



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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The Resurrection

“If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). I had to think what a tremendous important event took place in the resurrection experience. I thought this morning to speak about the resurrection as a vitalizing of faith and hope. When Jesus was crucified, the disciples beheld all that happened. Those things happened so fast that they almost forgot about the things

that He had said, and that it was necessary that He would go this way, and that He would rise again. A few times in His ministry Jesus talked to His disciples and said what would happen. “The day will come when the Son of man must be taken, and He will suffer and die and be crucified, but I will rise again.” Always at the end of speaking of the fact of His suffering was the fact that He would rise again.

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It is true that when these things happened it was such a new thing that the disciples somehow were stunned a bit. I suppose maybe if we were there, we would have been a little like they were. However, we have heard these things for many years of our life. Most of us have been taken to Sunday School and the rest of us have been mainly taken to Sunday school or to church and we have heard the facts of the resurrection. They become a

known truth that we speak about. I, again, want to help us to look at the facts and see what this should mean, and what it will do for us when it grips us fully. We are thinking about the fact that Christ arose. In that fact, He has made possible the power that should touch and transform our lives as well by the power of the resurrection from Jesus Christ from the dead.

Paul says in the Philippian letter that he desired that he might

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be able to somehow show the experience of His suffering and to know “the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). Paul was convinced that the life that he now lives was “by the faith of the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20). It calls for our faith. We see the need for the exercising of faith in the healing of the lame man in the book of Acts. It was necessary that he had faith. It was necessary that there was a faith expressed on the part of Peter, when he reached out his hand and took him by the hand and said, “Arise” (Acts 9:34). Faith was needed on both sides. Peter, John and the apostle Paul (all of them) realized that not only is it calling for individuals.

The problem we have today, in seeing the expression of faith in many of what is called the charismatic movement and the healing campaigns is the fact that they say finally, “Well, if you are not saved it is a lack of your faith.” They never say too much about whether there is any faith lacking on the part of the professed healer. Paul said “I desire to know . . . the power of his resurrection.”

The apostle Peter also, in his epistle written to the Church says “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which

according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Peter recognized again afresh that it was the experience that transpired before his eyes that he beheld when he was in the midst of it was a vitalizing experience. It was something that spurred in him a measure of dynamic power. *That experience caused him to search the Scriptures those days they were together until the Holy Spirit came upon them in a measure greater than before.* I believe they studied the Scriptures like in no other time. They began to piece the things together and remember all the things that the prophets had spoken about Him that should come to pass, and has happened before their eyes.

John wrote about these, “things which must shortly come to pass” (Revelation 1:1). It is good for us to be somewhat involved and realize what God is doing. Therefore, the fact of the resurrection should add a spark, be a revitalizing, and should put something of a dynamic force into our faith, and into the hope that we have that is for us far beyond this life — that which lies in the eternal.

In John 14 Jesus was talking about His going away. He was

going to “prepare a place” (verse 3), a “mansion” (verse 2) and He must go away. He will come again and where He is we can be also. Those are beautiful thoughts — thoughts that we ought to cling to. There are mansions because Jesus said so. We believe it. We cannot explain it all, but we believe. It should be a revitalizing of our faith. In that same chapter in verse 19 Jesus said, “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.” That is the glorious experience.

The world will lose sight. The world today around us is keeping a time of great festivities perhaps and they are taking up in their commercial interests and in the social expressions and all that goes with the “Easter” season. That ought to be a very fickle thing with us, should it not? In the depths of all of this, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the thing that revitalizes and brings vitality to our faith, to our living, and to the purpose to which we live and hope that we can “attain” [Philippians 3:11].

The book of Acts began with the thought of these things “that Jesus began both to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). It goes on to what was happening after the Lord was taken up. Jesus had begun.

We are inspired by the fact that Jesus rose again. The resurrection opens up unto us something that the world does not experience. We would not expect them to, but to us who are of the power of God of whom Jesus said, “the world seeth me no more; but ye see me.” “They will soon forget all about me, but ye shall see me.” We are called upon to keep our eyes glued and fixed on Jesus as the One who has gone through death for us and “become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Through Him, we too, might be able to rise unto the resurrection of life and we shall receive eternal life. Jesus said, “because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19).

