

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 **Proof of the gospel**

1. Prayer for illumination:
2. Sermon introduction:
 - a. What is the best news you have recently heard?
 - i. Maybe you received the good news of a pay raise.
 - ii. Maybe you received the good news of a job offer.
 - iii. Maybe you received the good news that another child is on the way.
 - iv. Maybe you received the good news that your close friend is getting married.
 - v. We all love receiving good news, don't we?
 - vi. Sometimes the news is so good, that we doubt it is true. So, we ask people to prove it.
 1. Are you really getting married? Prove it. Here is my engagement ring.
 2. Is your wife really pregnant? Prove it. Here is the pregnancy test.
 3. Did you really get a raise? Prove it! Here is my new paycheck.
 - b. This brings us to this morning's text (1 Cor. 15:1-11).
 - i. This text contains the best news that one can imagine.
 - ii. This text contains the good news of the gospel.
 - iii. The word gospel literally means good news.
 - iv. According to William Tyndale, the renowned Bible translator, the gospel is, "good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that maketh a man's heart glad, and maketh him sing, dance, and leap for joy." (*Prologue to NT* found in EDT).
 - v. The gospel is such amazingly good news, that some doubt it.
 - vi. How does one prove that the gospel is true? The resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves the gospel is true.
 - c. Four points this morning...
 - i. *The priority of the gospel.*
 - ii. *The presentation of the gospel.*
 - iii. *The proof of the gospel.*
 - iv. *The power of the gospel.*

1. First, the priority of the gospel.

a. How important is the gospel? It is of first importance!

- i. **1 Corinthians 15:1-3a (ESV) — 1** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, **2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to

you—unless you believed in vain. **3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received...

- ii. Paul does not say, “the gospel is pretty important.” He says, “the gospel is of first importance.” In other words, the gospel is the most important doctrine for the Corinthian church to ponder.
- iii. Why does he say this to the Corinthian church?
 1. They had lost the priority or centrality of the gospel.
 2. How do we know? Earlier in the letter we read that...
 - a. They were fighting about their leaders....
 - b. Others were suing each other...
 - c. Others were guilty of incest...
 - d. Others were fighting about food offered to idols.
 - e. Others were getting drunk at communion.
 - f. Others were fighting about spiritual gifts.
- iv. When the gospel is no longer of first importance in a local church, problems are sure to follow.
 1. How does the gospel lose its place of prominence in a local church?

This happens when churches get more excited about other things.
 2. Like what?
 - a. The end times
 - b. Spiritual gifts
 - c. Reformed theology
 - d. Worship music
 - e. A particular philosophy of education...
 - f. A new liturgy.
 - g. Political engagement...
 - h. Social justice...
 - i. And ten thousand other things...
 - j. These are all important things, but they are not of first importance...
 3. We start to think like this,
 - a. “Yes, I know the gospel is important, but I’m really excited about... fill in the blank.”
 - b. Eventually over time, we stop celebrating the gospel and start assuming the gospel.
 - c. Describing the history of a particular Christian denomination, DA Carson writes, **“the first generation of Christians believes the gospel, the second generation assumes the gospel, and the third generation loses the gospel.”**
 4. Healthy churches and healthy Christians prioritize the centrality of the gospel, which means that they never assume the gospel.

- v. But what is the gospel? This brings us to the next point...
- vi. *First, the priority of the gospel...*

2. Second, the presentation of the gospel.

a. How does Paul present the gospel? What is it? Paul tells us in verses 1-4!

b. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (ESV)** — **1** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, **2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. **3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

c. Exposition.

i. As I already said, Gospel literally means good news...

1. The word Gospel was a secular word...
2. King's sent messengers throughout their empires to proclaim/gospel their victories over their enemies.
3. What is the good news of Christianity that must be proclaimed?

ii. Paul defines the nature of the gospel in verses 3-4.

1. **1 Corinthians 15:3 (ESV)** — **3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that **Christ died for our sins** in accordance with the Scriptures,
 - a. "Christ died for our sins..."
 - b. These five words are the very essence of the Christian faith and the heart and soul of the gospel.
 - c. He did not merely die for you, **he died instead of you**... this is the key.
 - d. He died for your sins, not his sins, since he was perfect.
 - e. But why did he have to die for us to be forgiven?
 - f. Because the penalty for sin is death.
 - g. We deserved to die, but Jesus died for us.
 - h. This brings us to the heart and the soul of the gospel, which is summed up in two words- penal substitution.
 - i. Explain...
 - j. *Let's look at the next phrase...*

2. **1 Corinthians 15:3 (ESV) — 3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,

a. “in accordance with the scriptures” means that PSA was promised in the OT.

b. Let’s look at the next phrase...

