

## The Essential Gospel

### 1 Cor. 15:3-8

\*He was an ordinary prison guard on a **night shift**. He missed his home; his bed; his wife and kids.

\*He hated the night shift; the sleepless nights; the musty smells; the cursing prisoners.

\*When he put his uniform on, he had no idea that this night in prison would change his life forever.

\*Two new inmates had been locked up that day and he found them...**curiously strange**.

\*They had been **beaten** and **attacked**; their bodies **bruised** and **bloody**; feet shackled to floor.

\***Yet, they sang**. Their voices rose into the darkness with joyful songs of praise.

\*He heard them sing hymns to God; about a man named Jesus; and about rising from the dead.

*“Up from the grave He arose; with a mighty triumph o’er his foes; He rose victorious over the dark domain; and he lives forever with his saints to reign.”*

*“He is Lord; He is Lord; He is risen from the dead and He is Lord...”*

\*Prisoners in other cells hushed & listened with reverent quietness;

\*The guard leaned back against the cold wall, closed his eyes, and listened to the words of hope

\*That’s when it happened! The earth shook; every prison door mysteriously flew open; shackles fell off.

\*The guard didn’t know a lot...but he did know this was a **Divine Moment** and he was changed.

\*He called for torches, went to the cell of these two men, and dropped to his knees before them

\*He had one question: **“What must I do to be saved?”**

\*The guard realized: He was a prisoner; He was in shackles; He was bound.

\*The men responded with **the simple gospel**...and 2,000 years later it remains our answer:

**“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” (Acts 16:31)**

\*That is the **essential gospel**. It points to **what Jesus did...and how we must respond**.

On this Good Friday, I want to **“remind you...of the gospel”** (1 Cor. 15:1)

**“Christ died for our sins...He was buried...He was raised on the third day...He appeared.”**

**“Christ **DIED** for our sins...”** (1 Cor. 15:3)

700 years before Christ came, **Isaiah 50** promised:

\*He would be beaten on his **back** by those who struck him.

\*He would suffer pain by those who **plucked his beard**.

\*He would be **spit upon & humiliated**.

Isaiah 52 promised:

\*He would be **so marred in appearance** that he would be unrecognizable.

Isaiah 53 promised:

\*He would be **despised & rejected**, a man enduring great sorrow.

\*He would be **wounded & crushed**, lacerated with stripes.

\*He would be **oppressed & afflicted**, like a lamb led to slaughter.

\*Why would Christ do this? Isaiah gives us the answer:

“bore **our griefs**.”

“carried **our sorrows**.”

“wounded **for our transgressions**.”

“crushed **for our iniquities**.”

“died **for our sins**.” (1 Cor. 15)

\*The **Stronger died so the Weaker could live**.

**\*The deadliest Amtrak train accident in history happened in 1993 near Mobile AL.**

\*A train of passengers plunged into water when a bridge collapsed, killing 47 people.

\*On that train were Gary & Mary-Jane Chauncey (45 year olds) from Florida w/ 11 year old daughter Andrea, who was bound to a wheelchair with cerebral palsy.

\*When rescuers were saving passengers from the water, Gary & Mary-Jane refused to leave until their weaker daughter was safe.

\*They were able to push Andrea and the wheelchair into the arms of rescuers saving her life, but in the process both parents drowned.

\*It's called a “**Supererogatory Act**” where **the stronger does what the weaker could not do**.

\*The stronger dies so the weaker lives.

\*The stronger acts willingly so that the weaker benefits.

Jesus defined “*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*”

“He was **BURIED**...” (1 Cor. 15:4)

\*His **flesh** was torn. His **heart** stopped beating. His **blood** stopped running. His **body** was lifeless.

\*A Roman guard **pierced his side with a spear** (probably up into his heart) to ensure Jesus was dead, not just unconscious.

\*It is here that all **4 gospels** focus on the **physical body of Jesus** with emphasis.

\*Jesus was a man; **brown eyes (or grey); 5'10 (or 6'3);** weighed **175 or 200...**

\*We simply don't know about his body...except here they write with emphasis.

\***Matthew** says disciples came to Pilate: "*asked for **the body**...took **the body** & wrapped it...*"

\***Luke** says they "*asked for **the body** of Jesus...took it down...wrapped it...**his body** was laid*"

\***John** says they "*take away **the body**...took away **the body**...they took **the body**...bound it...they laid Jesus there...*"

\***Mark** says they "*asked for **the body**...granted **the corpse** to them...wrapped him...laid him.*"

\***Body. Corpse.** Nothing **proves his humanity more than this:** His body was dead.

\***Buried.** In a tomb. Friday night...all day Saturday...Sunday...a **weekend behind the grave.**

\*Like a **crime scene where police tape the door and post a guard** to keep it undisturbed, Rome sealed the tomb and posted soldiers.

\***Nobody from outside** dared get close. **Nobody from inside** was alive to do anything.

Song: "*There in the ground **his body lay**; light of the world by darkness slain.*"

"He was **RAISED** on the third day..." (1 Cor. 15:4)

\*His Corpse – **the one mangled, torn, disfigured, bloodied, & unrecognizable: HEALED.**

\*Fans of X-Men...picture **Wolverine**...all his wounds **MENDED**...except the nail pierced **hands and side which remain forever** as a "Show/Tell" of his sacrifice.

\*His Body – the one where **the heart stopped; the lungs stopped breathing; and was bound in burial clothes all weekend: was RAISED.**

\*His **heart** beat again; His **lungs** breathed again; His **blood** flowed again.

\***On my first trip to Israel, we visited "The Garden Tomb"** where a Christian tour guide showed us recovered ankle bones of what they believe was a crucified male.

\*An Egyptian pastor in our group asked inquisitively: "***Are those Jesus' bones?***"

\*Our tour guide smiled: "No. He is risen!"

\*Friends, the gospel includes the **physical resurrection of Jesus where his body was raised.**

HOW DO WE KNOW IT'S TRUE?

"He **APPEARED**...He **APPEARED**...He **APPEARED**...He **APPEARED**..." (1 Cor. 15:5-8)

\*He appeared...not just **once, twice,** but **many times...to many people**...over 40 days.

\*He appeared to give **convincing proof that He was raised BODILY**...in the flesh.

*“Jesus **met** them; he **went** with them (**walking**); he **said** to them (**talking**); he was at table (**sitting**); he came & **stood** among them; He **took bread** and gave it to them; he **took fish** and **ate**.”*

*“He **showed them his hands** and feet; they **took hold** of his feet; “**touch me** and see”; “put your **finger here...put out your hand and place it in my side**; Jesus **stood on the shore**; “Come and **have breakfast**.”*

\*The entire gospel revolves around the eyewitness accounts of what happened to Jesus.

**He died...He was buried...He was raised...He appeared...**

**\*This is why we call Friday...Good Friday.**

\*And this is why the **two prisoners who had been beat, sang with joy** at midnight:

Their Savior had **reversed decay, conquered death, and risen in triumphant victory over grave.**

\*And all of it was **“For Our Sins.”**

\*And that night, an ordinary prison guard wondered what he must do to be saved?

\*The response remains the simple gospel: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”*

That night in the early morning hours, the prison guard went home with those 2 prisoners...introduced them to his family. He was baptized. The church was started.

\*I could imagine, **prison guard and prisoners** joining together in singing praise to the Lord:

*I was lost in utter darkness  
'Til You came and rescued me  
I was bound by all my sin when  
Your love came and set me free  
Now my soul can sing a new song  
Now my heart has found a home  
Now Your grace is always with me  
And I'll never be alone*