

# The Saving Gospel of Grace

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Date: 07 September 2025

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[0:00] The sermon text for today is 1 Corinthians 15, verse 1-11. At the conclusion of this reading, I will declare this is the word of the Lord, and the church, in joyful response to this revelation given to us, will say together, Thanks be to God.

Now I will remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved. If you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you, as first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried and he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve.

Then he appeared to five hundred more brothers at one time, most of whom were still alive, though some have fallen asleep. He then appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Last of all, to the one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

[1:14] 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 was with me.

Whether then it was I or they, we preach, and so you believed. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Heavenly Father, thank you for this glorious word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, core message of that gospel.

It is a gospel of grace that saves us. Would you use this word this morning, Father, to awaken faith, to breathe life to the dead, and to stir up the saints that are in this room to love and good works.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, good morning, Shoreline. Oh, man, that was weak. I know it's raining out. Like, I just got up here after months.

Morning, Shoreline. Good morning. It's good to be back up here in the pulpit. My name is Mike Lusa, one of the pastors here at Shoreline. And I want to welcome you.

[2:25] Daryl, I want to welcome you. Brother, thanks for getting up and sharing on your first Sunday here. And whether this is your first Sunday or your 500th Sunday, I'm just glad that you're here this morning.

You know, I was going to start with just talking about my summer, but I'm not going to do that because it's a little after 11 o'clock. But a lot of you ask, like, what have you been up to this summer? Come talk to me after the service. I'll let you know.

But I do want to start by thanking the men that preached through the Psalms this summer. I don't know about you, but my soul was greatly nourished as you brothers got up and proclaimed Christ from the Psalms week in and week out.

What a blessing. So I just want to thank you guys for all that. It's a lot of time and effort that goes into that. You guys all have full-time jobs outside of here. But I am excited to be back up here preaching God's Word and specifically preaching on this chapter of the Bible on the resurrection of the dead.

I mean, 1 Corinthians 15, guys. This is an awesome chapter. We're going to take it in five sermons. And we begin today with verses 1 through 11. So if you haven't already, please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15, chapters 1 through 11.

[3:34] If you don't have a Bible, we have Bibles on the back table. Feel free to take one of those and keep it as our gift to you. Now, from January to June, if you weren't here, we have worked through the first 14

chapters of Paul's letter to the Corinthian church as he labors to correct this messed up wayward church.

Use Carl's term. You know, they were a hot mess, right? Now, the church had veered off course in a variety of areas. So just at like a macro level, we saw in the area of unity, chapters 1 through 4, they were veering off course.

In the area of holiness, that was chapters 5 and 6. In marriage and singleness, that was chapter 7. And then in the area of Christian freedom, as it related to food offered to idols, that was chapter 8 through 10.

And then finally, we worked through a portion on corporate worship and especially on the spiritual gifts, and that was chapters 12 through 14. And time and again, what we've watched Paul do is raise the topic, make a beeline for the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then show the Corinthian church how the gospel is the compass that points them true north.

But I want to ask, what would happen if that gospel message got altered? Like the gospel itself in the church, if that message was changed, what would happen?

[4:54] You know, an altered message is really comical in a game of telephone. I don't know if you all played game of telephone. It's funny then, but when the message affects the eternal souls of men and women, it's not so funny when the message gets garbled, is it?

Now just imagine for a second that some expert engineer, you know, the SME, the subject matter expert, he writes instructions for the shipyard to carry out, and then an engineer, fresh out of college, you know, he comes by, he thinks he knows the system better, and then he alters those work instructions, and he makes a major error in doing that.

Now let's say a problem arises in the shipyard, right? What does the shipyard do? They go to the instructions, the technical work document, that's where they know to go. But now they're following instructions that contain a grave error, right?

That's going to lead them down a bad path, and that's what happens when the gospel of Jesus Christ gets altered. All of Paul's counsel throughout his letter is going to be undermined if the Corinthians modify the gospel.

And it appears, as we read, we're going to work through this chapter together, it appears that that's what the Corinthians are in danger of doing. And in many ways, then, these 11 verses are kind of like Paul's, hey, if there's one thing I want you to remember from this letter, it's this.

