

Resurrection of the Christ

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Welcome to our Resurrection Sunday service. On Resurrection Sunday, we are reminded of the very heart of Christianity because at the heart of Christianity is not a system of belief or a philosophy, but a person, Jesus Christ.

At the heart of Christianity is not an abstract principle, but a concrete person, Jesus Christ. It's tempting to try to reduce Christianity to a set of manageable rules, but we must not do that because to be a Christian is to be a disciple of Christ.

Christianity is a religion, yes, but it's also a personal dynamic relationship. And this sets it apart from all the other major religions of the world, which provide people with a set of instructions, a way of living.

Zoroastrianism teaches its adherents to pursue good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Hinduism delineates four objectives of the human life, namely righteousness, wealth, sensual pleasure, and freedom from the birth-rebirth cycle.

Buddhism tells people to follow the four noble truths and the eightfold path in order to attain nirvana or enlightenment. Islam prescribes its five pillars, a declaration of faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca.

[1 : 22] In stark contrast, the greatest command of Christianity is to love God. Christian scholar Ravi Zacharias writes in his book, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, Jesus did not only teach or expound His message, He was identical with His message.

In Him, says the Scriptures, dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He did not just proclaim the truth, He said, I am the truth. He did not just show a way, He said, I am the way.

He did not just open up vistas, He said, I am the door, I am the good shepherd, I am the resurrection and the life. I am the I am.

In Him is not just an offer of life's bread, He is the bread of life. In this sense, Christianity is unique, but because of its uniqueness, precisely because it's so counterintuitive, it's easy to lose sight of it and replace Christ that's at the center of Christianity with something else.

And a similar forgetfulness was threatening to undo the Corinthian church that Paul is now writing to. And they were so enamored with their own brand of spirituality, they rejected the doctrine that God's people would, at some point, be resurrected from the dead.

[2 : 43] And because of their error, they were jeopardizing the very doctrine of Christ's resurrection itself, which they believed. And so Paul writes this passage to remind them that we must hold fast to the gospel of the resurrected Christ.

That's the main point of this passage. And I will talk about that in three sections. First is the communication of the gospel in verses 1 to 2. Secondly, it's the content of the gospel in verses 3 to 7.

And thirdly, it's the character of the gospel in verses 8 to 11. First, we see Paul's communication of the gospel in verses 1 to 2. He begins by saying, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you.

I'm going to say this word a lot throughout this message, so please listen now for what it means. What is the gospel? The gospel is Christian shorthand for the good news of Jesus Christ.

It is the good news of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Who he was, the promised Messiah, the king that was to come, the savior of the world, and what he did.

[3 : 47] So his person, who he was, and what he did, namely dying on the cross for our sins and rising from the dead to redeem us from our slavery to sin and death and to give us new life.

That's the gospel. It's the good news of Jesus Christ and that he made his relationship with him possible through his life and work. And it's important to remember that the gospel is good news.

And insofar as it is news, the gospel must be communicated. It has to be preached. Some Christians insist that actions speak louder than words and that preaching the gospel is old-fashioned and doesn't suit our times.

They quote Francis of Assisi, a 12th century Christian preacher who allegedly said, preach the gospel at all times when necessary, use words. As appealing as that sounds, Francis never said any such thing.

What he did say is found in the rule that he wrote to guide the Franciscan order of the Christian monks. And it reads this way, no brother should preach contrary to the form and regulation of the Holy Church, nor unless he has been permitted by his minister.

[4 : 55] The minister should take care not to grant this permission to anyone indiscriminately. All the friars, however, should preach by their deeds. Far from diminishing the importance of the verbal proclamation of the gospel, Francis wanted to ensure the faithful proclamation of the gospel by restricting who gets to preach.

And on the other hand, he permitted all people to preach by their deeds. Because the gospel is good news, it is always necessary to use words.

Of course, good deeds always accompany good news. But good deeds apart from good work, good news, divorce from the good news doesn't do anyone eternal good.

That's why Paul says here, he preached the gospel to the Corinthians. The word preach is actually a verbal form of the word gospel, which goes to show that it is in the very nature of the gospel itself to be preached, to be proclaimed.

And then Paul recalls the response of the Corinthians to his preaching of the gospel. He continues in verses 1 to 2, Now I would 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.

[6 : 15] We see the progression of the gospel here in this verse. First, it was received. That refers to what happened in the past. Second, it is the gospel in which they stand currently.

