

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

1 Corinthians 15:1-26 (ESV) ¹ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. ¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News of Jesus Christ, gives to us everything that we need for this life and for the life to come. *For God so loved the world that He gave his only son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, will not die but have everlasting life.* **Mark 16:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.* **John 10:9 (NLT2)** ⁹ *Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved.*

To live for Christ is to have the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, penetrate your soul, day after day, year after year. To use an analogy, we are pickled in the juice of the

Gospel, the truth of the Gospel, layer after layer until the Lord brings you home. To be pickled in the Gospel means you are marinated, preserved, kept, soaked, and ultimately cured. Your outer shell, your rind so to speak, must be softened by God so the Gospel, the Good news of Jesus will do its excellent work in your life ever-changing you layer by layer. When I speak to a person who is holding a painful grudge against another person and they have been holding onto this pain for over 70 years, I know the Gospel has more to penetrate into this person's life so they can be freed and healed. With every layer of being pickled in the Gospel comes not only the forgiveness of sins in your own life, it also causes you to forgive those who have hurt you so. It causes you to forgive those people who have caused you a lifetime of pain. The Gospel forgives and heals. This is why it is important for all of us to preach the Gospel to ourselves daily so we can have the Good News of Jesus lift us up and give us hope for another day. The Gospel of Jesus Christ contains everything you need for this life and brings you into the life to come. For every need you have, the Gospel of Jesus has an answer.

So what exactly is the Gospel? Let's listen to the words of Paul. ¹Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand. First of all, the Gospel comes to us through the preaching, the teaching, and the reading of God's Word. This is why it is so important to be consistent in worship in order to hear God's good news for you in a personal way. When we fail to hear the Gospel, we sink. There is nothing there to hold you up. By hearing the Gospel week after week, one's faith in Christ is strengthened. God has good news for every single area of your life including your problems and struggles. **1. The Gospel is the power of God. That power of the Gospel saves you and sustains you in this life and lifts you up into eternity.** **2. The Gospel contains every single spiritual blessing from God that there is.** We live in a day where God is being spurned, rejected, and the Good News of Jesus Christ is being mocked. When the Gospel is not listened to and ignored, the only place for a society to go is into deeper sin, into the pit of unbelief and all

the hell that it brings. The Bible says, "You cannot ignore God, you cannot mock God and get away with it. In the Gospel we discover God for who He truly is, and He is most clearly seen in the life of Jesus.

When my father was dying of cancer, at the young age of 74, I saw the Lord God bring out the absolute best in him. His last weeks were the holiest. All his friends stopped by the farm for they knew his days were numbered. Dad had a bright look in his eyes for he knew where he was going. The power of the Gospel made his last days with us his best days. The Gospel works my friends. That is why we want to be soaked in the Gospel early in life so at the end we reap all the benefits of a strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Please do not wait until it is too late to get your heart right with God. Be growing in the power of the Gospel now so when you need that strength the most it will be there for you. **3. The Gospel is the power of God for salvation for all who believe.**

Here is a quick summary in words of the Gospel. *"³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."* In the confirmation class the students write a statement of faith putting the Gospel into their own words so they can speak verbally the Gospel for the rest of their lives. If your grandchild asks you, "What is the Gospel?" could you give to him or her an answer that might sink into his or her soul and last for eternity. Heaven is only populated by those who received the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believed it. You may be that one person presenting the Gospel and another soul is saved forever. It is important for all believers to be able to explain the Gospel in just a few sentences and in your own words. It is just as important to speak the

Gospel as it is to live the Gospel. **4. When you believe it you want to speak it. Paul says, I believe therefore I speak.**

Paul preached the Gospel with great power in Corinth. The Greeks in Corinth did not believe in a resurrection, no life after death. Warren Wiersbe writes, "Paul had come to Corinth and preached the message of the Gospel, and their faith had transformed their lives." "An integral part of the Gospel message was the fact of Christ's resurrection." "After all a dead Savior cannot save anybody" (The Bible Exposition Commentary, pg. 617). The good news of Jesus' resurrection from the dead preached by Paul transformed the lives of the hearers. One of the greatest proofs of the Gospel's power is that of transformed lives to this day. We are all not a bunch of duds, empty shells without any fire power. No, the resurrection fire power of the Holy Spirit dwells within every Christian.

"¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead. ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." Paraphrasing this section of Scripture: If you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead then you believe in the resurrection of all the dead. Christ came as a man, truly human, and experienced all that we experienced, except that He never sinned. If there is no resurrection, then Christ was not raised. If He was not raised, there is no Gospel to preach. If there is no Gospel, then you have believed in vain and you are still in your sins [completely unforgiven]. If there is no resurrection, then believers who have died have no hope. We shall never see them again! The conclusion is obvious. Why be a Christian if we only have suffering in this life and no future glory [of heaven] to anticipate. **5. The resurrection is not just important; it is of first importance because all that we believe hinges on it** (ibid. pg. 618). Friends, all of the apostles except John were killed, murdered, suffered as martyrs for their proclamation of the Gospel. Had Jesus not risen from the dead and visibly seen by them,

there is no way they would die for a lie. No, I am not forgetting Judas, but this is not the place to go into his dying in unbelief.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. The term firstfruits is not a term we use today. It is speaking of a harvest time. The first fruits are those crops that are harvested first. Jesus is called the first fruits of all believers. That means when the day of harvest comes, when the Christians are separated from the non-believers, we will receive a brand-new glorified body that will be with God and fellow believers forever and ever. Jesus was the first one to be raised as such and so will we be on that great day when you hear the last trumpet and the commanding shout of the archangel. Oh what a day that will be. In the meantime, when a believer dies a Christian's soul, a Christian's spirit is immediately with the Lord being absent from the body. At the 2nd coming our souls will be reunited with a glorified body perfect in every way. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is our guarantee that this is going to take place. Death will be no more, and we will see the complete fulfillment of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.