

“...you are saved *if*...”

- 1 Corinthians 15, Part 2 -

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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1 Corinthians 15:12-30 *Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 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. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?*

15:12-14 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

Paul begins to reason in greater detail with the Corinthian believers. Having allowed the world to creep in its doors, both personally and corporately as a church, they had now apparently begun to dispute the very foundational elements of the gospel. That's what happens when we compromise. It's a slippery slope, and one day we find ourselves so far from where we are supposed to be. Having stepped "off the plate" ...stepped out of the battle that they were to faithfully be a part of, they were no doubt in better graces with the world around them...no doubt things were more calm around them and less persecution. But at what price? Clearly it is an easy thing to do...to step back from the fray in order to get the heat off of us. Many have certainly done it, and immediately they inevitably proclaim how happy they are now and how peaceful things are. Of course it is. They have left the battle, and no one is shooting at them any longer. But make no mistake, they may feel they have in some way "retired" but in fact they are AWOL. There is no retirement and no living faith outside of the front line. If Christ is indeed resurrected, then there is nothing more important or meaningful than to remain unmoving from our "post."

15:15-19 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised

up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

If there is no resurrection from the dead, then as preachers and disciples we're liars. Everything we stand for would therefore be a farce and our world is a sham.

“There can be no middle ground in judging the words of that group of people who bore witness to Christ's resurrection and then went up and down the ancient empire sealing the testimony with their life's blood. It was either truth, or it was a bold calculated lie which perpetrated upon mankind the greatest hoax of all time;”
(J.W.McGarvey)

If He *was* resurrected, then everything is changed. **Why** we live, **how** we live, and **with what priority** we exercise that living. THIS is the gospel! He is alive, and because He is, we fight to the death. Our *beliefs* transform our practical living. We live this life for and in Him, because we too will live again and forever. We trust Him to care for us, and He indeed blesses us beyond words. When we back down, when we abandon our post, we are saying we don't really believe that to be fact. We don't trust Him completely and are not living in light of that resurrection...of Christ or for us. And therefore, once again, the reality of our salvation stands in question.

Oz Guinness wrote in his book “The Call:”

The year was 480 B.C. The East was on the move against the West. A colossal and terrible army, the greatest the world had ever seen, had poured across from Asia into Europe. Led by the all-powerful Persian King Xerxes, eighty thousand men rode on horseback or in chariots; around them marched foot soldiers and archers beyond counting.

When this Grand Army marched, it was said, the ground trembled. When they ate, it was as if locusts had devoured everything in their path. When they drank, it seemed that whole pools were dried up and entire rivers reduced to a trickle. The imperial Persian war machine was like nothing anyone had seen before. Simply to pass by the king in review took a full week.

Even if they united, the Greek city-states would have been no match for Xerxes' awesome force. But they were divided as well as unprepared. The quarrelsome Greeks were as much at war with each other as with the Persians.

The opposition then was simply a hastily assembled, ragtag force of seven thousand Greeks from five city-states. And at their core were three hundred Spartans, trained to stand or die. (“Come back *with* your shield or *on* it,” a Spartan mother told her son.) They were led by a fifty-five-year-old Spartan prince, Leonidas. Eventually they would took their stand in a narrow pass, twenty yards wide, bounded by the sea on one side and the five thousand-foot cliffs of Mt. Kallidromos on the other. Hot sulfurous springs, which the Greeks called Thermopylae, or Hot Gates, bubbled out of these cliffs at the narrowest place.

For the Persians the whole encounter must have looked at first like a simple mopping-up operation, a tiny dust-storm scuffle. But for two days the unstoppable were stopped. Late on the second day, Xerxes, fearing a calamitous panic, sent in his crack division, “the Immortals”— who were repulsed too at tremendous cost. For two long days the Persian horde had attacked and the heroic handful of Greeks had held firm.

Then, disastrously, the Greeks were betrayed. (always a betrayer in the midst isn't there?) By night a traitor led the Persians over the cliffs so that at daybreak Leonidas and his men were surrounded. The

pass had been sold. The game was up. Death was coming as surely as the dawn. Dismissing most of his army, Leonidas led his own three hundred Spartans and a few others to a little mound from which they could make their last desperate stand and hold back the oncoming avalanche. There the little band fought to the last man and died. When their swords were gone, according to Herodotus, they fought on with their hands and teeth. But before they died, they sent home the stirring message that has become their epitaph: "Stranger, tell the Spartans that we behaved as they would wish us to, and are buried here."

Brief, laconic, and to the point, these last words came from a little band of Greeks who had no idea what was to come. They could not see how their example would trigger a surge of pride and inspire their fellow countrymen to decisive victories at Salamis and Platae, that never again would the Persians seriously menace Greece, and that in thirty short years the city of Athens would rise to become the most influential city the world has ever known.

Dedicated and courageous, they did their duty. They stood firm in the line of history, and today all free people enjoy a freedom that flows partly from their stand. As the French philosopher Montaigne said of Thermopylae two thousand years later, "there are triumphant defeats that rival victories."

We too are being called to what the great Martin Luther would one fateful day proclaim: "*Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.*" LUTHER

Will they say that about us? Will that be our record? Individually and corporately as a church? "Stranger, tell the (world and our God) that we behaved as they would wish us to, and are buried here."

