

There Really is Something More      2022  
1 Peter 1:3-5, 13, 21      1 Corinthians 15:1-2, 12-20, 58

### 1 Peter 1:3-5, 13, 21 (New Revised Standard Version)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, 12-20, 58 (New Revised Standard Version)

Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

When I applied to seminary and met with the Admissions committee,  
one of the professors asked if I'd ever read and studied philosophy,  
the discipline of trying to understand life's wisdom & truth.

I explained, not philosophy, but that as a science major,  
if a laboratory experiment was designed well enough,  
it would determine if my hypothesis **was true**.

As a businessman, reading a balance sheet and financial statement,  
would reveal **the true** effectiveness of a business operation.

But apparently that wasn't the **sort of truth** he had in mind,  
as with a long sigh, he suggested an Intro to Philosophy textbook  
that he insisted I needed to read, study and learn  
before he thought I would be ready to attend seminary.

In Corinth many of the new converts were steeped in Greek philosophy,  
and as Socrates explained with a popular phrase, *σωμα σεμα*,  
the physical body is a corruption or tomb entrapping the soul.

So the bodily resurrection of Jesus made no sense to them,  
and the promise of a Christian's future resurrection  
was also questioned & rejected as foolish nonsense.

But Paul was adamant, that Jesus really did die a physical death,  
and that God really did resurrect Jesus from the grave ... vs. 12

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians,  
this passage addressed some serious problems they were having,  
including some confusion about what Christians believe  
concerning the promise & hope of **our** future resurrection,  
... which Paul rightly recognized as **an essential to Christian faith.**

Without God's promise and our hope for eternal life after death,  
why not just do whatever it takes to get all of everything you want?  
Christian compassion, generosity or mercy, **what's the motivation?,**  
**if there is nothing more than this temporary troubled world,**  
**and if nothing really survives or lasts beyond the grave.**

For then what is the point or purpose of anything we do, good or evil?,  
because when we die, it all fades into meaningless forgotten vapor,  
**if this our one & only short mortal life really is all there is.**

It is our faith, **our trust and hope in the resurrection** – eternal life  
that enables us to see beyond this life's pleasure, gain & success,  
to see beyond life's disappointments, failures, flaws & losses,  
**to perceive that God is at work on our behalf to build us up and bless,**  
**because Jesus Christ is alive, present with us and up to something.**

For the Christian, of course we care deeply, and we're attentive  
to the events, situations and conditions of life in this world,  
**but our perspective is also guided by what's up ahead,**  
**as through the eyes of faith we trust there is more,**  
**and that God has promised us something even better.**

**It is that promise and hope of resurrection through Jesus Christ**  
**that defines and guides our living an authentic Christian life.**

Paul explained that if **God did not really raise Jesus from the grave,**  
**then the Gospel we proclaim distorts the truth of God,**  
**and our sin still separates us from the grace of God.**

Of course no resurrection of the dead,  
also means that there is no hope for our loved ones who have died,  
nor any hope for us beyond the limits of this mortal life,  
**and that Jesus was just some deluded guy way back then**  
**who taught & told parables that really mean nothing.**

To help the Corinthians understand what was truly at stake  
if they continued to deny and reject the resurrection of the dead,  
Paul reversed the argument and writes... vs. 13-14, 17

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised,  
then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. **If Christ has not been raised, your faith**  
**is futile and you are still in your sins.**

No resurrection means, when we die, we're just gone and that's it,  
and there really is no hope or escape for us from our sin & failures.

Now I cannot scientifically explain the resurrection of Jesus Christ  
or even how the promise of our own resurrection will be fulfilled,

but throughout the witness of the New Testament, it testifies  
that Jesus Christ was buried and raised by God from the dead...

... and in fact, lives and now dwells in our midst by the Holy Spirit,  
who speaks to us through God's Word, our walk of faith with him,  
and who also nourishes our lives within Christian community,  
all of which is part of the meaning of baptism and church membership.

