



1 CORINTHIANS

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11

INTRODUCTION

Before closing out his letter, Paul devotes an impressive fifty-eight verses to the topic of the resurrection, and it's not until verse 12 that we learn why: some in the church were saying that "there is no resurrection of the dead". Paul spends the first eleven verses highlighting how crucial Jesus' resurrection is to the gospel itself and how well-attested it is.

MAIN POINT

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is as important to the gospel message as his death on the cross is.

REFLECT

No Christian ever outgrows the gospel. At no point has a believer ascended to such a high plane of spiritual existence that they didn't need to dwell on Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Some of the Corinthians had forgotten this. They felt that they had "arrived" (4:8), that they had reached the end of the Christian road and were already living the good life God promised to his children. In their arrogance, some had actually come to believe things that contradicted the gospel: specifically, that "there is no resurrection of the dead" (15:12).

Paul will work out the practical consequences of denying the resurrection in the rest of the chapter, but for now he's concerned to remind them that a resurrection-free gospel isn't the gospel they received when he first preached to them. As if to grab their attention, he starts off by saying that as a church they only exist by means of the gospel,

and that only by clinging to it will they be saved. In other words: “Without the gospel your faith will collapse, so let me remind what the gospel entails.”

So what is “the gospel”? According to verses 3-7, the gospel is comprised of four points. First, “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.” This is in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:8 where God’s servant suffers on behalf of his people’s sins. As “Christ” (or “Messiah” in Hebrew), Jesus also fulfills God’s promise to David that one of his descendants would reign forever. Second, Jesus “was buried”. Even the Jewish opponents recognized this (Matt. 28:11-15).

Third, Jesus “was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (fulfilling Psalm 16:10 and Isaiah 53:10-12). Closely related to this is Paul’s fourth point, that Jesus appeared to Cephas (Peter), the rest of the disciples, a crowd of five hundred, and his brother James. So not only did Scripture demand that the resurrection must happen (point three), several hundred eye-witness were still alive who could attest that it did (point four).

Finally, Paul looks to his experience on the Damascus Road (see Acts 9:1-19). In addition to being further evidence for the resurrection, verses 8-11 serve to put Paul and his message on the same authority as the other apostles’ message (though he is certainly aware of how unworthy he is to be in this camp!). “We’re all preaching the same message,” he says (v. 11). Thus, it doesn’t matter *who* is preaching but rather *what* is being preached. And if you tamper with the *what* by removing the resurrection, you’re left with an incomplete and ineffective gospel that saves no one. Paul will spend the rest of the chapter explaining why.

- What makes the resurrection such an important part of the gospel? What do we lose if we agree that Jesus died for our sins but deny that he rose from the dead?
- Why did Paul feel so unqualified to play such an important role in God’s plan? What encouragement does this give us today?
- Based on this passage, how would you share the gospel with someone in two minutes or less?

MEMORIZE

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 – *“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures”*