



OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

THE DISCIPLES SAW WHAT? (1 COR. 15:1-11)

APRIL 16-22, 2017

SERMON OUTLINE

The Disciples Saw What? 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

The four eye witness Tests applied to the Gospels

1. Were they Present?

2. Were they Corroborated?

Matthew 26:67-68
Luke 22:63-65

3. Were they Honest and Accurate over time?

4. Were they Biased?

Only 3 Motives: Money, Sex, and Power

Acts 3:6
James 2:5
2 Corinthians 11:24-28

The four eye witness tests Prove the Gospel's Veracity

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

Jesus Christ, lived, died, was buried and raised back to life, and was seen by many witnesses.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. What are some sights you have seen or cherished memories you have that you still enjoy telling people about? Why have these stuck with you?

2. How is seeing something personally different than seeing it in a postcard or online?

Leader: Eyewitness testimony is a legal term. It refers to an account given by people of an event they have witnessed. Often we think seeing an event in person is preferable to watching a recording or seeing pictures. But eyewitness testimony is often thought to be less reliable than other types of evidence in court because of the subjective experience of it. Clearly there are benefits and detractors to it. In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul bolstered his claims about the resurrection with eyewitness testimony. Though we haven't seen the resurrection for ourselves, we are still witnesses to the resurrection thousands of years later.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-2.](#)

3. Who was instrumental in teaching you about Jesus? If you are a Christian, then when did you first begin to understand the importance of Jesus' death on the cross?

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4. Last week we talked about the importance of asking ourselves, “Who is Jesus?” Why is it important for us to remember the cross and continue to remind ourselves of its power daily?

Leader: A chief purpose of 1 Corinthians was to answer questions and challenges from the Corinthian church. None were more pivotal than their questions about resurrection. Paul’s presentation of the resurrection rested on the gospel he first presented to the Corinthians. The word *gospel* means “good news.” This good news extends to every area of believers’ lives and into eternity. It is not just the one time message that saves us. It is also the message that gives us growth in godliness and perseverance daily. Next Paul walked through the implications of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-8.](#)

5. Verses 3-4 include Paul’s summary of the gospel. Summarize the main points of this good news in your own words, as you would if you were having a brief conversation with someone.

Leader: These verses from 1 Corinthians 15 were likely an early catechism, a phrase or saying people would memorize as a definition of the gospel. The essence of the good news is that Jesus became a man, died for our sins, and was raised according to the promises of Scripture. Christ’s death is part of the gospel because it is the good news that He took on our sins and our death on the cross. The Scriptures pointed to Christ’s coming and dying a substitutionary death.

6. Why do you think Paul recorded all of these witnesses to the resurrection? What was he trying to show in doing so?

7. We were not eye witnesses to the resurrection ourselves, so are we at a disadvantage to the people Paul described here? Explain your thoughts.

8. A witness is defined as “a person who sees an event.” How are we witnesses to the gospel, even though we weren’t eye witnesses to the resurrection?

Leader: When Christ rose from the grave, He did not simply ascend to heaven, but stayed and spent time with people. The point Paul was making is that the resurrection

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really happened. It is more than a good story; it is a fact. Jesus appeared bodily to living witnesses. At the time of this letter, the Corinthians would have been able to meet someone who saw the resurrected Jesus because most of them were still alive! Yet we are not at a disadvantage because we have the Holy Scriptures that give us “something more sure” to hold on to. As the Holy Spirit attests their truthfulness to us, and our lives are changed by Jesus, we too are witnesses to the resurrection.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:9-11.

9. How does the gospel impact your life on a daily basis? Does your understanding of this good news lead you to worship, pray, or tell others about Jesus as it did for Paul? Explain.

Leader: In these verses, Paul gives a first-hand account of God’s grace by describing his own life before He knew Jesus and after. Because of God’s grace, Paul went from persecuting Christians to becoming one. But he didn’t stop there—Paul spent his life preaching and telling others of God’s grace, His undeserved love and forgiveness. God’s work in Paul’s life went beyond his salvation experience and forgiveness of sin; God’s grace led Paul to a life focused on sharing that grace with others.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

10. In the previous question, we considered how the good news of the gospel impacts our personal lives. How does it also transform this group and our church community?

11. Easter has a way of making people who wouldn’t normally think about Jesus think about Him. Is there someone that you could encourage to think about Jesus or share with this week as you take advantage of the Easter season?

PRAYER

Praise God for raising from the dead in victory over sin and death. Ask that He would give you the grace to take to heart and deeply believe the gospel of grace in such a way that it transforms your everyday life.

