Why Did Christ Die and Rise Again?

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FOREWORD

With you, I join in thanking God for the light of the resurrection, and for the song that it begets in our hearts. If Christ were yet dead, we would have no hope, and we would be "of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

This brief book, on the deeper meanings of the death and resurrection of Christ is sent forth with a prayer for all of you into whose hands it may go with its message of assurance and cheer.

If God's Son has brought to you the light of the empty tomb, then may you be His sunbeam, scattering the night of despair and unbelief that darkens many souls. May this Easter season bring a new sense of His resurrection power in your own heart and life.

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As we approach the Easter season, in this year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty-three, in this year of global war and human suffering, we ask once more the age-old question, the answer to which gives the only hope to fallen man: Why did Christ die and rise again? Why did He go to the cross and arise from the empty tomb? As we turn the pages of His inspired Word for the answer to this most important of all the questions of the human heart, we find literally hundreds of passages that tell us why our Lord suffered and died and arose. From the many, we have selected only seven; but these seven summarize God’s message to the sinner; they tell us in the voice of authority why Christ died and rose again from the dead:

“‘That he might bring us to God’ (I Peter 3:18).
“‘That he might be Lord both of the dead and living’ (Rom. 14:9).
“‘That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves” (II Cor. 5:15).
“‘That we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21).
“‘That he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4).
“‘That we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:5).
“‘That . . . we should live together with him” (I Thess. 5:10).

As we examine these seven passages of Scripture, we shall see that the death and resurrection of our Lord present one message, the message of salvation. If Christ
had not died, then there could have been no atonement for sin. If He had not risen, then we should still be "of all men most miserable," helpless to conquer death and the grave. There had to be the agony of His cross before there could be the victory of His empty tomb! He was "delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

Nearly two thousand years have passed since our Lord was crucified, since He broke the bars of death; yet today men's hearts are "failing them for fear." Our newspapers and radios tell us of the slaughtering of thousands on the battlefields of the world; of the starving millions in Europe and Asia; of hunted and persecuted minorities; of the atrocities and crimes against unsuspecting civilians. For nearly two thousand years the world has had the Gospel message of hope and peace; yet the picture today is one of stark and unrelenting tragedy and sin. And what shall be the final outcome of it all? Statesmen and leaders of men are beginning to talk of the problems of making peace when this war is over. They are groping for the answers to humanly insurmountable issues to be settled at the peace table—economic and social and political and geographical problems. They are suspicious of one another, fearing lest one nation grasp too much power or too much territory. What shall be the final outcome of it all?

Our Lord's own Word tells us plainly that there shall be no lasting peace until the "Prince of Peace" is given His rightful throne, that, until then, there shall be "wars and rumors of wars." But, whether we, His redeemed children, are at the battle front or in the munitions factory or on the farm or in the home—wherever we are, we can look up, for our "redemption draweth nigh." The story of the cross and the empty tomb is still fresh and meaningful and powerful as it was when the apostles proclaimed it over the heathen world nearly two thousand years ago.

It is a dark picture which the war-scarred world faces today; but darker still was the blackness of man's sin that sent the Son of God to Golgotha's cross. Even the sun refused to shine; the very rocks were rent; the earth itself quaked when our sins drove the sinless Son of God to the shameful death of the cross. And if the Roman seal placed on the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, wherein lay the body of our Lord, had not been broken, we should still be in our sins, forever separated from a holy God.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20). And because He lives, we too shall live!

