

## Paul Explains His Apostleship | 1 Corinthians 15:8-11

- Verse 8 –
  - This is, unmistakably, a testimony of Paul's Damascus road experience, in which Paul saw the risen Lord. The experience was a personal encounter with the Lord, not a vision: Acts 9:3-5, 17, 26:16 (compare Acts 18:8 and 2 Cor. 12:1-6).
  - How was Paul **born out of due time**? The word ἔκτρωμα [ektroma] is in reference to a *traumatic* and *premature* birth. There is no means of interpreting this other than to say either:
    - Paul's experience (and, by extension, message) is *premature*, or
    - Paul's testimony is either incorrect or meaningless rambling.
  - How could Paul's experience be premature?
    - He claims to be the chief of sinners saved by faith (1 Tim. 1:14-15). Grammatically, the word *chief* is just as equally (if not more-so) *chronologically first*.
    - He claims to be **a pattern to them which should hereafter believe** (1 Tim. 1:16).
    - His claims being true, he is at least *first in the line of those saved by grace through faith without works*.
    - But this is not *premature*, but rather *first*. He was only premature in that the salvation of the nations was to take place *after* the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, and not *before*. Thus, all of us who are saved in this dispensation are **born out of due time**.
  - Theologians (both dispensational and covenant) have had a hard time with this verse, because they refuse to separate the Pauline ministry from the others.
    - Ironside: Paul speaks of himself as having seen the risen Lord, and as one born out of due time. We are apt to think that this means that he was born much later than others, but the word he uses precludes any such thought. It really means, one born *before* the time. He is thinking of that glorious day when the risen, glorified Christ is to appear on earth once more, and His people Israel will look upon Him whom they have pierced, and as they recognize Him as their Lord and Saviour the nation will be born in a day. Paul had known that experience already. - H. A. Ironside, *Addresses on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1938), 467.
      - This is no different than the experience of Cephas, James, and the others in the passage.
    - Goudge: Thus the reference seems not to be to the lateness of S. Paul's call to be an Apostle, but to his utter insignificance and spiritual deadness before his conversion. H. L. Goudge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: With Introduction and Notes*, Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen & Co., 1903), 139.
      - Here the author makes *early* to be *late*.
    - Barnes: The expression, "as of one born out of due time," would seem to imply that Paul meant to say that there was some unfitness *as to the time* when he saw the Lord Jesus...The word here used (ἔκτρωμα) properly means an abortion, one born prematurely. It is found no where else in the New Testament; and here it means, as the following verse shows, one that was *exceedingly unworthy...*" Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: I Corinthians*, ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884-1885), 285.
      - He started out so close...then ran away!
  - Verse 9 –
    - If Paul is **the least of the apostles**, then why does he say **I magnify mine office** in Romans 11:13? And why has he instructed **be ye followers of me** (1 Cor. 11:1)? And why would we insist that Paul is the source of our instruction for daily living when Paul says he is **not meet to be called an apostle**? Is Paul simply being humble (with a false humility)?
    - In truth, Paul was not only the last apostle, chronologically, but was also an apostle for a *premature era*, that of the nations being saved outside of the covenants of Israel. For numerous reasons Paul was not fit for the apostleship of the 12 (namely, he was not even a follower of Jesus Christ, and adamantly opposed to the Kingdom Gospel of the Apostles, to the point that he **persecuted the church of God**.)

- Paul is pointing to grace (see v. 10), and thus though he is **the least**, he is still *the only* apostle that is for our dispensation.
- Verse 10 –
  - Paul makes a huge contrast from what he is in the apostolic "field" compared to what he is **by the grace of God**. Paul's apostleship, and his Gospel, is nothing without grace, and nothing can be added to that grace.
  - And because God bestowed grace, Paul **labored more abundantly than they all**. We should never fear that if we teach grace, people will abuse it. If there is abuse of grace, it is likely more of a lack of understanding of grace, and a rebellion from legalism.
- Verse 11 - If Paul's message is different from the Kingdom message of the Jewish Apostles, how can this be true? In the context, that which has been **believed** is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection is central to both the Kingdom message and the Pauline message.

## The Primacy of the Resurrection | 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

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- Verses 12-13 –
  - The question at hand is the *general* and *future resurrection of the dead*, which some were denying. Paul was arguing from larger to smaller: *if there is no resurrection, how can one Man (Christ) be raised from the dead?*
  - Who are those who **say...among you that there is no resurrection from the dead**? It is likely *not* pagan philosophers (who didn't "have a horse in this race,") but rather Jewish unbelievers. Compare, for example, Acts 26:6-8, noting that v. 8 is about the resurrection, denied by standard-fare Judaism.
  - Paul argues that the resurrection of Christ demands a general resurrection and the general resurrection demands the resurrection of Christ.
- Verse 14 - Paul begins to share several reasons why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential to the Gospel. In this verse, he mentions the vanity (emptiness) of **our preaching** and **your faith** if Christ remains in the tomb. (I wonder how much preaching is *in vain* because it doesn't require the resurrection of Jesus Christ to be true? Self-help preaching that is true in all walks of life is *vain* preaching.)
- Verse 15 - In addition to empty preaching and the resulting empty faith, another reason that the resurrection is essential is because if Christ remains dead then **we are found false witnesses of God**. Note that *intent* is not needed to be a false witness, but that such a witness is based on content alone.
- Verses 16-18 -- Paul continues the same theme, repeating his previous insistence of the centrality of the resurrection, and adding another implication of denial of the same: if there is no resurrection then our loved ones **which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished**. This is, incidentally a testimony that there are not multiple ways to salvation. If sincerity of belief was enough, then these would be saved.
- Verse 19 - Paul encourages an eternal outlook rather than temporary. He does not deny **hope in Christ in this life**, but he certainly never focuses on it either, and here downplays whatever hope that Christ provides *today* as **most miserable** compared to eternal life. (Sadly, most Christian work today seems to be focused on **this life**.)