

# As of First Importance

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1 Corinthians 15, and we will read verses 1 to 11.! 1 Corinthians 15, and we will read verses 1 to 11.

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1 Corinthians 15, and we will read verses 1 to 11. And I quickly found these headlines. a search for a missing person, a celebrity chef that was accused of workplace abuse, a report of an Iranian cyber attack on a U.S. company, and an article detailing that candy makers are removing real cocoa from chocolate.

So to one degree or another, that is all bad news. It's not hard to hear bad news today. But this evening, we have good news to hear, good news to be reminded of, the good news of the gospel.

[ 2 : 37 ] And that is what we hear as we come to chapter 15. Now, as we've seen throughout this letter, Paul is very organized. He's dealing with issues in this church that have arisen and been brought to his attention, whether it was by Chloe's household that we heard of early in the letter, or by the very church itself writing to him with questions that they wanted him to answer.

And so he's dealing with these issues in this letter, one by one. Now, for the last several chapters, he's been dealing with the issue or the topic of spiritual gifts.

He taught the Corinthians. He taught us, I would hope, many things about spiritual gifts. He taught us what they are, how they're given, why they're given. He taught us the manner in which they're to be exercised.

Many things that he taught about spiritual gifts. Well, now we come to chapter 15. And Paul is transitioning to a new topic, a new issue that he must address with the Corinthians.

And they likely wrote to him about this very topic with questions, with possibly even concerns. Now, we're going to see soon enough that Paul himself is very concerned for the Corinthians.

[ 3 : 46 ] He's very concerned because, as we see in chapter 12, there are some in the church that are denying the resurrection of believers. That's a huge problem for Paul.

We should readily see that is crucial to be addressed in this letter. He must speak about that. Now, Lord willing, when we get to verse 12 next week, we're going to see why that is such a huge problem that needs to be addressed.

But here, in these opening verses of chapter 15, Paul is setting the stage for addressing that topic beginning in chapter or verse 12. The claim there's no resurrection of the dead.

So he sets the stage here in these first 11 verses. And how does he do that? By telling us the gospel. The good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins.

That he was buried and that he rose again. Paul presents us then with five features of this good news that we're going to see tonight. And the first feature is this.

[ 4 : 47 ] The importance of this good news. Look again with me at the first four verses. 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.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

So Paul has talked about a lot of very important issues in this letter. Topics that very much relate to the Christian life. To live a life that pleases God.

To live a life that honors God. So yes, spiritual gifts are important. Yes, orderly worship is important. Yes, Christian liberty is important.

Many other topics we could say. All that he addressed in this letter, important. But none of these topics is of first importance. You can only have one that is first.

[ 5 : 57 ] Not every topic in the letter gets to be first. There's no participation trophy for the topics of first Corinthians. Only one can be of first importance.

And that one is the gospel. All of these other topics matter. But they are all understood in light of this one topic of first importance.

The gospel impacts all of these other topics. Everything else that Paul writes about must be seen through the lens of the gospel. Remember back to chapter 2, verse 2.

Paul made this very strong statement. Now let's think about that for a moment.

Do you remember how long Paul spent with the Corinthians when he first came to Corinth? The book of Acts tells us three years. Paul spent three years with many of the people that he's writing to here in this letter.

[ 6 : 58 ] We can be sure that he taught them many things in those three years. So what does he mean? That he decided to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

He means the gospel was of first importance. And everything else that he taught them flowed from the truth of the gospel. Everything else that he taught them was in light of that good news of Jesus Christ and him crucified.

It was all impacted by the gospel. We can never forget who we once were. We can never forget what Christ has done for us.

The old self has been crucified and we've been raised to newness of life. And so what are we to do? Walk in that newness of life. Or as Paul says in Philippians 2, Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

You see, salvation, it's not just a past event. There's a very present dynamic. Work out your salvation. We are to work it out. The gospel, the good news by which we are saved, is the good news that now drives our present obedience.

[ 8 : 09 ] The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central truth by which our lives are defined. It's not just good news on the day of our conversion.

Though indeed it is good news on that day. It is the good news that we rejoice in every day. As we just sang, it is the theme of salvation. It never grows old.

The good news in which we stand. That's what Paul says there in verse 1. In which you stand. That is present tense. We stand in the good news right now.

