

Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. – Mark 16:15-16.

The fortieth day after the resurrection of our Lord was at hand. The eleven Apostles were at Jerusalem. They were just sitting at meat when Jesus came to them. And now that they were able rightly to understand it, He upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed them that had seen Him after He was risen. It is well for us to know the perverseness of our heart; and we never know it more fully than just when we are certain of our sonship with God through faith. Thus we are then impelled always to trust in Jesus only, and never in ourselves.

– Then the Lord repeated the command concerning the conduct of their apostolic office which He had previously entrusted to them by saying: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And the Lord invested this office with supreme authority: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall he damned." Nor can it be otherwise. Only in Christ there is salvation. He that believeth in Him is saved; he that rejecteth Him is damned. – And then the Lord equipped His Apostles and their fellow-disciples with the power to perform miracles, in order to confirm their preaching: "And these signs shall follow them that believe In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents: and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them!; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." And then – but that we shall hear on the festival of the Ascension.

– O Christian, dear Christian, abide in the faith in Your Savior, who has died and is risen for your sake. But do not rely on your own strength or constancy. For your heart is a frail heart. Seek the strength and help of Jesus. He gives it to you through His Word.

PRAYER. – Almighty God and Lord, by Your grace I believe that Your dear Son Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen, is the only



Illustration: The Resurrection of Christ

A Devotional for the

Week of the Second Sunday after Easter.

Savior, besides whom there is no salvation, and that He is my dear Savior and Redeemer. But since I know the fickleness and inconstancy of my heart, and perceive that without Your grace I cannot persevere in faith, O Lord, therefore at all times bestow Your grace upon me, and keep me in Your Word and faith to life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn 225, 5-7.

He who slumbered in the grave,
Is exalted now to save:
Now through Christendom it rings
That the Lamb is King of kings! Hallelujah!

Now He bids us tell mankind
How all may salvation find,
How poor sinners are forgiven,
And through faith may enter heaven: Hallelujah!

Thou our Paschal Lamb indeed,
Christ, today Thy people feed;
Take our sins and guilt away,
That we all may sing for aye: Hallelujah!

MONDAY.

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up.
– John 5:19.

Thus Jesus said to the Jews when they desired of Him a sign showing that He was the promised Christ. He spoke of the temple of His body. Kill me, and in three days I shall rise again; that was the meaning of His words. The resurrection of Jesus, who had been put to death, is the great sign which shows that He is the Christ promised in Scripture, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and that His doctrine is right and true. If Jesus had not been the Christ, but – the pen fairly refuses to write it -- a false prophet, then He

surely would not have risen, but would have remained in the grave, like all false prophets.

But since He is risen, He has proved beyond all controversy that He is the Son of God, and the Savior promised in the Scripture, the ever truthful, whose words shall not pass away. When, therefore, He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said to them the words that you read above, and they believed, they believed in Him, they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. Everything, the truth of all the Scripture, the whole Christian faith, yea, everything depends upon the resurrection of Jesus. If His, resurrection did not take place, then all is vain, but since it has, all is sustained.

Christian, you must be altogether certain of Jesus' resurrection, or you can not believe in Him as your Savior. And you may be altogether certain of it. The eye-witnesses testify to it with one accord. These eye-witnesses testify to it in writings which radiate naught but holiness. The same is true of the Old Testament prophecies. And the Holy Ghost bears witness, divine and powerful witness, that the Scripture of the Prophets and of the Apostles and Evangelists is truth. Nothing on earth is so strongly attested as the resurrection of Jesus. And so your faith in Jesus Christ, Your Savior, is well founded. you are redeemed.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, heavenly Sun, You did set before the eyes of the world and even of Your disciples, when You died on the cross. Soon, however, You did rise again, when You came forth alive from the grave, and in rapture did Your disciples behold You. And in their Spirit-testimony You do shine on me also, O true Light of mercy, full of life, salvation, and never-ending bliss. O my Lord and Savior, let my eyes always be fixed on You, that in You I may know my salvation. Amen.

Hymn 226, 4.

I am content! My Jesus is my Light,
My radiant Sun of grace.

His cheering rays beam blessings forth for all;
Sweet comfort, hope and peace.
The Easter-sun brings life, salvation.
And everlasting exultation.
I am content!

TUESDAY.

Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. – Romans 4:25.

Christ was delivered for our offenses, delivered into death. He atoned for our sins by His death. And He was raised again for our justification. By the resurrection of Christ, God has made us righteous, declared us righteous, has justified us. Even as Christ's surrender into death is our atonement, so His resurrection is our justification.

