

# I WANT TO REMIND YOU OF THE GOSPEL

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Key Verse 15:1

**“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.”**

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 is a reminder of what the gospel is, what it does and what our response should be. We need reminders. When I was a child, my mother would ask me, “Why must I constantly remind you about this or that?” She would ask with varying levels of frustration, depending on whether it was the third time or the twenty-fifth time she told me something. Now that I am a parent I understand my mother. Looking back, she did not remind me of trivial matters. But she constantly reminded me about things that were important. The greater the importance, the more often she reminded me. She wanted to imprint these important things onto my heart and mind.

Not only children but we all need reminders on important matters. In your day-to-day living, what is important to you? There is nothing more important than the gospel. Not only twenty-five times but we need to be constantly reminded of the gospel. As children are easily distracted, so we, too, can be distracted by social media, our daily problems and life agonies and lose sight of the gospel. Only the gospel has power to fully address our life challenges and to give life to our soul. May the Holy Spirit may help us to deeply receive the gospel and stand our life on it.

## **First, take your stand on the gospel (1-2)**

Let us read verse 1. **“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.”** 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 does not teach the Corinthians something new. According to verse 1, Paul wanted to declare the gospel which he had previously preached to them. These Corinthian Christians knew the gospel. In fact, they probably knew it very well. Paul had spent a year and a half teaching them God’s word.

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Yet as time passed, opposition to the gospel intensified. Bickering about church leadership and ministry direction damaged relationships. Cliques formed around spiritual gifts, social status and ethnic backgrounds which drove wedges between people. Pride settled in people's hearts so that it was more important to be right than to love. Their ideas and actions regarding sex and marriage were often self-destructive. The latest ideas, memes and news seemed a little more interesting than the simple old gospel. Paul addressed all these things and more. But Paul also knew that all of those problems could only be solved in the gospel. Those seemingly irreparably broken relationships could be restored if people newly received the gospel, repented and forgave one another. Those self-destructive sins could be overcome if people newly received the gospel and allowed its power to work in their lives. All of the human differences that caused division could melt away if people would only receive the gospel and lay down all of their sins and pride at the cross.

This is why Paul reminded them of the gospel. Of course, the Corinthian Christians still believed the gospel. But somehow, its relevance and power in their daily, practical life seemed much more remote than it once had been to them. The gospel had not changed but the Corinthians had changed. They needed a refresher. They needed to be reminded.

Look at verse 1 again. **“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.”** The gospel had not gone on deaf ears. They received it. Many believed and were baptized after they heard the gospel.

The Corinthians had also taken their stand on the gospel. Taking a stand requires courage, commitment and willingness to suffer. In the darkest hours of World War II, England alone remained free from Hitler's grip in Europe. A Nazi invasion seemed imminent. News of lost battles streamed in. People were afraid. Should they continue fighting or compromise? At that pivotal moment, the new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill took a stand against the Nazis. He implored his people to stand for freedom from tyrants and to stand for people everywhere in the world, including the United States. Churchill exhorted his people to defend Christian civilization from evil, saying, “we shall never surrender.” Their stand

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saved Europe. That time might have been Britain's finest hour. But they suffered for their stand. Their soldiers were killed. Cities were severely bombed. Countless children evacuated to the countryside, never saw their parents again because they had been killed in those bombings.

The Corinthians had stood on the gospel like this. Theirs was no superficial stand. The gospel had become everything to them. Jewish thugs went from city to city, harassing and beating up believers in Jesus. Local governments did nothing to protect them. They were ostracized by friends and family. Even Paul, a man who once courageously went right back into a city where he had been stoned, was afraid while in Corinth. Such was the situation of the believers. Yet they would not back down in the face of opposition and evil. They staked their present and their futures on the gospel.

We live in the freest and supposedly most broad-minded country on earth. Nevertheless, taking a stand on the gospel is hard. Christians are pressured to be quiet or to compromise. Some colleges have demanded that Christian clubs allow non-Christians to hold leadership positions or risk being kicked off the campus. Christians who disagree with shifting popular opinion on morality, identity and marriage are mocked and scorned. Taking a stand on the gospel risks alienation from family, friends, neighbors and colleagues. I was the first Christian in my family. That stand caused a lot of conflict to the point where my dad didn't come to my wedding. Many in this room experienced similar conflict. But the gospel is worth far more than the momentary pain. The gospel is God's power that brings salvation to everyone who believes. The gospel brings healing, freedom, forgiveness and truth. May the Holy Spirit help us to courageously take our stand on the gospel.

Let's read verse 2. **“By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise you have believed in vain.”** The gospel did not merely make them morally better. The gospel saved them. To be saved implies that they had once been in danger. Indeed, prior to receiving the gospel, they were in danger of squandering their lives on earth. Even worse, they were in danger of hell and eternal destruction. But by holding firmly to the gospel, they were saved and so are we.

