

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

“The Gospel”

We've mentioned before in our journey through the Word of God how that God's Word is like unto a Mt Range. There are various peaks and points throughout it that as you make your way through you find yourself cresting upon, and going from one summit peak to the next. and Surely if you were to take various Ch's of God's Word and list the various peaks and high points found with in it 1st Cor Ch 15 would be on that list and probably pretty close to the top.

Because as you well know the substance that makes for the subject of this Ch is the gospel message, focusing on the fact of the resurrection. Paul has gone from dealing with *carnalities* to *spiritualities* and now included in on that he comes to the *reality* of the resurrection. and That's part of the beautiful news that comprises the message of the gospel; the Christian faith never views life as ending with death. We have hope that goes beyond this life, we realize that this life isn't where it all ends, it's where it all begins. What we do now, the decisions we make, the things we do and are apart of will impact our eternity. This life simply represents a period of preparation, and as far as believers are concerned the bible is clear that the works we do here will make for the rewards we get there. **and It's not that works save we understand that, but saving grace that's present in your life will work. The bible is clear that works won't save you, but that you're saved *unto* good works, meaning God has a plan for your life.** We read in the book of Ephesians, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” Eph 2:10 and As you walk in those works, are busy *about* those works, are faithful to the Lord *through* those works, your reward will be eternal in the resurrection.

Understand that as it pertains to the gospel that the single most important element to it is in fact the reality of the resurrection. Often times people consider the work of the cross as the most important part of the gospel message. and Certainly with out the cross we have no gospel, no good news, because if the sin issue isn't dealt with we can't be saved. and Because of that we have a tendency to view the resurrection as sort of an added bonus, an addendum to the finished work of the cross. But it's not simply supplemental, it's absolutely essential, because a dead Savior can't save anybody, the payment of our sin upon the cross could not be imputed to us apart from the resurrection. What does the bible say? It says of Christ, “...*who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.*” Rom 4:25 Which is to say that He was delivered up to the cross for our sin, but our personal justification is found in the fact of His resurrection. So the death of Christ couldn't help us apart from the resurrection of Christ. I guess we could understand it like this; through His death our sin is subtracted *from* us, through His resurrection His righteousness is added *to* us. and It takes both to open the entry way of heaven *for* us. We need not only our sin subtracted from us, but we also need His perfect righteousness added to us. Jesus said, “*For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*” Matt 5:20 and Perfect righteousness is imputed to you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ He was delivered up for our sin, but raised for our righteousness, our justification.

So as we enter into this Ch we understand that it's with the emphasis being placed upon the resurrection because there is no gospel message apart from it. The sinless life of Christ and His sacrificial death upon the cross is only 2/3 of the message, the ratification, the verification of the fact that His sinless life and atoning death were acceptable to the Father is found in the resurrection. So we read.

Vs1-2

Now when we get to Vs 3-4 we'll get to the *content* of the gospel, as for now Paul reminds us of the *benefit* of the gospel. He says, "Moreover" or that could be translated, "Now," or "But," and he says, "brethren, I declare to you the gospel." So now we have the subject matter at hand. It's the gospel, when he says, "I declare to you," he's saying, "I'm making known to you, I'm granting understanding to you." **It's imperative that you and I understand the message of the gospel, because how can I really rightly respond to that which I don't really understand? and So, "I want you to understand, I'm making known to you (again) the gospel." and As you know the word gospel literally translated simply means "good news." and Though the church basically has a monopoly on that word now in Paul's day it was a word used in a general sense. If you got a raise at work that was gospel, it was good news. So when someone mentions "The gospel of Jesus Christ" they're simply clarifying the subject matter of their good news, it's the good news of Jesus Christ**

and We see here in Vs 1-2 the basic pattern of evangelism. Paul says, "I preached to you, you received it, stand *in* it and are saved by it." So 1st of all the gospel is preached, or proclaimed. In Eph Ch 6 you'll find that 1 component of the armor of God by which we're to be equipped with is having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. That is we're to be prepared at any time and in any place, we're to take with us everywhere we go the message of the gospel. Peter said, "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you,*" 1 Peter 3:15 **If you don't know the gospel, how can you effectively share it? If right now I pointed to you and said, "Would you please stand up and share with us the gospel of Jesus Christ" What would you say? Are you prepared? When Paul was speaking to the Romans about God's willingness to save any who would believe *in* Him and call *upon* Him he said, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: '*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!*'" Rom 10:14-15 Before the gospel can be received it has to be heard, it needs to be proclaimed in the hearing of a person or a group of people. You have to know it and be able to communicate it. Paul says, "That's what I did, I came *before* you and preached the gospel *to* you."**

