The Evidence for Resurrection, Part 2
1 Corinthians 15:5-11
1877

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 and we're having a great time studying the resurrection. This tremendous chapter, a very long chapter, 58 verses, by far the longest chapter in 1 Corinthians, deals with the resurrection.

A recent scholar, C. F. Evans, writing on the resurrection says "To a greater extent than it is anything else, Christianity at least the Christianity of the New Testament is a religion of the resurrection." He's right.

John Locke, the famous British philosopher said, "Our Savior's resurrection is truly of great importance in Christianity. So great that His being or not being the Messiah stands or falls with it."

Now, those two statements just emphasize two points that I want you to remember. Christianity is built on the resurrection and the Messiahship, the Lordship of Christ is built on the resurrection. It is the cornerstone of the Christian truth. It is so important to the basis of Christianity to the claims of Jesus, and I would add to the destiny of every human soul. The resurrection is the sinequanon of history. It has the greatest impact of anything on human destiny as well as the divine plan.

And so we study it with great excitement and anticipation. And you know it's great to study it today because there's a new interest in the afterlife. And there's a new interest in death. In fact, Psychology Today, September '76 said, "Death is now in vogue." In other words, it's a topic that you can talk about now. It's something that people are discussing.

A recent gallop poll reported that 73% of Americans strongly believe in life after death. And if you've seen anything about high school and college course work, you know that both in colleges and high schools, they're now offering courses on death. In fact, I was reading about a couple this week where they are allowing in these two particular schools, students to lie in a coffin just to kind of get the feel of it.

And everybody is concerned about death, even the 27% who aren't too sure they believe in life after death, have thought a lot about death, everybody does. You might interested to know that the average teenager, thinks about death once every five minutes, according to surveys.

Now, people have to offer an answer to this and so we have all kinds of solutions to the problem of death and what happens afterwards. Some people teach soul sleep. That when you die, your soul goes to sleep for a while and then you awake into some Nirvana, some celestial Disneyland or some happy hunting ground or whatever after your soul has slept for a while. There are others who believe in what is called termination, and that's the materialistic view that when you die you go back to dust,

forget it it's over, lights out, extinction.

There are others who believe in what is called reincarnation, which I prefer to call recycling. And that's just where you...you get turned in and you come back as something else. Then there are others who teach what is philosophically known as the philosophy of absorption, which is what the Greeks believe surrounding the Corinthian church, that every man was indwelt by a spark of deity and when the body died, the spark went back to the big fire, which is God.

In other words, your absorbed back into the divine mind. This is what the Hindus believe and the Buddhists. They believe you're absorbed back into the divine mind, you lose your personhood, you lose your individuality, you cease to exist and if you're fortunate, you get recycled later on back as somebody else.

But the view of absorption, the view of reincarnation, the view of extinction, all involve the loss of self. They all involve the extinction of personhood. They all involve the end of you forever. But the Bible teaches that we'll live forever. And that you will live forever as you. And that's different than most human philosophies.

Now, I can't get too excited about reincarnation. I want to see myself as me in the way that God can remake me for His kingdom. I can't get too excited about extinction either. That makes everything seem so useless. And least of all can I get excited about absorption. Going back into some floating supernatural fog. Some people get excited about that. You...you wouldn't believe the rhetoric about getting absorbed back into some deity.

Leslie Weatherhead writes, just listen to this, "Would it really matter if I were lost like a drop of water in the ocean? If I could be one shining particle in some glorious wave that broke in utter splendor in perfect beauty on the shores of some eternal sea."

Sounds drippy to me. We don't want to lose our identity. The Bible says that the soul of man is eternal and the Bible adds too that the body of man is going to be redone in an immortal fashion. Listen, we are unique persons and we will be use forever in a unique way. And yet with some wonderful modifications that'll equip us for God's wonderful kingdom. Now that's exactly the message of 1 Corinthians 15.

