

(1 Corinthians) ch.14:1-15:19

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of balance in the use of spiritual gifts, particularly prophesying and speaking in tongues, for the edification of the church.

Duration: 44:12

Scripture: Exodus 20:18, 1 Corinthians 14:1

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Christian Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on 1 Corinthians 14:1, which encourages Christians to pursue love and earnestly desire spiritual gifts. The aim in life should be to have the type of love described in 1 Corinthians 13, while also seeking the gifts of the Spirit. The speaker emphasizes the importance of not being imbalanced, but rather desiring both love and spiritual gifts. Specifically, the gift of prophecy is highlighted as a gift that builds up the whole church, contrasting it with speaking in tongues, which edifies oneself. The speaker also discusses how speaking in tongues allows the release of spiritual pressure, similar to water flowing through a pipe.

Transcript

Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians and chapter 14 and verse 1. We were looking at this verse in our last study where it says, Pursue love yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts. Or as another translation has it, make love your great quest or aim in life. And this is a very needed exhortation for us as Christians.

That if someone were to ask us, what is your aim in life? It is not primarily to win souls, even though that's a very good thing. It's not primarily to know the scripture thing. Here it says, make love your aim.

Hotly pursue after this love. Seek it earnestly. In other words, to have the type of love described in 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

But do that while you are also setting your heart on the gifts of the spirit. Don't be imbalanced like some people who prefer love to spiritual gifts. Or like others who pursue after spiritual gifts and ignore love.

Love does not seek its own. And so if we seek for spiritual gifts while pursuing after love, we will desire those gifts not to exalt ourselves, but to bless and to help others. And here it says that there's one particular gift that you need to desire more than anything else.

And that is the gift of prophecy. Now here is a word that's much misunderstood. In the Old Testament, prophets were primarily used by God to give direction to his people.

Even kings had to come to prophets to find out what God wanted them to do. But in the New Testament, we never come across a case of directional prophecy. Of directive prophecy.

Where a person tells another believer what he should do. On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Jesus Christ appeared with Moses and Elijah, the disciples made three tabernacles for them. And immediately a cloud came between them and God.

And God took away Moses and Elijah and said, if I were to paraphrase what God was trying to say to his people on that Mount of Transfiguration, it was this, the age of Moses and Elijah is now over. They were the two outstanding prophets of the Old Testament who directed God's people. The time is over now.

Now, this is my beloved son, hear him directly. You don't have to go via a prophet in the New Testament. Even Agabus never gave directions in any of the prophecies recorded in Acts of the Apostles.

He merely stated what was going to happen in the future. But here it's speaking particularly about the ability to bless and encourage and build up others as we see very clearly when we come to verse 3. That one who prophesies speaks to men for edification, that is to build them up. Exaltation, that is encouragement and challenge.

Consolation, that is comfort and strengthening. So this is the meaning of prophecy. One who speaks to men God's word according to the need of the people he is speaking to.

A prophet is one who has grace from God to minister according to the need of the people whom he ministers to in a particular situation at a particular time. It results in their being built up, encouraged, strengthened, comforted and challenged. Now it also speaks here about the gift of speaking in tongues.

In fact a great portion of 1 Corinthians 14 is devoted to these two gifts. It says here in verse 2 that one who speaks in the tongue does not speak to men but to God. No one understands him but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.

This is not a gift to be devalued or despised since God himself has given it. And the Bible says in James chapter 1 that every good and perfect gift comes down from above. And every gift God gives including the gift he gave the disciples on the day of Pentecost of speaking in tongues is a good and not only a good gift but a perfect gift.

And when a person speaks in a tongue we're told here that he does not speak to men. The speaking in tongues is not to men. It's not a gift exercised primarily to give a message to men.

It is speaking to God primarily. And no one can understand what we're saying because we're speaking in an unknown language that God has given us through his Holy Spirit. But in his spirit he speaks mysteries.

In other words he's communicating from his spirit to God without the use of his mind. Later on it says here that a person cannot understand himself what he's speaking when he prays in tongues. Verse 14.

