

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 v 1 - 11

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[0 : 00] We're here because of God's grace. We were particularly thinking about that grace this morning, that grace to us in the gospel. And when the Apostle John was given that vision of heaven, in chapter 14 of Revelation we're told that he saw an angel.

And this is what he says, I saw another angel flying in mid-air, in other words between heaven and earth, and he had the eternal gospel to acclaim. And to those who live on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language and people.

The eternal gospel, in other words the everlasting gospel, the gospel that always has been from start to finish. There's never been more than one gospel. There's only been the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel of God's grace, the gospel of God, the great gospel.

And so we're going to sing together of that great gospel, 150. Great is the gospel of our glorious God. Let's stand and sing together, 150.

Let's continue to adoringly sing of him who dwells above. Let us pray together.

[1 : 19] What a day it will be, O Lord our God, when all the shackles and all the weariness and all the gloom of this life is gone. When we are with you in the splendor of your glory, in the splendor of heaven, in the splendor of your presence, when all tears will be dried, all pain will be gone, all death will be finished, when all sin will be destroyed, O Lord.

And we shall sing, O how we shall sing. We shall sing and our throats will not become dry. We shall sing and we shall not be weary. We shall sing and we shall be so much more tuneful than we are now.

For Lord, we shall be perfect, for we shall be like you and give you the praise and the worship that you rightly deserve. But, O Lord, we thank you that you are drawing us to that day.

Thank you that we are one day's march closer to that day. Thank you, O Lord, that we are on our way to that celestial city, that golden place.

We praise you and thank you that along the way you give to us Sunday by Sunday the sweetness of your presence, the nearness of your Holy Spirit, the encouragement of your word.

[2 : 39] Lord, we thank you even though day by day through the week we may not be able to meet in this way, yet we can still meet with you and be refreshed in your grace.

Be with us in this time, O Lord, we pray. Draw near to us. Speak to us. Draw from us worship and praise and love and obedience.

Make us again, we pray, to be a people whose heart is filled with love for Jesus. We ask these things in his name and for your glory, O God.

Amen. Let's read together. We're going to turn to 1 Corinthians and chapter 15. Sorry, that's not up on the board as it should be. 1 Corinthians 15.

We have been studying 1 Corinthians. About things happen like holidays and special speakers and all sorts of stuff.

[3 : 40] So we haven't been here for a few weeks. But we're going to pick up verse 1 through to verse 11 of this chapter. So that's page 1156.

If you have one of the church Bibles, page 1156. 1 Corinthians 15. Beginning at verse 1. Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you've taken your stand.

By this gospel, you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance. That Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. That he was buried.

That he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures. that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve. After that, he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

[5 : 01] Then he appeared to James. Then to all the apostles. And last of all, he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles, do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them.

Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether then it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

We thank God for his faithful word. Wonderful hymn. Well, let's turn back then to 1 Corinthians 15, where we read just a few moments ago.

Those of you who've been on the journey through 1 Corinthians, or those of you who know 1 Corinthians will know, that up to this chapter, Paul has been dealing with all sorts of problems within the church.

[6 : 10] All sorts of divisions, all sorts of wrong practices, wrong attitudes, dealing with ignorance about the way that Christians are to behave, or to believe, and to act.

And when we come now in the last two chapters of this letter, we come to the one vital matter that he has yet to deal with. In fact, really, you would say, well, surely this one thing that he has to speak about, particularly in chapter 15, is something that surely they must have understood by now.

Surely it's something they couldn't have got wrong, but they did. And it is simply this, verse 1, Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel.

How on earth could they have got the gospel wrong? How on earth did Paul need to remind them of that which is the very essence of what it means to be a church? How can they have gone off beam of something which is so vital?

Is it perhaps the very reason why they had got so many things wrong, because they had got the beginning wrong? Like a house that's built.

[7 : 21] If the foundations are square, as they should be, then the rest of the house should be built straight. But if the foundations aren't square, if the foundations are out of line, then no matter how good a builder you are, you cannot make a straight forward house.

It will be crooked as well. But you want to say, well how did they get the gospel wrong? Because Paul says, it's the gospel I preached to you. It wasn't Paul who laid the foundation wrong at all.

