

Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

1 Corinthians 15:1-19 The Big Message -The Gospel

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

- The word *gospel* (*euangelion*) means "GOOD NEWS". In the classical Greek it was the announcement of victory from a battle. When an ancient conflict was fought and won in a distant land, a soldier would be sent from the front line to quickly travel back to the homeland to inform. He would ride into town and proclaim, " We have won! We have overcome! We have victory!"
- Seventy-five times the same word, *gospel*, is used in the New Testament to describe that through Christ we can have eternal life! We can overcome the evil world! We can have victory over death! THAT IS THE GREATEST NEWS OF ALL! That is the GOSPEL!!!
 - This is the message Paul personally delivered to them on his first stop at Corinth (Acts 18:1-4).
 - This is the message they accepted when presented to them (Acts 18:8).
 - This is the message they were to stand upon. As Paul stated in *Ephesians 6:15* "*having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE*". What we stand upon is really what our foundation is. In the beginning the gospel was their foundation.
 - This was the same message which saved them from their sins. It is the *power of God to salvation* (Romans 1:16), a life preserver thrown to them to deliver from the spiritual danger of this world.
 - They were to hold fast to this message. The phrase hold fast referred to a military stronghold to which they would not surrender one inch of ground. They were to hang on tightly to this precious gospel message!
- What is this "good news" message according to Paul? What did Paul deliver from his lips to Corinthian ears by which they received, were saved by, stood on and held fast to?

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

- The GOOD NEWS was the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.
 - The Jewish leaders falsely tried Him with lies, beat him to a pulp, spat in His face and had Him hung on the cross with nails driven through His hands and feet. They mocked in His great hour of need, yet He did not waver in composure. His beaten and bloodied body gave out as He cried out one last time, "Into Thy hands I commit My spirit!" How is this "GOOD NEWS"? There is nothing good about violently and mercilessly murdering a man!
 - He was quickly embalmed and laid in a tomb. The tears of His admirers fell and the countenance of His enemies beamed with joy, for Jesus was graveyard dead. The sobering silence of the tomb was all that remained of the man of hope. The self-proclaimed Messiah went the way of the grave like all the others of history. How is this "GOOD NEWS"? People weep at funerals. There is nothing good about this! This is bad news.

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- Three days passed and the tomb of Jesus was miraculously opened by an angel. They found it open and empty on the morning of the first day of the week. An angel of God announces, "*He is not here, but He has risen*" (Luke 24:6).
- That is the good news, for Jesus Christ was brought back from the dead! The first two facts of history, the death and burial, were simply there to make true the third fact, which is the GOOD NEWS, His resurrection.

Is 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

- This is Good News because He holds the keys of death and Hades (Rev 1:18), giving us the hope of also being resurrected from the dead to live an eternity in heaven (John 5:28-29). This was the message they received when Paul went to Corinth and preached the message of hope.
- Paul would reason with many according to the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus was raised back from the dead, confirming that He is the Christ (Romans 1:5).
 - Acts 17:2-3 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,³ explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."
- This was the same message that Paul received from Jesus Himself on a failed trip to Damascus to persecute Christians.
 - 1 Corinthians 11:23 "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you..."
 - Galatians 1:11-12 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.
- Paul always made it clear to the Corinthians that Christ was the center of his message. He might have taught them to fix their problems, but the core of his teaching focused on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.
 - 1 Cor 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,
 - 1 Cor 2:2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.
 - 1 Cor 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:5-8 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;⁸ and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

- Don't just take Paul's word for it about the resurrected Jesus. There were many that witnessed the resurrected Christ.
 - Mary Magdalene (Mark 16.9-11; John 20.11-18)
 - Peter in Jerusalem (Luke 24.34; 1 Cor. 15.5)

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- James (1 Cor. 15.7)
- The other women at the tomb (Matthew 28.8-10).
- The two travelers on the road (Mark 16.12,13; Luke 24.13-34).
- Ten disciples behind closed doors (Mark 16.14; Luke 24.35-43; John 20.19-25).
- Another disciple, referred to as "Doubting Thomas", had the following exchange with Jesus. *John 20:27-28 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"*
- Seven disciples while fishing (John 21:1-14).
- Eleven disciples on the mountain (Matthew 28.16-20).
- "Then to all the apostles" (1 Cor. 15.7) which includes the Twelve of Acts 1:26.
- Those who watched Jesus ascend to heaven (Mark 16.19,20; Luke 24.50-53; Acts 1.3-8).
- If you add them all up, there were nearly five hundred living witnesses to the resurrected Jesus at the time of Paul's writing of the letter.

1 Corinthians 15:9-11 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. ¹¹ Whether then *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

- The last person on record to have seen Jesus following the resurrection was Paul from Acts 9. This was many years following the ascension of Jesus and was a special intervention leading to his conversion. Paul was incredibly humble which went well with his history of persecution of the church. He gave all the glory to God in light of this, preferring to be lumped into the group instead of standing out. He was taking the exact opposite path to the prideful Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. ¹⁵ Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

- Every culture have people that struggle with the concept of being resurrected.
 - The Hindus believed in reincarnation, not resurrection. The Sadducees did not even believe that anyone would be raised from the dead (Mt 22:15; Acts 23:18).
 - Even Solomon, in the midst of his spiritual slide, doubted in the resurrection (Eccl 9:5).

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- Just down the road in Athens, he was met with much skepticism concerning the resurrection. *Acts 17:32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."*
- Atheism teaches that there is no life after death. Millions of humanists believe and teach this concept.
- It appears that there were some in the church that had stopped believing in the hope of a future resurrection of the human body. This posed seven major problems.
 1. If there is no resurrection of the dead...then Christ has not been raised.
 2. If there is no resurrection of the dead...then our preaching is useless.
 3. If there is no resurrection of the dead...then our faith is worthless.
 4. If there is no resurrection of the dead...then the apostles are liars.
 5. If there is no resurrection of the dead...then we are still in your sins.
 6. If there is no resurrection of the dead...then those who have already died will perish.
 7. If there is no resurrection of the dead...then we are the most pitiful people.
- Do we not remember that when we were baptized, we were making the great confession to our own souls that we believe in the resurrection from the dead. It is the core of who we are as a people. It is the core of our faith. It is the hope that we hold. As Paul states in Titus 1:2 that we are the people "*...in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.*" **WE ARE THE PEOPLE OF THE OF THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION!**

What are we as Christians to take from this?

According to a survey taken in 2006, only 36% of American adults believe that, after you die, your physical body will someday be *resurrected*. 54% do not believe so and 10% are undecided. (Scripts Howard News Service 4/5/06)

- We need a RESURRECTION our HOPE of the RESURRECTION from the dead!
- We need to proclaim that we firmly believe we will be resurrected from the dead through the power of Jesus' eye-witnessed resurrection from the dead.
- We need to be sharing the ONE HOPE (Eph 4:5) of the Resurrection of our ONE body unto the One Lord through the power of the One Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead!

If we will simply share this hope with as many people as we can, they will seek to have what we have by learning about the same Lord that died, was buried and resurrected from the dead. Boost the number of people that are willing to believe in the resurrection and we will boost our gospel presentations in Jesus.