

“What’s Right with the Church!”

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Intro. – I don’t know about you, but I grow weary in hearing all the criticism concerning the Church. Some of our greatest assets are made to sound like liabilities.

Illus. – reminds me of a story I heard as to what a man said to his wife: “Harriet, back when we were in high school and I got knocked out at the football game, I woke up and you were there. Harriet, after we got married I had that auto wreck, I woke up in the hospital and there you were stroking my brow. Harriet, when I had that terrible fever and finally came out of the comma, there you were right by my side. Harriet,” he said, “You’re just bad luck.”

It’s a fact, sometimes we don’t appreciate what’s right beside us. This is certainly true with the Church. There’s so much right with the Church, I’d like to use this sermon to reestablish this fundamental truth.

Note, “What’s right with the church” is not a question. It’s a statement that includes: purpose, motive and power/means. All of which can be easily summarized.

All of us have a tendency to forget – why we have buzzers, alarms, calendars and other gadgets to remind us. Teachers know that even the keen minds of little ones often forget; so, they review, review, review...

Thus, what’s right with the Church – her message!

Purpose: to see the MESSAGE of Christ’s Church as being the fundamental truth as to what is right with her!

I’d like to review the simple all important facts of the Gospel. There’s absolutely nothing more important and significant that could be covered than what we are going to review in the remaining time together:

Gospel Message: 1) Person of the Gospel; 2) Proof of the Gospel; 3) Promise of the Gospel

I THE PERSON OF THE GOSPEL

- Xtianity not religious system of do’s and don’ts = is worship/devotion to PERSON – Christ the Lord!

A. Jesus Came

1. Came claiming to be unique among all men – John 14:9 *“If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father...”* John 10:30 *“I and the Father are One...”*
2. Verified the claim being God by His life and works performed... even His enemies could not find fault in Him; so, they lied concerning Him...
3. Threatened by His popularity, accused Him of blasphemy sentenced to die = age 33, Roman cross.

B. Jesus Died

1. 3-21-86 JAMA (Journal American Medical Association) – “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ” – 8.5 page, technical analysis of Christ’s physical pain.
2. Wm D. Edwards, MD (Mayo Clinic) & colleagues searched Biblical records – “As a recent new Christian I wanted to learn what Christ suffered on my behalf. As a pathologist, I was interested in an accurate reconstruction surrounding Christ’s death.”
3. Read from JAMA
4. This is the Gospel – Christ died!

C. Jesus Died for Our Sins

1. Christ’s death was not a martyr’s death – it was a vicarious (substitute) death.
2. God’s love wanted to reach out, but His justice (holiness) required sin be punished; so, He who knew no sin, had the sins of the world laid upon Him!
3. To understand this, we must understand – justice... mercy... grace:
 1. justice = “deserved punishment”
 2. mercy = “exemption from punishment”
 3. grace = “payment when punishment is due”
4. Christ died according to the Scriptures – cross NOT a last minute effort of God to fix our mess!

D. Jesus Was Buried

1. Roman law permitted family of the accused to give a proper burial.
2. Joseph of Arimathea/Nicodemus got permission, took X's body down placed it in Joseph's tomb:
 - Illus. – passion play Grand Rapids, MI – most drama's like these have the cross and then the resurrection. This one showed 2 men taking beaten, broken, limp body of Christ down, while Mary comes and removes the crown of thorns...
3. Wrapped the body of Jesus in linen, covered the body with spices, laid the body in the tomb...

E. Jesus Is Resurrected

1. Then came Sunday – raised 3rd day, per the Bible! – OT predicted death & resurrection on 3rd day
2. Enemies remembered X's prediction He would rise 3rd day – got tomb secured = no hoaxes!!
3. First day of the week, world's greatest event happened – bright light knocked guards out and God the Father breathed life into His Son's brutalized body – He arose = 1st fruits of them never to die!
4. Illus. – group of kids asked the meaning of “Easter” – Nicole: “Easter means surprise!” Can you think of a better word? Surprise Satan, surprise death... enemies of X... grave couldn't hold its Creator and King!

II THE PROOF OF THE GOSPEL

- How do we know this isn't a hoax? Mark Twain: “Faith is believing what you know ain't so.”
- What proof do we have of the Gospel?

