

Paul has brought before us the wonderful truth of the One Body, Christ the Head, the leading and power of the Holy Spirit in the believers within it. He has pointed us toward loving edification of all in use of spiritual gifts. And the loving, orderly, unity when gathered in assembly has been set out for us. Now Paul moves into a different issue needing attention, the **resurrection hope of the believer**. This truth is fundamental to Christian belief. Yet Paul waits until he has covered many of their problems and answered several of their questions first. This blessed truth is essential to releasing believers from earthly/fleshly views and practices which were threatening the very existence of a Christian testimony in Corinth. He winds up the epistle on a positive note with a wonderful revelation of the bright heavenly prospect that await us. This truly lifts the heart above the menial, trivial maneuvering and self promotion that so easily infects us when we lapse back into fleshly ways.

So He starts at the very beginning, **the gospel** which they had first heard from his own mouth. See Acts 18 for the full story. He was discouraged by the resistance encountered in Corinth when he came to seek souls for Christ. The Lord Himself intervened and encouraged him to stay and stick it out, v.10, “*for I have much people in this city.*” This is a remarkable statement! The motive given believers for preaching is the fact that the Lord has many people who are His chosen, the elect, who don’t even know it yet but whom He will save through our preaching. In Romans 10 Paul says God’s desired process to bring people to Christ is through earnest, persuasive preaching, (whether personal or before crowds). But the saving is solely the work of the Holy Spirit, not of man, neither of the preacher or of the

convert. Glory to God!

The gospel he preached was what he had received from God, none else. Note how he reminds them that what he tells them is what he received directly from the Lord, as he had the directions for the Lord’s Supper, 11:23. See also 9:1; 11:16; & 14:36-38, 2Corinthians 10:8, & 13:10, for affirmations of the authority with which he wrote. They were in danger of making their faith a relative thing subject to the whims of leading men, and not from God. Remember in chapters 1 and 2 how he reminds them they were not chosen because of any merit of their own,1:21.

The believer receives the gospel, stands in it, and is saved by it. The idea of them having believed in vain is not new in Paul’s epistles. The word “vain” has the idea of something being done idly and therefore without effect.* The question is raised whether the person who professes faith in Christ but shows no change in his life is really saved at all. The passage does not suggest that one can be truly saved and then somehow lost. The gospel of truth is enough to keep the born again heart engaged with the Savior and serving Him until ultimately taken bodily into His very presence, through rapture or resurrection. Case in point, Paul in verse 10 refers to His conversion and commission from the Lord of glory,

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

The reality and truth of his conversion was borne out by his faithful labor and unceasing struggle to bring the gospel to others, including the Corinthians. And was not by mere human effort or ability, it was by GRACE.

Next he restates the simple and yet deeply moving truth of the gospel:

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

and that he was buried,

and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

This is what he received independently of all other sources, directly from the Lord who called him to be an Apostle. Yet, of course, it did not clash with what other apostles and prophets had spoken, v.11. But it did enlarge immensely upon what others had been given and he often speaks of it as “my gospel.” For it is truly unique and reveals God’s mind in a way seen nowhere else. It includes more than the preaching of the cross and the resurrection. It is the whole truth of the Assembly, the body of Christ, the House of God, the bride of Christ. And it shows the proper relationship of the Assembly to the Kingdom of God which encompasses it both in time and scope.

The essentials of the gospel include:

- Christ’s real, human death for our sins,
- real burial of His dead human, physical, body, and
- His real bodily resurrection,
 - in which His departed spirit and soul is reunited with His body
 - which is raised from the dead, and changed,

- seen by many reliable witnesses over a period of forty days and
- taken up into heaven and seated, a man, at God's right hand.

The Sinless One dying for the sins of others, and His Resurrection are key differences between the Lord Jesus Christ and the claims of earthly religious leaders such as Mohammed, Buddha, and others. None of their followers claim they were a sacrifice for sins or their subsequent resurrection. Islam claims Mohammed didn't die but was taken up to heaven like Elijah. The Lord's resurrection is doubly unique in that He Himself **raised Himself** from the dead, thereby conquering the power of death as we shall see later in this chapter. People have been raised by God's power, at the command of men (such as Elisha and Peter) but none ever before or since was given authoritative power to raise himself from the dead as did Jesus, John 10:17-18. But, He did! **The third day.** A sufficient time to witness that He had truly died. But the **first day of the week**, the resurrection day, initiated a new beginning henceforth called the Lord's Day. It is not the Sabbath Day for the Lord spent that day in the tomb. We do not commemorate that. But we remember Him in His death weekly as did the disciples, Acts 20:7; and not merely at "Easter." **Every Lord's Day is the Resurrection Day.**

Now the list of privileged witnesses to His resurrection is presented.

- **Cephas** (Peter).
- **the twelve** (excluding Judas the betrayer, but including his replacement Matthias (Acts 1).
- **five hundred** all at the same time, many of whom were alive when Paul wrote, so his account could easily be confirmed if any doubted. Some of these were "asleep," dead in Christ, awaiting the resurrection.
- **James** (apparently not of the twelve, but the Lord's step brother, who wrote the epistle).
- all **the apostles**, showing there were other apostles in addition to the twelve, Barnabas was one.
- and, last of all** by **Paul** himself, under very different circumstances for Paul saw Him first as the risen ascended man in glory, proof HE LIVES!

Paul says he was as "an abortive," not born at the right time, that is prematurely or underdeveloped. Paul was not one of those that had been drawn to Him and walked with Him three years while He was on earth. Paul's spiritual birth was sudden and instant without the benefit of earthly, personal contact with the Lord experienced by the other apostles. He had opposed Him and persecuted His people up to the moment the Lord, in grace, appeared to him. The glory of that Man in glory struck him to the ground, a very real experience for Paul. He was the only one to be saved by actually seeing the ascended, glorified Lord. But he saw Him prematurely so to speak, long before He will appear in glory to Paul's fellow Israelites. We apparently have three eye witnesses of the ascended Christ in glory, Stephen, Paul and John. Each saw Jesus in glory and told us about it. It is authentic. He is there! And He is returning! It is enough! Can't wait to see Him, too!

But Paul's gospel, despite its being a unique revelation, was based upon the scriptures. It was according to the (Old Testament) scriptures that Christ died for our sins. It was according to the scriptures He rose again the third day. What scriptures foretell these things? Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Daniel 9 among many others. All was planned before the creation and forecast long before He came. Glory to God!

By Ron Canner, January 7, 2004.

***Vain** 1500. *eikh eike, i-kay'*. probably from 1502 (through the idea of failure); idly, i.e. without reason (or effect):--without a cause, (in) vain(-ly).

1502. *eikw eiko, i'-ko*. apparently a primary verb; properly, to be weak, i.e. yield:--give place. E.g. Galatians 2:5 To whom we gave place <*eiko*> by subjection, no, not for an hour;,,,

** Note that Paul states that he is the last apostle. There were to be no more. There are none today despite the wishful thinking of some. We now have the Apostles' witness as recorded in the Bible.