

# A Complete Package

July 9 – 1 Corinthians 15:12-20a

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Day 190 – 175 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, specifically his long chapter on the importance of the resurrection to the gospel. Some of the Corinthians doubted that bodily resurrection was possible (v.12). Therefore, Paul used a skillful debate tactic to prove his opponents' claim was false. In essence, he took their claim to its logical conclusion and showed them the error of their thinking. Thus, Paul addressed the chain reaction that would occur if their assumption was true (v.13-19).

If resurrection was impossible, then the gospel unravels and is, therefore, a false claim. To illustrate his point, Paul took his opponents' beliefs to seven logical conclusions. First, Jesus would still be dead (v.13, 16). No one, of course, was willing to admit Jesus was not alive.

Second, if resurrection was impossible, then those who share Christ with others are "preaching in vain" or wasting their time (v.14). In fact, they would be charlatans, only telling fairy tales and myths. Third, believing in Christ for salvation would be foolish if resurrection was impossible (v.14). How could Christ grant us eternal life if He were still dead in the grave?

Fourth, Paul wrote that he and the others who preached the gospel would be liars, false witnesses, claiming something that was not true (v.15). Fifth, if resurrection was false and Christ was dead, then our faith is worthless (v.17). There would be no hope for us because, sixth, we would "still be in our sins" (v.17).

But couldn't Jesus have died on the cross for our sins without being raised from the dead? Wouldn't that have saved us? Perhaps, but **the gospel doesn't work like that. It's all one package. We can't pick and choose which parts of the gospel we like or prefer. We must accept it all**, and resurrection is part of the package. Jesus died to defeat the power of sin, yes, but He was also raised to defeat the curse of death.

Next, if resurrection was impossible then those believers who have already died were not saved either. They are forever lost in their sin (v.18). Finally, Paul argued that if we have put our trust in someone who is not what He says He is, and we have believed in a false god, then we should be pitied (v.19). We have been deceived. We believed in a lie. Those who had endured persecution did so for no reason. Therefore, we should be ashamed of ourselves.

Paul's tactic was effective. He buried his opponents in hopelessness and despair. Then, he turned the corner and shared the good news – "but Christ has been raised from the dead" (v.20a). Next, he will explain the significance of this aspect of the gospel (v.20b-26).

## Daily Reflection

**The gospel is an all or nothing deal. We believe it all, or it benefits us nothing.** No one knows that better than Satan. That's why he works so hard to undermine the totality of the gospel by discounting one aspect of it. If he can get people to believe a lie about one part of the gospel, then he can lead them to reject it all.

**The gospel is one package. If any one part of the package is untrue, then the whole of the gospel is compromised.** Therefore, we must be careful to take God at His Word, for if we claim that any part of the salvation story is a lie, then we undermine its credibility and our cure.

Satan is still actively working to discredit parts of the gospel. What are some aspects of our salvation that people doubt today? What are the consequences for believing that lie to be true?

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# First Fruits

July 10 – 1 Corinthians 15:20-34

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Day 191 – 174 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul's incredible chapter to the Corinthians regarding the resurrection. He has provided evidence for the resurrection (15:1-11), as well as reasons why the resurrection is essential to the gospel (v.12-19). Next, Paul explained some of the details of the resurrection, such as the order of events. Along the way, Paul included some of his deepest teaching in this letter.

After his arguments for the resurrection, Paul described Jesus as the "first fruits of those who are asleep" or dead (v.20). The term *first fruits* is a flashback to the Old Testament, in which the Jews were commanded to dedicate the first of their harvest to the Lord (Lev. 23:10). Thus, Paul was equating Jesus' resurrection to the first fruits of a harvest of His followers who will be resurrected to eternal life.