That refers to what the Corinthians are doing in the present. And then third, it is the gospel by which they are being saved, meaning that their salvation will only be consummated in the future time.

And because of this past, present, and future reality of the gospel, we must hold fast to the gospel of the resurrected Christ. Paul says, If you hold fast to the gospel, if you hold fast to the word I preach to you, that parallels the phrase, the gospel I preach to you, the word is shorthand for the gospel here as well.

So Christians who do not hold fast to the gospel will fail to experience that final salvation, which still lies ahead in the future. This is why we must daily preach the gospel to ourselves.

This is why Christians gather weekly to preach the gospel to themselves. This is why I preach the gospel every time I come to preach, even when everybody in the audience is Christian.

[7 : 28] 17th century Christian pastor Richard Baxter expressed this sentiment in one of the poems that he wrote. It reads this way, Still thinking I had little time to live, My fervent heart to win men's souls did strive.

I preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men. Well, how should preachers men's repenting crave, who see how near the church is to the grave?

On no day do I think of myself as preaching to the choir. I preach to you urgently, earnestly, because we must hold fast to the gospel of the resurrected Christ.

As Paul says at the end of verse 2, Those who do not hold fast will have believed in vain. Having exhorted them to hold fast, Paul then explains the content of the gospel in verse 3 to 7.

This gospel is not something that Paul came up with by himself in one of his brainstorming sessions. Rather, the gospel that Paul preached to the Corinthians, which they received, is something that he himself also received.

[8 : 41] He says in verse 3, For I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received. Paul used this expression of delivering what he received earlier in 1 Corinthians 11, which we talked about on Friday.

By the way, we've been in 1 Corinthians for a while. I don't know if you want to change the battery, or is there something? I can just...

I can just... Can you guys hear me? Yeah. So I can just... I just preach like this on Friday, so I'll preach like this again. This mic might come flying to one of you guys.

I move my hands so much when I preach. The language of delivering what he has received is a language of faithful transmission of what he has himself received from the Lord Jesus Christ.

So he's saying that he's faithfully passing on what he has received from the Lord Jesus himself. And this, what he's about to articulate, the gospel, is not something that's of secondary importance for Paul.

[9 : 56] It is something that he says is of first importance. And the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is at the heart of Christianity, this goes back to the very beginning, to Jesus. And it's crucial that we get this, especially for all of us, but for Christians who are trying to live by the gospel.

Because, yes, it's important that we believe all of the right and true things that are taught in Scripture. But it's also important that we believe all the right things in proper proportion.

Think about it this way. There's a bodybuilder who has the biggest biceps in the whole world. It's twice the size of your thighs.

But imagine that he skipped leg days when he went to the gym. So he has skinny chicken legs. If you look at him, he would look hideous and aily.

Because the best bodybuilders in the world don't just try to build big muscles. They try to build big muscles in proper proportion so that it looks good. So that it looks human.

[11 : 01] So that it looks right. Similarly, we have to believe all the truths of Scripture, but we have to believe them in proper proportion.

And this, what Paul's about to tell us, is of first importance. In Matthew 23, 24, Jesus accused the Pharisees of missing this particular thing. He said that they were keeping the smallest minutiae of the law while neglecting the weightier matters of the law.

Christians can do the same. Among all the good and right things that we believe, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the first important. That's the heartbeat of Christianity because it's the good use of the person and work of Jesus Christ, our King and Savior.

It's what makes us tick. It's what makes us go in life. It's what makes us get up in the morning. It's what we are most passionate about. It's what we are most eager to share with anyone that we see.

Sure, the Bible does call us to be good stewards of our environment. The Bible teaches that. But if you're more passionate about Earth Day than Resurrection Sunday, then there's something profoundly amiss about your theology.

[12 : 16] The Bible does call us to be loyal subjects of the governing authorities. But if you're a patriot before you're a Christian, if you're more passionate about Independence Day than above Resurrection Sunday, then there is something profoundly amiss about your proportions of belief.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is of first importance. And Paul succinctly summarizes this gospel in verses 3 to 5. And because of the balanced structure of verses 3 to 5, and because Paul explicitly says that it's something that he's passing on that he received in this form, most people, most who study the Bible conclude that verses 3 to 5 is a formal early Christian creed.

It probably goes back to 33 AD or so, which is around the time when Paul visited the apostles. And that's probably when he received this creed. So this is as ancient as you can get.

So the gospel that he's teaching here goes all the way back to Jesus probably within the lifetime, really, within years, a few years of Jesus' lifetime. And this gospel formulation in verses 3 to 5 has an A, B, A, B structure.

