

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **1 CORINTHIANS LESSON 8 (Chapters 15-16)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15: 57). Welcome to our study of 1 Corinthians 15 and 16 as we deal with the marvelous subjects of the resurrection and Christian giving. The resurrection is the heart (or core) of the Gospel. Paul makes this known to us in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 as he ties the Gospel of Christ directly into the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Often-times Christians sing the song, “Up from the grave He arose.” How encouraging it is to know that this life is not all there is. When we die and our bodies are buried in the grave, that is not the end. We have the hope and promise of the resurrection. Notice what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Here you have Jesus’ death. The Gospel is about the death of Christ. Jesus died **for** sin (1 Pet. 2:24) so that we do not have to die **in** sin (Ezek. 18:4). Jesus was buried in a grave, Matthew 27 teaches us. And, we meet Jesus in His burial (Romans 6:3-4) when we are buried with Him in baptism. But the Gospel does not end there. It is not just the death of Christ and the death of Christians to sin. It is not just Christ’s burial in the grave and our burial in baptism. The core of the Gospel is that Jesus arose from the grave, and that we, too, must rise and walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Without the resurrection, the Gospel has no meaning. Yes, it is great to know that we die to sin. It is great to know that we are buried and united with Christ. But what does all of that mean if this life is all there is? The truth is that this life is **not** all there is. We have the promise of the resurrection. Jesus said in John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” Jesus said that we can never really die if we believe in Him because we have the promise of eternal life. In John 5:28-29 Jesus said, “The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” There is a resurrection, and all people will partake of it. The way we live our lives now determines if that resurrection will be a resurrection to eternal life or a resurrection to eternal death.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul shows that some were saying that the resurrection was untrue, and that it was not part of the Gospel. Some were telling Corinthian Christians that the idea of the resurrection was not right. But Paul, using a negative, says in essence, “If the resurrection is not true, then here is what else is untrue.” Paul says in verses 6-23 that if there is no resurrection, then our preaching is in vain. Preaching the Gospel—which is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—is worthless if Christ was not raised from the

dead. What good is it to tell people that Jesus died for their sins if they are going to remain in the grave forever? Paul says that not only is our preaching in vain, but our faith is empty. What kind of faith would in God would we believed in Jesus so that we could have eternal life, yet we never were raised from the grave? That is not a faith that is based on fact—if the resurrection is untrue. Paul then says that not only is our faith empty, but we also are liars and false witnesses. If we are preaching Jesus and saying what God says in the Bible, but the resurrection is not a fact, then Christianity is a farce and a lie. We need to “pack it up and go home.” That is how serious this matter is.

Furthermore, if there is no resurrection, then we are still in sin. How are those two things correlated? If there is no resurrection, guess what else there is not. If there is no burial, there is no death. All three are tied together. You cannot have one without the other. Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected. To say that there is no resurrection is also to deny the plain fact that Jesus died. When we say that the resurrection is untrue, we say that we are still in sin—which is a very serious matter.

Paul then says that if there is no resurrection, then dead people simply perish. They are like rovers—they are “dead all over.” That’s it. This life is all they have. If the grave alone is our hope, what kind of hope is that? That is why Paul goes on to say that if the resurrection is untrue, then this life is our only hope. If there is no resurrection, we may as well adopt the ideology of the Epicureans (who said, “Eat, drink, and be merry!”) because this life is all we have.

If there is no resurrection, Christians are the most-pitiable of all people. Every Christian’s hope is built upon the fact that one day there will be a resurrection. This life is not all there is. We are serving God in the here and now because we love Him and because we have the hope of eternal life as a result of the resurrection. If that is not true, how pitiable we are among all people because we live our lives with false hope. But Paul makes the point abundantly clear that there **is** a resurrection, and that there **is** abundant proof. The resurrection of Christ was not something that happened in a corner somewhere. In 1 Corinthians 15:6 Paul shows that Christ was seen by more than 500 people all at once after His resurrection. It is a fact that Christ lived, that He died, that He was buried, and that He came up out of the grave. In John 20 we see the example of Thomas, who said that he would not believe that Christ was the risen Lord until he had touched the nail print in the Lord’s hands and the place where the spear pierced His side. After Thomas did both of those things, he said, “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:28). The evidence overwhelmingly teaches us that the resurrection was true.

