

February 27th, 2022

By the Grace of God I Am What I Am

1 Corinthians 15:8-11

The Gospel of first importance

Ch. 15 marks the beginning of a brand new subject in Paul's letter to the Corinthian Church, and consequently it is the last subject he deals with. He saved the most important subject for last, namely the gospel. And specifically the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Apparently there were some in the Corinthian Church who were claiming that there was no such thing as a resurrection of the dead (v.12). But to deny the resurrection *generally* is to deny Christ's resurrection *specifically*. To believe in a resurrection-less gospel is to believe *in vain*. That type of belief doesn't save anyone.

Two proofs: history and prophecy

So Paul methodically starts laying out proofs for the resurrection of Christ. We saw two proofs last time. 1) The proof from *history*. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact. The risen Christ appeared to the apostles, some individually but also as a whole group, and this happened multiple times. He also appeared to 500 brothers at one time. Why does Paul trot out these eye witness accounts? Because that's how all human history comes down to us, through the eye witness accounts of credible men of sound mind and integrity who witnessed said events. If we consider this testimony *alone*—even from the enemies of Christ who acknowledged the empty grave—the resurrection of Christ is “the best authenticated event in the history of the world.”¹ 2) The proof from *prophecy*. Twice Paul said that these things happened “...in accordance with the Scriptures” *meaning* Jesus rose from the dead just as the Scriptures—specifically the OT—foretold He would. The entire OT is about the death of Christ, how He would suffer for our sins, *and* the

¹ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg. 314

resurrection of Christ, that He would defeat death itself, rise victorious and establish His Kingdom from shore to shore. In other words, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is not only the oldest prophecy in the world, but it is the most prophesied event since the beginning of time. Those two stunning proofs: history and prophecy demonstrate beyond all doubt that the God-man Jesus Christ really rose from the dead.

The third proof: conversion

But Paul is not content with these two proofs, He adds a third proof in our passage this morning, his own conversion and transformation. By all human reckoning, Paul should have never become a Christian. What could possibly explain how Paul began as a persecutor of Christ only to end as a martyr of Christ? The risen Jesus appeared to him. Paul is testifying himself that the only explanation for his conversion and transformation is that Jesus really did rise from the dead. And beloved that is the only explanation for your conversion. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, you're faking it. Your conversion isn't real. But your conversion is real. Your supernatural love for the saints, your perseverance under trials, your growth in godliness, your hope in seeing Christ in glory—those things are all real. What explains it all? The risen Christ.

The Big Idea...

A believer's conversion is the third greatest proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ

- ★ Our Doctrine
- ★ Our Duty
- ★ Our Delight

I. Our Doctrine

A post-ascension appearance

Recall that in v.5-7 Paul tells us that the risen Christ appeared to the apostles and those 500 men. Picking up in v.8 we read “Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.” The word for “untimely born” is ἔκτρωμα ektrōma, it refers to “an abortion [or] miscarriage”² or a child that has been still born. The OT Septuagint always uses ἔκτρωμα to describe a child that is dead from the womb.³ In effect, Paul is saying, ‘I was already a dead child destined never to see the light. When Christ finally appeared to me I had already been aborted. I had no hope of ever seeing Him.’ Remember when Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus road in Acts 9, He had already ascended to the right hand of the Father.⁴ The risen Christ, *beyond all expectation*, appeared to Paul from Heaven.⁵

Abortion is my name

But Paul goes further. Why does he describe himself as one ‘untimely born’? v.9 “For [*because*] I am the least of the apostles,⁶ unworthy to be called an apostle, *because I persecuted the church of God*.” Thayer’s lexicon imagines Paul to be saying this: ‘I am as inferior to the rest of the apostles as a stillborn is to live baby, and I am as unworthy to be named an apostle as a child is to be named

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, (Chicago, IL.: Moody Publishers, 1984), pg. 405

³ Numbers 12:12; Ecclesiastes 6:3; Job 3:16

⁴ Acts 1:9-11 “And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” Also cf. Acts 2:24-35

⁵ This was a post-ascension appearance.

