

1Corinthians 18-11-04b

So, let's continue our study now in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and in a somewhat unexpected way, Paul has, in talking about our motivation and in what is the key to our success as believers, he has brought into central focus the resurrection. The resurrection. I like practical truth.

I want to know not just what needs to be done, but how to do it. And we live in a wonderful age where if you need to figure out how to do a thing, you can go to YouTube and watch a video. You can find somebody that has done it and they say, you know, here's what I did.

And here's the mistake I made. You know, I've tried to get things open to replace the rechargeable battery. And once in a while, I'll find somebody that's got the same model of thing and they'll say, Now, don't try to crack it open this way, which is the way I did it.

And I ended up shattering the case and I have to epoxy it back. And they say, you know, where was this video when I needed it to say, oh, you know, put the screwdriver in this end and it'll open like a clam. If you put it over here, you're going to break all of the clips.

But it's nice to know how to do a thing successfully with a minimum of destruction and a maximum of success. So Paul himself, a convert to the Lord Jesus Christ from being a religious Jew and a Pharisee and a persecutor of the church, as he's about to tell us in some detail, gives us how to be saved. Not in the initial trust in Christ for eternal life sense, but in the present tense, passive tense, how to be saved.

We're not saving ourselves, but we are able to be delivered. We are delivered and we stand in that deliverance on an ongoing basis. We began standing in the past perfect tense and we continue to stand all the way through.

How does that happen? Well, Paul says, let me bring back to your mind, Norizo, I would have you know, the gospel which I preached to you. Verse three, for I delivered to you first of all, as of first importance. This sounds like it might be chronological and sometimes it's used chronologically.

But in this sense, this word means as of first importance. It's en protois. You know what proto means? If you have a prototype, it's the first one.

It's usually the most important one. It's the archetype. En protois, as a first importance, that which I also received.

Now he says in verse one, I preached to you and you received. He says, I received the same gospel. This is the way it works.

Whether you are the apostle or whether you are the least member of the Corinthian church, the gospel is preached and you receive it. And this again is para lumbano. You bring it alongside.

You take it into your possession. So, I delivered to you. This is paradidami.

I gave alongside. Didami is to give. Para is alongside.

I put it out there. You received it. There's sort of an externality when you have para.

They didn't become bosom friends. It wasn't some sort of internal communion. Paul says, I had this gospel out here alongside and I delivered it alongside.

You took it alongside. So, there's almost visible transfer of this independent truth. Para also means that this thing that is being given and received is independent of Paul and it's independent of the Corinthians.

It has its own existence and stands on its own. It's going to be there whether you have Paul and the Corinthians or not. It is its own substantial truth.

Paul says, I received it and I delivered it to you. What is it? That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. Now, what does Paul know from first-hand experience in terms of the gospel? When the Lord Jesus met him on the road to Damascus and he is struck blind by the glory and others only hear thunder and so on, what does Paul personally, at first-hand, come to know? Jesus is alive.

He has been raised from the dead. What is not implicit in that appearance and in that observation? Paul knows that he died. He's heard that.

He knows what the Christians believe. But why did he die? Well, he died because he got crossways with the religious authorities and they succeeded in trumping up the charges enough to get the Romans to execute him. So, in some sense, he was a criminal.

Maybe just a religious criminal, but he ticked off the wrong people and got himself killed. That's why he died. What does Paul say here? What is it that Paul received as of first importance? Not just that Christ died, but that Christ died for our sins.

That's why he died. He didn't die because he was politically incorrect. He didn't die because he was socially not astute.

He didn't die because he stepped in something that he shouldn't have, accidentally or on purpose. There was a purpose. There was a plan and it was foreknown.

It was declared ahead of time. What's the last phrase in this verse? According to the Writings. According to the Graphas.

G-R-A-P-H-A-S. They don't use a capital S and say Scriptures. According to the Writings.

Now, what writings? It's easy to sort of be a bit sloppy in our thinking and say, well, Christ died. That's what it tells you in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. What Scriptures is he talking about

here? There is no Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in common circulation yet.

So, according to what Scriptures? The Old Testament Scriptures. He died in accordance with. This is kata, according to, in accordance with, in keeping with, as it was written.