The first and third clauses deal with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and they both include the phrase according to the scriptures. And then the second and fourth clauses, they verify the first and third clauses respectively.

[13 : 38] You'll see what I mean. The first clause states this, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. Paul is referencing Isaiah 53, 5 to 6, which prophesies about Christ in this way.

He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Some of you might wonder, if you are quite perceptive, that if this is a prophecy about Christ, why is everything in the past tense?

And that's because in the Hebrew, there's what grammarians call the prophetic perfect. In order to convey the fact that what God says about the future is as sure and certain as something that has already happened, when the prophets use prophecy, they use what they call the prophetic perfect.

They use the past tense to indicate that it's as sure as if it had already happened. And so this prophecy, recorded in 8th century BC, 800 years before Christ, accurately predicts that Jesus would be an unusual messianic king.

[14 : 55] One who would come to reign, yes, but one who would first be pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquities. But Paul's not merely saying that this one specific Old Testament passage spoke that Christ would die for our sins, but all of scripture, he says, Jesus said in Luke 24, 27 speaks about him.

So all the institutions from the Old Testament, the Passover lamb that was sacrificed for God's people, the sacrificial system with atonement for sin through the sacrifice of animals, all of that ultimately pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus.

They foreshadowed his coming and his death. So that's why Paul writes that in accordance with the scriptures, Christ died for our sins. The language that he died for our sins is referring to atonement, which is a cleansing or removal of the defilement and punishment that we deserve because of sin.

Sin is an offense against God. It's a violation of the will of God, rebellion against God. And by living for our own glory, for ourselves rather than living for God, as we were created to do, we have all sinned.

For this reason, there was enmity between God and man. We were God's enemies. David Wells, a local theologian at the Gordon-Kylew Theological Seminary, he puts it this way in his book, *The Search for Salvation*.

[16 : 20] Man is alienated from God by sin, and God is alienated from man by wrath. It is in the substitutionary death of Christ that sin is overcome and wrath averted so that God can look on man without displeasure and man can look on God without fear.

Sin is expiated and God is propitiated. This is the reality that Paul is speaking of. Christ died for our sins so that those who entrust themselves to Jesus Christ for salvation have their sins forgiven, they have their debts paid, they have their guilt absolved, they have their penalties satisfied.

Do you know this truth? That when God looks at you, if you are in Christ, that he does not see the squalor and filth of your sin, but that he sees the light and glory of Christ's righteousness.

That when God looks at one of his children, that he does not see a failure and a disappointment, but his beloved child. When you feel the weight of your own sins, remember this truth that Christ died for your sins.

Christ died for our sins so that you would not have to, the only man that ever lived who did not have to be punished for his sins, because he did not sin. The Holy Son of God himself, he bore our sins and paid its exacting penalty.

[17 : 56] As a confirmation of this truth, Paul moves on to the second clause of the creedal formula in verse 4, that he was buried. This verifies Paul's first claim that he died.

He was dead and buried. He was laid in a tomb cut out of a rock and a large stone was rolled in front of it to seal the entrance. There's a sense of finality to that statement that he was buried.

But that's not the end of the story. In the second half of verse 4, Paul moves on to the third part of the creed, which parallels the first. He says that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

Unlike the preceding phrases, this one in the Greek is actually in the perfect passive tense. So it should be translated that he has been raised.

Paul says that intentionally to convey the fact that not only was Christ raised back then at that point, then to die again later, but that he has been raised in the sense that he was raised once and that he still lives, that he remains the risen Lord.

[19 : 04] When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in John 11, though Lazarus came back to life, he lived for a while and then died again. He was raised only to temporal life.

But Jesus' case is different. When Jesus was raised from the dead, he was raised to eternal life. That's why later in verse 23, Paul describes Jesus as the first fruit of the resurrection.

All those who have put their faith in Jesus will soon share in that eternal resurrection life when Christ returns. This too was in accordance with the scriptures, Paul says.

Matthew 12, 40 alludes to the Old Testament book, Jonah 1, 17, and says this, For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The Jews counted their days inclusively, meaning that if you went on a skiing trip on a Friday night and returned on Sunday morning like good Christians to attend worship service, that would be counted inclusively as three full days, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

[20 : 15] So even though technically Jesus died on Friday night and he rose at the beginning of Sunday, this is consistent within a Jewish time reckoning to say that it was three days and three nights.