Luke 24 is largely the experience of the day of the resurrection. We see a little bit of something portrayed in the Record that is kept for us of how they struggled with their thoughts and with their imaginations, with their discernment and maybe some preconceived ideas. They needed to work them through because they saw things that they could not explain.

In the early hours of the day following the Jewish feasts and preparation, we see a few women going to the sepulchre because they had observed where Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus

[John 19:39], had “begged the body of Jesus” (Luke 23:52) to put in his tomb.

Scholars of today and theologians are coming up with some new light on what happened the week when Jesus was crucified. They propound a lot of questions of why and how that a consistent Jewish man would have given room to have Jesus put in his new tomb, and so on. Nevertheless, the answer is simple to those who believe because we believe that God superintended over all of it. God could make the men’s hearts respond according to the need of the hour.

They borrowed a tomb, an empty room, and they borrowed a lot of things in His death, but the cross was His own. Jesus took and bore it, but the grave could not contain Him. Praise God that He has risen. He arose because death had no power over Him. He was not a sinner and a transgressor, and subject unto death as was Adam and all the descendants of Adam on down till today. We are subject to death because of sin. Jesus was the triumphant one and “knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore, the things that were used in that day were not permanent. He did not need them permanently but only to fulfill.

When they discovered that He

had given His life and life had gone out of the body, there was a dead form on that cross. They marvelled that He was already dead. That was again another fact that Jesus had power. God was at work. Men were not. Men can only bring forth death, but Christ and God are able to bring forth life.

The power of life is with God and Jesus had that in His hands. The early morning little band of followers (some of whom were not far from the cross during the last hours of Jesus’ earthly life before He gave His life) saw the sufferings, and they were quite taken with all that was allowed. We wonder too that it was necessary and that all that suffering needed to be. You know, the suffering was for us. Jesus was willing to go that route of the fleshly body and suffer in the flesh to help us to realize that if suffering comes our way we can reach out, by faith, to a source that is greater than that power that was present there in the attempts of men to put Him to death.

We can overcome those kind of adversaries and afflictions that men endeavour to bring by the power of our faith in our God. We are encouraged again to know that Jesus is risen. When they came to the tomb they wondered who would roll away the

stone [Mark 16:3]. However, when they got there the stone was rolled away. It was an empty tomb.

There were two things especially to note that goes along with this story of these individuals. When Peter and John came running to the tomb and saw an empty tomb, one of the things that they were commanded to do was “Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:6). See the empty tomb. What else? “Go . . . and tell” (Matthew 28:7). Go and make it known that He is arisen, and remember having said to you He will arise the third day and meet you in Galilee. Go meet Him.

The Scripture says, “Come and see. Get a glimpse. Realize it is an empty tomb.” The tomb could not contain Him. Even the great watch of the security that these professing people of God (and adversaries of Jesus) remembered that when He was alive He said that He would arise again [Matthew 27:63]. Somehow they marked that a little bit sharper than the followers of Jesus. Sometimes individuals who like to counteract and are ready to argue know some things about the Scriptures a bit better than we do. However, they remember for the wrong purpose.

They said “Sir, we remember

that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. (64) Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first” (Matthew 27:63, 64). They had crucified Him. They thought that they now had Him — this ‘troublemaker’ out of the way. They wanted to be sure now to seal that tomb. They set a seal on that tomb. They set watchmen there. We know what happened. When the angel descended from glory and rolled back the stone and sat upon it, what happened? These watchmen “became as dead men” (Matthew 28:4), in the presence and the power of God. Therefore, they knew that he had arisen. They said to these men who were there and supposed to be watchmen and guardsmen, “Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept” (Matthew 28:13). “And if this gets you into trouble we will secure you.” They were ready to stake their lives against the very truth and the facts to simply try to cover up, rather than to accept the fact that they had no power in this hour.

We see the power of God

working. Men were helpless. There was nothing they could do. When the program of God came to a point and a time, the third day He arose and nothing could stop it because God was there.

Today we are challenged to simply believe the Word, are we not? How often do we falter around the Word when we think of circumstances, face oppositions, and a number of adversities that maybe are spoken of against Christianity. Does our faith continue to stand strong in the Lord? Do we remember what the Lord has said so that we can still go on believing.

In Luke 24:11 we read, “And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.” Even with all these striking facts and evidences, as they told the story, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and other women who were with them told these things unto the apostles and “they believed them not.” After all of this, when Jesus met the disciples for the first occasion, Thomas was not there and he said, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25).