I wonder if you understand this, kind reader. Christ is our Substitute. By atoning for our sins with His death as our Substitute, He has reconciled God to us. And then God raised Him from the dead. Thereby God declared in very fact that nothing has remained for Christ to do for our reconciliation, towards the atonement for *our* sins. By the resurrection of our Substitute, God declared that our sins have been atoned for, that in His sight we are righteous in Christ. Christ's resurrection is Christ's justification of our sins, and hence it is our justification: for Christ is justified for our sins, as our Substitute, in our stead, for us.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, we would not know whether our sins were really atoned for, whether God had actually accepted His sacrifice for our sins, whether we were actually reconciled to God, whether we were actually righteous before God in Christ. But now that God has raised Christ, we know that He has actually atoned for our sins, that God has actually accepted the sacrifice of Christ for our sins, that we are actually reconciled to God, that we are actually righteous in the sight of God. And so we must look upon Christ's resurrection from the dead as

upon the declaration of our righteousness, our justification, and fully trust in it.

What was said yesterday may be said again today: Everything, the truth of all the Scripture, the whole Christian faith, yea, everything depends upon Christ's resurrection. If this did not take place, then all is vain. Since this did take place, all is sustained. My dear Christian, you must be altogether certain of the resurrection of Jesus, or you can not really believe Him to be your Savior.

PRAYER. – Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Risen One, You are my Righteousness; You are made righteousness to me by God; when God raised You, after You had died for me, He justified me in You. Grant that my faith hold fast to You, Lord, my Righteousness. This is the name whereby I will know You, O Lord, and cling to You: Jehovah *Zidkenu* – The Lord, *Our Righteousness*. Amen.

Hymn 324, 3. 4.

Thy Son has come to earth | My sin to bear,
My every wound to heal, | My pain to share.
“God in the flesh” for Me, | Brings me now nearer Thee,
Nearer to Thee!

Lo! all my debt is paid, | My guilt is gone.
See! He has ris’n for me, | My throne is won.
Thanks, O my God to Thee! | None now can nearer be.
Nearer to Thee!

WEDNESDAY.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. – 1 Corinthians 15:20.

Death is dreadful! It takes all away from us. We return to dust. But that does not make an end of us. After the darkness of death there is the darkness of death: judgment and eternal damnation.

Death is the wages of sin. The bands of death are as strong as God, who has subjected us to it. But Christ has taken our sin upon Himself and atoned for it. He entered into our death and arose from the dead. He arose from the dead to give us resurrection. He has destroyed *our* death. He has riven the bands of *our* death. He is become the first-fruits of them that sleep.

We who are His own in faith do but sleep when we die, and in this sleep nothing shall disturb us. And then we shall follow Him, the first-fruits, and shall likewise rise from the dead, full of eternal life, full of inexpressible joy, unto eternal bliss. Do you rejoice when now, in springtime, you behold the first little flower lift its head Ah, yes, for you know that more shall follow, a rich profusion of spring and summer grandeur. So Christ, our first-fruits, has lifted up His head from the great burying-ground, but many will follow, all those who believe in Him. If Christ were not risen, we would all be lost in death. But now that Christ is risen, we all shall rise.

Once more we say: Everything, the truth of all the Scripture, the whole Christian faith, yea, everything depends upon the resurrection of Jesus. If this did not take place, then all is vain. Since, however, it did take place, all is sustained. Christian, you must be altogether certain of the resurrection of Jesus, or you can not believe Him to be Your Savior.

PRAYER. – O faithful God, that I may live in true faith which rests on my Savior, die in Your grace, sleep in peace, rise by Your power, and thereupon inherit the blessed hope of eternal life, for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, who has destroyed all the terrors and bands of death for me. Amen.

Hymn 226, 2. 5.

I am content! My Jesus is my Head,
His member I will be;
He bowed His head, when on the cross He died,
With cries of agony;
Now death is brought into subjection
For me, too, by His resurrection.
I am content!

I am content! Lord, draw me but to Thee,
That from the dead I rise
With Thee, my Head, and enter cheerfully
Into Thy heavenly joys.
The fetters of my body sever,
Then shall my soul rejoice forever.
I am content!

THURSDAY.

He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. – Psalm 130:8.

Christ has redeemed us from all our *sins*. Scripture says so. This is our faith. And this is most certainly true. -But how is this? We still have sin, we are sinners, we sin. How, then, are we to understand that Christ has redeemed, rid, freed us from all our sins? -We sin against the Law of God. Hence we are guilty and liable to penalty. Because of our sins we are under the curse of the Law. From the *guilt* and *penalty* of sin, or from the curse of the Law, which is the same thing, Christ has redeemed, rid, and freed us. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us," says the holy Apostle, Galatians 3:13.

And from the *dominion* of sin Christ has redeemed us. Sin, which indeed still dwells within us, can no longer own, dominate, enslave, rule, govern us, and shape our lives. We can laugh and mock at sin, resist it, be disobedient to it, and act contrary to it. Christ has rid and freed us from our former vain conversation under the authority of sin, received by tradition from our fathers from the beginning. The Apostle Peter writes: "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Peter 1:18-19. And the time will come when we shall be freed altogether from every sin that still clings to us, for the sake of

the sacrifice which Christ made for us. And all this has been brought to light and vouched for by the resurrection of Christ, when Christ, our Substitute, having finished the work of our salvation, entered into a new life, which no longer was subject to our sin.

