

**“JESUS CHRIST,
AND HIM CRUCIFIED”:
PAUL’S TESTIMONY OF CHRIST**

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IN Corinth, in the early fifties of the first century A.D., Paul faced opponents within the Church who felt that the way to understand God and the vicissitudes of mortality was through the use of philosophy or, as Paul puts it, the “enticing words of man’s wisdom” (1 Corinthians 2:4). It is in response to this situation in Corinth that Paul makes the following statement in 1 Corinthians 2:1–2: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

In that single declaration, Paul spotlights for us the very core of his personal ministry. The only way to understand God and mortality is to come to know that Jesus Christ was and is the Redeemer of the world and that He alone had the power to change lives by redeeming individuals from the power of

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sin and death. Now, Paul's witness of these things was not some abstract, theoretical premise; rather, it was grounded in his own personal metamorphosis. He had "spiritually been born of God" and had experienced the "mighty change" of heart of which Alma speaks (Alma 5:14). Paul wanted everyone he came in contact with to have the same type of experience. As a result, he dedicated his life to bringing the message of "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" to the world. The sheer volume of Paul's letters that have survived antiquity make this apostle to the Gentiles our greatest single New Testament personality to bear testimony of the power of Christ and His atoning sacrifice.

Paul's testimony of Christ is multidimensional and there are numerous aspects that we could discuss here, but the limits of time demand that I be selective. I propose, therefore, to focus briefly on just three areas of Paul's testimony of Christ: first, his testimony that Christ changes lives; second, his testimony of the Resurrection; and third, his testimony of the faith of Christ.

CHRIST CHANGES LIVES

I love the following statement from President Ezra Taft Benson: "The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. . . . The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature. . . . Yes, Christ changes men, and changed men can change the world."¹ Paul's conversion to Christ is a prime example of what President Benson is talking about. He was able to teach and bear witness to the world of the power of Christ to change lives because he

1. Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 64.

had personally experienced that metamorphosis. He knew firsthand about both the cost and the implications of such a metamorphosis, and he also knew the impact that it could bring—not just for the individual, but also for the Church and the community as a whole.

Before his conversion, by his own confession, Paul considered himself to be "the least of the apostles" because he "persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:9; see also Galatians 1:13). In fact, he wrote to Timothy that he was the chief of sinners (see 1 Timothy 1:15). The events on the road to Damascus, however, proved to be a dramatic course correction for this young persecutor. We all know the basic events that took place on that day, but there are some elements that Acts leaves unclear, and we have to look to other sources for clarification. For example, the text does not indicate why the Lord chose to appear to Paul and not to others. Certainly Paul was not the only individual who persecuted the Church. The fact that Christ told Ananias that Paul was a "chosen vessel" strongly indicates that the vision was the result of foreordination. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has noted the following: "Nothing [Paul] had done on earth qualified him for what was ahead; but his native spiritual endowment, nurtured and earned in [the] pre-existence, prepared him for the coming ministry."²

Paul was the quintessential example of what is possible when a person turns to Christ. Recognizing the importance of Paul's experience for all would-be Christians, Luke records not just one, but three accounts of Paul's conversion (see Acts 9:3–20; 22:5–16; 26:12–19).³ In that vision, Paul saw, for the

2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–73), 2:91.

3. See F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1970), 196.

first time, the resurrected Christ. Using language reminiscent of the First Vision, Paul declares the following to King Agrippa: "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 26:13-14). Saul was not the only person to see the light, but he was the only one to hear Christ's voice (see Acts 22:9; JST, Acts 9:7).

The scriptures are also silent about why this vision was so life-changing for Paul; after all, an angel appearing to Laman and Lemuel did little to change their behavior (see 1 Nephi 3:28-31). Elder Neal A. Maxwell suggests that Paul "may have already been 'in a preparation' [see Alma 32:6], perhaps brooding and pondering before his great vision." President David O. McKay suggests that some of that preparation may have occurred as Paul spent a week traveling to Damascus. He indicates that Paul may have used this time to reflect on recent events. "Perhaps the shining face of the dying Stephen and the martyr's last prayer began to sink more deeply into his soul than it had done before." Perhaps, he continues, "little children's cries for their parents whom Saul had bound began to pierce his soul more keenly, and make him feel miserably unhappy as he looked forward to more experiences of that kind in Damascus. Perhaps he wondered whether the work of the Lord, if he were really engaged in it, would make him feel so restless and bitter."⁴ Some kind of reflection must have been