Today. And we are to stand in that good news every day that the Lord gives to us. Paul says something very similar in Colossians 2. Beginning in verse 6.

You see, just as we received Christ, what are we to do?

[ 9 : 16 ] So walk in Him. You've received Him. Now continue to walk in Him. So the gospel should never leave our lives. There's no room for thinking, well, you know, I believe the good news about Jesus at this point in time.

Perhaps many years ago. Perhaps for some of us when I was a child. But that good news isn't really all that important to me anymore. No, this good news that we believed, we continue to believe.

Until the end. It's the gospel on which we have taken our stand. It is the gospel that we now firmly hold on to. It's the gospel that we never let go of.

We hold fast to it. Just as Paul says here in 1 Corinthians 15. This gospel is of first importance. And so nothing ever takes its place of being first in our lives.

It's not of first importance the day that we believed, but then secondary thereafter. It's not the good news that we believed one day and then decent news the rest of our lives.

[ 10 : 23 ] That's a temptation, isn't it? It's a possibility that our hearts would grow cold. Not cold like the water of Laodicea this morning. But cold like we're distant and not caring and somewhat aloof and not interested in the good news.

No, our hearts should be warmed to it. The Corinthians had given in to this temptation. That's why Paul says that he's reminding them. This is a gentle rebuke.

Almost like when somebody says, Need I remind you? Or perhaps they say, As you should already know. When we hear those kinds of things.

It's to our shame that we're having to be reminded. We shouldn't have forgotten in the first place something that should have first place in our lives.

But we have. And so we need reminding. Well, that's what's happening here with the Corinthians. They were forgetting what was of first importance. And we have to be on guard against that as well. [11:27] We can forget, just like they did. Treating the gospel as though it was only how we were saved. But not how we are being saved. And not how we will be saved one day.

Because we will be found blameless on the final day. Not because of what our hands have done. But because of him whose hands were pierced. Because of what he did upon the cross.

So we see the gospel is of first importance. From first to last. From start to finish. In our Christian lives. That's the first feature that Paul points out to us.

The importance of the good news. Well, let's consider the second together. The transmission of this good news. We see it again there in verse 1. As Paul says, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand.

Then drop down to verse 3. For I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received. So we see there, Paul had the gospel delivered to him.

[12:34] He's already showing us very quickly here, this isn't some invention. This isn't just something that I came up with, that I thought would be an interesting story to tell you. And he's saying, I received it.

Much like Peter does the same thing in 2 Peter. He says, these aren't myths that we're telling you. I was there upon the mountain with Jesus. Paul's doing something of the same thing. Or think of John, the apostle John, in his first letter.

When he's saying, we saw Jesus. We touched him. We were really there. Paul's saying something similar. I'm not making this up. It was delivered to me. And I've delivered it now to you.

Now it was delivered to Paul in a very unique, special way. He got this personal visit from the Lord Jesus himself. Paul recounts that visit in Galatians chapter 1.

I'll read this beginning in verse 11. You see there again, he's saying, this isn't my invention.

[13:38] This isn't just what I think or my opinion or what I want you to believe because I've made it up and I like it. No, this is not man's gospel. Verse 12. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.

I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. But I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. So God's son revealed to Paul in this very unique way in that encounter on the road to Damascus when Paul was struck blind and the risen Christ spoke to him.

In that moment, Paul was converted when the person of Jesus Christ was revealed to him. And at the same time, the message of Jesus Christ as well.

[15:00] The gospel of the Son was given to Paul. He received it. He believed it. And he was commissioned to carry that message to the Gentiles. Gentiles like the Corinthians.

Paul brought that gospel message to them. So what was delivered to Paul by the Lord Jesus himself, well, Paul then went on and he preached it to the Corinthians.

And they received it. Paul was called by God to be an apostle. And the Corinthians were called by God to then be his saints. God's chosen, elect, loved ones.

That was how the gospel was transmitted. That's how the gospel was passed along from Jesus to Paul to the Corinthians. And that gospel has continued to be passed down all along through the ages from one generation to the next, to the next, to the next, including to us as we sit here this evening.

Consider as Paul instructed Timothy in his second letter to him, chapter 2, verse 2. And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

[16:19] So that's the model. That's the pattern. Beginning with the twelve there on that mountain in Galilee, Jesus gave them the great commission. He revealed himself to the apostle Paul.

