

FURTHER STUDY GUIDE

THE LAST ENEMY | 1 Corinthians 15:1–26

Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 15:1–26, Paul the Apostle reminds the church that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a side issue—it is the heart of the gospel. If Christ has not been raised, Christianity is empty. But because He has been raised, death does not win. Jesus has conquered the grave, and one day the last enemy—death itself—will be destroyed.

Icebreaker Question

What is one thing people chase in life to try to avoid thinking about death or eternity?

THE GOSPEL WE STAND IN (vv. 1-2)

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel they had received, in which they now stand, and by which they are being saved. The Christian life does not move beyond the gospel—it grows deeper into it.

Key Truth

The gospel is not just how we begin the Christian life; it is what sustains us every day.

Study Questions

- Why do believers need to be continually reminded of the gospel?
- What does it mean to “stand” in the gospel?
- How does perseverance reveal genuine faith?

Cross References: Romans 1:16; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 3:14

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL (vv. 3-4)

Paul summarizes the gospel:

- *Christ died for our sins*
- *He was buried*
- *He was raised on the third day*
- *All according to the Scriptures*

This is the core of Christianity: Jesus died in the place of sinners and rose again in victory.

Key Truth

The gospel is not advice—it is the good news of what Christ has done.

Study Questions

- Why is “for our sins” essential to the gospel?
- Why does Paul include Jesus’ burial?
- How does the resurrection complete the work of salvation?

Cross References: Isaiah 53:5–6; Romans 4:25; 2 Corinthians 5:21

THE RESURRECTION IS HISTORICAL (vv. 5-11)

Paul points to eyewitnesses of the risen Christ, including Cephas, the apostles, more than 500 believers, James, and Paul himself. The resurrection is not myth or metaphor—it is historical reality.

Key Truth

Christianity is rooted in a risen Savior, not religious imagination.

Study Questions

- Why is eyewitness testimony important to the Christian faith?
- Why is Paul’s conversion such powerful evidence?
- What does this passage teach about grace?

Cross References: Luke 24:36–43; Acts 9:1–22; 1 Timothy 1:12–16

IF CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN RAISED (vv. 12-19)

Paul argues that if there is no resurrection:

- *Christ has not been raised*
- *Preaching is useless*
- *Faith is empty*
- *We are still in our sins*
- *The dead in Christ are lost*
- *Christians are most to be pitied*

Without the resurrection, there is no Christianity.

Key Truth

If Jesus is still dead, there is no hope, no salvation, and no gospel.

Study Questions

- Why is the resurrection essential to Christianity?
- What does it mean that without it we are “still in our sins”?
- Why would Christians be “most to be pitied” if Christ were not raised?

Cross References: Romans 10:9; Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 1:3

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS (vv. 20-23)

Paul declares: “**But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.**”

Jesus is the **firstfruits**—the first part of the harvest, guaranteeing more to come. His resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all who belong to Him.

Key Truth

Jesus’ resurrection guarantees that His people will rise too.

Study Questions

- What does “firstfruits” teach us about the resurrection?
- What does it mean to be “in Adam” versus “in Christ”?
- How does Christ’s resurrection give believers hope for the future?

Cross References: Romans 5:12–21; John 11:25–26; Colossians 1:18

THE LAST ENEMY (vv. 24-26)

Paul lifts our eyes to the end of the story: Christ is reigning now, and one day all His enemies will be put under His feet. The final enemy to be destroyed is **death**.

Death is not natural or neutral in Scripture—it is an enemy brought by sin. But because Jesus rose, death’s defeat is certain.

Key Truth

Death is not the end. It is the last enemy, and Christ will destroy it.

Study Questions

- Why does Paul call death an enemy?
- In what sense has Christ already defeated death?
- How should resurrection hope shape the way Christians face suffering and grief?

Cross References: Psalm 110:1; 2 Timothy 1:10; Revelation 21:4

MAJOR TAKEAWAYS

- The resurrection is central to the gospel.
- Christianity stands or falls on the empty tomb.
- Jesus' resurrection guarantees our future resurrection.
- Death is real and painful, but it will not win.
- Christ is reigning now and will one day destroy every enemy.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Why is the resurrection essential to the Christian faith?
2. How does the gospel shape everyday Christian living?
3. What difference does it make that Jesus rose bodily from the grave?
4. How should believers think differently about death because of Christ?
5. What hope does this passage give you personally?