So, these are Old Testament Scriptures. And that fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy is another assurance that Jesus is who he claimed to be and who the apostles preached him to be, the Son of God. And that he died for our sins, that information didn't come from Jesus.

Paul gives the account of the Damascus Road three different times, or it is given three different times in Acts. And in none of those cases does Jesus say, by the way, Paul, let me just tell you, I came and died for sins. How did Paul get that information? How did he receive that truth from the Scriptures? It was in the Writings.

So, as of first importance, I deliver to you what I received. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Now, of the possible appellations that Paul could use, why does he say Christ? Christ is really the title for the person of whom we speak.

He doesn't say Son of Man. He doesn't say Jesus. He doesn't say the Lord.

He says Christ. Why? That is his Old Testament title. That's Mashiach.

Christos means the anointed. Mashiach is the anointed. So, he is reinforcing that this was known and written in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The Messiah came and died as was foretold. The anointed one, this was a part of a known pre-planned purpose. Purpose.

So, I deliver to you what I also received. What I received. Paul got this information.

Christ died for our sins according to the Writings, according to the Old Testament Scriptures, and that he was buried. The word buried is really great because the form here in the aorist passive indicative, you don't bury yourself. You receive the action of being buried, right? And it's an aorist.

But this is from Phapto. T-H-A-P-T-O. And you wouldn't think, well, that's Phapto.

I've never seen any cognates of that in English. But actually, you have. Because in the aorist, this is etafe.

Etafe. Epi-tafe. Epi upon tafe, being buried.

What is the epitaph? It is that which sits upon the burial, right? Epi-tafe. This is the word where you get epitaph. And that he was buried.

And that he was raised. This is a perfect passive indicative. Have we seen a perfect passive anytime in the recent past? We had a perfect active indicative up in verse two, in which you

stand.

You started standing in the past. You continue to stand. You have stood, as it were.

So here, we have a perfect passive. He was raised up. Something raised him.

He did not raise himself. He was raised from the dead. So, as of first importance, just like I received it, you received it, that Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised the third day.

The third day. Did he need to include the third day? Couldn't he just say, was buried and was raised? Why does he say, raised the third day? Paul wasn't there with the apostles. I'm sure Peter and John have an intimate memory of the fact that it was the third day, early in the morning on the third day.

Women are running from the tomb. Peter and John are running toward the tomb. There are angels.

And that evening, the Lord Jesus himself appears behind locked doors. They have a hard time forgetting that Sunday, which was the third day after Thursday, which was crucifixion day, he was raised the third day according to the scriptures. He repeats according to the scriptures.

So, another affirmation. Not only did the scriptures say that the Messiah would die for sins, but the scriptures say that he would be buried and that he would be raised the third day. Now, where are those scriptures? I would love to go back and spend a couple of weeks reviewing all of these many prophecies.

I'm not going to. We're familiar with many of them. In our study of kings and prophets, we looked at all the prophetic books.

You'll remember Jonah, and the Lord Jesus talked about the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, even so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. Jesus connects the prophet Jonah and his experience with his own death, burial, and resurrection.

And it is three days and it is three nights. We've covered that in exhaustive detail in several of our Resurrection Sunday specials. Can't be anything but a Thursday crucifixion, next day being a Sabbath.

It's a high Sabbath. Passover is a high Sabbath. So, the unfortunate assumption that Jesus was crucified on Friday because scripture says the next day was a Sabbath, just fails to understand the high Sabbaths.

High feast days like Passover were a Sabbath. They are declared to be so in the law. So, Friday is a Sabbath.

Saturday is a Sabbath. That's why nobody could go in and tend to the body of the Lord Jesus for two whole days. They couldn't go until early in the morning on the third day because there were two Sabbaths in a row.

Makes perfect sense. Anyway, it is part of the gospel that he was raised the third day. What if you believe he was raised but not the third day? How would that be possible? I mean, would you not be saved? Would you not be able to stand in your salvation? You say, well, I believe he was raised, but I think it was only two days.

What about that? Are these Friday crucifixion people not saved because they haven't got three? I mean, they believe it's three days. They just think the Jews counted funny, right? I mean, you cannot get around the Old Testament way. I mean, there are multiple passages in the Old Testament that talk about three days.

