

## Resurrecting the Gospel: Its Frame, Focus, and Friendship

1 Corinthians 15:1–11 | 04.16.2017 | Body Life @OBC

If you've come this morning doubting Jesus' resurrection . . . you're in the right place

First Corinthians 15 is a chapter addressing the very question of resurrection and its historical reality.

So . . . if you have or have had doubts about the resurrection of Christ, you are in the right place. I'd even say . . . God has ordered steps to hear this message today.

ATST . . . If you've come this morning believing Jesus was raised from the dead but are unsure what to do with that . . . you are also in the right place.

In every one of us exists a longing for eternity. **Ecclesiastes 3** says God put eternity in the hearts of men . . . and none of us will be satisfied without eternal life.

Tragically, some go to great lengths to seek eternal life . . . but ignore Jesus' resurrection

**For instance** . . . somewhere in AZ rests the [frozen body of Ted Williams](#)—the baseball HOF-er—who decided to have his body frozen after he died . . . just in case, technology might bring him back to life.

A few 100 miles north of Williams frozen body pioneers at Google are looking at how to [extend life to 500 or 1000 years](#).

Why?? . . . B/C we are hard-wired to live . . . and to live forever.

So, if you come this morning . . . longing for life after death, you're also in the right place

For all of us . . . **1 Corinthians 15** is a message of forgiveness, resurrection, and lasting transformation . . .

And as we will see . . . God's Word is not magic or a fairy tale

. . . but the very power . . . to make all things new . . . to make everything sad untrue.

Indeed, this is power of the gospel . . . which centers of Christ's resurrection . . . and which is most clearly explained in **1 Co 15:1–11**

In fact, if there was one passage in all of the Bible that best defined God's good news . . .

It would be this passage.

In context . . .

Paul turns to the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 . . . after spending 3 chapters on the spiritual gifts.

And by contrast . . . he shows us that God's power is not found in signs and wonders . . . but in the simple wonder of Christ's death and resurrection.

. . . A resurrection that is already being felt in the experience of believing the gospel.

**Therefore, on this Easter morning... we need to see what this gospel message is & how it applies to us**

Yet, before unpacking those details about this coming resurrection, Paul introduces the gospel.

In **vv 1–2** . . . he reminds the Corinthians of the gospel he preached, the gospel they received, and the gospel they must continue to embrace to enjoy its blessings.

Then in **vv 3–8** . . . he unpacks this gospel. He reminds us that the gospel is not an abstract concept. It's not a music genre. Or any statement of truth about God.

The gospel is the specific message of Christ crucified, buried, raised, and reigning.

In these verses he explains the content of the gospel, and most commentators believe he quotes an early Christian creed or hymn in **verses 3–5** . . . or maybe **vv. 3–8**.

This hymn stands on four key truths

- [1] THAT Christ died for our sins
- [2] THAT he was buried
- [3] THAT he was raised on the third day
- [4] THAT he appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve . . . 500 others.

These are the main turning points of the gospel . . .

The message of salvation that every child of God must know and believe

. . . to experience friendship with God, fellowship with Christ, and fullness of the Spirit.

And because this message of good news determines the eternal state of a person . . .

We must be sure we have the gospel right . . .

And we must be sure not to let go of this gospel or the God who gives it to us.

Therefore, we need to see three things today . . .

**First . . .** we need to put the gospel in its proper **FRAME**.

Like any good frame, there are four sides to this frame.

From what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 . . . we can say the gospel is central, external (as opposed to internal), Scriptural, and historical.

These four truths are not the gospel itself . . . but they must be maintained or else the gospel will be distorted or destroyed.

So we begin by setting up the gospel in its **FRAME** so we can then see the face of Christ as the **FOCUS** of the Gospel.

**Second . . .** Just as a portrait must include all parts of the face . . . and must give them proper proportions and shapes . . . the same is true in this picture of Jesus.

We must include the four points Paul includes if we are going to “get” the gospel . . . and be saved by the gospel because we are captivated by the Christ of the gospel

So we need to see the **FRAME** of the gospel and its **FOCUS** the person and work of Christ.

**Third . . .** We must see how the gospel is not just **news**. It’s not just **good news**.

It’s **personal good news**. . . if you are willing to receive it and stand in it.

For those who receive this gospel . . . **FRIENDSHIP** with God awaits

That is Through this gospel . . . natural born enemies of God are made friends.

This is what Paul experienced . . . and what he offers to all of us through X

So We need then to see the frame, the focus, and the friendship of the gospel.

## First . . . let's see the Four-Sided Gospel Frame

### First, the gospel is CENTRAL.

v. 3 says, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received."

The word "first importance" indicates the place Paul puts on the gospel.

