

# The Gospel Paul Preached

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The gospel Paul preached is of divine origin, has saving power, and is the only means of building the church of God.*

**Duration:** 48:57

**Scripture:** Galatians 1:11

**Topics:** "Gospel"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of going back to the basic truths of the Gospel and not compromising on them. He highlights that there are forces that try to undermine the purity and power of the Gospel. The speaker then focuses on the Gospel that Paul preached, emphasizing that it was not of human origin but a divine revelation given to him. He urges the audience to recognize the glory of the Gospel and the fact that it was foretold that Jesus would rise again.

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## Transcript

Against the background of our reading from Galatians chapter 1, I would like you now kindly to turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and I would like to read a few of the early verses in that chapter upon which tonight's message is based. Beginning with the first verse then, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Now brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you, otherwise you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that he appeared to more than 500 brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the Apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. On this anniversary Sunday, coinciding as it does with the commencement of Missionary Conference, I'm so grateful to discover that our already resolved schedule of preaching brings us to this particular passage. We had already decided to be meditating on 1 Corinthians 15 for the next number of Sunday evenings, and I'm so delighted to be faced with this glorious passage that is before us tonight.

I know of no passage of Scripture that is more basic, more relevant, more apposite for the people of God, be it involved in a congregational ministry here in this country, in the Western world, or being as emissaries sent abroad somewhere. I know of no passage of Scripture which is more important, more basic and fundamental than this. In every age there are enemies of the truth of the gospel.

They don't always wear the same guise, they don't always appear in the same manner, but if you examine their strategy and what they're attempting to do, it is in some way or other to undermine the purity and the glory and thus the power of the gospel of our Lord. I suggest to you therefore that this passage before us tonight is absolutely basic for us. We need constantly to go back to basic things and basic truths, and remind ourselves of the verities of the gospel.

Of the things that cannot be given up or negotiated. Of basics that are so fundamental that we dare not on any condition argue about them. They are given us by God, and they are given us that we may give them in the proclamation of his word to other people.

And that is what I want to do briefly with you tonight, and the enabling of the Spirit of God I trust. I just want us to take a look at the gospel Paul preached. I want us to see something of its glory.

Every page says something different, of course, and adds to this picture, but this is a remarkable passage and a remarkable picture nevertheless. Now the first thing then we look at here is the manner in which the Apostle assures us that the gospel that he preached was essentially of divine origin. The gospel Paul preached, he insists, was not of man.

It was something that was exclusively the revelation of God to him. This comes out of course in many ways, but chiefly perhaps in that reference at the beginning of verse 3, where Paul says what I received I passed on to you as of first importance. He's referring of course to the gospel.

In the first three verses you remember he said this, I want to remind you of the gospel that I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand, by which gospel you are served, if you hold it firmly, otherwise you've believed in vain. It is a gospel, says the Apostle Paul, that he received. He didn't make it up.

He didn't have it from any human being, as the passage from Galatians 1 assures us. He received it from God. Paul received his message from God and from God alone.

And so those words in Galatians 1, 11, 12 are very important for us to remember. Let me repeat them again. I want you to know brothers, he says, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up.

I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, rather I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. Now I would like you to notice there, Paul's denial on the one hand, there are certain things he denies in that passage in Galatians, and there is one positive claim which he makes in Galatians, as he does in the passage in 1 Corinthians 15. Notice first of all this threefold denial.

Where did Paul get his gospel from? Well you know there are many scholars who tell us that he took the message of Jesus and he messed it up and made it all theological. What Jesus said according to them was so very simple and lucid and clear, but when this strange character, this converted Pharisee came along, he took the simplicities of the gospel of Christ and he made something out of it that was quite different from what it originally was. Well listen to Paul's denial, threefold denial.

See at the beginning of verse 11 there in Galatians 1, he says this, the gospel I preached is not something man made up. It is not something man made up. What Paul is saying is that the gospel was not a product of human reason or indeed of any human action.

It wasn't even the answer to human prayer. The gospel that Paul preached was not something that man made up. Man neither thought it out as a system of belief, nor did he in any wise contribute to its production.

But where did it come from then? We'll come to that in a moment. Look at the second negative. I did not receive it from any man.

Now that's not just tautology, he has something extra to say there. Here Paul goes beyond his first negative and he says that he wasn't handed it as a piece of tradition, either a family tradition, or a social tradition, or a national tradition, or a religious tradition. For the simple fact that it wasn't a tradition.

He did not receive it from any man. It wasn't that any man handed him the gospel on the plate and says here is the gospel take it. No, no he didn't receive it from any man, from any human quarter.

