

Of First Importance
1 Corinthians 15:1-5

I. Priorities

A. Priorities

1. Personal
 - a. When you set your priorities for the day, the year, a season, or an event in life, where does the gospel come?
 - b. When you decide what is of greatest and foremost importance in your values, your decision making, your thinking and your heart, where does the record of God's saving grace in Christ fit?
2. Paul/Corinthians
 - a. Division in the church
 - b. Sexual Immorality and Pride in the church
 - c. Lawsuits and relationships in the church
 - d. Personal freedom and love in the church
 - e. The Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts in the church
 - f. Propriety and worship in the church

B. Paul's priority: the gospel and its impact on life in the present and in the future.

1. **Every work of faith and grace in life to which Paul calls the Christian and the church is grounded in the work of Christ on our behalf.**
2. Of first importance: the work of the Lord
 - a. **1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV) *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.***
 - b. **1 Corinthians 15:3-5 (ESV) ³ *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: 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, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.***
3. **The work of the Lord to which every Christian and every church is called is the proclamation by life and word of the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus! This is the priority God sets for us!**

C. What makes the gospel so important that it should form the basis of Christian life and practice?

II. Three Reasons the Gospel is of First Importance to the Christian and the Church

A. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the means through which sinful people are called to faith, saved, and share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 (ESV) ¹³ *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.***
 - a. Saved?

- (1) God created Adam and Eve and considered them representative for all future generations of human beings
 - (2) God gave these representative humans one simple rule: don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that is in the midst of the garden
 - (a) God assigned the guilt connected with their disobedience to all future generations of human beings
 - i) In Adam all sinned.
 - ii) In Adam all stand guilty before God.
 - iii) In Adam all are subject to death and punishment
 - (b) Saved = God's divine action in Christ to resolve human guilt and restore human fellowship with Himself
 - i) Through Christ (and by faith) we may be delivered from bondage to sin
 - ii) Through Christ (and by faith) we may be forgiven of the fact of sin (guilt)
 - iii) Through Christ (and by faith) we may be rescued from the consequences of sin
 - iv) Through Christ (and by faith) we may be transformed in heart and life from the ravages of sin
 - b. To be saved is to appropriate through faith in Christ all the benefits of divine grace.
 - c. **To be saved is to fully participate by faith in God's plan for your restoration to a relationship of love with Him**
2. All the benefits of salvation come through faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!
- a. **Acts 4:11-12 (ESV) ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**
 - b. God sent His Son Jesus into the world to take on human flesh and life
 - (1) as an act of love.
 - (2) as the new representative of the entire race
 - (3) as the obedience that would condemn sin and Satan
 - (4) as the sacrifice that would satisfy divine justice
 - c. Jesus
 - (1) Lived the life we were created to live before God, a life of unbroken faithfulness, deep relationship, unshattered devotion, and unspeakable joy
 - (2) Though guiltless, he suffered the punishment and death

deserved by sin and sinful people

- (3) Was raised from the dead a testimony to his sinless life and sacrificial, satisfying, substitutionary death.

3. **Every human hope for eternal life hinges on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, as reported in the gospel!**

B. Reason #2: The gospel provides the standard for discerning truth from deception.

1. **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 (ESV) ³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.**
2. Someone is coming who will deceive the world into thinking and believing he is God.
3. The gospel reveals the truth about God
 - a. God is holy and just
 - b. God is gracious and kind
 - c. God is powerful and good
 - d. God is love and worthy
4. **When you understand the full true message of the gospel, you will find the true God.**

C. Reason #3: The gospel sets the standard for human obedience and divine judgment

1. **2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 (NIV) ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.**
2. **God holds every human being personally accountable for their response to the gospel!**
3. Punishment
 - a. Will reflect the whole character of God: just, pure, holy, righteous, fair, infinite, and eternal
 - b. Hell is the utter withdrawal of God's glory from human existence.
 - (1) Eternally alone with infinite regret.
 - (2) Left with no hope, entangled in sin, guilt, and shame, without hope of parole, reprieve, or relief.
 - c. Hell is more than an environmental condition. It is the eternal, unwavering effect of insurmountable rejection from perfect love.
4. **Through the gospel every human being is offered eternal life rather than eternal punishment, but the divine condition for eternal life is obedience to the gospel.**
 - a. Believe God's revelation of grace
 - b. Entrust your life—past, present, and future—to him
 - c. Follow Jesus in life and death