Then, Paul contrasted the results of the first Adam to the second or last Adam, a title for Christ (v.21, 22). Since both are representatives of mankind, their life and ministries affected everyone else. In his sin, Adam brought about death (Rom. 5:12). Therefore, all human descendants of the first Adam (that's us) sin and die. However, Christ died to pay the penalty for our sin. Then, He was resurrected from the dead. Therefore, all who are in Christ (that's us again) will be resurrected as He was. As the first fruits from the dead, Christ has already been resurrected. We will be next (v.23).

After our resurrection, Paul wrote, comes "the end" (v.24). At that time, Jesus will defeat His enemies, including death, and reign over them for a time (v.25, 26). Then, He will give all that has been "put under His feet" to God the Father, and He will subject Himself to His Father (v.27, 28). Here again we see in the Godhead that there is equality and unity with different roles and submission of one to another. Jesus is fully God and equal to Him, but He has submitted and will always submit to God the Father.

Next, Paul inserted a strange set of questions, and their meaning is uncertain (v.28-32). First, "What will those do who are baptized for the dead?" Second, "If the dead are not raised, then why are they baptized for them?" Third, "Why are we in danger every hour?" Paul is well-known for inserting comments in strange places in his letters. When he thought of something that he forgot, it was not worth rewriting the letter, so he simply inserted his random thought wherever it landed.

Therefore, my opinion of these three questions relates to the context of his previous stream of thought, regarding the significances of the resurrection to the gospel (v.13-19). In essence, he thought of another reason to tack on to his argument. What was it? Simply this — why would you be baptized in the name of someone (Christ) if he was dead? Also, if Christ is dead, then why does Paul risk his life every day to tell people about Him? This interpretation is supported in the following verses, when Paul said, "I die daily" for the gospel (v.31), and if there is no resurrection, then let's just "eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (v.32). In other words, if Paul could've edited his letter, he would've included this section (v.29-32) at the end of the previous section (v.13-19). The strange questions make more sense given that context. But, again, their meaning is uncertain.

Finally, Paul admonished the Corinthians for allowing pretenders into their ranks who were teaching false doctrine and leading them astray. That's why he added, "Bad company corrupts good morals..., for some have no knowledge of God" (v.33, 34). If they didn't act soon, their "leaven" would soon leaven the whole lump.

## Daily Reflection

Be assured, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first fruits of many who have been resurrected; and His mission will not be complete until He defeats death once and for all, and we have inherited eternal life!

# We Will Be Changed

July 11 – 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

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Day 192 – 173 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We finished Paul’s incredible explanation of the resurrection (*1 Cor. 15*). He provided evidence for Christ’s resurrection (v.1-8), listed reasons why it’s important to the gospel (v.13-19, 29-32), and expounded on the order that it will take place (v.20-26). Finally, he answered two more questions (v.35). First, how are the dead raised? Second, in what body will they be?

To explain how the dead are raised, Paul used the illustration of a seed (like Jesus in *Jn. 12:24*). After a seed is planted, it dies and bears new life in the form of a plant (v.36-38). Likewise, our bodies will eventually die, but they will be resurrected as new bodies. The Creator God, who made all kinds of beings and bodies in the beginning will simply create for us new bodies to enjoy in eternity (v.39-41).

As to what kind of body we will have after the resurrection, Paul contrasted it with what we have now. For example, we have earthly bodies, but we will be given heavenly bodies (v.40). Our bodies are perishable (they die), but we will be given imperishable bodies (v.42). Our bodies are dishonorable, weak, and natural, but we will be given bodies that are glorious, powerful, and spiritual (v.43, 44).

Then, Paul returned to contrasting the first and second Adams. God breathed life into the first Adam, and “he became a living soul,” but Christ, the second Adam, gave the Spirit of God to indwell His followers (v.45). Because of the first Adam, we have human life. We are living souls like him. But, because of Christ, the second Adam, we have His Spirit within us, ready to bear new life when our first body dies. Because of the first Adam, who is from earth, we are natural and earthly, but because of Christ, the second Adam, who is from heaven, we will be spiritual and heavenly (v.47-49).

