

“Better Now; Best to Come!”
Monthly Comment - March, 2008

“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...” (Phil. 3:10).

There is no truth greater than the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord. His death is without question, the satisfaction of God’s justice for the sin of man, just as the angel spoke to Joseph and said, “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21).

His resurrection however, is God saying sacrifice accepted. He is “...declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, BY the resurrection of the dead” (Rom. 1:4). No resurrection from the dead and Jesus becomes just another religious martyr, however exciting and celebrated He may have been.

The apostle is telling us that he has scrapped everything for Christ. Possessing Christ, or the knowledge of Christ possessing Him, eclipses everything else he once counted dear (Phil. 3:7-14). He connects the reality of that statement to knowing Christ in the power of His resurrection. Why? How does Christ’s resurrection hold such power and cause such desire in the apostle to make him talk in such a way? Let’s think out loud about this!

The concept of resurrection automatically carries with it the reality of death. Put bluntly, there is no resurrection without a death. That being stated, I would have to say that mankind’s greatest fear on a global scale is death. Scripture says that death is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). We don’t need the Scripture to tell us death is an enemy because since time began, man has endeavored to do everything he can to cheat death. Anything and everything man can do is being done to delay death’s inevitable work.

The power of Christ’s resurrection to the believer is that death’s sting and the graves’ victory has no sway any longer in their lives (1 Cor. 15:55). That which has held man “in the fear of death” and subjected him to a “lifetime of bondage” (Heb. 2:15) no longer has that power any longer.

When believers get a hold of or come to know “...the power of His resurrection” the shadows of death becomes the stage for immortality. There is no cold, darkness, or fear associated with death to the Christian who knows the power of his resurrection because He is with them; His “rod and staff” comforting them (1 Psa. 23:4). The resurrection of Christ assures the believer of their own resurrection: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Th. 4:16). Jesus puts it this way, “Because I live you shall live also” (John 14:19) or the one who believes in Jesus “though he may die, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

In short, Paul could say everything he once counted gain before faith in Christ is “rubbish” compared to the extraordinary blessedness of Christ now (“For to me, to live is Christ” Phil. 1:21) and the Forever of heaven in the resurrection. No wonder Paul says in the same epistle, “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is FAR BETTER” (Phil 1:23). The power of His resurrection is ultimately saying...

Better Now; Best to Come!

Mike

Waiting For Face to Face"
Weekly Comment – March 2, 2008

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12).

Mirrors in ancient times were made of highly polished brass. One could see the reflection of their image, but not perfectly. The (NLT) probably catches the sense of this better in that it reads in the NKJV; "Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity."

Surely this is true of what we see of each other. When we see each other, it is face to face. What I can see of me in a mirror is a reflection of an image that is flipped. I am seeing me through a secondary and reversed image, though while I look at you, I see with no obstruction. That is probably why we can see each other's flaws far better than our own.

But actually that is only a devotional rendering of this verse of Scripture. The direct meaning of this verse has to do with the end of earth time. "But when the end comes" (1 Cor. 13:10 NLT), we are going to see things much different. "We see things imperfectly" now, "but then we will see everything with perfect clarity" (NLT). What I can know now is "partial and incomplete" (1 Cor. 13:12 NLT).

In the context of 1 Corinthians 13, can you imagine how even more "partial and incomplete" our ability to "see" would be without the gifts of the Spirit, a partial list being mentioned in (1 Cor. 13:8b-10). But in the end, we won't need these gifts of the Holy Spirit either...we will be gloriously changed "...this mortal" will have "put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

Enjoy the mirror; enjoy the gifts, but the best is yet to come!

Waiting for face to face,

Mike

"Laborers!"
Weekly Comment – March 9, 2008

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Mt. 9:37-39).

Believe it or not, Jesus doesn't tell us what to pray for very much. He prays and tells us to pray everywhere in the gospel, but what to pray is limited. He says "when you pray," and "whatever you ask in prayer," and that "men ought always to pray," but rarely does He say to pray specifically for one thing. This Matthew portion is one of those exceptions.

"Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Now that is a specific prayer! The petition is made to God by the one who prays. The supplication has to do with a request for helpers/laborers. The reason for the direction to pray this way is the vast need within the Lord's harvest (literally, crop). That crop or harvest isn't left to our imagination as to what that is as it precisely states in the preceding verse:

"...when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them" (Mt. 9:36).