[6:13] And so Shoreline, if there's one thing that I want you to remember from six months' worth of sermons, it is this. Okay, it's going to be on the screen here. That the gospel is the true saving message of God's grace to sinners through the death and resurrection of Christ, which we must hold fast to the end.

That's it. Remember this. The gospel is the true saving message of God's grace to sinners through the death and resurrection of Christ, which we must hold fast to the end.

So we're just going to talk about the gospel today. Are you guys okay with that? Like, this is all about the gospel of Jesus Christ. I mean, this is such a good text to come back to as a preacher. So I don't know how long we're going to be here, but if you've got to go, that's fine.

We're just going to keep preaching. Paul begins in verse 1. Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preach to you. Now the word remind, it actually means to make known or to declare. I think Paul is being a little tongue-in-cheek here. The Corinthians, they know the gospel, right? It's what Paul came originally preaching to them. Read chapter 2.

[7:24] And that's what led to the establishment of the Corinthian church in the first place. But Paul is saying, I need to make it known to you. I need to remind you of the gospel. Yet again, I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preach to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, it's if you hold fast to the word I preach to you, unless you believed in vain.

Note this is the first main point here. The power of the gospel, it saves. Power of the gospel, it saves. I want you to notice in these verses, is that there's a past, a present, and future action going on here relating to the gospel.

This will be on the screen. The past is the Corinthians received the gospel. They received it. And in this, we're reminded that the gospel is a gift, right?

It's a gift. It's not earned. It's freely given. And so we take the gift and receive it, not on any merit of our own. And how do we receive that gospel?

By faith. It's by faith. So to receive the gospel is to believe the gospel. Paul uses the word belief at the end of this text. So that's a past action. The Corinthians receive the gospel. Then they have this present action.

[8:39] The Corinthians have a standing in the gospel. As Paul would say in Romans 5, a standing in grace. And so in this little phrase, we're reminded that all other ground is sinking sand.

Christ, the gospel, as Paul said in chapter 3, is the only firm foundation for our lives and for the church. The Corinthians received the gospel.

They have a standing in the gospel. And Paul says here that they're being saved. By which you are being saved. Now that sounds a little funny to us, but this word is actually, it's a present tense.

They are being saved. But it's pointing forward. I think Paul is pointing forward to the saints' future salvation on the day of judgment. He talks similarly in some of his other letters. Yes, we have been saved.

Amen? We have been saved. But it's also true that we are being saved. Salvation is a past, present, and future work of God. And I think Paul here is pointing to that future work.

[9:43] Which makes sense because he's about to talk about the resurrection of the dead in the rest of this chapter. This, friends, is the power of the gospel. It saves us.

Paul had said in chapter 1, verse 18, that it is folly. He's talking about the cross, core of the gospel. It's folly to those who are perishing. But to us who are being saved, it is the, you guys remember? The power of God. Romans 1, 16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.

But notice here, Paul adds this condition that makes us a little nervous and uneasy. By which you are being saved if, what? If you hold fast to the word I preached to you unless you believed in vain. If you hold fast. Now we would like to just move right past that statement. The thing is, there's other statements just like it in the New Testament. Just write two of them.

[10:48] Colossians 1, 23. Hebrews 3, 14. You can look those up this week. Now perhaps these and others are all just hearkening back to the words of Jesus. Matthew 24, 13.

Jesus says that the one who endures to the end will be saved. And that's repeated all throughout Revelation. I wish the ladies were in throughout the summer. So I want to ask, are we saved then through our holding fast?

Are we saved through our endurance? Is it our efforts in cooperation with God that saves us? And I want to use Paul's famous expression, By no means.

By no means. We are saved by Christ and his merit, not our own. We are saved by grace through faith. Which faith is itself a gift of God?

It's Ephesians 2, 8, 9. It is a gift of God. It is all by grace. And you know, Paul had said in chapter 1 that it's Christ who will sustain us to the end, guiltless on the last day.