More than anything else . . . the gospel receives FIRST PLACE for Paul.

And so it should be with any faithful Christian or healthy church . . . the gospel is what saves us, sets us apart, unites us, and makes us a people pleasing to God!

As a church . . . it must define who we are . . . shapes the emphasizes of our ministry . . . and fills every conversation . . . And Why?

Because the gospel is not a one-time, ticket-punch out of hell.  
It is the good news about Jesus Christ that gets better every time you hear it.

Nothing concerns me more than when I hear someone say about the gospel "Oh, I've heard that before . . . "as if you can move beyond the gospel.

No . . . the gospel is the bedrock, the centerpiece, the power-plant for everything in the Xian life, and thus it must be central.

### Next, the gospel is external . . . meaning . . . it is an external word.

In v. 3 again . . . Paul says he delivered to the Corinthians what he himself received.

This is tradition language . . . meaning he has passed on what he has received.

Only in this case . . . the gospel is not a man-made tradition . . . like Easter Eggs / Sunrise Services

This revelation is from Jesus himself, as Paul says in **Galatians 1:16–17** . . . he did not consult anyone else when he received a revelation of the gospel from Jesus Christ.

**Why does Paul say he did not consult with anyone??** . . . to assure us that his gospel is from God, not from man.

For Paul and all of us . . . this God-given gospel . . . comes from outside ourselves as an external word of confrontation and comfort. **Now . . . why does that matter?**

Well . . . any message that says "Believe in yourself" . . . or encourages someone to activate some power from w/in . . . is not the gospel.

In fact, any preacher that tells you to release your inner potential or trust in your heart's desire . . . is preaching a false gospel that will lead you to hell.

Beware! The true gospel comes from outside yourself . . .

### **Third, the gospel is Scriptural.**

Notice in **vv. 3 + 4**, Paul says Christ died and rose again **according to the Scriptures**.

Paul is explaining that Christ's death for sin and resurrection on the third day are explained by the inspired words of God.

In particular, Paul is not quoting one passage here, but rather with the plural **Scriptures** he indicates that multiple OT promises are being fulfilled in Jesus substitutionary death and triumphant resurrection.

So, practically . . . the gospel is not something that begins with Jesus.

It began in the OT . . . a book inspired by God to prepare the way for Christ.

Indeed, any understanding of Jesus apart from this OT revelation will likely go astray, because Jesus is the CHRIST of Israel . . . and must be understood in his biblical context

### **Finally, the gospel is historical.**

Meaning that the gospel is not an ethical list of rules . . . but an historical reality.

Just look at the way Paul speaks of it. First, he describes Jesus as an historical figure. The center piece of his salvation is his death on Calvary and his resurrection on 3<sup>rd</sup> day. **These are statements of historical fact!**

If you want to know God, according to the Bible, you must read the historical accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John . . . these are not 4 gospels, but 4 witnesses of 1 gospel.

Just the same in Paul's description . . .

When he says 500 people saw the risen Christ . . . and says many of them are still alive today . . . he's saying: **If you doubt me . . . go ask the witnesses.**

The gospel . . . therefore, isn't a mystical hidden experience in some middle eastern cave . . . it is an historical fact attested by dozens and hundreds of witnesses.

Christ was crucified in public . . . buried in a known location . . . raised on the third day . . . and publicly visible to his followers for 40 days.

### **All in all, the gospel must be held as**

Central . . . External . . . Scriptural . . . Historical

Or else . . . the message will be lost in transmission.

These 4 sides make up the frame of the gospel . . . and help us see what to FOCUS on

## The Focus of the Gospel: Jesus Christ

As we look inside the frame . . . we find four facts of the gospel to focus on.

**And all of these facts focus on Jesus Christ.** . . . He is the person who holds the gospel together and holds salvation in his hands.

So let's listen to what Paul says about him ... and what Christ did to secure this gospel.

The first fact to focus on is this: **Christ died for our sins.**

Notice, Paul doesn't just say Christ died . . . he explains WHY he died.

He died FOR sins . . . and not for his OWN sins, but for OUR sins . . . for the sins of the people who trust in him.

So this means . . . Christ's death is not centrally an EXAMPLE for service or leadership.

It's not centrally a VICTORY over Satan and evil and the world.

It's not centrally a statement of God's LOVE.

It is all of those . . . but centrally it is the penal payment for sinners like me + you.

It is the substitution of a sinless sacrifice dying in the place of sinners

This is what it means . . . when he says "**in accordance with the Scriptures**"

Throughout the OT . . . God had established a principle of substitution  
An innocent animal dying in the place of a guilty man.

In **Genesis 22** God provided a lamb to take the place of Isaac, when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son.

