



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Easter Sunday

April 17, 2022

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Clint Pressley

*15 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. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup>Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

*(Pastor prays)*

Today is a beautiful day! Resurrection Sunday. The Sunday that makes all other Sundays possible because Jesus is alive, and today we celebrate and declare to the world that we serve a Risen Savior! Jesus Christ, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. And on the third day, He rose again from the dead! And He is the one true hope for the tragic world we live in!

I have chosen this passage to celebrate today because of verse three of the text I just read. Paul says, “I delivered to you as of first importance.” Here in I Corinthians 15 you will find the most direct, intense, and clearest treatment of the resurrection of Jesus in all the Bible. The apostle Paul stakes everything on the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. He goes so far as to insist that the resurrection of Jesus gives life and joy and hope and strength to every other part of being a Christian! At the cross, victory is won, and at the resurrection, victory is declared!

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 I Corinthians 15:14, Paul says, “if Jesus has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” But in fact, Christ *has* been raised from the dead. Did you know that the very first Christian sermons preached in Acts focused completely on the resurrection? If the resurrection of Jesus is eliminated, then the soul-saving, life-giving power of the Gospel is completely void! And the Gospel is useless and Christianity doesn't exist. When the apostle Paul is explaining how to become a Christian in Romans 10:9 he says, *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.* That's a promise to every person here who trusts in Christ. Paul is saying that in order to actually become a Christian, you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross in the place of sinners and God raised Him from the dead that you might have life!

Right up front, here is the Gospel in short form. In approximately 33 AD, Jesus Christ, the very son of God, was nailed to the cross taking the punishment for our sins. He died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried. He was raised on the third day, a Sunday according to the scriptures. And all who believe in Him will have life and have it more abundantly. The tomb, I've been there myself. Every year millions of people go to the tomb where they laid Him and they see the tomb is empty because Jesus is alive!

### **A Living Jesus Will Save You**

I will use questions for my points today.

#### **Do you trust Him?**

You know religion is a personal thing. We are often told not to discuss politics or religion because it's personal and can get out of hand. Notice how Paul addresses the people getting this letter in verse one. **15** *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 as we see it in verse one. They received it. The idea is that someone has presented a remarkable gift and he received it with great joy. You make it your own. I received with joy this pen in my pocket from Connie LaBelle

Smith Pressley. I received it and made it my own. This is important to understand that the gospel of Jesus is only good for you if you make it personal. It must become your story. There are many people here like you who believe in God but have never made the Gospel personal.

Do you trust Him?

What do I mean by the Gospel of Jesus? Let me explain it in a way that we normally do. We have categories. The Gospel has to do with God, Mankind, and Christ. So we would explain it like this: The Bible says that God is the holy creator. He created you in His own image. You, as a human, have the image of God. It's what gives you dignity. That image of God in us has been disfigured by our own sin. Sin is not just bad decisions or mistakes; sin is offensive to God. And that makes it so that we are not in fellowship with God because He is holy and we are sinners. But God is not just a *just* God, he is also *loving*, the Bible says. He loves us in such a way that He gives us Jesus. Now this is exclusive to Christianity. That Jesus being fully God and fully man. He lived on earth in such a way that He fulfilled all the commandments. We can't do it. We are all sinners. But Jesus, as our substitute, lived as a man earning that righteousness. And then, after fulfilling all the commandments, at the cross something happens. Because God is just, he must judge sin. But because He is good, that judgment of our sin is on Jesus. It's why Jesus died on the cross. But He didn't just die on the cross, He also, for any person here who trusts Him, He gives you His righteousness. He calls it "the great exchange." He takes your sin and gives you His righteousness. So that if you believe in Jesus—this is the beauty of the Gospel—if you believe in Jesus and you trust Him, the Bible says, that you are saved. So, do you trust Him?

Here's the second question.

