

## “The Facts of Faith” (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

I want you to stop for just a moment and think about the greatest vacation you have ever taken. Do you have those special memories locked into your mind? Good! Now think with me: what made that vacation so memorable? Great food, great fun, great sights, and great fellowship, right? Now, when you left on this vacation did you just jump on a plane and take off? Of course not! Before you departed on your dream vacation, what did you have to do? You had to make sure you could take the necessary time off from work. You had to have saved enough money to get to and fro. You had to book airfare and lodging. You had to research the location you were traveling to. Perhaps you even had to learn a foreign language. Upon reflection, you had to put a lot of thought and effort into your vacation, didn't you?

The same truth applies to moving to a new city. What do you do when you finally decide you are moving? You visit the new area and check out the neighborhoods, the schools, the climate, the churches, the restaurants, the gyms, the shopping areas, and the entertainment options. You do your homework in advance and discover everything you can about the new city because it's going to be your new home.

What I find so surprising and tragic is most people give more thought to vacations and relocations than they do their eternal destination and their quality of life there. We don't prepare for our trip to our eternal home. I hope that we can change that as we study through 1 Cor 15. In 1 Cor 15 we come to one of the most important chapters of the Bible—the resurrection chapter. Interestingly, this chapter is the longest chapter of any New Testament epistle, and the book of 1 Corinthians is the longest epistle in the New Testament. Paul's words in this chapter divide into two distinct sections. The first section (15:1-34) makes the case for the reality and certainty of the resurrection. The second section (15:35-58) explains how the resurrection is possible and discusses the nature of resurrection bodies.<sup>1</sup> Paul spent so much time on this topic because the Corinthians had come to believe in life after death without bodily resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, Paul is not trying to prove the resurrection of Jesus but to argue from it that Christians will be resurrected.<sup>3</sup> The Corinthians evidently believed in the immortality of the soul but had bought into the popular Greek view that once a person takes his last breath, it was curtains for the physical body.<sup>4</sup> Not so, says Paul, and he argues in great detail from Scripture and from reason that there is a future for our physical bodies, as well as for our souls. But before he can adequately defend the believer's resurrection, he has to deal with Christ's resurrection, for His paved the way for ours. In 1 Cor 15:1-11, Paul exclaims, “*What goes down must come up.*” In these eleven verses, Paul imparts two features of the gospel.

**1. The gospel is trustworthy (15:1-8).** In this first section, Paul explains the contents of our relationship with God. In doing so, he particularly emphasizes the validity of the resurrection. Again, Paul does not try to prove that the resurrection of Christ actually happened. Instead, he assumes the resurrection as fact. In these verses, he simply wants us to know that Christ has risen from the dead. Paul begins by stating in 15:1-2: “**Now I make known to you, brethren,<sup>5</sup> the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if<sup>6</sup> you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.**” As with some of the other topics dealt with in this letter, Paul starts answering the problem even before he defines it in 15:12.<sup>7</sup> What Paul is saying now is no different than what he shared with the Corinthians previously. The gospel still works today. This is certainly not the first time the Corinthians have heard this truth, rather Paul is reminding them of something they have forgotten.<sup>8</sup> Paul uses this phrase when he wants to share something important (cf. 12:3).<sup>9</sup> It is as though a father is sitting down with his son and saying, “Now I want to go over your responsibilities around the house *one more time*...”<sup>10</sup> I can relate to this, as I am sure you can as well. The bulk of our faith is review. As Christians what we really need is to be reminded of what we already know.<sup>11</sup> We need to preach the gospel to ourselves every day.<sup>12</sup> When we do this, we experience a new surge of life and love for Christ.

