

The Power of His Resurrection

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In this paper we are going to study the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we shall show at greater length later on, the doctrine needs more study among us. It is not preached often enough nor with enough emphasis. As a result, it does not mean as much to the individual believer as it should. Even if this were not the case, we should feel the need for a repeated and intensive study of this vital doctrine, that we might be built up in the faith once delivered to the saints.

Yet we cannot hope to treat the whole Scripture testimony regarding the resurrection of Christ in this essay. It is too wide in its scope. Our study would become sketchy and superficial.

The theme chosen for this paper will indicate in what way we have limited our treatment of our Lord's resurrection. This theme was taken from Philippians 3:10. In a few moments we will make a rather thorough study of the passage in which this verse is found. But let us say in advance that here Paul speaks of one particular meaning of Christ's resurrection. When Paul says, "that I may know him (Christ) and the power of his resurrection." he means to say: Knowing or seeing the risen Lord made me sure that I have been perfectly redeemed and stand justified before God. This connection between the resurrection of Christ and our justification, which also receives the primary stress in Scriptures, will be the focus of our attention. To use Paul's words, we wish to know Christ in the power of His resurrection.

In the first section of this essay we shall use three passages from Paul's Epistles to fill our hearts and minds with this truth: The resurrection of Christ brings us sinners the divine assurance that we stand "pure and sinless in God's holy eyes."

First let us turn to Philippians 3:7-11, the passage which supplied our theme. Here Paul tells us: To know Christ and the power of His resurrection is to have His perfect righteousness as our sure possession, with God's own seal upon our title to it. Let us see how Paul brings this out.

First Paul called on the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (v. 1). At once there came to his mind a danger that could smother this joy. He therefore warned them against the Judaizers (v.2). These aggressive, fanatic men mixed the Law with the Gospel. They taught that one is saved through Christ's work plus one's own moral performance and attainment. If the Philippians should succumb to this error, they would fall from grace, lose Christ (Gal. 5:4) and, of course, their joy in the Lord Jesus Christ. They would then be boasting in the confidence of the flesh instead of boasting only in Christ (V.3). Thereupon Paul showed that he far surpassed all the Judaizers in what they, in their false confidence, considered the right religious background and attainments: "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (vv.4-6). At one time Paul had considered these things his prize possessions, but he now regarded them as loss. Why? "For Christ." Christ revealed Himself to Paul - there on the Damascus road. Since that revolutionary event in his life he had put all those supposed moral, religious gains or credits on the debit side of the ledger. Since then nothing counted but the matchless "knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." The Greek text here has: "I was made to suffer the loss of all things." Christ had done that to him at his conversion. He had shown Paul what He had to give him, in what way He wanted to enrich him. Ever since then Paul considered all that he had foolishly trusted in as '*skybala*,' rotted hay, manure, dung. To him all his former religious standing, zeal, and performance appeared as something offensive and repulsive. (The NEB has: "I count it so much garbage.")

Paul does not leave us in doubt regarding the riches which he had found and which made him consider as loss and dung all the things of which he had formerly boasted. He continues at the end of verse 8: "that I may win Christ." Let us say at once that Paul here is not speaking of something still in the future. He is writing from

the viewpoint of his conversion. At that time he was made to suffer the loss of all things, and the purpose of that loss was to gain Christ. This purpose had been realized in Paul.

“To win or gain Christ” is a very compact expression. Paul does not take for granted that his readers will read everything he means into this, but goes on to explain himself: “And be found in him.” This is not something new beyond “to gain Christ.” The sinner gains Christ in only one way, by faith. God works this faith. And so neither Paul nor we found Christ under our own will and brainpower. We were found in Him. Faith put us in connection with Christ, united us with Him, so as to come into possession of all His blessings. The greatest of these blessings, the one from which all others flow, Paul now expounds. “Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” How strongly Paul preached grace by means of this contrast: “not my own righteousness... (derived) out of the law,” on the one hand, and on the other: “that (righteousness) which is through faith in Christ ... of (or: out of) God ... by faith.”

