

1 Corinthians 15, Part 1 (Conrad Bowman) (8-12-07)

Chapter 15, that's where we are going to take off this morning. Phil covered part of it last week. I'm not real sure where he stopped, so I'm going to start over with verse 1.

1st Corinthians 15. We've done 12, 13, and 14. Thirteen is an interlude between 12 and 14, which deal with the gifts. Now we're going to move to 15, and the subject changes pretty completely.

"Now I've made known to you brethren the gospel which I preached to you which also you received in which also you stand." A lot of times that first verse is a throw-a-way, but I guarantee you, in Paul's case, this is not a throw-a-way verse. He's making several points here, one of which is, the gospel which he is making known to these brethren is the same gospel ("good news") that he's already previously announced, preached to them. It's the same gospel that they received and accepted; so there's agreement on that, and it's the same good news in which they currently stand firm in the Lord. Now, all the way through the Pauline epistles, we saw it in Timothy, we saw it in Ephesians, we certainly saw it in Galatians, we saw it in Philippians and Colossians, it was Paul's insistence that the gospel that he was delivering should be protected at all costs. You do not lose your hold on the gospel. To Timothy he said; 'make sure you don't get knocked off message. You make sure that those things which I've delivered to you that I received directly from the Lord Himself, you make sure you hold on to those things, and don't let them slip away.' And, the word he used to Timothy was, if you don't pay attention, they'll "drift past" you just like stuff floating on a river, and they'll be down-stream before you know it. You do not want that to happen. Don't neglect these things that I am telling you. Now, he is so emphatic on that because he's mentioned it now three times in that first verse. The importance of the things he's delivering to them. The reason he's doing that is because Paul is painfully aware that the gospel he's delivering is the same gospel that was revealed to him by the Spirit Himself, and taught to him by the Lord Himself, risen and ascended. The first qualification for an apostle is that you have to be an eye witness to the resurrected Christ. That's the first qualification of an apostle. After Paul, we don't have any other apostles who can make that claim. There are absolutely none that we can authenticate. The Damascus road experience was the appearance personally of the resurrected ascended Christ to Paul, His apostle to the Gentiles, and that's you and me. The message he received was the message that the Book of Ephesians tells us, or rather he told us, as he wrote to the Ephesians that he got by means of revelation. It was a special gospel

and it was not the same as the gospel to Israel. We studied those differences when we went through James, and 1st Peter, and 2nd Peter, and Hebrews. The message to Israel was that *the Messiah has come*. The message to the Gentile church is the Savior has died, was buried, resurrected, and now ascended, and that Man, Jesus, the Last Adam, now is at the Father's throne in heaven, and that's where your life today originates. So all of the Law was replaced by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, not the life he lived for 33 years, or the last 3 years when He was ministering, but the life He lives now, today, from heaven, through you, on earth. That's why the Church is called His body, because it is! His mind and the mind of the Father are expressed today through His body here on earth, and that's me and you. We haven't been given the Spirit of fear, but we've been given the mind of Christ; a sound mind, and power, the power of the Spirit. You see how all that fits together? Now you find that as you meld these Pauline epistles into a single message; when you start studying these things, it's like weaving a basket. All the strands of doctrine fit together into a cohesive whole. They all agree with one another and they all resound with one warning: **do not let these things that I'm delivering to you slip away or pass away – you pay attention to them.** What did he tell the Galatians? In His opening comments to the Galatians He said,

If I or an angel from heaven should deliver to you any other gospel than that which you have heard preached, let him be accursed, anathema.

That's strong. That's very strong. Paul says, "if I come back to you, and try to tell you a different gospel than the one I've already delivered to you, let me be accursed." 'Consider me anathema. Throw me away. Discard me. Run me off. Don't allow me on the property.' That's what he says. Now that's as strong an instruction as one could give. **How important is content? Content is everything.**

Joe Morris: That's what is going on now, the big thing about the candidate that is running for office that is a Mormon. Are they teaching anything other than what Paul taught? You bet they are. And so we've got error being taught, we're asking these questions. People don't look at that so much in our society anymore, if they don't know the truth anyway, and so they're just overlooking what's going on. But they're absolutely going on contrary what Paul was teaching. They've introduced things that are new, a new word came from God out of the sky, I guess. It's terrible.

