

March 23, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Of First Importance

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

- 1. Do You Believe It? (verses 1-2)**
- 2. Do You Know It? (verses 3-8)**
- 3. Do You Feel It? (verses 9-11)**

This morning is Easter Sunday. It's the one Sunday in the year that we set aside to focus our hearts upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This year, we will do so from 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.

Throughout the letter that Paul wrote to those in Corinth, he addressed certain issues that had arisen in the church. Apparently, they had written Paul a letter asking questions about these things. And Paul responded to them. In chapter 7, verse 1, we read, "Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman." Paul spends the rest of chapter 7 discussing issues surrounding marriage. Chapter 8, verse 1 begins with these words, "Now concerning the things sacrificed to idols." For the next three chapters, Paul speaks about how to deal with the idolatrous culture of Corinth. In chapter 12, verse 1, Paul writes, "Now concerning spiritual gifts." Chapters 12-14 are an attempt to answer their questions about the spiritual gifts.

And now, in chapter 15, Paul addresses the issue of the resurrection. The entire chapter is filled with a discussion about the resurrection. It begins by talking about the resurrection of Christ. It proceeds to speak about our future resurrection. Apparently, there was great confusion as to the meaning of the resurrection in Corinth. In fact, there were some in Corinth, who were denying the resurrection altogether. In verse 12, Paul says that there are "some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead." And Paul knew that such a belief was deadly to the gospel.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is at the very heart of the gospel. To deny the resurrection is to deny the gospel. And without the gospel, you have no Christianity. The resurrection of Jesus is something that all Christians need to embrace.

Without the resurrection of Jesus, our faith is worthless. In verses 17-19, Paul describes how worthless our faith would be. Consider the weight of 1 Corinthians 15:17, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins." If Jesus Christ did not raise from the dead, then will still account for our sins before a holy God. This means that we are headed to damnation and destruction! It means that we have no hope! Paul continues his reasoning, "Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." If the resurrection of Jesus didn't happen, then might as well close up shop at Rock Valley Bible Church and stay home each Sunday, because our message is an empty one.

The resurrection is at the heart of the gospel and without it, we have no gospel. We have no good news. We have no hope! My outline this morning comes by way of three questions. Here's my first question.

1. Do You Believe It? (verses 1-2)

Do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Do you believe in the gospel?

This was Paul's point in verses 1 and 2, where he writes, "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."

With these words, Paul brings us back to Acts, chapter 18, which describe the events of the gospel first coming to Corinth. It was on Paul's second missionary journey. He had traveled to Philippi, where he spent some time in jail for preaching the gospel. He proceeded on to Thessalonica, where he was thrown out of the city for preaching the gospel. The same thing took place in Berea. Angry Jews had come into the city and forced Paul to leave the city. After he left Berea, he proceeded on to Athens, where he received a mixed reception with the gospel. Finally, he arrived in Corinth, and proceeded to visit the synagogue every Saturday, where he preached the gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike (Acts 18:5). But, when those in the synagogue "resisted" Paul's preaching, he "went to the house of a man named Titius Justus," (Acts 18:7) where he continued his preaching ministry.

Paul had thought about leaving the city of Corinth, but was assured in a vision at night when the Lord told him, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:10). And so, Paul remained there for 18 months and enjoyed a fruitful ministry, until finally, he traveled to Ephesus.

Throughout Paul's entire time in Corinth, he was constantly preaching the gospel to those who lived there. In fact, in chapter 2, verse 2, Paul said that when he was among the Corinthians, He "determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The "word of the cross" was always on his lips. Whether the people received the message of the gospel or not, he constantly preached "Christ crucified" (which included all of the implications of the resurrection).

And to these Corinthians, once again, Paul was going to make clear to them what the gospel was. Look again at verse 1, "I make known to you, brethren the gospel which I preached to you." He said, "I preached it to you when I was in Corinth, I'll preach it to you again, this time by pen (if that can be rightly called preaching)."

