

**Bible Reading – 1 Corinthians 15:1-58**

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup>By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup>For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

<sup>6</sup>After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup>and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. <sup>11</sup>Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

<sup>12</sup>But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. <sup>15</sup>More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. <sup>19</sup>If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

<sup>20</sup>But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup>But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. <sup>24</sup>Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup>For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. <sup>28</sup>When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

<sup>29</sup>Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? <sup>30</sup>And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? <sup>31</sup>I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>32</sup>If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,

“Let us eat and drink,  
for tomorrow we die.”

<sup>33</sup> Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” <sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” <sup>36</sup> How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. <sup>39</sup> Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. <sup>40</sup> There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. <sup>41</sup> The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

<sup>42</sup> So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; <sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in 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. <sup>45</sup> So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

<sup>50</sup> I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— <sup>52</sup> 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. <sup>53</sup> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

<sup>55</sup> “Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, 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.

## Back from the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-58)

21-June-20

We'll be looking at the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 - so please have your Bibles handy.

Let me ask God to give us understanding of His Word; **Let's pray...**

### Intro - Death?

- What happens when we die?

#### [PowerPoint 1-What happens?]

- It's a **great question** isn't it?
- The **average Aussie** might think
  - If I'm good and my **good outweighs my bad** - I'll get to **Heaven**
  - Or they might think - **Heaven is where everyone goes** - it's just the place you go when you die - and they don't think too much about having a relationship with God - they'll just be up there **playing golf** or **bingo** with their mates - and have a **few beers** together
  - Or some might think - there's **no such place** - when we die - that's it
- What does the **Bible say** happens when we die?
- Our **bodies return** to the **Earth** (buried or cremated) - [Gen 3:19; Acts 13:36]
- And our **souls** [*the spiritual or immaterial part of a human being, regarded as immortal*] - our souls return to **God** [Luke 23:43 and Ecc 12:7]
- The **souls** of those **believing** in **Jesus** are made perfect in holiness by **Jesus**, and are **received** into **Heaven** and **await** full redemption of their

bodies [Heb 12:23; 2 Cor 5:1, 6, 8; Phil 1:23; Acts 3:21; Eph 4:10; Rom 8:23]

- **Whereas the souls of unbelievers are cast into Hell where they remain in torment and darkness until judgment day** [Luke 16:23-24; Acts 1:25; Jude 6-7; and 1 Peter 3:19]
- Then when **Jesus returns to judge** - those who are still alive won't die, they'll be changed: and all the dead will be raised up, with the self-same bodies, but with different qualities, and will be united again to their souls forever [1 Thes 4:17; 1 Cor 15:51-52; John 5:25-29; Acts 24:15; Job 19:26-27; Dan 12:2; 1 Cor 15:42-44]
- The bodies of unbelievers will be raised to dishonor: the bodies of the believers, will be raised to honor; and be made to be like Jesus [Acts 24:15; John 5:25-29; 1 Cor 15:53; Phil 3:21]
- So, that's what happens when we die!
- That's the question we often tackle at funerals
- In the last 7 years I've conducted 62 funerals - 9 per year
- It doesn't get any easier as I try to comfort those who grieve
- Some of those funerals have been close friends and members of our church family - others have been people outside our church - who wanted a Presbyterian minister to conduct the service
- Each time I conduct a funeral I reflect on my own mortality - one day it will be me in the pine box - and someone else will conduct my funeral
- It certainly makes me think about how short and how frail life is on this Earth

- What I've noticed at these **funerals** is
  - When the **funeral** is for an **unbeliever** - or for a **believer** where most - if not all - of the family are non-believers - there is **incredible grief** and **sorrow** and **sadness** - and very little hope for those in attendance.
  - Whereas when the **funeral** is for a **believer** - yes there's **still grief** and **sorrow** - but there's also **incredible thanks to God** and **rejoicing** that there is the **certain hope of Heaven** for the **deceased** and for the **believers** in **attendance** - and there is the **certain hope** of **resurrection**
  - The **contrast** between a **believer** and **unbeliever's funeral** is **startling!**

### Context (1 Cor 15:12, 32)

- The **Corinthians** in the Apostle Paul's time were **saying** there is **no resurrection of the dead** - see v12