⁶ Note: this is the first of three valuations that Paul renders unto himself (also cf. Ephesians 3:7-8 and 1 Timothy 1:15-16). They are in chronological order as they appear in Scripture and in each successive valuation, he renders himself smaller and smaller, and the grace of God larger and larger.

abortion.⁷ Why? Because Paul persecuted the Church. Recall what Paul was doing the very moment that Christ appeared to Him. **Acts 9:1** says that that he was “...breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” He was on official business to arrest any Christian that he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As the historian Philip Schaff records “...with his Pharisaic education [Paul] regarded Jesus of Nazareth, like his teachers, a false Messiah, a rebel, a blasphemer, who was justly condemned to death.”⁸ Consequently he believed it was his duty before God to put Christians to death. Jesus prophesied about Paul in **John 16:2** “Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.”

The most unlikely convert

There was nobody more unlikely to become a Christian in the whole 1st century than Paul. Caesar Nero was the most vicious enemy of mankind *in general*.⁹ But Saul of Tarsus was the most vicious enemy of Christ and His Church *in particular*. But it’s not *merely* that Paul became a convert. He became an apostle. He became an official spokesman for Christ. It is his writings on which the Church’s very foundation rests. **Ephesians 2:20** says “Together, we are [Christ’s] house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.”¹⁰

“By the grace of God I am what I am”

What accounts for this transformation? The grace of God in the gospel. Look at **v.10** “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

⁷ I changed the pronouns: “...he is as inferior to the rest of the apostles as an immature birth comes short of a mature one, and is no more worthy of the name of an apostle than an abortion is of the name of a child.” Source: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1626/kjv/tr/0-1/>

⁸ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church Vol. 1: APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY: From the Birth of Christ to the Death of St. John, A.D. 1-100*, (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, Reprint 2011), pg. 292

⁹ He who is the Beast - Revelation 13:11-18

¹⁰ NLT

was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.” This is the key verse. Clearly, in Paul’s mind, the grace of the gospel is the central theme because he mentions it three times. So let’s make three brief observations about grace. **First** observe *the origin of grace*. Where does grace come from? Twice Paul says it is “the grace of God.” Grace is entirely supernatural. It’s not a product of nature. Adjust your expectations. If you try to think grace *in a merely human way* you will totally miss it. **Second** observe the *essence of grace*. What is grace? The word is χάρις charis. χάρις is the undeserved love, kindness and favor of God. As Van Mastricht says “[grace] is entirely free and independent of all worth and merit of the creature,¹¹ [God dispenses it entirely according] to the good pleasure of his [own] will.”¹² Paul did not convert or become an apostle because of anything he did. He specifically says “...by the grace of God I am what I am.” **Third** observe *the recipients of grace*. Who receives grace? Those who are entirely undeserving of it. Paul calls himself “unworthy” of God’s grace specifically because he persecuted the Church. However no one—not the most moral man on earth, not the sinless angels in Heaven¹³—can claim to *deserve* the grace of God. **Romans 11:6** “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.” **Romans 11:35** “...who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” If grace is owed, it is not grace. Grace is fundamentally unowed. To sum up these three observations, Paul is saying that he was converted and made an apostle because God’s underserving love and favor was freely given to Him through the gospel.

The efficacy of grace

Now every evangelical can affirm those three truths about grace. But it’s the **fourth** attribute of grace that is so controversial, namely *the efficacy of grace*. Saving grace is efficacious, *meaning*, it is actual not potential. It actually and

¹¹ Romans 11:6 “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”

¹² Petrus Van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology, Vol. 2: Faith in the Triune God*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. 353

¹³ cf. 1 Timothy 5:21

definitely produces effects. It always has success. It always brings things to pass. Look closely at **v.10** “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not *in vain*.” Vain is the word κενός *kenos*, it means fruitless, or without effect. That’s what Paul’s denying. ‘God’s grace is not fruitless, it is not without effect.’ To say it positively: ‘His grace toward me *produced powerful effects*.’ The most immediate effect of God’s grace on Paul was his conversion. Paul didn’t choose to be converted. He resisted Jesus the Messiah with every fiber of his being. But God’s grace overcame Paul’s resistance. One author says “This kind of [grace] creates what it calls for. If it says “Live!” it creates life. If it says, “Repent!” it creates repentance. If it says “Believe!” it creates faith. If it says “Follow me!” it creates obedience.”¹⁴ That’s the *efficacy of grace*.¹⁵

