

1 Corinthians 15:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

Analysis

And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain (εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς οὐκ ἐγήγερται, κενὸν ἄρα τὸ κήρυγμα ἡμῶν)—The word kenon (κενόν, "empty, void") appears twice. Paul's entire ministry—kērygma (κήρυγμα, "proclamation")—rests on resurrection. If false, apostolic preaching is kenon, devoid of content and power. Christianity is not moral philosophy or religious feeling—it's proclamation of historical event.

And your faith is also vain (κενὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν)—The Corinthians' pistis (πίστις, "faith, trust") would be kenē, empty. Faith is only as good as its object. Faith in a dead messiah is delusion. Paul stakes everything on historical fact—resurrection is not symbol or metaphor but event. Without it, Christianity collapses into meaningless mythology.

Historical Context

Paul wrote in an era of religious pluralism—mystery religions, emperor worship, philosophical schools all competed. Yet Paul doesn't say 'all religions lead to God' or 'Christianity offers superior ethics.' He claims unique historical event: God raised Jesus from death. This falsifiable claim made Christianity vulnerable to disproof—but also evidentially verifiable.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Christianity's dependence on historical facts distinguish it from religions based on timeless truths or myths?
2. What would Paul say to those who claim 'Jesus rose in my heart' while denying physical resurrection?
3. Why is Christianity more vulnerable than other religions—and how is this vulnerability actually a strength?

Interlinear Text

εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς οὐκ ἐγήγερται κενὴ ἄρα τὸ κήρυγμα
if And Christ not be vain then G3588 preaching
G1487 G1161 G5547 G3756 G1453 G2756 G686 G2782

ἡμῶν κενὴ δὲ καὶ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν.
is our vain And also G3588 faith your
G2257 G2756 G1161 G2532 G4102 G5216

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 15:17 (Faith): And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 (Faith): For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Acts 17:31 (Resurrection): Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Matthew 15:9 (Parallel theme): But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

James 2:20 (Faith): But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Galatians 2:2 (Parallel theme): And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

Isaiah 49:4 (Parallel theme): Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

1 Corinthians 15:2 (Faith): By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.