4. Neal A. Maxwell, *Men and Women of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 32.

5. David O. McKay, *Ancient Apostles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 120.

going on in Paul's mind because his immediate response to Christ's rebuke for "kick[ing] against the pricks" was the submissive question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:5-6; see also 22:10). Can I suggest to you that it was that submission that allowed the power of Christ to work within Paul. Never again could he doubt or question the centrality of Christ for mankind's salvation. Never again could he doubt or question the importance of Christ vis-à-vis the law of Moses. Never again could he doubt or question what was possible when people turned their life over to Christ.

What is interesting to me here is that all of the detailed accounts of this event are recorded in Acts and not in Paul's personal epistles. The two times that he does briefly mention the vision are in Galatians 1:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:8-11. In Galatians his testimony is simple, direct, and concise: "The one who set me apart from my mother's womb and who called me through his grace was pleased to reveal his son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (author's translation). Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 15 while testifying of the Resurrection, Paul declares, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (v. 8). Surely in these instances Paul could elaborate considerably on his personal experience to help the Saints better appreciate Christ's power, but he chooses not to. That raises the question, why not? Why doesn't he give a more detailed description of his conversion in his personal letters? As dramatic as that event was, why doesn't Paul use it as his clarion call to the Saints? Surely the impact of such a story would have stirred the hearts of all who heard it. Even King Agrippa, after hearing of these events, said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

Perhaps we find a clue to Paul's reasoning in his reference to it in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul uses the Greek word *ektroma*,

which the King James translators rendered as "one born out of time." This is an interesting word; we find it used nowhere else in the New Testament and it is uncommon even in Greek literature. At least on one level, we must understand this word as being parallel with the next verse where Paul says that he is "the least of the apostles," but perhaps there is an additional way that we can understand it. As one scholar notes, "the decisive feature [of *ektrōma*] is the abnormal time of birth and the unfinished form of the one thus born."⁶ This vision was definitely untimely, given Paul's history as a persecutor of the Church. It was certainly not something that he had earned. I am particularly interested in the latter half of this statement: the "unfinished form" of the birth. Let me suggest that by choosing this particular word, Paul wanted to indicate to his readers that the real change in his life came not from the spectacular visitation per se—the vision began the birthing process, but it could only be completed by the subsequent day to day struggle to live as a Christian, to follow the life of the Savior, and to apply the redemption that comes only from the Atonement in his life. Years after the road to Damascus experience, Paul told the Philippians that he was not "already perfect," but that he "pressed forward . . . because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (RSV, Philippians 3:12). The visitation was the catalyst for Paul's spiritual metamorphosis but was not the sustaining force behind it. This change in emphasis does not lessen the power of Christ to change lives, it just moves the conversion process from the dramatic to more subtle experiences with the Spirit (see 1 Kings 19:9–12). Elder Maxwell reminds us that although "God is certainly present in the

6. Johannes Schneider, "Ektrōma," in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 2:465.

dramatic, spiritual 'about faces,' such as occurred on the road to Damascus, . . . He is also [present] in the smaller course corrections." It is certainly these "smaller course corrections" that Paul knew were pivotal for his personal metamorphosis and would be the driving force behind how his readers experienced the power of Christ in their lives. That is where he puts his emphasis in his personal letters.

But if that vision was not what Paul saw as the center of transformation, what was? The answer for us, I think, is much more subtle. It is manifest in Paul's use of a simple phrase—a phrase he uses seventy-four times in his epistles. Paul wants very much for his readers and all those with whom he comes in contact to be "in Christ." It is as we seek this covenantal relationship that the real transformation takes place in our lives. We must be clear that Paul testifies that being "in Christ" is a process, not just an event. It is a process that begins before an individual joins the Church and continues through the spectrum of mortality and even unto death and resurrection. Thus, to the Ephesians, Paul testifies that even the Gentiles who were "far off" from Christ can be "in Christ" as they are brought near "by the blood of Christ" (2:13). In other words, as nonmembers begin the process of coming to Christ, they also begin the process of being "in Christ." That process continues even after they join the Church. Paul describes the members of the Church in Corinth as being "babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1). Even though these Saints were members of the Church, they still had not reached a level of spiritual maturity that would allow Paul to speak to them of spiritual matters. Lastly, even those who have died can be "in Christ." Paul promises those who die "in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16),

7. Maxwell, *Men and Women of Christ*, 89.

or, in other words, shall be a part of the first resurrection of the just.