In **Exodus 12** Lambs were sacrificed to save firstborn sons when the angel of death came during the night of the Passover.

In **Leviticus** The sacrificial system asked the worshiper to put his hands on the head of the animal . . . transferring guilt from the man to the animal.

The animal died in the place of the worshiper . . . thus sparing them from judgment and securing their relationship with God.

But of course . . . These animal sacrifices were never meant to save eternally.

As we read in **Isaiah 53** ... It would be a suffering servant who would die in the place of sinners.

This was always the way God would save his people and now in Christ, we see how these OT promises were fulfilled . . . and how God gave forgiveness and friendship sinners.

**This is the center of gospel Paul proclaims, but there's more to say.**

The second fact to focus on is this: **That Jesus was buried.**

The point of this fact is to say . . . Jesus did not simply pass out or swoon on the cross.

**He died.** His heart stopped beating. His lungs stopped breathing. He experienced death in all of its fullness . . . to the point he was taken off the cross and buried in a tomb.

**And this is odd** . . . It's odd because death is the due penalty for sin.

**Romans 6:23** makes this clear – **the wages of sin is death.**

Death is not natural to humanity. God did not create us to die.  
It is the consequence of the first couple eating the fruit and rebelling against God.

**So why did Jesus – sinless as he was – die?**

Well . . . it's because on the cross . . . God imputed to him the sins of his people.

That is . . . God treated his sinless son as though he was sin incarnate.

Think of it . . .

Jesus for all of his life perfectly obeyed the father, perfectly kept the law, and enjoyed perfect fellowship with God . . . because he did everything God required.

And yet, now on the cross . . . the Son of David who deserved to inherit the kingdom, . . . was treated like the greatest the sinner

Imagine the mental distress . . . the spiritual dysphoria . . . God himself experiencing the wrath of God . . . He who deserved to be crowned a king . . . was crucified and killed!

If ever there was an out of body experience, it was this . . . because the Son who never died in his divine nature experienced death in his human nature . . . thus he was awake and alert the whole time to experience it all.

**Oh what a horrible thing this was for Jesus** . . . but oh, how good it is for you and I !!

If you've ever experienced mental anguish, spiritual affliction, or the twisted feeling that something is dying within . . . **Know that Jesus has experienced this and more.**

And because he has experienced this kind of spiritual and bodily suffering . . . he is ready and able to comfort all those who come to him for grace and peace.

So this fact that Christ was **buried** . . . is more than a technicality.

It offers hope to all who now feel they are dying on the inside . . . and the reason he can offer this hope and help is because of what comes next!

The next fact to focus on is the main point of 1 Cor 15 . . .

**That Jesus was raised on the third day.**

Again . . . this point is an historical fact . . . but it is more.

Just as “for our sins” . . . described the meaning of X’s death by the Scriptures.

So “on the third day” . . . explains the meaning of X’s resurrection by the Scriptures.

But what does the OT say about resurrection? Does it say anything about the third day?

Indeed, a careful reading of the OT finds that the third day is regularly a day of deliverance, salvation, and life returned.

For instance,

**Isaac** was delivered from being sacrificed on the “third day” (Gen. 22:9)

**Joseph** released his brothers from prison on the third day (Gen. 42:17-18)

God came down to meet **Moses** on Mount Sinai on the “third day” (Exod. 19:11)

When **Joshua** rallied the people to enter the promised land, he said the conquest would begin in “three days” (Josh. 1:11; 3:2)

After **Jonah** was in the belly of the fish for three days, he was delivered on the third day (1:17)

**Hezekiah**, the king of Judah, was healed from his sickness on the third day (2 Kgs. 20:5-6)

**Esther** successfully interceded for the Jews on the “third day” (Esth. 4:16)

And most explicitly, in Hosea

The people said, “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up”

By themselves, any one of these verses is too thin to be a singular prediction of resurrection on the third day . . .

. . . but with all the evidence of the deliverance on the third day

. . . and Paul referencing the whole OT Scripture . . .

. . . we begin to see that God loves to bring redemption & resurrection on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day.

. . . **Jesus himself pointed to Jonah and his deliverance on the third day as a sign of his death and resurrection.**

Indeed, this is what the gospel is all about . . .

Displaying the glory of God by saving people on the verge of death.

Indeed, God does more than just protect us from death . . . the gospel he will raise us from the dead . . . and what is the proof?? **Christ’s own resurrection!**

Ultimately, all who trust in Christ – AND ONLY THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM – will escape the eternal judgment of God . . . what the Bible calls the second death!



**So Christ's resurrection is the third fact . . .** and this is quickly followed by the fourth that Christ appeared to at least six sets of people . . .

