

Christ Community Covenant Church

1 Corinthians 15:1-26

Pastor Scott Parr—May 21, 2017

Read Scripture:

This is a big day for 2 groups of people here...

I think it was just a God thing that our series in 1 Corinthians landed here, today,

Because you are launching. And there is no better launch pad for life and ministry than the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But this isn't just a talk for these dozen or so students. It's for all of us. Because we all need to remember the resurrection. We all need to remember the gospel. And God is launching us into a great purpose in the world.

You see, this chapter, an epic chapter with such powerful words about the epic accomplishment of the resurrection, comes near the very end of this long letter from Paul to the church at Corinth.

Think about it – why would this reminder of the gospel and the resurrection come at the END of a long letter?

Paul has been talking to a church – to a group of Christ-followers. And now he reminds them of the gospel. So this must matter to those of us who have heard the gospel and believed.

Three questions to look at this morning...

Why is the resurrection such a strong foundation for our faith?

Why do we need to be reminded of what the gospel really is?

What are we supposed to do about it?

1. Why is the resurrection such a strong foundation for our faith?

It just so happens that when I was in your shoes in 8th grade and the truth of the resurrection was this huge boulder of a foundation for my faith.

Friends asking questions, and evidence for the resurrection

Evidence:

- Tomb was empty. Nobody has ever come up with a body of Jesus to disprove it.
- Jesus really died – “he was buried.” Impossible that he swooned.
- Disciples didn't hallucinate – group hallucinations don't happen.
- Disciples were changed. They were cowering and disappointed and then all of a sudden they were willing to be tortured and killed because they KNEW Jesus was the risen Lord.

And so when this hit me as an 8th grader – WOW, there really is actually good reason to believe Jesus is real. I really believe he rose from the dead. Then since that's true,

everything he said was true. Since I KNOW he really rose, then I know, somehow, all this other stuff makes sense. Even the toughest times in life – I know that God is there and I have hope and I have purpose!

The resurrection is such a strong foundation because it's so real, so proven, so confirmed – and since Jesus really rose, Jesus really is the son of God, Jesus really defeated death, and the creator and king of the universe is offering you LIFE both now and forever!

And it's important to notice what the Bible really says about the afterlife. It's not "your soul floats up to heaven." Like so many people often think about it. No – the Christian hope always has been the resurrection of the body. You have a body. A human Body. The God of the universe came to earth as a human – in a human body. And in His human body He took on all of our sin and took them with Him to the grave. Then He defeated death – and His BODY was risen to life. Dave's going to look more at the rest of the chapter next week as the Corinthians (and we with them) ask...what is this like – our bodies raised again? But for now, we need to remember – our hope is that through Christ, our bodies will be raised with Him.

2. But so why does Paul feel like he even needs to remind the Corinthians of the gospel? I had a student a couple years ago complain about "okay, enough hearing the gospel!" And I get it – if you know this central message of Christ died for our sins – at some point you're hungry to hear more. But today serves as a great example of why we need to hear the gospel again and again, and remember what it really is:

Seniors: question for you – what has saved you? Paul says, "remember the gospel by which you are being saved." What is that gospel? Is it... you've maintained your perfect morals. You've attained a sinless life. NO." So, WHY do some Christian kids go to college, make some big mistakes and commit some big no-no's in their first days of college, and then shelve their faith? "Aww, I went to that party and I did those things that a Christian doesn't do...I guess I'm not a Christian." Seriously, this exact thing happens way too much.

But is that the gospel? No! The gospel is this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The gospel is this: We could NEVER be good enough for God on our own – so JESUS' Grace did for us what we could not do for ourselves!

So would we love for you to sail smoothly through the years to come, just getting godlier and godlier? Of course! Would God love to see you unwavering and living a holy life because you love him and you're so thankful for his grace? Yes! And you'd save yourself a ton of pain and heartache.

BUT YOU WILL NOT BE PERFECT.

DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO BE FAITHFUL TO JESUS AND STAY OUT OF EVERYTHING THAT SEPARATES YOU FROM HIM.

But WHEN YOU STUMBLE..... WHEN YOU FAIL BIG

Remember the gospel by which you are being saved. You aren't saved because of your own good deeds. You are saved because of the grace of Jesus Christ, who died for our SINS.

Grace is love that you don't deserve.

You need it most when you deserve it the least. (repeat...and have on slide)

That's going to be you – you're ready to take on high school –you're ready to take on the world. And when you get knocked over, it's not your own power to get back up again. It's because JESUS GOT Back up again – so you can too. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead – the Spirit of God – can pull you up out of a pit of sin or a mess of brokenness.

Remember that your faith in Christ makes you a Child of God. You're born again to new life. You're united with Christ. And WHEN YOU FAIL, THAT DOESN'T CHANGE.

So why do we have to remember the gospel? So you remember that through Christ, you are a child of God, And WHEN YOU FAIL, THAT DOESN'T CHANGE.

3. Okay, so you have this firm foundation on the resurrection. You are remembering the gospel and who you are in Christ. You are ready, you are set. What do you do about it? What does it look like to LAUNCH?

Don't be a bodybuilder – be a firefighter.

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A bodybuilder has big muscles, but for no purpose other than to show off. A bodybuilder may be strong, but it's a useless strength, a vain strength.

A firefighter lifts weights so he can RESCUE people. So he can HELP people. My friend Matt is a firefighter and he keeps himself sharp so he can save lives, so he is ready to give his strength away for the good of others.

Look at verse 9. Paul says, "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain."

You see, Paul was different. Do you ever feel awkward? Insecure? ("Yeah, like all the time") He had cause to feel like the loser apostle. All these other guys had been walking with Jesus for 3 years. Paul's like, "Yeah, I was kind of trying to kill you guys for a while...um sorry about that."

Here's the phrase I want drilled into your head as you go forward: "But by the grace of God I am what I am." "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

Don't waste any of your life comparing yourself to someone else.

My first year of college was HARD, and a big part of that was because I was caught in a comparison trap. I went from being big man on campus with a great reputation and a ton of friends to a guy that was new like everyone else. And I was fun and positive and likeable, but I happened to be great friends and ROOMMATES with Forrest. And Forrest Buckner, ladies and gentlemen, is the World Champion of energy, positivity, enthusiasm. I had been class clown, homecoming king, but people would meet us and later they'd be like, "Hey! It's Forrest! And..." "What's your name again?"

And it killed me.

Do you ever compare? Comparison kills. Don't fall into the comparison trap.

Because by God's grace you are what you are.

Embrace it. Be you. Be the person God made you to be.

Maybe you look around and you see people who are smarter, better, louder, richer, more successful, and most importantly, more likes on Instagram posts.

But God made you who you are, and God made you for a purpose. If you've been given 2 talents, don't sit there complaining about why you don't have 5 talents – but rock your 2 talents for the master!

Don't compare. Paul shows that he's tempted by that...well I'm not James...I'm not Peter. But for some reason, God made me this person who has a totally bad past and this unique calling to reach out to gentiles. And aren't we glad he did?

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

Did you catch that last little part? That's my final challenge to you this morning. Don't let God's grace to you be in vain. In other words, God has given you so much. Even if it doesn't seem like you have much, you have more than so many people because you know the love and truth of Jesus. Don't let that be a waste. Don't waste your life.

What does Paul do with the grace he's been given?

He WORKs HARD!

"I worked harder than all of them." - okay, easy on the comparison, Paul.

Take the grace God has given you and work it!

Conclusion:

The Resurrection is a firm foundation. Remember the gospel – you are being saved by the grace of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins. Don't be a bodybuilder – be a firefighter. By the grace of God, YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE. Don't compare to others – put your gifts to work for God's kingdom.