Why is it so important to Paul that his readers strive to be "in Christ"? Precisely because as they struggle to do so, they change; qualitatively they become very different from whom they once were. President Benson taught us that "when you choose to follow Christ, you choose to be changed."⁸ That concept is what George McDonald portrayed in the following parable, which was made famous by C. S. Lewis. "Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."⁹ Paul taught the same principle this way: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17; see also Colossians 3:10). Alma the Younger, whose life in many ways parallels Paul's, said that we become new creatures when we are "born again; yea, born of God, changed from [our] carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters" (Mosiah 27:25). As "sons [and daughters] of God," Paul testifies

8. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 61-62.

9. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Collier Books, 1960), 174.

that we become "joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:14, 17), thus inheriting all that the Father has. Can you think of anything more ennobling than this goal?

Let me summarize. Paul's metamorphosis into a "new creation" may have been initiated by his vision of Christ, but the process of being "in Christ" and thus becoming a "new creature" was a constant struggle for him. But the struggle was not so that he could make himself a "new creation"; it was so he could be "in Christ" and thus allow Christ to make that change in him. I love the example that Paul gives us of what was possible in his life, and I love the way that he spent his life trying to lift people's sights so that they could also understand how Christ could change their lives if they would only let Him in.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

The second focus of Paul's witness that I have chosen to address is the reality of Christ's resurrection. I have done this primarily because the controversy brewing over it is as real and as potent today as it was two thousand years ago. While I was in graduate school, two realizations highlighted for me how precarious the doctrine of the physical resurrection is in today's world. The first experience happened in 1993. I was in my first year of graduate school, and I was having lunch with one of my fellow students. He had been a Protestant minister for twenty years. While we were talking about the Resurrection, he told me, very nonchalantly, that he did not believe that Christ was resurrected with a physical body. I was shocked. How could anyone who had spent so much of his life as a Christian minister not believe in this fundamental doctrine? The second realization of the precarious perception of the Resurrection occurred two years later when I read an article in the *Los Angeles Times*. The article reported the

conclusions that the Jesus Seminar had reached concerning the Resurrection.

The Jesus Seminar, a controversial group of scholars that evaluates the New Testament in the harsh light of historical review, has concluded that there is no evidence that the Easter Resurrection was a physical reality.

More likely, they decided, the story of the historical Jesus ended with his death on the cross and the decay of his body. . . .

Whatever Jesus' followers experienced after the Crucifixion, it happened in their hearts and minds, not as a matter of history. To read the Resurrection accounts literally is to misunderstand the use of the symbolic language that was the hallmark of 1st-Century Jewish writers. . . .

The scholars—most of whom consider themselves within liberal Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions—doubted nearly all descriptions of visits to Jesus' burial place in the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts.¹⁰

One of my professors was a founding member of the Jesus Seminar. This article and the group it reported not only dismissed the physical nature of the Resurrection as my friend had done, they dismissed its historical reality. The Resurrection today is under attack. Two thousand years ago, initial reactions to news of the Resurrection were also skeptical. This skepticism seems to have come in two forms, both of which we will discuss because Paul directly addresses them. Let me spend a little bit of time setting the historical scene. As we understand that, I think we will be able to better appreciate

10. "Scholars Cite Lack of Resurrection Evidence," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 March 1995, B4.

just how important Paul's testimony of the Resurrection was and still is today.

