

I Corinthians Lesson # 32
The Gospel & The Significance of Christ's Death & Resurrection
Pentwater Bible Church
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June 6, 2010

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Paul is about to begin a section of the Scripture, which will provide the most concise description of the Gospel found anywhere in Scripture. He begins by telling them the sequence by breaking it down in steps. First he told them; then they received, followed by their new standing in spiritual destination, which is their salvation. Finally he provides a caveat. If they truly believed and were transformed they will be part of God's family and be headed to heaven when they leave their bodies. They must "keep" or hold firmly this salvation, which is an indication that the Holy Spirit has indeed entered them. Further as we will see later in today's lesson that salvation depends upon whether an individual believes that Christ was resurrected or not. Ephesians chapter two makes this a product of the grace of God to which we apply our faith.

Ephesians 2: 8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Just as our Spiritual Gifts cannot be earned, salvation is the same. It is provided by God to all those who place their faith in Him. Salvation has always been by faith in God. Only the blood of Christ can complete that salvation. He earned the right to give it to whom He pleased. In the Old Testament times the Jews were saved by belief in God too. Their belief though did not result in their immediate entrance into heaven at death. Blood sacrifice was and is essential for salvation. The OT saint only had the blood of animals, which were insufficient to get them to heaven, but with true belief the blood sacrifices were sufficient to keep them out of Hell. The OT saint went to Sheol and waited for Christ to accomplish the fulfillment of their salvation and then free them. Sheol is the OT word for Hades, which is used in the New Testament. There are sixty-four references to Sheol in the OT. Sheol was a place where both the righteous and unrighteous went after death (Psalm 89:48). The righteous expected to go *down* to Sheol (Genesis 37: 35; 42: 38; 44:29, 31; Job 14:13; Psalm 16:10 and Jonah 2:2). The unrighteous also expected to go there (Job 24: 19; Psalm 9:17; 49:14). There were different compartments in Sheol (Deut 32: 22; Psalm 86: 13). Scripture makes it quite clear that there are multiple compartments in Sheol/Hades (Luke 16:19-31). These compartments were for OT history, which runs from Adam to the Ascension of Christ (see attachment).

When Jesus died He died for the sins of *all* people. This includes the sins committed prior to His death and those after His death. It was the death of Jesus that removed the sins of the OT saints as well as Church Age saints. When He died His immaterial Soul as opposed to His material body went to those in Sheol as He predicted

(Matt 12:40). In I Peter 3:18-19 Peter points out that Jesus preached to the spirits in prison. These were the unrighteous ones not the righteous ones. We see this from Luke 16. When He ascended He led captivity captive (Eph 4:8-10). Those who had been captive within Abrahams Bosom (the good side of Sheol) were taken to Heaven with Jesus. It is a fact that Old Testament saints were secure in their faith if only they would believe (II Kings 17: 13-14; Psalm 78: 22, 32; Psalm 106: 24; Isaiah 43: 10-12; Habakkuk 2: 4; Hebrews 10: 37: 37-39; Deuteronomy 10:12. 13.16).

What is the Gospel? It is the fact that Christ died for our sins and was resurrected.

I Corinthians 15: 3-4 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:

Paul himself passed on the truth of the gospel to the Corinthians. This is the same pattern we have today. We learn the gospel, take it to heart and then pass it on. Regardless of how it is received we must continue to pass it on to others. Just as Jesus described in the parable of the sower, some seeds (the gospel) will fall on fertile ground and produce much fruit. These verses, the heart of the gospel, clearly demonstrate that Christ died for our sins and He was raised. The reality of this was verified by the Scriptures (e.g., Psalms 16:8-11; Isa. 53:5-6, 8-10) and by historical evidence verified by time in the grave and out of it, in the presence of the living. The fact that He was buried verified His death, and the fact that He appeared to others verified His resurrection. Peter, the first man to see that Jesus was not still in the tomb (Luke 24: 34; Mark 14: 72) was soon joined by the remaining apostles who comprised the Lord's immediate circle (Mark 16: 14; Luke 24: 36-43; John 20: 19-31).

I Corinthians 15: 6 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 His resurrection more than five hundred believers saw Christ. This group may have been those who were spoken of and received the commission recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. Also Acts 1:3-8 records another group who saw Him just prior to His Ascension. Most of those were still living when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. This was a discussion limited to a large group. Some saw Him, on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13). There were certainly others during the forty days He walked the earth in His resurrected eternal body.