It never hurts to hear the gospel again. In fact, there is something about the gospel that comes fresh each time we hear it! I don't care if you have been saved for 30 years. I don't care if you were saved last week. The gospel will come to each of us with a sweetness that satisfies our longing, like nothing else will do. One poet said it this way,

I love to tell the story; 'Tis pleasant to repeat.
What seems each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet.
I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting, to hear it like the rest. [\[1\]](#)

Paul knew this about the gospel, and that was why he was repeating it again to these professing believers. After all, he was writing these things to a church! He even began by affirming their faith. Again, verse 1 says, "I make known to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved."

Paul said that he **preached** the gospel when he was with them in Corinth. And the Corinthians **received** the gospel. That is, they believed what they had heard and embraced it. They no longer considered it to be foolish, but rather, they considered it to be the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18). Paul also says that the Corinthians **stood** on the gospel, "in which you also stand." That is, they staked their claim upon the cross. They weren't trusting in their good works. They weren't trusting in some other gods. They weren't trusting in their idols. They had taken their stand upon the gospel. The gospel was where their hope was. And in receiving and standing on the gospel, the Corinthians were **saved**. That is, they were rescued. They wouldn't perish, like the rest, who have no hope. Rather, they would be protected from the wrath of God and no longer face the prospect of perishing for their sins.

And yet, Paul puts forth some doubt into his affirmations of their faith. He writes in the middle of verse 2, "If you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." It may have very well have been that the faith of the Corinthians was an empty faith. Oh, when he was in Corinth, the people were expressing their faith in Christ. But, the Christ they were believing in, may not have been the Christ of Paul's preaching. Based upon what follows in the rest of this chapter, it seems as if Paul's doubts had to do with their lack of belief in the resurrection.

Paul was very clear in verse 2. You are saved, "if you hold fast the word which I preached to you." See, Paul had the saving gospel. To believe in his message would deliver you from the punishment that your sins deserve. But, if you distorted his gospel, you had a vain hope. It's a bit like the man who built his house upon the sand. It sure looked like a good house. It sure looked like the other houses. But, when the rain fell down the floods came up and the wind blew and slammed against the house, it fell. It looked like it was secure, but it stood upon the sand, rather than upon the rock (Matt. 7:24-27).

This is what Paul is saying here. "My words to you were like rock! If you have hoped in my words, you will stand. But, if you have hoped in something that merely resembles what I preached to you, your faith is an empty faith. In this case, there is no substance to your faith, because your Christ isn't the real Christ. You thought that your Christ could hold you up in the day of trouble, but, a Christ who hasn't conquered death and raised from the dead is a false hope."

Please know that there are many in this land in liberal churches and in liberal seminaries, who would profess a faith in Jesus, and yet deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Such was certainly the case with some in Corinth. They didn't believe that Jesus raised from the dead. Their hope in Jesus was an empty hope. It's a vain hope.

Those today who deny the resurrection are often sneaky people. They are very careful not to admit that they don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus bodily from the dead. Oh, they don't say that they don't believe in the resurrection. In fact, you might easily read some of their writings and see that they affirm it with their mouth, "I believe in the resurrection." But, when you ask them, "So, you believe that the body of Jesus was dead and that he was brought to life again?" They say, "Oh, no. I don't believe that. I believe that Jesus raised in the hearts of His disciples" (or something like that).

Perhaps an illustration might help. There is an English theologian, named William Barclay, who died in 1978. He was a brilliant man, who wrote a wonderful commentary upon the New Testament, which is particularly rich in the historical context of the New Testament. These books have been used by many evangelical preachers as helpful to understand the culture of Jesus' day. But, William Barclay was a liberal theologian. As such, he denied the deity of Jesus. He believed in "the essential goodness and nobility of man" and that all will be saved. [\[2\]](#)

At one point in his autobiography, William Barclay was writing about some things in the Apostle's Creed that he didn't believe. Here is what he said about it, "I had always had difficulty in repeating the Apostles' Creed, for there are items in it which I could not hold. But, the Apostles' Creed was not, 'I believe,' but 'We believe.' That is to say, when I am reciting the Creed, I am not claiming that all this is without exception my personal belief; But I am stating that this is the Church's belief, and this for course I can do." [\[3\]](#)

Do you see what he has done? With his mouth he is professing belief. What he is saying is true. (And that's why much of what is in his commentary set is useful for preachers). But, if you would press him to define what he means by some of his statements, you would find that he doesn't really believe what he affirms. When he had an opportunity to define his fundamental beliefs, William Barclay said this, "I believe that Jesus lived and I believe that Jesus died." [\[4\]](#) So far so good. But, then he gets to the point where he addresses the resurrection. Here is what he said, ...

