

One of the riches we gain from studying this chapter is to realize that the challenges to our belief in the resurrection is not new with the development of modern science. Foolish doubts about the resurrection began the same day that Jesus exited the tomb.

Already here in the ancient letter of 1 Corinthians, Paul had to write an entire chapter about the resurrection, because so many in the church were questioning it. Because it is so vital, as we discovered last week in saying the indispensable resurrection, Paul called on Christians to hold onto their belief in Christ's resurrection. Paul helps them by adding in our verses today the evidence needed to deepen their faith in the indisputable resurrection.

Because of the evidence, Jesus' resurrection is indisputable.

Paul knows that doubts are a heart problem, not an evidence problem. But Paul here provides the evidence in order to call the Corinthians to stop doubting.

If they doubt the resurrection, their whole Christian life will come unraveled. Paul knew how important this is. When a believer is in the middle of uncertainties and difficulties, if doubt causes him or her to stop holding onto the resurrection of Christ as something sure, then that person will quickly grab onto something else instead.

Alternate stabilizers actually offer no stability at all.

If Christ was not raised, then we are still dead in our sins. If we are dead in our sins, then we have no reason to be stable persons. We might as well be unstable, because death still has authority over us. What would we hold onto?

You want to have a great body and a great family – yes, but death still comes.

You want to have a great home, clothes and car – yes, but death still comes.

You want to have a vocation with great vacations – yes, but death still comes.

If death is coming, then whatever we get is not stable.

To strengthen our faith in the resurrection is a very important task that Paul takes up in these verses. A payment for our sins has been made, and because our sins have been overcome, our death has been overcome.

1. The Risen Christ appeared alive to many people. (v.5-6)

Christ was not simply raised. People saw Christ alive and heard Him speak, and talked with Him.

Verse 5, Christ appeared to Cephas, and then to the 12.

Verse 6, Christ appeared to more than 500 Christian people at the same time,

most of whom are still living.

2. The Risen Christ appeared to apostles, including Paul. (v7-.8)

Verse 7, Christ appeared to one apostle named James, then Christ appeared to all of the apostles.

Verse 8, Christ appeared to Paul Himself. Paul showed by writing the phrase “last of all” in verse 8, that Paul was the very last person to whom Christ appeared.

What have we learned from verses 5-8?

Christ in His Risen body appeared to central people in the authority of the church, such as Peter, James and all the apostles.

Christ appeared to large numbers of people. Judges and lawyers in courtrooms call this corroborating evidence. It means that when 12 apostles all saw the same thing, they support or corroborate, validate or confirm the report that each other is giving. Beyond that, when we say that Christ appeared to 500 people, that is huge. That is irrefutable proof.

Christ also appeared to Paul, which brings us to the third point.

3. The Glorified Christ appeared to Paul, and commissioned him as a genuine apostle. (v.9-11)

It was a requirement in order to become an apostle that a person would have to see the resurrected Savior. We know this from the time when the 12 apostles were down to 11 apostles because of the death of Judas, and it was time to replace Judas. Who would replace Judas as an apostle? It could not be just anyone. It had to be someone who had seen Jesus all along, and who had seen Jesus risen from the dead. In Acts 1:21-22, “*one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.*”

Christ appeared to Paul, but it was not simply the resurrected Christ. Paul saw the Christ later. So much later, that Christ had not only risen from the dead, but by that time Christ had ascended into heaven, so Paul saw the ascended Christ. But not just the ascended Christ. After Christ ascended, He was glorified. Paul saw the GLORIFIED CHRIST. None of the other apostles saw Christ later, after he had been glorified, so in that way, Paul was a special apostle.

So, in verse 8, Paul described Himself as being alive at the wrong time to be made an apostle. Paul saw himself as being connected to an earlier era. Paul wrote about himself this way, “*as to one untimely born, [Christ] appeared to me.*”

Paul had not lived at the time of the 12 apostles.

Paul had not seen Jesus get baptized by John the Baptist.