**So what does this message of hope and resurrection mean in our lives?**

It means we're not in the land of the living going toward death,  
but we're in the land of the dying headed toward eternal life.

It means we can be so certain of God's love, promises and purpose  
that we're not defeated, powerless, abandoned or unlucky  
even when life does go awry or our worst disappointments,

**There is hope beyond our mistakes, problems and failings of the past.**

It's being able to trust that God's wisdom is **greater than ours**,  
that God does perceive and know beyond the obvious and immediate  
further ahead toward the deeper & greater good & growth for us.

It's knowing & trusting that God **can redeem & transform**  
even suffering and disaster for our good and benefit...  
**... which can give us courage to face anything in life or death.**

If someone doesn't know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior,  
what a lonely, limited, meaningless and scary world this must be,  
and what horrible dread and terror **the grave must hold**,  
without the promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

I most passionately believe in the resurrection of Jesus on Easter  
not because of Jesus as just an event way back in history,  
but because of **Jesus living**; powerful and present with us today...

... which becomes our hope, with truth and promises toward tomorrow,  
**which is also the message of our reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter today.**

1<sup>st</sup> Peter is one of the later books included in the New Testament,  
written during a time of intense and extreme difficult persecution,  
a message of hope based on **taking a somewhat longer view** ... vs. 3-5, 13

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth  
into **a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is  
imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, **kept in heaven for you**, who are being protected by the power of God  
through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; **set all your hope on the grace that Jesus  
Christ will bring you when he is revealed.**

These verses of this is letter of First Peter  
celebrate what having **resurrection faith** means to us,  
and how that **hope** changes everything about our lives.

I see the authentic & faithful Christian life as something like  
a young person or student trying to do well in school or college  
by making an effort and sacrifice to learn and earn good grades.

**All being done in preparation for a career sometime in the future,**  
their family someday, perhaps  
for a spouse and for children **they do not yet have.**

hoping to provide for

Though it won't be completed until sometime in the distant future,  
it's something they're already working toward **expectantly** now.

So too our faith and faithfulness in this life, **at work in us now**,  
is preparing us for eternal life in God's Kingdom in the future.

The Christian life with Jesus is about having that **hopeful vision**,  
a bold and defiant hope even amid struggles, troubles or suffering  
because our reliance is not on the visible or explainable,  
but rather, we are trusting in an unseen inheritance  
that is promised & given by our unseen Lord & Savior.

And far more than just anticipation of something distant and ahead,  
it is about today, striving thru faithful living to reach for it,  
preparing for way more than we can possibly know or imagine...

... which is how we experience the hope, the power and promise of grace,  
so to use the gifts and blessings of God faithfully, usefully & well,  
and to grow by living up to **the very best that God created us to be**.

The call to action of this 1<sup>st</sup> Peter passage is that  
because of what God has & is giving to us – an eternal life, vs. 13, 21

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, **so that your faith and hope are set on God**.

In other words, be vigilant and live spiritually disciplined lives  
focused with our hope set on God's grace and promises in Christ,  
and don't be set or conformed into this passing & finite world,

**but live holy, live eternally, live as one set apart for God,  
by living a life of love, compassion, mercy and devotion to God.**

Many people live as though this one, mortal lifetime were it -  
you're born, you live, you die, and then it all ends.  
But resurrected by God from the grave,  
Jesus declares that there is something more, so much more...

... for we are destined to live in God's Kingdom forever,  
**setting our faith and hope, our priority on God,  
as we eagerly await for the best yet to come.**

So as we struggle with the challenges and issues of life, (such as Covid)  
**we can learn** to look for God's hand at work in the world around us,  
and more about God, God's love and grace, wisdom and truth,  
as we experience them in our lives and out in the world.

Our call is to grow and enlarge our faith & God's grace in our lives,  
as by our faithful response **our lives become a gift back to God**.

Here's how Paul explained it, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (*The Message*)

So we're not giving up. How could we!

Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace.

These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye.

The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. **But the things we can't see now will last forever.**