Because the Greeks were teaching absorption. That you just kind of go back into the...you're a drip in the eternal sea. And the Christians came along and the message of the gospel was that you would be raised bodily, but some of the philosophies of Corinth began to encroach upon the Corinthian church and pretty soon there was a gang of Corinthian Christians who were denying the bodily resurrection.

They were saying all right, we'll buy the immortality of the soul, but we're not going to buy the body bit. We'll buy the idea that the soul will go on forever, but not attached to the body in a unique personhood. And Paul is writing the 15thChapter to try to straighten them out on the fact that they must believe in the immortality not only of the soul, but of the glorified body that allows for a person to continue to be a person forever. The same person he was, only marvelously changed, sinuously changed by resurrection wise.

And so the message of 1 Corinthians 15 is not the immortality of the soul, it is the...it is the immortality of a glorified body. That's what Paul wants to talk about. The Greeks were denying bodily resurrection. They were denying physical resurrection. They were denying literal resurrection so that you are a person unique, confined within a glorified body. That's what they didn't believe and that's what the church of Corinth had begun to question and that's what Paul answers.

And as I told you last time, the way he approaches it is this, he starts out with the first 11 verses on the resurrection of Christ, and he says, look, we already believe that Jesus rose literally, physically, bodily from the grave. We all believe that. That's the gospel. We all believe it. Now if you already believe that Jesus rose literally, physically from the grave, then why do you have a problem believing that for your resurrection? That's his whole argument.

If Christ rose, then He is the first fruits of them that slept and we too shall rise and in 1 John 3 it says, "We shall be," what, "like Him." Now Paul's message is very simple. He wants them to accept the bodily resurrection, which they don't accept, so he starts on common ground, which they do accept that is the bodily resurrection of Christ. And he uses that as the premise upon which to postulate their resurrection.

Now, as we started in the chapter, we noticed that he begins by refreshing their minds about the gospel of the resurrection. And he says in effect, look at verse 1, "The gospel which I preach, which you already received, in which you already stand, by which you are being saved," that gospel according to verse 3 is, "that Jesus died for our sins," verse 4, that "He was buried and that He rose again the third day." And later he says that not only was He risen, but He was seen and he beings to list all the people who saw Him.

So he says, look the gospel which we preach, you receive, you stand on, you're saved by, the gospel which has been the basis of all of our faith and the basis of the church as a gospel involving a physical, literal resurrection. Look he says, if you already accept that, then why do you have a problem with the concept of bodily resurrection?

You already believe Jesus rose bodily. This is a great approach. You see, because he...he redefines what they already believe and says if you already believe that, you have no reason not to believe that you too shall rise bodily. If God can sustain one in the grave and bring Him out in the physical glorified resurrection, He can do it for you as well. And will do it since Christ promised to be the first fruits of them that's left.

Now, verses 1 to 11 then is refreshing the gospel. Reminding them of the gospel of the resurrection. Now watch this, as he reminds them of it, he re-enforces it by the testimony to it's validity that he gives. He goes through stating it, but he doesn't just state it, he just has a way of hammering home it's validity. And he gives five evidences to strengthen them in their confidence in the resurrection of Christ.

The apostle here weaves into this restatement of the gospel five evidences indicating that Jesus did rise, in fact, bodily, physically, literally out of the grave. And we saw last week and we're not going to go into these in any detail, just to remind you, but we saw last week, number one, the testimony of the church. The testimony of the church. He says, "look you have received it," verse 1. "You stand it and you are saved by it."

In other words he says the very fact that you 20 some years later after the resurrection believe this thing have been saved by this thing, stand on this thing, hold to this thing, is indication that it was true. You're living proof. You're evidence. You are a resurrection fellowship. You have received the gospel of the resurrection. You have believed the gospel of the resurrection. You hold the gospel of the resurrection. Your lives have been literally transformed by the gospel of the resurrection.

