

1 Cor 15:1-11

The Greatest News on Earth

Describe for me the gospel. I learned over the years that's one of the main questions I need to ask when I interview someone for church membership. I've learned that a person can have great things to say about the church, can have great things to say about how they think God is working. Yet they can still miss the gospel. This text is about one primary thing: the gospel

Without the resurrection there is no gospel. Resurrection is central to the gospel. Without the resurrection the good news is actually bad (v19).

In this message, we have four gospel-lessons for life.

1. Never let go of the gospel (1-2)

- Paul did not write the NT letters to convince unbelievers of the truth, but to establish and encourage the church. That's his aim for the church at Corinth, one marked by division, selfishness, and pride.
- There was also another threat of false teaching. Some denied the future resurrection (v12). So Paul sets things straight (v1-2), reminding the church that the resurrection is no small thing, it's the main thing.
- The ESV phrase, "would remind", is probably a little too soft to catch Paul's tone. It's more passionate and even on the edge of a rebuke. It sounds more like, "You all really need to know this."

It's easy to let the most important things slip. It's so easy to forget what is fundamental.

A few things about the gospel.

- 1) It was preached: Nothing will ever replace preaching.
- 2) It was received: The truth demands a response.
- 3) On which you stand: Gospel truth brings stability to all of life.
- 4) By which you are being saved: Notice the verb is in the present-continuous tense. There is an aspect of salvation that is ongoing. This does not deny the past aspect of salvation. It simply adds to the beauty. Gospel salvation requires a life of committed and continual belief, continual deliverance from Satan's power and sin's grip. (2b) reinforces this: "if you hold fast to the Word I preached."

Christian friends, never let go of the gospel. Whether you believed 20 years ago, or 20 days ago, keep Christ at the center of your life.

2. Trust the historical reality of the gospel (3-4)

- In case we think the gospel can be pushed to the periphery, we have this reminder (v3) that it is of first importance. First priority.
 - Paul reminded Timothy (2 Tim 2:8) “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead...as preached in my gospel.” It’s not just the spiritually immature that need this reminder.
 - Four action verbs describe the activity of the gospel (death, buried, raised, appeared). They are all centered on Christ. “The gospel is not preached if Christ is not preached.” —John Stott
- a. Christ died for our sins.
- The wording in the original is “on behalf of” our sins.
 - It’s essential to see *why* Christ died. Not as a martyr for a good cause. No, he died for our sins.
 - He died as substitute.
 - Not just sins generically—or for humanity in general, but *our* sins.

Let’s not forget this basic fact. Our sins deserve death. There is no sweeping them under the rug. My sin was so bad that a man went to his death—not just any man, but the God-Man.

The gospel does nothing for nice people. The gospel does everything for sinners who know they deserve death, and cling to Christ for their eternal hope.

- b. He was buried and raised on the 3rd day.
- We must see how essential the resurrection is to the gospel.
 - Look at vs 16-19. No resurrection means no salvation. Which means we would still be under the penalty and power of sins. That’s really bad news.
- c. Jesus physically appeared to many (500 plus people)—the historical evidence is overwhelming. The gospel is a historic reality.

One main attack on the faith that I’ve seen is by people (often religious) who deny that *all* of the Bible is actually trustworthy and true. It’s been an ancient strategy of the enemy. Usually it starts somewhere in Genesis. Honestly, some things are radical when we read it. Six-day creation of all things. Immediate

creation of Adam and Eve—not some evolutionary process of billions of years. People who live to over 900 years old. A global flood that destroys all except one family. And it continues. A prophet who spends a few days in the stomach of a large fish that vomits him so he can preach repentance. I've known the stories of how a person's faith begins to erode as they question the reality of these extraordinary events.

Yet, these events are all interconnected and fit with the Christian worldview. If my worldview says yes to the events in Genesis as historical, and not some invented myth, then it says yes to Jesus Christ exiting the tomb on the 3rd day! We can trust the historical reality of the gospel because we can trust the whole Bible.

- Also, believing the historical reality of the gospel means that our view of death is transformed.
- (v6) Some believers who saw Jesus's resurrection were still alive when Paul wrote. But some died. Look at how Paul describes them, not dead but "asleep".

Illus: When we sleep, we are (1) resting and (2) our bodies are not active on earth. But that changes the moment we wake up. Under normal circumstances everyone who sleeps wakes up. Sleep is temporary. Every night there is a mini picture of the power of the gospel.

(1 Thess 4:13)

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

3. Embrace a life of gospel producing humility (5-9)

- Some people like talking about themselves because they are in love with themselves. They are annoying to be around.
- Paul talks about himself, but not in a way a narcissist does. His self-talk is self-depreciating. As Paul inserts himself, note the tone of humility in his heart

- (V8) Paul refers to his conversion as an untimely birth. The word can refer to a miscarriage, but also a birth that is late term (past 40 weeks). That seems to fit Paul's testimony. Paul was a late-bloomer. When others were preaching, he was persecuting. *Which makes grace all the sweeter!*
- Paul sees himself as so inferior to the rest. *That's a life humbled by the gospel.*

When the gospel has truly taken root, it works a humility like this. There is no room for spiritual pride in any form or thinking our worth before God is in something we've done and contributed. Humility and the gospel always go hand in hand.

Also, another obvious thing is Christ gave meaning to Paul's life. I'm not surprised to find a lot of people who can't find meaning in life. They struggle with identity and purpose. Part of the greatest news on earth is not only the forgiveness of sins, but Jesus Christ gives meaning and value to life. Embracing a life of gospel-humility provides the identity and purpose our heart longs for.

4. Highlight God's surpassing grace in the gospel (10-11)

Here is a principle:

The more we grasp the gospel, the more we intentionally highlight God's work of grace in our lives.

- We see this in two primary ways.
 1. Salvation. Paul's testimony is that he never got beyond the fact that God called him and used him.
(1 Tim 1:14)
“¹⁵The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am the foremost.*”
- Secondly, God's grace was highlighted in how Paul *served* God. He was a hard-worker. But he realized that it's not him really. God enabled him.

The gospel highlights God's grace because it says, “nothing is from me, all is a gift. All that I can give back to God comes from God”.

The gospel means we take ourselves completely out of the picture and see that all is from God. All is of grace!

Conclusion

Grace. It is the greatest news on earth. God's grace is highlighted in the gospel. Is God's grace highlighted in your life today? Is the word grace foundational in your vocabulary?

There are two angles of gospel grace.

Saving Grace—Do you have saving grace? Have you come to the foot of the cross humbly? Do you know the gospel paradox—your sin is bad beyond measure—yet this is true: Christ came into the world to save sinners. That's the best news on earth. Even if you found out you would inherit all of Bill Gates's fortune, it wouldn't scratch the surface of the best news of the gospel.

Serving Grace—The gospel not only saves but enables service to Christ. Are you serving Christ by grace? The last verse reminds us that God saves us to serve. Like Paul, we have a job to do. Share with others the greatest news on earth. Tell them the need to believe.

Conclusion:

The legendary head coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi, has a famous speech that was packed into five short words. Lombardi gathered his team for training camp and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football." Winning is all about getting the fundamentals right. And Lombardi proved it by leading his team into victory multiple times. Yet winning a few football championships is nothing compared to what Christ won in the gospel.

"Resurrection" — *Valley of Vision*

Jesus strides forth as the Victor,
Conqueror of death, hell, and all opposing might,
He bursts the bands of death,
Tramples the powers of darkness down,
And lives forever.