### [PowerPoint 2-No resurrection]

- They were **saying** this because of the **Greek culture** and **belief** that only **the soul is immortal** and the **body is nothing** and **doesn't matter** - so why would there be a **need to have a resurrected body?**
- To 1<sup>st</sup> century Greeks the **immortality of the soul** was **unquestionably true** whereas the **idea of a resurrected body** was **absurd** to them (see Acts 17:32)
- Also, **Greek culture** of the day **believed** the **senses surrounding the immortal soul** were **given by Nature** and **could not be enjoyed beyond** the

grave - therefore there was the attitude as in v32 - let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die

- Imagine if this life on Earth was all we had - we go through the ups and downs of life - and then die - that's it - dead and buried - nothing more.
- That would certainly influence how we live out our life - wouldn't it?
- So, because of this doubt of a resurrected body

### [PowerPoint 3-Gospel]

- Paul addresses the Corinthians here in chapter 15 by reminding them of the Gospel
- Gospel means *good news*
- It comes from the Greek Word - euangellion - which literally means *Good Message* - and it's where we get our English word - evangelism from. Evangelism is simply sharing the *Good Message* or *Good News*

So, first up, in verses 1 to 11 - Paul defines the Gospel and concludes that the Gospel says Jesus rose from the dead - so Jesus had a resurrected body.

### [PowerPoint 4-Jesus rose]

#### 1. The Gospel says Jesus rose from the dead (vv1 - 11)

- See v1 Paul says - I preached this Gospel to you Corinthians - remember - and you received it - and took a stand upon it - in other words you believed it
- So, what is this Gospel?
- See V3 - the Gospel is - Christ died for our sins - it's a simple statement but it covers the entire Bible's history - it takes us back to the first

people **Adam** and **Eve** and the **Garden** of Eden - and it takes us back to the fact that they **disobeyed God's rule** - and **ate the forbidden fruit** - and by doing so - **sin** (disobeying God) **came into the world** - and that **sin angered God** because **He cannot look at sin** - and so with that sin - the **punishment for sin** came into the world - namely **death**. But here Paul says - **Christ died for our sins** - by God's grace (undeserved favour) He sent His Son **Jesus [The Christ - chosen One]** to Earth on a **rescue mission** - and Christ Jesus died on the cross for **our sins to be put on Him** and He **gave us forgiveness** - this is the **major theme** Paul preaches in this letter (as 1 Cor 2:2 says - **For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified**)

- We also see that Christ dying for our sins - was **all part of Scripture** - still in v3 it says - according to Scripture - the **Bible said He would die** - see Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53 for example
- The **Gospel also includes** that **Jesus was buried** - to be buried Jesus had to die - this is **important** because **remember** the **punishment for sin is death** - so if Jesus takes our punishment - then **He must die in our place**
- But the Gospel continues - v4 - that God the **Father raised Jesus** from the dead on the **3<sup>rd</sup> day** - and again it's **according to Scriptures** - the **Bible said He would rise** from the dead [Ps 16:10; 30:3; Hos 13:14; Jonah 1:17/Matt 12:40; 16:4; Luke 30:10; Acts 2:24-28] - and **Jesus Himself said He would rise** after 3 days.
- Why is the **resurrection important?**
- Without the **resurrection** - the punishment for sin is not removed - death still wins

- But **when Jesus rose** - he **showed** and **proved** - **death can't hold him down**
- **That's why the Apostle Paul takes the Corinthians back to the Gospel**
- Because the **resurrection of Jesus is crucial to the Gospel**
- **Unless Jesus dies for sin to be forgiven - unless Jesus takes the punishment from sin away from us - and unless Jesus removes the punishment of sin altogether by **defeating death** and being raised to life - and unless all this happens **we can't be resurrected either** - then **there's no Gospel - no Good News** - it's **just bad news!****
- Now **remember the Corinthians doubted the resurrection of the body**
- So, Paul sets out to **prove the resurrection is true**
- Now we **don't necessarily need proof**
- We could just **simply have faith and believe** what the Bible says
- **After all faith is believing something without necessarily being able to see it - or prove it**
- The **proof** Paul gives is **eye witnesses** - see verses 5 to 8
- **Eye witnesses** are what **proves any historical event** - people were there at the time of the historical event and witnessed it
- **In this case - the risen Jesus appeared to Peter, the Apostles, over 500 people** - most still living in Paul's time - so anyone can check out what they saw - and He also appeared to **James** and to **Paul himself**
- That's an **incredible amount of witnesses**. **We don't require that many witnesses** in a court today to prove a case. Even in **OT times** - only **2 or 3 witnesses** were **enough** to prove a case (Deut 19:15)