Conrad Bowman: I absolutely agree with you. And it is also happening all through the Church. We're shot through with the same error, as people claim to have new revelations through the Word of Knowledge that is other than and is different from what Paul was delivering. My calling is doctrine, and I make no apologies for that. That's my call to serve the Body and I'm hard nosed about it. I'm a stickler for it, you already know, and we joke about it sometimes here in class. The rule is; 'when there's any doubt, be dogmatic, you know, because I can be that, and I'm pretty good at that, well practiced. But the truth of the matter is, I have real sensitive spots in my doctrinal backbone, and when I hear something being taught somewhere that is off base according to what Paul has delivered to us, it just irritates the fool out of me. I can't get comfortable. I start squirming in the seat, and I want to get involved in the lesson, and that's not really fair to the guy trying to teach it sometimes. But it's very tough, it's tough if you have an ear for doctrine, and you're listening for that drifting away of truth and you hear something float by that doesn't jive, it's tough to sit there. The reason it's tough is because I'm studying ahead, I'm over in Revelation looking at the letters to the seven churches, and the letters to the seven churches says, "I know your works, and I'm not happy about it." The angels to the seven churches were given the messages. That's what John says, here's the message to the Church at Ephesus, here's the message to the Church at Laodicea, here's the message to the Church at Thyatira, and in every case He [the Lord] says, "I know your works" – those were busy churches, they were busy working for God. For the Lord said, in every case, I know your works. And, except you repent and return to My work, I'm going to judge you. I'm going to come and eliminate that part that's giving us a problem. You see why? What did he tell us in Ephesians 2:10, (that has become so important to us!)

You are God's masterpiece, His poem to all of creation, created unto good works, which have been performed, or done, or prepared, beforehand, long beforehand – is what Robertson tells us the Greek says – long beforehand, that you should walk in them.

God doesn't expect us to be doing good works, great works. He expects us to walk in the great works He's already done. That's a sea change to what you're hearing from most pastoring ministries today. They want us to get busy at work doing good work for God. That's not what the Pauline message is. The Pauline message is, the work of Christ was complete, and thorough, and finished, and accomplished, and you're to walk in that work that's already done. And if we do that, we'll find ourselves thoroughly occupied with Him, in all of our life, in

every moment of it. There won't be one second of your life that's not busy, and occupied, with the person of Christ, and at the end of the week, you'll find that you know Him; which is exactly why we are here this morning. These things are written that you might know. He wants us to know Him. Not to simply be busy working for Him, but to know Him, and grow up in Him. And, the more we know Him, the more our lives will become a settled living in Him, and it will become a beautiful thing for other people to see. Now I got all of that out of verse 1. I don't know what ya'll got [Laughter].

Now I made known to you brethren the gospel which I preach to you which also you received in the past in which you also now stand, by which you also are being saved, having been saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you unless you believe in vain.

And the word "vain or vanity" is the word for "feeding on wind." Unless you believe it, it's like having wind for lunch.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, that He appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve. After that, He appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive today, but some have fallen asleep, they died. Then He appeared to James, and then to all the apostles, and last of all to one born out of his season, He appeared to me also.

Isn't that a gorgeous summary? That's just a beautiful summary.

For I am the least of the apostles

The last one – I'm the last one of the apostles, and I'm not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God. So, you think of where I came from. I was busy, zealously persecuting the Church, and God came and got me.

He appeared to James, and all the apostles, and last of all, as it were, to one untimely born – born out of season – and He appeared to me also, and I'm the least of these apostles, and I'm not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of

God. But, by the grace of God, I am what I am. His grace toward me did not prove empty, but I labored more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me, or within me, was the one who labored.

Who is it who convicts the world of sin, or righteousness, and of judgment? The Spirit does, doesn't He? Does that sound like an evangelist to you? It does to me. It's the Spirit who convicts the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. He is the Great Evangelist. The Holy Spirit is the Great Evangelist. The work of the missionary today on the field is to take people who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ at all and bring them into and acquaintanceship with Him. And the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who is in you, is the one who sent the Spirit. And He sends the Spirit – just like dispatching – He dispatches the Spirit to the one that the Spirit should reach with the gospel of sin, of righteousness, and of God's sure judgment. And when that happens, you can't withstand it, can you John. [John: You cannot]. And until that happens, you can assail the walls all you want to but you're out of luck. You're just out of luck. You can't push somebody into the Kingdom. You might pray them into the Kingdom because you're begging the Son to send the Spirit to soften the heart of the one that needs to know the Lord Jesus. You can't bring them kicking and screaming into the Kingdom. You can pray them in. And, that's important to know. John and I have had a number of conversations about this. (John: "You see, I fought it years and years and years, and when it happened, it's like turning a light on in a dark room. And I won't ever forget that call.") John called me one day and said, "Conrad, you and I have to have lunch tomorrow." I said why? He said, Conrad, yesterday, I was as lost as I could be. Today I'm saved, and I've got questions. My lawyer friend John, here he comes, thundering herd [laughter], he had them (questions). Still got a few, but got a few answers along the way, didn't we John? That's been good, see how this works.