That is only a testimony of our faith maybe and how much we

falter, and how much we feel that “If only we could have been there. Then we could believe.” “If I could have been there to behold that and all that happened, I could believe.” These were men who had travelled with Jesus and saw the miracles He did, and knew the power that He had. Yet, they could not conceive the fact that Jesus could lay down His life and take it up again. These tales seemed like “idle tales,” and they could not believe it. It was too much.

Then as we go through this chapter, we discover to verse 13, we behold two disciples. We do not know who they were. After they came back they found the eleven disciples together and told them about what had happened. Thus, it was probably not any of the named eleven apostles, but they were disciples at least. These two went toward “a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. (14) And they talked together of all these things which had happened” (Luke 24:13, 14). It was a good subject to talk about. It was good to talk it over. It was good to see two brethren walking together pondering over truth, and facts that had some relation to their experience. *We get our encouragement at times in talking things over with*

brethren.

They were talking these things over maybe in somewhat of bewilderment and misunderstanding. These things were so new, so hard to grasp, and hard to conceive that the One who had manifested such power was crucified. They saw men take Him, not fully realizing that He was giving Himself and that it was not the power of men. Jesus said on one occasion "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11). Peter used his sword and cut the ear off the servant of the high priest. Jesus having healed it said, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me" (Matthew 26:55)? "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53)? "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53), but, "I lay down my life" (John 10:15).

In the resurrection we see Jesus taking up that life again. These were things that they pondered "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. (16) But their eyes were holden that they should not know him" (Luke

24:15, 16). As they were talking Jesus might have been asking, "What is this thing that you are talking about that seems to be so sorrowful, sad, and heavy of heart?" One of them said, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" Great things had taken place those couple of days before. They said, "Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: (20) And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. (21) But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day . . ." (verses 19–21). "And now we have some more strange things come to our ears." "And certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; (23) And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive" (verses 22, 23). Jesus asked the questions to His disciples, "Why seek ye the living among the dead" (Luke 24:5)? "He is arisen He is alive as he said."

I want us to again recapture, or be stimulated in our faith that we

follow one who is a living Lord and not one who is dead. *We follow One who is just as alive today as ever, and more powerful than ever.* He is now seated at the right hand of God. As a result of the resurrection we have an intercessor. He is alive and interested in us.

We have trust. They had been building faith around this particular individual. He was a great prophet. He was mighty in deeds, in works that He did and the Word that He spoke. Even the elements of the universe responded to Him when He rebuked the waves, and oh so many things, and He had power. He had done so many things in the days of His ministry. Nevertheless, those rulers, the chief priests, had condemned Him to death and crucified Him. They understood the crucifixion but not the resurrection.

In verse 25 it speaks about the Master who was withholden from them and who talked to them. From this time onward he began from Moses and the prophets to expound unto them all the Scriptures. Before that He rebuked them by saying, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." God has shown us a path of His footprints, some of His faith, sufferings, and movings through

the ages. The record has been kept by the Holy Spirit for us. The words of the mouth of the prophets when they spoke of the things of the Lord are kept for our learning.

Let us not be afraid to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Finally, this whole picture comes together. We put the puzzle together, as we would say and we see the full picture. Today we are this side of Calvary and we say, "Well, we do not disbelieve." Is our faith still as vital and rich? Do we glory in the fact that we have a risen Lord and we have One whom we are called to serve that has the power of God to be with us to do the things that He said He would do when we go out and face the world?

I suppose it was with them a little like it is with us today. We think, "If God is so powerful, and we go out to witness and testify we could mention only a little and they cannot lay hands on anyone because we are serving a risen Lord." However, we find throughout history individuals who were servants of the Lord since the resurrection of Christ in the New Testament era — men whose lives were taken by wicked men and they lost their physical life. Then, we are confused sometimes and think, "If we have all this kind of power,

we should be able to rebuke these kind of powers that are before us and God will deliver us without any sufferings, or controversies, and we simply march through.” That is the result of the disciples thinking in their day. They failed to fully understand all that was said.