[11:55] No, we're saved by grace. It's the work of Christ. But as the reformers argued, and this is what we believe here, while we are saved by faith alone, the faith that saves is never alone.

We're saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone. And here's what that means. A saving faith is active. A saving faith is persevering. And so Paul calls us in Philippians 2, work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Peter says in 2 Peter 1, 10, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. That working, that diligence, that holding fast, is itself evidence of the Spirit's work in our hearts that he has done.

It's evidence of the grace of God at work in us. Otherwise, Paul is saying our faith is shown to be counterfeit. That's faith that is in vain. And that reminds me of Jesus' parable of the sower.

Faith that is in vain. It's like the seed sown on the rocky ground that has no root. It's the seed sown on the thorns, and it gets choked out by the cares of this world. But the seed that falls on good soil

produces a crop, right?

[13:10] And so the call going out to us this morning from these verses here is this. It is receive and it's cleave. Receive and cleave. Now you've heard similar language at weddings, right?

A husband and a wife are called to leave their parents, then to receive and cleave to one another. And Paul is calling us to do that with the gospel. Saints, there are countless ways in which the world would have us loosen our grip on the gospel.

We're called to cleave, to hold fast, to cling tightly to the gospel. Now listen, if we lose the gospel as doctrine, then we're going to swerve off the path immediately, right?

But it's also possible, and I think this is maybe more likely for us, it's possible for us to affirm the gospel as official doctrine. This is what we believe. It's on our church website.

It's in our doctrinal statement. We believe this. We can hold to that as theory and yet lose it in reality. I think this is far more likely in our individual lives, in our corporate life here.

[14:14] And this can happen in all kinds of ways that I'm not going to necessarily get into, but it can happen in pleasure. We can allow the riches of this world to lure us away from Christ and the gospel.

This can happen in our pain. If we allow disappointments and despair to cause us to loosen our grip on the gospel, and this can also just happen if we simply drink in the ideology of our culture without questioning it.

And this is happening in all kinds of ways. We are swimming in a culture of individualism. We have for a long time. It's the air that we breathe, a culture that prizes prosperity, right?

We're the most prosperous nation ever. We're a culture that's immersed right now in very therapeutic language, and that seeps its way into the church. We're a culture that has been casting off God's created order of nature.

There's just a few different ways that all of these things are threatening to cause us to loosen our grip on the gospel. We need to hold it fast in our doctrine and in our culture, how we actually live that out.

[15:22] So, saints, let us cleave to the gospel. Paul would tell Timothy to guard the good deposit entrusted to him. That's our call. And there are also some in this room who have never received the gospel.

And the simple call that is going out to you today is to receive it, to receive the gospel. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that gives us, that would give you, a permanent standing in God's grace. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves you from an eternity in hell, receiving God's just anger for sin, and instead you could spend an eternity in heaven receiving his bountiful goodness and mercy that Dave preached on last week from Psalm 23.

Now, at this point, you might say, well, Mike, you keep using that word gospel, gospel, gospel. You haven't even defined what it is. So that's a great point. And that brings us to the next part of this chapter here in which Paul proclaims, the second point here, the message of the gospel.

Christ's death and resurrection. This is the message of the gospel. This is the core of the gospel. Paul continues. Look at verse 3. For I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received.

[16:41] Now, Paul reminded the Corinthians, if you look back just a few verses, the end of chapter 14, he reminded them in a reproving way that God's word did not originate with them. And here he's saying that it didn't originate with him either, right?

He's not the author of the gospel. Paul is the mailman. He's delivering the mail to the people. And when he delivered that mail, he did so as priority mail express, right?

As of first importance. When Paul came to Corinth, his highest priority, his chief priority, was not his own reputation. It was proclaim the saving message of the gospel which he himself had received.

And so now he's needing to remind them, make it known to them again, of this gospel because they're in danger of modifying it, which is to say losing it because there is only one true gospel.

And what is that gospel? That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to the whole bunch of people.

[17:51] We'll get to. That is the core saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now this was very likely an early creed or confession of

the church to make clear what it believed about the gospel.

And so we see here that this creed has four parts, four articles indicated by the word that. You see Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearances.