**v. 5** says – Jesus appeared to Cephas . . . who is Peter  
then to the twelve . . . we find these appearances in the Gospels as Jesus came to the 12 disciples in the Upper Room

then **v. 6** – Jesus appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time  
  
he didn't appear in some secret mystical experiences, or in personal hallucinations  
  
He rose from the dead and appeared in a public gathering of 500 Christians.

Then **v. 7** – he appeared to James . . . his half-brother who earlier in life did not believe Jesus was the messiah. So this testimony proves Jesus' resurrection overturns skeptics.

After James, he mentions the apostles . . .

Finally, he speaks of himself . . . as one untimely born . . . an apostle called to service on the Damascus Road when Jesus appeared to him.

These appearances mark the fourth fact of the gospel . . .

That once raised from the dead . . . Jesus made himself known to his people.

In history . . . these appearances prove the validity of Christ's resurrection.

But to each individual . . . they also prove the turning point in their lives.

For Peter, Thomas, Paul, James the half-brother of Jesus, and Paul . . . Jesus resurrection is more than just an historical data point.

It is personal . . . saving . . . life-changing . . . and even spiritually-speaking

**Resurrecting!**

And this brings us to the last part of Paul's message... **the friendship produced by the gospel.**

## The Friendship of the Gospel

If you read **vv. 9–11** . . . you quickly learn what kind of person Paul was.

Before Christ . . . he was murderer, a persecutor of the church, a blasphemer who personally opposed Jesus and all who took his name.

We might think of a religious zealot today who beheads Christians in service to his god.  
**This was Paul!**

But when he encountered the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) . . . all that changed. In the twinkling of an eye, he was born again . . .

Or as he puts in v. 8 . . . he was untimely born . . . **literally**, an aborted fetus . . . or a miscarried child . . .

Some commentators wonder if this was a slanderous name hurled at Paul, or if he chose to call himself this to emphasize the unlikelihood of his own spiritual birth.

Whatever the origin of the term . . .

God chose Paul as an example of unparalleled grace.

If God could save Paul . . . he could save and put into service anyone.

Paul's name is a testimony . . . that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace.

No one . . . no matter how much you've sinned . . . no matter what you have done . . . or who you claim to be . . . is beyond the saving grace of God.

Every single one of us comes into the world as enemies of God – Paul says in Eph 2:3 . . . you are by your very nature **objects of wrath**; Romans 5:10 says that before salvation all of us are **God's enemies**.

This is true for the sinner who smells like the pigsty . . . and for the sinner who smells like the church pews.

Friendship with God is not something we inherit or earn for ourselves . . . it only comes as a gift . . . given in the gospel . . . brought to us when we encounter the risen Christ.

No one knew this more than Paul . . . a Christian persecutor – turned – apostle.

And look at what Paul says in verse 10 . . . **But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.**

Do you see how Paul saw himself?

He understood that he was a new creation in Christ . . . created by the resurrected Christ.

Even when he looked at his good works . . . he says at the end of verse 10 . . .

**I worked harder than any of them (the other apostles) . . . THOUGH IT WAS NOT I, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD THAT IS WITH ME.**

Before Christ . . . he lived to exalt himself above others.  
And he used his religion to glory himself.

But now in Christ . . . he wanted nothing but to glorify Jesus and to labor with his Lord's grace

**What was this labor?** What did he care so much about, now that Christ had befriended him?

His singular passion was the gospel of Jesus Christ . . . and proclaiming Jesus crucified, buried, risen, and reigning!

That was the message he brought to Corinth . . . and the message they believed.

**In fact, he is writing this letter** . . . so that those who believed the gospel would continue to believe and go on enjoying the friendship with the Lord.

Do remember how he began chapter 15 . . . **READ vv. 1–2**

Paul's commitment was singular . . . it was the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He labored, and suffered, and would eventually die to make Christ known to others.

Indeed, this was the effect that the friendship w/ God in the gospel produced in his life.

And it is the effect that God's gospel produces in any of us who have experienced friendship with God.

**Let me ask you . . .**

**Do you know that friendship?** That is why Jesus came . . . to befriend you.

**Do you know the loving gaze of the Lord in your life?** This is why he died, so that he might look upon you and darkest sins and then wipe them clean with his blood.

**Do you know the resurrection power of Christ in the gospel?** It's available to anyone who asks sincerely and counts Christ more precious than anything else.

**This is why we gather today** . . . to worship this king who laid down his life for sinners like us, so that in him . . . we might know him and become like him.

**This is why we are here today** . . . because we are what we are because of what Christ has done for us . . . and we invite you to know him too —the forgiveness of his death, the power of his resurrection, friendship that never dies and has the power to change you from the inside out.