That being the case, Paul then shows some things that will happen at the coming resurrection. One of those things is that Christ will deliver the kingdom to God. Notice 1 Corinthians 15:24, where Paul said, “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.” When Christ returns and our resurrection occurs (the two events being united), Christ will deliver the kingdom to the Father. But what is the kingdom? What is being discussed here? Jesus promised that He would establish His kingdom. In Mark 9:1 He said, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” We learn from Colossians 1:13 that some in the first century were transferred into that kingdom. Thus, it was a present reality at that time. So what, then, is the kingdom? In Matthew 16:18-19 Jesus said,

“I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock [the fact that I am the Son of God] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

What, then, is the kingdom? It is the church. At the resurrection, Christ will deliver the church to His Father. Why is that significant? It is significant because the church is the “called out.” At the resurrection, Christ is going to deliver the church (the “called out”) to God. We must realize that it is essential for us to be in the kingdom when Christ comes, or to have lived our lives faithfully in the kingdom and have died in it, so that we can be with God forever. Only those in the kingdom—the church for which Christ died (the one church about which we read in Ephesians 4:4, the church of Christ that we see in the New Testament)—will be united one day with God. We must make sure that we are in the kingdom. The only way to get into the kingdom is to be baptized into God’s family. We are told in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that “by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” In Acts 2:38-47 we see people repenting of their sins and being baptized for the remission of their sins, at which time God added them to the church, the kingdom. When the resurrection comes, we must be in the kingdom so that we can have a resurrection to eternal life.

What else will happen at the resurrection? Not only will the kingdom be delivered to God, but the last enemy also will be defeated. What is “the last enemy”? We know it is not the devil, because the devil was defeated and given a death blow at the death of Christ on the cross. The Bible says in Hebrews 2:14 that Jesus “through death destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” The devil was ultimately defeated, and already has met his final end (Rev. 20:12-15). So what, then, is the “last enemy”? If it not the devil, then what is it? The last enemy is death itself, as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15:25-26. “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” Paul will say later in this chapter in verses 55-57, “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus destroyed the last enemy (death) by dying on the cross and by arising from the grave. When Jesus arose, death was completely conquered. And when He comes again, death will be ultimately conquered at the resurrection of all people because death will be no more. The beautiful picture here is that although Christians may die in this life, death will not always have a hold over us. Christ will come back, and we will be raised from the grave so that death will be no more. Revelation 14:13 explains why the death of a Christian is a blessing. Those who died in the Lord are blessed because one day they will be raised. This is why the death of a saint is precious in God’s sight (Ps. 116:15).

But notice what the resurrection should cause us to do. The last enemy, death, will be defeated at the resurrection. But in view of that, the resurrection of Christ ought to cause us to die daily, as Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians 15:31 when he said, “I die daily.” Because of the fact that we one day will be resurrected and death will be defeated, we must “die to self daily” so that we can live for God. If we are going to partake of the resurrection, a death must occur in the here and now in the spiritual sense. We must die to sin so that we can live for God. In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” We must put ourselves to death so that we can be preparing for the great day of Christ’s coming. In Romans 6:4, once we have been baptized into Christ, we are told that Christians are “raised to walk in newness of life.” We die to sin and are born again (Jn. 3:5). We then get a second chance. If anyone is in Christ, he is “a new creation.” This type of teaching in the Bible should cause us to say to ourselves, “In view of the fact that we will one day live with God forever when Christ returns (1 Thess. 4:13ff.), we ought to be motivated every day to die to self in order to live for Jesus.” Let’s be frank. This is the point that many people miss. Many people want to live for Jesus **and** live for themselves. If we are going to be part of the great resurrection, and if we are going to have the hope of Heaven, then we must die to self every day. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we are taught that we are not our own but are bought at a

price—which means that we must glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are His. Paul, in Galatians 2:20, taught us that we must be crucified with Christ. We must give our lives as a living sacrifice unto the Lord. Christianity is not about “me and God.” Christianity is about me dying to self so that I can live for God. We must make sure that we have done that so we can serve the Lord properly.

One of the ways in which we die to self is to get rid of evil influences in our lives that could keep us from being faithful. Another simple statement is found in 1 Corinthians 15:33—“Evil companions corrupt good morals.” We cannot die to self while running around with children of the devil who can cause us to do ungodly things. Evil companions corrupt good morals. If you run around with people who are living lives that are not right, those people will influence you, and may cause you to do evil things. In 1 Thessalonians 5:22 we are commanded to “abstain from every appearance of evil.” We are not to even get around something that looks like it is evil. Surely, then, if we want to be a part of the resurrection, we will have to cut some ties in our lives. One of the hardest things for people to do when they repent is to stop running around with the same people with whom they’ve always been associated in the past. If we want to change our lives, we’re going to have to repent, do what’s right, live for Jesus, and stop running around with some of the people with whom we’ve been associating. I’m not saying that we should not want to teach those people the Gospel, because we should. We must want to influence them for good and teach them the Gospel. But we cannot run around with people like that and expect them not to have some kind of influence on us. We must be very careful about the people with whom we associate.