Paul wants to remind his readers of what the gospel is. The term “gospel” means “good news.” This is the message that Paul preached to the Corinthians for the eighteen months he served as their pastor.<sup>13</sup> Paul is writing with the confidence that the Corinthians are bona fide believers.<sup>14</sup> *What goes down must come up.*

- Paul states that they have “received”<sup>15</sup> the gospel.<sup>16</sup> The verb “received” speaks of a response in the past. Salvation is the miracle of a moment. If the gospel worked for you when you believed in Christ and it’s not working for you now, you changed, not the gospel.
- Paul states that the Corinthians “stand” on the gospel. The verb “stand” indicates *present* stability on the basis of past action.<sup>17</sup> Archimedes, a 2<sup>nd</sup> century Greek scientist and mathematician, once said, “Give me a place to stand and I can move the world.” The gospel gives us a place to stand. Jesus Christ is our stability and security.
- Paul affirms that the Corinthians are “saved” by the gospel he preached. To be “saved” means “to be delivered or rescued.” The words “are saved” should be translated “are being saved” to reflect the present tense verb.<sup>18</sup> There are three phases to salvation: past, present, and future. Having received the gospel at a point in the past, God begins to work on us so that we become more like Him.<sup>19</sup> If we hold fast the gospel we initially received we will experience spiritual health. The phrase “unless you believed in vain” is referring to the hopelessness of our faith apart from Christ’s resurrection (cf. 15:14, 17).<sup>20</sup>

Paul has great confidence in this gospel message because Christ’s death and resurrection is prophetically and historically verifiable. In 15:3-5, Paul is going to clearly and succinctly share the core elements of the gospel.<sup>21</sup> He writes, **“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.”** An important phrase immediately jumps out because it is repeated in 15:3-4: “according to the Scriptures.”<sup>22</sup> In the Old Testament, God predicted that Christ would die and rise again. One of the strongest arguments that Jesus is the Christ is how He fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. In 15:3, Paul states that he delivered to the Corinthians the gospel he had received from other apostles. This gospel was “of first importance” and foundational to everything else in the Christian life. Underline that phrase “of first importance” in your Bible. We can discuss and debate the Charismatic gifts of 1 Cor 12-14 and other non-essential issues, but the gospel is “of first importance.” It is a non-negotiable. The reason for this is the gospel did not originate from Paul or any other man; rather it was received from God and then delivered to people. It is God’s gospel, not ours. No one would have ever devised a plan of salvation like this one, for mankind always tries to obtain salvation the old-fashioned way—“to earn it.” But the good news of the Christian gospel is that salvation is a free gift—costly to Christ but free to us.<sup>23</sup> Here are the facts of the gospel.

**Fact 1: “Christ died for our sins.”** There are three important elements to the first fact of the gospel. *First, Jesus Christ.* Say that powerful name out loud a few times. The gospel centers on Jesus Christ, not Buddha, Mohammed, not even God. You believe in God? Cute! But God wants to know: what are you going to do with My Son, Jesus Christ? Responses such as: “I go to church every week and I’m a good father or mother” have nothing to do with the gospel. The gospel centers on Jesus Christ. *Second, Jesus Christ died.* One quarter of the gospel accounts focus on the death of Christ. Plenty of other information was left out so that we would grasp the death of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the issue is what happened on the cross and why did it happen? *Third, Jesus Christ died for our sins.*<sup>24</sup> Jesus did not die as a good example; He did not die because He was a nice martyr; Jesus Christ died for our sins. Sin is a concept one doesn’t hear a lot in our culture today. We hear about illnesses, addictions, and disorders, but we don’t hear much about sin. Yet, the truth is: Jesus Christ died on the cross for the sins of every man, woman, and child that has ever lived. Sin is the reason Jesus went to the cross.

Christ had to die because you and I were in trouble with God. What puts us in trouble with God is our sin.<sup>25</sup> Just so that there is no doubt, let me clarify what sin is: Sin is anything contrary to the character and commandments of God. To boil down this definition even further, sin is merely leaving God out and failing to worship Him properly. If you have ever done this, you've qualified yourself to be a first-degree sinner. The only reason God made you was to leave Him in. He created you to have fellowship with Himself. But you and I have continually rejected His affections.

