

AF A9 BIBLE STUDY: I Corinthians 15B

Scripture of Lesson: I Corinthians 15: 29-58

In the second half of Chapter 15, Paul writes about the resurrection of the believers in Christ when the Lord returns. Paul's theology on resurrection is fully described here. And he encourages the Corinthian Christians to be true to the gospel of Christ based on the hope for the final victory even over death through the resurrection of the body in Christ on the final day of the Lord.

1. Resurrection process of saints: v. 29-49

Paul states in v. 30, "I die daily." In explaining this truth that we die to our past life of sin and yet we are raised to the new life in Christ, Paul wrote in Romans 6:4;

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. [Rom. 6:4]

By being baptized in Jesus Christ we became dead people with Him. So, in a sense we were baptized for the dead, that is, our past dead life, so that we may be raised to the newness of life in Christ. This is resurrection we experience while we are on the earth by accepting the gospel of Christ. Paul declares in this chapter that this pattern of being dead in flesh, that is, the first Adam, true children of God are raised anew to resurrected body of Christ, the second Adam. Unless a person goes through this process of miraculous transformation, he cannot ascend to God. It can be compared to a butterfly worm that goes through a transformation after living as a worm, then goes through a transformation in a cocoon for some time, is born again as a butterfly, which then flies freely in the open air, whereas as a worm, it could only crawl on the trees.

Paul describes what happens to us as we go through the resurrection process by contrasting the former state with the latter state in various ways as follows:

- 1) Sown in corruption → raised in incorruption [v. 42]
- 2) Sown in dishonor → raised in glory of heaven [v. 43]
- 3) Sown in weakness → raised in power of God [v. 43]
- 4) Sown in natural body → raised as a spiritual body [v. 44]
- 5) Sown in first man, Adam → raised as a living spirit of Christ, the second Adam [v. 45]
- 6) Sown in earthly life → raised into a spiritual life [v. 46]
- 7) Sown as earthy/fleshly man → raised as a heavenly being with the Lord of heaven [v. 47-48]
- 8) Born in the image of Adam → will bear the heavenly image of Christ [v. 49]

What a marvelous description of our resurrection! What we need to understand is that this process of resurrection needs to occur within us while we are here on the earth, just as the transformation process of a butterfly worm starts within a cocoon. The Holy Spirit of God begins the work of transformation in us so that the changes occur inwardly. Yet we are still in our earthly body while here on the earth. But, the day comes when the miraculous event happens.

2. Day of Rapture and Resurrection: v. 50-58

On the resurrection day when the Lord comes back with His angels and calls His people, there will be an instantaneous transformation from earthly body into resurrected body, whether we are physically alive or dead, which will be raised in 'rapture' with the Lord in heaven, as described in v. 51-53:

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. [1 Cor. 15:51-53]

This is the "First Resurrection," foretold also in Revelation 20:

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. [Revelation 20:4-6]

These faithful, loyal believers, who are resurrected in the first resurrection, will have special privileges of ruling the earth with Christ. In other words, God will raise faithful children, who were loyal and faithful to God during their earthly life in spite of persecutions, to become rulers with heavenly power and authority to govern this world for 1,000 years together with Christ. Great will be their privileges and honor! We can all aspire to take part in the First Resurrection by being faithful and loyal to Christ and to God Almighty.

These people will live forever, thus will overcome death [v. 54-55]. Death will no longer have any power over them. Satan has been using death as both a threat and a gimmick to deceive the humans -- to keep people from serving God and to keep them ignorant of God's plan of saving them. Satan deceives people by telling them that this earthly life is all they have and everything ends with death, giving the 'cliff mentality' to people.

Another way Satan deceives the people is that everything is rosy and fine over the cliff of death, that there is nothing to fear with no consequences of sin waiting them [v. 32-33]. Thus he gives them a false picture about the eternity and about the consequence of sinful life. And he entices them to listen to him and be loyal to his principles. He does all things possible to entice people from believing in Jesus Christ and in God's saving grace. He is a very cunning deceiver and enemy to our souls. Let us not be deceived by Satan's guiles as Adam and Eve were.

Our labor in Christ will not be in vain. God's reward will be beyond our imagination. And what we do for Christ is so little compared to the great honor and glory we will share with Christ in eternity [v. 58]. Be of good cheer and press on!

Discussion topics:

- 1. Let us discuss analogues in the nature to the resurrection process and their similarities.*
- 2. Why is this resurrection story a mystery? In your opinion, did Paul have this concept of resurrection before his conversion?*
- 3. What personal lessons do you get from this chapter on resurrection?*