Now, I've labored more than all the men but not I but the grace of God within me whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Our job is to announce what God is doing for us, and His job is to convince the sinner of their sinfulness and bring them to Him. Now, "if Christ is preached. That "if" is a first class condition.

If Christ is preached, and He is. [So that is better translated as] Since Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead,

how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

That's the problem. In Corinth, the problem was they didn't believe in the resurrection out of the dead; bodily resurrection; they didn't believe it. "But" always introduces a contrast; so whenever you see that "but" in there you know that verse 12 and verse 13 are going to be contrasted with one another.

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised.

Because He was a dead man. Now, I don't want you to lose that. It's easy to compartmentalize your thinking, and to always think of Christ in terms of His being the Son of God. But you have to remember Christ the Son of God; that was His name in eternity past. And it was also His name in relationship to the Trinity and all of heaven. God the Son, that's who He was. God the Son, when the Father spoke, became the Son of God, in title; then He changed the way that He used His character – His character was always the character of the Father. The attributes, we list them as; Sovereignty, Justice, Righteousness, Eternal life, Love Omnipresence, Omnipotence total Truthfulness, and His Unchanging spiritual character. That's what He shares with the Father. Now you take two persons sharing those characteristics, and they are going to occupy the same space, at the same time, have the same love, and have the same mind. They had and have unity; yet they're individually known. One is the Son and one is the Father. What that does is present to us leadership and unity. It's the Father's will that the Son performs. The Spirit, the third person, reveals that work done according to the Father's will. So, the Spirit is pointing to the Son. And the Son is doing the work of the Father and pointing to the Father as He does His will and His work. There's no weakness in the other Two, rather it's commitment. We are told,

Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.

When the Son was appointed to His incarnation as a man by the Father, the Son of God, became the Only Begotten Son of God; and that is His name in regard to all humanity. When the Only Begotten Son of God was born to Mary, He became known as Emanuel, *Yeshua*, the man-God in flesh. He became God come in flesh as a man. He was the same divine person, now known by a different name. When He took up His mantle as humanity, Scripture says He laid aside the prerogatives that were His as deity. He didn't lose them, He just laid them aside.

He choose not to exercise His rights as divine for the entire time that He was going to live as a man. And the reason He did that was because His expectations of you, and His expectations of me. They are the expectations that one would make of a man or a woman filled with the same Spirit that filled Him.

If He delivered Himself to living at eye level with us, on our plane -- Now think of that, the God of the whole universe who created it all and holds it together by finger play -- He limited Himself to living just like me and you in order that we might understand Him. He understands us thoroughly. But He did that in order that we might understand this. So when He said, here's what I want you to do. "Make it your ambition to live a quiet life, tend to your own business, work with your own hands, just as I have commanded you, so that you might not want, and might live at peace with all men" (1 Thess. 4:11). There are our marching orders. Live a quiet life. He is saying; 'I have already done the work I need to do in order to reach the world. You live a quiet life right where I send you. If I need a missionary in China, or (we have some BridgePoint people in Spain, and we have some behind the Iron Curtain, and we have some in France – we've got missionaries scattered all over) if I need a missionary there, I'll tap one of you on the shoulder and tell you about that need, and I'll send you there. And when you get there, I want you to do the same thing that I want you to do here – I want you to live a quiet life and tend to your own business, and your business is living in Me before them, and I'll show you exactly what I'm doing within that group, and you can be on-site and confirm by your own testimony the work that I'm doing among them, and I will draw them to myself, and you'll be privileged to be there when you see those people step out of darkness and into light. Now, that's the way missions are supposed to work. It doesn't work on the basis of the money we pour into it, or the people we pour into it. That's a privilege He affords us because we're willing to turn our people loose and send them with out prayers and our resources. But the privilege really is ours because He connects us with what He's doing way out there. It's His work and it's one of those works that's been done before the foundation of the world that we as a church are simply to walk in, and put our feet into the prints He has already made.

Are there any questions? I feel like I'm kind of rolling through some things and I don't want to discourage you if you have questions.

Joyce Wood: So I am to be patient about when God sends me, with our prayers, to do His work out there, and where else?

Conrad Bowman: And where else? Next to us, Yes ma'am. You see, 'out there' is everything from here next to where we sit or stand on into infinity. Here's what Matthew 28 says, and this is what Matthew 28 means. Christ turns to His disciples, just like John sitting there, and Christ says to His disciples.