As a result, Paul and the rest of the biblical writers teach that Jesus Christ died for our sins.<sup>26</sup> The word "for" means "in the place of, because of." This is substitution. A substitute is a person who takes the place of another. We should have died for our sins but Jesus died in our place. Jesus took your place that you might have His place. He took your hell that you might have His heaven. That is His substitutionary death. It is the heart of the gospel. Jesus' life does not save us. His teaching does not save us. He saves us by His death on the cross. There is no other way to get rid of our sins. The good news of the gospel is that when Christ died for our sins, He died for our past, present, and future sins. He covered all of our sins for all time. Are you having trouble forgiving yourself for sins you have committed? Remember, Christ's death was sufficient for your sins. His death satisfied God's wrath against sin.<sup>27</sup>

**Fact 2: "Christ was buried."** Christ's death was not an accident that left Him lying for a while along some deserted roadway. He did not endure His agony away from the notice of the crowd; rather, His death was the center of the city's attention. Furthermore, as the center of the city's attention, the scene was one of deliberate execution. This was a public execution by soldiers whose own lives depended upon their ability to carry out the death sentence. There were no heroic efforts to save His life. No emergency unit was called to rush His body to a trauma center where it could be placed on life support systems until vital signs returned. The evidence states that Christ actually died and spent three days in a tomb. His death was confirmed by His executioners, who didn't take any chances but plunged a spear into His side. Then He was carried away, wrapped according to the embalming custom of the day, and placed in a tomb, sealed by a heavy rock. The emperor's seal was placed on the tomb to warn grave robbers, and a guard was posted to make sure that no one brash enough to risk his life to steal a dead body would be able to do it. All of this is a reminder to us that what happened three days later was not just a physical resuscitation. Christ didn't rally from a nonfatal injury. He was not buried alive. He died!<sup>28</sup> *What goes down must come up.*

**Fact 3: "Christ was raised."**<sup>29</sup> Jesus Christ arose! Buddha has died. Mohammed has never arisen from the dead. What makes Christianity distinct and true is that the Messiah of Christianity is no longer in the grave...His bones are nowhere to be found...He is alive! The firm foundation of the Christian faith is an empty tomb. Peter Larson said, "The life of Jesus is bracketed by two impossibilities: a virgin's womb and an empty tomb. Jesus entered our world through a door marked 'No Entrance' and left through a door marked 'No Exit.'"<sup>30</sup>

When you buy something at a store, the clerk accepts your money and gives you a receipt confirming that the bill was paid in full. If there is ever a dispute about whether the payment was made, all you have to do is produce your receipt. When Jesus cried, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), He uttered the Greek word *tetelestai*, which means, "Paid in full." The payment for sin that God demanded has been paid, and the empty tomb is proof that the payment was received and the debt satisfied. The resurrection is our "receipt" from God the Father that He accepted His Son's payment for sin on the cross.<sup>31</sup>

**Fact 4: "Christ was seen."** Paul notes that Jesus appeared to Peter and the apostles. This is evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. It is amazing that the first person, after all of the women at the tomb, the resurrected Christ appears to is the very one who had denied Him three times. This ought to encourage you. God is a God of restoration. He has forgiven you for all of your sins—past, present, and future. All that He wants is for you to run to Him like Peter did (Luke 24:12).

Now that we have looked at the facts of faith, can I ask you a question? Do you know the gospel better than you know sports statistics, movie lines, and song lyrics? Could you preach the gospel message in your sleep? Are you that comfortable presenting the facts of faith? If not, you should be. There is no more important message in this world.

The great Emperor Napoleon had three commands he gave his messengers as they conveyed his messages to various sections of his army. Those three commands were, “Be clear! Be clear! Be clear!” Those who are entrusted with proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ must also be clear.<sup>32</sup> So let me be clear right now: You have sinned against a holy and righteous God (Rom 3:23). The penalty for your sin is eternal separation from Him (Rom 6:23). Yet, God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for your sins (Rom 5:8). He then demonstrated that He was God by rising from the dead (Rom 1:3-4). Today, He asks you to trust in His person and work (Rom 3:21-26; John 3:16).

You know, a preacher can stand up every Sunday and tell the truth and never preach the gospel. For example, I can say, “Diphtheria is a bad disease.” Now that is the truth, but that isn’t good news. But if I say, “Here is a medicine that can prevent diphtheria or cure diphtheria,” that’s the good news. And that’s the gospel. Will you believe the good news about the person and work of Jesus Christ today? Will you place your faith in Him as your Savior?