Paul had not seen Jesus perform many of the miracles and preach his

sermons.

Paul missed out on Jesus' earthly ministry.

Yet Paul gets to be an apostle.

To some degree, Paul had a permanent sense of humility about Christ.

Going on into verse 9, you understand why Paul wrote, "For I am the least of the apostles..." Paul did not have the same experience with Christ. But Paul had a different experience with Christ. The story is told in Acts chapter 9, when Jesus appeared to Paul, had a conversation with Paul, and set apart Paul as an apostle.

There is something else that Paul had which counted against Paul. That is, that Paul had a past. Paul had a record. Paul had a history of hurting Christians. Paul used to be a mean and violent person, with a desire to hurt other people. Paul was not proud of it now. In fact, Paul went on to write in verse 9, where Paul wrote, "*I am unworthy to be called an apostle.*" That is a surprising statement, but it is more than that Paul missed out on the earthly ministry of Jesus. Also, it was because Paul had killed Christians. Paul wrote the clear answer why he was unqualified to become an apostle, "*Because I persecuted the church of God.*"

Yes, that is a tough one.

Paul's opponents were probably bringing that up regularly, so it makes perfect sense for Paul to address it.

What is Paul's answer? Grace.

Here is the full answer in verse 10, "*For by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain.*"

God gave grace toward Paul was not in vain.

That shows that God's grace to Paul had an impact, it caused a result.

What was the result of God's grace toward Paul? God caused Paul to be converted, which means that God forgave Paul for all of the killing of Christians that Paul had done. But that was not the only result of the grace of God toward Paul. Another result of the grace of God toward Paul was that Paul become an apostle!

God chose Paul to become an apostle.

So, before anyone focuses on the fact that Paul was unworthy to become an apostle, please remember that it was God who chose Paul to become an apostle.

Everything good in Paul's life had come by the grace of God. Paul began with the grace of God when Christ appeared to Paul. When Paul evaluated his own life, in terms of grace, it was grace from start to finish and grace from top to bottom, grace from left to right, grace from the inside out, and grace all the way through.

Here Paul focused on one result of the grace of God. What was not in vain? What fruit had the grace of God had in Paul's life? What result? How could we know that Paul had been filled with grace? Paul's service to the church, to the

kingdom, to Christ Himself. Paul's works of service. That is not how Paul was saved. But that is how we know that Paul was mightily infused with the grace of God. Paul worked really hard.

In fact, out of all the apostles, it was the apostle who used to persecute the church, that was now working harder than all of the other apostles.

Paul was not being proud. Paul was being honest.

Paul was equally honest about his past failings. Paul had persecuted.

Paul now was truthful about his current efforts. More than others.

How do we know that Paul was not being boastful?

Because of the rest of verse 10, "*I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.*"

Paul did nothing in Paul's own power and strength.

Paul accomplished nothing on his own.

The only way that Paul could accomplish all that Paul had accomplished was the grace of God.

The apostle who relied so strongly on the grace of God, was the most effective apostle, the most productive apostle, the wisest and most fruitful of all the apostles.

Before Paul finished this section of this chapter, Paul wrote verse 11 to bring the readers back to the main point. The Corinthians must believe that Christ had been resurrected. All the apostles agreed that the resurrection of Christ was central to the gospel. Here when Paul uses the word "we" Paul is referring to the apostles. Here is verse 11, "*Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*" All of the true apostles had preached the resurrection, and the Corinthians had believed it. Paul was writing with the goal that the Corinthians would re-affirm their belief in the resurrection of Christ. Why? Because the evidence was indisputable. The death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of Christ. But also the evidences within Paul Himself, that Paul was changed by Christ. Paul was brought from death to life by Christ. Paul was given grace to believe, and grace to be commissioned as an apostle. Paul was given more grace to be a very diligent apostle. All of this is working toward the goal that the Corinthians would be secured in their trust in the indisputable resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Eagerly receive grace from God, & eagerly give grace to others.

Paul wrote about the gospel as something that Paul has experienced.

Have you experienced the gospel?