And then he adds a third denial, nor was I taught it. A young Saul of Tarsus did not hear the gospel from the lips of his parents. When he went to school there was no one who taught him the elements of the gospel of Jesus Messiah.

When he went to the synagogue or later on in the University in Jerusalem as a disciple of Gamaliel there was no one, there was no one who taught him the elements of this gospel. No man, nowhere, none. There you have three major negative statements.

And they deny that Paul received the gospel which he preached at Corinth from any human source whatsoever. His language is such as to cut out all human beings from being at the source of the gospel which he had first received and then proclaimed. Now look at Paul's positive claim to counterbalance that.

Not that says Paul, but this. I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. Galatians 1.12. By a process never fully explained in Scripture, but implying divine action whereby otherwise and hitherto unknown facts or truths are disclosed, made known, made clear, rendered clear to the understanding.

So that an individual in seeing them can grasp them with his mind, believe them with his soul, and later proclaim them with his lips. Now those who care to deny this particular claim of the Apostle Paul and the reality of it, this testimony must be prepared to face the facts as they are recorded for us. The facts as recorded point to this and to this alone.

Paul did not receive it from man, but he did receive it. And you and I know that. And we know that he so received it that it transformed his whole thinking and his entire living.

Morally, spiritually, in every sense from center to circumference. Every aspect of this man's life was forever more transformed and transfigured and stamped and embossed with Christ and with God's name. And that was in consequence of his reception of the gospel.

Well, how did he receive it then? Well, he answers the question. By revelation of God. It all began to happen on the road to Damascus.

And of course that illustrates for us very beautifully how no man had any share in it. There was no one there. No one capable of adding anything, of saying any word to help Saul of Tarsus out of the morass and the bondage of his philosophical thinking and his ignorance and his arrogance.

There was no one there to help. But God opened the heavens and he beheld the glory of Jesus Messiah as Lord seated on the heavenly throne. And he was given to see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Only God can do that. And it all began there. He was given to see the glories of the Lord.

And you see, in consequence, the Apostle Paul could never go back from that. When you have seen the glories of our Lord Jesus Christ, you can't go back. All the glitter, all the pomp of every other philosophy, every other teaching, every other alternative, it loses its power. When once you've seen the glories of the Lord Jesus, Jesus glorified on the Father's throne, and once you've seen him, how did you see him, Paul? By revelation.

The revelation of Jesus Christ. God gave me. And the whole content of the gospel, the message related to the crucified Lord now ascended up on high, the whole message was conveyed to him by revelation.

That's what he tells us in Galatians, that's the implication of it. It all happened by divine revelation. Something along the same level as took place on the Damascus Road also took place in Arabia.

You remember Paul tells us there in Galatians 1 that when this experience, this knowledge of the Lord Jesus had been given to him, disclosed to him, he didn't confer with flesh and blood, but he went straight for Arabia. In other words, he went aside, he went apart from the crowd, even from churches, even from Christians, as well as from his enemies. And there in Arabia of all places, possibly in a desert place, we cannot say, but alone and away from men, his gospel was given him, the truth was conveyed to him.

And you have this amazing miracle of divine revelation taking place. When at last, years later, Paul came back to Damascus, three years after coming back to Damascus, he went up to Jerusalem, where the Apostles were. Many years have gone now in between.

When he went back to Jerusalem, he went and he had two weeks, was it called, dare we call it a holiday, with Peter. He didn't know any of the Apostles until now, but he went to stay with Peter for two weeks. Do you remember the consequence of that? They heard his gospel, the gospel he had been preaching, and the Apostles concluded that he was preaching exactly the same gospel as they had been preaching, and were still preaching.

But he didn't get it from them. Now look at this. Praise the Lord, we have a wonderful God.

Jesus of Nazareth, in his incarnate state, taught the eleven all they needed to know. He walked with them, and talked with them, and lived with them, and he imparted all the truths they needed to know about himself, the Messiah of the Scriptures, the Christ of God. The same Jesus, but now glorified, now ascended, now no longer physically present with the eleven or anybody else, but spiritually enthroned in glory, communicates to Saul of Tarsus, the arch-rebel whose heart he has changed, and communicates the gospel to him, and teaches him from the throne in heaven.

And when Paul speaks with the Apostles, they say, man you're preaching the same gospel as we are. We've got the same gospel. We got it from the incarnate Lord here upon earth.

You got it from the enthroned Lord upon his throne. Christian, missionary, worker, saint, witness, here is something for you and for me to worship God on its account, because it is true. But not by man, not of man, but of God.