In 15:6-8, Paul moves from the message of the gospel to a strong argument for the resurrection of Christ—historically verifiable witnesses. He records, “**After that** [His resurrection] **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;<sup>33</sup> and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.**” Paul’s main argument is that there were still eyewitnesses to the resurrection living at the time he was writing this first letter to the Corinthians. Paul is inviting people to check out the reality of the resurrection for themselves.<sup>34</sup> He is saying, “There are nearly five hundred people who, some twenty years ago, saw Jesus after His resurrection. Ask one of them.” This is very convincing proof of the resurrection, because Paul would never have challenged people like this in a public letter that was going to be circulated if these eyewitnesses had not in reality seen the resurrected Christ. Paul was convinced that his witnesses would confirm the facts. While it might not be impossible for a small group of twelve to have a vision or even an optical illusion of a risen Jesus, this would be impossible with as large a group as five hundred.

Paul gives another convincing proof: Jesus also appeared to James. James is Jesus’ half-brother, who did not believe in Him until after the resurrection.<sup>35</sup> He grew up in the same home with Jesus, but He rejected Him until after Jesus rose from the dead. After His encounter with the resurrected Christ, James became the leader of the Jerusalem church.<sup>36</sup> What another great reminder that God is a God of grace. If you have placed your faith in Christ, *what goes down must come up.*

The people that Paul mentions were living too close to the time of Christ’s resurrection to effectively deny it. They simply could not explain away this great historical event anymore than a person today can effectively deny the reality of the Holocaust. There are people today who try to deny the Holocaust, but they don’t get very far because there are still too many survivors of the Nazi concentration camps. In 1981, 10,000 of these survivors held a four-day gathering in Jerusalem. In an interview, Ernest Michael, a survivor of the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps, held up his hands and said, “These hands have carried off (for burial) more corpses than I care to remember. And some say that the Holocaust never happened! We know; we were there!”<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the Corinthians to whom Paul wrote were living far closer to the time of Christ’s resurrection than the people who met in Jerusalem in 1981 were to the Holocaust they survived. You and I, of course, are almost 2,000 years away from the resurrection. We can’t talk to eyewitnesses like the people to whom Paul originally wrote his letter. Nevertheless, we have the testimony of Scripture and plenty of changed lives.

Since this is the resurrection chapter, it is appropriate to touch quickly upon Paul's notion of death. In 15:6, Paul states that some of the believers who witnessed Jesus "have fallen asleep." The verb translated "sleep" (*koimao*) is often used in the Bible as a euphemism for death when speaking of believers. This metaphorical usage by its very nature emphasizes the hope of resurrection: Believers will one day "wake up" out of death.<sup>38</sup> Unbelievers "die"; believers "fall asleep."<sup>39</sup> Death: separation. A Christian does not die, we fall asleep, and we turn over from one world to another world. We are alive! An unbeliever dies because he is going to where God does not exist. Death is not having the life of God in you.

In 15:8, Paul also refers to himself as "one untimely born." The Greek term here is the word for a miscarriage or an abortion.<sup>40</sup> Paul means that spiritually speaking he was like an aborted fetus or a stillborn child. He is referring to his state of wretchedness as an unbeliever and persecutor of the church. Before his call and conversion, Paul was spiritually dead but he was miraculously given life through God's grace. This image fits the theme running through the chapter of God's power giving life to the dead.<sup>41</sup> Like Paul, though, when you believe in Christ *what goes down must come up*.

[Paul has hammered home his point that the gospel is trustworthy. Now he will demonstrate that...]

