

Focusing on the Resurrection of Christ

Last Day of Unleavened Bread

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Usually during this time of year we see portrayals of the crucifixion. Various churches will have maybe one of their members act out their image of Christ as He undergoes the suffering.

You have probably noticed too that we have had several religious movies lately. We've seen "The Robe," "Demetrius and the Gladiators," "The Greatest Story," "The Passion of Christ." They even have an animated version out, I understand.

Frankly, as God's people, we get turned off by all these trappings and the "Christian" traditions acted out and portrayed for us. We just don't care for that. Is it a mistake for us then to have a tendency to play down the events that Christ went through, especially His resurrection? I think for decades we did a fairly good job expressing the things Christ suffered during the crucifixion. But, on the other hand, I think in the past we had a tendency to place Christ as "the God on the side."

So, today I would like to address that. I would like to talk about the resurrection, the life of Jesus Christ because He was resurrected and He is alive now. We're going to show that repeatedly as we go through this. I think that we should redirect our focus onto Christ and, in fact, my title is:

Focusing on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

When we think about that in the context of the holy days—and remember this is the Last Day of the Days of Unleavened Bread. Some day there isn't going to be a "last day," at least as far as we're concerned in this age. A couple of questions come up that are general questions I came up with. The first one is: Have we put a proper focus on the resurrection of Christ during these Days of Unleavened Bread? The second one is: How has the lack of that focus, if we haven't done that, affected the way we have kept the Days of Unleavened Bread, this spring holy day season?

Let's go to Acts 13. In order to get to what I'm trying to express here, in Acts 13 beginning in verse 14, we're going to join Paul and his companions in their travels. I will be using the New King James Version throughout. I only have one other translation I'll be using in one place.

Acts 13:14. *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.
15) And after the reading of the law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."*

16) Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: (NKJV)

These were mostly Jews, but there were some other people there also. Then, beginning in verse 17, Paul launches into a summary of the exodus, that particular historical era of Israel.

17) The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. (NKJV)

That's a very brief, condensed statement covered in Exodus chapters 12 through 14.

18 Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness.

19) And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.

20) "After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21) And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

22) And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, ... (NKJV)

Paul quotes Psalms 89:20. Actually, he is using two separate scriptures in this verse, but again Paul is giving a very condensed history.

22b) ... a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.' (NKJV)

You can check this in 1 Samuel 13:14, where in the context there it talks about the lineage of King Saul being severed at that point. It now has come to David and we know his lineage leads to Christ. Next Paul jumps to the New Testament in verse 24.

24) after John [the Baptist] had first preached, before His [Jesus Christ's] coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25) And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'

26) "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. (NKJV)

Verse 27 is a contrast here because it says:

27) For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers [meaning the religious leaders of that time], because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, ... (NKJV)

The religious leaders had access to everything about Christ, about the coming Messiah, but they didn't make any connection. They rejected Him. Continuing in the last part of verse 27:

27b) ... have fulfilled them in condemning Him. (NKJV)

Again, in the context of the way we keep the feast today, the Days of Unleavened Bread, we have to pause because we have heard these things every Sabbath and we've rehearsed them repeatedly every holy day. We're going through about the 41st and coming up on our 42nd rehearsal for us. We've all been exposed to those things, but could God say that about us? That we didn't know Him? We don't want to be in that category at all. We don't want to be in the category of having no relationship, no focus on the only one who can save us—the resurrected Christ. The point I'm trying to make is it is not just being exposed to all this knowledge and understanding—which we are very thankful for—but what are we doing with it?

Paul goes on to tell them here that they heard the words and the voices saying all these things, but they had no relationship with Him. Ironically, they fulfilled all the prophecies about Him anyway. Paul tells how here as he continues in verse 28.

28) And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.

29) Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, ... (NKJV)

For a reference, you can look in Luke 18:31-33. Christ said that they would do everything that was prophesied about Him. The religious leaders would fulfill their part of it.

29b) ... they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. (NKJV)

This "they" refers to Joseph of Arimathea and, if we look in John 19:38-40, we see that Nicodemus was with him. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are the ones who took Christ's body and put Him in the tomb.

Verse 30, and here is a great big "But."

30) But God raised Him from the dead. (NKJV)

Remember a lot of these individuals rejected Christ. There was that element throughout the early church era of residual Jewish tradition that came into the church with them. They had a hard time relating to that. What Paul is telling them here is because Christ

was raised from the dead and He is now alive, that is the zenith, the very heart of the gospel he's talking about. He's talking about the living Christ.

31) He was seen for many days [Forty, we know.] by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. (NKJV)

We have all of those accounts in the gospel—Mary Magdalene, the 500 others, all the disciples, all the apostles.

32) And we declare to you glad tidings — ... (NKJV)

Paul's telling them, "This is good news!"

