

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 0 0] Every April I buy a diary, a paper diary from February Smith, an academic diary, not because! I just like the church years you run from September to August. I buy the same diary, exactly the! same one for 25 years, sometimes in red, sometimes in grey, sometimes in black, because I like a change. I buy an electronic diary, some of you might work from a Google diary, but it just didn't work for me. So I say to our church staff, I say get yourself a real diary, a diary that you can open and write on. I write a complete diary, basically. As much as I can, I write down. And the reason for that is I forget something. Terribly, terribly forgetful.

I constantly forget appointments. I forgot that I was speaking here for two weeks instead of one week until yesterday. I forget my wife on a birthday. I forget I'm on a birthday. My biggest issue in life is, I forget the most important things. I forget the most important things. That's a source of my problem. Look with me at verse 1 of 1 Corinthians 15. Paul is writing to a church of believers in Corinth, and he's not going to say anything new. I like that. Do you see what he says? Now I would remind you, brothers, he's not saying anything new. In chapter 7 and verse 1, he has talked about marriage. He's talked about all sorts of different things. In chapter 8 and verse 1, he's talked about food offered to idols. In one Corinthians, he's been dealing with all their questions. In chapter 12 and verse 1, he's been speaking about spiritual gifts. Have you seen that? Verse 12, verse 1. And so he's moving through the letters of the Corinthians, and he's asking different questions. All sorts of different questions. Now, what's the question that he is answering in chapter 15? See the problem in verse 12. He says, chapter 15, verse 12. He says, now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection from the dead?

The last issue that Paul's going to deal with in this letter is probably the most important of all of them to deal with. Is there any future for you and I after the grave? And so verse 16, verse 16, if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And then verse 29, you see it in the middle of the verse, if the dead are not raised at all. And then verse 32, and again, if the dead are not raised, it's right in the middle of the verse. And so Paul is answering the question. It's not so much of an issue of forgetfulness, but it's a denial of the resurrection of the body. It's a denial that men and women, after they have died, when Christ returns, will one day rise again at the end of time. And what one comment it says is that question, that issue in the Corinthian church has resulted in one of the great theological treasures of the Christian church. So verse 1, what does he want to remind them of? He says, I want to remind you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel. I don't know what your earliest memory is. My earliest memory is the wedding of Prince Charles and Diana.

That is a terrible first memories of her. I wonder what's your earliest memory. Was it a turning point? The wedding of Charles and Diana wasn't really a momentous event, was it?

Do you remember where you were, where Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, some of you will? Do you remember where you were on 9-11? Do you remember where you were on 7-7? There are momentous events out there, and that are in our initial consciousness. And Paul is using this word gospel, and he is saying this is a momentous event. He says, I want to remind you of the momentous news, which I've literally gospels to you, which you received, and on which you've taken your stand. I received it from God. I've passed it on to you. You've embraced it. You've received it. And you stand on it. And that means that you are saved. Verse 1.

[4 : 3 1] You are rescued. I remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand. You're rescued from what? You're rescued from God. Because God is holy, and God is just, and God is perfect, and you must punish sin. And here we are told in the gospel that God punishes our sin in the Lord Jesus. And so this gospel, it is great news.

It is great news of how God in love has rescued us from himself. And Paul says it is the gospel which you've received, which you've held, which you stand upon. And it brings you to salvation.

And outside of the gospel, look at the last word of verse 2, there is only vanity. Now look at verse 3. Bride delivered to you has a first importance, and that should, if you are regularly in church, give you déjà vu. Where have you heard that before? Where have you heard, Bride delivered to you? It's what I also received. This is the Lord's Supper, isn't it?

Just then, click back to chapter 11, verse 23. It's good for you to be able to see it. You'll see Paul there, he passes on the Lord's Supper. Paul says, Bride received from the Lord what I also delivered to you. It's almost the same thing, isn't it? What's the difference between 11, verse 23, and 15, verse 3? Please spot the difference. Can you see the difference?

He says, Bride declared unto you, Bride delivered to you, as of first importance. He says, what I pass on to you here is number one priority. He's saying this to me, what I'm going to teach you in 11, verse 15, is even more important than the Lord's Supper. What is Christianity about? At its heart, what is it about? Sometimes I'd ask people, would you call yourself a Christian? And it's not sometimes I get told, I get told, I'm trying.

[6 : 41] Isn't that interesting? Wouldn't you think that being a Muslim has got something to do with Mohammed? Being a Buddhist has got something to do with Buddha? Being a Confucian has got something to do with Confucius. So being a Christian, is it not something to do with Jesus? Or is it just my efforts? If it's a matter of following Jesus' example, Christianity is a cruel religion, isn't it? Because none of us can do that. Pride causes you and I to have all sorts of ways in which we can propose to save ourselves. But being a Christian, Paul says, is all about the Lord Jesus. It's about Jesus. It's everything to do with him. And what I do want to do in this week and next week is really look at these four key words. They are four that's. We'll look at the first two that's this week and then next week we'll come back, God willing, and look at the second two that's. So look with me at verse three.