These men were called by Jesus to go and to proclaim the good news. They were the first ambassadors for Christ. And through them, the gospel was preached. Churches were planted.

The foundation of the church was laid. And ever since, that foundation has been built upon. It's been built up as a spiritual house, like living stones is how we're described. Because that is how the church is built. One by one. God saving his people. That gospel message. It was delivered to you and me. Who was it in your life?

Who was it that shared the good news with you? Who delivered the gospel to you? And then, now as we sit here, God's beloved people now, who are we delivering that message to?

[ 17 : 24 ] Who are we telling about the good news? Who are we passing along this all-important message to? This message that is indeed a matter of life and death.

We have no greater news to share. We have no greater person to tell others about. That's why Paul would say, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

That's the second feature of this good news. The transmission of it. Well, now let's turn our attention to the third feature. The Old Testament fulfillment in this good news.

And we see it in those little phrases. In verse 3 and in verse 4. We read that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

That he was buried. That he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

Sometimes in life, we have a whirlwind of a week.

[ 18 : 22 ] Where we expected it to go one way, and it goes completely differently. The events of that week are upon us, and they catch us completely off guard.

At the end of the week, we'll often look back and we'll say, wow, that was crazy. That was totally unexpected. I never saw all of that coming. That escalated quickly. Well, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was not part of a whirlwind of a week.

It sure could have seemed that way to those who witnessed it. They could have very well said, that escalated quickly. That all came out of nowhere. That happened so fast, so unexpectedly.

Just think. Jesus came into Jerusalem on that Sunday, riding on a donkey, received as this victorious king by the crowds there.

And within that week, he was arrested, tried by the Jewish leaders, tried by the Gentile leaders, condemned by the crowds, brutally beaten, ridiculed, and hung upon a cross of wood to die.

[ 19 : 30 ] Those who witnessed it from afar, those who didn't know Jesus, who weren't there with him for those three years, who didn't hear him there in the upper room, those people could have very well thought, as they looked upon him on the cross, as they heard the reports of his resurrection, they could have thought, that was crazy.

I never would have expected all of the events of this past week. That's basically what we find in Luke 24, on the road to Emmaus, those two disciples who were walking along.

Luke tells us in verse 14 that they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. And then Jesus draws near. And they're kept from recognizing him, so they don't know who this is.

They think he's just a stranger to them. And Jesus asked them, what are you talking about? And one of them said, are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?

In other words, it's been a whirlwind of a week. How are you out of the loop on all of the news? But it wasn't a whirlwind of a week for Jesus. No, he wasn't caught off guard by the events of that week.

[ 20 : 44 ] No, he knew just how things would go. Even as he entered into Jerusalem on that donkey, received as a king, he knew exactly what would transpire in that week.

He rode in on that donkey knowing that he would soon be lifted up upon that cross. That the crowds that were now blessing him would very soon be cursing him. Because all of this was a part of God's divine plan.

His death was in accordance with the Scriptures. His triumphant resurrection was in accordance with the Scriptures. I mean, that's basically what the apostles did as they preached the Gospel. In the early days of the church, they said, look at your Old Testament. It's all there. It all points to what's happened. Don't be caught off by surprise now. He did exactly what God said would happen. So many times in His own earthly ministry, Jesus said, the Scriptures must be fulfilled. What God has planned must take place. God the Son didn't become man for the fun of it.

[ 21 : 51 ] He certainly didn't become man just to see what it would be like. No, He became man to fulfill the plan of salvation. His earthly life then from beginning to end was so purposefully lived.

As Paul says in Galatians 4, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son. Or in Romans 5, at just the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

Not just so as it happened to be. Not kind of this crazy circumstances and events that came together spontaneously. No, at just the right time, Christ died.

Here was the eternal plan of God predicted in the Old Testament and now fulfilled in the new through Jesus Christ. May God be praised for His perfect plan, perfectly accomplished.

That's the third feature of this good news. The Old Testament is fulfilled in it. And now the fourth, which is the reliability of this good news.