And you can put those up on the screen, Jeff. You might even say that it really only has two parts. There's two assertions. Christ died for our sins. Right? You see that? Christ was raised on the third day.

Those are the two main assertions. Both of those are verified by the scripture. And then we see that the burial of Christ, it verifies his death. The appearances of Christ verify his resurrection.

And so we always talk about the death and resurrection of Christ. That is the core message of the gospel. But we'll look at each of these articles in turn. So the first article of this creed, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

[18:54] In chapter 1, verse 23, Paul had said, For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified. The crucified Savior was not the Messiah the Jews were expecting, was it?

To assert the death of Messiah was revolting to the Jews. Greater still, the death of the Messiah in the most hideous way possible on a Roman cross where he was hung up as a curse to die.

But this Paul had explained in chapter 1 and chapter 2, that was the power of God to save sinners. Christ died for our sins.

His death was substitutionary. It's an important word to know. Substitutionary, in our place. His death was atoning. It's another really important word. He paid for our sins through His sacrifice. He satisfied the wrath of God. The cross may have been offensive to Jews and Greeks, but Paul explained in chapter 1, verse 30, that through the cross, Christ has become to us wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

[20:08] We preach Christ crucified because the cross is the means of our salvation. It's a glorious means of our salvation, the unthinkable means of our salvation that shows forth the love of God for us.

This, Paul says, is in accordance with the scriptures. In other words, the death of Christ on the cross for our sins was foretold by the Old Testament.

Now, this, I want to point out something that's harder for us to notice in our English translations. First of all, as most of you know, the word gospel, I haven't said this yet, what does the word gospel mean literally?

Good news. We still say it like it's good news. What does the word gospel mean, guys? Good news. It is good news. That is the understatement of history. It is the best news that there will ever be. The gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, in verses 1 and 2, when Paul's using the word gospel, which means good news, he's also using this word we have translated preached, which literally means to announce good news.

[21:16] The word means to announce good news, okay? And those words are pointing directly back to Old Testament prophecy, prophecy that we looked at last fall when we were in Isaiah.

If you remember, through Isaiah, God predicts both Israel's national deliverance from exile in Babylon and then a greater deliverance from spiritual bondage to sin.

And one of the key passages is Isaiah 52, verse 7. You'll notice this language if you know Romans chapter 10. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns.

And Paul's use of the word gospel and preached, and now this explicit assertion that Christ died in accordance with the scriptures, here's what he's doing. He is declaring that Jesus is the Christ foretold from of old, that his death and resurrection is the fulfillment of all of God's messianic promises throughout the Old Testament.

Paul is saying that through Christ, the new age is here, the new covenant is here. Deliverance from spiritual bondage to sin for Israel and the nations has been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ.

[22:41] This is amazing. It's through the gospel. Now specifically regarding Old Testament prediction, because he's saying that the scriptures foretold of the death of Christ.

And surely Paul has in mind the passage we read at the start. Thank you, Jim. Isaiah 53. Okay? And probably other passages like Psalm 22 or Psalm 69. You can take a look at those passages throughout this week and just see how they point forward to the death of Jesus on the cross. It's another implication of this truth that the death and resurrection of Christ was in accordance with the scriptures. It's not only that they were foretold by the Old Testament, but also we cannot fully understand them.

We cannot fully understand the significance of the death and resurrection of Christ apart from the Old Testament. And so this is just, we should be good students of not only the New Testament, but also the Old Testament, the riches of the death and resurrection of Christ, they unfold to us when we know our Old Testament.

So just an encouragement to be studying all of scripture. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. Article 2, that he was buried. Okay?

[23:55] If Christ died, why do we assert that he was buried? Because the burial of Christ was the proof of his death. You know, from early on, people began to claim that Jesus didn't really die.

Like, he was only unconscious. Now, this was an outlandish claim, first of all, because the Roman crucifixion was a really effective means of execution.

But this early Christian creed here, it includes the burial of Jesus to affirm the undeniable reality of the death of Jesus. You know, there was also an early heresy known as docetism that claimed that Jesus wasn't really a man.

