Grounded in the Gospel | 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

The lecture focuses on holding fast to the gospel and the hope of the resurrection, drawing on 1 Corinthians 15:1–5.

Automatic Shownotes

Long Summary

Don’t Lose the Plot | 1 Corinthians 15:1–5 Date • Pastor • 1 Corinthians 15:1–5 Main Point: The Christian life is grounded in the gospel from beginning to end. Believers are called to remember its importance, hold fast to it, and live in hope of the resurrection. Outline: 1. Remember the importance of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1–3) - Paul reminds the Corinthian church of the gospel they received, in which they stand, and by which they are being saved. He urges them to hold fast to it rather than be distracted or lose sight of the church’s purpose. - The gospel is not only the starting point of Christian faith; believers continue to depend on it as they grow in holiness and await final salvation. 2. Remember the contents of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3–5) - Christ died for sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures. The sermon describes Jesus’ death as the payment for sin and his resurrection as a historical event attested by witnesses. - The resurrection gives believers hope that they too will be raised in glorified bodies. This hope is central to the chapter’s teaching about the future resurrection of Christians. 3. Stay grounded in Scripture and prayer - The sermon concludes by encouraging Bible reading, meditation, and prayer as means of spiritual growth. It also recommends gathering with others to read Scripture, ask questions, and remain focused on the gospel and the church’s calling.

Brief Summary

Don’t Lose the Plot | 1 Corinthians 15:1–5 Main Point: Hold fast to the gospel and hope in the resurrection.

Tags

gospel, resurrection, hope, hold fast, 1 Corinthians 15:1–5, faith, salvation, Jesus Christ, perseverance, central message

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Transcript

[0:31] The scripture reading this morning is from 1 Corinthians 15, 1-5. Your few Bibles will have this on page 961. Let's hear God's Word. Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve. This is God's Word.

[1:29] I wonder if it happens to you what happens to me I, hear about a book or someone recommends a long novel it's highly recommended, and pick it up make it through a third of the book, and then life gets busy and then I try to keep going with the book, with my eyes closed before bed. And after a couple weeks, I pick it up and I forget what's going on and who's who in the book. And then after a month, my wife will find it under the bed and say, how's the book? There's an idiom that describes what happened, happens to me. And that is to lose the plot.

[2:29] To lose the plot means literally to forget the storyline. Figuratively, to lose the plot means to become confused, to lose sight of a goal or purpose or direction. It's often used for a project or a movie or a plan that has gotten off track, drifted away from its original purpose, and it becomes a mess. Now imagine a church that has lost the plot, drifted away from its original purpose, got caught up in distractions, and their message is a distortion of what it's supposed to be. And it seems to me in these verses this morning, the Apostle Paul is telling the Corinthian church, don't lose the plot. Don't lose sight of what the main point is. Don't forget what matters most. And he gives them a reminder to stay focused on the central issue. Stay focused on the gospel.

[3:31] In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses problems that had come to the church in Corinth because they've lost their focus. They had been blessed in so many ways, but this was a church that was affected by worldly ambition, seeking worldly approval, and there had been divisive factions in the church, even people suing one another. And some were acting boastfully, selfishly using gifts without love. And they'd been influenced by the perverse culture in their thinking about sex and marriage. There were even problems with chaotic church meetings. And there were those that were saying there is no resurrection of the dead. To each of these problems, Paul responded by considering how the gospel should be applied to each area of life, in their relationships, their families, their church. And he gives them a reminder of what they should focus on, as if the Apostle Paul was wondering.

[4:51] Did you people forget the purpose of the church? Have you lost sight of what's most important? Have you forgotten the gospel? So in our verses this morning, we read Paul's gospel refresher, a reminder. And we'll see how important it is, and we'll see the contents of the gospel as well. And we'll see that from start to finish, the Christian life is grounded in the gospel. The gospel that saves is the gospel that sustains us until it's over. Our five verses are super concentrated, powerful medicine to get, a church that had gone off track back on track, re-centered and grounded in the gospel. Let's pray before we dig into the text. Father God, we are so grateful for your word of truth, your reliable, trustworthy revelation of who you are to us humans. And we pray this morning that your word would be

a lamp and a light to guide us in our lives. I pray that as we examine our hearts, that we would be honest with ourselves and honest with you.