For I deliver to you as of first importance all I also receive that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. Notice he doesn't say in verse three that Jesus died according to our sins. Of course that's true, but he uses the title Christ. Christ is the King, the Messiah of God, the one who is God in the flesh. He came and he died. And the death of Christ is central. You know that if you read through 1 Corinthians, because in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, Paul says, for I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. He died. He died a historical, verifiable death. But look at verse three.

There's a meaning to his death. He died for our sins. He died for our sins. What a remarkable thing. He had no sin of his own for which to die. The wages of sin, what sin pays for, what my rebellion pays for, is death. The wages of sin is death. He had not earned the penalty because he'd never sin, and yet he died. He pays the penalty for someone else's sin. Someone else had earned the penalty by their own sin. If I said to you, what do you think is the most audacious claim of the Lord Jesus? Well, we can think of a few, couldn't we? But I put it to you that one of the most audacious claims that he ever made was when he said in the midst of his enemies, who have you accused me of sin? And all of his enemies, none of them could point to anything and say, you're guilty of this, you're guilty of that. I think if I said that in our church leaders meeting, who have you accused me of sin, they'd have a long list. If I said that to my neighbors, to my friends, to my family, but to my wife, certainly. I hear you say yes. I saw you do that. But the only thing that the accusers of Jesus could accuse him of was, well, he eats with sinners. In other words, Jesus had no sin. He was sinless. He died for sins that were not his own. And so the apostle says, he died for our sins. It was on behalf of the sins that I committed. The death of God's innocent son for his undeserving people. It's all of grace. We don't deserve it. But look at the next words that says in verse 3. He died for our sins according to the scriptures. There was no knee-jerk reaction from God. It was not God in heaven seeing, oh, the world has gone wrong. My plan has gone wrong. I'm going to do something about it. No, it was not that.

It could never be that. This is according to the scriptures. So 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah the prophet said, he took our infirmities. Or you could go back even further than that, couldn't you? To the very first promise that God ever made. And it was going to be a promise that cost him dearly. In Genesis 2:17, God, the creator, speaks to Adam.

And he says, you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat of it, you will surely die. It's God's first promise. And he knew that eventually when he fulfilled that promise, and Adam did die, that this would involve the death of God the Son. His own Son is the substitute for Adam and all who put their trust in him.

[11 : 21] He died according to the scriptures. You think of the Passover Lamb, by which the firstborn were redeemed. It looks forward to the Lord Jesus, doesn't it? As the Lamb of God, the sins being laid upon him. The death of God's innocent Son for his undeserving people. And Paul says, from God, this is momentous news. And this is my first priority. And so being a Christian is not about being spiritual. It's not about getting your life back together. It's not about being good. It's not about being religious. It's not about believing in God. It's about knowing that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. And that is what we preach.

The minister I know was facing a lot of opposition in his church. And when they asked him, what is it that they don't like about you? He said, they accused me of preaching Easter sermons at Christmas. That's what Christmas is. The Lord Jesus Christ, the little infant, the baby in the manger, came in order to give his life for our sins. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now the second that is in verse 4. That he was buried. The suit of the eternity of his death. That is the foundation of the resurrection. Without his real death, there's no real resurrection. His resurrection was not a fantasy. It was not a plaything. It was not a pseudo death. It was not that he fainted on the cross, as the Muslims believe.

There's no play acting. It's a real death. Jesus did not faint. Jesus did not pass out. Jesus really died. He died so much that they buried him. And the second that in verse 4 underlines the integrity of the first that in verse 3. The Apostles' Creed puts it like this. He was crucified, dead, and so dead he was buried. And we know that his death was unique. We must die, wasn't we, inevitably. But Jesus chose the moment that he died. Into your hands I put my spirit. It is finished. He gave up his spirit. He chose the words by which he would die because he was voluntarily dying for sin. Sin which was not his own. Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. And he was buried. Now let me say three things in closing. The first thing is this. The Christian faith is all about Jesus. It's hardly rocket science, is it?

It's hardly rocket science, but the Christian faith is all about Jesus. I think it's quite fashionable, but it's acceptable in our culture to be willing to talk about God, however you imagine to be. But let us be clear that according to the Bible, Jesus is God. And anything that you imagine about God that is not consistent with the person and the words and the works of Jesus is what? Jesus is God. He is God in the flesh. He is God made man. And the Christian faith is not about you. It's about him. It's not about me. It is about him. And it's about what he has done. And the shortest definition of the Christian gospel is the one you get in Galatians 1. We went around preaching him. To preach him, to preach Jesus, is to preach the gospel. And when I came to IPC, 15 years ago I think this week, I really had no clue about the church calendar. It was a completely new thing to me. And yet one of my elders is quite fond of the church calendar. He's not here this morning. And he's particularly fond of Pentecost. I can never work out when Pentecost is. And occasionally I preach Pentecost service without knowing it. But the first year, I arrived on Sunday morning and he said to me, I hope you've got a Pentecost sermon this morning. And I looked frantically through my sermon and I didn't think it was. And then I suddenly realised I had a sermon about Jesus.