[ 23 : 00 ] And we see as Paul transitions now to verse 5, all of these appearances. He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. So we have here in our Bibles this wonderfully compelling evidence to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Compelling eyewitness accounts. And we have really a compelling source himself in the Apostle Paul. So let's talk a little bit about dates here.

Consider when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. It was in the 50s A.D. Now, just to make sure we understand these things, A.D. referring to in the year of our Lord.

So 50 A.D. And as we all know, we're in 2026 A.D. So a little less than 2,000 years ago, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in the 50s A.D.

[ 24 : 10 ] Now, when he wrote 1 Corinthians, he's recounting events from the 30s A.D. Jesus died. He rose again. He ascended into heaven. All of that in the mid-30s.

So this letter that we have, it was written roughly 20 years after those events. Now, it doesn't take a mathematician to figure out that's not all that long.

And that makes the historical claims that Paul gives us all that much more reliable. It would be incredibly difficult to fabricate the story of these events since these events took place so recently as Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

If you want to deceive people, this is not how you would go about doing it. If I wanted to lie about something, it would be easier to lie about events that took place in 1906 rather than in 2006.

Even easier to lie about events that took place in 1806. Most of us were alive in 2006. None of us in 1906. Certainly none of us in 1806.

[ 25 : 13 ] If it was a monumental event, we could find lots of historical records of it in 2006. We probably could find a decent amount of records from 1906.

Less of 1806 being farther removed from it. The farther back in time that you go, well, the less record, evidence, the less eyewitnesses that you have.

So it's important to know that Paul wrote only 20 years after the events took place. And of course, Paul isn't the only record that we have. He's not the only one writing about the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus.

We have the four different gospel accounts all in our Bibles. They're all detailing these same events that took place. And they were all written relatively close to when Jesus lived and died and rose again.

Now, the four gospels that we have, the letters that Paul wrote, these aren't the only writings that claim to be about the life of Jesus. These aren't the only ones writing that claim to have recorded his teachings.

[ 26 : 20 ] There are many other pseudo gospels, fake gospels, like the gospel of Peter or the gospel of Thomas or the gospel of Judas.

Now, these were writings that were falsely attributed to those different individuals that claim to tell us more about the life and the ministry of Jesus. But these accounts often conflict with the biblical accounts.

Or they teach heretical things like saying that Jesus didn't have an actual body. Now, here's something interesting about all of these pseudo gospels, all of these false gospel accounts, something that they have in common.

Do you know when all of these accounts were written? At least 70 years after the events of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Now, why is that significant? Why does it matter that they were writing at least 70 years later? Because that's basically the lifespan of one generation.

[ 27 : 22 ] Once one generation dies, how easy is it then to promote and to make popular a false account of events that occurred during the lifetime of the previous generation?

You've got a whole new generation very much removed from those events. They didn't experience any of them firsthand. You have perhaps evidence that's no longer available.

Maybe it was destroyed. Maybe it was lost. And those eyewitnesses to the events. 70 years have passed. Those people who were there that you could talk to, you could ask questions of, you could clarify the details with, well, 70 years after the events and those people are gone.

They've died. died. It's because of all of those factors that false accounts often really gain traction many years after an event has happened.

It's just simply easier to persuade. It's easier to convince people of something when time has passed. That's really all that you need to plant seeds of doubt.

[ 28 : 24 ] Just the passage of time. So, unsurprisingly, we find all of these false accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus written 70 years or later after he had lived.

But not the four gospel accounts that we have in our Bibles. Not 1 Corinthians either. We have these accounts written much closer to the life of Jesus. And what does Paul give us in 1 Corinthians?

A very long list of eyewitnesses. He gives us many people who saw Jesus. And not just before Jesus died, but after.

Now remember, Paul is speaking chronologically here. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again. And He appeared to all of these people. So He appeared in His resurrection body to these people.

Now we can read the gospel accounts. We can learn more about these appearances there. Jesus Himself appeared to the disciples.

[ 29 : 26 ] in Luke 24. And Jesus sounds a whole lot like Paul does in 1 Corinthians 15. In Luke 24, beginning in verse 46, we see Jesus saying this to His disciples.

Again, this is after He's risen from the dead. He says, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

And then listen to verse 48. You are witnesses of these things. You, the disciples, you are witnesses of these things. Witnesses of what?

