

The Gospel Preached By Paul

"Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:1f).

The apostle now turns from answering questions the Corinthians had asked him about, to the central doctrine of Christians' faith, but which doctrine seemed to have come under attack, even from some of those who were its professed adherents. In the opening two verses, however, Paul does not define the gospel — that he will address in the next few verses; he reminds the Corinthians that what some among them had come to dispute or deny, had, at the very beginning of the Corinthian church, been the bugle call which arrested their attention with their subsequent acceptance of it.

It is clear from what Paul immediately says after his words, *"I make known unto you,"* that he does not intend to say he will reveal something to them that to this point they were ignorant of: for the gospel which he preached to them was that which they had received and in which they stood. Rather than making known some previously unknown truth, Paul is shining the spotlight on the gospel they had earlier believed and received. He wants them to keep uppermost in their minds what it was that had attracted them to Christ: it was His gospel.

The good news (for this is the meaning of the word gospel) they had received was the message commissioned to the apostles by the Lord Himself. After His resurrection, but before His ascension, Jesus had commanded, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). It was this gospel of which Paul was not ashamed and for what he was set to defend (Rom. 1:16; Phil. 1:17). It was a doctrine so unalterable that should even an angel from heaven preach a different one, he would be anathema (Gal. 1:8).

Paul, before defining the gospel, emphasizes the validity of it by showing the consequence of either rejecting it or it being false itself, tells these Corinthians they had received the gospel. The acceptance of the gospel made a cleavage among Corinthian Jews, as well as separating some Gentiles from their formerly pagan worship. The combination of these two visibly different philosophies resulted in this "*church of God*" which was in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:1f). Receiving the gospel was what made them the church and had they not receive it, they would not have been among those addressed in these letters.

Not only had the Corinthians received the gospel, they stood in it. It was the foundation of all their hopes and expectations and to surrender their belief of that gospel would negate what future expectations they might have. And, it was the gospel by which they were saved, a theme often repeated by Paul who was but echoing what the Author of that gospel had said: "*He that believed (i.e., the gospel) and is baptized, shall be saved*" are the Savior's words (Mk. 16:16). The theme of the Roman letter is the same truth: "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth ...*" (Rom. 1:16).

Their salvation was contingent that they keep in memory that gospel, else they had believed in vain!

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