So you are the first line of evidence. How else could you explain the fact that Chapter 6 says that a whole group of people, some of whom were fornicators, idolaters, homosexuals, effeminate, extortioners, thieves and he goes on and lists all of those things, but all of a sudden they were transformed by Christ. How could that be explained other than by the living Christ? And the living power of the living Christ.

The fact that you believe it and you're only 20 years away, the fact that you have confidence that it happened and you're this close, is indication enough that it's true. And it has been evidenced all throughout history, the existence of the church has been evidenced that in fact, the gospel of the resurrection is true. Look at the charts.

Would all of this had happened from a hoax? Certainly the Corinthians very existence marshaled evidence of the validity of the resurrection, the living Christ had built that church.

Number two, the second line of evidence that we looked at last week was the testimony of the Scriptures and in the end of verse 3, he says, "according to the Scriptures." In the end of verse 4, he says, "according to the Scriptures." And we mark the fact in our minds that everything that happened in the death and resurrection of Christ was prophesized where? In the Old Testament, that's the Scriptures.

The Old Testament said it would all happen, and it happened exactly as the Old Testament said. The Old Testament generally predicts resurrection for everybody. That's right. In Psalms 49:15, it predicts the resurrection of the human being. In Psalms 73:24, it predicts the resurrection of the physical, the body, I'm going to be with the Lord. In Isaiah 26, it even states that we'll be resurrected.

In Daniel 12:2, it again states that we'll be resurrected. So the idea and the concept of mankind being resurrected is in the Old Testament and so is the promise that Jesus would rise from the dead. And we saw that didn't we? Such places as Psalms 16 and so forth.

And so there was the promise of the Scripture that it should come to pass. This is what God said. They believed in the validity of the Scripture. We might do well to remind some of our Jewish friends that when they say well, I don't believe Jesus was the Messiah, we would do well to show them Old Testament Scripture that predicts the Messiah will rise from the dead and show them in fact that Jesus did. He fulfilled Scripture.

So you don't need to speculate that this is just some whimsical thing. He's saying, you can't just pass off the resurrection. You can't just it's a non-secator, it doesn't matter. You can't just set it aside. It is a prophetic absolute. If Jesus doesn't rise from the dead literally, physically, and bodily, without corruption as Psalms 16 says, then He's not the Messiah.

That's how important is. The Scripture predicted it. It has to be. Just as it predicted He would be born in Bethlehem and just as it predicted that He would die. So it predicts that He would rise. And of course, when Jesus came into the world He immediately picked up this Old Testament scriptural format and He began to speak immediately about His death.

As early as the 2ndChapter of Mark. In verses 18 to 20, the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting. Now there was only one fast required in all of the Old Testament and that was the fast of the day of atonement. All the others were optional. And the Pharisees had made up a lot of optional fasts, and they fasted twice a week. I think basically they fasted on Monday and Thursday, if I remember right.

They fasted often and they considered it a sign of spiritual virtue, so apparently the disciples of John the Baptist fell into this habit and they did it as well. They came across Jesus and His disciples who weren't doing it and they said, "well, how come if we do this and the Pharisees do this, you don't? And he says, "because you don't fast when the bridegroom is here."

But one of these days the bridegroom will be taken away, then will His disciples fast. In other words, as early as the 2ndChapter of Mark, he was talking about being taken away and the phrase there taken away in the Greek is the same one used in Isaiah 53:8 and the Greek rendering to speak of Him being taken away to slaughter. So from the very earliest part of His ministry, He began to predict that He would die.

But it didn't end there. Later on in the gospel of Mark, by the time He gets to the 8thChapter, He's not just talking about His death, He's talking about what will follow His death and in Mark Chapter 8 and verse 31, he says, "He began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, by the chief priests, by the scribes, and be killed." Now watch this, "And after three days rise again."

So from Mark Chapter 8, He begins to talk about this. In Mark 9, verse 9, the same thing. "Til the Son of Man is risen from the dead, Jesus says." In verse 31, He taught His disciples again that He should be killed and rise the third day. So He began to teach death and resurrection from the earliest part of His ministry. Why? Because this was the essence of His whole ministry was wrapped in these things.