Today, the Scriptures say we are not promised a bed of ease, and we are not promised even to be spared of our physical life. However, we are promised power to overcome the enemy of our soul and we can live eternally. Finally it does not stop at the end of physical life, if our faith is strong and revitalized the fact is that our faith must move us beyond the experience in the physical flesh to lay hold on the victory we have in Christ in the eternal ages — in the eternity to come.

Today, we take up our discipleship following Him who was crucified. Though Jesus could have, in His day subdued all those enemies, it was necessary to redeem us. We do not know why it is necessary for some today who witness for the Lord, like the apostle Paul who was put in prison and the apostles who died and were martyred for their service and faith expressions and labours in behalf of the kingdom. We cannot answer all of those

things. But we are called upon to keep our eye fixed on the One who overcame so that we can overcome with Him.

As He came forth the firstfruits of the resurrection we can follow. We too shall be able to live eternally with Him. May our hearts not be slow to believe but to develop a faith that is anchored in the work and the Word of the Lord Jesus.

The facts of Christ’s resurrection is a central truth and foundation of the Christian faith. It is important that we believe with an unquestioning confidence in it. We have statements from the apostle Paul’s expressions in 1 Corinthians 15 — the resurrection chapter. Paul endeavoured to help us understand the experience of the resurrection as it is. Jesus made it possible. The resurrection is a central and a foundational truth by which the Christian faith is founded, and for which we live as we follow the Master. We need to embrace it without questioning and without a loss, but rather with confidence.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (20) But now is Christ risen from the

dead, and become the firstfruits” (verses 19, 20). It is a centrality of the course and the foundation for the Christian Church, to the New Testament time as long as time shall last. Verse 23 says, “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” This outworking and the manifestation will follow through when we have that.

Jesus’ resurrection was necessary for us for the fulfilment of Scriptures. Luke 24:44 says, “all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” Jesus told this to those two men on the way to Emmaus. It is necessary to believe the word of the prophets and those who prophesied. Over and over again in Jesus ministry He did this because of what was spoken by the prophets, so that they may be able to put it together. Everything needed to happen that the prophets spoke of. They did not speak something that was contrary or out of place, or that Jesus needed to somehow fit in to fulfill. It happened according to the prophets. We are reminded of in the accounts, as Jesus lived His life on earth, that these were the things that were the fulfilment of the words of the

prophets.

The resurrection finally brings us to the facts that these things were fulfilled. There are other things yet, of course, that the prophets have written in the Scriptures, even of those things which “shall be hereafter” (Revelation 1:19). Much had been centred around the resurrection — the things that the prophets spoke because it was the fulfilment of man’s redemption when the plan of salvation was made complete and the perfect sacrifice was made. Now that redeemed body of believers who follow Him will someday be taken out of this world to live with Him in glory. That is the end results of the great work of God and the fulfilment of the great plan.

God’s whole plan was laid out in the Old Testament Scriptures all the way through. We see God’s great interest in man’s need and fulfilling that need by providing salvation, bringing it to completion, and not stopping here with being able to have seen Him live on earth. The fulfilment of this all will go beyond into the greater experiences of the fulfilment in the eternal ages to come. Our faith must go beyond simply our belief and experience in the present. What the resurrection symbolizes shall finally be our

portion when we go beyond the experience here on earth dealing with sin.

The resurrection is necessary for the forgiveness of sin. “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins,” Paul says. Finally, the resurrection was not only that He gave His blood and was called the perfect “Lamb of God” (John 1:29), to be able to die and to have His blood shed for the remission of the transgressor. If that would be the end what would be the reality of the hope beyond that? “Nothing,” Paul says, “you would still be in your sins.” You would still be guilty before God. Today, we can experience redemption and be delivered by the power of God over sins that are our plague continually. Finally, one day we can be with that number that shall be taken out and be in the presence of the Holy One where Jesus is today.

The facts of the resurrection make the way to be justified before God. Paul says in Romans 4:24, 25 “But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; (25) Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Jesus stands in the presence of the One who was just. He became the

“justifier,” for us in the presence of God. He satisfied the just demands of that. Therefore, today He is there interceding for us. It is a hope — our offenses have been removed and we stand justified in the presence of God.

The resurrection experience and truths are necessary so that we can have a blessed hope. In 1 Corinthians 15:19–23 we have these words, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (20) But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. (21) For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (23) But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” This shows to us that sin came through man into the world. We have experienced the results of a fallen nature that came passed down to us from the first man Adam. Jesus Christ came into the world in the form of human flesh and lived among men. By man came the sinless Man who could provide redemption and salvation. Now He has given Himself so that we can be free.