The first form of skepticism seems to have originated because of the uniqueness of the event. Although Christ had raised three people from the dead during His mortal ministry, all had returned from death only to have it overtake them at a later time.¹¹ With Christ, however, His return from the grave had not just postponed death, it had cheated it! Nothing comparable had ever happened before; and even though the Savior had given ample hints and direct statements about His resurrection, the Apostles initially failed to grasp the significance of what He was saying. Thomas is best remembered today as the "Doubting Thomas" because of his statement of incredulity that "except [he should] see in his hands the print of the nails, and put [his] finger into the print of the nails, and thrust [his] hand into [Christ's] side, [he would] not believe" (John 20:25). Yet we would do well to remember that the other Apostles expressed similar doubts when the women first came to tell them of the Resurrection. Luke tells us that the disciples thought that the women's words were "as idle tales" and so "they believed them not" (Luke 24:11).

The second reason for skepticism about the Resurrection was the result of Greek philosophical teachings about the nature of God and of the body. The Orphic saying "the body is a tomb"¹² can be found at the heart of much of this skepticism. For example, note what Socrates had to say in his defense when he was charged with "corrupting the minds of the young, and of believing in deities of his own invention instead of the gods recognized by the state": "This, I do assure you, is

11. Jairus' daughter (see Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26); the son of the widow of Nain (see Luke 7:11-18); and Lazarus (see John 11:1-44).

12. *Sōma sēma* (Plato, *Cratylus* 400c; *Gorgias* 493a).

what my God commands, and it is my belief that no greater good has ever befallen you in this city than my service to my God. For I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies nor for your possessions, but for the highest welfare of your souls."¹³ Here Socrates understands the soul in a way very different from the Prophet Joseph's definition that "the spirit and the body are the soul of man" (D&C 88:15).

Greeks saw the soul as an entity that was totally separate from the body: in fact, they considered it to be "alien to the body and captive in it."¹⁴ Primarily, the Greeks viewed the soul as the vehicle of "human thought, will and emotion."¹⁵ These teachings explain, in part, the initial reaction of the Athenians to Paul's teaching in Acts 17 on the Resurrection. While they were willing to entertain his ideas when he spoke of the "unknown God" and that humanity is the offspring of God, at least a part of the crowd exhibited a very different reaction when he began to speak of the Resurrection. Luke tells us that they mocked him (see Acts 17:22-32). Likewise, about one hundred and twenty years later, the pagan philosopher Celsus argued that "it is not possible that Jesus rose with his body."¹⁶ For him the Resurrection was "simply the hope of worms. For what sort of human soul would still desire a body that has rotted?"¹⁷

As we turn to Jewish sources, we find that there were groups who anticipated a future resurrection. We know, for

13. *Apology* 30 a-b, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 16.

14. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 322.

15. Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 9:608-17.

16. *Contra Celsum* 6.72.

17. *Contra Celsum* 5.14.

example, that the Pharisees believed in a resurrection,¹⁸ and there are hints that the inhabitants of Qumran also anticipated one.¹⁹ The difficulty is that although these sources mention, or allude to, a resurrection there is almost no discussion of what they thought that resurrection entailed. Perhaps our clearest evidence that some Jews believed in a physical resurrection is the story of a young man facing martyrdom at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanies. In defiance, the young man declared the following to his persecutor: "Thou like a fury takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life." Then the martyr "put out his tongue," stretched out his hands and boldly declared, "These I had from heaven; . . . and from him I hope to receive them again."²⁰

By the first century, however, Judaism was clearly imbued with Greek philosophical thought. Philo, an Alexandrian Jewish philosopher who was a contemporary of Christ and who wrote extensively, never mentions a belief in a physical resurrection.²¹ Rather, we can clearly see the influence of

18. See Acts 23:6-9; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.1.3-4.

19. See 4Q521; for a brief discussion of the Resurrection found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Dana M. Pike, "Is the Plan of Salvation Attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls?" in *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Dana M. Pike (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 86-89.

20. 2 Maccabees 7:9, 11. I have not included the reference in Job 16:19 ("in my flesh shall I see God") in my discussion because it is a controversial passage. The King James translation seems to be influenced by the Latin Vulgate. The Hebrew text, however, reads "from (min) my body" with the preposition usually used to denote separation or removal (BDB, 577). The Greek version, the Septuagint, reads: "to raise up upon the earth my skin that endures these sufferings: for these things have been accomplished to me of the Lord." For brief discussions of the difficulties with this verse, see Marvin H. Pope, *Job* (Anchor Bible 15; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 147; and David J. A. Clines, *Job* 1-20, vol. 17 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 433.