But the gospel reviewed *before* you won't do you any good unless it's received *by* you. You have to receive it before you can be reborn through it. What does it mean to *receive* the gospel? It doesn't mean to give mental assent, a nodding (as it were) of the head. What this word literally speaks of is a joining to oneself. In other words we're speaking about personalizing and internalizing the truth contained in the message, allowing it to be assimilated and integrated into your very being.

It becomes joined to you, it's apart of who you are, it's apart of your spiritual DNA pattern, woven into the very fabric of your being. You're receiving it, drinking it in, soaking it up, allowing it to form the fabric of who you are.

So #1 We have to hear it, #2 We receive it, and then #3 we *stand* in it. When we heard it we received it, that speaks of the past, what do we do as it pertains to the present? We stand in it. That is we're to be *fixed to it, abide in it, rooted and established*. Remember Jesus said, "*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*" John 15:4 We're to stand firm in the gospel, and this word "stand" is a verb represented in the present tense which speaks of an ongoing never ending action. We're to stand continuously, unwaveringly, and by its very definition there's implied growth and maturity that comes with this word. *If you're to be firmly grounded and solidly established in the gospel you'll need to be growing in the grace and knowledge of God, through the study of His Word, prayer, and fellowship with other believers.*

How can you be established in something you give no priority to? How can you stand firm in something you know little to nothing about? I can tell you that when it comes to world history, or any form of higher math, science, or computer programming, I don't stand in those things; I'm not established in those things. *I may know bits and pieces about all of them, but I'm not established in any of them, why? Because I don't give myself fully to them, dedicating my time to understanding them, if I'm to stand in the gospel, I'm going to have to give time to it, being dedicated and consecrated to it.*

So I hear it, receive it; stand in it, which translates how? I'm (#4) saved *by* it. There is power inherently, intrinsically bound up with in the message of the gospel, the power of God unto salvation. Paul said, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes,*" Rom 1:16 The bible teaches that sin was woven into the fabric of our very being from the moment of conception passed down from Adam. *and That the wages of sin is death, both physically and spiritually in eternal separation from God. But through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ on our behalf we can be saved from the penalty of our sin. We read this, "by which also you are saved," and we can think, "Saved from what? I didn't know I was in distress."* What we're saved from is the wages and penalty of our own sin, *all have sinned and fall short of the glory and perfection of God.* and It's impossible for God to remain righteous if He doesn't deal with unrighteousness, so judgment is coming. But the good news is that God's judgment has already come, His wrath has already been satisfied (and we'll get into that directly) we don't have to fall under the heavy hand of God's wrath we can have His righteousness accredited to us through simply receiving the gospel and standing in it, you see we're saved *by* it.

Notice (Vs 2 ...if) "Are you saying that you can turn loose of that which you've taken in so that in the end it counts for nothing toward you if you let go of it and walk away from it?" That's basically the way I read it. There are those who will say that he's implying that if you ever let go of it that you never truly grabbed a hold of it. In other words if you don't endure to the end in reality you were never saved at all.