The mission of Jesus was to die and to rise. And this became the format for all the apostolic preaching. As soon as you get into the church in Acts 2, the first sermon ever preached is preached on the resurrection. You get into Acts 3 the second sermon ever preached is preached on the resurrection. When in Acts 1, they went about to choose somebody to take the place of Judas, he had to be a witness with us of the resurrection, because that was the bottom-line.

And so the mission of Jesus, as He sees it Himself as the Old Testament prophecies see it, as the Epistles relate it, the mission of Jesus was to set up a kingdom. And for that He must live. But in order to have any subjects in His kingdom He had to pay the price of sin and for that He must die. So He had to live and die. And to do that, you've got to rise in the middle, right?

And so the resurrection becomes the middle of the gospel. He must die to pay the penalty of sin. He must live to set up a kingdom and so in the middles He's got to rise from the dead. And that's what Scripture said. The Old Testament again and again and again and again predicts the death of the

Messiah. The death of the servant, the death of the sacrifice and it also predicts the King is coming and He will set up His kingdom and He will reign and if you've got a dying Messiah and a reigning Messiah, you've got to have a resurrection in the middle.

It was absolutely obvious that that had to happen all over the Old Testament according to the Scripture. So the resurrection evidence is given by the existence of the church, and by the testimony of the Scripture.

Thirdly, it is given by the testimony of eyewitnesses. Look at verse 5. "And that He was seen of Cephus, the of the 12, and after that He was seen of about 500 brethren at once of whom the greater part remained to the present time, but some are fallen asleep or have died. And after that, He was seen of James, then of all the apostles." Stop there. Now He's giving the third area of evidence the testimony of eyewitnesses. Human courts today, human courts all through history have pretty much predicated the decisions that make on the basis of eyewitnesses where possible. That is the conclusive kind of evidence.

And especially where you get intelligent, competent, sound men and women with real integrity giving the testimony. That's very strong evidence. So Paul appeals to that. He is saying, in case you have any question about the bodily resurrection of Christ, let me tell you about the 500 plus people who saw Him.

A lawyer by the name of Sir Edward Clark said, "As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the Easter day. To me the evidence is conclusive and over and over again in the high court, I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling. Inference follows on evidence and a truthful witness is always artless and distains effect. The gospel evidence for the resurrection is of this class. And as a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate." So the testimony of a lawyer, a capable man, in searching out evidence.

Professor Thomas Arnold was 14 years the famous headmaster or rugby. Author of a famous three volume history of Rome. Appointed to the chair of modern history Oxford University in England. And this is what he writes. "The evidence for our Lord's life and death and resurrection may be and often has been shown to be satisfactory. It is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece as carefully as every judge summing up on an important case. I have myself done it many times over, not to persuade others, but to satisfy myself. I have been used for many years to study the history of other times and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them and I know of no one fact in the history mankind which is better proved by fuller evidence than the great sign that God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

So a lawyer, so a historian and theologian Charles Hodge says it is the best authenticated even in ancient history. Why? Because of the massive evidence of eyewitnesses. Verse 5 says, "And He was seen," literally He appeared and we say that because Jesus was never seen by anyone to whom He did not reveal Himself after His resurrection.

Mary-Magdalene was in the garden. She saw Him. Did she know it was Him? No, she thought it was the gardener and she didn't know until He revealed Himself. Two disciples who had been with Him

for three years, walked along on the road to Emmaus, did they know who He was? They didn't know who He was until he revealed himself.

In John 21 He appears on the shore and the don't know who He is until He chooses to reveal Himself. Post-resurrection, no one saw Jesus as Jesus until He revealed who he was, to a select group. And so He revealed Himself after His resurrection. And now Paul chronologically lists those revelations.

