

The Eternal Gospel

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1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-- unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me*. ¹¹ Therefore, whether *it was I* or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The Resurrection which was and is and is coming

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, which proclaims his death and resurrection is something which no matter how often we hear it we need to be constantly reminded of it.

I think I have mentioned before that my daughter Kaylee has the habit of looking down while she is walking. Because of this her Physical Therapist at school and her teachers that work with her are constantly reminding her to keep her head up. Kaylee has now learned to remind herself. When she is walking, she will constantly repeat the phrase "up, up, up," she will even use her hand to lift her chin up.

Paul reminds us that we too as Christians need to constantly look up. We need to remind ourselves as we walk in faith through this life to lift up our heads. It doesn't matter how many times we have heard of Jesus' resurrection, our temptation is always to walk through this life with our heads bowed down and focused on our own feet. Even if we do not forget or deny that Jesus is risen from the dead, still we are constantly walking and making decisions as though there is no resurrection from the dead. We need that constant reminder.

Rather than looking down at our own feet we need to hold fast to his resurrection. Chin up up up and look to the truth of his resurrection. This is an eternal and unalterable truth.

This Gospel is eternal

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

The same gospel, which was given to Paul, he preached to the Corinthians. It is the same gospel that they received. It is the same gospel in which they stand and which they also preached to others. It is the same gospel that we also received, and which will bear fruit among us. It is the same gospel, that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead. It does not change. It is the eternal gospel.

As we hear in revelation

Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth

This verse clearly teaches that the gospel like Christ himself has always and will always exist. Aionios does not mean with beginning but no end, it means without beginning and without end. Even the angel who holds and proclaims the gospel has a beginning, but the gospel which he carries does not.

In what form of how this gospel existed before creation we do not know, but it did exist, as Peter and Paul teach

1 Peter 1:20 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you

That Jesus would become man, die for the sins of the world and rise again is an eternal proclamation. Paul emphasizes in our text that this eternal proclamation was given to him and he passed it along as he received it. It was proclaimed before the foundation of the world for our salvation.

This eternal gospel does not change

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

After Paul told them about Jesus the Corinthians were tempted to follow other teachers and preachers who claimed to speak of Christ but taught a new gospel. It is tempting to get excited and enamored by new things.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that this eternal gospel does not change. He gave them exactly what he had received without addition or subtraction. What others preach has changed but what the Gospel preaches is the same today as it was in the beginning.

What doctors tell you will change. What politicians and scientists tell you will change. Education and farming and all other things change, but not the Gospel of Jesus' resurrection. That other things change is not a bad thing. It is a mark of learning and advancement. But it underscores the universality and unchanging nature of the Gospel of Jesus' resurrection, unlike these other things it is truth.

For this reason, Christ and his gospel, especially the proclamation of the resurrection is our rock. The one unchanging truth which gives us security and confidence while everything else blows and drifts around us

Even the church itself as a building changes and shifts over time. There is a great difference between the look of a church building from the time of Moses and Joshua till today, but we do not boast or take refuge in a building but in the central truth for which it was built that Jesus died for our sins and rose again. This greatest and most profound confession has not changed since the time of the prophet Job who proclaimed as we do today, "I know that my redeemer lives"

Consider how that one simple sentence envelopes all the basic truths of the Gospel

1. First, he calls him redeemer. This is a confession of his sins.
2. Second if he is his redeemer then it is clear that this messiah saved him from his sins, thus the death and sacrifice of Christ is proclaimed.
3. This redeemer lives - thus the resurrection of Christ is proclaimed.
4. If our redeemer lives then Job himself can also be confident that he will live as well.

The whole simple gospel proclaimed unchanged from the time of Job till now.

Paul preached what he saw and what he witnessed but even at his time there were those who thought that they knew better than Paul. Today also many attempt to change the Gospel, but the gospel like Christ himself is immutable and unchangeable. Like Job we also can confess with absolute certainty that Jesus died for our sins and rose again on the third day.

The eternal gospel produces fruit

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that it was this everlasting Gospel which produced the fruit of faith among them. It was also this gospel the proclamation of Christ' death and resurrection which made Paul what he was. This Gospel did produce fruit and will continue to produce fruit, even the final fruit of everlasting life.

This everlasting gospel has produced fruit and will continue to produce fruit among you as it did for Paul. This is against all reason and against all experience and must be grasped by faith. Our reason and our experience see only death and sin and it appears to us that they always prevail. The gospel proclaims that death does not prevail, but that Christ rose from the dead and so shall you. For this reason, also Paul stresses that he passes on only that which he received, for any addition on his part would only ruin the everlasting gospel.

This gospel cannot be mixed with anything. It stands alone and pure. Paul says I passed on to you exactly what I received: that Christ died and rose again according to the scriptures.

Chin up up up - lift up your eyes, away from your feet which are so firmly attached to this life and look to Christ's resurrection. This is the eternal proclamation, which we have received and in which we stand, and which does not change, that Jesus died according to the scriptures and on the third day rose again, according to the scriptures. Amen