That wasn't the problem. In fact, if we go back just to chapter 3 in verse 10, if you remember, Paul says, by the grace of God, or by the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it, but each one should build with care.

It for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. So Paul, as he went to Corinth on that missionary journey, as he preached the gospel there, and established the church there, laid a very square, clear foundation of Jesus Christ.

the problem is, it seems, that when we come to chapter 15, as we've looked through the chapters, that cowboy builders have come along, and they have built on Paul's foundation, not carefully, not straightforwardly, not in keeping with the foundation at all.

[8 : 51] And so now, Paul has to go back to basics. He has to go back to the start. He has to go back to the gospel and its essentials. And so in chapter 15, I'm going to, God willing, over the next, not next week, but anyway, sometime in the future, I'm going to break up this chapter into four sections to do with the gospel.

And so there's going to be four parts. Tonight, we're going to look at the gospel truth, and then there'll be the gospel hope, the gospel goal, and the gospel life. Because each of those, I believe, comes out clearly in God's word.

So I want us this evening to start where Paul starts with the gospel truth, and ask ourselves again, what is the gospel truth? Now, as you know, many people today will refer to themselves speaking the gospel truth.

It's almost like an oath. It's almost like a promise that whatever they're going to say is faithful, free from lies, free from exaggeration. It becomes that sort of slang, as it were, for a promise, a faithful description.

This is the gospel. This is gospel truth. But there is only one gospel truth. It's not right that we should say that. In fact, I would urge you not to say that as a Christian, that when you speak to make an oath, as it were, that I'm speaking the gospel truth, unless you're speaking the gospel truth, of course that is, then you can say this is the gospel truth.

[10:21] You know where I'm going with that, I hope. No, there is one gospel truth. One gospel, as Paul puts it, which is of first importance, of greatest importance.

What I received, I passed on to you as of the first, of the primary, the one and only, as it were. And so important is this gospel truth, this one gospel truth, that it is the only one that saves.

It's the only one that we can receive. It's the only one we can stand on. It's the only one we are to hold firmly to. And that's what he says there in those three ways of describing our attitude to the gospel truth.

You have received, which you've taken your stand, you hold firmly. Let's look at those descriptions briefly together then. First of all, the believer is someone who has received the gospel truth.

That's taken hold of it for ourselves. That doesn't mean simply, yes, I believe it's true in an abstract sort of way. I believe it's true, but it's over there.

[11:35] No, I believe that it is true and it is personally true. It is personally something that I believe and I affirm. When we receive the gospel truth, we are acknowledging our sin and our need of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

We are taking God at his word. We are convicted by the Holy Spirit of the worth of this truth and the power of this truth to save us.

So it has to be something essentially our own. It cannot be something that our parents believed, but we don't personally believe. It cannot be something that our spouse believes or our children believe.

It must be personally. We must have received it ourselves. It cannot be given to another and us receive the benefits. It must be ours. Have you received the gospel truth? Have you received it? Have you taken hold of it? Is it yours? My Jesus, my Savior. And then we have this phrase, received and on which you have taken your stand.

[12:48] To take your stand upon something is to be dependent upon, to place your feet upon, as it were, to bear your weight upon. The gospel truth is a high rock on which we are saved from the rising tide around about us.

To take your stand upon means I shall not be moved from this gospel truth. I shall not step off it onto some other foundation or some other way of supporting myself.

I will not move from this, which is Jesus as my Savior. I will not leave it for something that seems better or something that seems more sparkly or interesting or appealing or entertaining.

I won't move from this gospel truth because it is the only gospel truth and any other sort of gospel is a lesser gospel, a false gospel. Remember how Paul speaks to the Galatians about that.

How can you have so suddenly, how can you have moved, as it were, from this gospel to another gospel which is not a gospel at all? He was shocked and stunned by the fact that they had not taken their stand.

[14:00] It's our daily trust. It's that constant place of peace with God. That's why it's so important, dear friends, that every day we remind ourselves of the gospel, remind ourselves of what Christ has done for us, that we turn it into thanksgiving and praise to him.

Thank you, Lord, that my sins are forgiven in Christ. Thank you, Lord, for dying for me. That's why it's so important that we share in this communion table as we do. It's a reminder to us that we have taken our stand and we shall not be moved.