And incidentally, since this is the oldest record of the resurrection written even before any of the gospels, this is the first insight into who were the eyewitnesses who saw Him. Number one, was Cephus, and that's Aramaic for rock, Greek for rock is what? Peter. And Luke 24:31 when the road to Emmaus disciples came along, they reported to everybody else that He was seen by Simon.

Somewhere along the line right after Jesus came out of the grave, He went right to Peter. You say, why did He do that? Peter was a coward. He didn't deserve anything. Why didn't go to dear, beloved, faithful, wonderful John? Or one of those other disciples. Why did He go to Peter? The disciple who denied Him. Well, I don't know that I can give the exact answer, but I have a few ideas.

Number one, I think God wanted to emphasize what grace is and what love is and what forgiveness is. And aren't you glad He picks up the unworthy folks? Aren't you happy about that? I am. Jesus needed Peter for a strategic ministry. You He can use crooked sticks as well as He can use straight ones. And he went right to Peter because He needed Peter. And after all, Peter had denied Him, but what had he done immediately after he denied Him? He went out and did what? He wept bitterly.

And I think He had a broken heart and I think the thing that Peter was so left was that he had denied Jesus and now Jesus was dead and he could never make it right. So Jesus went right to Him and met with Him. Now we don't know about that meeting, because the Scripture doesn't tell us about it.

It was just a very private meeting. But Peter became eyewitness number one. You say well why did He pick Peter out? I'll tell you why. Who was the unquestionable leader among the 12? Peter. Who had the greatest ministry in the first 12 chapters of the book of Acts? Peter.

Who was the guy with the greatest line of credibility? With the greatest believability, with the most clout, with the greatest power, with the greatest impact on the early church in Jerusalem. Peter. And He picks out the prime witness of the resurrection and says, "Peter believed it." He saw Him and they got to say well, Peter's something what a man.

Post-resurrection, Peter was indominateable. Powerful, Peter believed it. And then verse 5, "Then He appeared to the twelve." Do you remember that same day it says in John 20:19, "And the same day, it being night, the disciples were in the upper room, the door being shut and Jesus appeared to them and said Peace be unto you." Immediately in John 20 after the incident with Peter and He's right to the upper and He meets the twelve. Now there's only 11 now, but the twelve became their official title. They were called the twelve.

Even though there's only 11 because of Judas apostasy, they're called the twelve. And so Jesus went to be with them. It's recorded also in Luke 24:33 to 43. And He met with the disciples. And He shared with them and they became witnesses.

Now listen, now these are not just fly-by-night characters. These are the apostles who were righting the theology the church was born out of. You see? From Acts 2:42 on the church studied the apostles doctrine. They were the bottom-line. They were the ones who articulated the revelation of God and He says it is Peter who was the primary one and the rest of the twelve, they saw the living Christ. That's evidence folks.

These are competent intelligent witnesses. And then he goes on to verse 6, and he says after that He was seen by over 500 brethren at once, at the same time. And He adds, "this of whom the greater part remain to the present time, but some have died." He says, there's a second line of evidence. Not only, now watch this, not only is the resurrection validated by the character of these witnesses, but by the number of these other witnesses. You've not only got the twelve whose character is impeccable, unquestionable, but you've got the mass of 500 people who saw the living Christ.

So in one case you have the quality witness. In the other case, you have what? Quantity witnesses. It's a great number, now where did this occur? Well, some believe it occurred in Jerusalem, because that's where so many people lived that were associated with the church. But if you really look at the text in Acts 1, you find there were only 120 disciples in Jerusalem when the church was born gathered in the upper room. There may have been some more, but it seems best to assume that Jesus' greatest reception was not in Jerusalem, but maybe the greatest crowd of people would have been Galilee and in fact, perhaps the sighting of Jesus by the 500 occurred on some hillside in Galilee when Jesus was in Galilee as Matthew indicates in the latter chapters He would be.

So whatever, but somewhere in Jerusalem, perhaps a little less likely, but maybe in Galilee more likely Jesus appeared to 500 people at once. That's a lot of witnesses. You have any case in court that you want to have and you drag through 500 people who all say the same thing, that's fairly convincing.