I believe that this Jesus so appeared to his men that they were convinced that he had conquered death. I do not know what

exactly happened. Mary is told not to touch him (John 20:17); Thomas is invited to touch him (John 20:27). Sometimes Jesus is so spiritual that doors are no obstacle to him (John 20:19, 26), and he comes and goes at will (Luke 24:31); Sometimes the story is so physical that he is depicted as claiming to have flesh and blood and is shown eating a meal (Luke 24:36-43). But I am not worried by the difficulties. I am certain that something happened to make Jesus available for all time in all places to those who love him and believe. [9](#)

In other words, Barclay is saying, "I believe that Jesus lived and I believe that Jesus died. But, I don't believe that he rose again, physically from the dead, although his disciples were convinced that he did." In Paul's mind, such talk is a vain belief. It makes a profession of faith, but it has no substance of faith. But, the content of faith is empty.

And so, I ask you, "Do You Believe It?" Or, is your faith in the gospel of Christ? Is your trust in the gospel which Paul preached? If not, the consequences are terrifying. In Galatians 1, Paul wrote of the consequences of drifting from the gospel.

Galatians 1:6-9

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

What I'm talking about today has a great importance to your soul! There are many doctrines of Christianity that you can fail to discern correctly and still be saved. You may be wrong about your views of the role of women in the family and in the home, and yet, you may still be a Christian. You may be wrong about your views of the inspiration of Scripture, and yet, you may still be a Christian. In fact, there are many things that you may be wrong about. You may be wrong about your views of the present manifestation of the gift of tongues and miraculous gifts; you may be wrong about your views of the extent of our depravity; you may be wrong about the extend of God's sovereignty upon the earth; you may be wrong about your views of the when Christ will return; you may be wrong about your views of the form of church government prescribed in the Bible; you may be wrong about your views of the who should be baptized (infants or professing believers); you may be wrong about your views of the elements of communion; you may be wrong about your views of the proper methodology of the church. You may be mistaken about many of these things and yet, you may still be a Christian. Your soul may still be safe in God.

See, God isn't demanding of us that we have perfect theology before we enter the kingdom of heaven. Would the truth be known, there may well be some things that we hold to that aren't quite right.

But, God is calling you to hold to the Biblical gospel, or you will be condemned to hell. That's what Paul told the Galatians. They were being enchanted by a different gospel (Gal. 3:1-5). And the eternity of their souls were at stake.

And so, I come back to my first point. 1. Do You Believe It? (verses 1-2) Do you believe the gospel of Christ? Perhaps you don't believe the gospel because you don't know it. That leads nicely to my second question for you this morning.

2. Do You Know It? (verses 3-8)

In verses 3-8 of our text this morning, Paul defines the gospel. Consider Paul's words, ...

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

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, 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.

Right at the beginning of verse 3, Paul gives us the importance of these words. He called the truth of the gospel, "first importance." Based upon Paul's earlier testimony in 1 Corinthians 2:2 about determining to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," we might well conclude that these words of Paul aren't merely of "first importance." We might easily conclude that they are of "only importance."

Jerry Bridges said it well, "The gospel, is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history." [10](#) Paul is very clear here in verse 3 that he didn't make these things up. It's not like we are following Paul. It's not like he came up with these things on his own. He was merely passing on to us what he had received from the risen Christ.

In Galatians 1:11-12, Paul wrote, "I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. "I delivered to you, what I also received." Paul considered himself to be the mailman. He had received the message, but now was delivering it. He considered himself to be the waiter, who didn't prepare the meal, but rather delivered it to the table.

Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul made this known. In chapter 2:12-13, Paul wrote, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." These things didn't originate with Paul.

