

1 Corinthians 15:25-28

PREFACE

We remain in the second section of Chapter Fifteen. In the first section (vv1-11) Paul makes the case for the “The Resurrection of Christ”; the Corinthians already believe this, but Paul is employing a rhetorical tactic he had used before the Areopagus in Athens: Begin where people are, then lead them logically to where you want them to be. The Corinthians believed Christ was raised, but did not believe *they* would be raised from the dead. In the first section Paul begins with what they believe for the purpose of leading them to what they *should* believe: that they, too, will be raised from the dead. In the third section (vv35-58) the apostle answers the question, “How Are the Dead Raised?”, but in the second section (where we are now: vv12-34) he establishes the evidence to prove “The Certainty of Our Resurrection.”

Read 1 Corinthians 15:25-28.

v25

For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Scholars have long argued over the pronouns in this verse: Is it God or Christ? But Gordon Fee has a good response to this.

Fee: The one and only God stands as both the source and goal of all that is; and since God has set in motion the final destruction of death, when that occurs, God will be “all in all.” Christ’s role is to bring about this destruction through the resurrection of believers, which is inherently tied to His own. When that occurs, all of God’s enemies will be subjected to Christ, so that in turn He may be made subject to God, who, it turns out, has been the one who subjected all things to Christ in any case.

And then he footnotes this with what I cited last week:

Fee: The question of whether the passage is basically christo- or theocentric is perhaps a red herring. It is both. That is, God is the ultimate source of all things; but He works out His purposes in history through Christ. Hence both Christ and God can alternatively function as the subject of most of the verbs in this paragraph.

David Garland adds:

Garland: It is impossible for Paul to think of Christ acting independently of God, or of God acting independently of Christ, or of one doing all the work while the other does nothing.

Christ Jesus does not reign passively, as if His work was complete after His resurrection, so He just patiently waits for the moment when the Father removes all opposition to His rule. No, He remains actively engaged in vanquishing all powers hostile to God ([Garland](#)).

It may be common for the average Christian to think of Christ's "reigning" as absolute—that is, if He reigns, then this means He has already nullified all opposition. In ancient times it was customary for someone desiring the throne of a kingdom to murder not just the sitting king, but his entire family—especially his brothers and sons. He might even murder his *own* brothers, to eliminate any chances of insurrection from within his own family. Nevertheless, a king always had enemies somewhere, and, at this writing, Christ's reign is still in process; He is indeed on the throne, but the opposition remains—and *will* remain until they are all placed "under His feet."

Sidebar: A number of commentators say that "He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet" refers to Christ's *Millennial* reign, but I'm not comfortable limiting it to that. Christ has been reigning, in one way or another, since His bodily resurrection. A very long time ago, and, perhaps, a long ways into the future—only God knows.

...put all His enemies under His feet.

Part of a king's physical throne would be a raised footstool for his feet, and a common motif for such a foot rest would be to display around the circumference of that footstool carved or painted images of the foes the king had defeated in battle—more often than not portrayed chained or tied together in procession (another favorite way this was portrayed in Egyptian motifs was of the king holding a group of his enemies by their hair). Thus, in his throne room the enemies of the state were shown "under the feet" of the king—an unavoidable statement of intimidation to any foreign ruler standing before him. "See what I can do," it tacitly announces.

The apostle draws from—but does not quote verbatim—Psalm 110:1 ([please turn there](#)), the most frequently cited OT passage in the NT, and without question the most fascinating Messianic prophecy in the OT. Here is a verse and psalm in which the superscription is of critical importance: "A Psalm of David." Because of the manner in which some versions of the Bible format the text, we might think that the superscription has been tacked on after the fact. But it is as inspired as the rest of the psalm. What we have in v1 is King David prophesying, *Yahweh says to His Son, who is my Lord (adonai, who would not be on earth for almost another 1,000 years), "You, my Son, take Your place on My right until I subdue all Your enemies."* So here is the king of Israel, who has no earthly "lord," claiming that there is a "son" of Yahweh who is lord over the king.