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

a. Jesus was buried, in other words, he actually died, when he died for us... His heart stopped beating, he was medically dead, he did not merely pass out as some Muslims argue.

b. Jesus was also raised from the dead. More on this crucial phrase in a moment...

iii. What is the gospel? In its simplest form, the gospel is the good news that Jesus Died in our place, as our substitute, experiencing the justice we deserved on the cross, and was raised on the 3rd day.

d. Illustration

- i. **The pilots of flight 225** were in a hurry to take off that Sunday evening. As a result, they did not perform all their required safety checks. If they would have, they would have discovered that the electrical system controlling the take-off system was not working properly.
- ii. As flight 225 lifted off the Detroit runway the jet began to rock laterally. It struck a light pole, severing eighteen feet off its left wing and igniting stored fuel. Then the right wing was ripped off as it tore through a car rental building. The jetliner careened out of control through the air and slammed into an overpass on interstate 94. Then it exploded into a fireball, scattering charred remains for miles.
- iii. **154** passengers perished that night.
- iv. **When the Detroit medical examiner** showed up on the scene, he declared that there was no way that anyone survived the crash.
- v. As workers sorted through the carnage it seemed that his initial assessment was correct. But then, one worker heard a soft cry.
- vi. It was the cry of four-year-old girl named Cecilia...
- vii. She was under the dead body of her mother.
- viii. After she was pulled from her mother, the medical examiners closely studied the position of the mother’s body.
- ix. They determined that at the last minute the mother somehow wrapped her body around the small body of her daughter to rescue her from the flames of the fireball.

- x. The mother was dead, but she positioned herself so that her body shielded her daughter's body from the massive fireball.
- xi. **This is what Jesus** did for us on the cross.
- xii. Unlike the girl in the plane crash, we deserved to face the fire of God's fury, but Jesus took it for us.
- xiii. By wrapping us in his love, on the cross Jesus shielded us from the fireball of God's righteous wrath.
- xiv. On the cross he took the flaming fireball of wrath that we deserved.
- xv. He died for us, as our substitute.
- xvi. (the book of Amazing Stories, 85-87)

e. Application:

- i. Because Jesus died in our place, there is nothing left for us to do. We simply believe and receive.....
 - 1. Every other religion is spelled with two letters "D-o"
 - a. Do this
 - b. Say this
 - c. Pray this
 - d. Chant that
 - e. Visit this place
 - f. And you will be accepted.
 - 2. Christianity is spelled with four letters "d-o-n-e"
 - a. Jesus lived, died, and rose again.
 - b. He completed the work of salvation.
 - c. It is done!!!
 - d. There is nothing more for you to do but believe....

e. Jesus last words on the cross were not, "you know, I worked pretty hard to save you, I got the process started, now you do the rest." He said, "It is finished."
- ii. Because Jesus died in our place, we will never ever experience the punishment that our sins deserve.
 - 1. Because God is just, he must forgive all those who trust in Jesus.
 - 2. It would be unjust of God to punish Jesus for our sins and then punish us for our sins.
 - 3. As a result, Christians will not go to hell.
 - 4. Christians will go to heaven.
- iii. Because Jesus died in our place, we can know God!
 - 1. This is the best part of the good news. And it is really good news.
 - 2. Because our sins have been paid for, we can experience the tremendous Joy of knowing the living God.
 - 3. This is the thing that your soul was made for.
 - 4. Our souls will not find ultimate joy, satisfaction, and delight in money, beauty, health, fitness, power, or control.

5. Our souls will only find true Joy in relationship with God and Christ's life, death, and resurrection make that possible.
 6. The gospel can be summarized with four words- God, man, Christ, response...
- f. *I think I understand the importance and the nature of the gospel... but how do I know it is true? It seems too good to be true. This brings us to the third point...*
- g. *First, the priority of the gospel.*
- h. *Second, the presentation of the gospel.*

3. Third, the proof of the gospel...

- a. The Proof of the gospel's power rests on the resurrection.
 - i. What do I mean? If Jesus did not rise from the grave, it proves that he was not God, and if he was not God his death can't atone for our sins, and we can't trust him.

b. **What is the proof that Jesus rose from the grave? The eye witnesses!**

- i. **1 Corinthians 15:5-8 (ESV) — 5** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. **6** Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. **8** Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.
- ii. The key word is the word "appeared." It shows up four times in this passage... Paul repeats this word to make a point...
- iii. "He appeared to Cephas (Peter)" according to verse 5.
- iv. "He appeared to more than five hundred at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep" according to verse 6. Why does Paul add the part about the ones who are still alive? Because he wants the Corinthians to go and talk to them...
 1. A few weeks ago Terry Meyer (our youth director) said, "If over 70 kids show up to youth group, I will eat a goldfish."
 2. If I told you If I told you that I saw Terry Meyer eat a live goldfish at youth group two weeks ago... you may say... no you didn't. Who would ever do that? That is disgusting.
 3. Then I can say... Yes, I did, I really did. But if you don't believe me, you can talk to, Carson G, Alaina G, William Farley, Chase Soehner, Matthew Stewart, and about 70 other people. They were there and they are still alive, and they can testify that Terry ate a goldfish.
 4. This is what Paul wanted his original audience to do.

- v. These people were all eyewitnesses. Jesus appeared before their very eyes. Eyewitness testimony is considered valid testimony in courts of law.
- c. Christians believe in the resurrection because there is overwhelming historical evidence for the proof for the resurrection.
- d. Here is a summary of the evidence-
 - i. Monotheistic Jews who are passionately opposed to worshipping a man start to worship Jesus Christ as he teaches and performs miracles.
 - ii. Jesus dies (this is confirmed by five non-Christian sources of the time)
 - iii. The disciples are completely dejected and afraid.
 - iv. Three days later Jesus rises from the grave and over a period of 40 days appears to more than 500 people in 12 different locations.
 - v. These eyewitnesses are transformed and full of faith.
 - vi. Many of them are so convinced of Jesus resurrection that they are willing to suffer and die for their belief.
 - vii. The resurrected Christ continues to radically transform lives around the world today.
- e. Dave, I still don't believe...
 - i. If you're a skeptic (and skeptics are very welcome here), you have the burden of proof.
 - ii. You must be willing to provide first century evidence contrary to the Gospel accounts.
 - iii. You must disregard eyewitness testimony.
 - iv. You must put forward an alternative theory that you can back up with at least 3-4 first century sources.
 - v. You must explain why 2 billion people worldwide are wrong.
- f. *I understand that there is proof for the gospel's truthfulness, but I'm a mess, can the gospel change me? This brings us to our final point.*
- g. *First, the priority of the gospel.*
- h. *Second, the presentation of the gospel.*
- i. *Third, the proof of the gospel.*

4. Finally, the power of the gospel.

- a. **What does the gospel have power to do? Transform broken people!**

i. **1 Corinthians 15:9–11 (ESV) — 9** For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy 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 was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it

was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. **11** Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

- ii. Before Paul was a Christian, he hated Christians. He rounded them up, tortured them, and had them put to death. You can read about this in the book of Acts.
- iii. Then in Acts chapter 9 something amazing happens. The resurrected Christ appears to Paul and tells Paul that his life is about to be radically transformed.
- iv. This is exactly what happened.
- v. Read the rest of the book of Acts...
- vi. By the grace of God, this one messed up man altered the course of world history.
- vii. The gospel of Jesus Christ transformed a self-righteous, proud, persecutor of the church into the most influential Christian to ever live.
- viii. If the resurrected Christ can transform Paul, the resurrected Christ can transform you. There is hope for everyone this morning...

b. But how do I tap into the gospel's transforming power? You believe and you keep believing!

i. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 (ESV) — 1 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, **2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain.

- ii. Paul reminds the Corinthians to believe and then keep on believing the gospel...
- iii. He tells them to hold fast to the gospel...
 1. Free solo (how firm do you think this climber held on to the rocks above him).
 2. On a train or bus and the bus lurches, what do you grab on to?
- iv. Trusting Christ is not something we do once when we first become Christians.
- v. We must keep on believing, keep on trusting, until the day we die.
- vi. We must hold fast to the gospel, or our faith will be in vain...

5. Conclusion:

- a. Some news seems too good to be true!

- i. If someone told you that you just inherited 2 billion dollars from a long-lost uncle, you would probably demand some proof before you got your hopes up.
- b. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the best news that anyone anywhere could ever hear.
 - i. God the father sent his own son to die in our place.
 - ii. As a result of substitutionary sacrifice, we can experience forgiveness of sins, joy, peace, relationship with God, and an eternity of Joy.
- c. But what is the proof that this good news is true?
- d. The proof is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- e. Let's pray...