May the Holy Spirit stir our hearts to renewed consecration and zeal and worship and thanksgiving as we consider these seven passages of Scripture, which tell us why our Lord Jesus died and rose again from the grave. May we let Him search our hearts and apply these precious truths to ourselves, that we may find and follow His will for our lives here on earth, even as we witness to a sin-cursed and suffering world, for our crucified and risen Lord. Let us turn to these seven verses, one by one, and read them in their context:

**REDEEMED BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST**

"For Christ also hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (I Peter 3:18).
Here, as in all seven of our selected Scripture quotations, the words "that he might," or their equivalent, tell us that God had a purpose in His death and resurrection. In I Peter 3:18 His eternal purpose is clearly stated, "that he might bring us to God." Sin separates man from God; His cross and His empty tomb bring us "to God." In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve were not afraid of God until they sinned. But when they sinned, they hid from Jehovah, and vainly sought to make a covering for their sin and shame. But the fig-leaf aprons which they made to hide their nakedness were the works of their own hands; wearing them, they were still afraid and ashamed to meet a holy God. Then the Lord Himself made them "coats of skins, and clothed them." On the basis of a death, the death of an innocent victim, the skins were obtained; and a covering was made which restored fallen man to fellowship with the sinless God. These coats foreshadowed the robe of righteousness, provided for the sinner saved by grace, on the basis of the death of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

"Christ... hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh"—on Calvary's cross. But the Holy Spirit did not stop there; through Peter He went on to add, "... but quickened by the Spirit." Now quickened is an Old English word for "made alive," or "raised." Thus the Spirit of God links inseparably our Lord's death with His resurrection. In order to provide a covering for our sins, He had to die; and in order to make His death efficacious, He had to arise from the grave. Death could not hold Him, because He was and is and ever shall be the omnipotent, eternal Lord.

"That He might bring us to God," the Lord Jesus suffered, "the just for the unjust." That He might redeem His lost and fallen creatures, who had been separated from Him through sin, He bore the shame and reproach and agony of the accursed tree. And where is He now? Seated at God's right hand. And where shall we be throughout the endless ages? Forever with the Lord in heaven itself. We were lost, but now we have been brought nigh by His shed blood.

When Dwight L. Moody was preaching to a large assembly of people in the Chicago Hippodrome, during the first World's Fair to be held in that city, his message on "The Prodigal Son" was interrupted by the crying of a little child. In the midst of his message the evangelist paused to ask, "What is the matter with the child?" "She is lost," the answer came. "Very well, then bring her to me," the man of God continued. And taking the little child in his arms, he asked again, "Does this little child belong to anybody in this auditorium?" "Yes, she's mine!" shouted a man from the vast assembly. "Then come and take her," Mr. Moody said. And with one of those flashes of spiritual genius that made his ministry so used of God, the evangelist turned to the audience, even as he placed the lost child in the father's arms, saying, "This is what the Lord Jesus Christ died to accomplish, to take up lost men and women, and place them in the Heavenly Father's out-stretched arms."

Dear unsaved friend, will you not accept God's love? You are lost, eternally lost, unless you let the everlasting arms of the God of forgiving love enfold you and take you home to heaven with Him. Christ died, in order that he might "bring" you "to God." He died for your sins, and arose for your justification.
“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

YIELDED TO THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

“To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living” (Rom. 14:9).

For what purpose have we who are saved been taken up and placed in the Father's arms? Romans 14:9 gives us the answer: That we might yield body, and soul, and spirit to Christ, the Lord of our lives. It is one thing to be saved from the penalty of sin; it is an added joy to be willing to let Christ control our daily lives, our hopes and plans and purposes during our earthly pilgrimage. And just here is where we most often fail, miss God's best for us in this present life, neglect our opportunity to witness to him before a godless world, and lose His reward in heaven—never our salvation!

This verse in Rom. 14:9 is one of the many passages to which we referred, which link our Lord's death with His resurrection. It shows why He "died, and rose, and revived," stating plainly that He wants to be "Lord of all." Now His Lordship implies sovereignty over every thought and word and deed. It means the yielding of self, loved ones, possessions, time, and energy to His all-wise plan for us.

Our Saviour is Lord of "the dead in Christ"; for their spirits are now in His presence, and He will raise their bodies when He calls His redeemed forth from the grave. But He also wants to be Lord of "the living," who are still in the flesh. "To this end" He "died, and rose, and revived."