Paul was taught by the Spirit of God. What he was taught, he passed on to those in Corinth. (And, as we are reading his mail, he also delivered them to us). "I delivered to you, what I also received" (verse 3).

Now, in verses 3-8, we see the essentials of the Christian faith. These are the things that you must hold. We find four key elements to the gospel message.

1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

This, here, friends, is the greatest message that you will ever know. That Christ died for our sins! Because of our sins, we deserve to die and face the wrath of God. And yet, Christ died in our place. He died to bear our penalty. This is the great reality of Christianity. We believe that Christ died in our place. As such, we are free from the condemnation of God! "There is therefore, now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" (Rom. 8:1).

Holy God, in love became,
Perfect man to bear my blame,
On the cross, He took my sin,
By His death, I live again. [\[7\]](#)

Paul's point here isn't so much that Jesus died. (He will get to that with the next phrase). Rather, the point here is that the death of Jesus had significance. And the significance of His death is that it removed our sin. We know this because that's what the Scriptures had prophesied. Long before Jesus ever walked upon the earth, the Old Testament told of a time when the Messiah would come and take our sins upon His body. And so, when Jesus died, there was divine significance to that action.

Consider what the Old Testament had prophesied.

Isaiah 53:4-6
Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

These words are filled with substitutionary language. His death was for our sins. He was pierced through for our transgressions (verse 5). He paid the penalty that our transgressions deserved. He was crushed for our iniquities (verse 5). Rather than being crushed for our own iniquities, Jesus took our place and was crushed for us. The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him. God's punishment fell upon Him, and not upon us. The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (verse 6). The consequences of our iniquity (which is death) fell upon Jesus instead of upon us.

"Christ died" (this happened in history)
"for our sins" (the divine interpretation of His death)
"according to the Scriptures" (how we know the divine interpretation).

2. Christ was buried.

With these words, Paul is pointing us to the historical reality of the life and death of Jesus. Jesus was a man, who lived among us. He had flesh and blood. He breathed the air into his lungs like we breath air into our lungs. He ate food like we eat food. He became tired like we become tired. He felt emotions like we felt emotions. And Jesus died. He didn't die a natural death. Rather, He was executed by being nailed to a cross.

The cross of Jesus was a real cross made out of real wood. He was attached to the cross with long nails. And through his sufferings upon the cross, Jesus died of asphyxiation. That is, He stopped breathing. His lungs no longer filled with fresh air. His heart stopped beating. His blood stopped circulating. His body became cold. Rigor mortis set in.

Consider the number of witnesses to the death of Jesus.

First of all, there was the apostle, **John**. John records what took place shortly after he died with these words, "Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and

immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:31-34). Lest you doubt this, John adds, "And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe" (John 19:35).

When they took him down from the cross, a man named **Joseph of Arimathea** asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Initially, Pilate was a bit surprised that Jesus was already dead, because a crucifixion often takes longer than the few hours that Jesus was upon the cross. So, **Pilate** summoned a **centurion** and "questioned him as to whether [Jesus] was already dead" (Mark 15:44). Once he received confirmation that Jesus had indeed died, he granted that the body be given to Joseph of Arimathea, who, along with the help of **Nicodemus**, "wrapped His body in a "clean linen cloth" (Matt. 27:59), and laid him in a new tomb which had been dug into the rock (Luke 23:52; John 19:39). And then, a large stone was rolled in front of the opening. At the tomb were **Mary Magdalene** and another **Mary**, who noted where Jesus was buried (Matt. 27:61).

After he was in the tomb, some of the **Pharisees**, who knew that Jesus had died, approached Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.' Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first" Matt. 27:63-64). Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how." And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone" (Matt. 27:65). The Pharisees knew that Jesus had died. You don't place live people in the tomb.

The number of people who attested to the death of Jesus were many: John, Joseph of Arimathea, numerous roman soldiers, Pilate, Nicodemus, several women at the tomb, some of the Pharisees, and whoever else the Scriptures doesn't explicitly name.

Jesus really died. It wasn't a botched execution. Is this important? Yes, because of Paul's next point.