Why must we have a new body? Why can’t we simply keep the bodies we have? Paul answered

this question next. “Flesh and blood,” he wrote, “cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (v.50). Our perishable body would not last. It is corruptible, weak, and dying. **But there is good news. “We will not all sleep (stay dead),” Paul said, “for we will all be changed” (v.51).** When Christ returns and that trumpet sounds, we will meet Him in the air in our new bodies at the Rapture. **We will be changed “in the blink of an eye” (v.52).**

## Daily Reflection

Paul closed this chapter with two wonderful results of the resurrection. First, while death is a reality of human life, it is not the end. Death is simply the transition of our “seed” being changed into its new form. Therefore, we do not need to fear death, for it has no victory over us (v.54-57). Death will not win! **Thus, what seems like a bitter end to life on earth has no sting at all. For we will simply be changed into our new, glorious, heavenly bodies!**

The second wonderful result of the resurrection is that doing the Lord’s work here on earth is not in vain (v.58). We serve a living God, not a dead one. The Lord is alive! He has defeated sin and death for us, and He has granted us new life in Him. Because of the resurrection, we always have hope for a better day! Therefore, Paul wrote, “Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!”

Upon reflection of *1 Corinthians 15* and Paul’s defense of the resurrection, what has encouraged you most? Explain why.

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# Money and Ministry

July 12 – 1 Corinthians 16:1-9

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Day 193 – 172 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We have reached the final chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in which he made some closing remarks and mentioned a few names of his co-laborers. We will discuss his teammates tomorrow and focus on the first half of his farewell today. The primary thrust of Paul's instruction focused on a collection of money for the saints in Jerusalem (v.1).

Paul mentioned this collection in other letters (*Rom. 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 5:9; 2 Cor. 8:1-15*), so this event was an organized fundraising effort to relieve the financial burden of Jewish believers. The reason for their economic struggle is unknown. Perhaps, it was from famine, but more than likely it was from persecution. Once identified, Christians in Jerusalem may have been marginalized, even having their businesses boycotted, and thus they were facing poverty.

In Paul's instructions regarding the collection, there are several principles to note. First, **Christians were to give on the first day of the week** (v.2). Here is an indication that early believers met to worship God on Sundays, not on the Sabbath (Saturday). Second, from the beginning, **giving was a regular part of worship**.

Third, **believers were not forced to give** but rather they gave "as they prospered" (v.2), meaning that they gave freely or as much as they desired. It was not mandated or compulsory. Fourth, Paul did not want money given while he was in Corinth (v.2). His presence would make giving seem obligatory or that they were giving the money for him. In other words, **Paul wanted their giving to be motivated by the Lord, not by guilt or pressure**.

Fifth, Paul told the Corinthians to choose someone (or several people) they trusted to deliver their gift to Jerusalem (v.3). Paul would not be the one responsible for the money. This gesture may have been because some Corinthians disliked or distrusted Paul, but it

may also have been that he wanted them to know the money was not for him (he was not a swindler). Either way, the point is that **Paul did not dictate the situation but rather gave them freedom to complete the task as they desired**. He assured them that he would send letters to accompany their gift (v.3).

After finishing his instructions regarding the gift, Paul explained his travel plans (v.5-9). He wrote the letter to the Corinthians from Ephesus but planned to visit Corinth again "if the Lord permitted" (v.7). In other words, Paul was sensitive to the Lord's leadership. He made plans, but he also left room for God to change them. He followed the Spirit's prompting, especially when there were "wide doors for effective service" (v.9). Paul did not allow his plans to intrude on what God was doing.

## Daily Reflection

God is at work everywhere, and there are numerous ways for us to be involved in gospel ministry. We can serve in our church, using our spiritual gifts to edify believers. We can live out our faith and share the gospel in our city. We can give to support the ministry of others. We can even go to distant places when God calls.

**Is giving to the work of gospel ministry a regular part of your worship?** Are you sensitive to the Lord's leadership regarding either to go somewhere or to give to those who do?