If I pray in a tongue my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. In other words other people can't understand me and I can't understand myself. And in spite of this it says in verse 4 even though other people can't understand and I can't understand myself yet it says in verse 4 that one who speaks in a tongue edifies

himself, builds himself up.

It's contrasted here with the gift of prophecy. Prophecy builds up the other person whereas speaking in tongues builds up myself. One who prophesies on the other hand builds up the whole church.

Now we can ask ourselves how can we edify ourselves when we don't even understand what we're saying when we speak in tongues? When our spirit is full whether a praise or a burden or sorrow or anything that is being a burden upon our spirit that we need to discharge. Very often we find that our spoken language whether English or any other mother tongue of yours is like a small pipe through which this pressure of water in the spirit has to flow out. Now if God were to give us a direct connection from our spirits straight to our tongue without going through our mind so that we do not have to speak in a known language that we have learnt and studied then there could be a release of that pressure in the spirit straight through our tongue.

Of course not passing through our mind we wouldn't be able to understand what we're saying but yet the pressure in our spirit is released whether it's a pressure of praise or a pressure of prayer. And as a result the spirit is edified and particularly in the days in which we live where the world is so full of pressure we could take seriously what Paul says in verse 5, I wish that you all spoke in tongues. And when we realize that Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit we cannot take verse 5 lightly.

He says I wish that you all spoke in tongues. No doubt there were people in Corinth whom Paul knew who did not speak in tongues but he wished that they all spoke in tongues. But he also wished much more that they prophesied that they would be able to share God's word in such a way as to build up the church because he says the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues.

Now we already considered in 1 Corinthians 12 verse 29 that all are not prophets and yet he wishes here in verse 5 that all prophesy. All are not called to the permanent ministry of a prophet. That is one who has God's word at all times consistently wherever God takes him he has a word.

And yet that's not the calling of everyone, very few are called to be prophets but yet all can prophesy, that is all can share God's word briefly perhaps, in particular occasions it is God's will that every one of his children seek for this gift. In fact in Acts chapter 2 when the Holy Spirit was poured out the Apostle Peter said this is the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that my spirit will be poured out on all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. That was the one sign marked there in connection with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And it says here that if you can prophesy that's even greater than speaking in tongues. Now sometimes we think because tongues is more spectacular that that is greater but the word of God says prophecy is greater. It's far greater and a far greater gift and a far better one to be able to speak in your mother tongue in a way that will edify, exhort and console others.

But speaking in tongues is not to be despised and Paul is always very careful to bring in that corrective word. He says then the one who speaks in tongues unless the one who speaks in tongues interprets so that the church may receive edifying. So it says here that it is possible that when a tongue is spoken it can be interpreted and then the church will receive edifying in which case he equates tongues with interpretation as equal to prophecy.

So that teaches us that tongues can sometimes be used not just to speak to God but to speak to men. To speak directly a word to men from God when there is an interpretation. Then he says in verse 6 how that works.

Now brethren, he says in verse 6 if I come to you speaking in tongues what shall I profit you? He's now speaking about tongues that's used in communication from God to man through Paul in the church. He says that won't be any use to you because you won't understand what I'm saying unless there is an interpretation and I speak to you either by way of revelation a tongue can bring a revelation of God on his word or some aspect of his nature that means something new. It can be knowledge of God and his word.

It can be a prophecy. It can be a teaching. The interpretation of a tongue can sometimes be prayer, verse 2. It can be revelation, knowledge, prophecy or teaching.

It can be any one of these five things. And then he says about the importance of speaking clearly. He says even a flute or a harp when it produces a sound must produce a clear sound so that people know what is being played.

Likewise a bugle, verse 8, must send out a clear signal otherwise people won't prepare themselves for battle. So in the same way he says when you speak with your tongue make sure that what you speak is clear so that people understand what you're saying otherwise you'll be speaking into the air. What then is the conclusion? Speak in your mother tongue and prophesy but do not despise speaking in other tongues because that along with interpretation is equal to prophecy.