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## Second, the gospel (3-4)

Let's read verses 3-4. **“For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures....”** The gospel is Jesus' death, burial and resurrection from the dead.

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. The other day over lunch, my friend asked me, “Why did Jesus have to die for our sins?” It was a good question. When we sin, two things happen: 1) we violate a law and 2) we violate a person. The two go together. The first man and woman broke God's law when they ate fruit from the tree about which God had commanded them not to eat. Their sin broke their relationship with each other. Their sin also broke their trust-based relationship with God. As a result, God sentenced them to death and banished them from his presence.

We see that pattern of sin and its results being played out every day. We tend to trivialize and rationalize our own sin. We shift blame, make excuses or try to forget about our sin. We might feel a little better in the moment. But the penalty for our sin remains and God holds us accountable for all of our sins. Our sin brings loss upon ourselves, damage to our relationships with people and most of all, breaks our relationship with God.

To effectively deal with sin thus requires both justice and forgiveness. Justice is the punishment required to pay for sin. Forgiveness is releasing a person from any more punishment. The cost of justice and forgiveness of our sin is very high. Romans 6:23a says, **“For the wages of sin is death....”** This death is more than physical. There is also spiritual death, during which a person will be fully conscious and experience eternal suffering, away from God's presence. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 says, **“They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”**

What, then, can be done when our violation is against God's law and the person we have violated is Almighty Holy God? In fact, we can do nothing but God did something. God provided a way for perfect justice and perfect

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forgiveness. That way is in the person of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus do both justice and forgiveness meet. It happened when Jesus died on the cross for our sins according to the Scriptures. Suffering and death are what we justly deserve for our sins. But God fulfilled all justice by putting that suffering and death on Jesus. At that moment, God also forgave us by releasing us from what our sins deserve. This is God's one-sided grace for each of us. God loved each of us so much that he gave his Son Jesus to suffer and die in our place. Isaiah 53:5 says, **"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."** Because Jesus died for our sins, we have forgiveness and peace with God.

Let's read verse 4. **"... that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."** Jesus' burial is mentioned to emphasize that he really died. Last night, through Sh. Mike's wonderful message and the skit, we heard how Jesus died and was laid in a tomb. That happened on a Friday.

Now fast forward to Sunday. It was early morning for the sun had not yet risen. It might have been chilly on that early Spring day. Jesus' death was still raw in the minds of those who saw it. Some women, close followers of Jesus, went to the tomb. They went there to grieve and to anoint Jesus' cold, lifeless body with spices.

When they arrived, Jesus' body was not there. The women were expecting to find one dead body but they were met by two live angels. Naturally they were frightened and fell to the ground. The angels said in Luke 24:5b-6a, **"Why do you look for living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!"** Jesus was no longer dead and buried. Jesus had risen from the dead!

The angels' message started a firestorm. The women went and told the disciples. A few of the disciples rushed out and saw the empty tomb. Then the Risen Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, several times to Peter, to Thomas, and to the other eleven disciples. He appeared to a disciple named Cleopas and his traveling companion. Jesus cooked for the disciples. Jesus ate with the disciples. News spread quickly. Jesus was very much physically alive. The funeral was over.

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Life was restored. A new era for the women, the disciples and all mankind had begun.

Jesus was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures. Jesus was not abandoned after dying on the cross. Psalm 16:9-11a speak of Jesus. **“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body will also rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the paths of life....”** Sin and death could not keep Jesus in the grave. Death had no hold on him. And if death had no hold on him, then our sin no longer required anymore payment. Isaiah 53:11 says, **“After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”**

The resurrected Jesus is now in heaven. Psalm 110:1 says, **“The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”** He is victorious over death. He is ruling over all things with his Father. One day will come again and all his enemies will be put under his feet.

There is more. Jesus’ resurrection means that we too shall be raised from the dead. Death has been the most powerful enemy of all mankind. No one goes through life without attending at least one funeral - his own. Death came to all of us through one man, Adam. But resurrection comes to all of us also through one man, Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:22 says, **“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”** Death is not the end. Because Jesus lives, we, too, shall live. We may experience physical death but we shall be raised back to life. We will not be raised to return to a fallen world. We will have eternal life in God’s presence. This is the only living hope for mankind. 1 Peter 1:3,4 say, **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you.”**

Those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be raised with a new body. We do not know exactly what this new body will be like. There

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is no analogy to it on earth. But we know well that our present body and heart are marred by sin, experience decay and are greatly limited. For example, I might be the poster child for bad dancers. I lack the coordination and rhythm that dancing requires and it is getting worse with age. Some years ago, I bought ballroom dancing lessons for my wife and me. It was supposed to be a time of doing something nice together. Well, between stepping on my wife's toes with my two left feet and my prideful insistence that I knew what I was doing when I obviously did not, those dancing lessons usually resulted in relationship tension. I didn't learn how to dance but I did learn never to buy dancing lessons again. However, with my resurrection body, I will be a new man. I will dance better than Fred Astaire or Justin Timberlake. With my resurrection body that will be free from sin and pride, I'll be dancing with the stars in heaven for Jesus Christ.