Here is the great wealth which the sinner, the pauper before God, gains when he gains Christ. He has the “real article” of righteousness. His is not the alleged, imaginary righteousness which is gotten out of the law, out of doing what the law requires. Such a righteousness does not exist, for to gain such a righteousness a sinner would have to do the impossible, fulfill the law perfectly. Paul knew that he had no such righteousness because Jesus, appearing to him on the Damascus road, had broken the soap-bubble of his own righteousness. The righteousness of which Paul and every believer boasts is “that (righteousness) which is through faith in Christ.” Notice how Paul describes the genuine righteousness. It is gained through faith in Christ. The Gospel tells the sinner that Christ has redeemed him from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for him and all men, likewise under the curse; that God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. So the Gospel does not demand anything, as does the Law. It does not even say: “Now, here is a great gift for you. Only, you are expected to make a slight contribution of right living or right thinking, before you can call it yours.” No. this gift of righteousness requires nothing on man’s part to complete it. It comes as a gift which is perfect and complete, comes from the hand of God and is laid into the hand of man. That’s why Paul describes the genuine righteousness as the one which is “of God,” literally, “out of God.” coming entirely from God’s side.

As such a perfect, unconditional gift, furnished by God and prepared by Christ, the true righteousness is held out to the sinner. The Holy Spirit moves him to respond, to put his trust in what Christ has done for him and in what Christ has won for him, a perfect righteousness. The moment he so comes to faith he has as his own personal possession the righteousness which is valid before God. But now Paul connects being found in Christ and having His righteousness with the resurrection of Christ: “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection” (v.10). Isn’t this too deep for most of us to understand? Not at all. Let us put it very concretely: When Paul saw Christ near Damascus, he came to know Him as “Christ Jesus, my Lord” (v.8). Jesus did not appear to Paul as the mighty Son of God, to exact the dread penalty from Paul for his crimes against Christ and His Church. He revealed Himself to Paul in all His mercy and grace as the Savior. Paul got to know Jesus just as Luther did and as we all have: “I believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord ... who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death.”

“Still,” you say, “you have not explained what the resurrection had to do with Paul’s saving knowledge of Christ.” That’s right. We were just coming to it. To make this point clear, let us visualize what happened there on the Damascus road. The risen Jesus appeared to Paul. Now, was Jesus unknown to him before that time? That’s impossible. Reports of the claims that Jesus of Nazareth made for Himself had filled Palestine during Jesus’ life on earth. The Jewish leaders had ample opportunity to learn those claims. Just because they knew those claims, they hated Him and crucified Him.

When Saul became a leader among the Jews, he certainly had received full information regarding those claims from his elders. What’s more, since the death of Jesus, His chosen witnesses had kept on advancing the same claims for Jesus, including the one that He was risen from the dead. In fact, Saul’s elders brought this

accusation against the Apostles: “Ye have filled all Jerusalem with your doctrine” Acts 5:28). Saul was well informed regarding all this. He knew the claim of Jesus that He would give His life for sinners, so that “whosoever believeth in me hath everlasting life.” and that He would rise again from death to prove that He had paid the ransom-price for men. But Saul, like his elders, chose to consider all such statements as claims made by “that deceiver.” He was proud of being the head persecutor of this blasphemous attempt to set aside the old, established, and true religion of Israel.

But then Saul saw the risen Jesus! At that moment He was not only overwhelmed by the enormity of His guilt. In that moment He knew that every claim Jesus had made was true, was true for him, Saul. He, the chief of sinners, the persecutor loaded with unspeakable guilt, had the perfect righteousness of Christ and now was precious and beloved in God’s sight.

In this way Paul knew, experienced in a blessed way, the power of Christ’s resurrection. We, too, have the risen Christ revealed to us. We may see Him at will in the Scriptures. It makes no difference whether it is stated that the Father raised Him up or that Christ rose from the dead. Whichever way the fact of Christ’s resurrection is stated, it is to bring home to us that God has accepted the ransom which Christ paid for us; that Christ has furnished a perfect, unassailable righteousness which is ours by faith that we stand “pure and sinless in God’s holy eyes.” To receive this assurance is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection.

What we have just stated provides a natural bridge to our next passage, Romans 4:23-25. Here we have this grand truth: With the resurrection of Christ God declared the whole world righteous.

Perhaps this passage shows the importance of Christ’s resurrection for our faith most clearly of all texts dealing with this teaching. No doubt that is why it is quoted so often. And yet it requires study and reflection to get the full force of it. Then let us turn minds and hearts to a consideration of this key passage.