**2. The gospel is life-changing (15:9-11).** Paul explains that the proof of the gospel is its inherent power to change lives. He will demonstrate this by sharing three characteristics. *First, the gospel leads to the recognition of sin.* In 15:9, Paul writes, **"For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."** All of the others to whom Christ appeared were believers, whereas Paul was a violent hateful unbeliever. He chased down the early Christians and sought to have them incarcerated or even killed.<sup>42</sup> As a result, Paul never ceased to be amazed that, of all people, Christ would have appeared to him.<sup>43</sup> I don't think a dream about Jesus could ever have produced the kind of humble assessment of himself that Paul came to. It took a direct encounter with the living Lord, the very person he had rejected, to help him see his sorry state. Here, Paul called himself "the least of the apostles." Elsewhere he labeled himself "the foremost" of sinners (1 Tim 1:15) and "the very least"<sup>44</sup> of all the saints" (Eph 3:8). Paul understood that apart from Christ, he was nothing. Like Paul, do you see and feel your own sin? Do you grieve over your sin? Are you more concerned about working on your sin instead of other's sin? It is so easy to be consumed with the sin of others (e.g., spouse, children, boss, neighbors), yet a mark of godliness is a concern with your own sin.

*Second, the gospel results in a total transformation of character.* In 15:10a, Paul writes, **"But by the grace<sup>45</sup> of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain."** Paul may have been a mess when Jesus found him, but Christ didn't leave him that way. Because of God's mercy and grace Paul became a great missionary, preacher, and theologian. It is only the one who has experienced the power of the resurrection in his life who can experience such a thorough transformation in character and then give the credit to God.

I love the phrase, "I am what I am." I grew up watching Popeye, who used a similar phrase, "I yam what I yam." When Popeye eats his spinach, he becomes strong. When you and I eat up grace, we become strong. Popeye had to take his spinach. He had to open the can, gobble it down, and do his thing! Similarly, you and I must do the very same thing. We need to gobble up grace and let God empower us to accomplish His work in and through us.

*Lastly, the gospel produces a redirection of one's entire life.* In 15:10b-11, Paul writes, **"...but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed."** In response to God's grace, Paul worked harder than everyone else. Paul does not believe, however, that he is repaying the divine grace shown to him with hard work. Rather, Paul is like a child who joyfully gives his mom a birthday present after having spent the parents' own money to buy it.<sup>46</sup>

All of Paul's effort and energy was bound up in God's grace. In the same way, we are saved by grace and we minister by grace.<sup>47</sup> "Grace" is mentioned three times in 15:10. In a general sense, the word "grace" means "an undeserved expression of kindness." Grace therefore is in the expression of the kindness of God that is given to those who do not deserve it. That involves not only the initial grace of salvation but every other expression of undeserved help we ever received from the Lord.<sup>48</sup> Don't let this point escape you.

In 15:11, Paul now reprises what he wrote in 15:1. "We preach" includes all of the apostles, and the present tense conveys that it continues to be their message. Christ's resurrection is the common denominator on which all are in accord. It is the nonnegotiable and cannot be jettisoned without gutting the Christian faith.<sup>49</sup> *What comes down must go up.*

This past month, I went to the dentist because I needed to have a wisdom tooth either pulled or filled. Since I am a manly man, I opted to have it extracted. However, when I was told that it would cost \$200, I decided to renounce my manliness and have my tooth filled. In the weeks that followed, I experienced discomfort and sharp pains when water ran over the tooth or I chewed on the left side of my mouth. I had a cavity in this wisdom tooth that went all the way through the entire tooth! So I finally decided I would pay the \$200 and get this tooth extracted. I knew this tooth would not get any better, and since I did not want to live in long-term pain, Lori set up an appointment for me. Fortunately, the oral surgeons that worked on my tooth were two gentlemen fresh out of the Army. They were gracious enough to not bill my procedure as an operation. I ended up being able to walk out of the dental office without my cavity-consumed wisdom tooth. It dawned on me that what went in needed to come out. I could not just have this tooth filled, I needed an extraction.

Similarly, your physical body that God brought into this world needs to be taken out of this world. *What comes down must go up.* Jesus Christ died, was buried, arose, and was seen. Since Jesus Christ came down, He must go back up. The same is true for every believer in Christ. Your body awaits physical resurrection. One day you will be given a glorified body, you will stand before Jesus Christ, and you will be made like Him (1 John 3:2). In the meanwhile, God asks you and me to live in the light of that day.