Then there's one more thing here as well, doesn't he? By this gospel you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preach to you. There's a determination to always trust this gospel no matter how long you live.

You see, the great concern that Paul had is that otherwise you have believed in vain. Believed in vain if you have not firmly held it.

What does he mean by that? You see, it's possible to receive, we thought a little bit about this in one sense this morning about the seed and the sowers, those who spring up quickly when they're here and those who grow up and then are choked by the weeds.

[15:26] It's possible to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ but on our terms, with our strings attached. In other words, I'll receive the gospel of Jesus for now and see how I get on.

If it works for me, great, but if it doesn't work for me, if it clashes with my own ideas or the way that I want to do things or I get bored of it, then I'll walk away.

That is not holding firmly to the gospel. It's holding loosely to the gospel, barely to the gospel. And the warning that Paul brings here is that it is possible to take a stand upon the gospel but still be lost and unsaved. Now we're dealing with mysteries here. Let's not try to theologize it all and put it all in our careful boxes and doctrine and so on and say, well, we understand this and we understand that and therefore this must be that.

We need to take the warning. Straight and simple. It's possible for you to believe and not be saved. It's possible for you to receive and not be saved.

[16:36] It's possible for you to say that I'm standing on and not be saved. holding firmly to the gospel is the only certainty of our salvation.

If we find ourselves being drawn to something else, if we find our hearts falling in love with something else, if we find a truth more attractive or more appealing, then we've believed in vain. Paul's words are very serious and we must search our hearts and ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts as well.

Lord, am I truly holding firmly to the gospel or is it just a convenience for me at this time? Am I truly holding firmly to Christ or is there an emptiness in my faith?

Is it real? Is it genuine? You see, to be held firmly, sorry, to hold firmly to the gospel is to be held firmly in the embrace of the gospel.

[17:50] It's not just that we, if I can put it that way, somehow think that we have taken hold of Christ but we know that Christ has taken hold of us. We are gripped by the gospel so that we cannot possibly let it go.

It could never be dragged from our grip. Taking that analogy of the sea just a little differently. Imagine that you're swept over the pier at the end and somebody throws you one of those flotation rings.

Two things happen. That flotation ring holds you up and surrounds you but you hold on to it for grim life, don't you? You know that you depend upon it yet it's the thing that holds you up.

And so there is both these things together. We are held by the gospel but we take hold of the gospel. It is not enough, if I can put it this way, that we simply sense that we have got hold of the gospel.

It must be that it has to have a hold on us. It must be that which grips us tightly. So again, does the gospel truth still grip you?

[18:57] I think this is a great thing. This is why I say every day we need to be those thanking Christ for the gospel, rejoicing in the salvation that he's won for us because I think that if we are not careful, if I can put it this way, if you are forgetful of the gospel, if a week can go by between Sunday and Sunday and you haven't rejoiced in what Christ has done for you, haven't got a sense of excitement about the gospel, if it doesn't grip your heart, then the question is, have you been gripped by it at all?

Something so stupendous and marvellous. Have you really been gripped by the gospel? Has it really taken a hold on you and are you holding firmly to it or is it simply at this time, well, it's okay.

At this time, for this moment, but what is the gospel? This gospel that grips us, this gospel truth which takes hold and we have taken hold of by which we are saved, says Paul.

What is this gospel? What is this gospel truth? Well, it's simply, simply one word. Christ, isn't it? Christ. I received what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ.

Paul compactly reduces the gospel truth to three events in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Three historical, actual, real events.

[20:36] Not myths, if I can put it that way. Not just a matter of take it or leave it possibilities, but real events. And these real events are the foundation of our gospel.

These real events are the thing that grips us, takes hold of us. The truth is the person of Jesus Christ. The gospel truth is not keep these rules, obey these rituals, perform these rites and you will be saved.

The gospel is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. He is the truth, isn't He? I am the way, the truth, the life, exclusively.

The gospel truth is only found in Jesus and fully found in Jesus. And firstly, and of first importance as Paul is this, Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

Christ died for our sins. In those five words in English are hidden the greatest power in the universe. Christ died for our sins.