- **The other reason for mentioning these witnesses**, is so that Paul can say in verse 11 - these **witnesses** whether Paul or any of the others - they all had the **same message** to preach - the **Gospel** - that Jesus died and rose again - this is what **they preached** - and this is what the **Corinthians believed** - and what **us** **Toukleyians** **believed**
- So, the **Gospel** is **personal** - it's **not just** believing an **historical event** - it's **believing** that **Jesus died** for me - and **Jesus rose** for me - and **Jesus** is **Lord** of my life - as v2 says - by the **Gospel** you are **saved**
- What Paul has done then is to **prove conclusively** that **Jesus rose** from the dead - and that's **fundamental** to the **Gospel** - that's **fundamental** for the **Corinthians** and **fundamental** for us - as he'll go on to explain

Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> point - **because the Gospel says Jesus rose from the dead** - we **also** **rise from the dead** - that's in verses 12 to 34

[PowerPoint 5-we rise]

## **2. Because the Gospel says Jesus rose from the dead - we also rise from the dead (vv12-34)**

- Paul argues in v12 - how can the **Corinthians** say there's **no resurrection** of the dead - I've just **proven conclusively** **Jesus rose** from the dead?
- He **continues** his **argument** - if there's **no** **resurrection** of the dead there are a **number of problems**:
  - It means - **Jesus** hasn't risen either (v13). Paul's arguing **God can't** **raise Jesus** if the **concept** of **raising** people from the dead **doesn't** **exist**. **Jesus's resurrection** is **paramount** - for anyone else to be raised from the dead

- Also, if Jesus hasn't been raised - no amount of preaching will **make any difference** - it's just a **waste of time** - I can preach all day - but if the foundation of the preaching - which is Jesus' was raised to life is not true - it's **useless preaching** - v14
- It **also means**, Paul and the other apostles are **false witnesses** - they're **preaching lies** - v15
- It also means our faith is futile - we're basically **believing a lie** - if Jesus hasn't been raised back to life. If some how they found a tomb in Jerusalem - and found **Jesus' bones in it** and could somehow prove it - what would that do to our faith? Our **faith** would be **completely shattered** wouldn't it?
- And if Jesus hasn't been raised - then V17 - then we're still in our sins. For our sins to be forgiven - Jesus has to die - and then rise again to complete the sacrifice and remove the punishment for sin - which is death.
- And if Jesus hasn't been raised - then all the **believers who have already died** - have **died believing a lie** - and **they're lost** and gone forever - v18
- If all we have is a bit of **inspiration in this life** - then we're in a **sorry state** aren't we - v19
- But Paul concludes - v20 - **all these problems** don't exist - because Jesus has been raised
- Paul **can even refer to death as sleeping** - because **death** is not this **evil monster** we have to face - because of Jesus' resurrection

- Paul says **Jesus** is like the **first** in a long line of people raised from the **dead** - see v20 - Jesus' is the **firstfruits** of the **harvest** of people to be raised. **Firstfruits** of a crop **guarantee** there's **more** of the crop to come. **Jesus'** resurrection **guarantees** every **believer's** resurrection.
- He **compares Adam** - the first man - with Jesus
  - **Adam** brought death to everyone. **Because** of Adam's sin - we all **inherit sin** and **death**
  - But **Jesus** brought **life** leading to **eternal life** - to those who believe in Him - through His death & resurrection
- Then comes the **end** - Paul says - v24 - when **Jesus** **delivers** the **kingdom** into the **Father's hands** - when He has **defeated** all **powers of evil**
- In fact, **Jesus** is **reigning** now - v25 - it's not like He's died and rose and gone to Heaven and left us to our own devices - He's reigning now - **making sure all enemies are defeated**
- Including the **final enemy** which is **death** -
- When will this end happen? **When Jesus** **returns** (see 1 The 4)
- Paul also throws in a couple of **extra reasons** why the **resurrection** of believers is **true**
  - See v29 - why do **people** **offer** to be **baptized** for those who are **already** in the **grave**? **What's the point** of them doing that, if there's **no resurrection** of their body?
  - And v30 - 32 - Paul asks **why does he** and **other preachers** **risk** all sorts of **danger** (like Paul did in Ephesus) - if there's **no resurrection**. He's saying do you think we'd risk our necks if there

was no chance that the resurrection is true? **Preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus - is Paul's sole purpose for ministry.**