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**Scripture Reference**

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Psalm 16:8-11; 110:1

Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15

Luke 24:13-35

John 11:25-27; 20:24-29

Acts 1:3; 2:27-31; 17:30-32

Revelation 1:11-20

**Study Questions**

1. What is the gospel message (15:1-4)? Can I share with another person how he or she can have a relationship with God? Have I committed the gospel to memory? If so, what Bible verses and illustrations do I use in my gospel presentation?
2. Am I absolutely certain that I am a Christian? What is my confidence based upon? Do I have assurance that if I were to die today that I would go to heaven? Do I believe other people can have the same assurance that I do? Why or why not? Read John 5:25; 2 Tim 1:12; and 1 John 5:9-13.
3. How do I view my sin (15:9)? Like the apostle Paul, do I see my sin for what it really is?
4. Author Harry Blamires once wrote, "In the Christian life, nothing, nothing at all, can be purchased at the do-it-yourself shop." How does this comment mesh with Paul's understanding of God's grace (15:10-12)? Am I wholly dependent upon God's grace to accomplish His work in and through me?
5. Do I work hard for the Lord (15:10)? What would those who know me say? How can I labor more efficiently for Christ? Where can I serve Him more effectively?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 295 and David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 679.

<sup>2</sup> Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians: New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 315.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 718.

<sup>4</sup> Some people in Corinth did not believe in the resurrection of the body but simply in the resurrection of spirit (15:12). Corinth was in Greece and the church in Corinth was being influenced by Greek thought. The Greeks taught dualism, or a strict separation of spirit and matter. To the Greeks, spirit was good, but matter, including the human body, was evil. The Greeks could think great thoughts and live wicked lives because they believed the material side of life was meaningless. In fact, Greek culture believed that the body was a prison for the soul. Death of the body freed the soul from its bodily prison. Bodily resurrection was repugnant to the Greek mind. This is why when Paul came to the great intellectual center of Athens and preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead as historic reality they sneered at him (Acts 17). The thought of a dead body being raised to life was a crazy idea. Furthermore, some schools of philosophy in Greece denied any kind of afterlife at all. All of these ancient perspectives are also very modern. We hear our contemporaries in the world talk these same ways about the possibility of life after death.

<sup>5</sup> Paul often uses the word “brethren” to denote a new aspect of his topic or a change of subject (1 Cor 1:10; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 8:12; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6, 20, 26; 15:1, 58; 16:12, 15). See Dr. Bob Utley, “1-2 Corinthians”:

<http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/pdf/VOL06.pdf>, 177.

<sup>6</sup> The “if” (*ei*) in 1 Cor 15:2 is a first class condition in the Greek which is best translated as “since.” The verb *eikatechete* (“hold fast”) is in the indicative mood which means a statement of fact: “if and it is true.” In this context, then the meaning is: “since you hold fast to the gospel of salvation you are indeed saved.” This is not to say that one is not saved if one does not hold fast to the faith. That conclusion is not supported here or anywhere else in Scripture. Paul is thus observing that the brethren in Corinth are indeed saved, the evidence of which is confirmed by their holding fast to their faith in Christ as Savior. If holding fast to ones faith in Christ were a requirement of receiving eternal life then the third class condition should have been chosen by God the Holy Spirit for Paul to use: *ean* + subjunctive (conditional) mood + future tense. One is saved if one (subjunctive-conditional) continues in the faith.

<sup>7</sup> Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians” in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> The verb *gnorizo* (“make known”) is capable of several other translations: “make clear” (NET); “remind” (ESV; NRSV; NIV; NLT); “clarify” (HSB); and “declare” (NKJV).

<sup>9</sup> Some have suggested that the phrase “I make known to you” might be a gentle rebuke, implying that the Corinthians do not properly understand the gospel even though they have “received” it from him. See Peter Naylor, *1 Corinthians* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2004):

[http://www.rheader.com/ebook\\_excerpt/c5/AStCommemoCorint.html](http://www.rheader.com/ebook_excerpt/c5/AStCommemoCorint.html).