That sounds great, but the scriptures seem clear to me that you have with in you the freewill choice to receive it or reject it and if you receive you can still turn your back and walk away from it anytime you choose. God didn't extract my freewill when I gave my heart to Christ. Jesus warned about it, Paul warned about it, he even sighted Demas by name as one who forsook him having loved this present world. and Paul was hardcore about his ministry team, if you were sold out, you didn't come along. Ask Barnabas or John Mark, Mark didn't hold it together the 1st trip so Paul didn't let him go on the 2nd, believe me if Paul wasn't certain Demas was on board in the 1st place he wouldn't have been on the mission's team. Jesus spoke of the penalty of not abiding, being cut off like a branch that bears no fruit and thrown in the fire, He speaks of the potential of having to blot names out of the book of life in Rev 3. and You don't have to agree with me; you know that I respect anyone's right to be wrong. But the exhortation goes out here, "Hold fast, keep a firm possession of the word preached, because to turn loose of, to walk away from it is to render it non-effective in your life."

Vs3-4

We've spoken of the benefit, this is the content, this is the gospel message given in its simplest and most basic form. and I want you to notice that it doesn't rest on a set of creeds or ideas, the gospel isn't spun out in spiritual platitudes or clichés, it's not the 10 commandments, it's not the sermon on the Mt, it's not do unto others as you would have others do unto you. The gospel isn't let's all hold hands across America and all I'm saying is give peace a chance.

None of those things are the gospel, the gospel is centered not in ideology, or philosophy but in facts and those facts center in a person, the person of Jesus Christ

Paul says, "I delivered to you 1st of all that which I also received." Again how can you deliver that which you've never received, but once we've received it we're obligated to deliver it. Jesus said, "*Freely you have received, freely give.*" Matt 10:8 Someone delivered the gospel to you, thank God for them. Now have you extended that same opportunity to others that they might come to know the same grace and forgiveness of sin that you have? You see we're to deliver 1st and foremost that which we have received in the gospel. When Paul says here, "I delivered to you 1st of all," he means of 1st importance, of top priority. I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the main objective of his presence in their lives was to communicate to them the truth of the gospel. "...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," you guys that's the good news.

It's not about what you have to do for God, but rather what God has done for you in Christ. If I came to you and told you that you could earn a million bucks simply by staying alive and working everyday for the next 150 yrs that wouldn't be very good news. But if I told you that someone had left you an inheritance and you didn't have to do anything to obtain the million because someone else had already done the work all you have to do is receive, that would be good news. and The focus of the gospel isn't what you need to do, it's upon the fact that someone else has already done everything for you, there's an inheritance awaiting you, all you have to do is receive it.

Notice, “Christ died,” that’s at the very heart of the gospel, the death of the Messiah, Jesus Christ the righteous. To the world foolishness, to those who are being saved, the power of God. Why? Because God has stated in His word that apart from the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin, because life is found in the blood. and You’ll find in Lev 17:11 where the Lord said that its blood that makes atonement for the soul. But sinful man can’t atone for sinful man, yet it takes man to atone for man, bulls and goats can’t make amends for man. So we have a problem, because there are none righteous no not one, there are none who do good, who seek after God, we all like sheep have gone astray. So what does God do? He becomes a man, fully God, yet fully man, perfect and holy, with out sin and He lays down His life, shedding His blood upon the altar of the cross. Why? What was the point, why did He give His life upon the cross? Notice it here, “...for our sins.” His blood making atonement for our souls, pouring out His life that we might have life everlasting. The bible says, “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” 2 Cor 5:21 He gave Himself for our sins. Now here’s the deal, He was made sin, but He was never made a “sinner” He became sin, but He didn’t become a sinner and it’s important that you make that distinction. He was a perfect sacrifice, with out spot, with out blemish. But He became the object of God’s wrath (full force) for you, for me, on our behalf, for our sins. That’s the 1st aspect of the gospel, that Christ died for our sins.

The 2nd part notice is simply put, “...He was buried.” Why is that important, doesn’t it go with out saying? No, here’s why; because it rules out any other option of “swoon” theories or perhaps Christ didn’t really die but that perhaps He just passed out and came to 3 days later and went about revealing Himself. Give me a break, do you honestly think that being beaten beyond recognition, scourged to the point of having all the meat torn from your back, entrails exposed, having a crown of thorns beaten down on your head, nailed to a cross and having a spear thrust through your side. That if you just “passed out” you’re going to feel like getting out and about in 3 days?