We can experience eternal life through Him by the One who

was Victor — not the one who was defeated but we follow the One who was Victor. He proved His power because He did not merely disappear. He did not become made into earth and His body decayed. Rather, He took up that body and came forth in a new body. He came forth in the power of God and manifested His power over all nature, all flesh, and all powers that are known to man. Jesus has proven and shown to us that nothing can withhold Him.

The resurrection gives power and effectiveness to preaching. It is the power of Christ. “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14). If there was no reality. There is a lot of religion that is bound around a dead person. The Christian religion is the only religion that has that living Lord as the central and powerful one. All the rest are dead men. Today, let us be sure. We have a message — a living message to dying men that they can be redeemed. They can experience the redeeming power.

It brings power and effectiveness for faith. “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain” (1 Corinthians 15:17). We put our trust in the living, unlimited power of God. By the acts of that

which has taken place before, gives reason why we can continue to exercise faith in that which He has spoken and shall come to pass in the future. We see all things of earth and men’s devices and even the devil’s power that was set against, and hoped to demonstrate and hold Him. It all gave way to the power of God when He was resurrected. The grave could not contain Him. Death had no power to hold Him.

The resurrection gives proof of His being the Son of God. The resurrection gives proof that He was the Son of God according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead. This verse we have in Romans 1:3–5. The apostle Paul says, “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; (4) And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: (5) By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.” Finally, there is nothing else that is able to stand alongside of that as credentials for the reason of our faith and our discipleship to follow the Lord Jesus. Paul spoke of the Son of God who arose from the dead by the power of God. It gives us the creden-

tials and effectiveness to give this message, and to go forth to the world.

The effectiveness of His resurrection it broke the bars of death. Really the effect of it was that delivers man from the very captivity of death. Many today fear death because they have no hope beyond the grave. They fear the fact of death because they face the unknown with a guilt on their conscience. Brethren and sisters we can go freely claiming the powers of God and the resurrection of His power working in us and making us new creatures in Christ. If that reality is true and our spirit witnesses with His Spirit “that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16), we can go forth with confidence. It is a revitalizing to our faith and our hope.

The resurrection makes it possible for the future accesses with God and to believe in the resurrection of Christ is part of our confession of faith. Paul said in Romans 10:9, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead. . .” We may pass over that rather readily at times but that verse is one that we work with when we tell men what is necessary to obtain salvation. They need to confess the Lord

Jesus with their mouth and believe in their heart. One of the parts of that belief is that God raised Him from the dead, because that puts the power in it. It puts a dynamic in it because it is a power that cannot be contained. It should enthuse us a little bit. It should get us a little bit excited about our faith. It is that which finally is part of what we profess — that we are following a living Lord and we are not merely following a form. We are following one who is alive.

His resurrection to the children of God means that we have a living advocate with the Father today. The results and the effects finally give us opportunity. We have one by the throne of God today making intercession — an advocate. Jesus Christ the righteous is my advocate today to help me in my Christian experience. It is He to whom I can come daily, and need to come daily, and keep the records clear between me and my Lord. He is there seated today at the right hand of God for me and for you if you are a child of God.

The resurrection fact means a new body for eternity. This is one of the glorious things that follows. Finally, this old body finally wears out and we have no more use for it. We look for the time when we can receive a new

body and we will have a body like unto His glorious body. We could take time to read in the 1 Corinthians 15 all about the various bodies that are for their purpose in their special sphere and effectiveness. It will be raised a spiritual body. That is what we are talking about. Again, as our faith stands, it does not stop at the grave. We look for a new body and we look for a new heaven and a new earth — raised up with a new body.

The resurrection means that we are brought to stand before

the great Judge of all the earth and justified, uncondemned. There will be a resurrection of all men. Another fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that is that the righteous shall come forth and be able to stand before God justified in the provision that God made in Christ. There will be also a resurrection of the unjust who will also come forth. The resurrection message finally tells us of a future coming event. We ought to prepare to meet our God.