Elenctic theology

This immediately raises a couple objections. The **first** objection is this: “If God’s grace *always* produces conversion, then why isn’t everyone saved?” Well because God doesn’t give His saving grace upon every single person.¹⁶ Friend you have to wrestle with the truth that God declares Himself sovereign over salvation. **Romans 9:15-16** “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will

¹⁴ John Piper, *Five Points: Towards A Deeper Experience of God’s Grace*, (Scotland, Great Britain, : Christian Focus Publications, 2017), pg. 33

¹⁵ Just as the rain is efficacious in causing vegetation to grow (**Isaiah 55:10**); just as fire is efficacious in consuming wood (**Jeremiah 5:14**) so God’s grace is efficacious in converting sinners.

¹⁶ You see the question assumes that God gives His saving grace to every one. That’s not true. It’s true that God offers the gospel to everyone. Jesus has specifically commissioned the Church to “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (**Mark 16:15**). But it’s not true that God gives His saving grace in order to believe the gospel to everyone.

have compassion on whom I have compassion.”¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.”¹⁷

Our **second** objection goes like this: ‘But many have resisted the grace of God. Stephen told the Jews in **Acts 7:51** “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, *you always resist the Holy Spirit*. As your fathers did, so do you.” *Therefore*, so goes the objection, *God’s grace can’t be efficacious because many have resisted it.*’ How do we answer? Yes it’s true that the external word of grace can be resisted—this is the **general call** of the gospel. This is the ‘grace’ Paul resisted and the Jews resisted. But there is an internal word of grace that cannot be resisted—this is the **effectual call**¹⁸ of the gospel. When Jesus commanded Paul’s heart on the Damascus road¹⁹ Paul immediately and irresistibly obeyed.²⁰ That’s the type of irresistible and efficacious grace Paul speaks of here: “...*by the grace of God* I am what I am.”

¹⁷ Another objection is this: “But what about those unconverted souls who truly want to be with God, and God decides not to give them saving grace? How is that the action of a just God?” How do we answer? There is no unconverted soul who wants to be with God. No unconverted soul has ever exercised their so-called free will to choose God. The only thing a sinner’s will chooses is sin. **Romans 3:12** “...no one *does* good [*or chooses to do good*], not even one.” **Jeremiah 13:23** “Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.” The only reason a soul is converted is because God gracious and irresistibly draws that person to Himself. **John 6:44** “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me *draws him*.” When God draws a man to Himself, all resistance is overcome.

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I would argue that every Christian already believes in efficacious grace: God will exercise efficacious grace 100% of the time in Heaven. Efficacious grace explains how we can have un-coerced volition at the same time while Revelation 21:4 is true. God doesn’t destroy our will with His grace, He sets it free to love that which is truly lovely. “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32)

¹⁸ Q. 31. What is effectual calling? A. Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

¹⁹ “But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” Acts 9:6

²⁰ “This is that remarkable special grace granted to the elect in the covenant of grace, by which they not only can believe if they will, but will [believe] since they can.” Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 2, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 1994), pg. 552. One thing that distinguishes the Covenant of Grace from the Covenant of Works is that grace is efficacious in the Grace but not in Works.

The power in Christ's resurrection is the same power at work in saving grace

So here's the question: *how* does this efficacious grace connect to the resurrection of Christ? Did you notice what Paul does? He breaks away from talking about the resurrection to talk about God's grace at work in him. Is this a digression? Is he changing subjects? No. Paul is specifically connecting Christ's resurrection to the grace of God that caused his conversion. What's the connection? Simply this: the power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power inherent in the grace of conversion.²¹

Doctrine: efficacious grace is wrought by the resurrection of Christ

Beloved that's why *conversion is the third greatest proof of the resurrection of Christ*. That's **our doctrine** this morning. No power on earth can explain how a sinner who previously hated Jesus and hated His Church now lives for Him, now desires and loves Him more than mother and father, brother and sister, wife and children yes even his own life.²² No power on earth can explain how a man like Paul a proud, self-righteous Pharisee was transformed into a man who willing suffering persecution and the loss of all his earthly possessions, indeed of his very life, in order to bring the message of Jesus Christ to people who regularly mocked him, beat him, and imprisoned him.²³ Humanly speaking, Paul had nothing to gain and everything in the world to lose by becoming a Christian. What's the explanation? The same power that raised Christ from the dead, transformed Paul into a Christian. And it's the same power that works in

²¹ What does Paul's conversion have to do with Christ's resurrection?