I had this little surgery on my face by medical professionals whereby they peeled back this portion and removed a little tumor under exacting conditions. Let me tell you I didn’t feel like doing *anything* 3 days later. The fact is Jesus was dead so they buried Him, you don’t bury someone unless they’re dead and the fact that they buried Him testifies to the reality that He was dead. and Jesus had brought a lot of trouble into the lives of the disciples, the leaders of the nation didn’t like them because of Him, they didn’t want more trouble, they weren’t looking to break through a Roman squadron and steal the body, they went back to fishing.

But He rose again the 3rd day, and this is what completes the gospel message. and Again what makes it so important is the fact that our righteousness before God, the fact that God accepted the sacrifice of Christ as sufficient for the sin of the world is directly tied to the resurrection. and The fact that He rose the 3rd day is significant as well, for numerous reasons. One reason is that it gives Christ credibility because He said He’d rise the 3rd day, not just once or twice, but over and over again He affirmed that. So if He rose the 2nd day, or the 5th day as incredible as that would’ve been He would’ve been found a liar and *un-credible*. There’s another reason why it was necessary for Christ to rise again the 3rd day, because the scriptures had declared it. Notice that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the 3rd day *according to the scriptures*.

Now I think we can readily find areas of the OT that point to the death of Christ and the burial of Christ, but where does the OT (the scriptures in view) speak of rising again the 3rd day, or the resurrection in general for that matter? Well, Jesus pointed to Jonah for one. Remember they were after a sign from Jesus and He said that it's an evil and adulterous generation that seeks a sign but no sign would be given them except the sign of the prophet Jonah. and He said, "*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" Matt 12:40 and Even as that great fish didn't hold Jonah down but presented him alive 3 days later, so to Jesus would rise from the heart of the earth 3 days later.

You see the resurrection typified in the account of Ab and Isaac whereby Ab was told to take his son, his only son Isaac whom he loved and sacrifice him on Mt Moriah. and For 3 days (Isaac as good as dead in Ab's sight) they journeyed to the Mt. Isaac carried the wood up the Mt, even as Christ carried the wood of His sacrifice. But as you know as to where God prohibited Ab from allowing the sacrifice of his only son, God followed through, but on that 3rd day as they descended from the Mt, Isaac alive, it's a picture of the resurrection, Ab receiving him as it were "back from the dead." On the day of Atonement every year there would be 2 goats involved in the ritual sacrifice, one slaughtered the other set free, a picture of the death and the resurrection, God carrying our sin from us as far as the east is from the west.

In the ritual for cleansing healed lepers found in the law (Lev 14) (leprosy always being a picture of sin in the scriptures) you find one bird being killed in an earthen vessel over running water (living water being that work of the Spirit). The other bird was to be dipped in the blood of the bird who'd been slain along with cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop, and he was to sprinkle it 7 times over the one who'd been cleansed and then the living bird was to be set free in an open field. and So you have death, the spilling of blood, and of course the picture of the resurrection in the bird that's set free along with the net effect of the one who was cleansed.

There's a picture of the resurrection in Aaron's rod that budded, in that out of death came life, of course there's the Psalms. "*For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*" Ps 16:10 Of course the 2nd Psalm, "The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'" Ps 2:7

When Paul was preaching there in Acts 13 he said that that was a scripture that spoke *not* of Christ coming forth from the womb, but from the tomb, it was a reference to the resurrection. So it's all over in there, God's Word had declared it. That's the gospel, Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again the 3rd day according to the scriptures.

Vs 5-7

Here we're told that Jesus had a private meeting with Peter (Cephas) after His resurrection, what went on there I don't know. But Peter had denied Him vehemently, and so I'd imagine the Lord restored Him personally, and then at the beach publicly when He gave Him the opportunity to confess His love for Jesus 3x's even as he'd denied Him 3x's. How many lawyers would like to have as many witnesses for their case and Paul brings to the table here? These things are legends, fables and myths, they're verifiable historical facts. James (the Lord's brother) didn't even believe in Him until the resurrection, the bible tells us that Jesus' brothers and sisters thought He'd lost His mind.

