



# THE BEREHA PAGE

*“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11*

## Paul’s Resurrection Outlook

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Mention Paul and the resurrection, and we immediately think of 1 Corinthians 15. For good reason: of the fifty-four appearances of the words ἐγείρω (*egeirō*), ἀνάστασις (*anastasis*), and ἀνίστημι (*anistēmi*) in his letters ([issue 6, 10](#)), twenty-five are in 1 Corinthians, and twenty-three are in the defense in chapter 15 (the total includes references to the time idolatrous Israel “rose up to play” [10.7] and the future resurrection of humanity [15.12–13, 15–16, 21, 29, 32, 35, 42–44, 52]; 6.14 also refers to Jesus’s resurrection). As “the first written exposition of the resurrection” (Wright 1999, 132), 1 Corinthians 15 is a seminal text for understanding Paul’s outlook.

But Romans, his theological magnum opus, is at least as important for understanding resurrection’s place in Paul’s thought. The words *egeirō*, *anastasis*, and *anistēmi* appear thirteen times in Romans; apart from 1 Corinthians, no other Pauline writings use the words more than four times. And unlike 1 Corinthians, the appearances are spread across the letter (cf. Rom. 1.4; 4.24–25; 6.4–5, 9; 7.4; 8.11, 34; 10.9; 13.11; 15.12). Additionally, he uses ζάω (*zaō*, “to live”) and ζωή (*zōē*, “life”) thirty-seven times in Romans, compared to just five in 1 Corinthians.

Space precludes a detailed analysis of all the texts, but we can summarize a few of them. In the extended greeting in 1.1–7, Paul summarizes the historical context for “the gospel of God” (v. 1), emphasizing that what was promised through the prophets concerning God’s Son who would descend from David culminated in the person of “Jesus Christ our Lord” who “was declared to be the Son of God in power . . . by his resurrection from the dead” (v. 4). Later, he says that “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (10.9). Although *egeirō*, *anastasis*, or *anistēmi* do not appear in Romans 5.1–11, “the passage brings out emphatically the fact that Christ’s death was followed by His being raised from the dead (see vv. 4, 5, 8, 9), which was the beginning of His risen life, which is beyond the reach of death’s power (v. 9), and, as a life lived ‘to God’ (v. 10), is life eternal” (Cranfield 1979, 832). In 14.9, he supports his statement that “whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (v. 8) by saying that it is “to this end [that] Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”

The latter text is one of several that show that “Christ’s death and resurrection are thought of as a unity,” that is, “both His being Lord of the dead and His being Lord of the living depend equally on both His death and His resurrection” (Cranfield 1979, 833). Indeed, as Cranfield observes, Romans illustrates the point that, with regard to the Cross and the Resurrection, “for

Paul there is no good news in the former apart from the latter” (Cranfield 1979, 826).

But Paul’s resurrection emphasis in Romans is neither merely apologetic nor theoretical. Three texts show that he saw it to be eminently practical. First, it is the means by which we are justified (δικαιόω, *dikaioō*). In the previously mentioned 5.1–11, Paul extols Jesus’s demonstration of God’s love, dying for us despite the fact that we were weak, ungodly sinners; now reconciled to God, we can be confident that his life will save us (vv. 6–11). That reality is the premise for his conclusion that justification brings peace and other blessings (vv. 1–5). In the verses that immediately precede chapter 5, he declares that our faith “will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification [δικαιώσις, *dikaiōsis*]” (4.24–25). He revisits that idea in chapter 8, asking, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (vv. 33–34).

Second, it is because of the resurrection that we have new life and the wherewithal to live as new people. In baptism, we were “buried with him ... into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too might walk in newness of life.... Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.... So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6.3–4, 9, 11). Consequently, we no longer need to allow sin to reign over (βασιλεύω, *basileuō*) us, forcing us to obey its passions. Though we were once sin’s slaves, we are now liberated to be slaves of righteousness (6.12–14, 17–18), recipients of the “free gift of God [that] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (v. 23).

Third, Jesus’s resurrection empowers us to live as “more than conquerors” (8.37) in a world overrun with trouble. Few texts have been more heartening for believers than Romans 8, especially verses 18–39, and the resurrection is at the center of that encouragement. Beginning with the declaration that present sufferings are not comparable to the glory that awaits us (v. 18), this section proceeds to mention assurances that are based on the premise that is not stated until verse 34. There, Paul assures us that, because of Jesus’s death, resurrection, and enthronement, no one can successfully condemn us. The crescendo of assurance reaches its climax in the bold optimism that forms the chapter’s memorable conclusion (vv. 35–39). “I am sure,” he says, that no kind or amount of trouble can separate us from the love of Christ.

Is it any wonder early Christians celebrated the day of resurrection as a day of joy ([issue 6, 9](#))? Hallelujah! Christ arose!

### Works Cited

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