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Intro:

We live in an amazing age – an age of technology; an age when resources and artifacts are available to us in the push of a button.


There are incredible discoveries that have taken place. We can send machines with telescopes to peer into the universe that lies far beyond our own vision. We can look inside the smallest particles of matter and see what blueprint God has designed matter with. We can then tweak it – as if we feel we can improve on God. The more simpler things we do today is speak into a phone to get information. Without the aid of a human being, without being put on hold, in a matter of seconds it comes back with a response – probably giving you information you don't want others to have. You can be half way around the world and turn the lights off an on in your own home, or activate your furnace or check to see if anyone is in your home. You can go back to your old neighbourhood and see how its changed. Machines will wash your dishes and vacuum your carpets. The deaf are able to hear connected right into their telephone, the lame are able to walk and the blind (so they say) will be able to see.

It is no surprise, then when we do have a problem, or a challenge, we go looking for human solutions to remove the obstacle that we face. Solutions are so abundant that it becomes hard not to have a problem someone has already tackled and solved.

However, when it comes to the spiritual life and our relationship with God, looking for new and novel ways of finding the victorious and holy life that God wants to give us is out of the question.

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**The Solution to Every Defeat**



- The Corinthian church was beset with division, immorality, vengeful people, proud people, idolatrous people and rebellious people.

Observation:

- Not your typical picture of a "victorious church"
- When the victorious life fails to materialize, don't look for something new. Return to and understand the fundamentals of the gospel!

(s-c) The Corinthians seemed to be having that problem. The Corinthian church was beset with division, immorality, vengeful people, proud people, idolatrous people and rebellious people.

(s-c) Not your typical picture of a "victorious church".

Where would you turn to if you were their pastor? If you were given the challenge to transform and revive the soul of that church, what would you do? Do google search? Ask siri on your cell phone? Maybe just give up?

The apostle Paul did not look for a new strategy. He did not implement a new technology or re-invent himself as a pastor so that he would be more relevant. Paul pointed the church back to the gospel.

He did not offer any new information. The problem with the Corinthians was not that they were missing some special device that the other Christians had. The problem was that their understanding of the basic elements of Christian living and spiritual victory were faulty.


(s-c) When the victorious life fails to materialize, don't look for something new. Return to and understand the fundamentals of the gospel!

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**The VICTORIOUS LIFE starts with the gospel.**

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you— unless you believed in vain 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received:



The first truth Paul points the Corinthians back to is:

(s-c) I. The victorious life starts with the gospel.

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

**1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,  
2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you— unless you believed in vain.**

He proves it with two case studies.

Case Study #1: Paul himself.

He challenges the Corinthians to look at what the gospel did for him. So he starts out by saying that I declare to you or I need to remind you of the gospel. It was the main thing I did for you.

(s-c) 1. I remind you of it – because it is the main thing.

(s-c) 2. I announced it to you – I good-news-ed it to you. (1, 3)


(s-c) 3. I myself received it – because it was the main change agent in my life.

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(s-c) Paul presents another case study in these verses.

Case study #2: The Corinthians

Consider the way you have handled the gospel when you heard it.

1. You received it. It starts as a one-time event. You accepted the message – the good news it promised you.

But the gospel that is truly accepted will cause another response as it did in the Corinthians.

(s-c) 2. You stand upon it or abide in it. It becomes a condition for living. You become dependent on it.

(s-c) 3. You are saved by it. You eventually recognize that it is the thing that has rescued you and preserves you. You not only receive it, but you are dependent on it – in fact you desire it fully.

That is the normal path the gospel leads you down. However there is a precautionary note in Paul's appeal.

(s-c) If this journey of accepting, abiding and abounding in the gospel does not take effect, beware. It could be an indication that your reception of it was empty. That it meant nothing to you. The normal Christian after hearing the gospel will be prompted inwardly to hold fast to that word – you will continue to accept it, abide and abound in it.

Paul should not have had to explain the gospel over to them again. But this is what they needed. Somehow the gospel some of the Corinthians were abiding in did not appear to be the gospel Paul had preached to them.

