

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

---

For reply: Email: [truthfortoday@aol.com](mailto:truthfortoday@aol.com)

**Broadcast Date:** 12 March 2006

**No.** T0409

**Speaker:** Mr. Ernie Brown

---

## The Church - The Body of Christ and its Hope: 1 Corinthians 15

Some preachers, and some teachers, are very good at bringing in very apt, homely illustrations to highlight things they want to show. I have to say, straight away, I am not by any means one of them. Perhaps that is why I am always delighted to notice that the best illustrations of Bible truth are found in the Bible itself. Today's chapter, and subject, are no exception.

We read in 2 Samuel 23:20, of a man called Benaiah, one of the great men of his day: "Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow."

Imagine the scene. Winter, snow, cold, food scarce, even in the countryside. The wild beasts, who were used to hunting for their own food, were finding difficulty in scavenging sufficient for themselves, and for their families. The story tells of a lion, apparently getting desperate for food. While normally content to keep clear of the noise and bustle of a nearby village, desperation drove it to respond to the smell of flesh. In such circumstances, the people of the village would be understandably fearful for their lives. What were they to do? A ravenous, desperate lion was not the sort of animal anyone would want to encounter, especially in the midst of winter.

What could be done? Along comes Benaiah, a brave man, with a record of acts of valour. What could he do? He tracks the lion down. It is in its lair, a pit which provided it with shelter and security from any potential enemy. The pit was its stronghold. Who would dare to confront it in its own lair? Desperate situations call for desperate measures. Benaiah realised that if the village population were to be freed from their terror, the ravenous lion must be confronted, defeated, put to death. Benaiah must go down into the pit, in the most adverse of conditions, to confront the lion in its own stronghold. It would be a battle to the death. The lion would never allow an intruder to come out of the pit alive, once battle had commenced. When the battle was over, if the lion came out of the pit, the terror was still there for the village folk. Only if Benaiah came out of the pit alive, and victorious, could the villagers be sure that the lion had been defeated and put to death. Which was it to be? At last, all was quiet. The battle was over. Who had triumphed in the end? Imagine the roar of triumph and joy when Benaiah came up from out of the pit, alive, victorious. The population could live again in peace, knowing that the victory had been gained, and that Benaiah had done for them what no one else had been able to do. What love, respect, even reverence all would have for him, who had gone down into the pit on their behalf, and vanquished the foe.

Those of you who know your Bibles will readily see what a wonderful illustration this is of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus went down into the pit of death, on our behalf, to battle against Satan, whom the Bible speaks of as a roaring lion. Having defeated the mighty foe, Christ came out of death in the glory and triumph of resurrection. Our chapter today goes into the facts and significance of this wonderful story, which is the basis for all the blessing, and indeed all the justice, which emerges from the value to God of Christ's death and resurrection.

How true it is, as we read in Hebrews 2:15, that men everywhere are in fear of death all their lives. And rightly so! "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Can any man be without fear in respect of the Day of Judgment? Oh yes! 1 John 4:17 says just that. "We", that is we Christians, "have boldness in respect of the Day of Judgment, for as He is so are we in this world". That is, we who have trusted Him as Saviour are as clear of the judgment of God as Christ is Himself. How clear is He? Completely clear!

He will never again have to suffer for sins. How do we know that? Because God has put the seal of His approval on the work of Christ at Calvary by raising Him from among the dead. And, because of that, the Christian believer shall never need to be in fear of death, because Christ has done for us what we could never have done for ourselves. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

Our chapter begins by defining the Christian gospel. "This is the gospel which I preached unto you, ... 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." There we have it, the gospel in a nutshell. If we haven't believed it before, let us believe it now, once and for all.

Then, in verses 5 to 7, we are reminded that there were many reliable witnesses, who could personally testify to having seen Christ alive in resurrection. To clinch matters, in verses 8 to 10 Paul emphasises his own authentic claim to be an Apostle. He, too, had seen the Lord Jesus in resurrection, in his case, in a very special way, after the Lord Jesus had gone back to heaven. In verse 11, Paul emphasises unequivocally the unanimous testimony of all the Apostles to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. A careful reading of the Acts of the Apostles will confirm that the consistent theme of their preaching was "Jesus and the resurrection".

In case there was any remaining doubt about the matter, verses 12 to 19 take up the argument in this way. Imagine that the Lord Jesus did not rise from among the dead. Imagine that there is no such thing as resurrection. What then? Paul considers the consequences.

First of all, he asks again, "How can resurrection be denied if Christ be risen? He then lists the seven negative results and consequences of an assumption that there were no resurrection and therefore no risen Christ:

1. The preaching of the Apostles would be empty, without substance.
2. The faith of the Corinthians would likewise be empty.
3. The Apostles would be found to be false witnesses of God.
4. The faith of the Corinthians would be futile, fruitless.
5. The Corinthians would still be unforgiven.
6. Those believers who had died, fallen asleep in Christ, would have perished.
7. Christians would be of all men most miserable, having given up their worldly pleasures, and got nothing substantial in return.

Paul here turns from negative reasoning to very positive teaching. Doubts and queries have been considered, and are put out of the way. "Let us get back to the truth of the matter", Paul says. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." Because Christ personally is risen, that is God's guarantee that there will eventually be a mighty harvest of precious souls, all taking their life, nature and character from Him.

