

2156 - OF FIRST IMPORTANCE - 1 Cor 15:1-5

PRELIMS. I have been **affected** over the last few years in hearing about some Christians whom I **knew** pretty well, but who are now no longer 'following the Lord!' This has **saddened** me, and especially as I had **great hopes** for some of these people. I am amazed at **how easily** some professed faith in a **genuine** and **credible** way, but who are now **no longer** living life with Christ at the centre! Paul says: *it would have **been better** for them **never to have known** the way of righteousness than **after knowing it to turn back** from the holy commandment* [2 Pet 2:21]. It has brought me to see the **importance** that each of us **need the continual ministry of the Word**. Xnity is not a static thing, it is **dynamic**! We either **advance** or **retreat**. There is no stationary position in the Xn life - we get **more like X** - or **less**!

It is **important**, that a truly born again Xn, **needs** to have **regular** times of **feeding, instruction, fellowship**, with **both** the Lord and fellow Christians. If not, he is **liable** and probably **likely**, to backslide and possibly even **apostatise**! My definition of a Christian is, as the Bible, Confession, is: someone who **professes** the Christian faith! Someone whom takes the Lord's Supper! We ultimately do not know who are genuine and who are not - only by their **fruits** will we know them. We find this principle throughout Scripture in both testaments, so lets turn to God's Word and see what is of **first importance**!

In this passage the great Apostle Paul, like his Xn brothers Peter and Jude, sees the **need** of **reminding** his Xn readers of the vitally **important** aspects of salvation. Paul has been dealing with some of the practical matters in the church, and having corrected many of the abuses, he now, at the end of his letter, **reminds** them again of what is of **first importance** [3] - that is, of course, the **gospel**! It is that *Christ **died** for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was **buried**, that He was **raised** on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He **appeared** to Cephas, **then** to the twelve* [3-5] - and of course we can add "and appeared to many others all over the world, **including ourselves**, in divine and spiritual manifestations"! **APP** Has Jesus Christ appeared in **your** life?

Paul was rather anxious about some in the congregation who were on

the **slippery slope**, some even believing there would be no resurrection of the dead! His fear is seen in his mentioning two apparent contradictory things. (1) Although he was able to say *the gospel...in which you stand* (at this moment in time), (2) he immediately adds *by which you **are being saved**, if you hold fast to the Word - unless you **believed in vain!*** [1,2] There seems to be some uncertainty or **hesitation** about their **holding fast to the Word!**

Three times Paul uses the phrase **are being saved** to the Cors [1:18, 15:2, 2.2:15]. The Bible uses all three terms: **saved**; **being saved**; **will be saved!** Of course **all** those chosen by God in a past eternity will **certainly** be saved, they **cannot** be lost - but **we** do not know **who** they are! Only those who **persevere** to the end will be saved.

Paul was not 100% certain **all** of them would **persevere** - so he laid on them **the responsibility** of judging themselves! 'The Message'= 'I'm assuming, now, that your belief was the real thing and not a passing fancy, that you are in this for good and holding fast!' While Paul says they are *called to be saints* [1:2] he is speaking from the standpoint of the time of writing. Some would defect! Many in Paul's congregation **did defect!** To Tim later on he wrote about *Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have **swerved from the truth**, saying that the **resurrection has already happened**. They are upsetting the faith of some.* But their defecting should not worry us, because as Paul added *The **Lord** knows those that are His* [2Tim 2:17,18]. We must not defect. We must **hold fast to the Word** (Christ)! That is the big lesson!

The Bible **equally emphasises both** man's **responsibility and** divine **sovereignty!** The Bible teaches that before the foundation of the world, God chose His people! But the Bible **also** teaches that **unless you repent you will all likewise perish** [L13:3]. The Bible teaches that God preserves His people but it **also** calls believers to **keep themselves in the love of God** [Jude 21]. It teaches that God can intervene directly in the affairs of this world, as He did to Peter in prison. But it **also** teaches the **necessity of using the means** of grace. **unless you believe that I am He you will die in your sins** [John 8:24]. Paul taught this principle regarding daily life. He said **Unless these men stay in the ship, they cannot be saved** [Acts 27:31].

