

THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Selected Passages from Romans

Intro: When we talk about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are so many conflicting ideas about what it means that it is necessary that we explain what we mean. It is no wonder that people are inclined to doubt the reality of Christ's resurrection because nothing like the resurrection of Christ had ever taken place before, and so far there has not been anything like it since He was raised from the dead. Christ raised many while He was here on earth, but His resurrection was unique.

When we speak of the resurrection of Jesus Christ we are speaking of a physical, bodily resurrection. The body in which our Lord came out of the tomb was the same body, in some respects, as was laid in the tomb. I say, "in some respects," because, while it still had the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and the mark where the spear was driven into His side, yet it was a glorified body. We know that He ate food after His resurrection; we do not know that He had to eat food. But we also know that the Lord was not identifiable until He chose to make Himself known. He could appear with His disciples even though the doors were shut, and presumably, locked. But along with other things that made the resurrection of our Lord so unique was the fact that He would never die again. Paul taught this in Romans 6:9 where he said,

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead **dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.**

When our Lord appeared to the Apostle John, according to Rev. 1:18, the Lord said to John,

I am he that liveth, and was dead: **and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.**

So the Bible teaches a bodily, physical resurrection of the Son of God, and that He would never die again! Any departure from this teaching is a departure from Scripture, and thus a denial of the Word of God. Don't be surprised when people say something different from this when speaking about the resurrection of Christ. As the NT writers of the Gospels teach us, every attempt was made even in NT times to do away with the idea that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. But He was raised from the dead. And we as Christians commemorate the resurrection of Christ, not only once during the year on Easter Sunday, *but we commemorate it every Sunday. That is why we meet together on the first day of the week.* And we all need to know that this is why.

It is very disturbing to me that many churches are now holding services on Saturday, and I know of one church that was holding services on Friday so people would have the whole weekend free. What is more important, our pleasure, or the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

If you take a concordance and look for all of the references to the resurrection of Christ in the book of Acts, you probably will be surprised to see how frequently the apostles referred to the resurrection of our Savior in the messages that are recorded for us in that book. The early church believed in, and her leaders preached, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And there is much to be learned about the resurrection from their preaching. *But for today I want to take the book of Romans and point out to you from that epistle some of the main teachings that arise out of Christ's resurrection.* I won't claim to be exhaustive, but I want to call your attention to certain great truths which together form **THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION**. And I will ask you to turn first to the first chapter where we find the first great truth which arises out of the fact that Jesus Christ literally was raised from the dead.

I. THE MESSAGE CONCERNING CHRIST HIMSELF (Rom. 1:1-4).

The death and resurrection of our Lord, of course, go together. But it is interesting to me that sometimes you have the death of Christ mentioned without the resurrection, and other times when the resurrection of Christ is mentioned without a reference to His death. The other night before we went to bed Lucille and I read Hebrews 2 together. There are three references in the chapter to the incarnation of Christ, and to the death of Christ, but no mention of His resurrection.

Here in the opening verses of Romans we are told about the resurrection of Christ, but no mention is made of His death.

These differences don't need to bother us. They simply mean that at times the apostles were concerned about what Christ accomplished by His death; at other times, what He accomplished by His resurrection.

So here in Romans 1 Paul was thinking about the resurrection. And he mentioned that *the resurrection of Christ was a testimony to His Deity*. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

The word "declared" is an interesting word for the Apostle Paul to use

here. It is the Greek word from which we get our English word, *horizon*. The horizon marks the line between the earth and the sky. The resurrection of Christ marked out the boundary between the Lord Jesus Christ and all other men. It declared Him to be the Son of God. It confirmed His prediction that He would rise again on the third day. It confirmed His claims that He was the Son of God -- one of the chief reasons that His enemies put Him to death. James Denney said in his book, *The Death of Christ*, that "the resurrection only declared Him to be what He truly was" (quoted in Robertson, IV, 324).

And His resurrection was "with power." The Lord had claimed at one point in His ministry that He had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it again. The resurrection was a testimony to that power.

But there is still another glorious fact to be seen in the resurrection of Christ concerning Him as a Person. *The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ showed that He was still the Son of God in every sense of the words*. God had laid our sins upon Him. The Apostle Paul said that our Lord was even "made sin for us." And yet having suffered for our sins, He put our sins away, and came through death and the grave to resurrection just as truly the Son of God as He was before He was nailed to the Cross.

Some blasphemously declare that the Lord became the Son of God when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism, but that He ceased to be the Son of God on the Cross. This statement in Romans 1 makes any such statement a lie. The Lord Jesus was conceived as the Son of God in the womb of the virgin Mary, and He continued to be the Son of God throughout His entire time here on earth, and He will always be the Son of God just as there never was a time when He was not the Son of God. But His resurrection clearly marks Him out as being distinct from all of His creatures. No other one can claim this title. He alone is the eternal Son of the living God.

Remember this great truth when you think of the resurrection. As Paul said in the first four verses of Romans, *this is the Gospel of God!* To deny the Deity of our Lord is to deny the Gospel. There is no Gospel, there is no salvation, if Jesus Christ were not the Son of God, and if He does not continue to be the Son of God throughout all eternity.

But let us go on to another passage in Romans dealing with the resurrection. Please turn with me to the last verses in Romans 4. Paul had been speaking of Abraham's faith in the promise of God when God tested him

by making him and Sarah wait for a son until they were too old to have children. Let me begin reading with verse 20.

Let me call this point:

II. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND OUR JUSTIFICATION (Rom. 4:23-25).

How are we going to reconcile the statement at the end of this chapter that our Lord “was raised again for our justification” with the statement in chapter 5, verse 9, that we are “justified by his blood.” If we are “justified by his blood, this would mean that we are justified by our Lord’s death, not by His resurrection. Do we have a contradiction here in Scripture? Absolutely not!

