

The resurrection of our Lord is the *factual* foundation of our faith in the *historical* victory of Jesus Christ over death. He really rose on a real third day! While there are surely other spiritual lessons to learn at Easter, we must begin with the history behind the event.

Monday: Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Fact Finding

Paul begins his summation of the great events of salvation history by emphasizing the eye-witness tradition which he has passed on. He received and preached a Gospel attested to by the eye-witness testimony of the Apostles. In fact, none of those chosen, including Paul, could make any claim to being Apostles without their eye-witness experiences of Jesus Christ, raised from the dead. Peter and the 12 (v. 5); 500 hundred Christian brethren (v. 6); Paul himself (v. 8) – all only called Apostles by virtue of seeing the historical Jesus.

Meditate and Pray: Father, we live in a world of cynicism in which even eye-witness testimony is continually jettisoned in favor of personal opinion, so that internet debates often can't come to any sort of historical conclusion regarding events happening even in contemporary life. Thank you for firmly establishing our faith in the eye-witness testimony of Apostles who were willing to die for what they had seen and heard! We rest est in the certainty of eyewitness, Apostolic testimony, found in the Scripture, such as 2 Peter 1:16: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

Tuesday: Read 1 Corinthians 15:9-11

Grace that Consecrates

Paul has no choice but to preach this Gospel, because it was this Gospel of grace which saved him, formerly a persecutor of the church (v.9), and then compelled him to "work harder" than any of the other Apostles (v. 10)! Jesus has saved him by grace and then bound him to serve as a "love-slave" by cords of grace. So Paul spends himself on behalf of the Gospel of grace which he preaches; he has no choice but to devote his whole life to this calling of preaching the Word. He is single-minded.

Meditate and Pray: What if the Apostle Paul were alive today and came to visit you with such a single-minded message of the Gospel? At your workplace? In your college dorm? Would you be tempted to distance yourself from the zeal of the Apostle? Such temptations are rampant among Christians today, because our culture is now so determined to keep Jesus Christ out of so many parts of our lives. (More on this tomorrow.) For now, ask the Lord to remind you afresh of the grace which not only saves you, but which obligates you to live for the Lord 24/7. Use the words of *Trinity Hymnal* #585 to help you:

*Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my will, and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.*

Wednesday: Read 1 Corinthians 15:12 and 2 Peter 3:1-3

Practical Atheism

Why is our society so hostile to the idea that the supernatural presence and power of God are at work in history? Why do men deny the resurrection of Christ from the dead, even as they did in Paul's day, according to 1 Cor. 15:12? There have always been scoffers who foolishly seek to be independent from God, seeking to deny Him a place in everything they do (2 Pet. 3:3). Paul Miller, in *A Praying Life*, sums up this tendency to live as if God is a non-factor for daily life, called by some "practical atheism":

During the period of the Enlightenment, the leading thinkers decided they didn't need God anymore... thinkers such as Kant divided the world into **feelings**, things that are true for me, and **facts**, things that are true for everyone. Kant lumped prayer and religion together with other things we can't be certain of, such as love or right and wrong. They belong to the feeling world of personal opinion... Now we see a flat, two-dimensional world that relegates God to the sidelines as a feel-good cheerleader. Prayer (and faith in the Resurrection) are private and personal, not public or real.

Meditate and Pray: Are you tempted to live as if your "real" life is divided from spiritual truth, as if God is merely a private, optional factor in your day-to-day affairs? We all are tempted at times in this way because the world seeks to pressure us into such a split existence. Ask the Lord to save you from such a "practical atheism" by reminding you of the end of those who deny God, where the wicked are **silenced** in all their abusive denial of God and in their oppression of God's people:

*In his pride the wicked does not seek him;
in all his thoughts there is no room for God.
He says to himself, "Nothing will shake me;
I'll always be happy and never have trouble..."
He says to himself, "God has forgotten;
he covers his face and never sees."
You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted;
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,
defending the fatherless and the oppressed,
in order that man, who is of the earth, **may terrify no more.** Psalm 10 (excerpted verses)*

Thursday: Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Till He Come

It doesn't take long for Paul to vigorously show us **why** the historical event of the resurrection is important for our salvation! He makes clear that, without it all we preach and believe and hope for disappears in one stroke! Without Christ's resurrection, there is no general resurrection, without the general resurrection, there is no Christian hope of life after death!

Meditate and Pray: In a world which lives as if there is no judgment to come and no living Lord Jesus who will judge the world one day, let us ask God to keep the living reality and hope of our Risen King Jesus before our eyes at all times, using the words of *Trinity Hymnal* # 426:

*"Till He come," O let the words
Linger on the trembling chords,
Let the "little while" between
In their golden light be seen;*

*Let us think how Heaven and home
Lie beyond that, "Till He come."*

*When the weary ones we love
Enter on their rest above,
Seems the earth so poor and vast,
All our life joy overcast?
Hush, be every murmur dumb;
It is only, "Till He come."*

*Clouds and conflicts round us press;
Would we have one sorrow less?
All the sharpness of the cross,
All that tells the world is lost,
Death and darkness, and the tomb,
Only whisper, "Till He come."*

Friday: Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

The Appearance of the Judge

We cannot over-emphasize the Resurrection for Paul and for biblical Christianity. It was and is the center of the Gospel preached by all the Apostles and received by every believer. Without the Resurrection, there would be no faith for one generation of the church to pass on to the next. Consider its centrality in the following important areas of Christian belief and living:

- 1) All true doctrine of God hinges on it. Consider: What kind of impotent figment of our imagination would be the object of our faith if God could not raise His own Son from the dead? No! God must be the one who "kills and makes alive" or He is not God! (See 1 Samuel 2:6).
- 2) All motivation for ethical Christian living depends on the reality of one day being judged by that "man raised from the dead", Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). Consider: How often does Paul cite the coming return of the Resurrected Jesus as the incentive for holy living?
- 3) Here are just a few examples from Scripture of the historical fact of the Resurrection and how it affects our lives now and in the future:

- May the Lord strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father **when** our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones (1 Thessalonians 3:13).
- It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take

advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord **will** punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6).

- For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God **will bring** with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him... For the Lord himself **will come down** from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first... Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:14, 16, 18).
- God is just: He **will** pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This **will** happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He **will** punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8).

Meditate and Pray: It is because Christ Jesus rose from the dead that God the Father appointed Him as Judge over the whole world. Listen to Paul's sermon before the Athenians:

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31)

No wonder the Judgment Day *is not going to be a merely spiritual reality*. Because Christ rose bodily, because He kept His physical body holy, along with His sinless soul, He has the authority and the right "to judge all men for their deeds done in the body"
(2 Corinthians 5:10).