21. See Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 41.

Greek philosophic thought on his writings in the following statement: "For the soul of the wise man, when it comes from above from the ether and enters into a mortal and is sown in the field of the body, is truly a sojourner in a land not its own, for the earthly nature of the body is alien to the pure mind and subjects it to slavery and brings upon it all kinds of suffering."²² In other words, the body was something from which the soul wanted to escape, not keep for eternity. Even among the early Christians, the Resurrection became a point of great controversy. Polycarp indicates that there were many Christians (*tôn pollôn*) who taught that there was no resurrection,²³ and Tertullian wrote an entire treatise to defend the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh against those who taught that only the soul received immortality.²⁴ Lest we think this discussion has little to do with us, we should note that these ancient notions of the body heavily influenced the Nicene Creed's statement on the nature of God—a doctrine that many Christians today accept as axiomatic.

The more that I study and learn about the controversial nature of a physical resurrection in antiquity, the more I am impressed with the central importance of Paul's witness of both Christ's resurrection and its subsequent impact on all of humanity. Although we find Paul preaching the Resurrection throughout his writings, let us turn to 1 Corinthians 15, which provides us with his major discourse on the subject. In this chapter, he addresses the two principle questions that we have been discussing: whether there is indeed something called a resurrection (v. 12), and if so, what kind of a body does it entail (v. 35)? These questions are not trivial to Paul. As we

22. Q Gen. 3:10, in Ralph Marcus, trans., *Philo: Questions and Answers on Genesis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), Supplement 1, 193.

23. See *Letter to the Philippians* 7.2.

24. See *The Resurrection of the Flesh*.

have seen, they were very much a part of the ancient world debate that impelled Paul to enter the discussion when it became a source of contention and division among the Saints in Corinth.

Lest anyone should miss the central importance of the Resurrection in Paul's teachings, he begins with the following statement: "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" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The phrase that the King James translators render as "first of all" (*en prōtois*) can also be translated as the "most important things."²⁵ Thus, Paul makes it patently clear that the two most important elements of his teaching, that which he has taught from the very beginning, are the Atonement and Resurrection. In other words, without the Resurrection his preaching of the Atonement would be incomplete. In fact, he declares that "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14), because "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

The implications of Paul's witness here are twofold. First, it is precisely because of Paul's hope in the Resurrection that he is willing to "stand . . . in jeopardy every hour," "die daily," and fight "with beasts at Ephesus" (1 Corinthians 15:30-32).²⁶

25. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and adap. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 726.

26. Although scholars have suggested numerous interpretations for the phrase "fight with beasts in Ephesus," it is difficult to know precisely what Paul is referring to. Acts 19:31-40 makes it clear that Paul was the center of controversy while he was in Ephesus. For an overview of the various interpretations, see R. E. Osborne, "Paul and the Wild Beasts," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (June 1966): 225-30.

Because Paul understood the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, he could view the vicissitudes of life from an eternal rather than a mortal perspective. Repeatedly, President Boyd K. Packer has taught us that "true doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior."²⁷

Second, Paul taught that without the Resurrection, nothing else in the Christian message, even the Atonement, makes sense. C. S. Lewis reminds us that "the Resurrection is the central theme in every Christian sermon reported in Acts. The Resurrection, and its consequences, were the 'gospel' or good news which the Christians brought."²⁸

Two thousand years later, the importance of the Resurrection cannot be explained away by modern philosophies. Note how one scholar responds to such arguments: "There seems to be little hope of getting around Paul's argument, that to deny Christ's resurrection is tantamount to a denial of Christian existence altogether. Yet many do so—to make the faith more palatable to 'modern man,' we are told. . . . What modern man accepts in its place is no longer the Christian faith, which predicates divine forgiveness through Christ's death on his resurrection. Nothing else is the Christian faith, and those who reject the actuality of the resurrection of Christ need to face the consequences of such rejection, that they are bearing false witness against God himself. Like the Corinthians they will have believed in vain since faith is finally predicated on whether or not Paul is right on this issue."²⁹

Lest anyone in either ancient or modern times should doubt the reality of this great event, Paul lists some of the

27. Boyd K. Packer, "Little Children," *Ensign*, November 1986, 17.

28. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 189.

29. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 745.

eyewitnesses.³⁰ "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" (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). Paul knew that under the Mosaic law, "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1; see also Deuteronomy 19:15). Clearly, those witnesses satisfied the burden of proof with regard to the Resurrection.³¹

Thus, with the reality of Christ's resurrection firmly established, Paul also stresses the impact that resurrection has on the rest of humanity. Although Christ was resurrected, death still rules in the world; it is still the enemy. The power of Christ's resurrection is not just that *He* overcame death, but that *He* opened the doors for *all* of humanity. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ [note that phrase again] shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:20-22; see also 2 Corinthians 4:14). Death was not cheated just once by Christ's resurrection. The beauty is that His resurrection will ultimately defeat death by enabling all to be resurrected. President Gordon B. Hinckley testified that "of all the victories in human history, none is so great,

30. I use the word *some* because Paul makes no mention of Mary's encounter with the resurrected Christ (see Mark 16:9-12; John 20:11-18).

31. As a "second witness of Jesus Christ," the Book of Mormon adds substantial force to the biblical testimonies. On the first day alone of Christ's visit to the Americas, twenty-five hundred people went forth "one by one" to "thrust [their] hands into [Christ's] side" so that they could "feel the prints of the nails in [his] hands and in [his] feet" and thus know for themselves that he was "the God of Israel and the God of the whole earth, and [had] been slain for the sins of the people" (3 Nephi 17: 25; 11:14-15).

none so universal in its effect, none so everlasting in its consequences as the victory of the crucified Lord, who came forth in the resurrection that first Easter morning.³² Is it any wonder, therefore, that Paul's declaration resounds in the minds and hearts of those who understand the majesty of Christ's efforts on our behalf: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55, 57).

The second issue that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 15 deals with the nature of resurrected beings: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (1 Corinthians 15:35). Paul's response is that we will be raised with a "spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44) which he describes as bearing "the image of the heavenly" (v. 49), incorruptible (v. 53), and immortal (vv. 53–54), but not consisting of "flesh and blood" (v. 50). The difficult point here is that the spiritual body does not consist of flesh and blood. With this verse does Paul side with the Greco-Roman philosophers and preclude a physical body in the Resurrection as some scholars insist? This is an important issue for us today. Remember my friend from graduate school? He is not alone in his feelings about the Resurrection. National polls reported in a *Newsweek* article on the Resurrection tell us that while 87 percent of Americans believe in a universal resurrection, only 30 percent of born-again Christians believe in a physical resurrection.³³

32. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Son of God," *Ensign*, December 1992, 2.

33. See Kenneth Woodward, "Rethinking the Resurrection," *Newsweek* (8 April 1996): 62. For a discussion of this and further polling evidence, see Keith Wilson, "The Christian Doctrine of the Resurrection: An Embattled Keystone," in *The Book of Mormon and the Message of the Four Gospels*, ed. Ray C. Huntington and Terry B. Ball (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2001), 219–33.

That statistic means that 70 percent of born-again Christians do not actively believe in a physical resurrection. In this respect, two thousand years later, perhaps, we are not too much different from those with whom Paul contended in his day.

So what does Paul mean by a "spiritual body"? In the Book of Mormon, Amulek taught Zeezrom that during the Resurrection "the spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form . . . never to be divided" (Alma 11: 42-43, 45). Note how he describes this reunification: "Thus the whole [i.e., the spirit and the body together] becom[es] spiritual and immortal" (Alma 11:45). President Joseph F. Smith said it this way: "Our bodies are designed to become eternal and spiritual. God is spiritual himself, although he has a body of flesh and bone as Christ has."³⁴ Both Amulek and President Smith make it clear that spiritual bodies include physical bodies. The most natural reading of Paul's argument concurs with those of Amulek and President Smith. In the Resurrection, we, like Christ, have a body that, although it is lain in the grave, rises again (see 1 Corinthians 15:4). The literary balance of this verse requires that Christ's body rose with Him in the Resurrection, and since His resurrection is the prototype for the rest of humanity, all of us shall also be raised with a physical body.