Scripture References

Matthew	24:44		63	15:14	65
26:53	60	John		15:17	53, 62, 65
26:55	60	1:29	64	15:19, 20	62
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24:25	61	1 Corinthians		1:1	55
				1:19	63

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” (John 11:25)

From the Previous Issue:

Nonresistance: Civilian Experiences in World War I

From a topic by Kenneth S. Auker

Saturday, September 09, 1995

Centerville Mennonite Church

Nonresistance: Peacetime Nonresistance

From a message by Larry R. Weaver

Saturday, September 09, 1995

Centerville Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 40.

Restrictions. — Non-Resistance.

This doctrine is founded upon the Christian principle of love. The love which prompted our heavenly Father to give His only begotten Son; which prompted this Son to submit to the suffering on the cross (though He might have had the assistance of more than twelve legions of angels from heaven); which fills men's hearts with a desire for the well-being of all men, be they friend or foe; should dwell in the hearts of all Christ's followers. The fruits of this love, as applied to outward life, we call non-resistance.

I. Christ the Prince of Peace. — Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:14.

II. Lessons drawn from wars recorded in the Old Testament.

1. The mightiest victories were those where the enemy was overcome by the power of God without the assistance of a single sword.

2. These wars were a series of object lessons to show the results of obedience and disobedience.

III. The chance which came with the ushering in of the Christian era. — Luke 2:14; Matthew 5:38-45; 6:15; 26:51, 52.

IV. Christ's teaching on peace. — Matthew 5:38-45; 6:15; 26:51, 52;

John 18:36.

V. Apostles' teaching on peace. — Romans 12:17–21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 2:20–24; Hebrews 10:30; James 4:1, 2.

VI. A few points of difference between the spirit of war and the Bible.

THE BIBLE.

1. Love your enemies.
2. If thine enemy hunger, feed him.
3. Resist not evil.
4. Thou shalt not kill.
5. I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

THE SPIRIT OF WAR.

1. Kill your enemies.
2. To give comfort to the enemy is treason.
3. Do not allow yourself to be imposed upon.
4. A glorious victory! Thousands of the enemy killed or wounded!
5. Wicked killed on battlefield without chance for repentance.

VII. Nonresistance as applied —

1. To the home. — Colossians 3:18–24; Proverbs 17:1.
2. To the church. — 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:13.
3. To business circles. — Matthew 5:40; Romans 12:17–19; 1 Corinthians 6:1–8; Hebrews 12:14; Proverbs 16:7.

NOTE. Lawsuits should be avoided, because —

- (1) They are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.
- (2) They are unnecessary.
- (3) They always produce bad feelings.
- (4) As a rule both sides are losers.

VIII. Why oppose war.

1. It is unScriptural.
2. It is barbarous.
3. It fosters crime.
4. Militarism cultivates a spirit of savagery.
5. It substitutes brute force for justice.
6. It wastes upon battlefields, or in camps and hospitals, the flower of manhood.

7. Its results are never commensurate with the enormous waste of money, life, or happiness.

1. When a man espouses the doctrine of nonresistance, but manifests a quarrelsome disposition, which should we believe, his profession or his life?

2. Is the man who springs the hangman's trap responsible for the taking of human life?

3. How may the saying, "In time of peace, prepare for war," be utilized to best advantage?

4. What is the effect, upon our modern civilization, of the present armament of the great nations?

5. Discuss arbitration.

LESSON 41.

Restrictions. — Swearing of Oaths; Secret Societies.

I. Swearing of oaths.

1. What Christ says about swearing. — Matthew 5:33–37.

2. James' admonition. — James 5:12.

3. How this command may be violated.

a. By the use of profane language.

b. By the use of "by-words" or "wooden oaths."

c. By swearing before the magistracy.

NOTE. — Enumerate all the reasons you ever heard why Christians should be permitted to swear to their testimony before courts. Then show by these reasons that when Christ said, "Swear not at all," that He meant something else.

II. Secrecy.

1. Christ's testimony concerning Himself. — John 18:20.

NOTE. — What member of a secret organization can give alike testimony?

2. Motives for secrecy. — John 3:19.

3. Paul's advice. — 2 Corinthians 6:14–17; Ephesians 5:11, 12.

4. The Christian's proper attitude. — Matthew 5:14–16; Mark 4:21, 22; Luke 8:16, 17.

NOTE. — The Christian's life should be as an open book, open to

public inspection. It is equally as unnatural to cover up our good deeds as it is to give publicity to our disgraceful deeds. Whatever is good should be brought to the light. That which will not bear the light should be condemned by Christian people.