[6:16] We pray that you'd impress these gospel truths into our hearts and minds. And we pray in Jesus' name, amen. If we're going to live lives worthy of our calling, if we're going to try to live faithfully in this world to love God and love one another, we need to remind ourselves of the importance of the gospel. That's point one. Let's look at verse one. I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you. He's saying, brothers and sisters, remember this. Don't neglect this. Don't let this slide from the front of your minds. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians a few years, three years after spending time in Corinth with Priscilla and Achilla. Acts 18 says Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. Paul used his reason, sound arguments. He tried to persuade people. This was persuasive preaching that Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the Messiah that the Jews and the world have been waiting for. And this is how important the gospel was to Paul, even after much persecution.

[7:42] It says, he stayed in the city for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Paul was openly, earnestly, intentionally proclaiming God's word to anyone who would hear. This is what theologians call the general or external call of God. Paul broadly, freely proclaiming the gospel invitation to everyone, come receive the free gift, forgiveness and peace with God. Come be reconciled to your maker. Come sinners, come poor, come unworthy, without merit, without pedigree or rituals, performances. Even if you don't have a clean record, come to Christ. Paul, who was dramatically converted on the road to Damascus as one who was persecuting Christians, he knew the importance of the gospel and was compelled to share it.

[8:50] But he didn't know who would receive it. And surely it was discouraging at times when people rejected him and rejected his message and tried to kill him. But listen to what God says to Paul in Corinth in Acts 18. This is God speaking to Paul. Paul, do not be afraid, but go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you, and I have many in this city who are my people. Paul was commissioned to preach and proclaim, herald the good news of the gospel. That was his purpose. He didn't know who would receive it, but God knew who his people were. This is the effectual call of God in a person's life. God's inward work through the Holy Spirit that brings a person to respond in faith. This is personal. There's a personal receiving of the gospel. It's obtained by faith.

[9:58] Paul did the proclaiming. God did the saving. And many people believed and were baptized, it says. So Paul sent this letter to the Corinthians because they had accepted the message. Verse 1, Now I remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received.

[10:21] He wants them to know that this gospel that saves is the gospel, this gospel that brings saving faith is the same gospel we look to to continue in faith. Look at the text. It says, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved. Your justification, your being made right with God, your right standing with God is grounded in the gospel of God's grace. Not in your perfect obedience, not in your sinlessness. If you want to stand firm.

[11:07] If you don't want to be on slippery ground, prone to backslide, center your life on the gospel, grounded, established, rooted in gospel truth. The good news of Jesus Christ and his work on the cross is not something that we receive for salvation and then forget about and move on from to go to deeper things. We continue in it, and in doing so, present tense, you are being saved. The Bible says that the people of God have been saved, they are being saved, and they will be saved. It's not a perfect analogy, but the gospel is like a time-released medicinal tablet. In salvation, we're perfectly justified, born again, delivered from the penalty of sin. And as we live the Christian life, we're progressively sanctified and delivered from the power of sin. And one day we will be perfectly glorified as we enter eternity, delivered from the presence of sin.

[12:27] When we get to the new heavens and new earth, there'll be no effects of curse or sin, no pain, no tears, no sickness, no death. So here, when it says that we are being saved, he's speaking of our sanctification, our being made holy, being set apart.

[12:51] By continuing in the gospel, never forgetting the gospel. Why is this so important? Because in the gospel, the free offer of salvation from eternal judgment is declared, saved unto eternal life. Come receive, not judgment, but fullness of joy. Continue holding on to the gospel until you reach your final destination. Never let it go. Look, it says in verse 2, If you hold fast to the word I preach to you, unless you believed in vain. It could be, surely it was, that people that Paul preached to so openly, so freely, did not have genuine belief. They believed without counting the cost, without due consideration. Surely, there were some who claimed to follow initially, but it was just a passing fancy, just a cold conformity to rules. So, interest faded. But in the context of our verses, Paul is confident in the faith of his readers. Verse 11 says, So we preach, and so you believed.

[14:20] Paul hadn't seen these Corinthians for like three years, and he's writing to these true believers to remind them of the gospel, to continue in the gospel. He's heard about all the problems, and he knows that if they're going to get things right, they need to hold on to the gospel. He says, hold fast to the gospel. Naturally, many of us are thinking about Home Depot, aisle 21. Fasteners screws, nails, anchor bolts nuts and rivets, fasteners are devices that mechanically join or secure materials together, Paul is saying the gospel must be firmly and securely forever attached to your person, to your life every area of life, everywhere you go every day you bring the gospel. Fasten your seatbelt to the word of God. Get locked in. This is important. How important? Verse 3, I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received. The most important, primary important, first things first. The main thing must remain the main thing.

