

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

*<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*

*(Pastor prays)*

Today is a beautiful day because Jesus is alive! Today is the day we declare to the world that we serve a risen Savior – Jesus Christ -- who is the only Son of God and the hope for our tragic world.

In verse 3 of the text I just read, Paul says, *For I delivered to you as of first importance...* Here in Chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians you will find the most exclusive, clear and extensive treatment of the Resurrection in all of scripture. Paul tells us that the truth and power of the resurrection of Jesus gives life and joy to every other area of Gospel growth. The bodily resurrection of Jesus sits at the very heart of Christianity and, if we don't have the resurrection of Jesus, then we don't have hope. In 1 Corinthians 15:14 Paul says. *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.*

Did you know that the first two Christian sermons preached in the book of Acts focused on the bodily resurrection of Jesus? If the resurrection is eliminated, then the life-giving power of the Gospel is eliminated. Paul wrote it like this in Romans 10:9: *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Do you know what he meant by that? It's not possible to be a Christian and *not* believe in the resurrection. In approximately 33AD, they nailed Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on a cross. He died for our sins according to the scripture. He was buried. He was raised on the third day according to the scripture that we might have life and have it

more abundantly. Every year millions of people go to the tomb where they laid Him and they see the tomb is empty. Because Jesus is alive ...

## **The Resurrection is the Gospel**

(There are) Several things to notice. Let me give you just a few words that you can hang your thoughts on as we go through this scripture. The first word is...

### **Personal**

Religion is a personal thing. We are told not to discuss two things: politics and religion. When you read Verse 1, you can feel the personal tone. *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand...* He calls them “brothers.” They are obviously believers and notice how he describes what they did with the Gospel. See it? They “received it.”

The idea is (one of) a remarkable gift that someone has given to you that you received with great joy...to take it as your own. Like this pen in my pocket – it is a gift from my wife Connie. I carry it everywhere I go. It is important to me. I received it and I *love* it. Now that is on a lower, earthly, more understandable level. Think on a higher, stronger and holier level. It’s important for you to understand the Gospel and take it as your own. The Gospel of Jesus is only good to you if you make it personal. It must become a part of your story. There are many here who believe in God but have never made it personal. If you attend church because of your upbringing or guilt, you miss the life-changing power of Christ. The first word is "personal." The next word is...

### **Strong**

Let’s read Verse 1 again: *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand...* See the last phrase in Verse 1, “*In which you stand*”? Receiving the Gospel is not just something personal. The Gospel has the power to keep you standing in the face of tremendously adverse circumstances. That little word “stand” means established, planted with deep roots. The Gospel is different than trying to get people to have a good experience on a Sunday. The Gospel of Jesus equips you for the war on Monday.

To stand means to hold your ground. In Ephesians Chapter 6, as Paul closes his letter, he says, “<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the

*whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the full armor of God, and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – the Gospel – will give you the ability to hold your ground in the face of your present struggle. That's the power of Christ - His sinless life, His atoning death, His resurrection. That's two words so far – "personal" and "strong." Let me give you a third word to consider:

### **Change**

Verse 2 says, *and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.* Let's talk about the idea of "being" saved. The idea here is that of being rescued, delivered from harm, pulled from a fire, restored to health.

Later in the book of Romans Paul will say that we were dead and in Christ we are made alive. There is a dramatic feel. The Gospel is not just changed behavior or to start going to church more. Instead we use words like "transformed" or strong words like "converted."

Jesus Christ said, "Born again." In this passage, we must pay close attention to the verb tense in verse 2. *By which you are being saved...* Pay attention here. The tense is called "present continuous." That means salvation is a once and for all act (you received) but it is an ongoing event. It's progressive. Here's the idea: Don't just look back at the time you received the Gospel as when you *were* saved and that was *it*. That's when your salvation started, but it is ongoing. As you grow and worship, as you struggle, read and pray, you are being saved. You are being transformed into Christ-likeness. The Gospel is personal. It gives strength. And there is change. The fourth word is...

### **Cherish**

Verse 2 – Hold fast so your faith is not empty. This little phrase means to catch something and hold onto it with both hands. The Gospel is the pearl of great price that we cherish above everything else. And we value the Gospel of Christ above all else. We hold fast to it. With all that said, now in verses 3-4, Paul takes the earliest Christian creed and teaches us the fundamentals of the Christian Gospel. He teaches us that it is personal, strong, causes change and we cherish it. The last word is...

## **Forgiven**

Christ died for our sins. Paul uses the divine name for Jesus—Christ-- to tell us the one who is fully God and fully man died for our sins. This creed in verses 3-4 presupposes that there is an alienation from God because of human rebellion and sin. The Bible teaches that the just penalty for sin is death. Paul tells us that Christ died for our sins. One died on behalf of many to satisfy the penalty and overcome the alienation. Paul says Christ died for our sins according to the scripture pointing back to Isaiah 53:4-7a

*Surely he has borne our griefs*

*and carried our sorrows;*

*yet we esteemed him stricken,*

*smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*<sup>5</sup>But he was pierced for our transgressions;*

*he was crushed for our iniquities;*

*upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,*

*and with his wounds we are healed.*

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,*

*yet he opened not his mouth;*

*like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,*

He is the paschal lamb, the sacrifice. Christ died (substitute) for our sins according to the scriptures. Not only that, in verse 4 of today's passage, Paul tells us He was buried. Paul tells us in no uncertain terms: He was dead. On Saturday, there was a genuine corpse lying in the grave. His brain had stopped functioning. His heart had quit beating. The color went from His cheeks as the ashen tint of death settled on His body. (It's) an objective reality: cold, lifeless, motionless, hopeless, dead.

Paul tells us the corpse of Jesus lay dead in a grave. He was buried. God Almighty, the eternal and only judge, delivered the punishment for our sin onto Jesus. The full and unthinkable wrath of an incensed God was unleashed on Christ at Calvary, whereby He became the scapegoat, the sin offering for mankind.

Listen, He was your substitute if you believe and His death met the eternal obligations for justice. God is satisfied with the death of Christ. His holy anger is emptied on the cross of Christ...the cross where God's love and God's judgment meet.

Now if you continue in verse 4, you find out the objective of the death of Jesus will be reversed by the one that delivered the fatal judgment. It's important to note the wording that Paul uses in verse 4. "He was raised" *not* that "He raised." God the Holy Judge who delivered the punishment, raised Him from the dead. The finality of the death penalty delivered at Golgotha has been overrun by the love and grace of God in raising Christ from the dead. God has spoken the final word of victory, life and hope. "God raised him from the dead."

Did you know John MacArthur says there is more concrete *bona fide* evidence for the resurrection of Christ than there is the conquest of Britain by Julius Caesar? The bodily resurrection of Christ is the most-documented, best-proven fact in antiquity. The earliest creed of the church affirming it from the Old Testament. "According to scripture." There were eyewitnesses who died proclaiming it and the resurrection gives the victory stamp to the Gospel and erases forever my alienation from God. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you *will* be saved.

*(Pastor prays)*