

**Luke 24: 1-12; “Saving Faith & the Risen Christ”, A Sermon for God’s people
on Easter Sunday, April 12th, 2020, and Delivered by Pastor
Paul Rendall online, due to the Coronavirus.**

This particular Sunday morning ought to have been a time of great expectation for the disciples of our Lord, but it was not. His closest disciples we are told here, did not believe in Christ’s resurrection when they were told of it. The Lord Jesus during the time of His earthly ministry had predicted that He would rise from the dead at least three times; telling them that He would be crucified and rise again. (Matthew 20: 19, Mark 8: 31, and Matthew 17: 9 and 23) This truth holds several lessons for us about saving faith and the importance of the exercise of our own faith if we would be strong Christians. Therefore, I will give you the truths which come from this text in lesson form.

The 1st Lesson is this – The Beginning of Saving Faith is often like the morning of Christ’s resurrection.

Luke 24, verse 1 – “Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning the, and certain other women with the, came too the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.” It was still dark on that first day of the week, but the dawn was coming. Jesus had risen, but His disciples were still in the dark, spiritually speaking. Perhaps it is even so with some of you who have saving faith here this morning. But let us be persuaded by the words of our text. God is faithful, and Christ is the morning star of our faith. He is the dawning of a new day for everyone believing in Him. Having saving faith, the Scriptures tell us, depends entirely upon the working of God to give light and life. But once it is given, it ought to be exercised. “The path of the righteous is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.” (Proverbs 4: 18) Well, here was another day that had arrived, but it was unlike any other, for the Lord Jesus had just died the day before. He was put to death just two days before this, by the hands of wicked men, and all of those who had followed Jesus knew about it.

Those who had believed in Jesus and had followed Him faithfully during the time of His earthly ministry were His faithful followers, but you can understand why they were sorrowing. They thought that it was all over; that the cause of the Lord Jesus had come to this grievous end with Him being crucified, and now some of them thought there was nothing more to expect. Some of them were totally unprepared for what was taking place that morning. I would venture to say, that it this is true also with many of us. Perhaps we are not joyful and exuberant this morning. Our expectations concerning what God would have us to learn from Him are very low. We may be discouraged having had to stay inside now for many days, hiding away from the coronavirus. But actually, if the truth were known, we are very low because we do not have our faith in exercise in the way that should have it in exercise, in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

For true and saving faith perseveres; it continues to believe in Jesus, even when it cannot see clearly what is going to happen in the future. Are you afraid of the future? Does your soul sit in darkness of uncertainty? Then you must learn to trust in Christ. Because He has risen, even if you have never before exercised faith, you should look expectantly to the Christ who is raised from the dead. You cannot behold Him in your heart by faith yet, but if you will believe that He died for a sinner like you, your soul shall be raised from the dead by His mighty power. Because He is risen, if you believe in Him, your spirit which is dead in trespasses and sins, shall be made alive with His. And your body which will someday die, shall someday then, be raised from the dead when He returns, for the eternal dawn is coming.

Well, certain of the women, very early in the morning came to the tomb where they thought the Lord Jesus still lay. They were intending to place the spices which they had prepared on His body, and around it. If you look at verse 55 of Chapter 23 you see it says this: “And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His

body was laid.” “Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils.” “And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.” There is a lesson here for our faith, from their faith. Faith says this: I will do what I can to promote the cause and kingdom of Christ, even when all appears to be lost; even when I am at my lowest. Even when Christ’s cause is to all outward appearances dead, yet I will believe that God can raise it from the dead because I know that God raised Him from the dead. I look expectantly to the future, because I believe in the resurrection of the dead. That is what these dear ladies were saying with their faith working by means of love. Their love for Christ was greater than their fears of evil men, or what the future would hold for them.

Now, I want you to notice that they kept the Jewish Sabbath commandment when it appeared that there would be no greater fulfillment in the Christ who had said, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath”. Let me ask now if you have this resurrection faith of Jesus Christ in your heart this morning? What is the evidence of that? The evidence is, that if you are a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, every Sunday is a day where you celebrate His resurrection from the dead. Every Sunday is the Lord’s Day. Every Sunday is an Easter in this holy sense that we are thinking about. It is true that there are very few people who “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy” in our day. Even many Christians think it a legalistic commandment. The Christian Sabbath seems to be dead and in the tomb. But does that mean that you should not observe it, even though many others do not observe it?

No, if you have true and saving faith, you know that Christ is risen from the dead. He is the first fruits of those who sleep. You celebrate this every Lord’s Day. You know and you believe that the Day of the Resurrection of all the dead is coming; and O what a glorious Day it will be for you and for all true believers because Jesus truly is raised from the dead! Let your heart take courage, O Christian who has come early to the tomb. Even in the midst of this coronavirus situation where there are so many restrictions and you cannot worship together with others of the saints as you would, there ought to be a great expectation of a time coming, when you will be able to come and worship with the saints once again. Let your heart be encouraged by that expectation.

There is always reason for your faith to be encouraged by your Lord Jesus, for He has overcome sin and death. You may not realize all the implications of this, but you behold an empty tomb. Live by the evidence that you see, and do not fear that someone has stolen the body. Bring out your spices and your fragrant oils, but it will not be to anoint a dead body. It will be to celebrate His resurrection, His power, and His glory to save you from all of your sins, and give you the power to live a holy life. Your spices and oils will be your praises for what God has done through your risen Savior! These praises will be a fragrance and they will be sweet to God, for all of eternity. The morning of Christ’s resurrection came then, just when He said it would. And will you not remember, that the morning of your resurrection to eternal life will indeed come, and as you continue on, steadfast in your faith, you will eventually come to the dawn of eternity, and find eternal and everlasting joy!