[15:50] I may have forgotten a few of the details, but it reminds me of a movie of a scrappy boxer who trains and works hard and fights and ultimately becomes the world champion. But then as world champion, he gets distracted and caught up in the media and the photo shoots and the magazine covers and the, glitz and the glamour until his manager confronts him. What are we doing here? Are you a fashion model now? Did you forget where you came from? Did you forget you're a boxer? And in 1 Corinthians, it's as if the Apostle Paul is saying, what's going on there? Did you forget you're a

church? Did you forget you were bought with a price? Did you forget that all the gifts you're boasting about were a gift of God? Did you forget whom you serve? Did you forget the gospel?

[16:55] And I wonder about us. Has it just become commonplace, truths in our mind, just somewhere for the back part of your mind and your thinking? Has Christian life or church life gotten complicated or off track or confused? Paul kept the gospel front and center, determined to focus on Christ and Him crucified. Paul received the gospel from Christ himself, directly from God and not from man. And Paul was given this most important mission to deliver this most important message. So Paul labored and toiled tirelessly, reasoning from the scriptures, explaining, persuading, proving that Jesus is the Christ.

[17:51] Just as he heard the gospel from Christ, so he delivered faithfully the full counsel of God, without compromise, without apprehension. And so you and I, as we endeavor to live the Christian life, as we walk together in this journey to heaven, let's remind ourselves of the importance of the gospel. And, point two, remind ourselves of the contents of the gospel. What is the gospel? The word in Greek means glad tidings, good news from the battlefront, good news of a military triumph. In the New Testament, good news is good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Paul gives us here in a few verses some important essentials of the contents of the gospel. Verse 3, for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received. Here it is. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures that he was buried. Let's unpack the contents. It begins with Christ.

[19:06] Jesus Christ. There's no gospel without Jesus. The Bible says there's salvation in no one else, for there's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. This is Jesus of Nazareth, the historical figure who lived 2,000 years ago, claimed to be the unique son of God, and these claims were attested by miracles. The gospel says Christ died.

[19:35] Uh so everyone dies yeah it says christ died for our sins, something happened something was accomplished something was achieved at the cross the contents of the gospel include a transaction, through his death on the cross, Christ paid the full debt for our sins. This was a real victory, bearing the wrath of God, removing guilt of sin for his people. We bring our sin to the cross. We lay our burdens down at the feet of Christ, and he grants us his perfect righteousness. Today, there are many churches that have lost the plot. In their teaching, they want to redefine sin or soften sin, smooth over sin, or deny that sin exists.

[20:39] That's not the Bible. If there's no sin, why would we need a cross? Why would we need a Savior? God doesn't overlook sin. God is perfectly just, but the Bible says God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were enemies, we're reconciled to God through the blood of his Son on the cross. What a transaction. Jesus bore the wrath. Our guilt is removed and were declared not guilty. You who were dead in your trespasses, God made alive, having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Don't forget this.

[21:29] The best, most pious believer is only able to come before God and continue in God the same way the worst criminal does, by grace, through faith. Christ died for our sins. How do we know that he died? It says right there, he was buried. He was crucified, died, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. This is well attested by the witnesses. Look what else it says. The contents of the gospel are all according to the scriptures. This is speaking of the Old Testament, written long before Jesus lived.

[22:16] The true gospel is according to the scriptures, planned by God beforehand. Not an afterthought. This was foretold by the prophets. Many centuries before it happened. Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. We could look at lots of Old Testament examples. Isaiah 53, he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. From Isaiah, or from Zechariah. They'll strike the shepherd, they'll look on the one they have pierced, and they will mourn as people mourn for the death of the only child. These texts and many more are like giant clues pointing to the death of the Messiah. Even more compelling is the whole story of the Bible. Going all the way back to Genesis 3.15, man needed an atonement for sin, a substitute who would pay the penalty for sin.

[23:44] Like a Passover lamb, like the whole sacrificial system in the tabernacle, in the temple, all fulfilled at the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, according to the scriptures. This crucifixion, this death for sin was designed and promised before the ages began and at the proper time, manifested and orchestrated under the triune God's sovereign command of all time and space and people and events. And not only was his death predicted and planned, but also his resurrection. Look at verse 4. He was buried and he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

[24:41] Whether speaking of Jonah, Hosea, or Daniel, or the Psalms, there was enough in the Old Testament that Jesus could say to those despairing disciples after the crucifixion on the road to Emmaus, are you slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken? Wasn't it necessary that the Christ should suffer and then enter into glory? In beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted from all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And it says the disciples' hearts burned within them as he opened the scriptures to them. Oh, how do we know he was raised after three days? Verse 5, he appeared to Cephas, that's Peter, and then to the twelve, and Mary Magdalene, and James, and all the disciples. There were lots of eyewitnesses. Look at verse 6. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive.

