

“Now Is Christ Risen From the Dead”

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:19, 20). In the Apostle's explanation of the resurrection of Jesus and the many benefits we enjoy because of this glorious event, he lingers briefly on the consequences of the event not happening. Of all the people alive, we would be among those who would be considered *"most miserable."* The good news is that he lingered only shortly before giving us the timely conjunction followed with the reprise, *"But now is Christ risen from the dead...!"*

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, everything changes! Now that Christ is risen from the dead that means,

I. We have victory over mood-swings and encounters with those who have them.

Have you ever been with someone when the chemistry between the two of you was electrifying, everything was funny and you genuinely enjoyed their company? Then the next time you see them, they are on edge and the overall temperature of the encounter is tense and foreboding. You are hesitant to say anything, lest you be misconstrued and taken out of context.

Sometimes we can be the victim; other times we are the one victimizing. Emotions are a funny thing. Sometimes they are clinical, but for the average person they are induced by the environment. If enough stuff categorized as *"bad"* comes into our day, we have a tendency to implode, hurting only ourselves or explode, hurting others. Sometimes all that person has to do is be in the same room with us.

Because Christ has risen from the dead, we can go on! A brighter day is coming no matter what, *"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"* (Proverbs 4:18). The promise from God is that our days will grow brighter and brighter. Today I received a phone call from Dr. Albert Garner, a man that was my dad's peer. He and his wife were married in a double ceremony with my mom and dad. He has written fifty-one books while leading out in Christian education as the founder and president of Florida Baptist Institute and Seminary. It was exciting to hear that at his ripe old age, he still has bright and shining plans for his future. That is the way it is supposed to be. Jesus said, *"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"* (John 11:26). Don't die before your time! Say with Paul, *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"* (Philippians 4:11).

When tempted to *"rain on someone else's parade,"* remember Christ is risen from the dead, so let us not steal someone else's joy. Don't let what you are feeling rub off on them; let the resurrected life of Jesus reign through you.

II. We have victory over the mediocrity.

Sometimes it is not the volatile emotions that erupt that get us down, but the settling for a *"settled for"* existence. *"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body"* (II Corinthians 4:10). Knowing that we are crucified with Christ as Christians (Galatians 2:20), we also have this assurance that the resurrected life of Jesus is also working in and through us. The Scriptures have given us this confidence, *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings..."* (Philippians 3:10). Walking in the fellowship of our Lord's suffering means that we are simultaneously walking in the power of His resurrection.

On Sunday evenings we shall continue our verse-by-verse study of the book of Philippians. A couple of weeks ago, I encouraged our members to greet one another with *"grace and peace"* instead of the usual, *"What's up?"* or *"How are you doing?"* As we might vary our greetings, could we not just as well inquire upon meeting one another, *"Are you in Christ?"* or *"Do you know Him?"* A jubilant reply would be a good hearty, *"Yes, and walking in the power of His resurrection!"* Walking on resurrection ground removes all room for mediocrity. It eliminates boredom, activates faith, energizes hope and floods our

environment with charity.

III. We have victory through the passages of life.

The seasons remind us that we, too, are entering and passing on a continual basis through the seasons of life. Recently my brother came down from Oklahoma and in our talks I caught us reminiscing over our past, discussing health issues, and overall talking like a couple of middle-aged “dudes.” When did this happen? Aging just happens. All you have to do is not die, and the alternative comes automatically. I have to admit, it is not nearly as bad as I thought it would be when my generation was encouraging us not to trust people over thirty. Over thirty? Wow! Thirty looks so young now. Thirty is not bad, forty is good, fifty is better and now I am beginning to understand why they call the last years the “golden years.” There are some things that must age to be fully appreciated. I am convinced that aging must take place before life can come into full appreciation. When Lord Byron wrote about his life entering into the “yellow leaf,” likening his existence to fall, you must understand that he died very young and never learned the appreciation for all of life. As you become older you may prefer to call the season of fall by the other word, autumn. It becomes not the ending but a passing through a stage experience. Spring reminds us that the dead shall live again, whether it would be a tree, flower, plant or human being. The wise old Solomon realized this when he, by inspiration, wrote, *“For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away”* (Song of Solomon 2:11-13).

I find old clichés such as “See you later, here, there, or in the air” being so much more real than a mere clever way of saying good-bye; it is reality! Because our Lord rose up from the grave we have the promise that we cannot and will not by His grace and goodness stay in the ground. *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him”* (I Thessalonians 4:13,14). God’s happy people make it through the passages of life much better than the unbeliever. Even the final phase is the most exciting! Morbidity must go when eternal spring is just around the corner!

- Pastor Pope -

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