Nobody seriously disputes the three days, the return of the Lord Jesus to speak to his disciples and so on. They just count funny. But why is the third day so important? According to the scriptures.

Scriptures. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you believe that He died for sins and you believe that He rose the third day, you believe the Old Testament Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, because that's what predicted that He would come. That is part of His authentication, is that He fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures.

To believe in Him is to believe in the Old Testament. You can't think that the Old Testament is a bunch of convenient myths and fables and be saved. Jesus says to the Pharisees, you look at the Scriptures and think that in them you have life, and yet it's they that speak of Me.

You can't only believe the Old Testament Scriptures and not believe in Jesus. You can't believe in Jesus and not believe the Old Testament Scriptures, they are linked. They confirm and join to one another.

Jesus is authenticated, and the third day is just emblematic of all of the prophecies and all of the truths. If you don't believe that the Scriptures were accurate saying that He would return on the third day, then how can you believe that He died for sins? It's the same Scriptures that tell us that His death was efficacious, that His atonement was satisfaction in God's eyes for sin. That His judgment accomplished our salvation.

That's Old Testament truth according to the Scriptures. My point of application is, those of us who live in this age as members of the body of Christ, who are Church, need to pay a lot of attention to the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus said, they are what speak of Me.

If you want to know Jesus, study the Old Testament. So many churches have got a real strong New Testament emphasis, and great swaths of the Old Testament get short shrift. We have endeavored, however the effectiveness might be, but we have tried to cover as much of the Old Testament in our church as we can, because Jesus said this stuff illuminates Me.

If you want to learn about Me, study the writings. So we've looked at every single Old Testament prophet. We've looked at all of the history books.

We're in the middle of looking at the book of Psalms. We've done Ecclesiastes. We've done the five Gospels, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

We've done the book of Esther. We've done the book of Ruth. We've done the books of history, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles.

Why? We spend half of our time in the Old Testament. We always have one Old Testament study and one New Testament study. Why? According to the Scriptures, *tas graphas*.

It's important. You want to be a healthy believer, and you want to stand and be saved, you've got to know what's in the Old Testament Scriptures. You've got to know it, be familiar with it, and see its illumination of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Without the Old Testament, you're going to be a rudderless ship, because the New Testament is built on that foundation. And it has no rudder, it has no center of flotation without the Old Testament. That's what holds it up.

That's what causes it to make sense. In many cases, and we've seen this over and over across the years, if you have difficulty with the New Testament passage, go back to the Old. That's where you find the big book that explains the little book.

So do not give short shrift in your memorization, in your contemplation, in your review, in your reflections, your meditations, your prayers. Remember God's writings, the Old Testament. It is important.

It is central. Paul says, I deliver this to you just like I received it, as of first importance, that these things happen according to the writings, according to the Scriptures. Now, what is the thrust of all of this? All of that is good, but what's his main idea here? Let's just cover this quickly and a little bit summarily.

Brethren, I'm reminding you of the Gospel that I preached to you and that you received. It's the same Gospel I heard and that I received. Christ died for our sins.

He was buried and He was raised again the third day. He was raised according to the Scriptures. And verse 4, verse 5 rather, He was seen by Cephas the son of Zechariah then by the twelve.

Seen by Cephas then by the twelve. Again, how many names has that apostle got? He is Shimon, he is Shimon Bar-Jonah, he is Peter, and he is Cephas. Cephas in Greek and in Aramaic, actually.

So, why is he called Cephas here? Cephas. Why not Peter? He was seen by Peter. Why not Shimon? Simon? Paul met him.

We know this. So, of the available names, why does he call him Cephas? Well, what does Cephas mean? Cephas is the name Peter basically has two names. He is Shimon Bar-Jonah, or if you read John, it actually says Shimon Bar-Yohanon.

In the Nestle-Allen text, it says Simon son of John. John and Jonah are two forms of the same name. So, he is Simon son of John, which resonates when you realize that he is among the first to believe.

Remember, Andrew listens to John the Baptist and introduces his brother Shimon to John the Baptist. You never know what small word you are going to say that is going to do big things. We don't know much about the exploits of Andrew, but the one jewel in his crown is that he was the means by which Simon Peter became a believer.

He came to understand the message of John the Baptist and believed it. His brother Andrew introduced him to the Baptist. So, Cephas.

Cephas is the Aramaic form of Petros. Petros is Greek and it means little stone. Cephas is just the Aramaic of that.

So, this is the name Jesus gave Simon. Now, it is interesting, and we don't have time to do this. I thought about doing it as a special sometime, but if you look at all the times in the Gospels where this apostle is referred to, Simon Peter, and when the Lord addresses him in particular, many times the Lord says, Simon.

Remember our study of Jacob and Israel? When is he called Jacob and when is he called Israel? I just will suggest to you, it is very fascinating to trace in Scripture when this apostle is called Simon, especially by the Lord, and when he is called Cephas, or Peter. I'll just give you one quick example. At the time when the Lord Jesus was arrested and being tried, and Peter, read the account in Mark, which is Mark's taking down of Peter's preaching.

Peter denied the Lord, and then the Lord Jesus is crucified. He is in the tomb, and then he is raised, as Paul is reminding us. And then he appears, one of his last appearances is by the sea, at the end of the Gospel of John.

And you remember that very famously, they are walking along, and there is a question put to Simon Peter by the Lord Jesus. And he addresses him by name. Which name does he use? Does he say, Peter, do you love me? What does he say? Simon Bar-Jonah, do you love me? Simon Bar-Jonah goes back to his old name.

If somebody gives you a nickname out of respect and love, then you kind of feel bad if they quit using it, right? It's a bit of a step back. But in that conversation, three times Jesus says, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me? He calls him Simon. And it's an additional cause of the grief that you can see in Peter's heart, that the Lord is not using that Lord-given nickname.

Anyway, he calls him Kephas here. This is his success name. This is his I'm the Rock name.

This is the name Jesus gave him. This is his Israel name, not Jacob. Kephas.

But it's given here in its Aramaic form, because at the time, they hadn't been talking to Greek-speaking people much. This is back in the context. This is the first generation of the church is all Jewish, right? So they talk Aramaic to one another.

And so the early stories about who saw the Lord Jesus, all of that's in Aramaic. Paul speaks Aramaic. Peter speaks Aramaic.

All the disciples speak Aramaic. They talk among themselves. The earliest testimony and witness is circulating.

These guys are all talking Aramaic among themselves. They adopt Greek, which is their second language when they go out to the Gentiles, right? But this tells you that this is an early account when he's called Kephas and not Petras, because it's the Aramaic. And these are the earliest stories, the earliest accounts.

So what I want you to look at here is, what is the basis of assurance that this is a real gospel? Paul says, did you believe this to no purpose? Is there no fruit? Is there no outcome? Are you not being delivered by this gospel that I preached and that you received, that I also received? Is it all to no purpose? That's what that word up in verse 2 means. It's I-K-E-I-K-E. And it means, it's like Hevel in Hebrew.

It means it was just a puff. It was just a passing thing. It's a passing thing.

No substance, no purpose, no lasting existence. It was just a passing event. But he says, he was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

Of course, this is the ten. Peter is there and that makes eleven. Judas is gone.

But they still call them the twelve. You can call them the brothers four, even if only three of them show up, right? I mean, they are still known by the group name. He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

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. So Paul is subtly providing assurance that their faith is in something substantial, that their faith is in something real, that it is of God, that it reflects reality, its actuality, and holding fast to it is the means by which they continue to be delivered in the present. What is the nature of that assurance? Well, you've got to kind of look, but first of all, it fulfills Old Testament Scripture.

It's according to the Scriptures. It is in line with what Scripture predicted and God's expressed purpose through His prophets. Secondly, it has been authoritatively delivered by the Apostle Paul himself in person, and he is an eyewitness to the resurrected Lord Jesus.

Thirdly, there are other living eyewitnesses. Unless you think that they're just making it up or

deluded or delusional or hallucinatory, he says not only was he seen by Peter, who has a great reputation as the Lord Jesus, one of his foremost apostles, and he's got personal credibility. The twelve, the remaining disciples all saw him, but then this is really the culmination of Paul's offering of evidence here.

After that, he was seen by 500 brethren at once, not seriatim, not individually. We collected a group of 500 who all said that they saw Jesus at some place. This wipes out the notion of hallucination or delusion, because there were half a thousand people all in one place and they all saw Jesus at the same time.

Twenty, twenty-five years later, as Paul writes this letter, most of them are still alive. Patty and I were looking, I was discussing with her, I was thinking about the fact that my grandmother, I know somebody who knew Civil War veterans. You think, oh, the Civil War was such an antique event, but my grandmother as a child knew a lot of Confederate War veterans, some in her own family.

To be just one extended generation back, the last Civil War veteran died in the early 1950s, I believe it was 1953. He was 110 years old. He was celebrated, his name was Harold something, I think, and he lived until the early 1950s.

You think, well, gosh, a lot of us were around in the 1950s, and your life overlaps with somebody who didn't just see the Civil War, but was in the Civil War. This guy fought at Antietam and is on the books. He was a musket-shooting soldier.

In the 1950s, I love those old, old, old game shows when Betty White is like 22 years old and she's on the panel, back in the early 1950s. The guy that had a secret was 90-something years old, 97, 98 years old, but they had him on and they started questioning him. They got him pretty quick because they said, well, this is about something he witnessed.

Well, he was at Ford Theater when Lincoln was shot in the 1950s. He was a child of five, but he said that the thing he remembered most was he was concerned about the man who fell out of the balcony onto the stage. That was John Wilkes Booth running away from the scene of the crime.

But as a child of five, he didn't know what was going on. He heard a bang and he saw this guy fall to the stage. He said, oh, I hope he's okay.

But he had that as a living memory in the 1950s. So this notion that Paul introduces here where he says, look, there were 500 people all in one place. Go ask them.

This wasn't some invention. Cross-check their testimony. They all saw the risen Lord Jesus after the crucifixion, after the three days.

500 people, most of them are alive. But then he's got a beautiful transition here. He could just say most of them are still alive.

But what's the last thing he says? Some have fallen asleep. Ah, we're back to the issue, life and death. Like Johnny Carson, are you going to be right back? If you've fallen asleep, are you going to wake up? If you die, if a man die, will he live again? After that, and notice Paul's got the chronology here.

Jesus appeared to 500. After that, he appeared to James. And this appears to be his half-brother, James.

Because the 12 subdued him, he assumes James is the brother of John. Peter, Andrew, James, and John, Philip, Bartholomew, Simon the Less, and all the rest of those guys, the other Judas. So after that, he was seen by James.

This is James of the book of James fame. This is James of the Jerusalem church, Jerusalem council fame, the Lord's half-brother. Then by all the apostles.

So he's seen by the 12 in verse 5, and then he's seen by all the apostles in verse 7. Then last of all, he was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. Out of due time is ectroma. It was the word used for miscarriage.

It was the word used in some cases for an induced miscarriage or an abortion. And it is a delivery not according to the schedule. It's not when it would be expected to take place.

It's not nine months after conception. This is some other time. And he is actually late rather than early, one born out of time.

So he says, last of all he was seen by me. Is that the last post-resurrection appearance of the Lord Jesus? You are wise to hesitate. Is that the last post-resurrection appearance of the Lord Jesus? Did he appear to anybody else after he appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road? Revelation chapter 1, the Isle of Patmos.

I heard a voice behind me. I looked. Who did he see? The Lord Jesus.

Glorified appearance, flame, burnished bronze, the whole bit. So at the time this is written, Revelation has not been written. At the time this is written, John has not yet been given the apocalypse, the unveiling.

So at this time, it's the last. But it's actually the second to last. Now, we talk about the last, and last of all he appeared to me.

Who did he first appear to? First post-resurrection appearance. Who saw Jesus first in terms of earthly people? Peter, John, Mary. Who did he see first? Paul.

Who did he see first? John. Who saw Jesus first in terms of earthly people? The Father. Who was he first, the Savior? Paul.

Who was he first? John. Who was he first? Paul. Who was he first? John.

Who was he first? Peter. Who was he first? John. Who was he first? in Jesus and upon Pentecost.

Now they are the cadre of first-generation church-age believers. But the first-generation church is all Israel, right? The apostles, the disciples, the twelve, they're all Israelites. Luke is not in that group.