5. Why oppose secret societies?
 - a. There is no necessity in hiding a laudable enterprise under the cloak of secrecy.
 - b. They are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.
 - c. Christians should not allow themselves to be bound away from church and family in any oathbound organization.
 - d. Lodge membership destroys liberty of conscience and liberty of speech.
 - e. They constitute an unequal yoke between believers and unbelievers.
 - f. Many secret orders teach false ideas of religion.
 - g. The charity which they teach and practice is founded upon the wrong basis.
 - h. All the good that is found in these orders is found in any well-regulated church.
 - i. Secret societies sap the life out of churches.

1. Distinguish between an oath and an affirmation. Show the difference in the wording.
2. Will a Christian feel more disposed to tell the truth under oath than in a simple affirmation?
3. Discuss the effect of secret societies upon the home; upon the church; upon the nation.
4. When it costs an institution three dollars to spend one dollar charitably, can it be said to be a charitable institution?
5. Show that the so-called charity of secret organizations discriminates against those who are in most need of charity.

Children's Book Reprint *continued* **The Little Woodchopper**

“Tell me a little more about your father, my boy.”

William told in his child-like and truehearted manner all that

had happened in the last months and weeks before his father's death. He did not neglect to tell what his father had said about his

young years, what a naughty boy he had been, and how he had run away from his God-fearing mother, a widow. He told further with clearness — for it had made a deep impression on him — how thoroughly his father repented of the sins of his youth, and how he had longed to see his mother once more before his death, and to ask her forgiveness, and how he had become so happy through faith in the Lord Jesus, and had, in peace, gone home to be with Him.

“In peace let me resign my breath,
And Thy salvation see;
My sins deserved eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.”

While William spoke, the eyes of the old lady opened more and more, and bending over him, she listened to the tale of the little one. When he had finished, she began to tremble violently, so she sat down on the edge of the bed to keep from falling. Was it possible that William’s father ... ?

Ah, she feared to finish the thought. Her son, too, had left her many years ago, in disobedience and stubbornness, and she never had heard a word; only the heavy sobs, rising from time to time, gave evidence of her

inward feelings. William noticed the terrible excitement of the old lady, but did not know what to think of it. At last she asked with trembling voice:

“What was your father’s name?”

“Robert H.,” replied the boy.

“Gracious God,” she cried lifting her eyes heavenward and folding her hands tightly together, “is it possible? O, how wonderful! Thy Ways are past finding out! Robert H. was my son, my only son! And he died as you have said? O, then, my prayers are answered. God be praised! My son has not died in his sins, but come to himself and returned, like the lost son to the father’s house.”

“And when he came to himself, he said. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned ... And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” Luke 15:17-20.

The old lady stopped a moment. The surprise was too great, the excitement too much. William was sitting on the bed and stared speechless at her. She continued again after a while:

“And you are the son of Robert H., my boy? Then you are my

grandchild and I am your grandmother! Has the Lord sent you, poor child, to me to find a home and that I might have comfort and help in my old days? O Lord, how great is Thy kindness. Thy name be praised forever!

After saying this she took William in her arms and kissed him tenderly. The dear boy did not know what was happening to him. He had experienced so many things, and now, so late at night, this unexpected meeting with his grandmother! He could not comprehend it and could find no words to express his feelings. When he recovered at last from his amazement, he said:

“This is a wonderful day; how good it was my brothers took me into the forest. Otherwise I would not have come here, nor ever found my grandmother. O, how good! I thought I had no friend on the earth except Caesar, and now God has led me here!”

Both shed tears of joy together. After the first excitement was over, nature made her demands, and our happy little friend’s eyes began to close, and the next minute he was sound asleep. His grandmother did not think of sleeping for a good while; her heart was full of joy and thanksgiving, and all traces of fatigue were gone. She sat down at the table and put her horn eye-glass-

es on and read in a low and trembling voice the Psalm 103. Yes, the Lord had done great things for her and had satisfied her with good things in her old age. Again and again she would say in a low voice:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” Psalm 103:1.

Then she knelt down to thank and praise the God of all grace for His boundless goodness. O, her son, who had once caused her so much sorrow and grief, but for whom the mother’s heart had reserved the same love, had gone home with faith in his Redeemer, had gone where she would soon see him again, and, also, the Lord had sent this dear grandchild to her in such a wonderful way.