Describe your desire related to money and ministry. How are you involved in gospel giving?

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# Tough Love

July 13 – 1 Corinthians 16:10-24

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Day 194 – 171 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We concluded Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. This letter has been a bit edgy at times, as Paul dealt with criticism, doubt, immature and immoral behavior, and unusual questions. However, he did his best to close the letter on a positive note. In most of his letters, Paul ended with remarks about individuals, summary statements (related to themes he had covered), quick reminders, and closing comments. This letter is no exception.

Paul mentioned several individuals: Timothy, his associate who probably delivered his letter (v.10, 11); Apollos, who had recently visited Corinth and was requested to return (v.12); Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who were probably leaders from Corinth and who brought Paul news from the church (v.15-18); and Prisca and Aquila, who hosted a house church in Ephesus (v.19). Paul also sent greetings from the believers in Asia (province) and Ephesus specifically (v.19, 20). The Lord was using a network of people to do important ministry work, all of which encouraged the Corinthian believers.

Regarding summary statements that reinforced themes included in the letter, Paul added four. First, he wrote, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men (be brave), and be strong" (v.13). Paul had given the Corinthians some difficult assignments, such as confront divisiveness and execute church discipline. He was challenging them to complete them.

Second, Paul wrote, "Let all that you do be done in love" (v.14), a recap of "the love chapter" (Ch. 13). Third, Paul added "Maranatha" (v.22), an Aramaic expression meaning "O Lord, come," a flashback to his comments on the end times (15:20-26). Finally, Paul inserted, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you" (v.23), which mirrored Paul's mention of God's grace in his life (15:10).

Next, Paul added two reminders. "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (v.20). Kisses on the cheek were a common greeting in those days, like our handshake. The key word here is *holy* kiss, a kiss that is sincere. Paul was encouraging genuine friendship amid their disunity. Paul added this reminder as well, "If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed" (v.22). This warning was the strongest Paul could issue, and it was aimed at those who were seeking to destroy the church. They should be removed.

Finally, Paul ended his letter by adding his signature (v.21). Evidently, someone else had written the letter for him (a scribe), perhaps because of poor eyesight or some other issue. With his signature, the Corinthians knew that the letter was official. Then, **Paul sent his love in Christ Jesus. He had spoken harsh words, some difficult truths, but it was all spoken in love.**

## Daily Reflection

**Speaking the truth in love is a difficult thing to do.** Paul had some strong things to say to the Corinthian believers, but it was all meant for their edification, and nothing he said brought dishonor to the Lord. **Those are difficult waters to navigate, but we must follow Paul's example.** Do you find telling people truth in love easy or difficult? Explain.

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Telling people the truth is an expression of love. How so?

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# Comforted to Comfort

July 14 – Acts 20:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

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Day 195 – 170 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We transitioned from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (which he wrote in Ephesus) to his second letter to the Corinthians (which he wrote while in Macedonia). Once the situation with Demetrius and the silversmiths settled down in Ephesus (the gospel had threatened their idol sales), Paul quietly left town to continue his third missionary journey (*Acts 20:1*). He crossed over into Europe and revisited the churches in Macedonia. While he was there, he penned his second letter to the Corinthians.

After his introduction (*2 Cor. 1:1, 2*), Paul immediately shared an incident that he and his teammates had endured in Asia. Though he did not provide details about the situation, Paul indicated that the ordeal “burdened them excessively, beyond their strength, so that they even despaired of life” (*v.8-10*). He may have been referring to the situation with Demetrius in Ephesus or some other difficult trial, but the point is that they “could not trust themselves” (*v.9*). There was no way out except God alone, who delivered them from “a great peril of death” (*v.10*).

