

A closer look at the gospel  
1 Corinthians 15:1-28

What is the gospel? The good news; the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

Where would you go for the clearest explanation of the gospel?

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (Read)

1. The gospel (1-11)

I. The gospel made known (vv. 1-2)

A. “Declare” could also be translated “make known.” Paul is discussing a familiar topic, but will also teach the Corinthians something new about the gospel. He teaches both the old and the new.

B. Paul **preached** the gospel

1. Acts 18:1-18

a. Paul first preached to the Jews, but they rejected the message. He then turned to the Gentiles (5-6)

b. Paul stayed at Corinth for 1 ½ years (11)

2. Paul preached the gospel in the power of God, apart from the wisdom of men. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

C. The Corinthians **received** the gospel

1. Some Jews did believe (Acts 18:8)

2. Many believed (Acts 18:8-10)

3. 1 Corinthians 1:2

D. The Corinthians **stand** in the gospel

The Corinthians’ spiritual existence is found in the gospel. Without the gospel, the Corinthians’ would cease to exist (as new creatures in Christ).

E. The Corinthians are **saved** through the gospel

1. Both “saved” and “hold fast” are in the present tense. These are the only two words in vv. 1-2 that are in the present tense.

2. “By which you are being saved”—not referring to the moment of salvation when they first believed. This is described in verse 1 by “received.” Salvation is an ongoing process—progressive sanctification.

3. “If you are holding fast”—sanctification is only possible when the believer adheres to the pure and simple gospel message. They must continue to hold fast to the gospel throughout their Christian life.

4. “Unless you believed in vain”—could be translated “without due consideration” or “in a haphazard manner.” Obviously the Corinthians did not fully realize the full significance and implications of the gospel message.

II. The gospel delivered (vv. 3-11)

A. Paul delivered what he had himself received. The Corinthians received Paul’s message. They should follow Paul’s example and share what they have believed.

B. Content of the gospel

1. Christ died for our sins

2. Christ was buried
3. Christ rose up the third day
4. “According to the scriptures”—The Old Testament scriptures; see Isaiah 53, Psalm 16:10
5. Christ was seen by many witnesses
  - a. Cephas—Luke 24:34
  - b. The Twelve—a general term which would not include Judas; perhaps recorded in Luke 24:33-36; if it is the event recorded in John 20:19-24, then only ten disciples were present (Thomas was gone)
  - c. Over 500 brethren at once
  - d. James—probably James the Lord’s brother
  - e. All the apostles—perhaps during the ascension, Acts 1:1-11
  - f. Paul

Paul saw the resurrected Christ, and thus played a part in the gospel message he was proclaiming. He could attest to the reality of the risen, glorified Christ.

His life was transformed by the gospel. He, and many others, were called to preach the gospel, and many responded and believed.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a unified whole. We cannot pick and chose those elements of the gospel that we want to preach. There is no gospel without the death of Christ. Likewise, there is no gospel without the resurrection of Christ.

A lot of times we focus on the death of Christ, and rightly so. He died for our sins

**Isaiah 53:5** <sup>5</sup> But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

But we must not leave out the resurrection of Christ. Paul emphasizes the utter importance of this in the following verses.

## 2. What if there was no resurrection? (12-19)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:12-19

Paul had just affirmed the essence of the gospel. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And then He was seen by many, many people in those 40 days that He walked this earth after His resurrection and before His ascension. So when the gospel is preached, necessarily Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead.

So Paul asks the Corinthians a question, “How do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” Paul was questioning the belief of some within the church that there is no resurrection. It was a ridiculous proposition, and Paul goes on to show the futility of such a thought.

v.13—Paul clearly delineates the ramifications of such a belief. If there is no resurrection, then Christ cannot be risen.

He continues in v. 14. If Christ hasn’t been raised from the dead, then our preaching is empty, or vain, and our faith is also empty, or vain. They are without merit, useless, futile.

And it gets even worse in v. 15. If there is no resurrection, that means that we are liars—false witnesses of God. We are claiming that God did something that He indeed did not do.

So not only did Paul waste his life preaching the gospel, he was actually preaching heresy. He was a false apostle, a wolf among the sheep. He gave false hope from a false message.

Without the resurrection, we have no faith. We have no hope. Those who have died have perished. Period. There is no escape from the grave. There is no hope of a life after death. Death ends it all.

As Paul says in

<sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

Without the resurrection, we have no salvation. We couldn't claim the truth of John 3:16.

We would have no justification in Christ.

**Romans 4:25** says that Jesus was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

Jesus was raised for the sake of our justification, in order to secure our justification. Without the resurrection, we would never be declared righteous by God.

But enough of the hypothetical scenario of a world without the resurrection. Some may have claimed that to be the case, but such a claim is absolutely false, without any merit at all. It would totally destroy our faith.

Having made this clear, Paul now shows the Corinthians the wonderful blessings that result from Christ's resurrection.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

3. Christ the firstfruits (20-28)

Christ has been raised from the dead, and He is the firstfruits of those who are in the grave.

Paul goes on to explain. He contrasts two men—Adam and Christ. It was by the first man, Adam, that death came into the world. He ate the forbidden fruit and plunged the entire race, all of mankind, into sin and death. It was the second man, Jesus Christ, that defeated death, and was resurrected from the dead. He will make all alive, specifically referring to those who are in Christ, to those who are believers in Him.

Christ was raised from the dead almost two thousand years ago. He was the first man to be resurrected. That does mean that men hadn't been restored to life before that, because many had.

Remember in the Old Testament

1 Kings 17: Elijah cried out to the Lord, and the widow's son was brought back to life.

2 Kings 4: Elisha and the Shunnamite's son

2 Kings 13:21: As a man was being buried, the body touched the bones of Elisha, and he revived and stood on his feet.

Luke 8: Jairus's daughter is brought back to life by Jesus.

John 11: Jesus' friend Lazarus is brought back to life.

Matthew 27:51-53: Many saints arose after Christ's resurrection and went into Jerusalem and appeared to many.

Acts 20:12: Eutychus brought back to life by Paul.

But I believe that all these eventually died. Christ was the first man to be resurrected, never to die again. And we who are Christ's have this hope as well. We will be resurrected, never to die again. And when will this happen? At Christ's coming.

Christ will come for His church at the rapture, when the dead will be raised and the living will be changed. And then He will come in power and great glory at the end of the Tribulation, to set up His 1000 year kingdom. He will resurrect the saints of God, both Old Testament and Tribulation saints, so that they may enter the Millennium and rule with Him.

Yes, Christ will put all enemies under His feet. Every man that raises himself against God will be defeated, every fallen angel, even Satan himself, will be put under Christ's foot. But the last enemy to be put under His feet is not a nation, or a person, but death itself.

**1 Corinthians 15:26** <sup>26</sup> The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death.

All this is possible because Christ rose from the dead. God's eternal plan truly is centered in Jesus Christ. He had to die, but just as important, He had to live again. Praise God that we serve a living Savior, a Savior who will one day come back for His own, and resurrect us just as He was resurrected so many years ago.

Praise God for the words of

**Hebrews 7:24-25** <sup>24</sup> But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. <sup>25</sup> Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.