Paul's gospel was the gospel of God. Before ever he called it my gospel, he called it the gospel of God, and the gospel of his Son, and he received it by revelation. Now the next thing, I don't need to apply that, I'm going on.

May the Spirit of God apply it to our hearts, but you see, you and I need to be sure that we've got the gospel of God. I need it. There is no assurance that I prize more than this.

As with fear and trepidation, I often mount this pulpit, but I lose my fears when I am certain in my soul that I have the word that God has revealed to give to you, dear people. And unless we know that, not only are we the poorer, but we've scarcely the right to preach, whether it be at home or abroad. But of this we must be sure.

Now look at the next. The gospel first preached by Paul, and first received by Paul, and then preached by him, was a gospel with saving power. Oh, we use that word saving or salvation very, very flippantly sometimes.

Forgetting that it's such a big word encompassing so much, it makes a difference between heaven and hell. This is one of the great, if not the greatest words of Scripture, of the Paul reminds the Corinthians, I want to remind you of the gospel I preach to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are being saved.

The gospel of God is a gospel that saves. Don't let's ever be ashamed of that. It's a biblical term with a biblical concept that matches the danger and the peril of our human society here and elsewhere.

We are lost in sin and shame, but the word salvation changes the whole thing and brings the life of God as well as the pardon of God into our souls, and everything's different. Now just a few things about this tonight. The first thing, the gospel that is from God, from God alone, can alone produce the Church of God.

The gospel which is from God alone, unadorned by human philosophies and ideas, unalloyed by anything human, the pure unadulterated gospel of God is the only gospel that will build the Church of God. Now I deliberately put it like that because I encounter people these days, and I'm sure you do too, we encounter them differently, but I encounter some people who like to tivate the gospel and like to add to it certain things. And to me it's like plucking the rose of Sharon and putting it in a bouquet, and they say that the background, what you put alongside of it, is far more important than the rose of Sharon itself.

And they want to accompany the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with this, that, or the other, because that is what makes it palatable. That is what makes it acceptable. The gospel per se is not the thing we're depending upon, it's the things that go with it, it's the trimmings.

Brothers, I have a, and sisters, I have a dread in my soul of dishonoring the gospel of God by putting emphasis on trimmings, be it in the church, or its services, or in any other context. When once you introduce trimmings into the propagation of the gospel, you are in danger of elevating things that are man-made and humanly conceived, and thus of taking away from the glory of the gospel of God. And I have a dread of that, because people want to introduce all kinds of things into the church today.

I sometimes confess to myself, well this is a great time in which to preach the gospel, but I say to myself, I'm almost glad that my days in the ministry are drawing to a close, because I encounter so much of this which to me dishonors my Lord, dishonors the Lord. He's to be the center. It's the gospel of God as God gave it in its purity, in its sanctity, without any of the additions and human accretions of so-called human wisdom.

This is the gospel that will build the church of God. Now wait a moment. You can build a church of a kind without building the church of God, and this is where it is so subtle.

You and I can build a church that is filled to capacity with people, all making a wonderful sound which is apparently praise to the Lord. Now I've gone through this, and I've been in that situation, and I know it is possible to do it, but I tell you, if I understand these words are right, it is only the gospel of God in the purity of its original givenness that can build the church God is building. And I don't want to build my own church.

I want to be building the church of God and if I'm not building the church of God, I want the Lord to take me out of the way. Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it. Now listen to this.

Believe it or not, an offshoot of the true church of God emerged of all places, of all places in ancient Corinth, in ancient Corinth. Now that it was a true church of God, there's no question about it. Listen to how Paul addresses them.

1 Corinthians 1. Paul, he says, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes to the church of God in Corinth. And then he goes on to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Now you've only to read these verses in which the apostle introduces his first Corinthian letter to realize that he's looking upon the Corinthian believers as genuine believers, true Christians.

There were some exceptions among them, maybe. But speaking generally, it was a true, a genuine church of God. He goes on and he makes an addition at the, toward the middle of chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians.

He makes it abundantly clear that the Corinthian church, speaking generally again, was not inferior to any other church anywhere. There were churches in other places. But you read verses 4 to 9 and it's amazing what he tells us about the church in Corinth.

I'll come to the reason why I stress that in a moment. Some of you don't need telling, but let me, let me read these words first of all. Verses 4 to 9, 1 Corinthians 1. I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Jesus Christ, in Christ Jesus.

For in him you have been enriched in every way, in all your speaking and in all your knowledge, because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus to be revealed. What do you think of that? He's telling this church that they don't lack anything.