He looked like a man, okay? But his flesh and blood were just this sort of clothing that it was illusory. So this affirmation of Christ's death and burial is confronting that heresy.

Jesus really did take on human flesh. He had to. And he indeed did become like one of us. So that, become like us, I mean, so that as Hebrews 2.17 says, he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make, here's another big word, propitiation for the sins of the people.

[25:11] That's another really important word that I don't think we should lose, the word propitiation. It means to satisfy the wrath of God, to turn it away, to appease him.

See, God's wrath was justly aroused for our sin. God is holy. God is perfect. We were marring his good creation. Sin is an affront to a perfect God.

Justice demands payment. Okay? The propitiation that Christ accomplished was to turn away and satisfy the wrath of God.

God satisfied, another way of saying this, God satisfied his own wrath in sending his son to die on the cross for our sins. You think about that. And if Christ did not actually become a man, his death could not have been on our behalf.

It would not have made propitiation for our sins. But thanks be to God, he did become a man. Christ was fully God and fully man.

[26:13] That is a miracle of the incarnation that we believe. And therefore, his death on the cross forever satisfies God's wrath for sin for all that believe in his name. And can we just pause for a moment and revel in the love of God towards us?

I want you to listen to these words from John Stott in the book *The Cross of Christ*, speaking about the propitiation of Christ. Thus God took his own loving initiative to appease his own righteous anger by burying it his own self in his own son when he took our place and died for us.

There is no crudity here to evoke our ridicule, only the profundity of holy love to evoke our worship. Praise you, Lord, for that holy love.

You know, the third article is that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

You know, a dead and buried savior would be no savior at all, would it?

If he had not risen from the grave three days later. You know, John Stott in that same book *The Cross of Christ* which I highly recommend, he calls the cross the conquest achieved.

[27:32] The conquest achieved. Christ's death was the defeat of sin and Satan and death. The death itself was the victory of those things. But the resurrection, he says, is the conquest confirmed and announced.

He continues on, we are not to regard the cross as defeat and the resurrection as victory. Rather, the cross was the victory won and the resurrection, the victory endorsed, proclaimed, and

demonstrated.

Hallelujah! In rising from the grave, which Christ had to do because it's not possible for the author of life to stay dead. In rising from the grave, his sacrifice for sin was shown to be sufficient, paid in full. As we sang at the beginning of this, Jesus paid it all in his conquering of hell and the grave was proven in the resurrection. It was proclaimed in the resurrection.

Christ is risen. Man, the rain is really affecting us today. Okay.

[28:37] Church, Christ is risen. Let's do that again. Christ is risen. Like Jim said, every Sunday is Easter Sunday as a Christian.

Okay, we continually glory in the cross and the empty tomb. What Christ achieved through this gospel, the gospel. In Christ's resurrection, like the cross, Paul asserts, it happened in accordance with the scriptures.

Paul, again, is probably referring to Isaiah 53, which speaks of both the suffering and the humiliation of the servant, but also his vindication, his exaltation.

Right? He probably also has in mind the other passage we read. Jim and I didn't even talk about this. Jim was just in the text this week. Psalm 16, verses 9 through 11. You will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your Holy One see corruption.

You know, Peter takes that verse and he applies it to Christ on the day of Pentecost. And man, how I want to linger here on the resurrection of Christ, but we will be lingering here for the next four weeks as we make our way through this chapter.

[29:41] So for now, we go on to the fourth article that we see here. that he appeared to Cephas and to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. Like the burial verifies the death, the appearances verify the resurrection. Because you know, naturally, far more than people questioning the death of Christ, people question his resurrection. You know, it's relatively normal for people to die. Not so much for people to rise from the grave.

But Christians believe that Jesus Christ rose bodily in time and space and history from the grave. That was a good spot for an amen.

Christians believe you will wake up, you will participate with me in this sermon, okay? Christians believe that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the grave in time and space and history, amen?

[30:55] And here, Paul provides evidence of that resurrection, right? These post-resurrection appearances are evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead. Okay, so Paul first lists Peter, right?

Now, Peter was not the first one to see there is in Christ. You can read the Gospels, but he was the leader of the disciples and that's probably why Paul lists Peter here first. But he's saying if people don't believe Peter, well then go talk to the twelve.

Go talk to any of the twelve disciples. Okay? And if you don't even believe the twelve disciples, which is kind of nuts, I don't have time for that, never mind. Well, there's five hundred other people that Jesus appeared to at the same time.

You can go talk to them, Paul is saying. Like, most of them are still alive. Go talk to any of those guys. Now, as an aside, did you notice Paul here refers to some of these five hundred as having merely fallen asleep?

Okay? Paul is dropping a hint as to where he's going for the rest of this chapter. With that little phrase, he's reminding Christians that death is forever defamed. Right?

[32:02] For the Christian, death is just a mere doorway. That's what we said here a few weeks ago during Frank's memorial service. It is a doorway. It's a doorway for Allie's mom. Okay?

But his main point is to provide evidence for these post-resurrection appearances which validate the resurrection itself. See, people throughout history have claimed that those who believed to have seen the risen Christ were simply hallucinating.

Okay? People in a state of anguish, people mourning the death of their supposed Messiah certainly might hallucinate his appearing, right? I mean, for months after my own dad died, just back in 2017, I very often had these vivid dreams about him.

And I would wake up disoriented, confused, like, was that real? But here's the thing, church, 500 people do not hallucinate the same thing at the same time. It simply does not happen.

Okay? You can check the science. Okay? Go check your science textbooks. And Paul is saying here, hey, if you doubt Peter or the 12, then go talk to any of these 500 people that are still alive.

[33:07] And one commentator writes, any assertion that an event took place in the past implies an historical claim and exposes itself to testing. Paul accepts this challenge for his own day.

Challenge accepted. Okay? Now there's a reason that the gospel message has been heroically held fast to for the last 2,000 years. It's because Christ was risen from the dead.

There's a reason that the 12 disciples almost all went on to lay down their lives for the sake of the gospel. If they believed that Jesus did not rise from the dead, would they have done that? Would they all have held on to that message to their own deaths?

No. Christ is risen. Yes, thank you. I wasn't even looking for that. That was good. And Paul finally lists himself last of all here.

He's like, if you still want some evidence, just consider me. I'm the guy that was zealously killing Christians, persecuting the church of Christ. But I was radically changed in an instant when the risen Lord Jesus Christ appeared to me on the road to Damascus.

[34:13] That's what Paul was saying. This gospel, Paul is asserting, is true. It is true. It happened in time, in space, in history. Jesus Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

Jesus Christ was buried. He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures and he appeared to many. This shoreline is what we believe. This is the core saving message of the gospel.

The central tenets of our faith. And it is the message to which we must hold fast. And so, having laid out that gospel message, I want to return again to the invitation here.

Not mine, but Christ's. For those who have not received that gospel, to do so this morning, it is through the death and resurrection of Christ that we are saved.

There's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, Acts 4.12.

And if you want to receive this gospel today, come, talk to me after the service. And for the Christians in this room, this passage here is calling us to do two things.

[35:17] To remember the gospel and to relay the gospel. Okay? Remember the gospel. There's a reason that Paul is again needing to make known, needing to remind the Corinthians of this gospel message.

They were in danger of losing it. Church, we need to constantly remember and rehearse the gospel. This is our compass. It's pointing us true north.

Right? And so, this has all sorts of implications. But in these gatherings here, the gospel needs to continue to remain central in all of our speaking, in our singing, in our praying, in our preaching, and in every area of our lives, saints.

Every decision that we make, every problem that arises, the gospel must be the framework with which we see and respond. We need to remember the gospel.

And we're called here to relay the gospel. What Paul did in Corinth, delivering as of first importance what he received. It's what he did everywhere that he went.

[36:18] This is the call of every single Christian. This is the Great Commission. Is this not? This is the Great Commission. We are all called to relay the gospel, to pass it on to others.

Parents, this is our primary calling. This is it. It's to pass on the faith once for all delivered to the saints to our children.

Okay? Yes, we want them to be good American citizens. That's part of being, living in this world. But foremost, first and foremost, we want them to become disciple-making disciples of Jesus Christ that exalt his name, that display the gospel in their lives.

And this is actually not just the job of parents. Okay? This is the job of the whole covenant community. Okay? It is all of our job to evangelize and disciple the next generation.

Okay? Parents have primary responsibility. We all have a responsibility here. Okay? This is why we have Shoreline kids. This is why we have Shoreline youth. And we would love to also begin to see adults discipling children that aren't their own.

[37:25] That can happen. Okay? Look, my dad and mom did a great job disciplining me, but also, I had small group leaders and other adults pouring into my life and that made an impact.

Because sometimes our parents' voices like the Charlie Brown want, want, want, want. It is helpful for another adult to be living the same faith, preaching the same gospel message. And of course, we're called Shoreline to not only relay the gospel to our children, but to the nations.

It's where the gospel moves. It moves outward to the nations. And that begins right here with our own family, our own friends, our own neighbors and coworkers, and then it extends around the world.

So we've talked about the power of the gospel. It saves. The message of the gospel. The death and resurrection of Christ. And finally, with Paul, let us glory in, point three, the grace of the gospel. The grace of the gospel. Sinners made saints. I know it's getting on in time. Stick with me here. A few more minutes. Let's look again at verse eight and what follows.

[38:40] Paul says, Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

Let's just stop there for a second. That phrase, untimely born, actually refers to a miscarriage or an aborted fetus either, even. With strong terms, Paul is comparing his wretched state prior to coming to Christ with the other apostles.

He was so far from Christ. He was so far from salvation. By contrast, those 12 had spent three years being disciplined by Jesus himself. They were trained, they were disciplined, they were commissioned by him, and Paul was in the business of killing Christians, scorning the name of Christ.

What hope was there for Paul, humanly speaking? But by the grace of God, I am what I am, says Paul.

By the grace of God. Resurrection, one commentator writes, is all about God's sovereign power as sheer gift and grace that confers life upon the dead and transforms the lifeless.

[40:02] Paul is glorying in the grace of God that reached down to him in his wretched state, persecuting the church, and in redeeming love, it radically transformed his heart and life.

By the grace of God, I am what I am. By God's grace, Paul was turned from sinner to saint. 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. You know, the one who has been forgiven much loves much.

And Paul's life is a testimony to that. Paul went from the most ardent persecutor of the church to the most active missionary of the gospel. But he doesn't take any credit here, does he?

You know, again, back to Philippians 2. After exhorting the Philippians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, what does he say next? He says, for it is God who works in us both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

[41:12] Paul knows that his transformed desires and his physical ability to carry out those transformed desires are all owing to God. So here, he's boasting in the Lord, which he had told the Corinthians to do.

He's praising God for God's grace towards him. And then Paul brings things full circle before he moves us on in the discussion. Whether then it was I or they, referring to the other apostles like Apollos and Peter, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

See, Paul doesn't care ultimately who did the preaching. He's only concerned that the gospel is being preached because it's through the preaching of the gospel that the lost are saved.

The Holy Spirit uses the preached word to awaken faith in one's dead hearts, turning sinners into saints. And Paul here is reminding the Corinthians of God's grace to save them through the gospel that was preached to them.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, like Paul, you and I have no grounds for boasting in anything except in Christ and in him crucified.

[42:28] And you know, in the grace of Christ, not only to die for us, but also to appear to each of us personally and call us to a life in him. That's an amazing thing that I saw in this text this week.

I almost missed it. That is part of the grace. Jesus appeared to Peter in the 12 and the 500 and then to Paul. Those appearances are God's grace, right?

And he has appeared, saints, he's appeared to each one of us personally, individually, calling us to faith in him. By the grace of God, we are what we are. And so like Paul, when we grasp this saving gospel of grace, we are moved to a heart-affected response of two things that we see here, proclamation and praise.

Okay, proclamation and praise. God's grace in Christ moves us to proclaim the gospel in word and deed. Okay, proclamation and word is essentially what we talked about earlier, relaying the gospel to the next generation, to the nations.

But I want to add, the reason that we have had other men from Shoreline get up in the pulpit and preach this summer and at other times, it's not simply so that Mike gets a break from preaching, it's to raise up faithful preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[43:45] I wouldn't be here if that opportunity had not been given to me. Okay, we want to multiply preachers of the gospel through this body of believers, proclaiming the gospel in word, proclaiming the gospel in deed.

That happens in all kinds of ways, but I want to focus specifically on just three things we see here from Paul in this text. Okay, his honesty, his humility, and his forbearance.

And those things are born out of this gospel of grace. Okay, honesty. So what Carl was talking about, because of God's grace, I don't need to hide from my sin.

I also don't need to wallow in it. Okay, it precludes both. I can admit my sin, I can repent of it, and then I can walk forward in confidence knowing that God's grace covers it.

Humility. God's grace towards me, it undercuts all self-centeredness, all pride. Right? It precludes any sort of condescension towards others, any superiority feelings.

[44:49] By the grace of God, I am what I am. Oh, may we take that to heart. Honesty, humility, forbearance. You know, forbearance is patience and self-control towards others.

It is a disposition to cover over offenses in love, to extend forgiveness, to seek reconciliation. It is a refusal to harbor anger or bitterness towards others.

God forgave me, saints, God forgave us the million dollar debt that we could never repay. How could we not forgive a brother of the hundred that he owes us? Lastly, God's grace in Christ moves us to praise, to praise his name.

Now, Paul does not mention the word praise, but that is exactly what he is doing in these verses. He is glorying in the saving gospel of grace for the praise of God's name.

That's what we were created to do, to praise God's name. And saints, he is endlessly worthy of our worship. And he would be, even if the gospel had not happened, simply for who he is.

[46:01] But he has come, taken on human flesh, paid for our sins on the cross, risen again, and the gospel moves us all the more to praise God for who he is and for what he's done in Christ to save sinners by grace.

I want to close by just reading an excerpt from the diary of 1700's New England missionary David Brainerd. If you don't know David Brainerd, he was born not too far away from here in Haddam, Connecticut.

He ministered to Native Americans in New Jersey. And from college, he was plagued with tuberculosis. He passed away at the age of 29, but his short life had a profound impact, contributing to the second great awakening and inspiring generations of saints and missionaries to give up their lives for the cause of Christ.

And here's what he writes in his journal about five months before his death. Lord's Day, May 17, spent the forenoon at home being unable to attend the public worship.

At this time, God gave me some affecting sense of my own vileness and the exceeding sinfulness of my heart, that there seemed to be nothing but sin and corruption within me.

[47:14] All the abominations of my heart and life seemed to be open to my view and I had nothing to say but God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Towards noon, I saw that the grace of God in Christ is infinitely free towards sinners and such sinners as I was.

I also saw that God is the supreme good, that in his presence is life and I began to long to die that I might be with him in a state of freedom from all sin.

Oh, how a small glimpse of his excellency refreshed my soul. Oh, how worthy is the blessed God to be loved, adored, and delighted in for himself, for his own divine excellencies.

The turning point for Brainerd here was the gospel. Did you see that? The grace of God in Christ.

It's another way to say the gospel. Grace of God to do away with his vile sin on the cross.

Brainerd held fast to the gospel which led him then to praise God and motivated him in the Spirit's power to proclaim that gospel, to take it to the lost.

[48:23] So may we follow this morning Brainerd's example and Paul's examples in this generation. Saints, for our good, for God's glory, and for the advancement of this gospel to the nations.

Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, God, what is there to say but we worship you, Lord? We worship you. And you loved us this much, Lord, to send Christ to die for our sins.

Here's a paradox, Lord. We are unworthy of your love and yet you've shown us this love and so apparently we're worthy in some sense, Lord, of your love.

We are worth your love would be a better way to say it, Lord. In the cross we see both our unworthiness, Lord, but our worth, our value to you. Thank you for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May we hold fast to this gospel all of our days. May we proclaim this gospel in word and deed. May we praise you all the time for it, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.