<sup>10</sup> Michael P. Andrus, “What Difference Does It Make?” (1 Cor 15:1-11): unpublished sermon.

<sup>11</sup> Peter understood the importance of reminding his readers. In 2 Pet 1:12-13, he writes, “Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder” (italics mine).

<sup>12</sup> Jerry Bridges has written on this subject in various books such as: *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994) and *The Gospel for Real Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Paul knew that his message had brought nothing but good as he makes plain by the repetition of “gospel” both as noun and verb (“preached”). “Gospel” (*euaggelion*) means “good message,” this part of the verse reading almost literally: “the good message with which I good-messaged you.”

<sup>14</sup> The aorist tense “received”; the perfect tense “in which you stand”; and the first class conditional sentence “if [since] you hold fast.”

<sup>15</sup> The term “received” (*paralambano*) is used of “passed on traditions” (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3; Mark 7:4; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 4:10; 2 Thess 3:6).

<sup>16</sup> John uses the term “receive” (*lambano*) of the gospel when he writes, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). The verb “received” is synonymous with the verb “believe” (*pisteuo*).

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<sup>17</sup> The verb “stand” is in the perfect tense, which refers to an act that happened in the past that has abiding results.

<sup>18</sup> See NET, ESV, NRSV. Verbrugge notes, “Paul uses *sozo* twenty-nine times in his letters and with a variety of nuances. He has a rich and full concept of the doctrine of salvation. In Romans 8:24, Paul uses the Greek aorist (simple past) tense to indicate that when people believed in Jesus, they ‘were saved.’ In Ephesians 2:5, 8, he uses the Greek perfect tense: ‘by grace you have been saved.’ This particular tense in the Greek language emphasizes that this refers to a past action with an ongoing effect. In Romans 5:9-10, Paul uses the future tense twice to say that believers ‘shall ... be saved from God’s wrath through [Christ].’ And here in 1 Corinthians 15:2, Paul uses the present tense: by the gospel believers ‘are [being] saved.’ While we tend to think of salvation as a past event (‘when were you saved?’ we ask), salvation is for Paul also a present reality and a future hope. Our salvation will not be complete until we have passed through the judgment day. Interestingly, the same three foci occur in Paul with the noun *soteria* (‘salvation,’ cf. Eph 1:13, past; Php 2:12, present; Ro 13:11, future).” Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians.”

<sup>19</sup> See 2 Cor 3:18.

<sup>20</sup> Although the Greek words for “vain,” “empty,” and “worthless” are different in these three verses (15:2, *eike*; 15:14, *kene*; 15:17, *mataia*), Paul is using them as functional synonyms.

<sup>21</sup> Paul also discloses the simple gospel in his preaching and writing in Acts 16:30-31; Rom 3:24-25; 6:23; 1 Cor 1:23; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 2:16; 3:26; Eph 1:7; 2:8-9; 1 Tim 1:14; Titus 2:14; 3:5.

<sup>22</sup> Verbrugge astutely writes, “What passages might Paul have in mind as predictions of the suffering and death of Jesus? The NT itself gives us a clue—passages such as Psalms 22:1, 18; 69:4; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 11:13; 12:10; 13:7 (see Mt 16:31; 27:9-10, 35, 46; Mk 14:27; 15:34; Lk 22:37; Jn 15:25; 19:24, 37; Ac 8:32-33; 1Pe 2:24-25). And what passages might he have in mind as prophesying the resurrection of Jesus? Surely Psalm 16 and the book of Jonah would be two prime passages, since the NT explicitly refers to these (see Mt 12:40; Ac 2:25-28, 31; 13:55). With respect to ‘on the third day’ (v.4), we might cite Hosea 6:2, though this passage is not cited in the NT.” Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians.” See Kenneth O. Gangel, “According to the Scriptures,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 (1968): 123-128 and Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 685.

<sup>23</sup> Andrus, “What Difference Does It Make?”

<sup>24</sup> Christ’s atoning death is a central tenet of the Christian faith (Rom 5:6, 8; 8:32; 1 Cor 8:11; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Eph 5:2; Titus 2:14; cf. Gal 1:4). Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 684.