[25:54] I met my wife about 20 years ago, and I vividly remember that first date. I remember her hair. I remember what we talked about. I remember her outfit. I remember the cafe we were in. I remember all of my emotions and hopes. The apostle paul wrote these words to the corinthians about 20 years after the resurrection he's saying most of these 500 witnesses they're still alive, you should go talk to them they'll tell you all about what happened and what they saw and what they experienced and.

[26:44] The contents of the gospel include a historical event. This good news is news. Facts about what happened. The gospel is grounded in reality, in time and space. A physical death, a physical resurrection, and verifiable witnesses. This is not some metaphor, some spiritual resurrection like, Oh, phoenix rising from the ashes of defeat. No, this is a bloodied, bruised, stone-cold, crucified corpse, of a Jewish rabbi who conquered the grave, raised in a glorified body to return to the right hand of the Father in glory. This is the gospel. This gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, whether Jew and Gentile. In this gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. The righteous shall live by faith.

[27:57] So, because of his death and his payment for sin, we can be forgiven in Christ. This is Christ's finished work on our behalf. And because of his resurrection, we can walk in newness of life for the rest of our days, no longer condemned, but empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk worthy, united with Christ, ever increasingly sanctified.

[28:25] But it doesn't end there. And this is part of the context of our verses because 1 Corinthians 15, is dealing with questions and confusion concerning a future bodily resurrection of Christians.

[28:44] The gospel contains our eternal destiny, in a physical glorified body, saved to live eternally in the everlasting joy, of God's glorious presence. Paul is reminding them of their future. Because Christ died and was resurrected, those in Christ will also be raised at the last day. Later on in this chapter, we read, In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, the last trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable. They shall all be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable. This mortal body must put on immortality. This gospel contains resurrection hope. I wonder if you have that hope this morning, Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night Especially if I'm sick And can't sleep And just think about how strange this world is How interesting this reality is.

[30:04] I'm alive I live I'm thinking I'm breathing and one day there will be a last breath, dead what happens when we die, and I think about people that I know that are now dead where are they where is their everlasting soul where is their everlasting soul, Are you ready to die? Have you given this enough thought?

[30:43] If you're not yet a Christian, you don't know his redeeming love. If you have not surrendered to Christ, aren't you concerned about the unknown nature of death and the afterlife? What will happen when you die? And while you live, where do you place your hope? For the rest of your days, where do you bring your shame or where do you bring your guilt? Look to Christ to be saved. If you have doubts, there are lots of people and lots of resources available to address and answer those questions and doubts.

[31:24] And for you Christians, I hope that you celebrate this reminder that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave, that he was resurrected to life. Christ overwhelmed and overpowered death so that we too will be resurrected from the dead one day with the resurrection glorified bodies. The resurrection of the dead is what we anticipate with great longing. From first to last, the Christian life is

grounded in the gospel, and we're meant to remind ourselves daily of gospel truth and hold on to that hope of resurrection every day, all day, until we die? Is your Christian walk confused? Have you lost your focus? Is your life marked by something other than love for God and love for others?

[32:24] By way of one concluding application, is it? Our Protestant tradition embraces a word-centered means of spiritual formation. As a church and for individuals, here's really the Bible's own simple formula for spiritual growth and vitality. Bible reading, meditation on the word, and prayer.

[32:55] We're not to give in to distractions of relics or candles or statues or stained glass or the latest fads of, shallow pragmatism we want to hear god's voice he speaks to us by the holy spirit as we read, and listen to and then meditate on the word of god and pray, On the night he was betrayed, Jesus said, Father, sanctify these disciples in the truth. Your word is truth. So we focus on the Bible not just as information in our brains. We want to meditate on it so it gets to our hearts. And when it hits our hearts, we change and grow and want to obey. The Bible's a big book. And sometimes in reading it, we get lost in who's who and where and when. So I urge you to attend church each week. To follow along and join together with others as often as you can to read the Word of God together.

[34:14] Consider going to a Bible study or a home group, one-on-one reading. It's like a book club, where you could ask questions. But it's a book club with a book that is living and active, the very Word of God. What a great way to keep us on track, unified as a body, so that we don't get confused about our focus or our purpose as Christians, our calling and identity as a church. Every day, together, let's remind ourselves of the gospel so we don't lose the plot. Let's pray.

[34:57] Heavenly Father, thank you for revealing yourself to us in your word and through your Son. Son, thank you for this gospel of eternal life and your words of everlasting life. We pray that we would receive the gospel by faith, that we would, delight in the gospel and deliver the gospel to others, and that we would remind ourselves and others of the glorious truths of your gospel of peace and reconciliation. We pray in Christ's name Amen.