He draws attention to the fact that two major groups, which we can call families, can be distinguished in the race of mankind. All men are, naturally speaking, descended from Adam. They are of Adam's race, as the saying goes. Adam is the head of that race. Secondly, another completely different race of man has been brought into being since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It includes all who believe in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Head of this new race. Paul emphasises distinctions that need to be drawn between the two races, because of their relationship with their two respective heads. There is no doubt about it. Our future destiny is determined by whether or not we are linked by faith to the Lord Jesus, or whether we are still of Adam's fallen race, with no other future than eternal judgment because of our sins.

The overall teaching here is that in virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, all adverse power will, in God's good time, be put down and subjugated to Him. He the Son, will then hand over all things to the Father, that God, as such, will demonstrably be all in all. How wonderful! Resurrection, and, in particular, the personal resurrection of Christ, will lead to eternal glory.

This makes every bit of suffering and adversity at the present time worthwhile to Paul and those who are likeminded. If this were not the case, we may as well live like the unbeliever, as verse 32 indicates. "Let us eat and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Let us make the most of things in this life, enjoy ourselves as much as we can. We'll soon be dead." "Not at all", says Paul. The resurrection of Christ proved the reality and the blessing of living for God in a world that hated Jesus, and still hates those who serve Him, just as much as when He lived here on earth.

Paul then builds on the established fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In verses 29-34, he says, "What are the implications of the Resurrection?" First, he returns to the query, "If there is no resurrection, why bother?" He considers the fact that there is a constant turnover in the personnel of those who take part in Christian witness. As some are removed from active witness by death or incapacity, there are those who step up into the breach and fill up the ranks. In both cases, they will have wasted their time if there is no resurrection of the dead.

He inserts a strong challenge to the Corinthian Christians. Be true to what you say you believe. Be careful that you keep the right sort of company. It greatly affects the way you live and behave. Live righteous lives. Then he considers further questions that might arise in their minds.

Verses 35 to 49 are concerned with the mode of the resurrection. Two vital questions are posed in verse 35. First of all, "How are the dead raised up?" How? The answer to that is given in verses 45 to 54. But, before that, he answers a second question. "With what body do they come?" What? By way of answer, Paul uses a God-given analogy from

nature. A seed is sown in the ground. Its identity is preserved but the body in which it comes up is in a very different form to that in which it was sown; a figure in itself of the truth of resurrection.

When a Christian dies, the body is buried, sown in corruption, dishonour and weakness. When it comes out of the grave in resurrection the contrast will be immense. It will be raised in incorruption, glory, power. It is “sown”, that is, buried, a “natural” body. That is, the life that had been lived in it had been dominated by the soul. By way of contrast, the body that is raised is “spiritual”. That is, the life that will be lived in it is one in which the “spirit”, rather than the soul, is the dominating influence.

Paul embellishes this contrast by taking the examples of different kinds of bodies, and different kinds of glories. These examples are all extremely relevant to the points that Paul is making, and well worth following through.

In rounding off the argument, Paul traces these distinctions back to the relationship that each member of these families has to their respective head. Those who are “natural”, with no faith in Christ, are traced back to the head of their family, Adam. When God breathed into him the breath of life, he became a living soul. By way of contrast, those who are Christ’s are traced back to their Head, Christ. He is the Last Adam, a life-giving Spirit. Christ is termed the Last Adam because there will never be another race of man. He is spoken of as the Second Man, because since His death and resurrection, there is now another, completely different order of man.

Having answered the two questions, What? And How? Paul adds the answer to a third. That is – when? When will this great change occur? He gives the answer in verses 51 to 54. “I want to show you a mystery”, he says, that is, something which has never been revealed before. Christ is coming again. He will certainly come again in glory, to put down all those who have opposed Him. This is prophesied time and time again in the Old Testament. But, before that, He will come again and receive unto Himself those who have trusted Him as Saviour, by believing that He died for them and rose again. We are told in verse 51 that this will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the shortest conceivable moment of time, instantaneous as far as we are concerned. Those believers who have previously died will be raised from among the dead. Those believers who are still alive at that time will be changed. Ultimately, at The Great White Throne, all the unsaved will be resurrected, judged and condemned.

What a contrast! The denial of His resurrection leaves us in our sins and subject to the judgment and condemnation of God. The resurrection, and in particular the resurrection of Christ, leads to glory, eternal glory. Whether raised or changed, He will give us bodies of glory like unto His own, in place of the bodies of humiliation we have lived in in this world. No wonder we sing with such fervour, “The sky, not the grave, is our goal”. This has been the sure and certain hope of the Christian church down the ages since the day of Pentecost!

What a wonderful victory over Satan, death and the grave that will be. No wonder that Paul bursts out now in happy acclamation. “O death! Where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now comes the final challenge, and rightly so. It is a consistent theme in the Bible that what we believe affects how we live and behave. This chapter is no exception. Two statements in the text make that clear. Verse 33 says, “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” That is, whether I understand it or not, whether I accept it or not, what I believe, and the company I keep, affects how I behave. The contrasting statement, indeed exhortation, is given in verse 58. “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” Which description fits my manner of life? Verse 32 or verse 58?

God grant that my faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ will so work upon my soul that it might indeed be my lifestyle, and, yes, my joy too, to demonstrate in my life what I say I believe.

Let us put together once more what is really cause and effect: “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures.” “Wherefore, my beloved brethren be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” Amen.

---

#### **Please Note:**

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1. Large Print copies of this document are also available upon request.