We can make the same mistake.

The gospel is sometimes confused with health and wealth. It may at times produce both, but the gospel is neither. The gospel is not a mandate to change the world and simply a free pass into a place called heaven. The gospel is not really an end that we aim for. It is a beginning or a foundation that we build our lives on. The gospel has many personal benefits, but its message is not about us. It is a Christ-focused message.

Paul's recounting of the gospel message reflects the fact that it is first and foremost a message about Jesus Christ and what he has done for us, rather than being a message primarily about us and how we can be saved. It is Christ's story which gives meaning to our lives, not our story which gives meaning to Christ's life. (N.T. Wright)

So what is the gospel? What is the message that is so transforming?

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**The GOSPEL is the good news about  
GOD'S VICTORY**

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4  
3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,



(s-c) II. The gospel is the good news about GOD'S VICTORY (15:3-8)

**1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NKJV)**

**3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,**

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(s-c) A. It is God's victory "according to the Scriptures."

It is a message that arises out of the Old Testament. It is not a coincidence or a tragedy. It is prophecy fulfilled. It gives evidence of an all powerful God who executes his purposeful will.

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(s-c) B. It is God's victory concerning our sins.

It gives evidence of an all-merciful God who neutralizes our mistakes and sin with his redemptive plan. God did not seek revenge on us when we offended him. He sought to remove the offense and reconcile our relationship with Himself.

God has not done something wrong to us which He wants to make right. The message of the gospel is that we have wronged God – and we have no way of making it right with God apart from His help. The gospel is a message that God has offered us victory – His victory over OUR sins.

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(s-c) Now how did he gain this victory? How did He fulfill his prophecy in Jesus Christ?

C. It is God's victory in Jesus Christ.

Victory #1: Christ died.

At first glance we question how death is a victory at all. We spend our whole lives trying to postpone death as long as possible. However the victory comes in light of the second phrase. HE DIED FOR OUR SINS. For death to be a victory, it had to bring pleasure or accomplish something of value for Jesus. The value for Jesus is two-fold. He died doing the will of the Father. He died doing what the people he loved needed for Him to do. He loved sinners and he died for their sin.

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**The GOSPEL is the good news about  
GOD'S VICTORY**

- Isaiah 53:10–11  
10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. 11 After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

(s-c) Isaiah 53:10–11 (NIV)

**10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though (s-c) the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and (s-c) the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. [Everything he did was pleasing to the Father]**

**11 After he has suffered, (s-c) he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.**

It satisfied Jesus to do the will of his Father. It satisfied him as well to give his life to bear a sinner's punishment for sin. He was rewarded for it as well.

N.T. Wright: Jesus' death was not a messy, tragic accident, but the surprising victory of God over all the forces of evil (Simply Christian, p.111).

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**The GOSPEL is the good news about  
GOD'S VICTORY**

- 1 Corinthians 15:3–4  
3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,



(s-c) That simple phrase "He died for our sins" enlightens us about God in several ways.

(1) God is willing to do far more for us than we are willing to do for ourselves. None of us would die for an enemy. Few of us would die for a friend. Most of us would try to negotiate our way out of our own death rather than face sin's punishment ourselves.

(2) God takes our sin more seriously than we do. It is God that finds a way to draw us near to Him, not us. We do not find our way to God. It seems as though the human heart is wired to keep its distance from God. That is where it feels most secure (in a deceitful sort of way). It is God who disturbs the soul and makes us uncomfortable in our sin.

(3) God is not the cause of our pain and sorrow. He is the One who alleviates it. God does not work at making the lives of people miserable. His aim is to rescue them from their sin and reconcile them with Himself.

I would have shrugged off their dilemma and said, "That's their problem." Aren't you glad that I am not God.

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- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4  
3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that **He was buried**, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,



(s-c) The next phrase about Jesus is in verse 4. It is a confirmation of Jesus' death: He was buried.

