
- there are important subtle differences
- v. 22 does have the proper names and verbs – “die” and “made alive”

“**in Adam**” → Adam is the head of the human race

“**in Christ**” → Christ is the head of the redeemed race

All “**in Adam**” are in Adam by natural generation.  
All who are “**in Christ**” are in Christ by spiritual regeneration.

All who are “**in Adam**” have the common factor of death.  
All who are “**in Christ**” possess the common factor of life.

All “**in Adam**” have been born once.  
All who are “**in Christ**” have been born twice.

➔ All “**in Adam**” die. All “**in Christ**” live.

Death entered the world because one “**man**” committed sin.  
The debt of sin requires the blood of “**man**”

**Turn to: Rom 5:12, 17-19**

At the cross, Jesus takes the world’s instrument of death and makes it God’s symbol of life

death and taxes - common factor to all who are in Adam  
Paul’s version - death and resurrection - all who are in Christ  
have the common factor of life

The very thing most feared by man (Death), very thing that drives a stake of despair, sorrow, and terror into the heart of man is used by God to drive home the ABSOLUTE certainty of His **Promise of Rescue** ➔ the **Hope of the Resurrection!**

**Illustration:** Death, you see, is not extinguishing the light from the Christian; it is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.

- because the person has left the land of the dead and entered the land of the living

**Application:** We approach death with hope and joy rather than despair and sorrow.

**Promised Rescue, Powerful Redeemer...**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Truth** surrounding the Resurrection ...

**III. Perfect Result**

**15:23-24**

Point – This is the glorious end. This is the consummation of the Resurrection

Proof – **15:23** – “**But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, <sup>24</sup>then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.**”

“**order**” – Greek military term

- describes a division or a troop arranged in proper order and rank
- he is giving a picture that in God’s economy, everything is done in its proper way
- the picture of Christ as a **Sacrifice** is replaced with a more forward looking picture as God as a victorious **General**
- the image of an ordered parade with soldiers marching in sequence after their victorious General –
- He is first in His proper order – we follow in rank behind Him – we follow in His footsteps as His disciples and He is our Commander in Chief

On one hand, he uses Jewish imagery of first fruits; harvest. On the other, he uses Greek imagery of Christ as Victorious General.

Paul uses different powerful pictures:

1. Christ as the **Sacrifice**
2. Christ as the **General**
3. Christ as the **King**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Picture** is one of **Coming King**

Proof – **15:24** – “**then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.**”

**“all rule and all authority and power”**

- comprehensive
- all demonic forces that gather against the glory of God as well as all the wicked that scoff at God and oppress believers
- every tongue will confess and every knee will bow

This is the realization of the goal of Christ’s rule, the realization achieved with the resurrection, its accompanying defeat of death, and subsequent handing over the kingdom to the Father.

- the end of history and time
- **Daniel 12:2-4**

**“when”** – reverse order:

First, **“He has abolished all rule and all authority and power”**  
then, **“He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father”**  
then, **“the end”** - v. 28

MacArthur – *“Here in a wonderful inter-Trinitarian way beyond our comprehension, the Father who ordained redemptive history to gather a bride for His Son, a Kingdom for His Son, when the Son receives that Kingdom which is a gift of the Father’s love, the Son hands the Kingdom back to the Father. The grandeur of this crowning event can hardly be fathomed.”*

All of history is marked by the life and death of Christ.

All things will not just be restored as they were originally designed and created by God. “Paradise Restored” (not quite)

Jesus was raised and **continues to be alive**, not like the widow’s son who was raised and died, not like Jairus’ daughter who was raised and died, not like Lazarus who was raised and died.

➔ Christ was raised never to die.

This is the foundation of the gospel.

This is why He is the Perfect Redeemer.

And the state of our redemption is greater than even Adam and Eve's state of innocence before the fall.

**1 Corinthians 6:3** – God tells us that we will judge angels

- In heaven, it will be so much better!
- In the future resurrection, there is no more pain, no more sorrow and no more tears.

**Application** – Sometimes we think about salvation in very personal terms. Salvation is ultimately not about you, it's about the infinite love, the limitless love of the Father for the Son and wanting to give to the Son a gift of His love which is a redeemed humanity that will love Him and adore Him and worship Him and praise Him and serve Him forever.

## CONCLUSION

**Luke 14:14** – “resurrection of the just”

**John 5:29** – “resurrection of life”

**Rev 20:6** – “the first resurrection”

- the other side of this language that John is using in **v.6**: second death – **Rev 20:11-15** – the lake of fire

God is telling us we can be born twice and only die once OR we can be born once and die twice.

Pastor A. B. Simpson said this:

[The Gospel] tells rebellious men:

that God is reconciled,  
that justice is satisfied,  
that sin has been atoned for,  
that the judgment of the guilty may be revoked,

the condemnation of the sinner cancelled,  
the curse of the Law blotted out,  
the gates of hell closed, the portals of heaven opened wide,  
the power of sin subdued,  
the guilty conscience healed,

the broken heart comforted,  
the sorrow and misery of the Fall undone.