The suffering, the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus. Thus, and what did Jesus just say here in Luke 24? What did He just do, I mean, to prove to the disciples that He had indeed risen from the grave?

Well, He had just showed them His hands. Showed them His hands. Showed them His feet. And He took a piece of broiled fish and He ate it. Kind of a strange thing to do.

[ 30 : 37 ] Don't you find that kind of odd, kids? Why is Jesus grabbing some fish to eat? This is a really important event. He's showing the disciples that He's alive and He's taking time to eat some fish? Like, are you really needing to do that right now?

But it was to prove a point. It was to show His disciples that yes, I really do have a body. The fish didn't just fall through Him to the floor. He's really there.

He ate the fish that they know was real. They had the fish before He appeared. And now Jesus has eaten it. Showing yet again, I've really been raised from the dead. You are witnesses.

To these things. And the disciples weren't alone. Paul says that Jesus appeared to Cephas, who is Peter, to the twelve, just as we heard in Luke 24. But then Paul says that Jesus appeared to other people as well.

Five hundred brothers. Now we don't have clear, specific reference to these brothers anywhere else. We're not entirely sure who they are or what this particular event was where Jesus appeared to them all.

[ 31 : 41 ] But Paul includes this reference to these eyewitnesses. I think he does it for really good reason. Number one, these are people outside of Jesus' inner circle who saw Him.

These aren't Jesus' buddies because His buddies had some motivation for claiming that Jesus had risen from the grave. They had been preaching and teaching of the kingdom of God and Jesus was at the center of it.

So for them to say that He lived, well that would have been expected. They wouldn't have been the first disciples of a popular teacher or revolutionary to claim that their leader was alive.

You know, the religious leaders, they even anticipated that the disciples would do this very thing. You remember when they set the guard at Jesus' tomb? What were they concerned that the disciples would do?

Steal the body and then say that Jesus had risen from the dead. So it's one thing for the friends of Jesus to say that they've seen the Lord. That's expected. It's another thing though for other people.

[ 32 : 47 ] That's far more compelling evidence. They have far less reason to lie and to say that Jesus lives. So we have people outside of Jesus' inner circle. That's significant.

It's also significant that it's just not one or two people. It's 500. 500 brothers. That's followers of Christ. They say we've seen him.

Now the fact of the matter is the more people that you have the more compelling their testimony. One or two people can be blackmailed or bribed depending on how you want to do it to join you and to join in on the lie.

Maybe it's Paul's cousin's friends that he's paid off to say yeah, yeah, I saw this man. But when it's 500 people no way. They're far more trustworthy about what they say and they say we saw the Lord in his glorified body.

But Paul's saying to the Corinthians don't just take my word for it because what does he tell them? Some of them are still alive meaning you can go and ask them.

[ 33 : 54 ] And that's the third reason that this reference to these other people is so compelling. They can be interviewed. The Corinthians can hear it straight from the horse's mouth. They'll tell you who they saw.

They'll tell you what they heard where they were what happened. You can go and ask them verify what I'm saying. Go ask some of those brothers who are still alive. So that's a very important detail that Paul includes here.

These 500 brothers as eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ. But the list of eyewitnesses doesn't end with them. There's also James the brother of Jesus.

You know, James didn't believe in Jesus during his earthly ministry. James was skeptical. He was unbelieving. But at some point all of that changed.

We aren't told when, but he was converted. He became a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church. Paul says, Jesus appeared to him and then to all the apostles.

[ 34 : 51 ] Now we often think of the apostles as the 12 disciples, but there were more apostles than just them, like James. like Paul himself. So Paul is just layering on the evidence.

All of these eyewitnesses saying the same thing about the same person. And that of course includes Paul. He saves himself for last.

Because he thinks of himself as deserving to be last. As least deserving to be in this privileged position of being an apostle. And that brings us to the fifth work.

And the final feature of the gospel that Paul highlights for us. The grace of God in this good news. And it's motivating power. Listen as I read again in verse 9.

For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace toward me was not in vain.

[ 35 : 52 ] On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believe.

There's two qualities here that we must see about Paul. Two qualities that are very much worth emulating. We see his humility, and we see his confidence.

Paul's humility and Paul's confidence. confidence. And what is it that drives both of these qualities in Paul? It's the grace of God.