The resurrection is not really about dancing. But Jesus' resurrection does mean we are promised everlasting life in heaven. We will experience this fully with new bodies and with new characters that are shaped by love, joy, and peace. We shall be forever in God's presence, never to be separated again. All this is possible because Jesus was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Jesus' resurrection also greatly impacts our daily life. But you will need to wait until tomorrow to hear Sh. Jason's homerun message about that.

## **Third, the witnesses (5-11)**

Jesus' resurrection was an incredible miracle. People are usually skeptical of miracles and the miracle of Jesus' resurrection was no exception. After all, people do not simply rise from the dead. Jesus' followers couldn't initially accept it. Jesus' enemies stridently attempted to disprove it. Haters Tweeted and Snapchat'd that Jesus' resurrection was "fake news". But the resurrection is not fake news. The resurrection is good news and it is true.

So in verses 5-8, we are introduced to more than five hundred fourteen people who saw the resurrected Jesus. If Jesus' resurrection was not factually true as a historical event, the gospel and Christianity would collapse like a house of

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cards. Death might be very difficult to accept but it is not difficult to believe. However, how can we believe the miracle of the resurrection?

This is why these resurrection eyewitnesses were so very important. They help us to believe the otherwise unbelievable. For 108 years, the Chicago Cubs had been known as “the lovable losers”. The Cubs were where “hope goes to die.” No one alive today witnessed the Cubs previous championship. Then on the morning of November 3, 2016, I woke up to a miracle. The Cubs had won the World Series. I was out of the country at the time so I had not watched it. It seemed unbelievable. But I believed because there were many witnesses who saw it happen. Even my son Daniel, who doesn’t really like sports, stayed up watching it and emailed me in the middle of the night.

The Corinthian Christians had not personally seen the resurrected Jesus. But there were many reliable, credible people who did. Cephas, the Twelve, more than five hundred brothers and sisters, James, and Paul himself all had seen and interacted with Jesus after he was raised. Most of them were still living at the time. Any doubts could be dispelled by these living witnesses.

The changed lives of these witnesses show further reveal the truthfulness of Jesus’ resurrection. Cephas or Peter, was one of Jesus’ disciples. But during Jesus’ trial, Peter denied Jesus three times because he was afraid. His fear and failure were too great for him to overcome. But the resurrected Jesus met with Peter in the presence of the other disciples. The resurrection revealed that Jesus was stronger than all of his enemies. The Risen Jesus also lovingly accepted Peter again. Peter’s fear and failure were replaced with courage and love. Then Peter very publicly proclaimed Jesus’ death and resurrection for the rest of his life.

Paul’s life was also evidence that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Look at verses 8-9. **“... and last of all he appeared to me also as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.”** Paul had been a ruthless persecutor of the church. He harmed and imprisoned many Christians. He was responsible for the death of Stephen. Jesus could have put an end to Paul’s madness by striking him dead. But Jesus had a different, more glorious and



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gracious plan. One day, while Paul was on his way to arrest more believers, the Risen Jesus stopped him and blinded him. Jesus changed Paul's life 180 degrees. He went from Jesus hater to Jesus follower only because of Jesus' grace.

Paul confessed as much in verse 10. **“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them - yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”** Paul knew well that he should never have been Jesus' apostle. However, Jesus' one-sided grace of forgiveness transformed him. Not only did he see the Risen Jesus, he also began to tell about the Risen Jesus. He gave all he had to make Christ known. Many of the New Testament churches, including the one in Corinth, were planted by Paul. It was not his effort but again, only God's grace. If there was any doubt that Jesus was alive, the Corinthians only had to look at Paul's life.

Like the Corinthians, I have not personally seen the resurrected Jesus. But there is a missionary couple here who told me all about him in word and deed. They didn't pretend to have all the answers for my issues. But they always reminded me of this gospel, prayed for me and urged me to claim this gospel by faith because they knew that Jesus had all the answers. Through their witness, I accepted the gospel as truth. This gospel resolved the heartache and shame I had from growing up in a home of divorce. This gospel brought reconciliation with my dad. This gospel has delivered me from fear and worry about being laid off. As one family here was a witness to me, so by God's grace, my wife and I are now witnesses of the Risen Christ. We find ways to tell students, friends, family about Jesus. I must often go overseas for work which is tough. But God wants me to witness there too as I am the only believer in a team of 40. Please pray for my family to tell others about our Risen Lord Jesus.

This morning we conclude with verse 11. **“Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.”** It does not matter much who first told us the gospel. What matters is that we believe the gospel. What did Paul remind the Corinthians of? What is the most important thing to be reminded of? It is the gospel. Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. This is the

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gospel. May the Holy Spirit help us to stand our life on the gospel of Jesus Christ.  
Amen.