



“For what I received I passed to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4)

“Christ died for the ungodly.” (Romans 5:6)

I confess that I get easily irritated by people who post Bible verses in social media, who want to pray in public, who quote Scriptures yet seem unable (in my view) to do the things a Christian should or avoid those sins that a Christian shouldn't. They appear to have plenty of 'theory' but very little 'practice.'

If you take note of the articles I write each month for Saltshaker, I guess you will notice that the majority of them are trying to encourage you and me to take action to demonstrate our Christian faith.

My judgment of the people I have just met is sinful. I am seeking ways to prove to myself (and probably to God, however useless that may be) that I am a better Christian than they are. I may or may not be right but that is far from

the point. Christ died for the ungodly and I am as ungodly as anyone in the eyes of God whether I like that or not. For all have sinned...

In fact, there is much that I ought to be able to learn from them. Whatever faults there are in their lives, they are publicly professing God's name and word. Should I not be doing the same. Many an atheist tries to make the world a better place the Word of God, our Christian doctrine and beliefs are, as Paul says to the Corinthians, *of first importance*. At Easter we celebrate Christ's death and resurrection, the starting point of our Christian faith. If our lives are not grounded in those beliefs, we remain lost. Faith without works may be dead but works without faith are futile and can only lead to frustration and disappointment.

Of course we need both faith and works (in that order). This Easter let us humbly remember our sinfulness, thankfully celebrate the salvation God has won for us and energetically work to pass that gospel, that good news on to others *as of first importance*, as Paul did to the Corinthians.

Quotations for Easter
- From the author John Stott

'Before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us.'

'Many people visualize a God who sits comfortably in a distant throne, remote, aloof, uninterested, and indifferent to the needs of the mortal, until it may be, they can badger him into taking action on their behalf.

Such a view is wholly false. The Bible reveals a God who, long before it even occurs to us to turn to him, while we are still lost in darkness and sunk in sin, takes the initiative, rises from his throne, lays aside his glory, and stoops to seek until he finds us.'

'Perhaps the transformation of the disciples of Jesus is the greatest evidence of all for the resurrection.'

'In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God was immune to it?'

'Why is it that some Christians cross land and sea, continents and cultures, as missionaries? What on earth impels them? It is not in order to commend a

civilization, an institution or an ideology, but rather a person, Jesus Christ whom they believe to be unique.’

‘We must allow the Word of God to confront us, to disturb our security, to undermine our complacency and to overthrow our patterns of thought and behaviour.’

IF EASTER BE NOT TRUE

If Easter be not true,
Then all the lilies low must lie;
The Flanders poppies fade and die:
The spring must lose her fairest bloom
For Christ were still in the tomb –
If Easter be not true

If Easter be not true,
Then faith must mount on broken wing;
Then hope no more immortal spring;
Then love must lose her mighty urge;
Life prove a phantom death or dirge –
If Easter be not true

If Easter be not true
‘Twere foolishness the cross to bear;
He died in vain who suffered there;
What matter though we laugh or cry,
Be good or evil, we live or die,
If Easter not be true?

If Easter be not true,
But it is true, and Christ is risen!
And mortal spirit from its prison
Of sin and death with him may rise!
Worthwhile the struggle, sure the prize,
Since Easter, aye is true!

Henry H Barstow

THREE TIMES

Ask me who I would be if I were to go back to the time when Jesus walked the earth. Ask me who I would be as one of His followers - Thomas? Judas? John? Matthew? Peter? Who would I be? I tell you that I would be Peter. I would be His rock.

Before I am accused of self-righteousness and pride- why? Why would I be Peter? It would not be because I walked on water. I would not be Peter because God told me I would be the rock of His church but because I told God I would never leave Him and because when put to the test I did not deny Him just once or twice- because when asked if I knew my friend who was being whipped alone by guards who mocked Him as He remembered my promise of loyalty and sacrifice- I denied Him once, twice and then the third time, because when the cock crowed I knew I had denied the Messiah.

Have you ever been Peter? More than three times with your words, heart and life have you told God, "I do not know You"? Have you ever denied your friend?

The incredible thing is Peter did and God loved him no less and guilt could not trap him. He allowed Love and forgiveness to heal him and became Christ's undeniable rock.

Stephanie Mutasa

From The Bell, Christchurch, Borrowdale

The forgiven must forgive

“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others” (Colossians 3:13 NLT).

Do you show people grace? It’s what God wants us to do, but it’s not always easy to remember to do because we are so often focused on ourselves.

It’s easier sometimes to be selfish instead of gracious. You see the slow checker in the grocery store line as a five-minute interruption to your day rather than somebody who might be struggling to keep his job, somebody who just got the worst news of his life a few minutes earlier.

You see the one in your family who’s struggling right now as a drain on you rather than seeing her hopelessness over a desperate situation. You see the person who cut you off on the freeway as the physical embodiment of Satan instead of just a jerk who is in need of God’s love.

We are all jerks in need of God’s love. That’s why Jesus Christ came into this world. And to show people grace is to remember what God has done for us. The ultimate way God shows us grace is by forgiveness. And the ultimate way he asks us to show grace to other people is by forgiving them. Colossians 3:13 says, *“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others” (NLT).*

People often ask me, “How can I find the strength to forgive? I don’t have it in me.” I don’t have it in me, either! The only place I’ve ever found the strength to forgive is to remember how much Jesus has forgiven me. When I remember that, then he gives me the strength and grace to forgive others.

Clara Barton, who founded the American Red Cross, was reminded by a friend of an especially cruel thing that somebody had done to her years before. Barton acted like she didn't remember it, and the friend asked, "Don't you remember?" Her famous reply was, "No, I distinctly remember forgetting it."

What do you need to forget? If you don't forgive, you're not going to enjoy God's vision for the rest of your life, because forgiveness will keep you stuck in the past. You need to forgive for your sake, and then you need to get on with your life. Forgiveness is not saying that what somebody did was right or that there shouldn't be consequences for what happened. It just means that you let go of your anger and hurt and give it to God so that you can move on with God's purpose for your life.

When that seems impossible, when you feel like you can't be gracious toward someone, just remember one thing: Jesus forgave you. Remembering the grace God has shown you will give you the strength to be gracious to and forgive.

Rick Warren www.purposedriven.com

Knee Polishing

For Easter, let's try to pray around the events of the "Passion of Jesus" and his resurrection.

Sunday : praise God for the resurrection of Jesus; may the resurrection power work in our lives

Monday : as we think of Palm Sunday, may our praises be lasting and genuine and not change to 'crucify him.'

Tuesday : like the women who followed Jesus to the cross, may we be willing to follow Jesus even into the "dark places" of life

Wednesday : with Peter in mind, pray that we may never deny the Lord Jesus in our speech or actions

Thursday : may we be willing to wash the feet of others, literally or metaphorically, as we remember Jesus' action on the first Maundy Thursday

Friday : as we remember the crucifixion, let us both confess our sins which brought Jesus there and praise him for the forgiveness which was made possible by his death

Saturday : like the disciples from Emmaus, pray that we will be willing to drop all to proclaim the good news of Jesus death and resurrection

"Christ the Lord is risen today, sons of men and angels say. Raise your joys and triumphs high; sing, ye heavens and earth reply."

– *Charles Wesley*

One Sunday morning the pastor got up in the pulpit and apologized for the plaster on his face. He said, "I was thinking about my sermon while shaving and I cut my face." afterwards he found a note in the collection plate, "Next time, think about your face and cut the sermon."

Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00 PM - prayer and medication to follow.

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