But the power of the resurrection made a believer out of them. So we have the Word, and we have the witnesses, but notice God's Word before the witnesses because God's Word is of more value and greater reliability than even an eyewitness.

Vs8

Paul is saying that he didn't really have that 3yr gestation period that the others had in spending time with the Lord, he was just more or less pulled out of the world and confronted with Christ on that day on his way to Damascus. So he realizes that his situation is different than what the rest of them experienced. and Your experience may be different than mine, that's ok. **What's critical is that you have an up close and personal encounter with Christ that changes your life, whereby you submit to Him, surrender to Him and give your heart, your life to Him. Circumstances may vary, the end result is what needs to be the same, a life surrendered to Jesus.**

Vs9

Paul's past seemed to haunt him, he never seemed to be able to really get over the fact that he had those who loved his Lord put to death. He knew he was forgiven, but it just never seemed to be too far removed from his mind. But notice his humility, "I'm the least of the apostles (I wouldn't say that) not worthy to be called an apostle," (I wouldn't say that either.) **But that was his personal evaluation of himself. Later on he would say that he was the least of all the saints, and by the time he was ready to be poured out unto the Lord at the end of his life he said that he was the chief of sinners. You would think that the more one walked with Christ the more of a sense of holiness they would have.** But such isn't the case, in reality though we grow in holiness and sanctification, the closer to God we grow the more aware of our own sin and unworthiness we become, the more we walk in humility, modesty, and meekness. Because we realize exactly who we're not in the presence of who He is.

Vs10

There's just so much packed in this 1vs. I think we'd all agree with his 1st statement, "By the grace of God I am what I am." I've done nothing to deserve God's goodness toward me, or warrant His using me. One pastor said, "If you knew who I really was you wouldn't be sitting here listening to me." But then he said, "and If I knew who you really were I wouldn't be standing here talking to you." It's by the grace of God we are, what we are. Paul's next statement is more searching, deeper probing still, "and His grace toward me was not in vain;" "When God grabbed hold of me I didn't take a lethargic approach toward life." I tell ya I don't want God's grace toward me to be in vain, I want my life to count for the kingdom.

So what should I do? Get busy, begin laboring, become a vessel of service for my King. Can I tell you that we're to do whatever we do as unto the Lord, and whatever we do as unto the Lord we're to do with all our heart. We're to work hard, labor abundantly for the Lord. **Is it Christ at work in you, sure it is, but again your freewill is completely intact, serve the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, and with all your soul. But realize it's not you, but the grace of God which is with you. Apart from Christ we can do nothing. The grace of God works for you, it works in you, and it works through you to the glory of God.**

Vs 11

The gospel may come through any # of vessels, to hear it isn't enough you have to believe it. This portion starts out speaking of receiving it, it ends with the need to believe it. I think that says it real nice, we're to receive and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ **and In so doing we stand *in* and are saved *by* it. Take God's Word into your heart, drink it in, internalize, personalize, allow it to be woven into the very fabric of your being, receive the gospel, believe the gospel, it's changed you, it has the testimony of God's Word, the testimony of eye witnesses, it's historical fact, your faith is on a sure foundation.** and As Peter said, "*Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith -- the salvation of your souls.*" 1 Peter 1:8-9

Prayer Points:

God we're so thankful for the work You've done in the person of Your only begotten Son Jesus Christ and Having received it, Lord help us to deliver it to others, that the utmost urgency of our heart would be to make that opportunity available to those around us to hear the gospel, to receive it, stand in it and be saved by it. **We thank You for the power to save us that's found therein and God having been recipients of your grace, may we be those who labor abundantly as *unto* You, out of the overflow of love that we have *for* you. That Your grace toward us be not in vain.**

If you're here and you've never received the gospel, you've never taken the death and resurrection of Christ to heart, had your sin subtracted and His righteousness added to your life then why not let today be the day of salvation for you? Just open your heart, call upon the name of the Lord, internalize, personalize, the reality of what Jesus has done for you. Let Jesus be the Lord, and the Savior of your life.