Let's turn now to 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 10. In our last study I mentioned that Paul was speaking here about the two gifts of speaking in unknown tongues and of prophesying. In fact the whole chapter right up to verse 33 deals with this subject.

And one of the wonderful things we see in Paul's writing here inspired by the Holy Spirit as we see throughout the scripture is the balance, the balance that's summed up in verse 1 pursue after love yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts and further in the rest of the chapter the balance between prophesying and speaking in tongues. Here again many people have gone overboard on one extreme or the other. Some have almost taken prophecy to the exclusion of speaking in tongues and others have taken speaking in tongues to the exclusion of prophesying.

What we read in the word of God is that we need both. Verse 10, there are perhaps, he's talking about the gift of speaking in tongues here a great many kinds of languages in the world and no kind is without meaning. And he says it is possible that God can give this gift of speaking in some language which is spoken in some part of the world, and there are thousands of these languages to a brother to speak for in the church but it must be clear what is spoken, verse 9. And there must be some meaning to it but we don't understand it.

And then he says in verse 11, if I don't know the meaning of the language I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. In other words if somebody is speaking in an unknown tongue in the church and I'm sitting in the church trying to listen and understand what God is trying to say to me and I can't understand a thing of what he's saying because I don't know this language he will appear like a barbarian to me and I'll probably appear like a barbarian who doesn't know these languages to him. So also he says, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, verse 12 seek to abound for the edification of the church.

That's a very needed exhortation in connection with the use of spiritual gifts. That whatever gift you use, make sure your ultimate aim in the use of that gift is the building up of the church. In verse 1 we saw pursue after love, at the same time pursue spiritual gifts, desire them.

But now he tells us how to desire them and what to desire them for. He says you've got to be zealous but it must be for the edification of the church for the building of the church and not for your own thrills and excitement. Therefore if you are really interested in building up the church through a gift and say your particular gift is speaking in tongues in public well then he says there's only one solution, you've got to pray that you will interpret.

Otherwise nobody can understand what you're saying. Therefore, verse 13, let the one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. Because he says when I pray in a tongue, it is my spirit praying as we considered in our last study.

It's my spirit expressing itself, bypassing my mind, coming out straight through my tongue. My mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? And here is the balance again.

Since my mind is unfruitful when I speak in tongues, shall I discard speaking in tongues altogether? No, he says in verse 15. What is the outcome? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also. That's the balance.

God wants us to pray in our mother tongue. God wants us to pray in other tongues also. I will sing with other tongues and I will sing with my mother tongue as well.

That's the balance of scripture. And if we are to be balanced, not one-sided Christians, we've got to do what Paul said he did. He prayed in tongues and he prayed in known languages.

He sang in unknown languages and he sang in known languages. And then he says in the church, for example, you're getting up and you want to praise the Lord and you are praising the Lord in the spirit. That means in an unknown tongue.

How will the person who is sitting there, who is ungifted, say amen when you give thanks? Because he doesn't know what you're saying. You see, the purpose of our leading out in prayer or praise in the church is that other people will follow and say amen to what we are saying. But they can't say amen if they don't understand what we're saying.

He says you're giving thanks. That's all right. God understands what you're saying and God's given you that gift.

But the other person is not built up. You, of course, are built up because the one who speaks in an unknown tongue does build himself up as we read in verse 4. Now, lest it appear as though Paul is despising the gift of tongues, he gives this word of testimony, verse 18. I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all.

You see, he doesn't want anyone in Corinth to think that he despises this gift. Not only does he say I speak in tongues more than all of you, but notice what he says in verse 18. He says I thank God for it.

It was something that brought tremendous edification to Paul's life. He accepted it as a good and perfect gift. He was not an extremist going off the cliff on one side or on the opposite side.