In Christ's resurrection, Christ was dead and then raised to life.

In Paul's conversion, Paul was spiritual dead and then raised to life.

²² Luke 14:26

²³ "In accepting this half-crushed and wholly execrated faith he had everything in the world to lose—he had nothing conceivable to gain; and yet, in spite of all—overwhelmed by a conviction he felt to be irresistible—Saul, the Pharisee, became a witness of the resurrection, a preacher of the cross." Farrar quoted in Schaff, pg. 304

every single conversion. If you are a Christian this morning, it is because the power of the resurrected Christ worked in you to make you a Christian.²⁴

The witness from Ephesians²⁵

Let's consider just one Scripture to demonstrate this. Please turn with me to Ephesians 1. We are going to pick up in v.19, but understand that Paul is here praying for the Church. He is praying that the eyes of our hearts be enlightened, so that we may know the hope to which God has called us. What is *one hope* that Paul prays for us to know and benefit from? Paul is praying for us to know "...what is the *immeasurable greatness of his power* toward us who believe." Stop. The word power is δύναμις dynamis—where we get the word dynamite. Paul modifies δύναμις with two words. First he calls it *immeasurable* ὑπερβάλλω hyperballō. The root word βάλλω is the verb for throwing something. An ancient olympian would throw [βάλλω] a discus. Add the prefix ὑπερ to it—where we get the word hyper—and that olympian now hyper-throws it that discus not only out of the stadium but it breaks orbit and flies into outer space. He threw it to an immeasurable distance. This power—this δύναμις—cannot be measured. The second word Paul uses to modify power is *greatness* μέγεθος megethos. We still use that word mega today as a unit of measurement. A

²⁴ This is proved from 1) Reason. If our conversion is not a result of the power of Christ's resurrection, but rather of our so called free-will...It follows that Paul's use of his own testimony is illegitimate here. He clearly trots out his testimony as evidence for the grace of God *not* his correct choosing or behavior. In fact at every point, he speaks as poorly as he can of his own choosing and behavior...It follows that believers do not properly owe thanks to God. If our conversion was not brought about by God's grace, but rather our so-called free will then we owe God no thanks for it. But this is contrary to Philippians 1:29 which says that it has been granted to us to believe. (cf. The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 2 pgs. 548, 559, 560)...It follows that we do have some good in us, namely in our will before we are saved. For in order to make a virtuous choice, there must be virtue to begin with. But Scripture everywhere objects to this (cf. Romans 3:10-12) If the will is corrupt, how can it ever choose God? How can fresh water come out of a bitter well? How can grapes be produced from thorns. If our sinful nature is as rotten and vile as Scripture says, how can a good choice be produced from it? 2) Proved from our Confession. See WCF 10.1; 16.3. 3) The witness of Church History. Pelagius theology was condemned as heresy. 4) Personal experience. This is not how we pray. cf. https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/spurgeon_prayerfreewill.html

²⁵ Witness from 1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

megahertz is a unit of frequency, equal to one million cycles per second. This power is mega. It's not power squared, or power cubed. It's power to the millionth power. That's the power that Paul wants us to understand is at work in us who believe—a dynamite power that is impossible to measure, a power to the millionth power. But he wants us to know something else. Look again at v.19 "...what is the *immeasurable greatness of his power* toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might *that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.*" Do you see now? The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is what converted us, justified us, sanctifies us, and will glorify us.²⁶ That's **our doctrine**. The efficacious grace by which Paul could say "I am what I am" is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. That's *why* conversion is the third greatest proof of the the risen Christ.

II. Our Duty

2 duties...

1. Informatory Use

Dear believer, the first duty is simply to *meditate* on the Apostle Paul's life. Paul is giving us an autobiography. More than that he's showing us *how* the power of the risen Christ transformed him. Consider with me 3 marks of this efficacious grace on Paul.