The story is told of an English noble, Sir John Ramsden, who made every effort to purchase all of Huddersfield in Yorkshire. He realized that the town would soon become a great industrial center; and, within a few years, he bought all the houses and lands in the locality, with the exception of one cottage and garden. The Quaker who owned this little plot would not sell.

When the efforts of real estate men failed, Sir John himself called on the owner of the coveted property.

"I presume you know the object of my visit," he said to the old man.

"Yes," the Quaker replied; "I have heard that thou hast bought the whole of Huddersfield, with the exception of this cottage and garden; and I have been earnestly solicited by thy agents to sell this. But I do not want to sell. The cottage was built for my own convenience and suits me. The garden, too, was laid out according to my taste. Why should I sell them?"

"But I am prepared to make a very generous offer," urged Sir John. "I will put a golden sovereign on every inch of ground covered by this cottage and garden if you will sell."

"No," replied the Quaker, with a twinkle in his eye; "not unless thou wilt put them on edge." And Sir John turned away, defeated and chagrined.

"Remember," explained the old man, in parting; "Huddersfield belongs to thee and to me."

Sir John Ramsden wanted that property more than any earthly thing. He longed to be the owner of all the town. But it belonged to him and the old Quaker. He was willing to pay for it, but he could not possess all of it.

Our Lord Jesus has actually paid the price for full
possession of all our energies and all our devotion, the awful price of His shed blood. We can understand why the Quaker wanted to cling to his cherished property; but it is strange that Christians are unwilling to yield their all to the rightful Owner of their redeemed bodies, souls, and spirits. Shall we let Satan control even a small part of that which is Christ’s purchased possession? Shall we let him have a chance to say that we belong partly to him, and only in part to Christ? Or shall we sing with the hymn-writer who wrote,

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all"?

CONSECRATED TO THE SERVICE OF CHRIST

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (II Cor. 5:14, 15).

Here again the death and resurrection of Christ are inseparably linked together; so also is the believer’s resurrection life in Jesus linked forever with His own powerful resurrection life—for this present time and for all eternity.

The chapter in which these verses are found is wonderful. Paul was writing of the believer’s assurance of heaven and the presence of God, reminding them that death, for the Christian, is but the laying aside of this mortal body which is burdened by sins and troubles of the flesh; that death, for the Christian, is the abundant entrance into the presence of the Lord. Then the inspired apostle began to explain the motive back of the believer’s service for God, even during the earthly pilgrimage. That motive he stated in the comprehensive words, “love of Christ.” “For the love of Christ constraineth us,” that we should not live unto ourselves, self-seeking lives, but "unto him which died for" us. Because we are a new creation in Christ Jesus, because “old things are passed away,” and because “all things are become new,” we want to go out into all the world as “ambassadors for Christ,” telling lost men that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,” telling the sinful world that “he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:17, 19, 20, 21). Is this not a wonderful chapter? And right in the heart of it we read that we have been called to live, not unto ourselves, but unto our Lord who died for us and rose again! What an incentive to Christian service! What a challenge to unselfish service!

Paul himself knew the meaning of this consecration to the service of Christ. That is why he could write to the Galatian Christians, saying,

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Many dear saints of God have spent their lives serving their fellow-men for Christ’s sake. Not the least of these was the late Dr. Howard A. Kelly. A recent issue of “The Sunday School Times” quotes “The American Magazine” issued December, 1942, as having stated:

“He is one of the world’s greatest surgeons and gynecologists; an authority on radium; a naturalist known for his interest in fungi and Reptilia; an author of wide note in the medical and scientific world; an ac-
accomplished linguist and traveler—a man who has been honored by scientific bodies and universities of Europe and America."