[21 : 51] In that statement, we have revealed for us the love of God for sinners. In that statement, we have revealed the greatness of God's grace for the undeserving.

In that statement, we are brought face to face with the horror of the justice and judgment of God against sin. Christ died for our sins.

To receive the gospel truth is to acknowledge that Christ died for my sins. Christ died for my personal rebellion against God.

Christ died for my law-breaking crimes. Christ died for my wickedness. It's not enough, if I can put it this way, to say that Christ died for the sins of the world.

Yes, John was able to say, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Marvelous and glorious statement, but for that to have any impact upon me and you, it must be Christ died for my sins, for our sins.

[22 : 55] It's that personal application again. So we can speak to people, can't we, and talk to them about Jesus and about God and they can talk about, yes, I believe in God and yes, Jesus is great and all sorts of generalizations, but it must be personal.

It must be real. It must be within my heart and my faith and my trust and to receive the gospel truth is to recognize that Jesus died in my place taking the punishment I deserve.

To receive the gospel truth is to mourn and to grieve over those sins that took him to the cross, that caused such suffering to the sinless and perfect Son of God.

To receive the gospel truth is to at one point be brokenhearted and another to find our hearts mended. Our hearts made whole.

It is to sorrow at my sin but to joy at his salvation. This is the gospel Paul has preached.

[24 : 12] Christ died for our sins. Then perhaps surprisingly for us he says this, that he was buried. Usually we skip that bit.

Usually we just go from Christ died and Christ is risen. Paul says of first importance, of necessary importance for us to stand, Christ was buried.

Why is this event of first importance? Perhaps you've got your own thoughts and ideas about this.

Mine is simply this. It's the evidence that he was truly dead.

It's the evidence that he truly died. Even in Paul's day as in our day there are those foolish theories that somehow Jesus either momentarily died and was resuscitated or fainted and was brought round again.

The whole central aspect of Revelation, sorry, 1 Corinthians 15 is of course the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. that's the gospel that he's going to be particularly picking up on and therefore it's so important we understand that Christ truly genuinely was raised from the dead.

[25 : 21] Not from a swoon and not from a passing out not even resuscitated. All that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ the very center of our salvation is this, that he died and rose again.

If it is proven that he did not truly die then he did not truly rise. Because any faker of course can do that, any charlatan can do that and pretend to die.

I'm sure you've seen all sorts of these programs like Sherlock Holmes and others where they pretend to die and set up this great elaborate scene where he, in the latest one he jumps off this roof building and his friend sees him there with a pool of blood but we find out it's all a fake.

He hasn't really died. The whole point of Jesus being in the tomb for three days is to give long enough time for everyone to be convinced that he's really dead.

Totally dead. Completely dead. Not just partially. First importance Christ died and was buried.

[26 : 35] And then says Paul that he rose again. Christ rose again on the third day. Physically risen. Perfectly risen.

Now wonderfully of course when we look in the life of Jesus we see that there were those who Jesus raised to life from the dead. Jairus' daughter, Lazarus, the widow of Nain's son.

But every single one of them that Jesus raised from the dead died later on. They were raised physically but they weren't raised perfectly. They were raised to life once more but they still had corrupt bodies if I put it that way that were still polluted as it were corrupted with sin so they went on to die whether it was months or years later.

But not with Jesus. Jesus was raised to life permanently. It's so important this event because it confirms not only that Jesus' sacrifice for sin was accepted by God Romans 4.25 He was delivered

over to death for our sins was raised to life for our justification.

This was in one sense by raising Jesus to life God was saying yes he has paid the price for all the sins of my people I accept the sacrifice. by which they are justified but also it declares to us without a shadow of a doubt that he truly is the Son of God.

[28 : 05] Romans chapter 1 and verse 4 speaking of Jesus appointed or declared to be the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead.

What nobody else could do has done or will ever do because no one else is the Son of God. So we have the death the burial and the resurrection of Jesus.

They are the foundation cornerstones of the gospel that Paul preached and upon which the people were saved. But some may question on what authority can we say that these three events actually happened?

On what authority can we say that these things are really true that these are the gospel truth?

Surely it's only a fool who believes something which has no evidence which has no certainty.