<sup>25</sup> See Isa 59:2; Rom 3:23; 6:23.

<sup>26</sup> The Greek word *huper* + a genitive (“for our sins”) is common, often implying substitution. E.g., 1 Cor 1:13; 11:24; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:19-20; John 6:51; 10:11, 15; 11:50-51; 15:13; 18:14; Rom 5:6, 8; 8:32; 14:15; 2 Cor 5:14-15, 21; Gal 1:4; 2:20; 3:13; Eph 5:2, 25; 1 Thess 5:10; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14; Heb 2:9; 5:1; 10:12; 1 Pet 2:21; 3:18; 1 John 3:16.

<sup>27</sup> See the doctrine of propitiation in Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10. Propitiation means that God’s righteous wrath against sin was satisfied and turned away by the death of Jesus Christ.

<sup>28</sup> M.R. DeHaan II, “The Resurrection of Christ: 1 Corinthians 15,” *Radio Bible Class Discovery Series* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, 1993), 5-6.

<sup>29</sup> The statement that Christ “was raised” (*egeertai*, perfect passive from *egeiro*) occurs in this chapter seven times and always with reference to Jesus (1 Cor 15:4, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20). With rare exceptions (Matt 11:11; Mark 6:14; 2 Tim 2:8), the expression occurs nowhere else in the NT. The grammar teaches that the living Christ remains in a state of “risen-ness”; the miracle within the tomb was not, and cannot be, reversed. The truth is driven home that the one whom God raised is by definition the risen Savior (cf. John 11:25), as a reminder to the Corinthians that if they do not believe in the historic resurrection, they have neither Jesus nor salvation. See Naylor, *1 Corinthians*.

<sup>30</sup> Preaching Today citation: Peter Larson, Prism (Jan/Feb 2001); submitted by Bill White, Paramount, CA.

<sup>31</sup> Haddon Robinson, “Empty Proof,” *Our Daily Bread* (8/8/1997): <http://www.rbc.org/odb/odb-08-08-97.shtml>; Tony Evans, *Who is This King of Glory?* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 292.

<sup>32</sup> Larry Moyer, *Free and Clear* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 17.

<sup>33</sup> The apostles refers to a larger group going beyond the Twelve (Acts 1:6-11).

<sup>34</sup> See Naylor, *1 Corinthians*.

<sup>35</sup> See Mark 3:21; John 7:5. All of Jesus’ family were present in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14). This James was identified as the Lord’s half-brother (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3) in order to differentiate him from James the apostle, a part of the inner circle, who was killed very early (Acts 12). Utley, “1-2 Corinthians,” 180.

<sup>36</sup> Acts 15:13-21; cf. Gal 1:19; Jas 1:1.

<sup>37</sup> Herb Vander Lugt, “Is There Life After Death?” *Radio Bible Class Discovery Series* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, 1993), 9-10.

<sup>38</sup> See NET Study Notes.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 15:18, 20; 11:30.

<sup>40</sup> The term *ektroma* (“untimely born”) is only used three times in the Greek OT for a still born child (Num 12:12; Job 3:16; Eccl 6:3). Paul is likely suggesting he was spiritually dead when Jesus called him.

<sup>41</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 693.

<sup>42</sup> See Acts 9:1-5; 22:7-8; 26:14-15; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6.

<sup>43</sup> Jesus appeared to Paul a year or two after His ascension.

<sup>44</sup> The word “least” (*elachistoteros*) is a comparative piled up on top of a superlative, thereby suggested deep self-abasement.

<sup>45</sup> Thistleton writes, “We come to the heart of Paul’s point. Undeserved, unmerited ‘grace’ (*charis*) which springs from the free, sovereign love of God alone and becomes operative in human life not only determines Paul’s life and apostolic vocation but also characterizes all Christian experience, not least the promise of resurrection and the reality of the activity of Christ as Lord.” Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1211.

<sup>46</sup> Archibald Robertson, and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*: International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), 342.

<sup>47</sup> Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians.”

<sup>48</sup> DeHaan II, “The Resurrection of Christ: 1 Corinthians 15,” 14.

<sup>49</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 695.