



The resurrection of Christ

“What benefit do we receive from the “resurrection” of Christ?

First, by His resurrection He has overcome death that He might make us partakers of the righteousness which He has obtained for us by His death.

Secondly, by His power we are also now raised up to a new life.

Thirdly, the resurrection of Christ is to us a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.”

(Heidelberg Catechism, Q45)

Good Friday is a day when we remember the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. We remember how He became a curse for us on the cross so that we might receive the blessings of God. We remember how Jesus suffered during His whole life on earth, how He endured the reproach of sinful men and suffered the physical torture of being beaten and nailed to a cross. But the greatest of His suffering was when He was forsaken by His Father! On the cross, Jesus Christ experienced the pains of eternal death so that those who believe in Him might receive eternal life. Matthew 27:46: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* Christ was forsaken for a time by the Father because of the sins of all who were given to Christ (John 6:37). It was on the cross that Christ became a curse for us and was cast out by the Father for every sinful thought, word, and deed, both past, present, and future of all those given to Him by the Father, which Revelation 7:9 tells us was *“a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.”* Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* Christ was our scapegoat in order that God’s wrath might be turned away from us, and that we become favorable in His sight (Leviticus 16:21–22).

In the same way, Christ’s death was a substitutionary death. His death actually atoned for the sins of His people. *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). Do you understand what Christ had to go through to redeem your soul? Do you realize the great horror that He had to endure so that you and I wouldn’t have to? For us to be saved, the precious blood of Jesus had to be shed. But He was the innocent Lamb of God, the only one who knew no sin; therefore, death could not hold Him down.

In Acts 2:23–24 we read, *“Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”* And since death could not hold Him down, Good Friday is not the end of the story. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, *“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.”* At the very heart of the Christian faith is the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To deny the resurrection of Christ is to deny the whole of the Christian faith. *“If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.”* And in verse 17 we read: *“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”* (1 Corinthians 15:14). You see, if Christ is not risen, then the wrath of God has not been turned away from us and we must face a holy God clothed in the filth of our sins. If Christ is not risen, the Apostle declares: *“Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished,”* and, *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable.”*

And men deny the resurrection today as they did in Paul’s day: *“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”* This was a false teaching that was being perpetuated by some who were in the church at

Corinth. But Paul declares to us the Good News of the Gospel when he says in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: *"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."* The Apostle Paul gives us three basic facts of the Gospel: 1) Christ died for our sins, 2) was buried, and 3) rose from the dead the third day according to the Scriptures. Our confession is not simply that Jesus died, but that He died for our sins. Christ's death was punishment; it was death as the wages of our sins. The law and justice of God is clear. He who would save sinners must do so by the shedding of His own blood even while at the same time loving God perfectly and living in perfect obedience to God's commandments, *"For without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins"* (Hebrews 9:22).

It was Jesus Who came to fulfil all righteousness for the salvation of His people through His perfect law-abiding life and sin-atonement death, and then *"rise on the third day according to the Scriptures."* And this was not new teaching but was something the Old Testament prophets taught. It was according to the Scriptures that the Savior must rise from the dead, *"For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption"* (Psalm 16:10). *"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction!"* (Hosea 13:14). Therefore, the Messiah must be One of Whom it is said, *"It was not possible that death could hold Him down"* (Acts 2:24). He must be One Who can say of Himself, *"Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death"* (Revelation 1:18). The Savior must be one, who after dying for the sins of His people, could say, *"No one takes my life from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again"* (John 10:18).

Beloved, is your hope in the resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ, the One who said *"because I live you will live also"*? (John 14:19). Is your hope in the One who said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die"*? (John 11:25-26) Our faith is sure because Jesus is risen from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's declaration to every believer that we are righteous in Christ and are no longer guilty before God because of the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. We need to understand this. You see, our justification depends on the fact of the physical, literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ arose as the Head or representative of His church and upon this truth the declaration is now made to the church that all those who belong to Jesus Christ are righteous in Him. *"Christ was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification"* (Romans 4:25). Jesus Christ was delivered over to the cross. Why? Because of our offenses! He went to the cross to suffer for our sins. But then Jesus Christ was raised. Why? On account of our justification! The word *"justification"* means to be made right with God. In other words, Jesus really paid for our sins, and the fact that He was raised from the dead is God's declaration to His people that all our sins have been paid in full, once for all time, at the cross of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Believer, do you understand that you are righteous before God through faith in Jesus Christ? Do you understand that you can no longer come into condemnation because you partake of Christ's perfect righteousness? (Romans 8:1). Christ's resurrection is God's guarantee that those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Redeemer have *"everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but have passed from death into life"* (John 5:24). *"Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died and is risen again"* (Romans 8:34). Who is going to condemn and bring a charge against the believer? Our sins have been paid in full by King Jesus. How do we know for certain? Because God raised Christ from the dead! The resurrection of Christ is God's declaration that the work of Jesus on behalf of elect sinners given to Him from before the foundation of the world was accomplished, accepted, and successful. Therefore, with His resurrection comes the testimony of God to every believer that we are justified in Christ. Christ, on the cross, has accomplished our full redemption.

We have a risen Savior, and the fact of His resurrection is the declaration of God that we are His children, adopted in and through Christ (Galatians 4:5). Because of Christ's resurrection we now

shall live in Him. Jesus said in John 14:19, *“Because I live, you shall live also.”* By the power of Christ’s resurrection we, who were once spiritually dead sinners (Ephesians 2:1), are now made alive unto God in Christ. Jesus said in John 11:25-26, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”* In other words, all who are united to Christ by true faith have everlasting life right now. Spiritually they will never die because they have the life of the risen Christ implanted in their soul. *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* Yes, we still struggle with sin, but sin doesn’t *reign* over us. Rather, the principle of grace now reigns in the soul of the believer because of the life of Christ implanted within. And when the life of Christ is implanted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit we are alive unto God and we demonstrate this in repentance toward God.

Is this true of you? If so, then the resurrected Christ dwells within you and you shall never die spiritually. You have passed, as Scripture declares, from the realm of spiritual death and darkness in Adam into spiritual life and light in Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is also a pledge of our physical, bodily resurrection as the people of God. Today we are in the body and we suffer the effects of sin and death. Yes, we have Christ living within us, but we are still in the body of this present death and so we go through many trials, struggles, and heartaches in this vale of tears, and will even suffer death itself unless Christ returns. But in the resurrection of Christ, God gives us this promise: *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you”* (Romans 8:11).

Christ promises that when He returns to this earth He will raise our mortal bodies from the grave and *“will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”* (Philippians 3:21). This mortal will put on immortality and this corruptible will put on incorruption. Death will be swallowed up in life. Our mortal bodies, which turn to dust in the grave, shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Jesus said, *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”* (John 5:28-29).

Beloved in Christ, the proof that our sins are paid in full, and the promise of our blessed resurrection all rest upon the fact that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. If Christ is not risen from the dead we have no hope. We would still be in our sins. But the Scripture declares these wonderful words: *“Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.”* Christ is the pledge that every believer will be raised up to incorruption, honor, glory, immortality, and victory, and therefore every believer can say to death, *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”* (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Do you know these truths by faith? Have you heard God speaking to your soul through His Word? The question that always remains when the Gospel of the risen Lord is proclaimed is this, do you believe it? If you do not, then the only thing that is in your life is a fearful reckoning when the risen Lord Jesus Christ comes again *“in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 1:8). But all who trust in the risen Savior and believe the Good News of His Gospel, the blessed Word to you is this, *“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said”* (Matthew 28:5-6).

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