He had the gift of tongues and he knew how to exercise it. But he says when I come into the church, I don't show off my gift of speaking in tongues. I'd rather speak five words with my mind because my aim there is to instruct you, to teach you, rather than 10,000 words in a tongue.

And he says if I had a choice of speaking 10,000 words in a tongue, that would just impress you with my ability. But if I spoke five words with my mind, that would be able to instruct you and bless you. Though Paul did speak 10,000 words in an unknown tongue in private, that's what he's referring to in verse 18.

His spirit was edified. So there we see the balance. That the gift of tongues is something God gives so that we can edify our spirit and it's primarily for private use.

It's very clearly seen in verse 18 and 19, something to thank God for, particularly in the days in which we live, days of pressure, that our spirit can be edified. But in the church, we must prophesy. Alternately, we must pray that there will be an interpretation, either through ourselves or, as he says later on in the chapter, through somebody else.

And so he says in verse 20 to these Corinthians, who were obviously abusing this gift of tongues and using it in excess, contrary to the way the Holy Spirit intended it to be used. He says, brethren, do not be children in your thinking. Don't be babies.

When it comes to evil, be babies. Be innocent concerning all the evil that goes on in the world. There it's good to be a baby.

But when it comes to understanding God and His ways and the way His church is built and even the exercise of spiritual gifts, when it says here, don't be children in your understanding, what's he referring to? He's referring to the gift of speaking in tongues and prophesying. He says, don't be like a child in these matters. Understand what the Holy Spirit is saying.

Be mature in your thinking. And he says, doesn't it say in the law, in the law it is written, this is a quotation from Isaiah chapter 28, verse 11 onwards, by men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people and even so they'll not listen to me. He says, that's a reference to speaking in tongues in the church.

So then he says, according to that verse, tongues offer a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers. And that's how it was in the day of Pentecost. This is one function of the gift of tongues, that it is a sign to the unbelievers, particularly when they understand what is being spoken.

And there they understand and they realize the speaker has never learned this language that can be a sign to them. That's how it was in the day of Pentecost when people from many parts of the world who knew many languages came and heard these languages being spoken by these unlearned apostles who had never learned them and that type of thing God can repeat even today. And so he says there it can be a sign, that's one function of speaking in tongues along with all the others that we've already seen in the chapter.

But prophecy, he says, is primarily a sign for those who believe. Prophecy is primarily directed to the believer, to edify and encourage and console him. The unbeliever needs the message of the gospel, not prophecy primarily.

However, he says, now this is in contrast to what he's already said in verse 22, supposing the whole church were coming together and everybody in the church began to rattle off speaking in tongues and some unbelievers came in or people who never knew about these gifts of the spirit. They'll think you're a crowd of mad people and you can't blame them. If you all begin to speak in tongues together, what's the use? Nobody's understanding what you're saying.

But on the other hand, he says, prophesying, even though it's a sign for believers, it's primarily meant for believers, yet you can have a meeting together of the church and you come together and you're prophesying and it's directed mainly to the believers in the church. But an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters and even though the message is not directed to the unbeliever, yet he's convicted by what he's heard and he's called to account by everyone. In other words, one after the other as different people get up and prophesy, if all prophesy, he says the secrets of his heart are disclosed, verse 25.

And that teaches us what prophecy really is. Prophecy is that which convicts a man of his sin, particularly of his hidden sin, particularly of areas in his life which he had no light on before. The secrets of his heart are disclosed.

It's not just Bible teaching or Bible study. It is a supernatural revelation that comes forth, bringing to light the hidden things of the people in the congregation. And when he sees that he's convicted and exposed, he understands what is being spoken, he'll fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

Just like in the Old Testament tabernacle, the glory of God dwelling on it was the mark of God's presence. In the same way, in the New Testament church, the manifestation of these spiritual gifts that exposes sin in the hearts of people who come to sit there, where they get revelation on their spiritual needs, that is the mark of God's presence. This is the mark of the New Testament church, that God's word is so powerfully spoken that people are brought face to face with God with an awareness of their need and they fall on their face and worship God and say God is certainly here.

Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 26. In our previous two studies, as we've been going through chapter 14, we've been discovering Paul's teaching on the subject of speaking in tongues and prophesying. We see there a beautiful balance, very difficult to find in Christendom today, the balance that is found in 1 Corinthians 14.

We often find in Christendom today those who are totally against the gift of speaking in tongues or those who have taken it to an excess. But it's always refreshing and beautiful to see a church where these gifts are exercised in the balanced way that Paul speaks of here in 1 Corinthians 14. And one cannot but believe that if the apostle Paul or the other apostles were living today, they would like to be in a church where they find the same balance as found in this chapter in the exercise of these gifts.

And then he speaks about how they are to conduct themselves when they come together for their meetings as a church. Here is almost the only passage in the entire New Testament that tells us how the meetings of the early church were conducted and how the Holy Spirit has intended that meetings in New Testament times should be conducted. In the Old Testament it was different.

They had the synagogue and they had the pulpit up there with one preacher who would get up and exhort everybody else and then they'd go home. But in the New Testament many things have changed compared to the Old Testament. In fact, it's a radical change in almost every area.

It's a leading upward and higher from what it was in Old Testament times. The Holy Spirit was not given like it's given in New Testament times to all believers. In the Old Testament it was a rare prophet or a priest or a king who was anointed.

But now all believers can have the Spirit poured out upon them and therefore there is to be a difference in the meeting because the leader of every meeting of the church must be the Holy Spirit exercising the authority of Jesus Christ, the head of the church, in that meeting. And so he says, when you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

Now there are two ways in which we could look at that verse. We could look at it like this. That Paul is saying, when you come together, each one is so eager to put forth that which he has on his mind, a psalm or a teaching or a revelation or a tongue or an interpretation.

He doesn't say these things are wrong. He says, but remember this basic principle that everything must be done for edification and everything must be done in a particular order. For God is a God of order and not of confusion.

And that's very important for us to bear in mind. And he says that later on in verse 33, that God's not a God of confusion. Or we could look at that verse like this.

That each one, when he comes to the meeting, should come seeking the burden of the Spirit to see what do you want me to contribute to the meeting today. And the Spirit may lay upon his heart a psalm. A psalm means a song of praise or a particular song that he would like to choose from the songbook, from the hymnbook, to be sung.

And there must be freedom for someone in the congregation to call out a hymn. If it is a meeting of the body of Christ and the gifts that God has given to the body are to be exercised. Someone may come with a teaching, someone else with a revelation, someone else with a tongue and interpretation.

But he says concerning speaking in tongues, verse 27, at the most two or three. If it's a large assembly, three. If it's a small assembly, perhaps one or two is more than enough.

But no one should speak in a tongue without interpretation. And if you find that there is no interpreter there to interpret that tongue, then he should keep quiet. And let him just speak to himself and to God.

Because there must be some awareness of whether in the church there is someone with the gift of interpretation. Now an interpretation is different from a translation. A translation is word for word.

An interpretation is thought for thought. That which is the thought behind the tongue can be interpreted by two different people in two different ways and yet the message can be exactly the same. But if there is no interpreter, then the one who has the gift of tongues should keep silent.

And he says here concerning the prophets, let the prophets then speak two or three. In a large assembly, three. In a smaller assembly, two.

And let the others pass judgment. In other words, let them do what the Berean Christians did as we read in Acts chapter 17. Compare what this prophet is saying with the word of God.

That's how they pass judgment. Is this according to scripture? They should not allow anyone to get up and say he's a prophet and fool them. No.

Let them check up whether it's according to scripture and then receive it. Hold fast to that which is good. And if while a prophet is speaking another person sitting there has got a revelation on something, he says let the first keep silent.

In other words, wait for the first person to finish. Don't just jump up and make the other person sit down. But wait for the first person to become silent.

In other words, to finish his message. And then you can prophesy. And that's what he says in verse 35.