Did Jesus really die? Indeed he did. He was buried. The burial of Jesus is important because it is the confirmation that Jesus actually died. He didn't just escape punishment. Our sin did what all mankind's sin has always done. It took his life away.

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- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4  
3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that **He rose again the third day** according to the Scriptures,



(s-c) The second important victory of Jesus is the content of the next phrase: He rose from the dead.

This is the aspect of Christ's ministry where Paul wants us to park our minds for a minute. In 1:13-2:8, he wove his appeal to the Corinthians based on the message of the cross. Here he contemplates the resurrection. As we glance backward we look at the cross and see what we have been rescued from. As we peer into the future, we catch a glimpse of what we are to become. In the present these are both transforming and triumphant truths. They are of first importance. They are to be emphasized equally when the gospel is told and are equal components of Jesus' redemptive mission.

In my opinion, the cross tends to speak to me of God's victory over our past. The resurrection tends to speak to me of God's victory in me not only for the future, but in the present – right now.

The death of Jesus deals with my past vices. My sin is forgiven in Jesus' death. That was good news. That was God's victory. BUT, that victory did not give me a license to sin. Not at all.

Because of the resurrection, as long as Jesus is alive, I should be expecting the same help from God to give me victory over my present vices as God gave to Jesus over sin in general. The same power is at work in me as was in him. If God can do it for Jesus. He can do it for me because I am now in Jesus.

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... in the resurrection of Jesus, God has done for the Messiah, in the middle of history, what he had been expected to do for all his people at the end of history.

- N.T. Wright, What Paul Really Said, p. 127



(s-c) I like what one author says about the resurrection:

**... in the resurrection of Jesus, God has done for the Messiah, in the middle of history, what he had been expected to do for all his people at the end of history. (N.T. Wright, What Paul Really Said, p. 127)**

It is in Jesus – in his work on the cross and in God's satisfaction with Him that I know my life of victory is possible.

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It is not that God's help and presence must still be proved in our life; rather God's presence and help have been demonstrated for us in the life of Jesus Christ. . . . I find salvation not in my life story, but only in the story of Jesus Christ. Only those who allow themselves to be found in Jesus Christ—in the incarnation, cross, and resurrection—are with God and God with them.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Life Together

(s-c) Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote:

It is not that God's help and presence must still be proved in our life; rather God's presence and help have been demonstrated for us in the life of Jesus Christ. . . . I find salvation not in my life story, but only in the story of Jesus Christ. Only those who allow themselves to be found in Jesus Christ—in the incarnation, cross, and resurrection—are with God and God with them. - Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Life Together

The promise of God is that what he did for Jesus, He is going to do for those who are found in Jesus. God has already proved he can do it. Just look at Jesus.

The only suspicion that can be cast on such a promise is the question of whether Jesus truly rose from the dead. Paul answers that in verse 5-8.

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**The GOSPEL is the good news about  
GOD'S VICTORY**

- 1 Corinthians 15:5-8  
5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.



(s-c) Verses 5-8 are the confirmation of Jesus' resurrection. He appeared to many people.

He does not name everyone Jesus appeared to, but he records the names of those who were probably highly esteemed in the Corinthian church.

Sighting #1: Cephas (Peter)

(s-c) Sighting #2: the 12

(s-c) Sighting #3: 500 believers at once (many who were still alive)

(s-c) Sighting #4: James (the brother of Jesus – head of the Jerusalem church)

(s-c) Sighting #5: all the apostles

(s-c) Sighting #6: me (Paul)

By citing himself in this list, Paul makes another statement about God's victory.

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**GOD'S VICTORY is imparted to  
believers in Jesus by GRACE**

- 1 Corinthians 15:8-10  
8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy 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 toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

(s-c) III. God's victory is imparted to believers in Jesus by grace.

**1 Corinthians 15:8-10**

**8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.**

**9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy 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 toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**

**GOD'S VICTORY is imparted to  
believers in Jesus by GRACE**

- 1 Corinthians 15:8-9  
8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as  
by **one born out of due time**. 9 For I am  
the least of the apostles, **who am not  
worthy to be called an apostle**,  
because I persecuted the church of God.