Verse 23 gives the connection with the rest of the chapter. Paul had shown there how Abraham was justified: God had imputed or credited to believing Abraham the righteousness of Christ, which God offered him in the Promise of the coming Savior. But Abraham is to be an example from which we are to learn how we are justified: “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” The striking thing here is this summary of saving faith: to “believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

Such a statement regarding the resurrection of Christ does not, of course, hide the death of Christ behind a wall of silence. Such a statement always implied, presupposes, and includes the atoning death of Christ. Without this implication, any statement of the resurrection would be meaningless, would hang in thin air. But still the question is in place: Why does Paul employ this striking wording? The answer can only be: to throw into bold relief what the resurrection of Christ is to mean for our faith. It is to show us and make us sure over and over again that the atonement which Christ made for our sins with his substitutionary death was perfect and complete; that God was satisfied with it and accepted it.

Paul emphasizes this still more when he goes on: “(Jesus our Lord) who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification” (v.25).) The “for” in both parts of the sentence means ‘because of,’ ‘on account of.’ Jesus was delivered into sufferings and death because of our offenses, our sins. That means: God wanted to bring about the full atonement for our sins. And Jesus was raised again by the Father, for, because of, for the sake of our being declared righteous. God achieved His purpose in both acts. He delivered up His own Son, and so atonement was made for our sins. And if a sinner’s guilt is atoned for and canceled out, then he actually is righteous in God’s sight. Scriptures say this in many places, as in Romans 5:9: “being now justified by his blood,” that is, His death, “we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

But how will we know that we are justified through Jesus’ death? How can we be sure of it? Here some word or sign is needed to bring assurance into the distressed hearts of sinners. What will it be? A Christ still dead in His grave? Such a Christ would be the grave of all hope, for such a Christ could not have been righteous Himself. Then how could He be the source of righteousness for all the guilty? But the Father has spoken the word and given the sign which is “the balm of Gilead to make the wounded spirit whole.” He did so by raising

Jesus from the dead. It is the Father's declaration that He has found the ransom paid by His Son all-sufficient. It is the pardon and absolution which God pronounces on the whole world of sinners.

Some refuse to admit that this passage speaks of the general (objective) justification of all sinners. They argue that Paul's use of "us" and "our" proves that Paul is speaking of personal (subjective) justification, the assurance of pardon which the individual sinner receives when he comes to faith.

But this conclusion is not valid for two reasons: Paul has been speaking in universal terms all through the foregoing chapters, especially in passages like 1:17 and 3:23,24. Always He presents justification in these chapters as the verdict of acquittal which God pronounced on the basis of Christ's atoning work - pronounced, we say, on all sinners apart from any faith, before there was any faith. Paul uses the "us," "we," and "our" for one obvious reason. His Roman readers are to see themselves "in the picture." They have come to faith in Christ, and so they have been assured that God sees them as such who have been clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ. When their hearts become troubled, they are to look to this great act of the Father, His raising Jesus from the dead, and to see its blessed meaning: "raised again for our justification."

We repeat: with the resurrection of Christ, God declared the whole world of sinners righteous in His sight.

Now let us turn to a third passage to consider this truth: The resurrection of Christ makes us sure that we are being justified day by day. The passage is Romans 8:31-34. In the preceding verses (28-30) Paul had just set down the comforting doctrine of election. He had spoken of God's eternal purpose according to which He in pure grace chose His children for Himself, even before the foundation of the world, to be His own for time and for eternity. He also showed how God carried out His purpose in time: "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called (that is called effectively, converted, brought to faith); and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." In other words, we Christians can look at the facts of our conversion and justification, and from these facts conclude that we belong to the elect and be certain that we shall gain eternal glory. That being the case, God is for us, has been for us from eternity. At this point Paul asks: "What shall we then say to these things?" What follows from all this? He answers with another question: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" God is for us, as our eternal election shows. Therefore no one can be against us. Paul does not mean that no one can oppose us, but that no enemy can really harm us, can prevent us from gaining final salvation. Thereupon he directs the believers to the greatest demonstration of God's love: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" -everything that we need now in this life, until we inherit eternal bliss and glory.

Then Paul, after showing that God is for us, returns to the possibility of some being against us. He asks: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of, that is, accuse, God's elect?" Paul here is not thinking of the Judgment Day. He has been speaking on the subject: How will those who are called according to God's purpose, those that love God, His children, fare as they face the opposition and obstacles of this life? Now, Paul's question does not intend to suggest the answer: "No one will even try to accuse us." Every Christian knows how wrong such a picture of his life would be. His own conscience accuses him, for the Law of God is against him, telling him that he "daily sins much and indeed deserves nothing but punishment." Satan, our Foe, the devil, the Slanderer, makes good use of our transgressions of the Law. On the basis of them he directs a barrage of accusations against us. The world can point to much in our lives that is contrary to our profession and on that basis accuse us.