A. Jesus Appeared to Many Eyewitnesses

1. Appeared to Peter... the twelve (eleven)...
2. Appeared to 500 at one time – note: 1 or 2 could hallucinate, but 500 at once?... and the fact these were willing to die for their faith?! Resurrection faith explained only by the Resurrection!
3. We have ample evidence to believe!

B. Jesus' Followers Wouldn't Die for a Lie

1. Illus. – *Loving God* by C. Colson (Watergate cover-up convinced him resurrection no hoax) read:
2. 2 Peter 1:16 “*We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but, we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*”

What's right with the church – The PERSON and the PROOF... finally the PROMISE:

III THE PROMISE OF THE GOSPEL

A. Jesus Conquered Death

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson – “The statistics on death are pretty convincing. One out of one dies!”
2. Death is the great equalizer... only Christ came to save us and only He can say, “I've conquered death and through My power so can you!”
3. 1 Corinthians 15:20-21 “*But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.*”

B. Jesus Gives Promises

- the rest of 1 Corinthians 15 gives answers to questions concerning life AND death:
- 1. “Will we have physical bodies in heaven?”
 - a. yes – not spending eternity as disembodied spirits sitting around strumming harps...
 - b. Philippians 3:21 “*He will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory...*” – we will have transformed bodies!!
- 2. “When will the resurrection of the body take place?”
 - a. at the 2nd coming of Christ
 - b. 2 Corinthians 5:8 “*we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*” – Xtian dies their spirit/soul in presence of the Lord!

3. “How can this be possible?” “What about bodies that have been destroyed?”...
 - nothing is impossible for God (1 Corinthians 15:35-36) He will raise up all bodies!
4. “What will our bodies be like?”
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:20 “*But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.*” i.e. our bodies will be like His glorified body!
 - b. eternal dimension – like fish suited for water, our new bodies will be suited for heaven – perfect with no pain, arthritis, cancer, aging etc.
 - c. 1 Corinthians 15:51 says “...*we shall be changed*” – what a day Resurrection Day will be!!
5. “Will we recognize each other in heaven?”
 - a. again, Christ answers this – His followers recognized Him, if not He revealed Himself...
 - b. God will deal with our recognizing each other one way or another...

Summary: some day we will see the saints of old and each other in His presence. I’m telling you, this is what is right with the Church!!

Conclusion: A cowboy rode up to some buffalo who were home on the range. Cowboy said, “You’re disgusting. Why look at you – you’re fat, your hair is shaggy/matted, you’re ugly & you walk funny.” As the cowboy meandered off, the buffalo turned to another buffalo said, “I believe I just heard a discouraging word.”

Remember how I began this message? I said I was weary in hearing all the criticism concerning the Lord’s Church, and how that our greatest assets are made to sound like liabilities. How about you, are you weary in hearing all the criticism concerning the Church or do you participate and enjoy criticizing Christ’s Church here and abroad? Do you have a hard time recognizing what is right with His Church?

Years ago a singing group called “Regeneration” was singing at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY. Derrick Johnson told the story of his daughter when she was about 4 yrs old getting lost in a store. He said for the longest time after that she was petrified of crowds... During family devotions, Johnson said they were talking about heaven when this daughter asked, “Will there be a lot of people in heaven?... Will I ever find you and Mommy?”

Wanting to reassure her, Derrick said, “Wait for us just inside the gate and we’ll meet there.” “Is there more than one gate?” Derrick remembered the Bible saying there will be twelve gates. Daughter said, “What gate?” “Honey, when you get to heaven ask which direction is EAST. Walk to the eastern wall and let’s meet as a family just inside the middle eastern gate.”

That satisfied her. Kissed her good night and said, “Remember, we’re going to meet just inside,” and she interrupted him saying, “The middle eastern gate.”

Derrick Johnson said, from that moment on he and this daughter seldom said, “bye.” One would say, “Meet you just inside.” The other would complete it by saying, “The middle eastern gate.”

Upon hearing this, I pray this causes you to think about where you’re going to meet your family and loved ones in heaven. Without Christ and His Church, such anticipation, such promise would be impossible. I ask, what does the world promise that even comes close to what Jesus and His Church promises?

What is right with the Church? Her MESSAGE: The Gospel’s PERSON, PROOF, PROMISE