MEMORIZE

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. – 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11

15:3-4. Paul next explained why it was important for the Corinthians to believe his teaching about the resurrection. He justified his insistence that they hold fast to the gospel, insisting that the resurrection was central to the gospel message. Why was this so important? Why was the resurrection a necessary element of the gospel? First, Paul received and passed on this gospel. In rabbinic Judaism, this terminology described the transmission of authoritative religious teachings. Paul told the Corinthians to maintain the gospel as he had given it to them, because it was a sacred tradition, not a human tradition. Second, he delivered this gospel teaching as a matter of first importance. In other words, nothing was more central or more important in Paul's conception of gospel than these teachings. Paul summed up his gospel as having two main concerns: the death and the resurrection of Christ. Both of these took place according to the Scriptures. Paul repeated this phrase to emphasize the importance of the scriptural witness and to demonstrate that the resurrection's importance paralleled the centrality of Christ's death. He spoke first of Christ's death, declaring, "Christ died for our sins." Christ's substitutionary death on behalf of believers brought salvation to those who would otherwise have been lost.

When Paul said that Christ's death was according to the Scriptures, he probably had in mind Isaiah's prediction that the son of David would suffer on behalf of the people of God (see Isa. 53:1-12). Second, Paul referred to the resurrection. Christ was buried, but he was raised on the third day. Paul never said that Christ raised Himself. Instead, the apostle taught that God the Father raised Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 1:4; Gal. 1:1). The resurrection was also according to the Scriptures. Paul probably had in mind Isaiah 53:10-12. The prophet explained that the son of David would come back from the grave to bring great blessings to God's people. Paul also may have thought of Psalm 16:10, a passage in which David recorded that God would not allow His Holy One to see decay. Jesus defended the idea of resurrection in the Old Testament by asserting that God was the God of the living (see Matt. 22:31-32). By including both Christ's death and resurrection as essential elements of the gospel, Paul precluded those who denied the resurrection from claiming salvation in Christ.

15:5-8. Paul continued by adding a third element that expanded the second. Christ was not simply raised from the dead. He also appeared; people saw and heard Him. Paul did not repeat the refrain "according to the Scriptures" here, because no particular prophecy focused on appearances of the resurrected Son of David. But Paul did note that several people saw the resurrected Christ. These included Peter, the Twelve, more than five hundred of the brothers (most of whom were still living), James, all the apostles, and Paul himself. Although Paul's main idea was that all of these people bore witness to the resurrection of Christ, his list had at least three major concerns. Christ appeared to: (1) figures of central authority in the church (Peter, the Twelve, James, all the apostles); (2) large numbers of people (Twelve, five hundred, all the apostles); and (3) to Paul himself. Paul declared that Christ had appeared to him on the road to Damascus "last of all ... as to one abnormally born." The expression "last of all" probably indicates that Paul was the last person to see the resurrected Christ. Viewing the resurrected Savior was a requirement for apostleship (see Acts 1:21-22). Yet, Paul admitted that his own situation had been extraordinary, because Christ came to him in a miraculous manner after the ascension. Thus, Paul saw himself as having been "abnormally born." This expression is difficult to translate, because it occurs only here in the New Testament. In an effort to express his humility, Paul compared himself to an untimely born child, indicating some degree of inferiority to those who

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had lived with Jesus during His earthly ministry.

15:9. In explaining why he spoke of himself in this way, Paul admitted to being the least of the apostles, not even deserving the title, because he persecuted the church of God. This probably resonated strongly with his detractors. They most likely thought, “Obviously he is the least—that is why we favor Apollos and Cephas.”

15:10. But Paul went on to defend his apostolic authority by pointing to God’s choice of him. As Paul considered his background, he had no doubts that he had been called as a Christian and as Christ’s apostle (I am what I am) only by the grace of God. Paul taught elsewhere that the Christian life begins by grace and continues through God’s grace received by dependent faith. Here the apostle evaluated his own life in these terms. Not only had he initially believed because of God’s grace, but every good thing in his Christian life also came from the grace of God. At this point, Paul concerned himself with one particular aspect of God’s grace in his life. Divine mercy had great effect, or result, on his service to the body of Christ. This is the same type of argument he used in 9:1-27 to defend his apostleship. The one who had once persecuted the church worked harder than all the other apostles. Paul assessed the situation honestly, not speaking proudly as if he had accomplished anything on his own. He reiterated that he did nothing in his own power. He performed only by the grace of God that was with him. Paul knew himself too well to take credit for the good he had done in Christ’s service. He knew that the only source that could produce these good works through him was the grace of God. Because he relied so strongly on God’s grace, he became one of the most effective apostles.

15:11. Paul closed this section by bringing his readers back to the main idea. The Corinthians must believe that Christ had been resurrected. On this, all the apostles agreed—Christ’s resurrection was central to the gospel. All of the apostles continued to preach this message, and the Corinthians at one time had believed it as well. Paul hoped they would reaffirm their commitment to Christ’s resurrection.