Just saying these things doesn't make them true or the gospel truth. Well there's three witnesses three testimonies as it were that Paul brings to declare and to proclaim and to assure the believers that this gospel is the true gospel the dependable gospel the only gospel.

[29 : 23] First of all there's a testimony of God himself in the scriptures. Notice how that's spoken of. Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures according to God's word.

And that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures in accordance with God's word. Everything that happened to the Lord Jesus Christ in his life and death burial and resurrection was just as God had foretold through the testimony of his prophets hundreds sometimes thousands of years beforehand.

It wasn't just by chance that he was crucified on that Good Friday. It wasn't just that somehow all these things were forced to fit together to make this gospel truth when they didn't really fit together that they've just been manufactured.

No, it was all as God had planned. There's wonderful prophecies like Isaiah 53 which foretells that the Christ the servant of God would die in the place of the sins of his people.

As Isaiah 53 4 says he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed.

[30 : 52] And his resurrection. Peter on that day of Pentecost quotes from the psalmist from David Psalm 16 showing that the resurrection of the Christ was something which God had planned and promised a thousand years beforehand even in the time of King David.

For David himself writes in Psalm 16 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead and this verse particularly nor will you let your holy one or your faithful one see decay.

You've made known to me the path of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence eternal pleasures at your right hand. And again and again we see that in the Psalms in the prophecies that Jesus the Christ must rise again.

So the very first piece of evidence the first authority the first testimony that the gospel truth of Jesus Christ is true is because God has said so in his word.

The second testimony is this says Paul that there have been many eyewitnesses to his resurrection. Verse 5 he appeared to Cephas that's one of the names for Peter then to the 12 appeared to 500 other brothers and sisters some of them still alive others fallen asleep in other words who've died appeared to James all the apostles and last of all to me we know when he appeared to Paul on that Damascus road as he journeyed to go and persecute the church.

[32 : 25] Paul's very careful isn't he he's trying not to miss out anyone who saw Jesus after his resurrection. It's not chronological he's not writing an exact order when they were seen in one sense he's doing a little bit like we do when we try to remember who to put on our Christmas card list.

He's just remembering the names remembering the events and putting them all down. Here's the evidence and they're living witnesses.

They're not people who can say oh well of course so and so saw it and so and so saw it but unfortunately they've died so we can't actually listen to their testimony. You've seen that again in those crime dramas isn't it?

Oh just on his deathbed so and so confessed to the death of so and so but now he's dead so that testimony is void can't be taken can't be used in evidence no says Paul these people are alive

including myself in the court of law of course there was needed in those days at least two witnesses but here we have hundreds of witnesses how many more do we need to believe that Jesus is really alive from the dead what more evidence do we want than that there's one more evidence as it were to the gospel truth there's the evidence of scripture God there's the evidence of those testimonies of those eyewitnesses but then there's finally this the witness of the power of the gospel in the life of a believer and this way Paul turns to himself Paul's life I'm the least of the apostles but by the grace of God I am what I am his grace to me was not without effect and here when he uses that word grace he's using it interchangeably if I can put it that way with the gospel of

Jesus Christ this gospel truth was not without effect in my life once a persecutor of the church once a once a criminal once a murderer once a gospel truth hater now completely transformed by that same gospel that he opposed and hated no one can be convinced to receive the gospel truth by the authority of scripture nor by the witness of countless people we can only be convinced and receive the truth of the gospel and stand firmly on it and hold firmly to it when we have experienced the very power of the gospel in our lives when it has come as it were as a as a as a train into our hearts as it has come with power as it has come with explosive power power to give us peace power to bring us forgiveness power to turn us around in a radical way so dear friends as we are those who take the gospel truth out into our town into our streets into our homes into our schools not only do we need to ask have I received it am I standing on it am I holding firmly to it but we need to also be convinced of it sure and certain that it has worked in our hearts and lives that it has really done a transforming work in me here's what

[35 : 53] Paul says to these believers earlier on in chapter two I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling my message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the spirit's power so that your faith may not rest on human wisdom but on God's power the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation for those who believe it's the place upon which we have made our stand and it's that place upon which the church is built and as we come to this table we are coming to demonstrate our faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ let's God sing we are to him let's to go down to