

1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

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, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11 Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Dear Friends in Christ,

(pic) When I say, “*Easter blessings*,” what comes to mind? For many people special candy would be looked upon as an Easter blessing. Apparently people are very focused on candy at Easter time. (pic) The following



headline ran on a web site for Florida News station WKMG. “*Has Easter surpassed Halloween as the top candy holiday?*” It continues, “*Easter bunny means big profits for candy retailers.*” There are other blessings associated with Easter. Easter breakfast at church, families gathering and spending time together, etc.

What is the most important blessing of Easter? St. Paul reminds us of what Easter is all about. He points us to the risen Lord Jesus, who is our Savior. There is more than one blessing in Jesus’ resurrection. So as we listen to

God's word today, **St. Paul Reminds Us of Easter Blessings!**

1 Corinthians is a letter written to a group of Christians in the First Century A.D. They were relatively new Christians. Paul had instructed them about Jesus and life and death and heaven. After he left them, some other teachers came from outside the congregation. They were not teaching the same things about God's plan of salvation. Some apparently questioned the resurrection of the dead. Perhaps the Corinthians had doubts about life after death and salvation. So Paul who is doing missionary work in another place writes to them. Here in chapter 15, he explains that Jesus rose and so Jesus' followers will also rise. Paul's words are meant to help their faith and ours.

1. The Easter good news reminds us where we stand.

I remember years ago a widow telling me that she hadn't really planned for her husband dying. He was gone before he was 70 years old. She did make it, but his untimely death shook her world. Death has a way of shaking our world. We, therefore, need to stand on a good foundation. The good news of Easter that St. Paul shares reminds us where we stand.

A. When Paul, the missionary, had come to the Corinthians, some of them believed in many gods, others none at all. The apostle had preached Christ as the Son of God. God's Son had not only helped create the world, but he had come into this world to live with people like us. He had come to conquer death.

In their early Bible classes Paul would have explained that sin causes death. **"The wages of sin is death."** (Romans 6:23) God's Son came to take care of the wages of sin and bring us salvation. Since we preach the Scriptures in our churches this is what you have heard in our church and in our sister congregations. This preaching about Jesus and his work placed us on the foundation that is our salvation.

B. The Corinthians had this faith. They were standing on this foundation.

1. The problem was that the false teachers were trying to get them off this firm base. It probably started with innocent comments like, *"We are sophisticated and educated. We know the dead don't rise. If they did, how gross would that be! Surely God hasn't promised a physical resurrection."*

Today Satan will use spiritual instructors and even Christian pastors to bring doubt to our personal resurrection. The main way the resurrection is attacked is to attack God's word. *"We can't be sure God is promising a*

physical resurrection. Not every word in the Bible is God's word. Some things were Paul's opinions or ideas." They suggest, "More likely God will give some kind of spiritual resurrection, if there is one at all." This false teaching will effectively shatter the foundation on which our lives depend and on which we stand.

St. Paul calls on us to hold firmly to the message he taught. To believe is to accept what St. Paul and the Scriptures say about Jesus as being absolutely true. If we say we are Christian, but do not believe in the resurrection, then we have believed in vain. We are not on the foundation that Jesus laid. There will be no salvation.

2. The Easter good news reminds us that Jesus is alive.

St. Paul assures the Corinthians and you and I of our resurrection by speaking to the fact of Jesus' resurrection.

A. First of all St. Paul mentions the reason he needed to rise. He died for our sins. (pic) **"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."** (3)

In the Old Testament days God had spoken to his people about their sins and he spoke of the answer to sin. They were commanded to bring the blood of sheep and goats for sin offerings. (pic) While the Lord God accepted these sacrifices it says in the New Testament letter to the Hebrews. (pic) **"Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins."**

(Hebrews 10:11) These sacrifices foreshadowed one great sacrifice that would count as payment for all sin. (pic, pic) The writer tells us of Jesus, **"But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."** (10:12) This was the not the end of Jesus.

B. St. Paul tells us, (pic) **"...he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."** (4) Jesus himself had predicted this,

"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again." John 10:17 The prophets had also predicted Jesus' rise from the dead. King David wrote in Psalm 16, **"You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your holy one see decay."** (Verse 10 NIV 1984)

Isaiah wrote, **"though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days."** (53:10)

C. It can be said that talk is cheap, the proof is in the facts. So Paul parades a

crowd of witnesses who saw Jesus alive after his resurrection. (pic) He mentions “**Cephas**” that is another name for Peter. He mentions “The Twelve.” Judas is gone, but the label for the original group is “**The Twelve.**” Then he mentions an **appearance to 500** believers at once. We don’t know when this happened. He also **appeared to James**, the one called “the brother of the Lord.” It is interesting that he does not mention the women who originally went to the tomb. It may be that Paul is highlighting people that the Corinthians could still go to and verify that they had seen Jesus. In any case there were many living witnesses who had seen Jesus alive after Easter.

D. Finally St. Paul, with great humility, mentions that Jesus appeared to him too. “**and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.**” (8) Paul describes himself as a miscarried child because while he is a child of God, he had been the one to persecute and harm God’s church. He saw himself as the most undeserving person of God’s grace. Yet Jesus had appeared and spoken to him. He testifies to that truth.

Application: The Corinthians could go and talk to the original witnesses. What can you and I do? Jesus points us to the Scriptures. In the *Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus*, Jesus states, “**They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them.**” (Luke 16:29) We have the testimony of Paul and others in the Scriptures. The Scriptures claim to be more than the word of men. “**All Scripture is God-breathed.**” (2 Timothy 3:16) Do you have doubts about Jesus’ being alive? Read the Scriptures concerning the promise of his resurrection and its fulfillment. Do you have questions about dying and eternal life? Go to Scriptures! Here the Lord God who loves us and sent his Son to save us has given us answers that he believes we need. He wants us to trust in Jesus and prepare ourselves to journey through death to eternal life in heaven. There we will see Jesus alive with our own eyes.

3. The Easter good news reminds us that we are energized to serve.

As St. Paul is writing to the Corinthians he confesses, “**by the grace of God I am what I am.**” He did not deserve to be a child of God and an apostle, but God was gracious. He was not only saved, but he was called to serve the Lord as a messenger of God’s grace to the Gentiles.

St. Paul goes on to confess that God’s grace was not without effect on him. He says, “**No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace**

of God that was with me.” (10) Christ’s love compelled him to share the good news of Easter with as many as possible.

What are you planning to do today and tomorrow? I am sure that you have things to do. Please open your eyes to whatever work or service that Jesus has for you to do. He will at times bring people into our lives that we can serve. It might be the brother or sister who is down and doubting. We can listen and talk about Jesus. It might be someone who is not religious and confesses that their life is empty. You can listen and talk about the power of Jesus’ resurrection. It might be someone who doesn’t have long to live. You can talk confidently about perfect life and eternal life in heaven. God’s grace to us undeserving sinners that moves us to be his messengers today.

Conclusion: There are many Easter blessings, including some extravagant ones. (pic) Witness Pierre Marcolini’s “*The Magician’s Hat.*” This is available for your Easter basket for a mere \$115.00. I hope he tastes good!



The greatest Easter blessing didn’t cost us a dime. (pic) Jesus died and rose again. We receive this factual news from God’s word.

This is what has been preached to us. This what we believe. Take comfort and live and serve based on the Easter Good News. It’s all about Easter blessings! Amen.