

Sermon 72: The Importance of the Resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet 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 which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed..."

Introduction:

- **The Corinthian Problem:**
 - They believed in an afterlife, but not one that was built on scripture.
 - They struggled with the concept of an eternal physical body.
 - Their struggles were likely rooted in a worldview shaped by Greco-Roman thought, not scripture.
- **Their immediate tension:**
 - People in the church had recently died and their current situation was in question.
 - The deeply pagan practices of Greco-Roman culture had negatively impacted nearly every area of doctrine and practice in their church.
 - The controversy needed to be addressed thoroughly and biblically.
- **His basic approach to addressing this problem:**
 - **First: Bodily resurrection is both an historic fact and a foundational piece of the gospel: 15:1-11**
 - **Second: There are several ministry implications if this doctrine were not true: 15:12-19**
 - **Third: There are rich theological implications because this doctrine is true: 15:20-28**
 - **Fourth: There are several personal ramifications if the doctrine were not true: 15:29-34**

- **Fifth: Resurrected bodies have a unique character like our current bodies, yet also different in several significant ways: 15:35-49**
- **Sixth: A personal practical application to this critical discussion: 15:50-58**

Summary: Paul methodically picked apart the doctrinal controversy regarding our eternal state by arguing from fact to practice, building a case for the importance of accurate view of the resurrection.

Truth 1: Understanding the resurrection begins with the facts of the gospel: 15:1 "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel..."

- **The question of the resurrection should start with objective proof:**
- **The gospel presents that objective proof:**
 - Jesus of Nazareth was a real man.
 - He was crucified under Pontius Pilate.
 - His physical death was objectively verified.
 - He rose from the dead.
 - His resurrection was objectively verified by witnesses who did not anticipate or initially believe in the reality of His resurrection.
 - He had a literal physical human body that was similar yet unique.
 - He ate with people and invited them to physically touch His body to verify what they saw.
- **The church's misunderstandings of the resurrection could have been corrected by simply considering these witnesses.**

Truth 2: Their worldview needed to start with and be fully saturated with the gospel: 15:1-2 "Which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain..."

- **Paul preached it:** "Which I preached unto you..."
- **They embraced it:** "Which also ye have received..."
- **They stand in it:** "Wherein ye stand..."
 - **Perfect tense:** You embraced it and still stand in it
- **They are saved by it:** "By which also ye are saved..."
 - **Their salvation is their current position.**
 - **John 5:24** "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life..."
- **If your faith is genuine, it will endure:** "If ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain..."

- **This is a first-class condition meaning two things:**
 - Genuine faith is enduring.
 - He believes this to be true about the people he is addressing.
- **Two examples of this concept:**
 - **John 6:66-69** "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God..."
 - **1 Peter 1:7** "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ..."

Truth 3: The gospel is made of four key components: 15:3-4 "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scripture..."

- **It is affirmed by Scripture:**
 - "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received..."
 - "According to the scriptures..."
 - "According to the scripture..."
- **It is about the work of a specific person:** "How that Christ..."
 - The term "Christ" has an OT background.
 - **Isaiah 9:6** "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God..."
 - **Zechariah 12:10** "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced..."
 - **Isaiah 40:3** "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God..."
 - **He is the fulfillment of the OT prophecies.**
 - He is fully God.
 - He is fully man.
 - He would be pierced
- **It focuses on His substitutionary death:** "Died for our sins..."
 - **He died a specific kind of death:**
 - **It was for our sins:**

- **Isaiah 53:5-6** "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him...All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all..."
- **Isaiah 53:11-12** "It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities..."
- **2 Corinthians 5:21** "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him..."
- **Galatians 3:13** "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree..."
- **1 Peter 3:18** "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God..."
- **It is completed by His bodily resurrection from the dead:** "He was buried, and that he rose again the third day..."

Truth 4: The resurrection was objectively verified and publicly affirmed by numerous individuals: 15:5-7 "And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles..."

- **He named specific witnesses:**
 - "Peter"
 - "The twelve"
 - "Five hundred brethren at one time"
 - "James"
 - "The rest of the apostles"
- **He emphasized that many of these witnesses were still living and go verify their witness:** "Of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep..."

Truth 5: The resurrection was objectively verified and publicly affirmed by the early church's greatest opponent: 15:8-10 "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet 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 which was bestowed upon me was not in vain..."

- **He saved himself as the last and most significant witness:** "And last of all he was seen of me"
- **His witness is significant because his conversion was a shock:** "As of one born out of due time"
- **He was a militant opponent to the truth:** "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God"
- **God's grace radically changed the trajectory of his life:** "But by the grace of God I am what I am..."
- **Paul took decisive action with the grace that he experienced:** "And his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain..."

Truth 6: God's rich grace and Paul's absolute conviction regarding the truth compelled him to labor in the gospel: 15:10 "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me..."

- **Grace was poured into his life:** "By the grace of God I am what I am..."
- **Grace empowered his ministry:** "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain..."
- **His labors were energized by the grace of God:** "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me..."

Truth 7: This message came with power and changed their lives: 15:11 "Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed..."

- Paul's audience was converted because of this powerful gospel witness.
- Some were directly converted through his ministry.
- Some were directly converted through the ministry of the others mentioned.
- This message is true, and they had personally experienced its power.

Application:

- The resurrection was documented as a real event in history and should be treated as such.
- Each witness left compelling reasons to believe, but none as compelling as Paul.
- He lost everything and was willing to suffer to bear witness to it.
- He not only presented it as a fact, but also as a fulfillment of OT prophecy.

- We need to understand that this doctrine is not a secondary issue.
- If we understand the gospel and are attentive to the scriptures, we will understand the basics regarding it.