The Spirit of God has given them everything they need. They're blessed with every spiritual gift in Corinth, in Corinth. Now the moral and spiritual transformation involved in the emergence of that Corinthian church is nothing short of the miraculous.

Corinth was one of the most unholy and unwholesome of all Greek or any other cities in the ancient world. You know as well as I do that it used to be called the dunghill of that ancient society. And I don't know who had done it, but it had come, it had become fashionable to use a verb, which is not a verb, but they made it into a verb, to Corinthianize.

And to Corinthianize meant, it's referred to the act or process of making something or someone utterly perverted. To Corinthianize a person was to make it utterly and completely perverted in every sense. And Corinth was such a city.

So you remember in chapter 6 of his first letter the Apostle Paul says this to them. Do you not know he says that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God. Do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And now hold your breath. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

What? Oh have you got it? Here is a true church of blood-washed, spirit-indwelt and sanctified men and women, a congregation of the saints of God, built upon the downhill of ancient Corinth. What did it? The gospel Paul preached, not with eloquence of man, but in dependence upon the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit sealed the word to the hearts of men and brought men to the Savior and to God through the Savior.

By the proclamation of the gospel given to Paul by revelation, believed by Paul and then proclaimed by him in its beauty and its glory and its totality to those debauched people of Corinth, a church of God appeared. Not just a church, but the true church. The other thing which I can alone stress tonight is this.

The gospel that hails from God and which alone can produce and perfect a church in any atmosphere, but especially in an atmosphere like Corinth's, is based upon the death and the burial and the resurrection of the man Christ Jesus. This is how this early passage in 1 Corinthians is related to our main theme, the resurrection, Christ's and ours. The only adequate cause for such a glorious effect as the emergence of a church of the living God on the downhill of ancient Corinth is to be found in a Messiah that was anointed of God, who lived and died and was buried and rose again and, listen, is risen.

Not only did he arise and it's over and done with, he arose and he lives in the power of an endless life and because he ever lives to make intercession for us, he is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by him. Ours is a living Savior. He arose in history.

He is risen still and he abides the one with the keys of death and Hades, dangling from his life. Oh yes, that gospel which created the one body of which Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, a body whose diversity of gifts makes it capable of fulfilling the mind and the purpose of its divine head, even in a hostile pagan world whose love can be of the quality of 1 Corinthians 13, the gospel that produces a body such as that is no flimsy gospel. There's no man-made gospel.

It must be the gospel of God. You see, that's why Paul everywhere was not unashamed of the gospel. He saw it as the power of God in operation, unto, working towards, aiming at, and achieving salvation among all the nations.

Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the Messiah of the Scriptures. He accepted in Peter's confession the fact that he was, when Peter said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Yes, and more than that, in replying to him, Jesus said, actually, Peter, that is absolutely foundational to my church.

Upon this rock I will build my church. The Messiah of the Scriptures was destined to die and to rise again. I have no time to develop that here tonight, so you can pacify your mind.

I have no time to develop it. But in the Scriptures he was foretold, and he was referred to as one who would suffer. The Jews couldn't take it in, of course.

They just couldn't, and you can't blame them, in one sense. It's such an amazing thing to take in, that one anointed of God to be the Savior of men should himself suffer, especially in terms of Isaiah 53. But it is also foretold in Scripture that he would rise again from the dead.

Jesus himself was quite clear of that. You remember he mentions it in a number of places, especially in Luke chapter 24, the two on the road to Emeus and the rest of the disciples later on. He said, everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms.

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, this is what is written. The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

He were witnesses of these things. He believed the Scriptures concerning himself, and he came to fulfill them. And it is the testimony of the church that he not only came to fulfill them, he did fulfill them.

They were filled to the full in him. May I remind you that Isaiah 53, though it begins with terrible anguish and suffering, doesn't end quite there. Many people have read Isaiah 53 without recognizing some of the remarkable things that are stated towards the end of that great prophetic chapter.

May I remind you of some of these words, listen to these words, I just cull them out and hold them forth to you. He will see his offspring and prolong his days. He's already died in the in the development of the passage, but says the Prophet, he will see his offspring and he will prolong his days and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

And all that's to come again. Or listen to these words, he will see the light of life and be satisfied beyond his death, beyond his anguish, beyond his sufferings, he will be satisfied. Or listen to this, therefore I will give him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils with the strong.

Hallelujah, did you get that? He will divide the spoils with the strong. He who has suffered, he who is in anguish, he who is lacerated, he who is torn, he whom some of the scholars say is like a man tortured and tortured not only with physical beating and laceration but by some hideous loathsome disease. He will divide the spoils with the strong.