3. Christ was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

This speaks about His resurrection, which we celebrate this Resurrection Sunday. Jesus raised from the dead. He was dead, but now He lives. This is the victory of Christianity: that Christ has conquered death! And as we believe in Him, we might share in His life!

Again, we see that this was prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures. One of the foremost passages that speak of the resurrection comes in Psalm 16. Peter referred to this text on the day of Pentecost when he preached to the Jews who witnessed the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:31). He also used it when he was addressing the Jews in Psidion Antioch (Acts 13:35).

Anyway, Psalm 16:10 says this, "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will you allow Your Holy One to undergo decay" (Ps. 16:10). These words couldn't refer to David, because the Scriptures testify that David was buried in the city of Jerusalem (1 Kings 2:10). During the days of the apostle, David's tomb was still identifiable (Acts 2:29). These words must be referring to the Messiah, who would never undergo the decay of the grave. And as Isaiah 53 speaks of how the Messiah will die, these words must refer to how Messiah must be raised from the dead.

Another Old Testament reference to the Messiah comes in Isaiah 53:11. Shortly after speaking about the death of the Suffering Servant, Isaiah says, "As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied." The implication is that the Messiah will live after He dies. This implies the resurrection.

Even the Davidic covenant, as given in 2 Samuel, chapter 7 anticipates the resurrection of Jesus. In that covenant, God promises that the Davidic dynasty will endure forever. There will always be someone on the throne of David! The only way for this to take place is for David's sons to keep begetting more sons throughout eternity, or for one of David's sons to sit on his throne forever (which is the case in the crucified Messiah).

The suffering Messiah would be the one who would reign forever! Psalm 89 echoes the same thing. "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations."

Regarding Paul's mentioning of Christ rising on the third day, it is difficult to find his reference to the Old Testament. Perhaps he was referring to Matthew 12:40, when Jesus said, "for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." It may be that Paul was referring to Hosea 6:2, which mentions raising us up on the third day.

4. Christ appeared to many.

Paul's fourth point of the gospel is a list of the post-resurrections appearances of Christ. "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" (1 Cor. 15:5-8).

With these words, Paul is pointing us to the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus. He didn't merely raise from the dead, only to disappear. We don't believe that Jesus rose from the dead simply because nobody has ever found His body. No, Jesus raised from the dead and appeared to many people.

Let's go down the list that Paul gives. First off is verse 5, in which Paul says that the risen Christ appeared to Cephas. (This is Peter's Aramaic name).

Verse 5 continues to mention that Jesus appeared to "the twelve." This is a reference to Jesus' twelve disciples Peter, Andrew, James, and John, Thomas, Matthew, Philip, Bartholomew, James, Thaddaeus, Simon (the Zealot). Of course, it doesn't mean Judas, who had hanged himself already, but, this may have a reference to Matthias, who took his place.

Verse 6 mentions how Jesus appeared to "more than five hundred brethren at one time." We don't know exactly when this took place, but certainly, this wasn't unfamiliar to Jesus. He often appeared before thousands of people, teaching them and healing those who were sick (Matt. 14, 15). My guess is that Jesus was doing the same with these crowds.

In verse 7, Paul mentions how Jesus appeared to James. This is his brother, who probably came to faith through the resurrection (John 7:5; Acts 1:14).

Again, in verse 7, Paul mentions "the apostles." This is probably another reference to the twelve again.

Finally, in verse 8, Paul mentions how Jesus appeared to Himself. He identifies himself as being "untimely born," because he never had the opportunity to walk and talk and learn from Jesus as did the other disciples.

Now, as Paul mentions these names, it's far more than merely a list of names. He's identifying people who were eyewitnesses of the resurrection. In verse 6, Paul mentions how most of these people are still alive, though some have died. The idea is that those in Corinth could probably go and find many of these people and talk with them about what they saw and what they heard. Time after time after time again, you would get the same testimony. "I saw Jesus alive! He had the wounds in His hands. He had the wounds in His feet. He had a spear wound in His side. This was the same guy who was crucified upon a Roman cross!"