The multitudes Jesus saw are the crop or harvest to which Jesus refers. Today, that multitude has extended to include the harvest field of all the earth. A formidable task – 7 billion people;

100,000 of which live right here in the Missoula area. The prayer is to God to send out laborers to reap the multitudes in His harvest field – “the world.”

Warning! This prayer will adjust your life, because as you read the very next verse in Matthew 10, He sends out into the harvest the 12 He just admonished to pray about “laborers” (Mt. 10:1-8).

Laborers together,

Mike

“What’s the Point!”
Weekly Comment – March 16, 2008

In one way or another, better minds than mine have spent their lifetime endeavoring to find the meaning of life. There have been endless volumes of books written on the subject, which if assembled all in one place, would be enough individual books to fill a library. Why am I here? Why do you and I exist? What is the point to our lives?

The evolutionistic point is that there was a cosmic accident billions of years ago and a slow evolutionary march toward utopian man is occurring. Utopian man in all his proposed goodness gets seriously flushed with whackos shooting people at restaurants and Universities for fun. There is little support in the educational or scientific arena that promotes hope in my mind that man will find his way to utopian “peace, love and harmony on earth.” Admittedly “peace and harmony” proves as elusive to the religious explanations to “what’s the point” as all other fields. I’m quite sure Jesus didn’t have killing people in mind with His concepts of advancing His Kingdom on earth.

Why are you here? Why were you born? What is the point to your life? Pretty light subject matter wouldn’t you say? Even the most hardened of individuals can’t say the point to their whole existence is to get educated, get a job, then die and somewhere in that timeframe, raise kids so they can get educated, get a job, maybe go fishing some and then die themselves.

Life is not pointless!

Mike

“Just Stay Open”
“He is not here; for He is risen” (Mt. 28:6)
Weekly Comment – March 23, 2008

What startling news this was for the two Marys that first resurrection morning. I am certain I would not have been going to the tomb that morning expecting it to be empty anymore than these ladies were.

The unbelief the disciples had when the ladies reported the resurrection to them would probably have been my response as well. In fact, there was two early reports of His resurrection by a number of witnesses in two separate encounters, both of which were met with “unbelief” (Mk. 16:11, 12). I hardly think I am more spiritual than the apostles! Understand that this is “unbelief” even after months prior to this, Jesus had been telling these close followers He was going to Jerusalem where he would be “delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again” (Lk. 18:32-33). Then it happens just like He said, and they didn’t believe. Sound familiar?

It is not the natural order of things to see people alive after 3 days of being dead. The supernatural is freaky to the natural man. In fact, "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him (1 Cor. 2:14). The disciples (and us) were "slow of heart to believe" (Lk. 24:25) but they eventually got it. So did we and so will you if you are still having a hard time believing.

Just stay open and He will show Himself,

Mike

"The Way to the Top"
Weekly Comment – March 30, 2008

"...Jesus Christ is Lord..." (Phil. 2:11).

Just prior to this phrase, the apostle referred to our Lord's volunteered "humbling." He became a man! Beyond that He allowed Himself to be pummeled to death (2:8). In anybody's opinion that's a step back.

Death by crucifixion is unimaginable. What He willingly submitted to is beyond my intellect. This was no cake walk He came to accomplish. When it came time you can see the anguish of soul He wrestled with; "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me" and just prior to saying that, His righteous soul was "...exceedingly sorrowful, even to death..." (Mt. 26:38-39)

Apparently the "passing on this cup" was not possible. In Mark's rendition, our Lord stated to the Father "...all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from Me" (Mark 14:36). Apparently not all things are possible with God. It was not possible for God to be just without His justice being served. Man had to die for his sin and rebellion against God. God had already decreed that prior to man's sin.

There was no other way! It was not possible for this cup to pass from Jesus. The only way to redeem lost man was the sacrifice of a Perfect Man – that's why He humbled Himself, became man and satisfied His own violated law by the sacrifice of Himself.

But in that righteous act of voluntary humbling, the name of Jesus goes right to the top. In His resurrection, He becomes "highly exalted" and has been given the "Name which is above every name" (Phil 2:9). From voluntary humiliation to exaltation. The point! "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Humbling yourself results in being lifted up and exalted (James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6).

Your "needing work in humility" servant,

Mike