He's the conqueror. He's the victor. He sees the light of day.

He will see his seed. He's not lost the day. Brothers and sisters don't miss that.

It was foretold that he would rise again and rise again he did. He is the fulfillment of the prophesied pattern. The actuality of the resurrection didn't give all that problem to Paul and others in his day of course because as he tells us here in 1 Corinthians 15 there were so many witnesses to it.

To people today the resurrection causes a lot of trouble. But you see Paul is almost embarrassed here by the number of people who'd seen the Lord Jesus and he's telling them even though he doesn't put it in these words, look he says he was seen by over 500 brothers and sisters at once of whom the most part are alive to this day and if you've got any doubts well take a single ticket or a return and go and see them and go and talk to them. You know they're around today.

They saw him. They touched him. They handled him.

That's the way to get rid of your doubts. They're still alive. I think we've lost the vision of this and the grandeur of this and the certainty that arises out of this.

But I must conclude with this. The gospel of God given to all by revelation is the gospel that relates to Jesus Christ. Lived, died, was buried, rose again and is risen and lives forevermore.

But the thing that I want you to notice particularly is this. So this, if it was foretold in scripture must have been God's plan from all eternity. The cross was no accident.

What happened in ancient Jerusalem wasn't just all determined by man. All they did they worse. Paul says that in the book of Acts in chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost.

Of course you by wicked hands have taken him and you've crucified him and you've slain him. He says but nevertheless he says this was the predetermined plan of God and because it was predetermined by God you see it could be foretold. You see you can't foretell.

The prophets could not foretell what had not been foreordained. There is no prophecy unless something has been determined beforehand. You can't have prophecy only guessing unless something has been predetermined.

And if something has been predetermined the only one who can reveal it is the person who has predetermined it. And the only one who can predetermine anything is the Lord God Almighty. He had predetermined.

He had chosen the lamb from before the foundations of the world. And he had been set aside and he had been sanctified to be the bearer of sin. And in the fullness of the time he sent him forth and he lived under the anointing of the Spirit.

God did not give him the Spirit by measure. So he lived. So he wrote miracles.

So he offered signs to men that he was the scent of Jehovah. And then the shocking thing happened as far as man was concerned. He died.

The bottom went out of the life of his disciples and his enemies bought it. But wait a moment. On the morning of the third day there was a real earthquake.

Not an ordinary one but an extraordinary one. He arose, a victor from the dark domain, and he lives forever with his saints to reign. And that is the gospel that builds the Church of God.

In Corinth, you and I are in Toronto. We're a long way from Corinth. I ask you, are we? Are we? Some of you have been already talking to me today about ancient Corinthian morals.

Not as they were found in ancient Corinth, but as they are found today and impinging upon your lives right here in the city of Toronto. Can there be a true Church of God rising amidst the rabble and remaining pure? I know of only one way in which that can take place. By the purity of the Word of God proclaimed and applied and obeyed.

If you receive, says Paul, the gospel that I proclaimed to you, the gospel which I first received before I handed it on, if you've taken your stand upon it, you are saved by it. Unless you've believed, of course, in vain. To believe in vain is to believe on a bubble, something that has no content, something that is empty in the middle.

To believe on a Christ other than the Christ of revelation and of history, the Son of God who came and lived and died and rose again. Any other Messiah, to believe on any other Messiah is to believe in vain. For God has only anointed one, and it is only the one of God's anointing who has suffered and borne the penalty of our sins and has been raised again for the justification of a sinner.

I commend him to you. If there are those among us tonight who do not trust in him, O friend, trust him. There is no other Savior you will ever find like him.

There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved. But I believe most of us here tonight are trusting in him. There is one other question.

Are we proud of him? Do we see the total significance of Christ and his gospel? Or do we see any need to supplement it by this, that, and the other? Or is not Christ and Christ alone sufficient for us to live by, to serve by, and to die by? I believe he is the Alpha and the Omega. Let us pray. Lord God, our Father, we thank you for the gospel of your blessed Son, our Lord.

We thank you for the grace that has drawn us to you in him and through him. We ask your forgiveness for everything that tends to come between us and you by any measure in which we ever dishonor him or yourself as revealed in him. And we pray that we may learn more and more to see him with clarity and to recognize and honor him fully.

Make us as individuals very cautious, very careful of this, and grant to us as a congregation, whether we serve abroad or whether we serve at home, grant us, we pray, a jealousy for his glory, a holy inbuilt jealousy that matches your own for the glory of your Son. Hear us in his holy name. Amen.

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