What Paul does mean, is that no one can prevail with any accusation against us. And the reason is: "It is God that justifies." He justifies us, the elect, right along. In our heading we put it this way: "We are being justified day by day." So God does not simply overlook our many daily sins, saying arbitrarily: "They're my elect; so don't bother Me with talk of their sins." If that were so, then God would be like the doting mother who has the fixed notion that her darling boy can do no wrong and lightly dismisses any charge against him. No, God remains a just God as He justifies us daily. He pardons us, His elect, for the sake of Christ, and that is the most valid basis for our acquittal, for

Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,

Forever for our pardon cries.

Therefore God will not acknowledge any charge brought against us by the Law and our conscience or by the devil and the world.

Now Paul comes to the climax of comfort. It is exactly for the sake of spelling out the certainty of our daily pardon that Paul asks: "Who is he that condemneth?" This takes him a step farther than the previous question. The aim of any accuser is to secure condemnation, conviction. But as unyielding as the Law is in pressing its charges, and our conscience in backing them up, as unrelenting as Satan is in pointing to our sins and clamoring for a "Guilty!" verdict, and as eager as the world is to prove that we are miserable hypocrites who simply cannot be God's children - none of them shall prevail in the court of God.

God will acquit, pardon, forgive. And He will do so on a legal basis that is unassailable, as Paul says in Romans 3:26: "To declare, I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Men accuse the God who justifies of being unjust. But every mouth will be stopped (Ro. 3:19) in regard to God's verdict of justification as well as His judgment of condemnation. For though the elect are justified freely, they are also justified through - on the basis of - the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. This redemption is perfect and complete. The ransom-price paid by Christ was more than enough. As Paul continues he says, in effect: Look at the evidence that God the Father has marked our bill of indebtedness to Him: "Paid in full by My Son."

Paul says: "It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again." In the Greek we have simply this: "Christ Jesus the One having died, yea, rather, (or: in fact) having been raised." This shows that the death and resurrection are to be taken together here. In no way does the "yea, rather" indicate that the death of Christ was not a sufficient atonement for our sins; that the resurrection added something to make the vicarious sacrifice complete. Such a view is ruled out by Scriptures such as these: "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14) "(Christ Jesus) whom God hath set forth to be propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 5:10). If the bloody, atoning death of Christ has put away our sins, what can the fact and truth of Christ's resurrection do for us? Answer: It can and does assure us mightily that our sins have been purged away in the blood of Christ. We repeat: By raising Jesus Christ from the dead, God declares, certifies, guarantees, and attests that the blood of His Son cleanses us from all sin. When we come before God in the distress and torment of our sin, we are to behold the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, and so we hear God assure us: "His blood avails for you." To use a picture, the resurrection makes us certain that the fountain of Jesus' blood will never dry up, but keeps on flowing for us and for all men, for all time. It is God's rock bound pledge that daily we shall find pardon for our sins - justification - and so will remain in God's grace until we achieve the final and full redemption to which God has foreordained His elect.

The other two statements regarding Christ do not, strictly speaking, come under our theme. But it would be a pity to stop here, especially since they do have a connection with Christ's resurrection.

First Paul says: "(Christ Jesus) who is even at the right hand of God." Some combine this with the next statement concerning the intercession. They say it brings out the nearness of the exalted Christ to the Father. Therefore He must certainly win the Father's ear with His intercession. But this seems rather superficial. It is more satisfying to connect it with the resurrection.

There is here an echo of Romans 1:4: "(Jesus was declared (ordained) to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Both the resurrection and the sitting at the right hand of God show the lowly Jesus, the seed of David (Ro. 1:3), again using to the full the divine power and majesty which are His native right, but which he had refrained from using, for the most part, during His humiliation. In this way Paul again stamps Jesus' death as a divine sacrifice and, therefore, as an all-sufficient one. But there is more here. Recall Philippians 2:5-9. First Paul describes the humiliation of Jesus, even to the death on the cross. Then he goes on: "Wherefore God has also highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow....and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). What are we told here? Why, that the

Father saw that the Son in His lowliest Servant's form had successfully obtained an eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:2). Therefore it followed naturally, inevitably that the Father exalted Him.