15:20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

The day following the Jewish Passover was the Feast of First fruits. The practice at this feast was to wave toward heaven a portion of the wheat grown from their crops. This was an act of worship and thanks to the Lord for His care and supply of their needs. Notice something however: such an offering was given *before* the harvest actually took place, in anticipation of what was to come. I wonder how many of *us* are so willing to sacrifice and worship even before pay day, and how many want to wait to see just what "Santa Jesus" brings them and *then* maybe thank God in worship?

Notice that He is the first fruits, meaning that *there is more to come*. Christ arose from the grave on the day after the Passover, becoming the embodiment of our first fruits offering, This will be followed by the resurrection of all of us as we pass from this temporary life into the real one to follow. Make no mistake: Jesus was the first One truly resurrected, never to die again, but there will be many more to follow!

15:21-23 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

Because we descended from Adam, we are thus affected by his actions. It was by the first man, Adam, that death came into the world. His sin brought death not only to him, but to us all. So God sent Jesus into the world *as a man* in order to trump the actions of the first man and to free us from the effects of his sin. Christ, coming in the form of a man, lived the opposite of Adam: a *sinless and perfect life*, thus overcoming death.

If we become part of the Christ family (as we are of Adam's): We are able to inherit *His* effect, and we will also arise from the grave in triumph over death. Once again, *if* is an important word here because such a promise of forgiveness of sin and eternal life comes only to those who are *in* Christ. IF: such critical implications for such a small word!

15:24-26 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. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

“Then comes the end...” is a bit ambiguous. What we can ascertain, though, is that He “delivers the kingdom to the Father,” and He will do so at “the end.” From this and other passages, we can gather that God’s kingdom exists in some form today, though it is no doubt incomplete. At that “end,” all worldly rule and authority will cease. The battles will be over, and the war will have been won.

Eph 6:11 - Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.

1 Tim 6:12 - Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Let’s face it. Being a Christian is far from the social club that we have made it today. Scripture says we are at war, and that calls for serious living.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."

"Endure hardship, as a *good soldier* of Jesus Christ."

"Put on the *full armor* of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes!"

Those who are not committed and are not sold out to Christ will not stay standing. They will eventually run. Jer 46:16 says “*They will stumble repeatedly; they will fall over each other. They will say, ‘Get up, let us go back to our own people and our native lands, away from the sword of the oppressor.’*”

In that final day, all of His enemies will have fallen “under His feet” in respect to authority and rule, the last being death itself. In our day of overt and subvert “dominion theology” attempts, man’s pious efforts to establish a new and godly “kingdom” on this earth, it is interesting to note that the scripture says that will not come “till *He* has put all enemies under His feet.” Not us. **Him**. But if we are actually a part of Him, we will remain at His side until that day, or until He calls us home.

15:27-28 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Paul remarks here that in reality, everything is *already* under the feet of Christ. He chooses at this time, in an effort to bring the lost to His salvation, not to exert His full authority. For in the end, it will indeed be by force and will be the end of all things. He waits so that more people might come to His salvation and find life abundant and life *eternal*.

“All things (will be) under His feet” except for one: God Himself is excluded. Christ the Son, in position and function, is subordinate to the Father, although in person He is equal and one with the Father. At this point in time, a broadly encompassing position has been given to Christ by the Father Creator. This is so that the God-man Jesus might fulfill all things: This is so He can bridge the gap between humanity and deity, between fallen

and perfection.

15:29 Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?

This verse, *and note that it is but one lonely verse*, does not in any way teach that we should be baptized vicariously for those who have passed on before us. In fact, this practice was no doubt carried over from the pagan rituals of the world around them in Corinth. Man has a tendency to adopt such alien ideas in order to appease the world outside the church doors, both then and now.

The fact is, verse 29 is extremely ambiguous and a point of dissention. Baptism for the dead is a major part of the Mormon church today, yet not Paul nor any Bible teacher gives such instruction. The teachings and practices of the Christian church have come from the following guideline: Christ initiated it in the Gospels, it was practiced in the early church, and it was taught in the epistles which followed. Some examples are: water baptism, communion, prayer, etc.

Paul separates himself from this practice by asking what will *they* do, not what will *we* do. Paul's point was not that we should adopt such a ritual, but his emphasis was on the subject of the resurrection of the dead. Paul, in his usual facetious self, is simply making a point that *if* people are not to be resurrected from the dead, then what is the point of such a practice as baptism of the dead?

15:30 And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?

Paul's life was always in danger on account of his beliefs, and even more so because of his profession. He was a man that would have gotten along much better in this world if he would have simply kept his mouth shut. And so would we today!

Paul knew a reality that few of us have ever shared. His life was in danger every moment of every day. Therefore, Paul was hanging everything he had, everything he believed, and everything he was on the fact that God had his back and moreover no matter what happened to him, it was not the end. He would arise again, and I have no doubt that he has.

I received communication this week from Afghanistan, that Far Reaching Ministries was trying to get to and evacuate a dozen American missionary families who were still on the ground in the midst of the current Taliban takeover of that country. It is easy to wonder what they were doing there in the first place. But for them, where else would they be? Like Luther, they would say “*Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.*” I'm not saying that everyone is called to a missionary life in a war-torn country. But some of us are. Are we where we are supposed to be? Are we fighting the fight that we ourselves have been assigned to? Does that describe our lives? “In jeopardy every hour?” Are we fighting the “good fight” of faith even here in comfortable Midwestern America?

I wonder how different this church would appear today if that were the case with us? How many of us are cowering under our bed, and how many are on the front lines? Well, the way we are going, it seems we will be finding out...