One by one, you can all prophesy. But that means you can speak for that revelation which you got while you were sitting listening to the other prophets. And the purpose of your all prophesying is so that all can get something from what you have to say.

All can learn and all can be exhorted. And if someone says, but I cannot control it. Well, here is a word.

The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. If you cannot control it, then it cannot be from the Holy Spirit. Because the fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control.

Galatians 5.23 And when a person says I'm being urged in such a way that I cannot control myself. That is not the Holy Spirit. It is either your soulish urging or the urging of evil spirits.

The fruit of the spirit is self-control. And he always gives us the ability to control ourselves so that we can keep silent even though we have the gift of tongues as it says in verse 28. Because there is no interpreter in a particular assembly.

Or we can even keep silent and take our time to stand up and share the revelation. And allow for others to speak before us. Because God is not a God of confusion.

But of peace. God does not bring confusion into any assembly. Where there is confusion, it is the work of the devil.

It is the result of a lack of wisdom. But when God works through his Holy Spirit in the exercise of tongues and prophecy and interpretation. The result will always be peace.

And more peace and more rest. As in all the churches of the saints. Paul says in every church of the saints.

It is like this. And then he gives a few words of exhortation concerning the ministry of women. He says let the women keep silent in the churches.

And this is a word that we need to understand. Does it mean that they cannot pray? Does it mean that they cannot even sing? Because some would interpret it that way. To keep silent could mean various things.

That they cannot even join in the singing. But we need to compare scripture with scripture. And we see in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

Just a few pages earlier in the same letter. Paul had already said that a woman can pray and prophesy. With her head covered.

1 Corinthians 11 verse 5. So that is obviously not speaking about any private prayer meeting. It is the meeting in the church. Where she has to cover her head in the presence of men.

And she can pray and prophesy. She is not called to be a prophetess. There are no prophetesses in the New Testament after the day of Pentecost.

Except a false one Jezebel in Revelation chapter 2. But she can prophesy means she can share. Testify to that which God has done for her. And spoken to her.

But otherwise she is not permitted to teach. When it says in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 34. They are not permitted to speak.

It becomes very clear when we read in 1 Timothy chapter 2. Paul writing to Timothy saying what he permitted women to do. And what he did not permit women to do. It says very clearly.

I do not permit a woman to teach. 1 Timothy 2.12. Or to exercise authority over a man. And so speaking about teaching and preaching and exhorting others.

That is not the calling of a woman to exhort. But to share and testify yes. Let them humble themselves and subject themselves to the authority in the church.

1 Corinthians 14.34. As the law says. And if they desire to learn anything. Let them ask their own husbands at home.

In other words do not interrupt the meetings in the church. Asking questions you sisters. If you have any questions.

Submit to your authority. Go home and ask your husband. If your husband does not know.

He will find out from one of the elders in the church and give you the answer. That is the proper way. But it is wrong for a woman.

To get up and be a preacher and an exhorter in the church. That is very clear. She can share the gospel with unbelievers.

True. But in the church as one who is preaching to believers. That is the ministry of a man.

But there was contention concerning this in Corinth. And there is contention concerning this even today. So there is a word here for those who have contention on this.

Did the word of God come from you? Or has it come to you only? Do you think you are so important? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual. Verse 37. Let him recognize that the things that I am writing to you are the Lord's commandment.

He says this is not my private opinion. He says it is not just because I am against women's ministry. No such thing.

This is the Lord's commandment. And he says if anyone cannot recognize this as the Lord's commandment. He is spiritually ignorant.

That is why he cannot recognize it. Remember that. Anyone who cannot recognize this as the ministry of women.

That they are not called to public preaching in the church. Is because he is spiritually ignorant. Therefore my brethren in conclusion.

Don't misunderstand what I am saying Paul says. First of all earnestly desire to prophesy. But don't go to the other extreme and forbid speaking in tongues.

Do not forbid speaking in tongues. Here is the law for the churches. Let everything be done properly.

And in an orderly manner. Not with confusion with everybody rattling off. But one after the other.