I Corinthians 15: 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

James the Lord's half-brother saw Him after His resurrection and at first did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah (John 7:5). All that changed after James saw the resurrected Jesus. Jesus' other half-brothers also became believers (Acts 1:14) including Jude. James became a believer and made a considerable contribution to Christianity. He

wrote one book that became part of the New Testament canon. He was the bishop of Jerusalem and he conducted the first world wide church council to deal with the issue of the Judiazers imposing orthodox Jewish Law first on new believers instead of them becoming Christians without any entanglements to the Mosaic Law.

I Corinthians 15: 8-9 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.

Since Paul was not one of the original apostles he referred to himself as “born out of due time” instead of born into apostleship with the other originals. The first credential for apostleship was a personal eyewitness of Jesus. Paul had his personal appearance on the Damascus road (Acts 9: 3-6). Paul continued to regret his persecution of the very people that he was now leading as an apostle. He could say with conviction the degree of God’s Grace that is available to even the vilest sinner. This provided him with a purposeful motivation to establish the Christian Church within the Gentile nations. All the while realizing that due to his sin nature he was not fit to be called an apostle. None of us are fit to be called into God’s work when we become believers. We are save by God’s Grace and it is not anything we did or could ever do to earn His merit.

I Corinthians 15: 10-11 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.

This is a summary verse for this section of Scripture. Paul simply states that God’s Grace provides all of our needs and the offices in which He places us to exercise the spiritual Gifts for the Body of Christ. In Paul’s case he affirms the level of commitment and resultant output he achieved. He was not boasting. He simply states the volume of work he achieved. Three major missionary journeys, thirteen, possibly fourteen books in the New Testament as well as personal appearances to high-ranking Romans and Herodians. In fact Paul even died for the gospel. In the final analysis he gives all the praise to God for God’s Grace was with Paul as it is with each of us as we labor for Him in the world. Paul leaves this section of Scripture with the truth that “It does not matter who actually brings a person to Christ” as long as they come. Some plant, some water and some harvest (I Corinthians 3:6-8). The message of Christ is far more important than the messenger.

I Corinthians 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Paul now begins to address an issue that was with the Corinthians. It still exists today. Some did not believe that a resurrection was possible. This was a direct contradiction to the entire gospel message. Paul might be still answering the Corinthians question, which they posed to him in a letter (I Corinthians 7:1). In any event he wanted to clear up their confusion regarding the resurrection.

I Corinthians 15: 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

Quite logically if a resurrection were not possible then the Lord Jesus did not rise from the dead with an immortal body either. Of course there is significant evidence that Jesus did rise from the dead. If some of the Corinthians were claiming to be Christians in some perverted manner they were denying that a resurrection was possible. Not believing that Jesus rose from the dead is to deny the gospel and there are eternal consequences for such a belief.

I Corinthians 15: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

Logically if there is no resurrection then Christ did not rise from the dead and anyone who puts faith in Him is placing his faith in an insecure object. So their faith would be useless.

If Christ did not actually rise from the dead what does that mean to our teaching? It is a waste of time and we could do better things with our time.

I Corinthians 15:15-16 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:

Paul continues his train of logic. If Christ has not been raised then the apostles would all be liars and would be putting their lives in peril for an unworthy cause. Paul appealed to their logic to demonstrate the faulty reasoning they were advancing. If resurrection was not possible then there was not a Christ resurrection. If no Christ raising then the apostles would all be false witnesses. These apostles were all driven to teach the truth of the resurrection. So much so that they all died for it as martyrs. It is impossible to call oneself a Christian if one does not believe that a bodily resurrection is possible. The liberals do this by changing the true meaning of the word *resurrection*. A resurrection is not just a human body coming back to life. It is a return to life with an immortal body that will live forever and never again suffer the ageing and frailties associated with our bodies living in time and space. Jesus is the only person on earth yet to be resurrected. We will follow Him in an ordered sequence.

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

This is the peril that not believing in a resurrection leads to. The faith one places in Jesus while they believe that a resurrection is not possible means that their faith is useless or futile. The Resurrection was God's validation that the redemption paid by Christ on the cross was accepted (Romans 4:25). Without the Resurrection there could be

no atonement and the so-called believers would remain in a state of alienation from God and their sins would continue to be unforgiven.

I Corinthians 15: 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

So the group widens that are not going to heaven. If again the resurrection is not true then those poor souls that went on before us believing it was true are actually in Hell not Heaven. The sting of death would remain and all who already died were deceived.

I Corinthians 15: 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

If there were no Resurrection, the pagans and unbelievers would be right. The “foolishness of the Cross” (1:18) would be just that, and men such as Paul and the apostles who had suffered for the gospel (4:9-13) could only be pitied. They would be seriously misguided and should have lived for the pleasure of the moment. The pagans would be right and the sacrifices of Christians to get the gospel message out would only be cruel, self-inflicted jokes (cf. 15:32).

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