He was "listed in 'Who's Who' as being a member of some forty-five medical and scientific societies in America and Europe." Yet this profound scholar and genius in surgery was humble and child-like in his faith in the crucified and risen Son of God. It was his custom to "rise at four or four-thirty, study his Bible for an hour or two, and then have morning prayers with his nurses." It was his habit to pray with his patients, to pray about his surgical operations, to bear witness to his Lord before those whose bodies he sought to heal. Indeed, because he was abundantly blessed with God-given wisdom concerning his profession, because he was a deep thinker and a skillful surgeon, he served the Lord and believed utterly in His inspired Word, a diligent "laborer together with God."

Surely he knew the experience to which Paul referred when he wrote the Corinthian Christians, saying,

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

"MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN CHRIST"

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).

At once we recognize this searching statement as a part of that wonderful fifth chapter of II Corinthians, to which we referred a few minutes ago. We can not fathom its depths; for they speak to us of the unsearchable meaning of Calvary—how the sinless Son of God became a curse for us, the very symbol of sin, as He was lifted up between heaven and earth on the cruel cross. He who knew no sin was "made sin for us... that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "The wages of sin is death." Someone had to pay the penalty of sin; and there was none who was sinless and therefore able to pay the penalty, save the holy God Himself. He alone was worthy; and because of His infinite love for us, He bore all the blame for all the sins of all the world. Oh, the tragedy of it, that ungrateful, unheeding men can turn a deaf ear to such love! That they rush heedlong to eternity, where they will have to bear their own blame and sin, because they refused the free gift of the God of love!

This is "imputed righteousness," which God alone provides for the man who will accept it as a free gift. Then there is God's "imparted righteousness," by which our Lord enables us to walk before Him in a manner well-pleasing in His sight. And there is that eternal state of complete deliverance from the very presence of sin, when, clothed in His "righteousness" we shall be "like him" who died for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

We can only accept the free gift of God's imputed righteousness, by faith in His blood as an atonement for our souls. For the righteous acts which should express this new life in Christ, we must let Him control our whole being, living in His presence, confessing our sins, putting away the evils of the flesh, drawing our strength for a yielded life from the spiritual food of His Word, from fellowship with Him in prayer, and from the power of the
Holy Spirit who dwelleth in us. Only thus may we be delivered from the power of sin in this present life; and such power is ours only on the basis of the cross and the empty tomb.

The assurance of eternity spent in our Lord's presence, clothed in His righteousness, gives us an incentive to live for Him here on earth. To look forward to the day when every vestige of sin, every evil thought, every selfish motive shall be done away; when "all things shall become new"—this gives hope and encouragement and assurance that, beyond the tomb there is a glorious resurrection for the child of God. That is why Christ died. That is why He arose from the grave—"that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

DELIVERED FROM THIS EVIL WORLD BY THE RISEN CHRIST

"Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Gal. 1:3-5).

The cross of the Lord Jesus and His empty tomb offer deliverance from "this present evil world" for the child of God, even in the midst of a "crooked and perverse generation." The life of separation from the things that defile is not only the privilege of the blood-washed child of God; it is his responsibility before a godless world, who reads the Christian's life, not the inspired Word of God. How else shall the indifferent, unsaved man know the Lord, except through the testimony of the Christian? He will not go to the Bible for the message of salvation. As the redeemed of God, we should be "in the world, but not of it"; that is, ministering to a world in need, yet finding our satisfaction and joy in the things of Christ. That is what Paul meant when he wrote such an admonition as that recorded in Col. 3:1-3:

"If ye then (or 'since ye then') be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

That is what Paul meant when he prayed, saying to the Philippian Christians,

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:10).

That is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Roman Christians, urging them to "walk in newness of life," henceforth not serving sin. (See Rom. 6:1-23.) That is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Ephesian Christians, reminding them that they had once been "dead in sins," but that they had been "quickened," made alive in Christ, "raised . . . up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5, 6).

That is the message of the whole New Testament, which contains the teachings of our Lord and His apostles. If we truly love Him, we shall want to please Him—more than anything else in the world. We shall never be sinless in this present life; God does not promise that; but He does promise the quickening power of His own Holy Spirit, enabling us to live the life of separation from the things that defile—not because we are driven to give up
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