And He exalted Him not only by raising Him from the dead, but also by enthroning Him (Ps. 2:6). Jesus not only lives to die no more; He lives to reign forever and ever, to reign for the welfare and progress of His Church and to keep me and each of His own safe in His and the Father's hand. He lives to rule, and He rules to save.

It is as we sing:

The Head once crowned with thorns
Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty Victor's brow.

"Who also maketh intercession for us." The intercession which Christ makes for those who are both saints and sinners has a direct connection with the resurrection. He pleads for us before the Father on the basis of the atonement which He made with His death and which is attested as all-sufficient by His resurrection. Therefore His intercession cannot fail, but will succeed in preserving us in faith and in grace, even as He did for Peter, in keeping with His promise, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

Thus we have seen that the resurrection of our Lord indeed has power to fill our hearts with the assurance that ours is the perfect righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ our Lord; that God has declared us and the whole world of sinners righteous; and that daily we are being justified and so are being preserved blameless until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was to give us the certainty of faith that God revealed this teaching to us. He has also entrusted to us the Gospel with its constant, powerful accent on the resurrection of our Lord that we might give to others the blessed assurance: "For Christ's sake all is well between you and your God. Only believe!"

Therefore the resurrection of our Lord must have a prominent position in our preaching and in our faith. "So we preach," said Paul to the Corinthians. In what connection did he say this? We find the words in 1 Corinthians 15. There Paul was dealing with doubts concerning the resurrection of the dead. Some members of the congregation had said that "the dead rise not" (15), that is, that there is no resurrection of the body. Notice how Paul went at the problem. First, he gave a summary of the Christian faith which they had received from him and to which they still held (v.1). It is found in these two verses: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (3,4). But then he added a great deal concerning the many eyewitnesses who had seen the risen Lord; he concluded with himself, who had seen the risen Lord on the road to Damascus (Read 5-8). We see even here that the preaching of the risen Christ was most important to him. It was a basic, central part of the Gospel for him, as it must be for every true ambassador for Christ. But the vital position of Christ's resurrection in Christian preaching is thrown into bold relief as Paul goes on to meet the error in Corinth. He points out what was involved in a denial of the resurrection of the dead. If they believed that error - they did not as yet - then inevitably they would come to the point where they would deny the bodily resurrection of Christ itself (v.13). Once they gave that up, all was lost. Read vv. 14-20.

We see that Paul presents the doctrine of the resurrection as the keystone in the arch of Christian doctrine and faith. In this sense he says: "So we preach," that is: All of us who saw the risen Lord agree in proclaiming the fact of Christ's resurrection and the all-important meaning of it.

"So we preach." When we examine the record of apostolic preaching, we find this same steady, strong emphasis on the resurrection of our Lord. We have such a record in Acts. Let us select a few examples of the Apostles' preaching. In the sermon which Peter preached on Pentecost, he had much to say about the resurrection. "You," he said to the Jews, "with wicked hands have crucified and slain him," but God canceled out your plan to destroy Him, for God raised Him up. This act of God was exactly according to the prophecy

which David made concerning the true Messiah or Savior. Therefore you should know that God, by raising Jesus from the dead and exalting Him, “hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (2:36). So Peter preached. There was power in that preaching - as the 3,000 conversions attest - because Peter let his hearers see Christ in the power of His resurrection. When we study Peter’s sermon after the healing of the life long cripple, we again find the resurrection of Christ given all due stress. Read 3:14-16. So strong was the resurrection note in the Apostles’ preaching that even their bitter enemies caught it. They had Peter and John arrested and clapped into prison because they were “grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (4:2). Peter, in his defense before the Sanhedrin, declared that it was the risen Lord who had healed the lame man (4:10) and then stated the exalted position God had given Jesus by raising Him from the dead (vv.11, 12 - Read). Always the preaching of Peter presented the crucified and risen Lord. It was so, not only when he preached to fellow Jews, but also when he proclaimed Christ to Gentiles. Listen to this section of the sermon he preached in the house of Cornelius. Read Acts 10:30-43. Not long after Saul had seen the risen Lord and had been converted, he “preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:20,22). Can we imagine that this preaching did not give the resurrection its proper place?

When we hear Paul preach at Antioch, we find him striking exactly the same contrast as we noted in Peter’s preaching. Read Acts 13:27-30. In the same sermon he makes everything depend on the resurrection of Christ, vv. 32,33. And again in verses 38 and 39.