1st Mark of Grace: Paul's self-abasement

Paul abased himself. Look at v.9 "I am the least of the apostles." Throughout Paul's writings in the NT, he displays an ever-growing sense of his unworthiness. He made this statement in 55 A.D.²⁷ Five years later in 60 A.D. he wrote his letter to the Ephesians and he re-assessed status. Instead of being

²⁶ Also see Ephesians 2:4-5 w/ 3:20 (cf. Col. 1:29; Heb. 13:20-21)

²⁷ All dates are approximate

the least of the apostles, he wrote in **Ephesians 3:8** “I am the very least of all the saints.” Three years later in 63 A.D. while in prison he re-assessed his status again. This time he said in **1 Timothy 1:15** that he was the chief of all sinners, the foremost. Why did Paul have a grown sense of his own unworthiness? Why did he abase himself so? Because that is what grace produces. The natural man does not abase himself. Our world is full of unregenerate people who are proud and self-exalting and arrogant. That’s how Paul was before Christ appeared to him. But after his conversion, Paul was a truly humble man. Grace enabled him to see himself the way that God did. That’s the **first mark** of grace: *self-abasement*.

2nd Mark of Grace: Paul’s deep concern for the Church

Why *precisely* did Paul abase himself so? Halfway through v.9 “...because I persecuted the church of God.” Paul could not forget how deeply how he hurt Christ’s Church. He knew that it was not only his brothers and sisters he had wounded but Christ Himself. On the Damascus road, Jesus said to him “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”²⁸ As an Apostle, no one care for the church more than Paul. He said in **2 Corinthians 11:28** “And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.” He said in **12:15** “I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.” Paul wanted more than anything to depart from this world and be with Christ for that is far better. “To live is Christ, and to die is gain.”²⁹ But he told his beloved Church “...to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account” (**Philippians 1:24**). His concern for the Church was unrivaled. Why did Paul care for the Church so? Because the power of the risen Christ was upon him. That’s the **second mark** of efficacious grace: *a deep concern for the church*.

²⁸ Acts 8:4

²⁹ Philippians 1:21

3rd Mark of Grace: Paul gave all glory to God

Halfway through v.10 “I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.” It’s true that Paul worked harder than all of the other apostles. He wrote more than half of the NT Scripture. He went on at least 3 missionary journeys, traveling by land and sea all over the ancient world. He evangelized, taught and converted pagans. He disputed and debated with the Jews. He fought against the Judaizers so the gospel could remain pure. He viciously opposed by the idol makers who saw his preaching as a threat to their business.³⁰ He wrestled against principalities and powers, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. He planted churches, trained ministers, reconciled divided saints, comforted the downcast, disciplined the profane and then restored them. He often worked with his own two hands so that he could afford to eat not relying on the support of the churches so as not to put a stumbling block in their way. He often preached all day and all night (Acts 20:7, 11). And he did all this for 25 years. Next to Jesus Christ, Paul was the greatest apostle in the history of the world. He worked harder than anyone and yet what does he say? “...though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.”³¹ Because the power of the resurrected Christ worked in Him, he wanted the same thing God wanted—that all glory go to God alone. That’s the **third mark** of grace: *the supreme desire to give God all the glory.*

2. Consolatory Use

The second duty is to *comfort* ourselves. Loved ones, if you’ve been born again your life is a proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Do you understand what has happened to you? I believe so many Christians live in defeat or lack assurance because they fail to see the power that is at work in them. **Ephesians 3:20** “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to *the power* [the δύνανμις] *at work within us.*” Beloved do you want evidence that this same power is at work in you? Well, take hold of

³⁰ cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-30 for list of his dangers

³¹ cf. Colossians 1:29 and Romans 15:17-20

yourself, don't you realize that you have the same marks as the Apostle Paul?

First, I know this about you, in your best moments you consider yourself entirely unworthy. You see yourself as insignificant, as the least of all the saints, as the chief of all sinners. Good news. All those things are actually true about you. The power of God's grace has opened your eyes to see the truth about yourself. Your growing sense of unworthiness is not a sign that something is wrong, it's a sign that something is incredibly right. The natural man doesn't think of himself that way. The world tells us to believe in ourselves, to be the best you, to have esteem for yourself. That's why it's impossible for the natural man to come to Christ outside of God's powerful grace—because he thinks too highly of himself. But you loved ones have been given this gift of self-abasement. Don't count it as a curse, realize that God's power is resting on you when you feel low. “For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit”” (**Isaiah 57:15**).