During the last days of the Last Things, just before the Eternal State of "the new heaven and a new earth" ([Revelation 21:1](#)), at the Great White Throne all remaining enemies of Christ will be cast into the Lake of Fire. And...

The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

Death “died” the day Christ was raised from the grave. Up until then, that was the worst day of Satan’s life. Imagine, on that day that Christ walked out of the tomb, Satan realized the jig was up for him; his fate was sealed. It was only a matter of time. Donald Trump would say Christ’s resurrection was *Huuuuuge!* And in the scope of God’s plan for mankind, it was indeed, for it guaranteed man’s own resurrection—and his eternity with God. More than that, however, it inaugurated Christ’s reign and set the stage for everything that would come after.

Death will be present—abnormally so—during the Tribulation, and it will be present even during and just after the Millennium. But there *will* come a day, a very long time from now even if Christ returns tomorrow, when death will be literally and finally abolished: removed from existence never to return. Done. Gone.

David Guzik: Paul reminds us of something important: death is an enemy. When Jesus came upon the tomb of Lazarus, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and Jesus wept ([John 11:33, 35](#)). Why? Not simply because Lazarus was dead, for Jesus would raise him shortly. Instead, Jesus was troubled at death itself. It was an *enemy*. Today, some are told to embrace death as a friend, but that is not biblical thinking. Death is a defeated enemy because of the work of Jesus, an enemy that will one day be destroyed, and therefore an enemy we need not fear. But death is an enemy nonetheless.

Read Revelation 20:11-15.

In v13 the “the sea” refers to the literal sea, but also to all those left unburied. “Hades,” which in some instances can be synonymous with how we use the term “hell,” and generally the same idea as “sheol,” simply stands for the place of departed souls, or place of the dead. Unlike the “Lake of Fire,” Hades does not have a direct reference to either torment or eternal happiness (Guzik).

In v14 both death and Hades are personified and thrown into the eternal lake of fire. I like what Guzik has to say about this.

Guzik: The last echoes of sin are now eliminated. Death is the result of sin, and it is gone. Hades is the result of death, and it is gone. The last vestiges of sin’s awful domination are done away with.

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Whether we consciously consider it or not in our daily life, this world system, down to its core, is based on, surrounded by, and preoccupied with death. From big-city streets to the forest glen we cannot escape death and the resulting nauseating corruption. Wherever we encounter death, it is ugly. All of this began in Eden with Adam; look at vv21-22, just above.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.

With the eternal death of death, Christ's reign will finally be complete. The last domino will have fallen. And it makes perfect sense: if all who are dead are raised from that death—not just believers, but everyone—then it only follows that death has been, once and for all, conquered.

v27-28

For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

When reading vv27-28 one can feel as if one is chasing one's tail. In these two verses Paul uses the word "subjection" or "subjected" six times. But the point is made, and even though these two verses are packed with pronouns, this time we can easily label the pronouns with their respective owners. Permit me do that for us now.

A paraphrase: For **GOD HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER CHRIST'S FEET**. But when **God (in His word)** says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that **God** is excepted who put all things in subjection to **Christ**. When all things are subjected to **Christ**, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to **God** who subjected all things to **Christ**, so that God may be all in all.

We have seen that the apostle Paul considers God to be the one who raises the dead. We showed in the first section that the verb tenses reveal that Christ was "acted upon" when He was buried and raised from the dead.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:4. (not NKJV)

This is continued into the second section. Verse 20: "But now Christ **has been raised** from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep." (emphasis added) Thus it follows that God is the one who defeats this last foe: death (Garland). Christ's sovereignty takes nothing away from the sovereignty of God. "All things" ([referring back to Psalm 8](#)) refers to all things in creation, as well as the hostile powers at work in it. It does not include Father God. All things on earth, all demonic powers...

Even as we read of the authority and kingship Christ will demonstrate during the Eschaton, the words of Christ Himself, recorded in the gospels, make clear His submission to and subservience before God the Father. Verse 28 does *not* end, "... so that Christ may be all in all," but "...so that God may be all in all."