And that is what Acts 2 and Pentecost is all about, isn't it? When the Apostle Paul finds the disciples of John the Baptist who'd never even heard of the Holy Spirit, what does he teach them? He doesn't actually teach them about the Holy Spirit. He teaches them about Jesus. And the Christian faith is all about Jesus. When Hudson Taylor had a young Christian missionary from Scotland who was about to go home from China in the first period of furlough, Hudson Taylor called the man in and he said, when you go back to Scotland, your great temptation will be to tell them about China. Don't tell them about China. Tell them about Jesus. And Jesus will look out to China. The old hymn says, I sowed for rest and happiness. I yearn for them, not me. But while I passed my Saviour by, looking for rest and happiness, his love laid hold on me. Now none but Christ can satisfy. None other name for me. There's life and love and lasting joy, Lord Jesus found in me. God cannot give you peace and happiness apart from himself. It does not exist. It's not there. There is no such thing. Happiness and peace and rest are found in Jesus. The Christian faith is all about Jesus. Jesus who died and who was buried.

[17 : 22] Second application is, it's about the substitutionary element of what Jesus did at the cross. It's about a transaction. I was in a jeweller shop once and a girl said to the jeweller she wanted a cross. And the jeweller said, do you want a normal cross or one with the little man on it? They had no idea of the death of God's son. The one with the little man on it.

Glory of the cross is that what justice requires, God's love provides. We do not earn his death, but we receive it. We trust it. We believe it. It's so difficult to give an example, isn't it? It is like collapsing into a hammock. It is like falling onto your bed. It is like resting in a chair, but it's much more than that. That's what faith is. It is all by grace and it is undeserved.

Now let me ask you, where does your confidence lie? He died for my sin. He was buried for my sin. The third application is this. Don't you think you already know it?

I think I said this now. I've been at the church for about 15 years. And I think I pretty much never teach them anything new there. Most of the congregation probably know what I'm going to say before I say it. But I want to say that's quite biblical, really. Why do you think that is the case? Well, because we need reminding, don't we? One of the problems in my life, do you know where we started? They spring from when I forget these truths, and your problems spring from when you forget them. That's why you come to church. You come to hear the gospel. That's why week by week, I hope your minister says that you let us worship God. Because that is the place of reality. It's the place where you go to hear what God says. And my biggest problem is when I forget. And Paul says, I want to remind you. That when I feel so guilty, the gospel reminds me my past has been dealt with. When I fear the future, the gospel reminds me that there is glory to come. And when I feel so inferior to other people, the gospel reminds me that I am a child of God. And when I'm jealous of someone, the gospel reminds me that I am a complete man. And when I hate myself, the gospel reminds me I am God's child and made in his image. And when I feel so insecure, the gospel reminds me that God's love is unconditional. And when I feel so insignificant, the gospel reminds me that I'm a jock of God's family. And when I feel purposedlessness, the gospel reminds me that I'm living for his glory. And when I feel lonely, the gospel reminds me that I'm part of an enormous worldwide family. And when I feel self-righteous, the gospel reminds me that it is only his righteousness that will stand. And when I doubt, I have to come back to the facts of his death and his resurrection. And when I'm filled with pride, I need to remember that it's not what I have done, but it's what he has done. And when I'm self-sancted,

I need to remember that it's what the gospel does for me, causes me to be a servant of God. Do you think you need those reminders? I certainly do. I need to let the gospel preach to me and roused to me and sang to me. I need to let the gospel remind you to me every week.

[21 : 02] He died from my sin. I am set free from my guilt. The debt has been paid. Jared Packer says, keep saying this to yourself. I am a child of God. God is my Father. Heaven is my home. Every day is one day near a heaven. My Saviour is my brother. And every Christian is my brother and sister too. He paid a debt he didn't owe. We are a debt he could not pay.

I needed someone to wash my sin away. And now I sing a family song. Amazing grace. Christ Jesus paid the debt that I could never pay. It's biblical. It's true. It's authentic.

It's apostolic. It's what you have. It's what you've believed. It's what you've received. It's what you trust. It's what you rely upon. It's where you stand. It is Orthodox Christianity.

Paul says at the end of this two as I finish, it is by this you are being saved. If you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise you believed in vain. But Christ died for our sins according to the scripture.

And he was buried. Let's pray.