He's a Greek, and he's not in there. They're all Hebrews of the Hebrews. Jesus appears last to John, who's one of the first to see Him.

He's down there with Andrew. John and Andrew are the first to see the Lord Jesus for who He is. When John says, Behold the Lamb of God, right? It's John and Andrew.

And they go and get their brethren. And, you know, the Israelite in whom is no guile, and so on. They go back.

But John is first, and then John is last to see Jesus. But the resurrected Jesus, the first person to see Him is not one of those guys who is identified as Israel. It's a woman.

And you think, who comes to faith in Christ first now? It's the church. Israel will catch up. And the twelve are going to be raised.

There's going to be pillars and gates and so on named after the disciples. But the first one to get it, the first one to see Him and believe, is a woman. It's Mary.

She has no disciple standing in terms of the twelve. She doesn't become an apostle. She doesn't become the mother of some mysterious line of descendants or something like this Dan Brown thing.

I forget the name of it. You know, the mysterious actual physical descendants of Jesus living on the earth. And you get the, I don't know, Rosicrucians and Knights Templar and all that they made movies about.

I can't even remember the name of it. But that's all balderdash. But she is the first to see Him.

And it is emblematic that the church, you know, Paul ends up shaking the dust off his feet and says, we go to the Gentiles. The Gentiles are going to get it first. Branches are broken off because of faithlessness and you were grafted in.

You've got to stick because by faith they can be added back in. But it's Israel, church, church, Israel. That's how it works.

And so that first appearance post-resurrection is no accident. Jesus could have easily avoided it. Do you think He knew Mary was there? Do you think He knew she would see Him? Could He have stepped behind a tree and waited until she left? She's blinded by tears anyway.

Wait a few minutes, she'll be gone. He lets Himself be seen and she's first. Touch me not, I'm

not yet ascended and so on.

So after that, He was seen by James and all the apostles. Last of all, He was seen by me as one born in ectroma, out of trauma, as it were. Ectroma.

It's sort of an unnatural timing. Then He talks about His own apostleship. I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God, but by the grace of God I am what I am.

And what a great phrase to tuck away into our souls. Yes, we may have made mistakes, but by the grace of God we are what we are. And He's talking about this just like Peter, Cephas, is what he is by God's grace, even though he had some failures.

Paul is what he is despite his failures because he is now being saved. He is now standing fast in the gospel that he received. And it goes back to the introduction of this section.

If you receive this gospel and hold it fast and are being saved, that's the goal. Paul made a lot of mistakes, but he received that gospel, he is holding it fast, he is standing in it, and he is being delivered. I am what I am by God's grace.

I am not defined by my failures, I am defined by God's grace because I am holding fast. I am getting with it. I am not letting failures stand in the way of God's plan and purpose for me.

What would have happened if Paul had said, oh well, aw shucks, I persecuted the church, nobody is going to listen to me, I am just going to go grab the writings in my cloak and sit in a corner and study and try to be the best person I can be. He was called to be an apostle and he took up that calling and fulfilled it because he focused on grace, not on failure. He focused on the Lord Jesus raised, not the Lord Jesus dead.

And it is the resurrection. This is the reason, sort of metaphorically, the Protestant church always has an empty cross. The Catholic church always has the body of Christ still on the cross.

They get focused on the death. The central issue is the resurrection. The empty cross.

He is gone. Not only is he gone, it is an empty tomb. If it was easier to symbolize, I think an empty tomb would be a far better Christian symbol than an empty cross.

Empty cross means they took him down. Empty tomb means God raised him from the dead. And that is what really counts.

I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. He channels the grace of God. He avails himself and makes use of and exploits the grace of God.

The grace of God is not going to do it for him. He says, I labored more than they all, but it is really the grace of God that enabled me to labor. That is what he is saying.

I could not have done any labor that would have been worthwhile if not for grace. But because of grace, I did labor. This is not passive perseverance.

This is active exploitation of the grace of God. Therefore, whether I or they, whether you heard me or you heard them, any of these other witnesses, we all preach and you all believe. However you got the gospel, you receive it, you believe it.

That is what counts. If you hold fast to it, if you bring it to your mind and concentrate on it, you are going to be saved. And you are going to continue to do what Paul is doing.