(s-c) In these verses we discover how God's victory is imparted to believers by grace.

A. We see, first of all, the description of Paul's encounter with Jesus.

Verses 8-9 answer the question: Who can experience grace? The answer is surprising. Paul describes someone who is beyond hope and without a chance.

In speaking of himself, Paul calls himself "one born out of time". Perhaps that was how Paul's enemies criticized him. "Paul, instead of being born again, you were aborted" (a suggestion from William Barclay). The time for becoming an official apostle was over. Jesus' ministry on earth was done. Yet, that was the time when Jesus appeared to Paul. Paul did not fight get defensive. He fully admitted that "I did not discover Jesus. It was not after a long searching of my soul in solitude and simplicity that Jesus finally opened the door to me."

Paul tells us that he was a totally unworthy candidate for the position of apostle. The gospel is for sinners who have run out of chances. They have totally proven themselves undeserving of Jesus' affection and love. People who are acutely aware of their unworthiness are most likely to be the candidates of God's grace. The victorious life starts by accepting the message of God's offer of grace.

**GOD'S VICTORY is imparted to  
believers in Jesus by GRACE**

- 1 Corinthians 15:9-10  
9 For **I am the least of the apostles**,  
who am not worthy 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 toward me was  
not in vain; but I labored more abundantly  
than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God  
which was with me.

(s-c) B. We see, secondly, the details of Paul's past offenses against Jesus.

The question these verses answer is: What can grace do for you?

3 statements stand out:

- 1) I am the least of the apostles.
- 2) I persecuted the church of God
- 3) I am what I am

Paul was not simply indifferent toward Jesus and his followers. He aggressively and arrogantly pursued them and bullied them. His past vices were not in pursuit of his own selfish desires, but in response to a hatred toward the followers of Christ. Jesus was his target – unlike most of us sinners today. Most sinners could care a less about Jesus. They sin because its in their nature.

Paul says I persecuted the church of God. How could anyone who took on Jesus with such malicious intent ever be crowned with the privilege of apostle? He follows that with "I am what I am – the least of the apostles - but a preacher in the church."

**GOD'S VICTORY is imparted to  
believers in Jesus by GRACE**

- 1 Corinthians 15:10  
10 But by the grace of God I am what I am,  
and His grace toward me was not in vain; but  
**I labored more abundantly than  
they all**, yet not I, but the grace of God  
which was with me.
- 11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, **so we  
preach** and so **you believed**.

That's how complete God's victory in the resurrection is. That's how transforming grace is. The victorious life is experienced when one abides in the message of grace.

(s-c) C. We see what the deliverance Jesus provided for Paul inspired Paul to do.

The question this verse answers is: What happens in the life of a person infused with God's grace and favour? What proves that grace is at work in the life of a believer?

Principle: God's favour (grace) inspires practical labour in the Lord's service.

The calling upon Paul was to become an apostle – "I am what I am." This was the work of God's grace. This work of grace inspired Paul's ambitions. "His grace toward me was not in vain." And despite the fact that it was Paul's desire, Paul's hands, feet, mouth and legs that were doing the work, it was God's enablement that infused his will and his body with the energy for such service. Although his labours surpassed that of his peers, it was no reason to criticize them.

(s-c) He says in verse 11:

**1 Corinthians 15:11 (NKJV)**

**11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.**

It is another evidence of grace at work in the life of the believer: Grace does not magnify man's achievements (or man's failures) but magnifies God's message.

Review:

1. The victorious life starts with the "old" gospel.
2. The Gospel is the good news about God's victory.
3. God's victory is imparted to believers in Jesus by grace.

We are to accept the gospel – that is receive it. We are to abide in the victory God has given us in Jesus. We are to abound in service to the Lord by the energy God imparts to us through His grace. The victorious life is nothing new and is no secret. It's looking back to the past so that we can chart our journey for the future.