PRAYER. – Risen Savior! Now are You rid of the sins of the world; You have atoned for it and vanquished it. And in You I am rid of my sin; it can neither damn nor rule me. For this I give thanks to You with all my redeemed heart. O grant that I may enjoy the knowledge of this my blessed freedom, and, being rid entirely of an evil conscience, of anxiety and fear, may serve You with a cheerful heart, until I shall awake from the sleep of death with Your likeness. Amen.

Hymn 224, 5.

Here the true Paschal Lamb we see,
Whom God so freely gave us;
He died on the accursed tree,
So strong His love! to save us.
See! His blood doth mark our door,
Faith points to it, Death passes o'er,
The Murderer can not harm us. Hallelujah!

FRIDAY.

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. – Hebrews 2:15.

Christ has redeemed us from *death*. Scripture says so, and such is our firm belief. And it is most certainly true. – But how about this? We must die, and the germ of death grows and is rank Within us. How, then, are we to understand that Christ has redeemed, rid; and freed us from death? -Our dying in this present time is in reality the entrance to eternal death, eternal damnation. But this eternal death,

eternal damnation, has been done away with entirely for us through Christ, who has redeemed us from the guilt and penalty of our sins. We who are in Christ need not fear it. And for this reason we also need not fear temporal death. For if, in departing this life, we do not enter eternal death, why need we be afraid to die?

What, then, do we enter through temporal death? Eternal life. Do you not know what the Savior said to the dying robber who believed in Him? He said to Him: "Verily, I say unto thee, "today shalt thou be with me in paradise." This He also says to us when we die. Should we, then, be afraid? And even our body He will raise from the grave, and fashion it like unto His glorious body. Fear? No, we need not fear temporal death. Quite the reverse! When, according to the will of our Lord, the hour of our death approaches, then we must join aged Simeon in exclaiming: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." All this has been brought to light and vouched for by the resurrection of Christ, when Christ, our Substitute, having accomplished the work of our salvation, entered into a new life, which was free from our death.

PRAYER. – Risen Savior! Now are You free from the death of the world; You have borne and vanquished it. And in You, I am free from death; it can no longer devour and keep me. For this I give thanks to You with all my redeemed heart. O grant that I may enjoy the knowledge of this my blessed freedom, and, being rid of every anxiety and fear of death, may commit my soul into Your hands in the hour of death, until You will also raise my body unto eternal life. Amen.

Hymn 221, 5.

Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head;
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies!

SATURDAY.

That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. – Hebrews 2:14.

For this purpose Christ came. And He really accomplished it. He has delivered us from the power, of the devil. Scripture says so, and such is our firm belief. And it is most certainly true. -But how about this? Are we not still on earth where "the prince of this world " rules with "great might and deep guile?" And what are we in comparison with him? How, then, are we to understand that Christ has redeemed us from the power of the devil?

– First, and above all, Christ has taken from the devil the power to accuse us and to demand our death, at the bar of God's unalterable righteousness because of our sins. For Christ, by His death, has atoned for our sins, has made full satisfaction to the righteous God, and reconciled God unto us. Thus our accuser has been cast down once for all. Furthermore, Christ, as our Substitute, in His great struggle with the devil, so completely conquered and vanquished him that through Him we are able to withstand all the temptations of the devil, and to gain the victory over him at all times, by means of the Word of Christ. "One little Word can fell him," him, the Evil Foe.

And lastly, as a result of Christ's victory over the devil, he can do nothing to us unless Christ permits it for our good. – Do you hear? for our good. Ah, yes, Christ has redeemed us from the power of the devil. Trusting in Christ, we may and dare and must deride and scorn the devil. This will sorely vex that proud spirit, and make him flee from us. Thus did Christ destroy the power of the devil. And this has been brought to light and vouched for by the resurrection of Christ, whereby Christ, our Substitute, triumphed over the devil.

PRAYER. – Risen Savior! You have bruised the devil's head, and taken all his power from him. And now I am redeemed from the power of the devil. The devil can no longer accuse me, can no longer seduce me, no longer harm me. I may deride and scorn him. For this I give thanks to You with all my redeemed heart. O grant that I may rejoice in the knowledge of this – my blessed freedom – and at all

times boldly resist the devil and firmly cling to You, until You shall free me from every temptation and take me into Your Kingdom of Glory. Amen.

Hymn 218, 5.

Hell and its prince, the Devil,
Now of their power are shorn,
I now am safe from evil,
And sin I laugh to scorn
Grim Death with all his might
Cannot my soul affright;
He is a powerless form,
Howe'er he rage and storm.

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