Having therefore gone, John, here is what I want you to be doing.
I want you to be teaching and to be baptizing.

Here's what he says to John. **Having therefore gone – you're already gone.** The English says, go ye into all the world. The Lord says, **having already gone into all the world, John, I want you to be teaching and baptizing.** You see, John is already on his trip. He's already gone. He's apart from the Lord just like the Son was separated from the Father by being declared His own person. When the Father's will expressed itself, God the Son became the Son of God. In the same way, when the Son's will expressed the Father's desire for what the Son had brought to the world to be taught to the world, He turns to His disciples right next to Him and says, having therefore gone into the world, as you are, be baptizing and teaching. Don't be looking around and worrying about a place to go, I'll put you there. You spend your time and pay attention to teaching, and baptizing, and confirming those people around you; what they are discovering of the Spirit's coming and conviction.

Charles Pirtle: I have to remind myself when it comes to this works issue. It's not so much that I do His work out there. It's, first, that I let Him do His work in there (pointing to himself), and then allow Him to do His work in here (again, pointing to himself) out there.

Conrad Bowman: Yes, well put.

Charles Pirtle: It's His work. I'm to be available for His work.

Conrad Bowman: Right.

Charles Pirtle: And we focus too often today, OK, lets save them, let's get busy. It's His work. Jesus, what must I do to do the work of God? Believe!

Conrad Bowman: Believe. The work of God is to believe.

Charles Pirtle: So, His work in me.

Conrad Bowman: That's it.

Charles Pirtle: And my faith – I let Him do His work through me out there.

Conrad Bowman: Don't you find that when your focus changes, and that's your focus, and you start seeing His work forged in you, that when you turn and look at somebody else, what you really see is His work being forged in them as well. Then what you have is a brother or sister you're talking to and you come together and share the appreciation of His work being forged in both of you.

Charlie Pirtle: Almost always retrospectively.

Conrad Bowman: Yes, before the fact.

Charles Pirtle: Not prospectively.

Conrad Bowman: Right. Not before the fact, but after the fact. Here is another analogy: The train is full, is pulling out of the station and you're on it, so you're out there, on your way. What you're supposed to be doing is teaching and baptizing.

That changes the nature of a church, from a ticket station more to a service station. We're not issuing tickets for people to go places. We're supposed to be filling their tank and fueling them so they can get there. And we fuel them with – here's the fuel (holding up the Bible). That's it. We are to be filling them up with the Word. Be thoroughly prepared, show yourself approved, study to show yourself approved, is what we keep coming back to, so we dig into this thing, and stuff our *nous* our minds, with it. Remember that from a few weeks back?

Alright. Now, since they had a question about resurrection of the dead and didn't believe it – intellectual Corinthians that they are –

If there's not resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

And we've got that empty tomb to contend with. But if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is empty and your faith is empty; because, if death and the grave is the end of it, then all the rest of it is just emptiness.

Moreover, we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He didn't raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

So, the resurrection becomes a cornerstone in our belief system.

If the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, and you are still in your sins. Then also those that have fallen asleep, or died, in Christ, have perished.

There are many who believe that when you die, it is all over. Those are the Annihilists, who believe that man dies and there's nothing after that. Well, there is too much of Scripture that tells us differently, that tells us of an eternity with a merciful, loving Father, or an eternity separated from that merciful, loving Father. Then it speaks of a place of eternal torments, and eventually we'll get to that, as we move off the epistles and into Revelation and perhaps some other places in the Bible.

Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hope in Christ in this life, we are of all men most to be pitied.

If all we had was hope in Christ, and there was no realization or no reality to the resurrection. If all there is, is our hope, then we're in a pitiful condition. We don't wish to be saved; we rest in the knowledge of our salvation.

But" (contrast) now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those that sleep.

When the grave was opened and the Father reached into that dark place and got the Son and drew Him out, and brought Him in resurrection out of the grave, He brought with Him all of the OT believing saints. They were held in Abraham's bosom until Christ went into the grave; and they were all raised with Him. For 37 days or so, they appeared on earth with Him during the period following the resurrection and until the ascension, which happened ten days before Pentecost. All of those OT saints who were asleep (dead), came out of the grave with the Lord. He had gone into the grave and announced Himself in the grave as victorious over death and over sin, because that was the first time they had heard the gospel personally; and He also went there to gather them to Himself –

He led captivity captive.

It says in Ephesians 4:7-8; those that were in captivity in Abraham's bosom, He led captive to Himself, drew them to Him, and took them out of the grave with Him. They appeared unto many, and then when He ascended and went to heaven, to the marriage supper of the Lamb, He took those with Him. They are the friends of the Groom that showed up at the wedding ceremony, just ahead of the bride.