I mean, all you need according to the Old Testament law was that something had to be confirmed in the mouth of what, two or three. God always goes overboard. Everything He does, He just had 497 more than He needed. And listen to this, this is so great. He says, "the majority of them are still alive." You check it out. Not only the character of witnesses who would some of them be dead, but the quantity of witnesses most of whom were still alive, you can ask them yourself.

And finally He adds, I love this, "And after that He was seen by James. And the again by all the apostles." James? Who's James? James the son of Alphaeus? James the son of Zebedee, both of those were apostles. I don't think that's who He has in mind.

This is James the brother of our Lord, the one who wrote the Epistle of James. The one who became the head of the Jerusalem church in the sense that He was the leader. James the brother of Jesus, the half brother, the son of Joseph and Mary. You say well, what's so important about this? Well, this is a witness of a different kind. Listen to John Chapter 7, verse 5. "For neither did His brothers believe in Him."

Now you've got the testimony of His own brother who's an unbeliever. You say well, what's the importance of this? Listen, the importance of this is the fact that here you have a witness right out of

his family who was a skeptic who has totally been changed and he is now a believer of the resurrection. Now James didn't believe that Jesus was who he claimed.

James didn't believe. John 7:5 says it, didn't believe. Maybe when Jesus died, James began to feel a little remorse. And maybe as he knew the circumstances of the death of his half brother, humanly speaking, maybe he began to feel some admiration for Jesus. And Jesus wanted a witness out of His own family, because you know it would be hard. People would say, don't kid us about you resurrecting from the dead. Your own family doesn't even believe it.

And so Jesus sought out James. Jesus appeared to James in resurrection form and James believed and James was changed. And James...it says in James 1:1 starts out his letter by saying, "James a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ." Well, that's a big change for an unbeliever. Now you've got not only the testimony of...testimony of quality men and of a quantity crowd, but you've got the testimony of a skeptic here.

And right out of Jesus' own family an unbeliever is transformed into one who does believe. The resurrection convinced him when all the rest of the stuff didn't apparently. He'd watched Jesus' life. It didn't convince him. The resurrection did. And then again it says at the end of 7, that he appeared to all the apostles.

And if you read Acts Chapter 1, it tells us how that happened. In verse 3, it says, "He showed himself alive after passion by many infallible proofs being seen by the apostles literally 40 days speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." So he appeared to the apostles again, at least on three occasion to them as a group. And so you can see the witnesses are really there. Quality type men. Quantity of people and even a skeptic.

J. N. D. Anderson writes "The most drastic way of dismissing the evidence would be to say that these stories were mere fabrication. That they were pure lies, but so far as I know, not a single critic today would take such an attitude. In fact, it would an impossible position." Listen, think of the number of witnesses, over 500. Think of the character of the witnesses. Men and women who gave the world the highest ethical teaching that is ever known and who even on the testimony of their enemies lived it out in their lives. Think of the psychological absurdity of picturing a little band of defeated cowards, cowering in an upper room one day and a few days later they are transformed into a company that no persecution could silence. And he goes on to say attempting to attribute this dramatic change to nothing more than convincing themselves of a fabrication doesn't make sense. Doesn't it.

So the evidence mounts. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is attested to by the church, by the Scriptures, and by the eyewitnesses.

Fourth, the testimony of a special witness, a special one. Verse 8, "And last of all, He was seen of me also." Who's this? Paul. "And last of all, He was seen of me also." And he throws in...this is a whole other category of witnesses. This isn't some quality person who's very much behind Jesus. This isn't 500 believing brethren. This isn't His own human brethren. This guy is a Christian killer.

That's right. He says, "I am as one born out of due time. I am the least of the apostles not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God." Here is a total unbeliever. He is a total

persecutor of the church. He says, I'm the last to see Him. Last of all.

