

Hold Fast and Stand

By Linda Rex

February 9, 2025, 5th Sunday in Epiphany—What do you believe about the Lord Jesus Christ? Why do you believe what you believe? What impact does this belief regarding Jesus have on your life, if any?

The apostle Paul, in our New Testament reading for this Sunday, 1 Corinthians 15:1–11, challenges the Christians in Corinth with the basics of their faith. In his letter to them, he addresses quite a few issues which were occurring within that church, which brought into question the seriousness of their faith in Jesus Christ. If they truly believed that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, who lived, died, and rose again, appearing to many people after his resurrection, then why wasn't their behavior demonstrating this? They were acting more like the culture they lived in than they were acting like Jesus Christ and his kingdom culture. This was a grave concern for the apostle.

In this passage, Paul rehearses an early statement of faith which was probably recited by the believers of his day. He reminds his readers of how Jesus Christ, in his life, death, and resurrection, fulfilled the prophetic Word, which predicted his life's events. Going on beyond that, Paul points out the many eyewitness accounts of encounters with the resurrected Jesus, who after his bodily resurrection interacted with, and ate and drank with many people, before he ascended back to heaven.

Today we do not have the benefit of being able to have a face-to-face conversation with those who knew Jesus Christ personally and witnessed his life, death, and resurrection. But we do have the written testimony of the New Testament scriptures, and the witness of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to understand and believe what we read about Jesus. Because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, we are able to come to faith in Jesus, realizing that he is still alive and active today in our world and in us, and in our lives.

It's important, though, to remember that Jesus Christ is not just this person who lived many millennia ago. He is so much more than a human being who lives and dies and ends up forgotten or memorialized in a book somewhere. What makes Jesus so significant is that he is not just human, but is God in human flesh. This means that his life here on earth is of eternal significance, and what he did for all of us as humans is profound. In and through him, we have new life. Our human existence, our personhood, has been transformed, brought up to a new level within which we live and participate by faith in Jesus Christ.

What difference does it make that we trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior? Faith in Jesus Christ, in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, means that our human existence is grounded in something beyond our transient, temporal existence. Our culture is constantly changing and morphing into something new. Its trends and expectations are always being replaced by new ones, which are grounded in changing human opinions, preferences, and passions. Instead of the solidity of our Maker's design and redemptive work, we are beset by a kaleidoscope of possibilities and impossibilities, which are ever in flux.

But Jesus, as the perfected human, who brings us into right relationship with his Father in the Spirit, stands as our Rock amid this constantly changing scene. Jesus provides us with a foundation which is solid, and on which we can take our stand, no matter what may come our way. As Paul addresses the issues in the church at Corinth, he brings the believers back to the basis of their faith—Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and rose again, as their Messiah. He was their unity, in spite of their many differences. He was their wisdom, right relationship with God and

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one another, and their redemption. It was Jesus they were growing up into by the Spirit, and who gave them all the Spirit's gifts and blessings for the benefit of the entire Body. The true evidence of life in the Spirit was when they were actually living in such a way that they resembled Jesus Christ. Today, as we gather in Jesus' name, we want to be sure that we heed the apostle Paul's words by living in truth of who we are in Jesus. Jesus is our life. May our lives, words, and deeds be a true reflection of him in every way.

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so much that you gave your Son and your Spirit so that we could share in your love and life. Enable us to trust in Jesus, and by your Spirit, to live out that faith in a way that is a true reflection of your kingdom glory. Amen.

"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed." 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 NASB

"... When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.' When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!' ... When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him." Luke 5:1–11 NASB

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" Isaiah 6:1–8 NASB