

RCC in the Word
1 Corinthians 15:1-2
Week of July 22

"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."

Thus far in this letter, Paul has dealt with a number of problems in the church at Corinth and now he turns his attention to a doctrinal controversy over the resurrection. Before he gets into the heart of his argument, he aims to remind the Corinthians of the importance of the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection is central to the gospel, so Paul begins this chapter by referring to the gospel and their belief in it.

The gospel, or good news, is the message of God's saving work in Christ. Up to this point, Paul had oriented the gospel message around Christ's death, but here he preached the gospel by emphasizing the resurrection. He also affirmed his belief that the Corinthian Christians had received this gospel message and had taken their stand on it. In Paul's day being a Christian was more than intellectual assent to a group of doctrines. The social price that followers of Christ paid forced them to take a stand in a hostile world.

It is the gospel message, that Paul would hereafter summarize, by which they are being saved. I think it's important for us to see how Paul speaks of salvation in these verses as a past, present, and future reality. At some point in time, all Christians believe in the gospel for the first time. From this moment in which we believe, we are saved. We have believed in Jesus Christ and all his work through which he accomplished our salvation.

Yet as Christians, we do not move past the gospel. We do not simply believe once and then forget about our faith. We must "stand" in the gospel - present tense. We must continue to believe every day. Our faith must continue. And of course, Paul says, we must always continue to believe in the future. It is the word of God "by which we are being saved," if we "hold fast." If we continue to believe, then we shall prove that our faith is not "in vain" but that it is genuine and that we are indeed children of God.

Anticipating the importance of what he would say about the resurrection, Paul made it clear that anyone who did not hold to the gospel he had preached could not be saved. Only by this gospel could they be saved from God's judgment. Salvation comes through belief in the good news of Christ's death and resurrection.

Yet, Paul added an important qualification. They are saved, if they hold firmly to

the word. As he indicated throughout this epistle, Paul believed that saving faith would set itself apart from insincerity through time. True believers persevere in their commitments to Christ. Paul did not mean that truly regenerate people could lose their salvation, nor that truly regenerate people were without sin and failure. He understood, as the entire Bible teaches, that saving faith proves itself over a lifetime.

So in each of the past, present, and future, belief and faith in the work of Jesus Christ (the gospel) are essential. That is why the gospel is always the most important thing for us to know and believe. It is why Redeemer Community Church preaches the gospel every Lord's Day. It is why we must preach the gospel to ourselves every day. The gospel is not just something for us to believe one time and then move on. Paul tells us that we must have believed it at some point, we must believe it now, and we must continue to believe it in the future if we are to be saved from our sins.

Paul warned that if the Corinthians had once trusted the gospel of Christ but did not hold fast to that gospel, then they believed in vain. In other words, their temporary commitments to Christ would not benefit them as they had hoped. Anyone who turns away from belief in the resurrection of Christ puts himself in a precarious position. In these verses we see the importance of continuing to preach, hear, study, believe, and rejoice in the gospel each and every day until the Lord calls us home.

Written by Nathan Renfro