

The Apostle Paul - Born Out of Due Time – Part 2
1 Corinthians 15:8-11

Introduction:

1. The subject in this chapter is the resurrection of Christ and believers.
2. There were people in the church at Corinth who were questioning the validity of a physical resurrection of the dead. vs. 12
3. Paul begins this chapter by reminding them of the gospel that he had preached and they had believed. Christ died for our sins and rose again the third day. vs. 3-4
4. Paul also details the eyewitnesses that saw Christ after His resurrection. vs. 5-7
5. In verse 8 Paul says, "*And last of all he was seen of me also...*"
6. Christ appeared to Paul, saved Paul, and gave to him a special message and apostleship to the church, the body of Christ. **Romans 11:13; 1 Timothy 1:1, 11-12, 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11**
7. Paul teaches us several incredible truths regarding his apostleship here in our text. It is vital that every member of the body of Christ understand these truths.

First, Paul was an apostle born out of due time. vs. 8

1. Paul experienced a spiritual rebirth on the road to Damascus. The Holy Spirit entered into him and he was regenerated. This is true of every believer today.
Titus 3:4-5
 - Regeneration is your dead spirit being given the life of God - being born of God's life. **Ephesians 2:1** - it uses the word "*quicken*ed."
2. But what did Jesus instruct **the twelve** concerning regeneration?
Matthew 19:27-28
 - He told them that the regeneration would be when Christ would return to earth and rule and reign on the throne of His glory. **Matthew 25:31**
 - When Christ's kingdom is established at His Second Coming, He calls it "*the regeneration*."
3. Did you know that at Christ's Second Coming there will be a rebirth of the nation of Israel that will take place? God breathes life once again into this nation that He had pronounced dead (**Hosea 13:1, 9**). **Ezekiel 37:1-14; Isaiah 26:16-19; Hosea 6:2-3**
 - A nation will be reborn with spiritual life. They will be regenerated.
Isaiah 66:8-9
4. In the time of the regeneration (when Israel is born again), God will fully execute all the provisions of the new covenant. **Ezekiel 36:24-30; cf. Hebrews 8:7-13**
 - Israel will be gathered from all nations into their own land.
 - God will completely cleanse them from all sin.
 - God will put His Spirit within them and cause them to walk in His statutes.
 - They will dwell in their land with physical fruitfulness.
5. This is not the regeneration program that you and I are part of, but it is for the nation of Israel, and God will keep His promises to them. The time of regeneration **will** come.
6. The "*due time*" regeneration program called for God's wrath to be poured out on all his enemies, and then the return of Christ to deliver, save, and regenerate Israel.

7. Paul was the chief enemy of Christ, yet when Christ appears, Christ doesn't destroy Paul, but rather saves Him by grace. Acts 9
8. When Christ appeared on that Damascus road, it was not for the purpose of bringing in the kingdom program, but rather Christ suspending the kingdom program and revealing to Paul the mystery of the body of Christ. **Colossians 1:24-27**
 - Christ revealed to Paul a new program that He had hidden in Himself from the foundation of the world.
 - This new program was not dealing with Israel's rebirth, but rather the rebirth of individuals (Jews and Gentiles), and the forming of a new agency, the body of Christ.
9. This wasn't what was due up next. Prophecy called for the wrath of God against His enemies and then the regeneration of the nation of Israel.
10. This is why Paul says that he was born out of due time. He was regenerated, but not through a national rebirth of Israel, but rather through the individual intervention and grace of Jesus Christ.
11. Paul was a pattern to all those who would believe on Christ after Him (**1 Timothy 1:16**). All of us are enemies of God who deserved wrath and judgment, but received grace and life apart from and before the due time regeneration program of Israel. Thank God for His grace.

Second, Paul was an apostle by the sheer grace of God. vs. 9-10

1. The other apostles had been hand-picked by Christ at the beginning of His public ministry on earth. They had walked with Christ in intimate fellowship and instruction for over three years. They were there when He was arrested and crucified. They saw Him the very day of His resurrection. They spent 40 days with Him after His resurrection. They witnessed Him ascending back to heaven. They had risked their lives by preaching His resurrection to the nation of Israel.
2. None of this was true of Paul. Paul was Saul of Tarsus. He was a man full of rage and fury against believers in Christ. He was holding the garments of those who stoned Stephen. He persecuted believers unto death, and put them in prison. **Acts 22:4**
3. Paul was the chief rebel of Israel's rebellion, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord (**Acts 9:1**). Paul was a great candidate to be the anti-Christ.
4. Then suddenly the resurrected Savior appears to Paul from heaven and speaks to him, not in wrath, but grace! He saves Saul of Tarsus in sheer grace, and makes it clear that He has a special work for him to do. **Acts 26:16-18**
5. As you look at all these basic facts, you can see where Paul would say that he was the least of the apostles and that it was not fitting for him to even be called an apostle.
 - Paul wasn't one of the twelve. Paul never walked with Christ on earth. Paul had done much damage to the early church through his persecution tactics.
6. But then comes verse 10, *"But by the grace of God I am what I am..."*
 - Paul was chosen to receive a series of special revelations from Christ.
 - Paul was chosen to hold the office of Gentile apostleship.

- Paul was chosen to be the one that Christ would reveal the mystery of the body of Christ and dispensation of grace to.
 - Paul was chosen to be the one that God would reveal the intimate details of the cross and the gospel of grace to.
 - Paul was chosen to write more books of God's Word than all of the twelve combined.
7. Was it because he **deserved** these privileges? Absolutely not. It was sheer grace, and Paul knew it. Paul didn't hold the office of Gentile apostleship because he earned it or deserved it. It was nothing but the grace of God.
 8. What a picture and pattern Paul is for believers today (**1 Timothy 1:16**). My friend, God's grace should never cease to amaze you.
 9. Are you saved? It's God's grace. Do you have a Christian family? It is God's grace. Are you in a Bible-believing church? It is God's grace. Are you serving the Lord? It is God's grace. Do you hold some position in the church? It is God's grace.
 10. Everything we are and everything we have is a gift of God's marvelous grace. There is absolutely no room for boasting. Paul knew it and we should know it.
 - When we are prone to complain about how tough the Christian life is or how hard we have it, or when we criticize other people for their apparent shortcomings, there is a problem. Do you know what the problem is? We no longer stand amazed at God's grace in our lives.
 - When we decide to quit serving the Lord or quit giving to the Lord or quit growing in our relationship with Him, when we get cold and indifferent and complacent, the problem is that we have lost sight of God's incredible and matchless grace.
 11. What should God's grace motivate us to do? Look at verse 10. Paul says, "*I labored more abundantly than they all...*" Why is this? I think Paul continued to stand amazed at God's grace and it motivated Him greatly.
 - The grace of God should be what fuels your Christian life - not guilt, not fear, not a desire for acclaim or recognition.
 - I should **want** to serve the Lord, give to the Lord, read His Word, grow in my relationship with Him, witness to others, etc. Why? The abundant riches of His grace motivates me.
 12. Notice what Paul makes clear right after he says he labored more abundantly than the twelve - "*...yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*"
 - This is one of those great "*yet not I*" verses. The other is, of course, **Galatians 2:20**.
 13. If every believer lived his Christian life with the attitude "*yet not I, but the grace of God,*" there would never be a divorce within the body of Christ, never a church split, never believers getting angry and holding grudges against each other, never a pastor lording over God's heritage, never a financial lack in the church, never a lack of laborers in the church or on the mission field, etc.
 14. "Yet not I" simply means that it is not about **me**, it is about **Christ** and His marvelous grace. Once you get this and understand this, it will revolutionize your Christian life. It will change everything.