We can say that the resurrection was a fitting climax to the work of our Lord on the Cross because since He was the Son of God, it was, as Peter said in Acts 2:24, “not possible that he should be holden by it.” This is another statement which proves His Deity. He had to be raised. He was a Member of the Godhead. He could not remain dead in the tomb. *But there is something else very wonderful that we all need to see in this last verse of Romans 4.*

What Paul was saying here was that Christ’s resurrection was a testimony that He by His death had done everything necessary for our justification. He did it by Himself, and nothing else needed to be added to it. In fact, it would have been a reproach upon our Lord to suggest that He had not completely provided for our salvation by His death alone. No additional ordinance or sacrament or sacrifice is required. We cannot make any contribution to what He has done. *Salvation is by Christ alone through faith alone and by grace alone!* Although God placed our sins upon Christ, yet He put them away. And when He came forth from the tomb, our sins were gone! His work was finished, and His work was accepted. And as God’s testimony to us that nothing more is required He raised His Son from the dead.

Have you gotten that message? The Lord did not do just 50% of what was required for our salvation. Nor did He do only 90%. We won’t agree with anyone who says that He fell short by only 1%. “Jesus paid it all!” We don’t add a single thing even by our faith. We believe as evidence that we are trusting in Christ and Christ alone for our salvation. *This is a major part of the message of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.*

But let me take you to another passage. Please turn to Romans 6.

III. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION IN THE LIFE OF EVERY CHILD OF GOD (Rom. 6:4-6).

One of the amazing truths connected with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus which we read about in the NT, and specifically here in the book of Romans, is that all who will ever be saved died with Christ when He died on the Cross, and those same people were raised with Him when He came triumphantly out of the tomb. Paul never said that the whole world, generation after generation, died with Christ when He died. If that were the case then the whole world would have to be saved. He died to pay the penalty for all for whom He died. Notice the *we*'s and the *our* in these verses (Rom. 6:4-6).

Now there are two statements in these three verses which show the meaning of the resurrection of Christ for those of us who died with Him, and who were raised with Him. The first is, "even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). The second is, "that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6).

Most of you know that to "walk in newness of life" means *to live a new kind of life*. This is how you can tell if a person is really a child of God, really a Christian. He won't live like he used to live. And it is *new* because from the moment a person is saved, he finds that he, or she, is no longer a servant of sin. Before we are saved, sin is our master. We are in bondage to our sin nature and to our sins. But when the Lord saves us, He gives us eternal life. This new life causes us to want to know God. It causes us to want to please God. It sets us free from the bondage we were under before, and we find ourselves hating what we used to do and loving what we used to hate. We now love God. We love His Word. We read the Word to find out what the Lord wants us to do, and what He wants us to be. So the resurrection of Christ has a message for us as to the life we now live in the flesh. It is a life of faith, a life in which we are constantly learning more about what it means to trust the Lord.

This is what Paul was talking about in Gal. 2:20. (Quote.)

It shouldn't be a surprise to us that before we were saved we were slaves to our sins. Maybe we didn't like to talk about them as sins; we would rather talk about them as weaknesses we had. But when the Holy Spirit began to deal with us we learned that they were sins because they were displeasing to God. But we learned also that "Christ died for our sins,"

and by the grace of God we turned to Christ and have experienced real deliverance from that bondage. We can still sin, *but the message of the resurrection is that we don't have to sin. In fact, we can't continue on in sin because we have the life of God Himself within us.*

See what Paul wrote along this line in Romans 6:11-14. (Read.)

How wonderful it is when we really hear the message of the resurrection of Christ.

Let me give you one more point about **THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.**

IV. THE MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION AS TO WHAT IT DOES TO US (Rom. 7:4).

We are married to Christ. He is our Bridegroom; we are His bride. And by Him we bring forth fruit unto God.

Dawson Trotman of the Navigators used to say that "the fruit of a Christian is another Christian." And that is true. But that is not the only fruit spoken of in Scripture. Cf. Rom. 6:21-22.

I call your attention to the expression, "your fruit unto holiness."

In my preceding point I mentioned that the resurrection preaches to us that we are to live a new life, a life pleasing to God, a life in which we are no longer in bondage to sin. This passage follows up on that. An obedient life produces a holy character. This is the way things work in the life we have in Christ. Being holy is the result of living obediently. And by living obediently I do not mean living just like we think Christians ought to live, but by living in obedience to the Word of God.

To be holy is to be like our Lord. We will not be perfectly holy until we get to heaven, but a growing Christian will even now be getting to be more and more like the Savior. This, too, is a part of **THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.**

Concl: So **THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION** is a message confirming that Christ is indeed the Son of God. It is a message telling us that Christ did everything for our complete and eternal acceptance with God. It is a message telling us that we are to live a new and different kind of life, totally different from the way people in the world

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live. And the resurrection of Christ tells us that as we seek to please the Lord through obedience, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts to make us holy. He is continually working in all of our hearts to make us like our dear Savior.

What a tragedy that millions of our children are growing up in these United States today thinking that Easter Sunday is just a day for eggs and bunnies! We ought to be praying that the Lord would be pleased to use us to give them the truth that will open their eyes to see the glory of our risen Savior. When people really understand Who He is, and why it was so necessary for Him to come to provide salvation for sinners, then they are beginning to understand the truth that can transform their lives and give them a love for the God Who loved the world so much that He sent His Son to provide salvation for all who would believe in Him.

Is He your Savior? May God in His grace be pleased to show all of us even more clearly what it means that Christ was raised from the dead.