The major thrust of Paul's position in 1 Corinthians 15, however, is not that our resurrected bodies are merely the "reanimation of a corpse to continue bodily existence in its *present* form"³⁵—a state which would have certainly horrified many of the Corinthian Saints. Rather, Paul's message is that as people become "in Christ," not only their spirits are enlarged and transformed but so are their resurrected bodies.

34. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 70.

35. Fee, *First Epistle*, 741.

Notice how in verses 36 through 38 he teaches this principle through the imagery of planted seeds: we may plant "bare grain," but God gives it a body. But then note verse 39: "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." Paul follows this verse with the passage that we often use in the Church as a proof text for the three degrees of glory: "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Corinthians 15:40-41). In the passage's context, the celestial and terrestrial bodies refer to the type of bodies that one may receive in the Resurrection. It would seem, therefore, that there are differing degrees of spiritual transformation that our bodies experience in the Resurrection. In a 1917 conference address, Elder Melvin J. Ballard said that "those who live the laws and attain unto the glory of the celestial shall have a body" whose "fineness and texture" or "composition" shall be greater than those who inherit a lower degree of glory.³⁶ Just as there are degrees of glory that we can inherit depending upon our faithfulness, so we will inherit resurrected bodies that are commensurate with our spirits.³⁷

Thus, Paul further testifies, although our physical bodies are sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness, eventually they will be raised in incorruption, glory, and power. In short,

36. Melvin J. Ballard, Conference Report, October 1917, 110. I am grateful to Dan McKinley for bringing this reference to my attention.

37. Note the following from Joseph F. Smith about the Resurrection: "Deformity will be removed; defects will be eliminated, and men and women shall attain to the *perfection of their spirits*, and to the perfection that God designed in the beginning" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 23; emphasis added).

our bodies may have been sown as natural bodies of flesh and blood, but because of Christ's resurrection they are raised as spiritual bodies (see 1 Corinthians 15:42-44), transformed so as to "bear the image of the heavenly [Christ]" (1 Corinthians 15:49). What a glorious doctrine the Resurrection is!

During the first century, Paul's testimony of Christ's resurrection stood as a powerful witness in an environment that sometimes sought to undermine its fundamental principles. His witness is unequivocal on both the reality of Christ's resurrection in the flesh and on the empowering ability to physically resurrect and transform humanity. As we enter the twenty-first century, his witness continues to resound for those who have ears to hear.

THE FAITH OF CHRIST

The third and final aspect of Paul's witness of Christ that I would like to briefly discuss centers on the principle of faith. Even though it is the first principle of the gospel, I think that it is a worthy conclusion to our discussion. One of the central messages that Paul taught the world is that we are justified, or made righteous, through faith in Christ. Over the last two thousand years much has been written on this subject; I would like here to focus on a less-discussed although equally important aspect of Paul's testimony. He testifies that salvation comes not only because of our "faith in Christ," but also because of the "faith of Christ." Although there are seven passages that we could turn to (see Romans 3:22, 26; Galatians 2:16, 20; 3:22; Ephesians 3:12), let us concentrate on Philippians 3. In this chapter, Paul speaks of the sacrifices he has made so that he "may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8). Note what he says in verse 9: "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

To whose faith is Paul referring here? The emphasis in this verse is not that righteousness comes through our faith in Christ, but that it comes through the faith of Christ.³⁸ That concept—that Christ has faith—is vigorously contested in some circles. A number of modern translations, following Martin Luther, translate this phrase as “faith in Christ,” rather than “faith of Christ.”³⁹ For the past four hundred years, Luther’s translation “was almost unchallenged.”⁴⁰

One New Testament scholar, Morna D. Hooker, identifies two major reasons why some modern scholars are hesitant to use “faith of Christ.” First, “faith in Christ” substantiates “the