As it is spoken in verses 26 to 33. And verses 34 to 36. Let everything be done according to God's commandment properly.

And in an orderly manner. Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And verse 1. Now I make known to you brethren the gospel which I preach to you.

Which also you receive and which also you stand. By which also you are saved. If you hold fast the word which I preach to you.

Unless you believed in vain. Paul is finished with the subject of spiritual gifts. And their exercise in the church.

Now he is moving on to another theme. And this chapter is mainly dealing with the resurrection. The resurrection of Christ.

And our own resurrection in the final day. And he begins with giving us the gospel in a nutshell. Here he says is the essence of the good news which I brought to you.

In which you are at present standing. And by which you are saved. If you hold fast the word which I preach to you.

That's very important for us to notice that if in the middle of verse 2. That you are not saved if you don't hold fast this word which you have heard preached to you. Unless of course your faith had no meaning behind it at all. Or in other words unless of course you never really believed with your heart in the first place.

That means your faith was just intellectual. Then of course it's not going to help you at all. But if your faith involved a committing of your life to the Lord.

Then if you hold fast this word which I preach to you. You can be saved by it. For he says I delivered to you as a first importance what I also received.

That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. This is the beginning of the gospel. And he was buried and he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

This is the gospel in a nutshell. And these are the two areas in which Jesus Christ is different from all other human beings. And all other religious teachers and preachers and everyone else.

One he and he alone died for the sins of the world. No one has died for the sins of the world except Jesus Christ. Secondly no one has risen from the dead from the grave other than Jesus Christ.

If you remove these two facts. There is nothing left in the Christian religion except a good set of moral rules. And the sermon on the mount becomes valueless without this foundation.

Christ died for our sins and rose again. The gospel does not begin with the sermon on the mount. No he says this is the gospel.

Christ died for our sins and Christ arose from the dead. This is the good news we preach. Because he died for our sins and he rose again for our justification that we might be declared righteous before God.

And if that does not take place it's no use trying to follow the sermon on the mount. There are some people trying to be saved by keeping the commandments in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. That's impossible. We believe in keeping those commandments.

Jesus said at the end of those chapters that if you hear my words and keep them you'll build your house on the rock. Obedience leads to a solid foundation. But that's primarily spoken to those who are already become disciples.

Here is how you become a disciple. Here is how you become a believer first of all. By recognizing that Christ alone died for your sins and that he rose up from the dead.

That's a very important truth. The apostles never spoke about the death of Christ without speaking about his resurrection as well. And then he gives a list of the people he appeared to.

First of all he appeared to women but they are not mentioned here. It says here he appeared to Peter. And then to the twelve.

He's already spoken about the importance of man's ministry in the church. So he refers to Peter and the twelve apostles first. And then to 500 brethren at one time.

Most of whom remain until now but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James who was his own blood brother. The son of Mary his mother.

Who was an unbeliever up until then but who got converted apparently. After Jesus appeared to him after his resurrection. And he wrote the epistle to James that we have in the New Testament.

And then to all the apostles. And last of all he says as to one who was untimely born he appeared to me also. He refers to himself as one who was like an abortion.

One who was born almost too late. But Jesus appeared to me. That was on the Damascus road.

And he says I am the least of the apostles. He's proving the fact that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. There are people who have seen him.

500 people saw him at one time. And I have seen him myself Paul says. But he says I am the least of the apostles.

The least important. The lowest rank of all the apostles. And I am not fit to be called an apostle.

And there we see his humility. Because I persecuted the church of God. That's one thing Paul never forgot.

All through his life. That he had been a persecutor of the church. It was God's great grace that saved him.

When he was out to kill other Christians. But he says the grace of God that I experienced. By that I am what I am.

I'm nothing apart from the grace of God. Paul realized that. I'm a hell deserving sinner.

And even though he was a great apostle. Had done many miracles. And built many churches.

Yet he recognizes that he was a hell deserving sinner. Apart from God's grace. And that's something that all of us.