- He **finishes** his point in v33 - **warning the Corinthians (and us) not to be hoodwinked by any talk of there being no resurrection.** Paul even quotes a Greek poet, Meander, "**bad company corrupts good character**". His point is - **if we hang around with people with unbiblical thinking; we can be deceived.**

Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> point

**Because the Gospel says Jesus rose from the dead, which also means we will rise from the dead - the Gospel guarantees we will have a resurrected body - that's verses 35-57**

[PowerPoint 6-resurrected body]

### **3. The Gospel guarantees we will have a resurrected body (vv35-57)**

See v35 - Paul asks the question that - he assumes would be next question on the doubter's lips

If we are going to rise from the dead - what kind of body will we have?

To explain what the resurrected body will be like - Paul uses a few analogies:

**Analogy 1** - is a farming analogy - what we sow in the ground can't come to life unless it dies. Wheat has 2 modes of existence - a seed buried in the ground which is like it's dead - and then a crop of wheat springs to life when the seed grows. In the same way - our earthly body has to die (buried or cremated) to rise & grow as our spiritual heavenly body made for eternity.

**Analogy 2 - Just like there are **different earthly bodies** - like people, animals, birds and fish - so there are **different kinds of heavenly bodies**.**

There are even **heavenly bodies** like the sun, moon and stars.

His point is that our **earthly body** has **different attributes** to our **heavenly body**.

Our **earthly body** is **perishable** (it dies) - our **resurrected** body will be **imperishable** (it lives forever)

Our **earthly body** is **full of dishonour** (because it's **sinful**) - whereas our **resurrected** body is **glorious** (because it's **pure** and **sinless** because of Jesus)

Our **earthly body** is **natural** (physical) - whereas our resurrected body is **spiritual**.

The bottom line is - our **earthly body** is made for **earth** and our **heavenly body** is made for **heaven**.

**Comparing Adam and Jesus** again - in vv45-49 - Paul says:

All **human beings** share **Adam's nature** and are **earthly** - but **Christians** also share **Jesus' nature** - and are **heavenly**.

For Christians there is the **guaranteed continuity** of **existence** with the **resurrection** of **their body** and its **transformation** into the **likeness** of **Jesus**.

Having this promise of a **resurrected** body because of Jesus - **gives us** assurance - that our **earthly perishable** body will one day be **changed** into a **heavenly imperishable** body.

This happens - v52 - when Jesus returns - and the trumpet sounds - those **already dead** will be raised with **imperishable** bodies - and those still alive will be changed - all in the twinkling of an eye.

Paul describes this as the **final victory over death**

Death **no longer** has any sting.

What **wonderful assurance** Christians have of living with God forever in Heaven - it's not a maybe - or if I'm good enough - it's **guaranteed because of our faith in Jesus**. This is the **promise of the Gospel**.

And it means **Christians don't need to be afraid of dying!**

### The Gospel requires our response (v58)

Now - the **Gospel** is not just something cognitive, something that we just **merely KNOW** - it **requires a response** in our lives

The **Gospel** requires us to **believe** it - to have **faith** in it.

Our **faith** in the **Gospel** means we're **right with God** and saved.

But our faith must **never** be alone.

Our response must be **head, heart AND hands**:

In v58 - Paul gives **our response** to the **Gospel** - actually 3 responses

#### [PowerPoint 7-Response]

1. **Stand firm** - it means to **refuse** to change our position on the truth of the **Gospel** of Jesus' death and resurrection. This is the **rock-solid foundation** that our **faith** is built on. The **rock-solid guarantee** of our own resurrection one day - this guarantee should be the foundation we will build our lives on - and we should **never turn away** from that faith.

2. Let nothing move you - we are to be an **immovable object** - when it comes to our belief in the Gospel - and particularly the resurrection. **We are not to be led astray by other people trying to **undermine our belief** - or other people trying to **sow doubts** in our mind.**
3. Instead - we are to **give ourselves completely to the work of the Lord**. What is this **work of the Lord**? It is to **bring the Gospel** - good news - to those who don't know. That Gospel work is not just telling people about **Jesus' love** - but showing them **Jesus' love**. As Jesus said - "*whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me*" (Matt 25:40)

### Conclusion

This work is not in vain - because we will be resurrected one day and as Hebrews 6:10 says - which is where we'll finish

[PowerPoint 8-Heb 6:10]

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them.

Let's pray...