God's grace fuels Paul's humility, and God's grace fuels Paul's confidence. He is humble because he knows just how undeserving of God's grace he is.

The least of the apostles, he says. Unworthy to be called an apostle. Why? Because he knows what a wretched sinner he was.

[ 36 : 55 ] He spells out for us, I persecuted the church. I didn't pretend to be neutral. I didn't pretend to just be on good terms with people and kind of likable. I persecuted the church.

He was a persecutor of God's church, and yet, he became a recipient of God's grace. He's saying, who am I? That God would graciously save someone like me.

And so now Paul can say, I am what I am because God graciously saved me. Undeserving. And so he was so very humble and so very confident at the same time.

We see that as Paul talks about his work ethic. He worked very hard. He was diligent in his preaching the gospel. He went on his missionary travels. He wrote so many letters.

He wrote many of them even from very difficult circumstances, like being in prison. He was faithful in his witness, whether in the streets or before tribunals or on ships or in prisons.

[ 38 : 02 ] Paul says, I worked harder than any of them. Speaking of other, very godly men, the other apostles, I worked harder than any of them. Now he could say that confidently without an ounce of arrogance.

confidence. Why? Because he recognized that the same grace of God which saved him now sustains him. The grace of God that was at work in his conversion and fueled his humility is the same grace of God that is now at work in his sanctification and fueled his confidence.

The same gospel at work in him in the past is the same gospel at work in him in the present.

Remember how Paul began this chapter emphasizing the past and the present reality of the gospel to the Corinthians?

That this gospel which saved them is the same gospel in which they presently stand? The gospel at work in their past is also the gospel at work in their present lives?

Paul's saying, yeah, me too. I'm right there with you. This gospel that you received, the same gospel that I received. This good news for sinners such as you, it's good news for a sinner such as me.

[ 39 : 18 ] This gospel that saved me is still at work in me and that makes me work all the harder. Doesn't that make us want to work hard too?

The grace of God motivates us when we remember what wretched sinners we were, when we remember who we are now. I was what I was.

And God saved me by His grace. I now am what I am because God sustains me by His grace. So with the same humble confidence as Paul, let's work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Let's work hard to remain faithful and steadfast. To continue to stand upon the truth of the gospel. To live upon that truth.

To tell others the good news. To praise God for that good news. To put sin to death because of the good news. To seek to grow in grace because of the good news. To love that message.

[ 40 : 20 ] And what's more than that, to love the person that message is all about. Jesus Christ. To think that He would save me from my sin. By dying for my sins.

Just as 1 Corinthians 15 says. He didn't just die on the cross. He died for our sins. As Paul says. Substitutionary atonement.

In my place. He suffered and died. For my sins. He bore God's wrath upon that tree. So let's not grow weary of hearing of God's grace in the gospel.

Let's not grow weary of working hard by God's grace in the gospel either. So let's keep what should be of first importance in its proper place in our lives.

And let's do that by God's grace. Indeed it is by His grace that we are humble. It's by His grace that we are confident. So let's seek to live lives that honor Him. Let's seek to live lives that are worthy of that good news in the gospel.

[ 41 : 23 ] Let's pray together. Father God, what grace You have shown to us in Christ. we who were dead in our sins and trespasses.

We who were following the course of this world. We who were rightly living under Your wrath. And yet, in Your rich mercy, You made us alive in Jesus Christ.

It is by grace through faith that we have been saved and we give You praise for doing that good work in our hearts of drawing us to Yourself. We look back on our lives and we see, Father, that in ourselves we were lost and going astray.

There was nothing in us that wanted You or loved You just as Your Word says. We were Your enemies. And yet, at just the right time, You sent Your Son for us to die for us.

So help us, Father, that we would go from here fueled by the same grace that saved us, that now is sustaining us and will sustain us until the day that we stand before Your throne.

[ 42 : 30 ] And in that day, we will claim nothing of our own but we will claim entirely the shed blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ. So help us, Father, this week to not lose sight of the Gospel, to not let the Gospel become something on the periphery that's kind of decent news to us.

No, Father, give us joy in the good news. Indeed, make it to be the best of news that we could know, the best of news that we could share with others. So help us to go from here rejoicing in the Gospel, rejoicing in Your Son, Jesus Christ.  
And it's in His name we pray. Amen.