By the way, that's a good word. For those who keep claiming appearances of Jesus, isn't it? Paul says, "I am the," what, "the last to see the resurrected Christ." This makes us suspect a myriad of so-called experiences of seeing Jesus. In fact, Peter even writes, "whom having not seen You love." Paul says, "I saw him." When did you see Him, Paul? You weren't even around fellow. I saw Him. I was on the way to Damascus. Read Acts 9. And I was just going there and I was breathing out fire and slaughter and I was going to do my thing, you see.

And all of a sudden I got slammed to the dirt and there in front of me was the blazing glorious resurrected Christ and I said to Him, "Lord what will you have me to do?" Paul saw Him. He saw Him and He was so brilliant He blinded him. It was the blinding of darkness. It was the blinding of light, like gazing at the sun.

"I saw Him," he said. He says, "I saw Him as one born out of due time." Literally taectrometry. From the word ectroma, which a pre-mature birth. Ectrometry is an aborted fetus. Now that's interesting. He says, "I saw Him as an aborted fetus." An abortion, a miscarriage. What's he saying?

Well, it seems to suggest initially the Greek word does that He was born too soon. But the fact is in relation to the twelve apostles He wasn't born too soon. He was born what? Too late. Well, how do you explain that? Well, perhaps the Greek word can imply that. Some commentators feel that the Greek word simply means an untimely birth, which means He could have been born too early like a miscarriage or too late. Retained too long and maybe the word can mean that. Maybe He's simply saying I was born at the wrong time.

It's possible that the Greek word could just be a general word meaning a birth at the wrong time. Either early or late. The problem with that view, it's okay, and it might be true is that we don't have any other use of the word to support that in that manner though it could be true.

Other people say, other commentators say that Paul is really just designating himself as the worst, the ugliest, the discard of humanity. Paul may be just saying I'm nothing more than abortion. And incidentally, he used the definite article here. It literally translates this way as the abortion. And some commentators say that there may have been some people who called him the abortion, because it was a term of derision and despite and hatred and the people hated him so much for his gospel of grace which counteracted their systems of law.

You want to put it all together. Paul is simply saying I was useless. I was ugly. I was despised. I was worthless. I wasn't even born at the right time and yet it was me that Jesus appeared to. And that tells me that God is no respecter of what? Persons. Aren't you glad for that?

Paul says, "I saw Him." "I saw Him." And he uses the emphatic pronoun in verse 9 "For I who am the least of the apostles. I'm not fit to be even called an apostle, because I've persecuted the church of God." Can't you imagine that all through the life of that dear man in his mind he saw the visions coming back and the people he had persecuted because the loved Jesus Christ.

They were all his brothers and he killed them once. I didn't deserve it, he said. The least of all. Verse 10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am. And His grace which was bestowed on me was not in

vain." Beloved it is always by the grace of God we are what we are, is it not?

So if you're saved, it's of His grace. But Paul says, "it was a sovereign thing. It was unmerited. I was just going to kill the Christians and the next thing I knew Jesus came and He appeared to me and He changed me and He made me an apostle and I can't believe it. I was the scum," he says.

It's like the old story of Mel Trotter that I love so much. Mel was such a drunken bum that when his little daughter, three years old died of malnutrition because he never bought food for her. Spent all his money on booze, he took the clothes off her body and took them to a hock shop. His wife had put the clothes on for the funeral and he stole the clothes and hocked them so he could buy some booze and left his dead daughter naked.

Mel Trotter stumbled into a mission and found Jesus Christ and became one of the greatest evangelists America ever knew. God is not respecter of persons. He picks up the scum and He picked up some scum named the apostle Paul and turned him into the greatest apostle and he says here, "His grace was bestowed upon me and it was not," what, "in vain."