I had a nice conversation with Charlie Aycock of Atlanta just last night about just when that happens. We have talked about it before, but this time he was driving a car, and all at once we were talking about the gathering of the Bride at the Rapture, and he got real silent on the other end, I could tell he was driving through Atlanta traffic, and he was stunned, because all at once it hit him. You see, I had mentioned it on occasion to Charlie. It went like this; my dad died a few years back, and the Apostle Paul died a few years before him, and I know that both of them are on their way through the Rapture as we speak, going to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Please understand; this is the way I understand this, I don't have time to review the entire scenario today – actually, I don't even have a white board, and if I write on that screen, they'll get me for sure. So, here it is in a verbal description; if I die today, and I step out of this life, the last breath I draw here, is followed by the next breath I draw there, where Dad and Paul are now. I'm going to move from wherever I am when I expire here, right to the Rapture of the Church; because that's the next thing on God's calendar for me, just as it is for you. You're going to die here, some day, and wake up right at the Rapture. I know that same thing has happened to dad, he drew his last breath, and though it's been a few years now for me, he has just stepped into the presence of the Lord Jesus at the Rapture of the Church. If he looks just ahead of him, he sees the Apostle Paul, and Peter, and that long succession of believers between those two and him; and, they're all arriving at exactly the *same time*. When I expire, I'm going to join that queue, right there, and he's going to be just ahead of me.

It's appointed unto man once to die and after that comes his judgment" (Hebrews 9:27), and Paul said that "we are willing to be absent from the body and present face to face with the Lord" 2 Corinthians 5:8).

Now, where's the next time we're going to meet the Lord after we die? It's at the Rapture of the Church, which means, as we *individually* step out of time, we *collectively* step into His presence. And it's going to be this huge reunion with every believer, taken as the Bride to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. That's a gorgeous thing. That's a beautiful thing. There's an artist, I don't remember her name, I have a copy of her painting tucked under my desk at home. There is no special holding-place where the bodies of believers are being held in some limbo place waiting to be reunited. That's not Scriptural or true. It is an instantaneous event; you leave this life, and everything connected with time and space and history and you step into that timelessness of an eternal relationship with the Son as His bride. And there you will know as you are now known, fully. It is just like that (snap of the finger).

Charlie and I have had this conversation half a dozen times or more, and all at once he is driving through traffic and it hit him, what was just said; and I got this long, long pause. I said, Charlie, are you OK? I hope you're at a light. And he just said, we've talked about this before, and I have never, ever, heard that preached anywhere.

[Conrad.], I know.

[Charlie] You know, I haven't heard that taught anywhere.

[Conrad] yes, I know.

[Charlie] this is going to change a lot of stuff.

[Conrad].Yes, it will change a lot of stuff, won't it.

Put it in your notes--You've got to be careful about how and where you teach this. You've got to live with people, and share a lot of stuff before you unload that. You unload this without preparation and they'll run you off.

I've got a number of people who get our notes and they'll say; "what are you doing in Houston?" I'll say there are a lot of Christians in Houston who will tolerate a lot of hard doctrine, because they've heard a lot of things that others might think are weird. But, we have been teaching through this for quite a while and we've added to it bit by bit, so that the entire Pauline message is before us.

I'm telling you that these Pauline epistles – there's unity here. There's doctrinal unity here. Stick with me as we work this stuff out; you will hear some things every once in a while that you haven't heard very often, or maybe never before. But, hang in there and continue to organize your notes. I promise you, I'm not going to ride of on some wild horse.

Lady: Is there a question time, where we can ask questions? Conrad. Oh sure. But, looking at the clock, right now, it's almost church time, and I've got to stop. [Conrad laughs]. I'd love to continue, but I've got to stop. Joe, what's up for Next week.

Joe Morris: Time after that. Next week we have the missionaries coming in, is that correct?

Conrad Bowman: Yes.

Joe Morris: So we'll have that entire hour, and the following week you'll (Conrad Bowman) take up the 20th verse or wherever we got.

Conrad Bowman: And we'll finish chapter 15.

Joe Morris: And then we can get into some questions.

Conrad Bowman said the closing prayer. "Father, we thank you for the time You give us. We thank you Father for just the leadership you give us. We just trust You to lead us by Your Spirit, line upon line, precept upon precept, from one concept to the other, just guide out hearts, and carry us through those places where we're so limited in what we understand. And we thank you, Father. We give You the praise and the glory, in Christ's name, we pray."