Now, the 2nd great lesson is this – Saving Faith will rest its hope of salvation upon remembering what Jesus has said. (verses 2-8)

“But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.” “Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” “And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold two men stood by them in shining garments.” “Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead?’ “He is not here, but is risen!” “Remember how He spoke to you when He was in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’ “And they remembered His words.”

Often the exercise of saving faith must rest upon the evidence of things hoped for; the conviction of things not yet seen. When the women came to the tomb bringing the spices to anoint the body of Jesus, they found that the stone was rolled away. They came all the way through the door and into the tomb itself, and they didn't find the body of Christ. They were perplexed. What had happened to Him? Now, we must remember that these were believing women. They were not unbelieving persons; they were persons who had heard the Lord Jesus teach on numerous occasions, and had no doubt heard Him say that He was going to die at the hands of the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees, and then be raised from the dead. But they did not really understand the things that had been spoken to them.

The same is no doubt true of many Christians concerning the living of their Christian life by faith in the Son of God. They have been saved from their sins, they have the word of God which reminds them of the all of the realities of Christ being risen from the dead, but somehow they do not believe it practically in their experience. Those who believe must believe in the evidence of things hoped for; for that is the essence of faith. If Jesus says, that you have died with Him and you are risen to newness of life, you must not act as though He is not alive. You are to set your mind on things above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Since Christ is raised from the dead and is in your life, then you must put to death your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry. Are these not sometimes things that Christians fail to deal with in their life, and thus God has to come with something like this coronavirus.

Christ has a much better and much more fulfilling life for you to live as a Christian than your toying continually with sin and unbelief. Living the Christian life to the glory of God will take Christ's resurrection power. If you have saving faith, your faith rests squarely upon this truth; that Christ Jesus not only died for your sins, but that He was raised for your justification. Let's think about the guilt of your sin of unbelief, and many other sins as well. In order to be justified, in order to be declared righteous in the sight of God, you yourself must believe in Jesus. But what do you believe in? You do not believe in yourself, or in your own strength to either save yourself, or to do God's will as it is revealed in the Bible. You look outside of yourself, and by faith you believe in Jesus. You believe in His being the Righteous One; the One who fulfilled God's law perfectly, and who went to the cross to suffer for all of your sins and shortcomings and failures to do God's will; not only before you became a Christian, but also afterwards.

Remember that the stone is rolled away. The work of redemption is complete. There was no body still lying there. He is risen to give you life as you exercise your faith in Him. You should not say that you are a true Christian unless you have come to know the power of Christ's resurrection in your life, giving you strength to repent of your sins, and the strength to do God's will. You may find yourself failing to do God's will at many points as a Christian. What will keep you from becoming discouraged, weary, sad, and continually disappointed in yourself? It will be Christ's life in your life. Why do you seek the living among the dead? Why will you act as though Christ is not risen, when it is told you that He is? Remember His words, that it was absolutely essential that he be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and on the third day rise again. You must by faith learn to believe that His life is in your life and live in great expectation of what is coming in terms of your walk with Him.

3rd – Saving Faith means that you, as Peter did, will marvel at what happened.

Verse 9-12 – “Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.” “It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the other of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles.” “And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.” “But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed marveling to himself at what had happened.” Peter marveled over Christ's apparent resurrection from the dead. If you have

believed in the gospel, that Christ is raised from the dead, you should understand and rejoice in this truth, that your salvation does not rest upon your perseverance in the faith, although if you have saving faith you most certainly will persevere. Since your salvation rests upon the death and resurrection of Christ, and God's both imputing an imparting that finished work of His death and His resurrection to you, you are equipped to do His will at every point. It is because of His resurrection life in your life that you will remember what He said, and you will respond in faith to it. Listen to what it says in Romans 4: 20 – "Abraham did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform." "And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." "Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us." "It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."

This is the message of the empty tomb. Yes, Jesus suffered. And yes, Jesus died for our sins! But Jesus also rose from the dead because God was well-pleased with what Jesus would do for you the sinner, both in your conversion and in living your Christian life. He was well-pleased to give you the grace of faith because Jesus died to purchase it for you. He was well-pleased to accept you in the Beloved, when you first believed. And thus, you not only had all of your sins forgiven, you were justified. You were declared righteous in God's sight. That imputation of Christ's righteousness not only permits God to accept you when you were first converted. Christ's imputed righteousness also covers all of your works after conversion. Thus, God sees you in Christ from the moment you were saved, all the way to glory.

Justification is not only the basis of your being free of guilt on a continual basis, it is also the basis of your continually being given life through, and in, and by the Holy Spirit on a continually basis. In other words, Christ died for this too. Romans 5: 18 and 19 – "Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life." "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." So, I hope that you can see this blessed truth, for it will strengthen your heart obedience to God and to Christ very much. It is that Christ's perfect righteousness and His sacrificial death are not only imputed to you, when you first believe, but the justification of life was also purchased by Christ, and these blessings of life are imparted to you from the very first moment that you believe in Christ, they abound to you all through your Christian life, all the way too glory and into eternity.

Therefore, you see, your faith is also sustained by Christ's grace, each and every day until you reach that glory. You persevere in faith because your faith is a grace which Christ builds, and strengthens and establishes. Romans 1: 16 and 17 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Thus, the beginning of faith and the exercise of faith all rests on the finished work of Christ, and His applying the blessings which purchased to you on a continual on-going fashion. See to it that you exercise the faith that He is the Author and Perfecter of. To persevere in your faith in Christ glorifies God because the strength to persevere to the end of your life comes from His imparted grace, and you are trusting that Christ's righteousness which is being imputed even to the best of your works, still covers you each and every day, until you reach glory.