This isn't merely a list of anonymous people, either. This list included the disciples who had been with Jesus for three years. If anybody would recognize Jesus after the resurrection, it would be them. These men were credible men who were known for their integrity.

And the account of the Scriptures isn't so much that they were trying to pull off some big lie. On the contrary, they were unbelieving at first. When the women first reported to the disciples that Jesus was alive, the disciples didn't believe it (Mark 16:11). When the two were talking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, they were unbelieving also (Luke 24). You all know what took place with Thomas, who said, "Unless I see in His hand the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

But, these same, doubting disciples saw Jesus in the flesh after the resurrection. And they came to believe that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. So convinced were they that from that day on, they made their life's ambition to make Jesus known. You simply need to read through the evangelistic sermons in Acts to see how boldly they proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus. Most of them died for preaching this message of the risen Christ.

And this is the good news that we believe and proclaim:

- 1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.**
- 2. Christ was buried.**
- 3. Christ was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.**
- 4. Christ appeared to many.**

It's as simple as that. The good news is all about what Jesus did. He lived. He died. He was buried. He rose from the dead. He appeared to many, who would gladly give you their eyewitness testimony to the truth.

And so, this resurrection morning, I ask you, "Do You Know It?" (verses 3-8) And just as important, "Do You Believe It?" (verses 1-2) Let's look at my third question for you this morning. It has to do with your response to the gospel.

3. Do You Feel It? (verses 9-11)

See, it's one thing to know the gospel with your head. But, it's another thing to feel its impact upon your life. Consider these verses.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 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.

With these verses, Paul expresses how he is absolutely overwhelmed by God's grace in his life. He said, "I'm not fit to be called an apostle." In other words, "I don't deserve such an honor. I was an enemy of the church. I was responsible for the murders of many Christians. And yet, God's grace has come full upon me! Jesus has died for my sins!" What an amazing thing, that the God of the Universe would come and die for my sins so that I might live.

The idea in these words is that Paul seemingly can't get over God's grace in his life. To Timothy, Paul once wrote, ...

1 Timothy 1:12-15

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

Do you know yourself to be a sinner? Paul called himself the "foremost of all sinners." You may never have persecuted the church of God. You may never have hunted down Christians to put them to death. But, if you know your own heart, you know your own sin. It may not have expressed itself outwardly like Paul's did, but there's plenty of sin in your heart.

Yet, if you believe the gospel that I have been proclaiming this morning, you may experience the forgiveness of all your sins! Colossians 1:13, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us **all our transgressions**." What grace! None of us deserve for the God of the universe to come and die for our sins!

Would the truth be known, you can easily say with Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (verse 10). And though Paul may have put forth his labor and effort and toil for the gospel, He knew that it wasn't he who labored. Rather, it was God's grace that worked in His life. Look again in verse 10, "I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." Paul felt the gospel. Anything that you do for God, is the grace of God. Attending Church, loving your wife, doing a good deed, praying, believing, sharing the gospel, helping the poor, worshiping God, conquering sin, all of these things are the grace of God in your life.

Do you feel Him working in your life? Do you desire Him to work in your life? Is He your supreme desire above everything? If not, you may not believe the gospel! The news is so good that it ought to affect every fiber of our being!

In Philippians 3, Paul expressed his own heart to pursue Christ with all of his might. He says, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the **power of His resurrection** and the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:8-10).

Finishing this section, Paul writes, "Whether then it was I or they, so we preached and so you believed."

Do you believe it?

Do you know it?

Do you feel it? Has it made an impact on your life?

The proof of your faith isn't in your profession to have faith. The proof of your faith is in your possession of true faith.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 23, 2008 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] This was written by A. Catherine Hankey.

[2] William Barclay, A Spiritual Autobiography, p. 66, 117.

[3] Ibid., pp. 97-98. It would be helpful to point out his words here came in the context of him discussion the importance for "sheer honesty" in preaching. While being "honest" about his beliefs regarding these things, I believe that Barclay was showing clearly how to be clever with his words, so as not to reveal his true beliefs!

[4] Ibid., p. 112.

[5] Ibid., p. 113.

[6] Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*, p. 46.

[7] Drew Jones wrote the words to these lyrics.