38. There has been a considerable debate by scholars over the translation of this phrase. The Greek construction has Christ in a genitive form, so the debate centers over whether it should be translated as an objective genitive “faith in Christ” or a subjunctive genitive “faith of Christ.” It seems to me, however, that Galatians 3:16 is the defining verse. Here Paul again uses the genitive construction, but a separate preposition (*eis*) indicates belief “in Christ.” For representative articles of both sides of the debate, see Richard B. Hays, “*Pistis* and Pauline Christology: What Is at Stake?” *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 714–29; and James D. G. Dunn, “Once More, *Pistis Christou*,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, 730–44. Other articles discussing this issue include the following: George Howard, “The ‘Faith of Christ,’” *Expository Times* 85 (1974): 212–15; Arland J. Hultgren, “The *Pistis Christou* Formulation in Paul,” *Novum Testamentum* 22 (July 1980): 248–63; Luke Timothy Johnson, “Rom 3:21–26 and the Faith of Jesus,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (January 1982): 77–90; Sam K. Williams, “Again *Pistis Christou*,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (July 1987): 437–47; “The Hearing of Faith: *Akoi Pistesōs* In Galatians 3,” *New Testament Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 1989): 82–93; Morna D. Hooker, “*Pistis Christou*,” *New Testament Studies* 35, no. 3 (July 1989): 321–42; David M. Hay, “*Pistis* as ‘Ground for Faith’ in Hellenized Judaism and Paul,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 3 (fall 1989): 461–76; Stanley K. Stowers, “*Ek Pistesōs* and *dia tēs pistesōs* in Romans 3:30,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 4 (winter 1989): 665–74; and Douglas A. Campbell, “Romans 1:17—A *Crux Interpretum* for the *Pistis Christou* Debate,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 265–85.

39. For example, see the Revised Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version, Contemporary English Bible, Philips Modern English, Today’s English Version, Jerusalem Bible, and the New English Bible.

40. Hooker, “*Pistis Christou*,” 322.

basic Reformation emphasis on faith" of the believers. As we noted at the beginning of this discussion, faith is an important part of Paul's teachings and, as a Latter-day Saint, I totally agree that it should be so emphasized. It is, after all, the first principle of the gospel, the foundation upon which everything else rests. The second point that Hooker makes is that while faith "is an appropriate action for the believer," some feel that it is "inappropriate for Christ himself . . . because faith is sometimes given somewhat negative overtones, so that it appears to be inferior to knowledge."⁴¹

It is this second idea that I would like to take issue with here because I believe it is too narrow an interpretation of what faith is, and it blinds us to a crucial element of Christ's role as the Savior of humanity. Faith is *not* something that mortals outgrow as they spiritually mature. The Prophet Joseph taught us that faith is "the foundation of *all* righteousness," that it is "the principle of action in *all* intelligent beings," and that it is "the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God."⁴² None of these characteristics indicate that faith is spiritually transitory or something that we outgrow. In fact, the Prophet taught that faith "is the principle by which Jehovah [i.e., Christ] works."⁴³ I think that Paul understood this broader definition of faith, and that is why he talks of the "faith of Christ."

I believe that in the premortal existence, it was faith that enabled the Savior to respond to the Father by saying, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). I

41. Hooker, "Pistis Christou," 322.

42. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith: A 1990 Edited Version*, in *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, ed. Larry E. Dahl and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 1:1, 9, 15; emphasis added.

43. Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 1:16.

believe that it was faith that enabled Christ to humble Himself, to leave behind His exalted station, and to condescend into mortality. I believe that it was faith that enabled Christ to ward off Satan's temptations as He prepared for His mortal ministry, and I believe that it was faith that enabled Him in the Garden of Gethsemane to declare, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). In each of these situations, faith was both a principle of action and of empowerment. It was faith that Christ had in His Father and in His Father's plan. That is why Paul declares that our righteousness comes because of Christ's faith. It is central to Paul's testimony of Christ that He was faithful in fulfilling His part in His Father's plan. Paul's testimony to us, therefore, is that we can have faith in Christ because, ultimately, He has faith in His Father. This is not a principle that we should underestimate. It is the foundation for Paul and his testimony of Christ.

A WITNESS OF CHRIST

The Apostle Paul is one of the great witnesses of Christ. Here I have only touched on three elements of Paul's testimony, but let me suggest that we could spend a lifetime learning about Christ from this great Apostle. He loved the Savior, and from the instant that he had his vision on the road to Damascus, he spent his life serving Him. Let me close with the following plea from Paul that, for me, epitomizes his testimony of Christ: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Paul had experienced all of these conditions. He responds to his own question: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35, 37-39).