Exploit God's grace. Make the most of it. Be fruitful.

But notice, what is central in that gospel in this whole eleven verses? The resurrection of Christ from the dead. It is not coincidental. It is not additional.

It is not supplementary. It is not in an appendix or a footnote. It is the big cheese in the middle.

It is the main thing. And he is going to go on to explain why it is the main thing and how important it is in the rest of this verse. But we know a lot of this already.

And we can begin today, when we find ourselves challenged, when we find ourselves flagging a little bit in our spiritual enthusiasm, in our spiritual energy, we find ourselves failing in terms of application or falling short in terms of accomplishment or fruitfulness, we say, well, I got to go back to the basics, to the fundamentals. We have been talking about that the last few weeks. Well, one of the basics is, if you are going to have a good golf swing, grab the club.

Pick up the club. You can't hit the ball without a golf club, so get the club out of the bag. It has got to be the right club.

We have got a lot of different tools and resources available. What is the one we pick to get started here? What is our driver? The driver is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is kind of an unexpected truth, but it is true.

Paul has just spent eleven verses here documenting for us the resurrection of Christ. He says, it is an unassailable, irrevocable, beyond contradiction truth. Five hundred people saw the man raised from the dead.

The disciples saw him raised. I saw him after all of those people. And I am here to tell you, he is alive.

And that makes a difference. So, that is our go-to. You say, well, okay, I certainly believe he is alive, but I have got a point of application here.

I have got to make some decisions. I have got to set some priorities. So, how does that affect me? Well, as a preview, as an anticipation, if there is a resurrection, and if we are coming back, what is going to happen at the judgment? What is the first thing that happens when we come

back? The evaluation.

To what standard will I be held? What is God going to be looking for? What is the Lord Jesus going to be examining and reviewing my test scores? What is He going to be looking at? What did I trust as I solved my puzzles? What did I use when I made my decisions? What are my values and goals and priorities? What are they based on? Am I reflecting somebody that believes that Jesus is really alive and I am really going to join Him in John 14.3? If I go away, I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am, there you may be also. If that is a reality, that changes a lot of what we think and do in this life. This earth and its forms are passing away.

That world is eternal. The treasure I lay up there is permanent. Anything I gather here is just going to get scattered.

Anything I pile up is going to get knocked down. So how should I then live? The resurrection is a big deal because the future eternity is predicated on there being life after death. There is no eternity and there is no eternal life and there is no God and there is no Christ if there is no resurrection.

Your faith is futile. You are yet in your sins. He is going to get there.

Remember in Corinthians 15 when we get further down the chapter, He is going to say, if Christ is not raised, you are still in your sins. Go all the way back to the beginning. Christ died for our sins.

If He is not raised, then He did not die for our sins. It is all one thing. If He did not die for our sins, you are yet in your sins and you are of all men most miserable.

There is no point to your life. Eat, drink, and be merry. You are going to turn to dust and corrupt and vanish away and in two generations nobody is going to remember your name.

Your picture is going to end up in some pile of antiques someplace. People will look at it and say, I wonder who that was. Nobody will know.

All of your furniture, anything worth keeping, musical instruments, knick-knacks, curios, nameless, ownerless, down there at the Rusty Rabbit waiting for somebody to pick it up and make a new use out of it. It all is predicated on the resurrection. All of it.

So, food for thought in the coming week. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You that Your Son, the Lord Jesus, is alive and because You have raised Him from the dead, You will raise us up with Him and we have the potential to be freely given all things in Him and through Him and because of Him.

We thank You that He did die for our sins, that we have been freed from the power of our sins, from the power of corruption, the power of death, and the life that we now live. We live as Your children in anticipation of the day when we will be brought to the household and we can dwell

on Your holy hill and visit Your tents and be qualified and know where we are and who we are and what we can do in further service and fruitfulness because of all of the wonderful gifts of life and resource that are ours in Christ. We pray that these realities will impinge on our thinking today and tomorrow and in the days to come so that we can more closely follow the example of the Lord Jesus in fulfilling Your will for His life and that we can follow the example that He set, that the Apostle Paul and the other apostles have set, and in so doing we reflect glory and credit on our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in His name. Amen.