Though Paul started far afield in his sermon at Athens, in order to establish a contact-point with his audience, yet he did proclaim the risen Lord: “he (God) hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” That means: God makes salvation utterly dependent on Jesus, as He attested when He raised Jesus from the dead. (17:31) Note, too, that Luke in his comment in verse 18 sums up Paul’s preaching in this significant way: “he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.”

We could multiply these instances many times over by citing from the Epistles, but we refrain. Instead, we sum up: The resurrection consistently received a heavy emphasis in apostolic preaching. And the primary emphasis is this: With the resurrection God put His seal of approval on Christ’s work of redemption. It is the great sign of the Prophet Jonah. “For as Jonas was three days and three night in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” It the sign of salvation to sinners, telling them: All has been done for you by your Substitute Jesus, and nothing remains to be done by you, who could do nothing. Then look to the risen Son of man, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth!

Can there be any doubt among us that our preaching must have this emphasis? If it does not, then our Gospel will lack something for the people under our care. Then some of the comfort, the assurance of faith, and the needed strength for the struggle of faith is not being channeled to them from the Gospel, though God has provided a full reservoir of this water for the thirsting soul. Likewise, through a failure to give Christ’s resurrection its rightful place in our preaching we would take from the Gospel some of its power to convict and win those still far from the household of God. In a word, we would weaken our missionary thrust.

Pastors are aware that they may have neglected to preach the resurrection as often and as intensively as they should without any intent to do so. They know that the Standard Gospels and Epistles for the Easter season do not encourage intensive resurrection preaching. Take the Gospels for instance. Those for Easter and the First Sunday after Easter are the only ones dealing directly with the resurrection. But if we realize this, then let us not tie ourselves to the Standard Gospels, but use other series as well. The Eisenach and Thomasius Gospels, for instance, contain more texts on the resurrection of our Lord. Or set up your own series of rich Epistle texts for the post-Easter season.

Let us also check on ourselves to see whether we are giving the resurrection of Christ its due during Lent. Let us not preach the Passion of our Lord in such a way as to give the impression that the Lord Jesus had not yet risen from Joseph’s tomb. I have some evidence that this is being done by some. (Relate the criticism raised by one critic of *Meditations*.) Such an attempt at repristination, such an attempt to turn the clock back many centuries and indulge in make-believe is not only artificial and unconvincing-it can create a picture of

Christ in His sufferings which is not true to Scriptures. Consider Jesus' own forecast of His sufferings in Matthew 16:21: "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day." Jesus foretold not only the extent and the intensity of His sufferings, but also the certainty of His victory in His Passion. Let that note of resurrection victory ring through in our Lenten preaching.

Again, let us make it a point to close on the triumphant note of Christ's resurrection, whenever we present the plan of salvation. Let it strike this note: "God has made assurance doubly sure for us by raising Jesus from the dead. By this tremendous act God has spoken his Yea and Amen to the Son's cry from the cross: It is finished."

This doctrine of Christ's resurrection is to hold a prominent place in our faith. "And so ye believed." So Paul told the Corinthians. He expected to hear no contradiction, and it is very likely that he did not. The Corinthians knew that the resurrection of their Lord was a basic and vital feature of saving faith.

Surely, the statement can be made to you: "And so you believed." For that reason, we trust you have followed this exposition with great interest. You always realized that the doctrine of Christ's resurrection has a strong bearing on your faith. But like all humble Christians you ask: Have I given it the importance that it deserves? Have I let God keep it before me, through my minister and through the Bible as I read it? Or have I been careless and casual about this mighty event? As a result, have I at times been in spiritual turmoil instead of enjoying true peace?

That the doctrine may appear in its true importance to us, and that we may be admonished not to hinder God in giving it a more prominent place in our faith, let us hear two Scriptural statements. Both of these show the vital place which the resurrection of Christ is to have in our faith.

The first one you have already heard, Romans 4:23-25, but let us hear it again. (Read)

The second, Romans 10:8-9 brings us this striking of the saving faith: "The word is nigh thee even in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Then let us ask God to give us grace to place all our trust in the crucified and risen Lord. Let us ask Him to let us see Christ in the power of His resurrection, its power to give us assurance and certainty that for Christ's sake we are God's righteous children who will finally "attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:11) and receive the glory God has in store for us. Therefore may these words be the record of our life until our dying breath: "And so ye believed" - believed the Gospel of Him "who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification."