



The Proof the Gospel is True (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

- Paul turns from correcting the abuse and misuse of spiritual gifts (ch. 12-14) to clarifying the harmful misunderstanding about there not being a future resurrection of the dead (v. 12). The implications of this are monumental and Paul wants to straighten out this very important truth of Scripture. This is right at the heart of the good news about Jesus Christ who died for our sins and rose again for our new life now and forever.
- Everything rises or falls on the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ (His death and resurrection), so Paul wants to prove the gospel is true and it matters for our future and eternal life.
- Paul provides four positive proofs that the good news is the best news of all.

① The proof of persevering faith (15:1-2)

- The perseverance of true believers and the one true church is evidence of the reality of the Person and power of Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of the good news. He is able to sustain God's people through every kind of sin, every form of opposition, every type of suffering and trial and will turn death into a passageway to life eternal.
- God is a God of good news ("*the gospel*") and Pauls reminds us that this good news is "*preached*" (must be known, declared, heard), "*received*" (by faith – Eph. 2:8-9), something you "*stand*" in (that grounds you permanently), and will save you (Rom. 1:16).
- But true saving faith is a persevering faith ("*if you hold fast the word*") or it's a "*vain*" faith. The good news is only for genuine enduring believers (1 John 2:19; Matt. 24:13). Out holding on to Jesus is evidence that He is holding onto us. If we let go, it reveals we were the only ones holding because God never let's go.
- The fact that the Corinthian church continued to exist in spite of all their sins and struggles, the church has continued to grow for two thousand years though every conceivable challenge and opposition shows the evidence of the power of the gospel to motivate endurance to the end.

② The proof of prophetic Scripture (15:3-4)

- Paul's number one priority is the good news of Jesus Christ. He didn't write it, design it, but only received it from God and then faithfully delivered it. This good news was communicated through God's written Word.
- This gospel message has two great realities
 - 1) Christ died for our sins and was buried (v. 3). Everyone dies, but Christ had a unique and different death. The preposition "*for*" reminds us that He was a substitute who died in our place. We were the sinners who deserved death (physically, spiritually, eternally), but Christ's death and our repentance from sin and belief in His saving work rescued us from God's wrath and gave us His forgiveness.
 - 2) Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day (v. 4).

- The proof of all this is stated twice: *“according to the Scriptures”*. The Bible proves what Jesus said and did is true as He fulfilled many prophecies about His life, death, and resurrection.

③ The proof of post-resurrection appearances (15:5-8)

- Paul points to six different appearances (one-on-one and in groups) Jesus made to over five hundred people. This is what Luke affirmed in Acts 1:3 and 17:30-31.
- *“Cephas”* (Paul’s favorite name for Peter), *“the twelve”* (Jesus’ disciples including Matthias who replaced Judas), *“more than five hundred at one time, most of whom remain until now”* (20 year later some were still alive), *“James”* (Jesus’ half-brother who thought He was crazy, yet James became an apostle and leader in the church and wrote a New Testament letter), *“to all the apostles”* (a larger group than the twelve), and then Paul (last in time and least in dignity due to his opposition to Christianity)

④ The proof of personal transformation (15:9-11)

- A changed life is an incredible proof of the reality of the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Before meeting Jesus, Paul was a self-righteous religious sinner, but after meeting Christ, he became a self-sacrificing servant of God and of the gospel.
- Notice four changes in Paul’s life which God wants to see and produce in us as well.
 - 1) There is a disclosure of your own sinfulness (v. 9). Paul openly admitted his sinfulness (v. 9). We must all admit our sinful guilt.
 - 2) There is a dependence upon God alone by His *“grace”* (v. 10a: *But by the grace of God I am what I am*). God gives us what we don’t deserve (grace) so we can enjoy what we could never provide or produce for ourselves (grace).
 - 3) There is a dedication to serve others (v. 10b: *“I labored even more than all of them”*) and Paul did this by *“the grace of God with me”*. Experiencing God’s grace motivates us to give back to the Lord who gave us everything.
 - 4) There is a denunciation of self (v. 10c: *“yet not I, but the grace of God with me”*). Paul didn’t care who got the credit as long as people separated from God came to follow Jesus.