Would do well to keep in mind. At all times by the grace of God I am what I am. But that grace was not something that Paul received.

In order to sit down in an easy chair. And wait to be taken up to heaven at the time of the rapture. No he says his grace.

Which was given to me was not proved in vain. How does God's grace poured out upon us. Proved to be in vain.

When we do nothing for him. Paul says I labored. Even more than all the other apostles.

And there is the proof. That God's grace that came to Paul was not in vain. God's grace is in vain.

When it comes to a believer. Who's got no other interest. But to go to heaven when he dies.

God's grace is intended to lead us to the place. Where we give our whole lives to God. He died.

We read in 2nd Corinthians 5.15. That we who live might no longer live for ourselves but for him. And so he labored. He worked.

And yet he says I don't take the credit for it. It was the grace of God with me. I labored even more than all those.

Who had walked with Jesus down here on earth. Yet it was not I. But the grace of God with me encouraged me. And helped me.

Whether then it was I or they. Who preached to you. It doesn't make a difference who preached it to you.

So we preach. And so you believe. And now.

Since there was some doubt about the resurrection in the church in Corinth. He says if Christ is preached. Then he has been raised from the dead.

And this is what the other apostles preached. And this is what I preached also. How do some among you say.

That there is no resurrection of the dead. That's an amazing thing. That in the church in Corinth.

There were some people who were saying. That there's no such thing as a resurrection. In other words when we die that's it.

But he says if there is no resurrection of the dead. Then even Christ has not been raised from the dead. And if Christ has not been raised from the dead.

He says then our preaching is vain. Do you realize that? That if there is no message of resurrection in our gospel. The whole thing is a waste of time.

We might as well pack up and go and do something else. If there is no message of resurrection. It's the resurrection of Christ.

Which is the distinctive part of the Christian message. Otherwise it's just a good moral code. But because Jesus has raised from the dead.

And death is man's greatest enemy. No one has ever been able to conquer it. And that's why we have a good news.

That which no one has ever been able to conquer. Jesus Christ has conquered. And that's why it's so important for us to know.

The importance of the resurrection of the dead. He says it's just a waste of time. Our preaching the gospel.

And your faith is also a lot of rubbish he says. It's not faith. It's just imagination.

Your faith is in vain. And not only that. He says we are just a bunch of liars.

Verse 15. We are false witnesses. We are guilty of telling lies about God.

If there is no resurrection. Because we said that God raised him. Raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

And you fellas say that there is no resurrection. And if in fact the dead are not raised. Then Christ was not raised at all.

Then it's a very serious thing. We are just telling lies about God. And deceiving people.

Because if the dead are not raised. Then Christ has also not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised.

Then your faith is worthless. You might as well close down the church. And go back to your heathen religions.

Because you are still in your sins. You are just imagining that your sins are forgiven. Do you know that the forgiveness of our sins.

The assurance that our sins are forgiven. Is based on the resurrection of Christ. It's not just that Jesus died on the cross.

How do you know that our sins are forgiven? There is one fundamental reason for it. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. It's true that Christ died for our sins.

But the fact that God accepted that. Is seen in the fact that he raised him up from the dead. And that's why he says if God didn't raise him from the dead.

Then there is no proof that Christ died for our sins. He must have just died as a martyr. Like so many other people died.

But when God raised him from the dead. That was to prove to us. That your sins are forgiven.

And he says I'll tell you something else. If there is no resurrection from the dead. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ.

They have just perished. They have lived all their life. Believing that they are going to be raised from the dead.

And it was just a fanciful hope they had in their heads. And it wasn't true. No they have perished.

But he says it's not true. That's not true. Further he gives another reason.

He says if we have only hoped in Christ in this life. We are of all men most to be pitied. He says we are miserable people.

If we are just suffering and denying ourselves. And going this way of the cross. If this life is everything.

No this life isn't everything. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. He says in verse 20.

And oh that the spirit of God. Will make this so clear to us. The importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

From the dead.

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