The fact that we humans **cannot reconcile** these dichotomies does not in any way detract from their truthfulness! **Both** are clearly **taught** in Scripture We must obey God's commands to repent and to seek the Lord. We are given **assurances** that those who seek, **find**.

So **because** of their **lack** of apostolic **teaching** - they had **no pastor** or apostle since Apollos left them, some considerable time ago - the Cors were **becoming careless** about many things, they were **presumptuous** - as if it did not matter how they lived/worshipped. They were **careless** about the **Supper**; careless about **relationships**; careless about **doctrine**; careless about **sexual perverseness**; careless about **order** in God's house. They needed much **correction!**

There was **no 'official'** teacher to guide them and lead them. Only **self-appointed** teachers who were actually **false** teachers! (**No apostle** ordained these new teachers, no church ordained them! They **appointed themselves** without any 'official' authority crediting their 'call' to minister!) **That** contributed to the Cor's spiritual decline! It is a **fact**, that believers, even strong believers, need **daily teaching** from God's Word **and** from the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Church, and who **silently/imperceptibly without our noticing** God is **strengthening** His people as His Word is read/prayed! **If** there is **no** daily teaching we will **certainly deteriorate** in our spiritual lives.

Now there are **four** things Paul emphasises here regarding things of 'first importance'! If we **focus** on these four things and hold them as fundamentals, the rest will fall into place. Three are about Christ.

First, He **died for our sins**! Does that still **affect you**? When did you last **thank** God for sending X to die for your sins? **Today**? Jesus, who was **sinless**, died in your place!! There was **darkness over all the land** for 3 hours when Jesus cried *My God, My God why have You forsaken Me* [Mat 27:46]. Is this a **myth** to you or a **great truth worthy** of **daily** thanksgiving? Which? Have you **forgotten** this?

Second, Jesus did not only die and make atonement for our sins. He **rose triumphant** from the grave. Tremendous things happened at the **resurrection** of Jesus. Tremendous **spiritual/eternal/infinite** things! Things between heaven and earth! Things about the Covenant between God and mankind! Look: after He rose *The tombs were*

opened. And **many bodies of the saints** who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs **after His resurrection** they went into the holy city and appeared to many [Mat 27:53]. Surely **very special!** So do **you think** about this often - or have you **forgotten?** Paul wanted to **remind** the Cors about it because they **lost sight** of it [1] Be honest - do **you hold fast** to that doctrine? Does it **excite you?**

Third, **He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.....** [5]! Why is Paul mentioning this? Because Jesus is still alive **revealing Himself** to sinners! Jesus is not dead. He is still alive - and **communicating** with people every day! Jesus met Paul on the Damascus Road. Since His ascension, Jesus **has been revealing Himself** to many people by **His Spirit!** Look: *It was **before your eyes** that Jesus Christ was **publicly portrayed*** [Gal 3:1]!! Is Paul 'out of his mind' when he later told the Cors, *God...has shone in our hearts to give **the light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the **face of Jesus Christ?*** Was he 'out of his mind' when he said *the god of this world has **blinded the minds** of the unbelievers, **to keep them from seeing the light** of the **gospel** of the glory of Christ?*[2C4] Tell me - Has X appeared to **you?**

Fourth, **hold fast to THE WORD** in accordance with the Scriptures! Now of course Jesus Christ Himself **IS** The Word! But here it refers to the **Holy Scriptures**. The Bible is a fascinating Book! No Book has ever **endured** such **opposition** and **survived** the centuries! It has endured the ages and is **still changing** people's lives! It is **not** simply changing the minds of simpletons but **scholars!** Do **not listen** to those who have not **seriously studied** the Bible! Checked it out!

So what is the main point of this message? This: **Daily** read the Scriptures! **Daily** pray to God to **keep you** in the faith for **you need** keeping. **Daily** cling, **hold fast** to Jesus Christ, **never go away** from Him. **Daily** walk in God's ways. Worship Him every day!

Else, **you too**, will slip and drift away, **slowly** but **surely** - without **realising** it! That is the way it happens - silently, imperceptibly but actually and really! Because this is true, Paul finished this chapter by saying: *Therefore my beloved brothers, be **steadfast**, always **abounding** in the **work** of the Lord, knowing that **in the Lord** your labour is not in vain* [58]!