All of this is in view of the wonderful fact that death has been defeated, and what is going to happen at the final day. What will happen when the Lord returns and we arise from the graves? What will it be like? We may not know all the intricate details of it, but we do know what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:50-55.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’”

We know that the kingdom is not composed of flesh and blood. There is no marriage or giving in marriage (Mk. 12). The kingdom is incorruptible. We, therefore, must be incorruptible. We no longer will have a mortal, fleshly body. We are not all going to sleep—which means that we will not all have died by that time. When Jesus comes back, there will be Christians still living on Earth. And we will all be changed. What does that mean? I do not have all the answers to that question. All I know is that we will be like Jesus. Philippians 3:20-21 tells us that “our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.” In 1 John 3 the text implies that our bodies somehow will be changed to something like that of the Savior. We still will be able to recognize one another. But there will be a change from corruptible to incorruptible, and from mortal to immortal, so that we no longer will perish or have to face death. In view of this, whether we understand the intricacies of it or not, it is a wonderful thing it is to know that there will be no more death, no more sorrow, and no more tears or pain. All of that will have vanished away. In view of that, Paul then says in 1 Corinthians 15:57, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory [over death] through our Lord Jesus Christ.” As Christians, although our physical bodies

may perish, if we remain faithful we will not die spiritually. Why? It is because “He who is in us is greater than He who is in the world” (1 Jn. 4:4). We are told in 1 John 5:4 that through our faith in Christ comes the victory that we have. Trust and obedient faith in Jesus gives us victory over death. We must remember that Jesus already has overcome death. He already has defeated Satan (Heb. 2:14). All we need to do is to remain faithful. This, then, leads into verse 58 where Paul said, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” We must be faithful to Jesus every day.

From 1 Corinthians 15 Paul then goes into chapter 16 where he discusses Christians and their giving. There is a direct correlation between the two. If we truly understand what Christ has done for us, and all that He gave, we, then would **want** to give of our means and of ourselves “unto the Lord.” Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2,

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day of the [the New American Standard Version says “every”] week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”

Giving, we need to understand, is a command of God. In John 14:15 we are told that if we love the Lord, we will keep His commandments. Giving is on the first day of the week (vs. 2), just like the language of Acts 20:7. The New American Standard Bible, as well as the English Standard Version and others that base their translation on more textual evidence (the NU text), include the word “every” as it is in the original. The idea is that we are to give “every” first day of the week. If that is true, why, then, are we coming together on the first day of the week to begin with? Acts 20:7 tells us that Christians gathered on the first day of the week “to break bread.” This helps us to understand that we must not only give every first day of the week, but we also are to partake of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week. Christians today do not tithe, since that is something found in the Old Testament. We may hear people today say that they have to tithe by giving one-tenth of their income. But that is not found in the New Testament. The Old Law was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14-15). What we are told to do is to give as we have been prospered. As God has blessed us above and beyond what we need to provide for our necessities, we are to give back to Him. Sometimes we even see examples of people who gave beyond their means. Think about the poor widow. In Luke 21:1-2 we see a widow who had two mites. A lot of people had put a lot of money into the collection plate. Everyone saw it and noticed it. But one poor widow walked by, and the only noise the people heard was that of two mites falling into the collection plate. Jesus said, however, that she had given more than everyone else because she gave out of her poverty by giving all that she had. She was a woman who did not just give as she had been prospered. Rather, she gave everything to God, which teaches us that God must come first in our giving. In Malachi 3:6 the question is asked, “Will man rob God?” A lot of people today do rob God because they do not put God first in their giving. If we are going to seek first the kingdom (Mt. 6:33), and if the kingdom is the church (Mt. 16:18-19), then the first thing we should consider in regard to our finances is what we must give to God. Sometimes, however, that is the last thing. Giving, of course, had a specific purpose in the context of 1 Corinthians 16. The funds were used to help those in need, as well as to reach those who were lost outside the body of Christ. Paul therefore teaches Christians to focus on giving to God by giving their best and giving as they have been prospered. This is a command for us today, too.