The Corinthian believers ought to be experiencing a continual effect because

of the fact that Jesus truly rose from the dead.

To believe in the resurrection is not an idea with which you agree.

To believe in the resurrection is not merely what Christians say who join churches, and become religious people.

To believe in the resurrection is to hold fast to a fact of history with **HUGE AND ABIDING PERSONAL IMPACT.**

The fact that Jesus rose has ultimate impact upon us.

Paul showed us how it works. Paul used to kill Christians, making him ashamed and utterly unworthy to receive God's love. But Paul is given God's love.

How did that happen? Christ made a personal impact with a personal appearance to Paul. Through that interchange with the risen and glorified Christ, Paul is shaped. Paul is shaped as a person and as an apostle. Paul wrote that it was the grace of God that **MADE PAUL WHAT HE IS.**

LET ME ASK YOU – WHAT MAKES YOU WHAT YOU ARE?

WHAT ONE THING MAKES YOU WHO YOU ARE?

The one thing should not be you. You are not at the center of your life.

That is the mistake of our day. Our culture. Everyone wants to define life as whatever he or she says it is. I am a female if I say I am a female. I am a male if I say I am a male. I am successful if I say I am successful. I am a winner if I say I am a winner. Me, me, me, me. Paul shows that is the sinful nature operating in full force unhindered.

No, you need something true and factual to tether yourself onto.

The gospel takes you out of the center of your life.

The gospel puts Christ at the center of your life.

WHAT ONE THING MAKES YOU WHO YOU ARE?

CHRIST. THE RISEN CHRIST. THE ASCENDED CHRIST. THE GLORIFIED CHRIST. THE SPIRIT-GIVING CHRIST WHO MAKES APPEARANCES TO INDIVIDUALS DRIVING DOWN THE ROAD OF DARKNESS, EMPTINESS AND SORROW. EVEN THE ROAD OF VIOLENCE.

When Christ is at the center of your life, you will be eager to be refreshed in the truth of the indisputable resurrection of Christ.

When Christ makes an appearance to you, the same thing happens to you that happened to Paul – you recognize that what you are is unworthy. You are unworthy. But without changing and efforts and makeovers and improvements at all, without becoming worthy in any way whatsoever, you receive a perfect relationship to God through Christ who died and rose again to remove your unworthiness. You still don't have the ability to live worthy. You must keep relying on the grace of God to live worthy.

Because you fully rely on the full grace of God, you live your life to the full.

Just like Paul, you will work for the King. You will pour yourself out, all your energy, all your hopes, and time and talents abilities efforts and attention will be on Christ and His people.

The grace of God does not create lazy people.

The grace of God creates diligence and a deepening engagement.

People filled with the grace of God don't stop where everyone else stops. They keep on going and exceed the prior high marks of Christian service.

When we live in the light of God's complete acceptance and approval, we are set free from the whole apparatus of guilt. True guilt. False guilt. Attempts to self-wash the guilt away. All of it is gone. We are free from all forms of guilt, all battles with past guilt and imagined guilt and shaming of others. We live in the gift that the world only dreams of – a cleansed conscience that results in a clear conscience.

Grace. Remember grace. When you evaluate your life, just remember that you don't deserve anything that you have.

Your walk with God started with the grace of God. Your life is grace from start to finish, grace from top to bottom, grace from left to right, grace from the inside out, and grace all the way through to the end. Everything good that you have has come to you by God's grace.

You cannot have any of this if Jesus did not rise again.

The Indispensable Resurrection.

Don't let anyone tell you that Jesus did not rise, because He did.

It is indisputable. Today we have celebrated the Indisputable Resurrection.

God placed at the center of the story that is at the center of history that the resurrection is true. This is the only thing that can carry the weight of being at the center of our lives. This is what we grab hold of, and never let go. We hold onto the resurrection of Jesus in a personal way, because without it we fall apart. With it, we can become the most productive members of the kingdom, by the grace of God. **Eagerly receive grace from God, & eagerly give grace to others.**