

There is no doubt that the whole teaching and preaching of the Apostles rested upon the fact of the Resurrection. If the Resurrection were proved to be false, then the Apostles were far worse than misguided: they were false leaders (1 Cor. 15:15). May this week's notes solidify our confidence in our Risen Lord Jesus and make us bolder in our Christian assurance, though we live in a strife-filled world of doubts, cynicism and outright denial of Christ's resurrection power.

Monday/Tuesday: Read Acts 1:21-26, 2:31-32; 17:18 and 1 Corinthians 9:1

Crucial Fact

C.S. Lewis writes so well on the importance of the Resurrection for the Apostles that I quote him here from his book, *Miracles*:

In the earliest days of Christianity an "apostle" was first and foremost a man who claimed to be an eye-witness of the Resurrection. Only a few days after the Crucifixion when two candidates were nominated for the vacancy created by the treachery of Judas, their qualification was that they had known Jesus personally both before and after the His death and could offer first-hand evidence of the Resurrection in addressing the outer world, (Acts 1:22). A few days later St. Peter, preaching the first Christian sermon, makes the same claim – "God raised Jesus, of which we all (we Christians) are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). In the first Letter to the Corinthians St. Paul bases his claim to apostleship on the same ground – "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord Jesus?" (1 Cor. 9:1.)

As this qualification suggests, to preach Christianity meant primarily to preach the Resurrection. Thus people who had heard only fragments of St. Paul's teaching at Athens got the impression that he was talking about two new gods, Jesus and Anastasis (i.e. Greek for Resurrection) (Acts 17:18). The Resurrection is the central them in every Christian sermon reported in the Book of Acts. The Resurrection, and its consequences, were the "gospel" or good news which the Christians brought..."

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for the truth of Resurrection imbedded by God in the heart of Christian faith. All Christians agree: If dead men are not raised, then there is no Savior named Jesus, no judgment to come, and no eternal inheritance. Ask God to give your church new boldness to declare this Resurrection Gospel and new boldness in prayer, believing that the real answer to all our prayers is nothing less than the drawing near of the Risen Lord Jesus, speaking to us through the Scriptures as He spoke to the first disciples: "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?" (Luke 24:38).

Weds/Thurs: Read 2 Timothy 2:1-9**Risen and Present**

Do we ever feel that we lack the Apostolic level of assurance for our faith since **we** are not eyewitnesses to the Resurrected Christ as they were? Do we sometimes long for a nearer sense of the Presence of our Resurrected Lord as we struggle in this world which so brazenly mocks our Easter faith? Well, so do some of the hymn writers. I wonder what you think of hymn # 190 in our Red Trinity hymnals?

*I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with them then.*

*I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
“Let the little ones come unto Me.”*

*Yet still to His foot stool in prayer I may go;
And ask for a share in His love;
And if I thus earnestly seek Him below,
I shall see Him and hear Him above.*

While the last verse above commends to us the hope of one day seeing our Risen Lord, are the first two verses really healthy, or do they betray a dissatisfaction with living now by faith instead of by sight back when Jesus walked the earth? At any rate, Paul has an answer for our discouragement in not seeing the Risen Lord. It is to declare triumphantly that His Resurrection power is just as powerfully at work in our day, and in our lives, as it was when the earth shook and the tomb first opened that Easter morning! We see this from Paul's words to Timothy in our passage today.

Paul tells Timothy that he is to “be strong” (2:1), “endure hardship” (2:3), fight as a “soldier” (2:3-4), strive as an “athlete” (2:5), and work hard as a “farmer” (2:6-7). But from where is Timothy to draw strength for all these strenuous Gospel endeavors? The answer is in verse 8: “Remember Jesus Christ, **raised from the dead.**” Consider what Paul is saying here, and what he is not saying:

- Paul does **not** say “Remember that Jesus was raised from the dead in past history” (though that is true).
- Paul does **not** say “Remember that Jesus is now in Heaven” (though is true as well).
- What Paul **does** say is “Remember Jesus **risen** and present, Timothy, in your life today!” Risen to impact Timothy's life as mightily in the hour of need as when He rose to defeat all the powers of death. “Remember, Timothy, Jesus **risen** and **reigning!**”

Meditate and Pray: Can we put our thankfulness for Christ, Risen from the dead, into prayer?

Lord Jesus, thank you that your resurrection life is indissoluble and that your presence with Timothy and with us in all our struggles is constant. You rose from the dead to be everywhere “with us.” Thank you that though once dead you now stand risen beside us. Here and now: working your resurrection power into our lives. Teach us to trust the power of your presence within our lives. Teach us to lean upon your mighty resurrected arm to guide our every step. Restrain us from sin by keeping us in awe of your resurrection presence. Make our speech,

thoughts, and actions carry the impression that we are **always** living with a consciousness of your resurrected eyes upon us, and your mighty hand upon our shoulders. In your Name we pray, Amen.

Fri/Sat/Sun: read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 & 15:12

The Tense Matters!

We conclude this week's Resurrection Day notes with a study of the verbs that describe Jesus' work in 1 Cor. 15:3-5. The verbs describing His death, burial and appearance to eye-witnesses are what we would expect. They are all in the aorist, past tense: "Once and for all" Jesus died; "Once and for all" Jesus was buried; "Once and for all" Jesus appeared to many after His resurrection. But it is not the aorist tense which punctuates His resurrection. There is no "full stop" or "period" after Paul's word, "Resurrection." Rather, the tense Paul uses is what grammarians call the "durative" or "extensive" perfect tense, describing an event done in the past, but whose effect still continues to impact us today.

In other words, when Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:4 that Jesus "was raised" (perfect tense) he means that Christ's resurrection was completed in the past in such a way that the effect of that resurrection continues even to this day. Though the tomb is empty, it was powerful enough to cause an earthquake on Easter Morning and that life shaking power continues till this day. Jesus resurrected and reigning still! Jesus resurrected and victorious over death still!

Now the meaning of Christ's resurrection begins to reach us where we live, doesn't it? Paul is reminding us here in 1 Cor. 15:4 that the Gospel good news is not merely that Christ rose one day in history, but rather that He lives on **in** and **over** history. His resurrection power reaches our lives, and still has complete power over all that we experience in our lives today. To put it in terms of 1 Cor. 15:12, the reason we believe in **our** resurrection from the dead and **our** experience of new life in Christ... is because Christ's resurrection is still happening every time a person is born again into the Kingdom of God. Because we believe Christ is raised, we know that there **is even now** an ongoing resurrection from the dead for us!

Meditate and Pray: Thank the Lord Jesus for the resurrection life which even now we can experience, using Question & Answer 45 from the Heidelberg Catechism [emphasis mine.]

Question 45. What does the "resurrection" of Christ profit us?

Answer: First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, that he might make us partakers of that righteousness which he had purchased for us by his death; **secondly, we are also by his power raised up to a new life;** and lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.