

The Gospel
1 Corinthians, Vol. 31

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1 Corinthians 15:1-11

The word ***gospel*** literally means ***good news***. The Greek noun and verb were transliterated into English in the form of ***evangelism*** and ***evangelize***. The gospel is an announcement of ***good news***. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news about salvation through Jesus Christ, available only by faith in Him.

I. **The Nature of the Gospel (1-2, 11)**

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, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.*

Make known to you is a rebuke.

1 Corinthians 15:11: *Whether then it was I or they, **so we preach and so you believed.***

so means *in this way; thus*. No one is ever saved in response to any message other than the true gospel, the good news that Jesus Christ died for sins. See also Galatians 1:6-7.

Faith plus ***anything*** is not saving faith. See also Galatians 3:11.

Therefore, it is safe to say four things about The Nature of the Gospel:

A. **It Doesn't Change**

The message of the gospel cannot be adapted to suit anyone's personal opinion about how salvation should come.

B. **It Demands a Response**

Received means the gospel doesn't do any good unless and until the person acts on it. There is no tricky fine print.

This passage also describes **the two sides of salvation**.

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**, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.*

The divine side: When God makes you His child, it is forever. **Stand** is in the perfect tense. It is a completed act which has continuing results. See also 1 Peter 1:3-5.

The human side: The term **received** means *to welcome, embrace, accept, say "yes," repent, believe*. However you describe it, it is the crucial step a person must take in order to possess the free gift of eternal life in Christ. **If you hold fast** means true faith is faith that **endures**.

C. It Is The Means of Salvation

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, **by which also you are saved**, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.*

Are saved is also a present tense. Right now, all who believe in the gospel stand in God's grace and are in the process leading to glorification. We **are saved**.

By which [gospel] uses the preposition *dia* which means, in this case, *the means by which*. There is no other way to be saved. Peter and Jesus were clear about it:

Acts 4:12: *"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*

John 14:6: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*

Three Tenses of Salvation

Past: You were already saved from **sin's penalty**
Present: Now you are experiencing salvation from **sin's power**
Future: You will be saved from **sin's presence**

D. It Includes Evidence

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, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, **unless you believed in vain**.*

Unless you believed in vain: Paul is saying that your salvation is real because the message is true. It's not empty because it is proven by the resurrection of Jesus. This phrase introduces the theme we will study in detail starting in verse 12.

II. The Facts of the Gospel (3-8)

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, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, . . .*

I delivered . . . what I received:

as of first importance:

Fact #1: Christ ***died for our sins***. Without the death of Christ, there is no salvation. See 2 Corinthians 5:21.

according to the Scriptures: Paul could have cited Isaiah 53.

He was buried: There was ample proof of the reality of His death.

Fact #2: He was ***raised on the third day according to the Scriptures***. The passive voice (***was raised***) points to the Father's work in raising Jesus from the dead. The perfect tense, as always, means the act is completed and the results continue in full force.

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

This not an exhaustive list of post-resurrection appearances. It skips at least the women at the tomb, and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The appearances were spread over 40 days, except for the appearance to Paul.

To Cephas. Peter. This is mentioned in Luke 24:34, but we're given no details.

To the Twelve. There were several appearances to all or most of them.

To 500+ at one time. Paul knew almost all who saw the risen Jesus.

To James. Probably, James the half-brother of Jesus.

To all the apostles. Likely the group that was gathered when Jesus ascended.

To Paul. This appearance was 2-6 years later. It's recorded in Acts 9.

III. The Recipients of the Gospel (9-10)

1 Corinthians 15:9: *For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

Paul was not one of The 12. His ministry was not launched upon the first arrival of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. He was not part of the church at first, and he was zealous about persecuting the church before he was saved (Titus 1:15), so he calls himself **foremost of sinners**. Paul's calling was unique from that of the other apostles. See Acts 9:15.

Paul had the widest geographical influence of any apostle. He was the one God used to oversee the union of Jewish believers and Gentile believers in the one body of Christ. He received the most revelation of any apostle, and wrote almost half the books of the New Testament. He was seamlessly connected with the ministry of Peter, with those two getting by far the most ink in the New Testament.

By human standards, it's easy to make the case that Paul was the **greatest** of the apostles. But the essential quality of every recipient of the gospel is **humility**, and Paul is a good example.

1 Corinthians 15:10: *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.*

What Paul says is true of all of us who love Christ. Absolutely every good thing we can accomplish is by the grace of God and the power of God working through us.

What is your response to the gospel?

The Good News is the answer to the bad news, that you are a sinner and deserve eternal death and the wrath of God.