### **How strong are you?**

We have just come through a rough couple of years. How much can you actually stand? Let's read verse one again and see that last phrase. **15** *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,* It says, in which you stand. Receiving Christ is not just trusting Him in a one-time event so you can go to Heaven. The Gospel has the power to keep you standing in the face of tremendously adverse circumstances. That little word "stand" means that you're established. You are planted. You've got deep roots. Look, this gospel is different than just trying to get people to have a good experience on

Sunday. The gospel of Jesus equips your soul for what happens on Monday. “To stand” means to hold your ground. In Ephesians 6:10-11 as Paul closes his letter to the Ephesian church 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 is the full armor of God! And the Gospel gives you the ability to stand in the face of your present struggle. That's the power of Jesus Christ; His sinless life, His substitutionary, atoning death, and His resurrection from the dead. You need to trust so that you can have strength.

### **Have you been changed?**

Let's read verse one and the first part of verse two. **15** *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,* By which you are being saved. That word “saved” means to be rescued, delivered from harm, pulled from a fire, restored to health. Later in the book of Romans Paul will describe being a Christian. Paul will say we are dead in sin and have been made alive in Christ. You see Christianity is not just some changed behavior, it's not getting clean or to start going to church more. Becoming a Christian is a dramatic event. Jesus described it as being *born again*. It is going from death to life, from slave to free, from an enemy to a son.

Now in this passage we must pay close attention to the verb tense. There is a grammar lesson here and it is in verse two. By which you are *being* saved. Pay attention here because the tense is a present continuous. That means that salvation is a once and for all act, when you received, but it has an ongoing effect, it's progressive. Here's the idea. You don't just look back at the time you were saved or confirmed or baptized and that was *it*. That might be when your walk with Christ *started* but that walk is *ongoing* as you grow and worship and struggle and pray and strive. You are being saved each day and becoming more like Christ. The question is, have you been changed by God in Christ?

### **What do you love the most?**

Go back to verse two with me and just read it all the way through. <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.* Do you see that little phrase “hold fast”? That little phrase means to catch something and hold it with both hands. You see, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the pearl of great price for Christians and we love it

above everything else. Because every person here who is a Christian was once lost, without hope and covered with sin. But God in Christ loved me and by grace saved me and He will do the exact same for you if you turn to Him. Do you trust Him? How strong are you? Have you been changed? What do you love most?

### **Do you need forgiveness?**

Let's get into the heart of the passage in verses 3-4.<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,* Christ died for our sins. The divine name, Christ, the one who is fully God and fully man died for our sins. Sinning is the alienation from God. God is just and the penalty for sin is death. Paul tells us that Christ died for our sins. One died on behalf of the many to satisfy the judgment of God. Paul says that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. That points back to Isaiah 53:5. *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.* Here is the Gospel. Christ died as our substitute and then the great exchange happens. He takes our sin and gives us His righteousness. Not only that, in verse four Paul tells us He was buried. Paul tells us in no uncertain terms that 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 left from His cheeks as the ashen tint of death settled on His body. Here is 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, unto Him. The full and unthinkable wrath of an incensed God was unleashed on Christ at Calvary - whereby, He became the scapegoat. He was the sin offering for mankind. Listen, He was your substitute if you believe. 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 is where God's love and God's justice meet. Now, if you continue in verse four, you find out the objective reality of the death of Jesus will be reversed by the one who delivered the fatal judgment. It's important to note the wording that Paul uses in verse four. He was raised. Not just 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.

This is what McArthur says. There is more concrete, *bona fide* evidence for the resurrection of Christ than there is for the conquest of Britain by Julius Caesar. The bodily resurrection of Christ is the most documented, best proven fact in antiquity. The earliest creed, the Apostles Creed, of the church affirms it. From the Old Testament, according to the scripture, affirms it. Eyewitnesses died proclaiming it. The resurrection gives the victory stamp to the Gospel and erases forever my alienation from God. If you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved and forgiven. You will be brought in as a son or a daughter of God based on what Jesus has done for you at the cross.

Will you today trust Him and Him alone? How strong are you? Have you been changed? What do you love the most? Do you need forgiveness?

*(Pastor prays)*