Now notice something else that Paul says to these Corinthian Christians as he is about to bring the book to a close. In 1 Corinthians 16:13 Paul says, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.” If Christians are going to endure to the end and be saved, they must

be watchful. We today must be watchful because the devil is on the lookout for ways to get into our lives in order to cause us to be lost. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." We must be on the lookout for sin in our lives, and for ways that sin might get into our lives. We also must be on the lookout for opportunities to reach out to people. We need to stand firm in the faith. Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith we cannot please God. But what is faith? Faith is something that comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). It is obedient trust in God. Many of the priests were obedient to "the faith" (Acts 6:7). We need to stand firm in the doctrine, teaching, and life that Jesus has set before us. We must be watchful and stand firm in the faith. In the King James the idea is set forth that we are to "quit ye like men." The idea is that we must be brave and courageous. We are to be strong. The idea is found in Joshua 1:5-9 where the change occurred between Moses and Joshua. God said to Joshua, "Act like a man. Be brave. Be strong. Be courageous. There will be trouble. There will be difficulties. Things will challenge you. But you must stand up to the call and live your life for God."

The love that we have for God and for others should be the motivating factor for all that we do. We are to preach the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). We are to let brotherly love continue (Heb. 13:1). In view of the fact that Christ died for your sins, and in view of the fact that He was buried and then arose after three days, shouldn't you change your life so that you can live in hope of the resurrection every day? What a wonderful hope it is to know that for our families, our friends, and those who have been faithful to the Lord, the grave is not the end. The grave (Sheol/Hades) has been defeated. But only Christians can enjoy the resurrection to eternal life. Are you sure today that you have that hope? Have you fully given yourself to the Lord and to His cause? If not, you can do so by obeying the will of God. What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be a part of the group that one day will be caught up with the Lord? It means that you must obey the will of God. You must hear God's Word (Rom. 10:17). You must believe that Jesus is the only way to obtain a part in the resurrection of eternal life. In John 8:24 Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." You then must be willing to repent. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." You must change your life. Stop doing the things you have done that are evil, and start doing things that are right. You also must confess Christ's name. Jesus Himself said that if we will not confess Him before men, then He will not confess us before His Father in Heaven (Mt. 10:32-33). The resurrection is so deeply tied to God's teaching on baptism that the two are inseparable. In Romans 6:1-4 we are told that we die to sin just as Christ died for our sins. We are buried with Him in baptism, just as Christ was buried in the grave. And we arise from the watery grave of baptism to live in newness of life with the hope of the resurrection. Ask yourself if you can really have the hope of the resurrection if you have never been buried with Christ for the remission of your sins? Acts 2:38 teaches that this is essential to salvation. The teaching of God on the resurrection is a powerful and motivating teaching. This old shell in which we now live is temporary and fleeting. There is something so much better and grander that awaits us. Each of us should be motivated every day to live our lives for Jesus and serve Him to the best of our ability because of the hope of the resurrection.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 CORINTHIANS LESSON 8 (CHAPTERS 15-16)

1. According to 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, what saves us?
2. According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, what is the essence of “the Gospel of Christ”?
3. According to 1 Peter 2:24, what did Jesus do for us?
4. According to John 11:25, how important is Christ’s bodily resurrection from the dead?
5. What does John 5:28-29 teach?
6. What did Paul say in 1 Corinthians 15:14?
7. What did Paul say in 1 Corinthians 15:17?
8. According to Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 15:24, what will happen when Christ comes again?
9. According to Christ’s statements in Matthew 16:18-19, what word is a synonym for “the kingdom”?
10. According to Ephesians 4:4 there is one body. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, what is the body?
11. According to 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, what will be “the last enemy” to be destroyed?
12. According to 1 Corinthians 15:57, we as Christians have “victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” What, according to content of 1 Corinthians 15, gives us that victory?
13. What simple-yet-profound statement is found in 1 Corinthians 15:33?
14. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, to whom do we belong?
15. According to 1 Corinthians 15:53, what will happen to those faithful Christians who die in the Lord?
16. What command does Paul give in 1 Corinthians 16:1-?
17. According to 2 Corinthians 9:7, what does God love?
18. According to 2 Corinthians 9:7, how are Christians **not** to give to the Lord?
19. According to Acts 20:7, what was one purpose for which Christians gathered on the first day of the week?
20. In 1 Corinthians 16:13, what did Paul admonish Christians to do?
21. What important message for Christians is contained in 1 Corinthians 16:14?