Secondly, because the power of the risen Christ works in you, you have a great concern for the Church. Not only are you concerned for the of members this local church, but you have a deep concern for Christians all over the world whom you've never met. Why is that? The natural man could give a rip about the sufferings of the church, or the afflictions of the church. By why do you care? Why does your heart long for their comfort and peace and unity? Because the grace of God has taken hold of you.

Thirdly, because the power of the risen Christ works in you, your chief concern is for the glory of God. Yes, it's true you still sin and still have many moments of selfishness and self-seeking. But those things trouble you deeply. Why? Because your inner man, the new creation inside of you more than anything wants to see God get all the glory. Whitefield, that great evangelist of the First Great Awakening would frequently say “Let the name of Whitefield perish, but Christ be glorified. Let my name die everywhere, let even my friends

forget me, if by that means the cause of the blessed Jesus may be promoted.”³² Beloved this is your desire also. In your heart of hearts, there’s one thing that you truly long for above all else—not your own credit, not your own accolades, but that Christ would be high and lifted up and that the whole world would sing His praises. The natural man wants no such thing. He has not taste for the glory of God. But why does this desire find its home in your heart? Because the power of the risen Christ works in you.

Therefore comfort yourselves loved ones. You are living, breathing proof that Christ really rose from the dead. That transformation that has come upon you can only be explained because the same power that raised Christ dwells in you. What obstacle can hinder you? What trial can crush you? What demonic attack can undo you? What enemy can overcome you? What weapon can kill your soul? If nothing could stop the power that raised Christ from the dead, how could anything ever stop you?

III. Our Delight

This is the gospel we preach

Paul concludes this portion in v.11 “Whether then it was I or they [*that is, the other apostles or myself*], so we preach and so you believed.” All the apostles preached the same message. The Corinthians who pit one teacher against another could not divide the apostles on the question of the gospel. All proclaimed the same truth: “...that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” Beloved, this is the same gospel that we preach today. And it’s the only message in the entire world that can transform people’s lives. A new diet or exercise plan cannot transform you. More stuff, more money can’t transform you. Politics, education, a promised career can’t

³² Source: <https://andynaselli.com/george-whitefield-i-am-content-to-wait-till-the-judgement-day-for-the-clearing-up-of-my-reputation> Accessed February 27, 2022

transform you. A better marriage, or more children can't transform you. Your problem my dear friend is not simply that you need the furniture moved around in your life. That's how the world tries to bring change in their life, they just move some things around, alter some behaviors, move this here, and that there, and that will work. That never works. In the history of the world, no one has ever been able to solve their deepest problem by simply making little adjustments here or there.

Our fundamental problem

Our fundament problem is this: we were born dead in sins and trespasses. How can you or I who are wretched sinners stand before a holy God? With man this is impossible. He would cast us out of His presence, He would say "Depart from me you workers of iniquity." No matter how hard we tried in this life to clean up ourselves, to live right, to live virtuous, it will never be enough. The guilt of sin cannot be overcome by anything we do. Only one Person in the history of the world can overcome our guilt: the Risen Christ.

A call to believe

Perhaps you're here this morning and you don't follow Jesus, you don't call Him your Lord and Savior, you don't believe on His name. Dear friend, consider what you heard this morning. Consider how Paul was transformed from an arrogant, proud Pharisee to one a humble, loving servant of mankind. Consider how he was transformed from a hater of Jesus, to one who found all His delight, all His joy, all His pleasure in Jesus even to the shedding of his own blood. He would rather trade his own life than give up Jesus. Dear friend, don't you long for that type of transformation? That promise of the gospel is that if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. Call out to the risen Christ. Call out for mercy: "Son of God have mercy on me a sinner" Believe the promise of Christ when He said: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and

believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"³³ If you believe that, you will be transformed. You will be able to say with Paul "By the grace of God I am what I am." You will think less of yourself, more of the Church, and you will desire of above all things to see God glorified the the Kingdom of Christ spread from shore to shore. You will be another proof of the risen Christ, because the power that raised Him will now live in you.

³³ John 11:25-26