“How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out.” Romans 11:33.

She would spend her days in: loneliness no more; young strength and energy would now take the burdens of labor from her, which had already become too heavy for her shoulders. Bright pictures of a happy future arose before her mind, and she marvelled at the kindness and mercy of God. Only one circumstance put a taste of bitterness into her cup of joy, and that was the thought of William’s older brothers. But her faith could

trust the grace of God concerning them too; that grace was sufficient even for these wicked and strayed young men.

The morning began to dawn before the happy old lady sought her resting place to get a few hours' sleep, and the sunbeams had long been shining into the room when the two sleepers awoke. After rising quickly and preparing the breakfast, grandmother began afresh to ask the boy many questions, and the boy went over the past few months again, till it was noon. In the afternoon, grandmother showed William her goats and chickens and geese, and also the garden in which grew all kinds of vegetables for her own needs. The care of the goats and poultry she put immediately into the boy's hands, and he did his work with energy and skill.

A new life had begun in the little cabin near the forest. Grandmother, who was already more than seventy years of age, but rather robust, evidently grew young again because of the presence of the child of her only and much loved son. She taught him, as he grew older, how to work the field and garden; at the same time she instructed him in reading and writing and sent him into the next village, where they had a small school.

Several years passed by thus, and William had grown up to be a strong youth walking in the fear of the Lord.

His grandmother dealt with him in much love and tenderness, but also with the proper severity when needed. Quite often she would say:

"I have sinned deeply against your father. He was my only child (her husband had died shortly after the son's birth), and I was too weak to punish him when he had been disobedient. Yielding to him in a false love, I left his naughty ways unpunished and so God punished me. Now, may God preserve me from making the same mistake with you.

When William had become big and more thoughtful, he was very, very thankful to his dear grandmother for having trained him thus, and truly every child has cause to be thankful when God has given them faithful parents who bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and who spare not the rod if needed.

"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." Colossians 3:20.

Thus one year after another went by in happiness; but no happiness is lasting on this earth.

William was to experience this. The first change which brought grief to his heart was the death of his faithful dog. Many years Caesar watched faithfully the old lady's possessions, but finally grew weaker and weaker in spite of the best care from the hands of his young master. The teeth began to fall out and finally he became blind, and one morning William found him dead in his house. He was not able to keep the tears from his eyes, and we can understand it very well. Had not Caesar been faithful to him when he was in great peril and forsaken by his own brothers, and saved his life twice? He dug a grave for him under an old tree in the garden and buried him as he had deserved it.

But this grief was small compared with what was yet before

our young friend. The dear old grandmother, who had meanwhile passed her eighty-fifth year, felt more and more the hardships of old age. But she was still quite strong and able to do the lighter work in the house. All at once she became sick, and a few days afterward she passed away in the arms of her grandson.

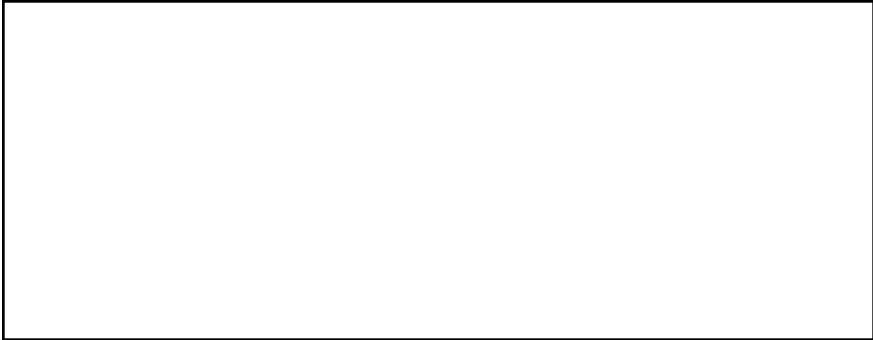
"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Psalm 116:15.

"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." 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14.

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7.

Youth

- Directing Maturing Youth
- Homes Meeting the Social Needs of Our Youth
- Keeping Peer Pressure Manageable
- Parental Responsibility in Developing Youth With Vision
- Reaffirming Our Position on Youth Activities
- Safeguarding the Social Life of Our Youth
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