So Jonah's confinement in the belly of the great fish lasted three days, and afterward he preached to Nineveh and the city repented and was saved. So that pointed to and foreshadowed Christ's death and burial for three days and his subsequent resurrection, which brought about the salvation of the nations.

Similarly, in describing the affliction and suffering of God's people, Israel, in Hosea 6, 2, it prophesied, after two days he will revive us. On the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.

And since the nation of Israel is metaphorically described as God's son in the Old Testament, and since Jesus is the son of God, the new and true Israel, this prophecy also prefigured the resurrection of Christ after three days.

Besides these specific parallels, the expression on the third day occurs some 30 times or so in the Old Testament. And there is a general pattern throughout Scripture of God bringing about deliverance and resolution to a difficult situation on the third day.

[21 : 33] For instance, Genesis 22, 4. On the third day, Abraham arrives at the place where he is to sacrifice his only son, his beloved son, Isaac. And Abraham offers up Isaac in the faith that God would even raise him from the dead.

But when he is about to slay him, God stops him and commends Abraham's faith and provides a substitute for Isaac, a lamb that will be sacrificed in the place of Isaac.

So on the third day, Abraham, in a figurative sense, receives his son back from the dead. That points to Jesus. When the king of Persia, incited by the cunning official, Haman orders the genocide of the Jews, Queen Esther, who is Jewish, instructs her people to pray and fast for three days.

And it says in Esther 5, 1, that on the third day, she intervenes by speaking to the king and saves the Jews. Exodus 19, 11, God says, on the third day, the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

So because of all of these examples and more God's people who were steeped in Scripture in the Old Testament, they were conditioned to expect God's ultimate deliverance on the third day.

[22 : 55] And that pointed to the resurrection of the Son of God on the third day. Sometimes as Christians, we can miss the significance of Christ's resurrection.

We think that his death alone is sufficient for our atonement. But Paul corrects this misbelief later in verse 17 of the same chapter. He says, And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Christ's resurrection is the proof that his crucifixion for our sin was effective. It's because Christ was raised from the dead that we can be raised to new life.

Because Christ was raised from the dead, we can be assured of our victory over sin and death. Because Christ was raised from the dead, we can hope in our resurrection life to come and endure suffering and trials of this life.

That's why the resurrection is worth celebrating. And it's for this reason that Christians of all subsequent ages chose to gather for worship on, not on Saturday when the Jewish predecessors worshipped, but on Sunday, the day Christ rose from the dead, the first day of the week to commemorate the fact that he makes all things new.

[24 : 17] That's why we call this day Easter. In many languages, the word for east is connected to the idea of the resurrection because the sun which had set rises from the east.

Baptism in water, which is the initial rite of becoming a Christian, signifies our union with Christ and his death and resurrection. Our submersion in the water signifies our death and our emergence from the water signifies our new life with Christ.

Our sinful past is gone. Our old selves are gone. We who had fallen low due to sin rise again when we are united to Christ to faith.

That's why the resurrection is essential to the gospel. Then, just as the second clause that he was buried confirmed the first clause that Christ died, so now the fourth clause that he appeared confirms the third clause that he was raised.

That Christ was raised can be verified by the fact that after his resurrection he appeared to people. Verse 5 says, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

[25 : 31] Cephas is another name for Peter and the twelve refers to Jesus' original disciples who were closest to him. And this ancient creed includes mention of Christ's appearance to demonstrate that Christ's resurrection was not a figment of someone's imagination, that Christ's resurrection was not figurative, oh Christ is alive in our hearts, no, but that it was a real, physical, concrete resurrection.

resurrection. That's what it means that Christ died, that he was buried, that he was raised, and that he appeared. And because it's imperative that we believe the reality of the resurrection, Paul heaps up more evidence in verse 6.

He says, then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. people. By brothers, it's the typical, the Greek word is inclusive, so it includes men and women.

So he's saying most of them are still alive, 500 or so of them. Go ask them. Check the facts yourself. Then Paul continues in verse 7, he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

James was the brother of Jesus, who initially didn't believe in him, but later came to faith and became a leader of the church in Jerusalem. And after appearing to him, Jesus appeared to all the apostles collectively.

[26 : 58] And the fact that all the apostles here is a distinct category from the 12 disciples shows that the apostles is a more general category that includes the 12, but also includes others who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection and were commissioned to be his authoritative witnesses.

And if you are not yet a follower of Jesus Christ, you might object to this as modern people living in the midst of great scientific advances and progress and reason, how can we believe in such fairy tales as the resurrection that these gullible, ignorant people of the ancient world believed?

But this kind of thinking reflects what C.S. Lewis likes to call and what I like to call the chronological snobbery. Because truth be told, people in the first century didn't believe that people came back from the dead any more than we do today.

For a moment, seriously consider the foundational claim of Christianity that is radically different from how all the other religions began. C. Michael Patton, the author of the book Now That I'm a Christian's, I've mentioned this actually last Good Friday, I think.

He writes that Christianity is the world's most falsifiable religion. And he contrasts that with other religions. For example, he says, consider Islam. In order to become a Muslim, one must trust in a private encounter that Muhammad supposedly had with God, which is historically unverifiable.

- [28 : 33] Consider Buddhism and Hinduism, whose central tenets are philosophy rather than a historical event rooted in time and space, so there's no empirical way to verify those either. consider every religion you can think of besides Christianity, and it either begins with a private dream about God, or a private angelic encounter with God, or a private idea or philosophy about God.

And then this one person tells everybody else about their experience. These cannot be investigated or verified, and they are unfalsifiable.

people. But contrast this with how Christianity started. After a public ministry, Christ was killed in public execution.

Then Christ rose from a public tomb accessible to all. Then Christ showed himself to the public, and this public that saw him then told everyone else what they saw.

Jesus predicted his own death and said that he would rise again. That's about the best you can do if you want to set yourself up for failure as a founder of a cult.

- [29 : 50] Because when he dies, and if he does not rise again, like the hundreds of people who have claimed to be the Son of God and the Savior of the world before him and after him, he would have faded into history like the rest of them.

But Jesus has not been forgotten. He has not been forgotten because he is worshipped still in the farthest corners of the earth. Why? Because Christ is risen.

There was an empty tomb to be reckoned with. It would have been impossible for Jesus' disciples to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus if his tomb hadn't in fact been empty.

When the apostles began to preach the gospel of the resurrected Christ and people began to come to faith in droves, the Jewish religious authorities and the Roman governing authorities who wanted to stamp out this fledgling movement, they stood hopelessly by.

Why? Because the tomb was empty. Because his corpse was nowhere to be found. Or else they could have just showed it to everybody and put this down once and for all.

- [31 : 06] The fact that the gospel of Jesus Christ took root and grew in the very city where Christ was crucified and buried remains to this day a compelling evidence for the historicity of the resurrection.

After articulating the content of the gospel, Paul then reveals the character of the gospel in verses 8 to 11. and he connects then the gospel of Christ to his own conversion and ministry.

He says this in verses 8 to 9. Read with me. 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.

all kinds of things are happening to me.

Sound is not working and it looks like my printer also malfunctioned so I'm missing the rest of my manuscript but thankfully I still have the Bible in front of me and I can still preach to you exactly what I wanted to say.

- [32 : 18] Just give me a second and we just find the passage. The gospel must go forward.

The character of the gospel. He 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.

But by the grace of God I am what I am. So he calls himself the one who is untimely born because apostles as he taught earlier in 1 Corinthians are those who have to have seen Christ if he resurrected Christ with their own eyes and had been commissioned afterward to be his authoritative witnesses.

But Paul didn't see ascended Christ and because he received his apostolic commission in that way he called himself the one who was untimely born.

And that's actually a very degrading way to refer him to himself. And it's very possible that because the Corinthians as we know it were already questioning and challenging Paul's apostleship they were saying that your teaching is not up to snuff.

[33 : 41] I mean it's not as good as these teachers philosophers you don't have the worldly wisdom that these people have so they were already challenging his apostleship so this fact that he was untimely born may have been something that they were also accusing him of and saying that you are not a real apostle and the word untimely born is literally one Greek word that means abortion a premature baby that's what it means he's saying that he's like a pleamy like an aborted fetus that's the kind of apostle I am so he's really degrading himself and humbling himself before the Corinthians and he says I am the least of the apostles but even though he was untimely born he nonetheless is an apostle but he never says that he is the least of the apostles unworthy to be called an apostle but for a different reason than what the Corinthians would have said they would have objected to his ministry saying that your ministry is not as powerful is not as wise it's not as insightful as the ministries of these people but

Paul says to them that's not the reason why I'm the least of the apostles he says he's the least of the apostles unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God this remained for Paul always a tender spot in his heart that he was formerly a persecutor of the church that he persecuted his own Lord and so in 1st Timothy 115 he calls himself the foremost of sinners the chief of all sinners in Ephesians 3 he says that he is less than the least of all the saints why because he persecuted the church of God he persecuted Christ the Lord himself but even though he degrades himself and humbles himself in this way he nevertheless has tremendous confidence and this is why because he says in verse 10 but by the grace of