Paul’s point in sharing this experience was not to highlight their suffering but rather to share what they had learned through the trial. God delivered them, yes, but **they learned that He is the God of comfort, and His comfort enabled them to endure the trial** (*v.3, 4*). They also found that **God’s comfort equaled the severity of the trial they were facing** (*v.5*). In other words, to the extent that their suffering was great, so also was God’s comfort great.

Paul also noted and thanked the Corinthians for praying for him. Their prayers were effective in strengthening Paul and his teammates during their suffering (*v.10, 11*). Though we may not be able to be with someone in or through their trials, we can pray to the God of comfort on their behalf and ask that He might enable them to endure in His strength.

Finally, Paul recognized that he and his teammates had experienced God’s consolation not only so they might be comforted but also so that they might know how to comfort others who were suffering as well (*v.4*). The things we learn in difficult situations are not only for our sanctification but also for others’ edification.

**Simply put, we are comforted to comfort.**

## Daily Reflection

While we are in a trial, our focus is typically on survival, praying for God’s comfort and strength to endure. But once our suffering has subsided, we usually move on and overlook God’s purpose(s) for the trial. Instead, we should note what we learned, not just for our sake (when we face future trials) but what we might be able to share with others in their afflictions. **God does not provide comfort simply to make us comfortable during hard times. He wants us to become comforters to others who need help through their time of suffering.**

List a few trials that you have endured

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Did you remember how God enabled you to endure? How have you passed His comfort on to others in their affliction?

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# Damage Control

July 15 – 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:17

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Day 196 – 169 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Paul addressed a misunderstanding regarding his plans to travel to Corinth. Originally, he had intended to visit there twice, but in the end, he could only go once (1:15, 16). Evidently, some of the Corinthians (probably the false teachers) used this “wavering” to prove that Paul was not trustworthy, that he did not keep his word. The enemy is always working his schemes to cause division (2:11). Thus, **Paul had to do some damage control in his letter.**

What was his strategy? First, to defend his integrity, **he declared his conscience to be clear (1:12)**. He sought to be pure in heart and mind and to be genuine in all his dealings with people. Before God, he said, his conscience had not convicted him of any wrongdoing (v.13, 14). We would be wise to follow Paul’s example.

Second, because of Paul’s integrity, **he told the Corinthians that they could trust what he said (v.17, 18)**. Third, not only could they trust Paul’s word, but **they could also trust God** who had saved them through Christ (v.19-22). Despite what they thought of Paul, the gospel he preached had not changed. They were still “sealed by the Spirit with a pledge” which was everlasting (v.22).

Fourth, to explain his change of plans, Paul shared that **he wanted to spare the Corinthians (v.23, 24)**. There was trouble during his first visit to Corinth, and his first letter addressed some difficult issues in their church. He was concerned that either he or they would be grieved at his coming, and he did not want his visit to be undermined again (2:1-5).

Next, **Paul commended the Corinthians** for taking steps to discipline a degenerate church member (v.6-10), possibly the one mentioned in the first letter. Then, he challenged them “to reaffirm their love” for that member (v.8). Whatever they decided, Paul committed his support.

Finally, **Paul shared his anguish over the reception of his “sorrowful” letter.** He experienced such unrest in his spirit that he turned down “an open door” for ministry in Troas and began searching for Titus, to see if he had any news of their response (v.12, 13). He did not find Titus, so he left to go to Macedonia.

## Daily Reflection

Have you ever had to do damage control, maybe repair a relationship, mediate between people at odds, or fix a bad situation? Explain. What strategy or steps did you use?

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**Doing damage control requires integrity, a pure heart and sincere mind.** Sometimes, all you can do is what the Lord calls you to do (v.17). The rest is in His hands. Somehow, if you do the right thing, God will be glorified in the end, which is how Paul closed his damage control. “Thanks be to God,” he wrote, “who always leads us in triumph in Christ and manifests the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him...” (v.14).

Are your words and actions a sweet aroma or foul stench? Are you following the Lord to a parade of triumph or taking the walk of shame? Are you good at damage control or just causing damage? What is your strategy for making things right?

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