

Intro. All genuine Christians claim that what happened to Jesus will happen to them. If they die before Jesus comes back to earth, they will be raised from the dead with a new body to live a new forever existence of life with God where every aspect of sin and death have been destroyed and reversed. This new creation of life in a different body, without any effects of sin and death, in God's presence where peace, joy, justice and love dominate the news is admittedly a very strange concept for us to grasp in a meaningful way. It is the result of the gospel, the complete and total deliverance from sin and death. The gospel is both the salvation from God's wrath and the recreation of new life.

We live, move, breathe and exist in a world where it is challenging to live our faith that sin and death have been reversed, are being reversed and will one day be completely reversed through the good news of Jesus Christ. Our hearts are seduced, our senses are dulled and our hatred of evil is compromised by the multifaceted assaults coming our way daily. It is not uncommon for Christians to find themselves living according to standards less than the appeal of the resurrected life.

Like Christians today, the Corinthians had drifted away from the intensity and risk of gospel living. This happens as they began to morph their lives into a form of holding right beliefs but behaving according to their own gratification as their chief end. This speculation or special knowledge approach to Christianity can be very confusing because it sounds so right but minimizes the intensity of obedience and the risk required of living by faith.

This 'knowledge based' approach appears in our lives in part in these ways:

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| • Triumphalism | first response is/content with 'I know' | 8:1-3 |
| • Complacency | cautious/under control | arrogance 5:1-2 |
| • Fantasy | think we do more than we do/self impressed | 13:1-3 |

Chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians is written to address the core connection of our lives to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The issue that the Apostle addresses is that some are embracing the possibility that the dead are not raised (15, 16, 29, 32). Some were entertaining ideas that perhaps there was not life after death or perhaps the gospel just provided an inner or spiritual resurrection. The contrast that we see in this chapter is between a lethargic group of Christians impressed with their knowledge and credentials and the Apostle who is motivated by the transforming grace of God and the reality of a new life through Jesus resurrection. One is arrogant and content in their own special way of thinking, the other is taking risks, presenting himself daily to die and rejecting this so called special knowledge of the Corinthians.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-34

As you can see from reading the passage, the Apostle addresses the 'special knowledge' problem directly through logical and biblical arguments. His conclusion is that you and I have the potential to be seduced and brought under the influence of something other than the life transforming and death reversing gospel of the risen Christ.

How can this trend be reversed in our lives? Is there a way to return to living the gospel that was delivered, preached, received and believed? Can our complacency be transformed into steadfast and abounding joy?

First, consider the unacceptable consequences of a reduced gospel. 12-19

Note the concern expressed that the real issue is the work of God in Christ . . . if Christ has not been raised, the power of the gospel is limited to this life only. The point is that you cannot say you believe in the gospel, the saving, transforming power of God through Jesus death, burial and resurrection . . . and in a casual way be open to speculative, trendy and popular influences. Resurrection is a basic and foundational truth of the gospel that forms our hope . . . without it we are actually to be pitied.

Unacceptable consequences of a reduced gospel in your life . . . 12-13; 16

- Preaching of the gospel is false. 15 cmp w/12 opposed to God
- Christ is not raised. 16 cmp w/13 no victory or assurance
- Sin and death still reign. 17,18 cmp w/14
- No hope outside this life. 19

The farther you distance yourself from the truths of the gospel, the more your faith is neutralized, sin is no problem, hope is found in earthbound things, joy in the benefits won for us by Christ is lost and we share the distinction of being among the most pitiable people on earth . . . living out the fantasies of our religious imaginations. These unacceptable consequences of replacing the gospel with a slimmed down, more acceptable version must be considered and avoided.

Second, consider the irreplaceable advantages of a complete gospel. 20-32

Note the Apostle's strong transition to the facts. He turns our consideration to the real situation . . . Christ has been raised from the dead. Rather than the resurrection being something that you can be casual about, it is God's action and announcement that through Christ there is a resurrection to come. The resurrection points toward and leads to the death and reversal of all that Adam produced and the beginning of all that life is meant to be in Christ.

Consider three life transforming advantages of Christ's resurrection . . .

- If you die, you will be raised from the dead. 20-23

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Conclusion What's the response of your heart to these truths today? Which of the three perspectives from the passage do you connect with?

Special knowledge You may be thankful for the accurate teaching, glad that so and so was here to hear this and duly impressed again with your balanced, reasonable approach to Christianity that certainly will never scare anyone away. Your self confidence, religious dignity and lack of intensity are, thank God, still intact. You are to be pitied in very practical ways. You need to repent and approach God and his word as if you do not know him at all.

Dying every day You are humbled again by the awesome and satisfying privilege of spending your life for the glory of the gospel. Your hope and desires have been fueled. Your sense of worth in the kingdom of God has been expanded as you are reminded of his great love for you in Christ. You not only are motivated to new risk and intensity but would like to protest as Paul did the number of 'special knowledge' types around who hurt the team. You need to humble yourself before God's grace and transforming power in thanksgiving and worship. Cry out to him for his continued favor.

Ashamed You have received the gracious and clear rebukes of God's words by his Spirit and feel the weight of your guilt. You admit that you have come to enjoy a kind of Christianity that is limited to the here and now, enjoys control of your life and refuses to take risks or seek God with intensity. You have been slowly seduced away from loving Christ and the gospel. You need to wake up to the real claims of the gospel on your life. You know there is sin that must be dealt with now. You and the 'special knowledge' crowd have something in common . . . you both must repent, acknowledge your sin and seek after God and his word as if you have never known him at all.

Study Questions

1. Discuss and evaluate the 'knowledge based' approach to Christianity presented in the intro section of the notes. Compare 15:34 with the passages from 1Corinthians listed in the notes. Would this attitude be more receptive to minimizing the gospel or not? Why?
2. Review the unacceptable consequences of a reduced gospel. Formally, we would never say these things about the gospel . . . however are there ways in which these become the actual message of our lives when we are distracted and deceived? How?
3. What are some ways that the three life transforming advantages of Christ's resurrection have impacted your decisions, attitude, behavior or direction in recent weeks? Explain how the resurrection impacts such important areas of our faith like motivation and intensity.
4. What are some specific ways that Christians today are being seduced (or under the influence) to minimize the gospel? Who are some of the gangs that you are influenced by?
5. Why did the Apostle use such harsh, biting rebukes at the conclusion of this passage? What's the response of your heart to these truths today? Which of the three perspectives from the passage do you connect with?
6. Spend time in prayer as a group asking God to clarify and energize the gospel in your lives.