God I am what I am grace unmerited favor something that is not earned it's not a reward that is given to us but it is a gift that is freely given even though we don't deserve it grace it's when a son a rebellious son shames his father and tells him that I wish you were dead and takes half of his wealth runs away from the house squanders all of his wealth with prostitutes becomes a homeless beggar and returns home in shame and when he does that and the father does not reject him or shame him but embraces him kisses him puts the best robe on him and throws the biggest party for him because his son has returned that's grace that's what

God did for us grace is when a sworn enemy of God who opposed God at every turn and rounded up his very followers the adopted children of God rounded them up to jail them and even to execute them and when God doesn't destroy this insolent enemy but saves him and calls him to be one of his most esteemed messengers that's grace that's the grace that God showed to apostle Paul and so he says yes I am the least of the apostles I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle I freely admit that to you but by the grace of God I am what I am and his grace toward me was not in vain on the contrary he says

I worked harder than any of them though it was not I but the grace of God that is with me now Paul is mentioning that after degrading himself he's not trying to lift himself up saying oh I'm better than all these other apostles because I work harder than all of them he's trying to because the Corinthians are questioning his authority as an apostle he's trying to build his credibility because they were questioning his apostleship on the basis of his ministry but he's saying on the basis of my ministry I'm not one with less than any of those apostles so don't you dare reject the gospel I preach to you because you think less of me don't think less of the gospel I preach to you just because you think less of me that's what Paul is trying to say I worked harder than all of them and he's telling the truth he says in Romans he preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum in all the known world where he was able to go he planted churches everywhere he went all the city centers he says in 2nd

[38 : 57] Corinthians chapter 10 he writes about all the hardships that he went through for the gospel he was beaten one time he was stoned taken for dead he was given the 40 minus 1 30 times or something like that that's the severest punishment you can get before you get the execution because he gave them more than 40 lashes or 40 lashes or more they could die he knew hunger he was shipwrecked he was beaten with a rod he said he worked harder than any of them he is not exaggerating but he did not do that in his own strength he is not giving credit to himself when he says that but even in saying that he gives credit to God he says I worked harder than any of them though it was not I but the grace of God that is with me note the repetition of the word grace here in these two verses by the grace of God I am what I am and his grace toward me was not in vain and

I worked harder than all of them though it was not I but the grace of God that is with me I think it's Pastor John Piper Christian author he was the first person to note this but it's that every Paul characteristically begins and ends all of his 13 letters in this way he begins by saying in some form grace to you the grace of God coming to you at the opening of the letter but he ends his letter with some form of grace be with you the grace that came to them now he leaves them with that grace be with you because Christian life is grace grace beginning to the end it's grace it's the grace of God that saves us and it's that same grace of God that sustains us it's the grace of God that justifies us and counts us as righteous before God's judgment seat and it is that same grace of God that sanctifies us and makes us righteous like

God that's why it's a lie when someone says if you preach the grace of God people will not work hard people will not obey God no it's only those who have the grace of God and are sustained and strengthened by the grace of God that work harder than everyone else and so Paul says whether it was I or they so we preach and so you believe he brings it back to his main point which is he's trying to hold fast to the gospel of the resurrected Christ and he's saying it doesn't matter whether you heard it from me or whether you heard it from the apostles don't discount the gospel because you think less of me it's the same gospel that they preached that Christ gave to us that I have preached to you this has some very practical applications for all of us if you are a Christian this means that you don't need to be ashamed of your past you don't need to try to erase your sinful past you don't need to try to put on a mask a face keep your present struggles and sins hidden because all of us are sinners saved by the grace of

God and that should also if you're a Christian embolden you to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others because this teaches us that no matter how hardened people might be no matter how far and wayward they might seem from the truths of Christianity no one is beyond the reach of the gospel of Jesus Christ if God could save Paul he could save them and if you are not yet a follower of Jesus Christ let me speak to you leave your pride behind leave your guilt behind leave your shame behind leave your fears behind and come to Christ he can save you you are not so good that you do not need

Christ salvation neither are you so bad that you are beyond God's salvation that's what we remember today hold fast to the gospel of the resurrected Christ let's pray together maybe a moment actually to reflect on that how you can respond to this gospel of Jesus we'll have time of corporate prayer together and if you .