You know what's beautiful about that? Paul didn't just accept salvation. He gave his life to fulfill God's will. You know, you have to wonder sometimes if...if sometimes God's grace is not maybe just kind of in vain because somebody gets saved and then they become sort of a spiritual flake. They never do anything. Not Paul. And somebody may say well, yeah, uh-huh, the resurrection happened. All you people, sure, the apostles would believe it, sure the 500 would believe it, sure James' brother, He had a vested interest. He probably loved His brother humanly and boy he really wanted to believe it. Well, listen folks, what are you going to do with this guy who didn't believe anything and it happened to him. He saw Christ before he believed.

And it shattered his life. Tough for the skeptics to deal with Paul. And so he says it wasn't in vain either. "But I labored more abundantly than the rest of the apostles, yet it wasn't me, but it was the Grace of God was with me." _____(40:33) I work to the point of exhaustion. And God gave more abundant fruit to me than He did to anybody else, he says. It wasn't me, it was God.

He's not...he's not extolling his hard work. He's saying I worked hard and there was a more abundant response as God's grace worked. It's the idea of results in the more abundant rather than effort. God's grace did it. How do you turn a guy going killing Christians into the greatest apostle who ever lived. How do you take somebody who is doing everything he can to destroy the church and to the greatest proponent of the church that every lived? There's only one thing that could do it. He saw the living Christ.

That did it. And there's the last evidence. The testimony of the church, the testimony of the Old Testament, the testimony of the eyewitnesses, the testimony of a very special witness, and finally the testimony of the common message, verse 11. "Therefore, whether it were I or they, whether it's myself or the other apostles, so we preach and so ye believed. What's he saying? He's saying this, we all are preaching the same message. We all are believing the same gospel and it is a gospel of resurrection so we preach the resurrection. So you believe the resurrection. Whether it's Paul or Peter or the twelve or James or whoever it is, it's all the same proclamation and whether it's Corinth or Galatia or Ephesus or Colossi or anywhere else, we all believe the same thing.

You see the impact of that? Listen, one of the greatest testimonies to the resurrection is the unity, the uniformity of the common faith of the early church. There weren't a few over here who believed in resurrection and a little segment over here who didn't. That's something new folks, that's something new. It's only been in the age of the skeptic that all of a sudden we've got some part of the church that's the church believing in resurrection and some other so-called Christian church that denies it.

That's new. Paul says early, we all believed it. And if we all believed it and if we all believed that Jesus rose and we all believe in a bodily resurrection, then go to verse 12, and watch how his argument moves. "Now if Christ is preached by all of us that He rose from the dead, how come some are saying there's no resurrection of the dead?" And now he's moving into the second argument, which we'll get into next week.

If you have accepted already the resurrection of Christ bodily, what's the problem with the concept of bodily resurrection. Now watch this, go back to verse 8, and I'm going to close. There are three great implications of the gospel right here for us and I want you to get these as we close. Implication number one, when you hear the gospel of the resurrection the first thing that should happen is a recognition of sin.

"And last of all He was seen by me as a dead fetus, the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God." The first implication the gospel had in the life of Paul when he met Jesus, he recognized he was a sinner.

Second, not only a recognition of sin, but secondly a revolution of character. The second implication of the gospel in verse 10, "but by the grace of God I am what I am in His grace, which was bestowed on me was not in vain." In other words, he was changed. He was miraculously transformed. The first implication of the gospel is a recognition of sin. The second is a revolution of character.

The third is a redirection of energy. "And so I labored more abundantly than they all. Yet not I, but the grace of God in me. Listen beloved, when you hear the gospel of the resurrection, number one you should respond with the sense of sinfulness. Number two, you should turn to Jesus Christ, the living Christ for a revolution of character and number three, you ought to be anxious to see a redirection of energy so that from then on, your life is given not so that grace is in vain, but so that grace fulfills it's plan. Your life is given in a total commitment to bear fruit for His glory. So I hope the truth of the resurrection has those implications for you. Let's pray.

Thank you Father for the time we shared, for the message of the word of God. Thank you for the resurrection. Thank you that resurrection is not a past event to be remembered, but the culmination of the resurrection as a living Christ to be adored and serve it. May we do that, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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