

Title: “Paul the Evidential Apologist”

Introduction: Apparently there were a number of the Corinthians at the church at Corinth who were either confused about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ or they were in doubt that the event even took place. Paul having the pastor’s heart that he did, heart about these issues in the Corinth church and he went to deal with these issues. When Paul arrived at the Church of Corinth he had his Evidentialist hat on. He was prepared to argue for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and document the eye witnesses to the central event in human history, and the central event in the Christian faith.

Propositional Question: When Paul demonstrated to the Corinthian church the evidence of the central doctrine to Christianity it was a powerful argument, should we make that same argument to those we are witnessing too?

Text: I Corinthians 15:3-19 “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

CONTEXT:

Who: Paul the Evidential Apologist.

What: Paul the Evidentialist made the case for the resurrected Christ.

Where: Paul wrote the book in Corinth.

When: The epistle of Corinthians was written in 56 AD.

How: Paul knew the doctrine and history of the Resurrection.

INTERPRETATION:

Key theme: Paul preached an Evidentialist Apologetic detailing the Resurrection of Christ.

Key words: Brethern, preached, scriptures, five hundred, grace, Christ, risen, faith, sins.

Summary of the text: Paul brought an Evidential, Apologetic message proving the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the church at Corinth. He presented both biblical and circumstantial evidence to overwhelmingly prove his case for the risen Saviour to those skeptics and baby Christians at this early, New Testament local church. Paul referenced some 514 eye-witnesses to the central event in all human history. Paul again here references his being the least of the apostles as he had previously persecuted Christians as Pharisees. Paul gives the reason for this dramatic change in his life as the grace of God had transformed his life. Paul then makes the argument, using his Pharisees credentials, to bolster his case that salvation is not of works, but rather by God's grace. The remainder of Paul's was rhetorical in nature. His argument revolved around the proof of the risen Saviour. He pressed further and made it personal by arguing if Christ isn't risen you're still in your sins. He was forcing his hearers, not only to make a decision for Christ, but to be rock solid in how one arrives at the conviction that Christ is risen and those who have placed their faith in Christ are eternally saved.

Summary of the passage: Paul opening argument in his message to the Corinthian church was evidential in nature, as he offered the evidence of the case for the risen Saviour. The closing argument however was rhetorical, as Paul asked "if" questions seven times. Each time he asked a question his hearers were posed with an unsolvable problem if Christ had not risen from the dead. Each of the seven times Paul asked these "if" questions he was driving home the message of the resurrected Christ. Each time these questions were asked it further persuaded the Corinthians that indeed Jesus Christ was risen from the dead, and that their sins would be forgiven.

Summary of the main verse: I Corinthians 15:17 "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Paul argued that Christ' resurrection was the authentic Saviour.

APPLICATION:

Original audience: The church of Corinth was young and had weak believers and to be sure some skeptics who were yet to be persuaded and converted.

To myself: This study has deepens my faith and conviction that Christ is the only way to heaven.

To family: When witnessing to family evidentialism and rhetorical questions are powerful.

To church: The local church should train her members in these powerful apologetic tools.

To my job: The Christian's obligation is to be an effective witness and apologetics will help.

To society: The Christians must become the apologists that brings the gospel to a dying world.