32b) ... that promise which was made to the fathers. (NKJV)

We know that promise is sprinkled throughout the Old Testament and it is fulfilled at this time because when Christ was crucified and resurrected that was a very glorious event in human history.

33) God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' [Psalm 2:7]

34) And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, ... (NKJV)

His body was not going to decay.

34b) ...He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' (NKJV)

Looking in Isaiah 55:3, those "sure mercies of David" means *the blessings that were promised through David*—coming right back again to the raised Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 55:3. *Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you — The sure mercies of David. (NKJV)*

Verse 35:

35) Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see [or to undergo] corruption.' [Psalm 16:10]

36) "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, ... (NKJV)

David died. Christ tells us over in John 3:13 that "No one has ascended up to heaven." So, David didn't go to heaven. He died.

36b) ... was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; (NKJV)

He did see corruption. David's body did decay. That's a very normal thing. Verse 37 shows the contrast here.

37) but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. (NKJV)

Again, Christ did not decay. He is a living spiritual being. The whole point here in these verses that compare David and Christ is that David died but Christ is alive. Christ was resurrected. The point here is that as great as David was, this one (Christ) is better. It means much more. Christ's death, His resurrection, His life means so much more than David's life. We could even look at some of the other individuals in the Old Testament. As great as Moses was, this one is better. These are all dead like Abraham. This one is better. He is better because God raised Him from the dead; the Firstborn, we know. The point there is, again, the glory goes to God the Father. And the Father says that if we give honor to the Son, we give honor also back to the Father.

38) Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; (NKJV)

The only way possible to get that forgiveness; Christ made that ultimate sacrifice for us.

39) and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. (NKJV)

God gave the law through Moses and, as good as that law was and is, it cannot compare. It cannot save us. It cannot forgive sin. It can't do that.

The Father said that He was going to raise Christ (and the Father did raise Him by that incredible power that He has, the ability that He has to do that) because Christ's sacrifice was accepted by God. There is a lull there from the time He was sacrificed. He told Mary Magdalene not to touch Him (when she discovered Him, when she actually realized who it was) because He hadn't ascended to the Father yet. There is a gap there so we don't know what went on. But basically at some point, He returned to heaven; He went before God's throne; and God accepted that sacrifice for all mankind.

It is because of the fact that Christ was willing to sacrifice Himself that we can have forgiveness, justification and reconciliation. That's the only way we can do that! That is why the Passover and these Days of Unleavened Bread picture something so very special for us because it points to things we should be learning and how it affects us. And it should affect the way we walk with Christ. It should affect us in that Christian walk because there are consequences to that. Verse 40 goes on to say that if that relationship is lacking, there are consequences.

40) Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: (NKJV)

We can turn over to Isaiah 1 and we see that because the prophets talked about this. This pulls us into the context here. Isaiah is interesting. Isaiah is addressing himself to the Jewish people; “to Judah” it says in the very first verses. It’s interesting what it talks about. We’re going to start in verse 9, but just as an aside if we look earlier in the chapter and the context, he calls the nation then a “nation of evil doers.” They were giving into some things. One writer even said that when you think of the symbolism and you combine Egypt, Pharaoh, Sodom, and Gomorrah (which he’s going to talk about here), it pretty much describes our society today—some attributes and all of those things. We’ll see that as we go through here.

Isaiah 1:9. *Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah. (NKJV)*

And we know that those accounts are found in Genesis 18 and 19. What Isaiah is saying here is that most everyone falls into these categories and falls into category of being part of an evil nation. There are very few, a small remnant there like maybe the church is today. We could maybe compare ourselves, the church today in relation to the world.

10) Hear the word of the Lord, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: (NKJV)

That’s what he’s calling them. Again, in Judah and Jerusalem, the leadership was in a degenerative state comparable to Sodom and Gomorrah. That’s what Isaiah is saying to them. And, again, just like today whichever way the leaders go is pretty much the way society goes. We see that all around us. For Isaiah 1:10, I like the Amplified Version because it brings that out a bit. In this case, the Amplified picks up the typology here. Verse 10 says:

Isaiah 1:10. *Hear [O Jerusalem] the word of the Lord, you rulers or judges of [another] Sodom! ... (AMP)*

In other words, it’s talking about a type, a kind of Sodom. That’s what he’s telling them.

10b) ... Give ear to the law and the teaching of our God, you people of [another] Gomorrah! (AMP)

So, Isaiah is not being very kind to the nation here. That is the state that they were in. Going back to verse 11 in the New King James Version:

11) "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. (NKJV)

We know Isaiah 66 talks about what God does delight in. That's a poor and a contrite spirit, which is far different from a ritualistic approach to God that these individuals were portraying here.

12) "When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? (NKJV)

"You didn't learn this from Me. I never taught you this. These are your traditions. All of these things you throw in here that you think honor Me but none of them are."

13) Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense [a type of prayer] is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies — I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.

14) Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. (NKJV)

Some people have tried to use this verse to say that the Sabbath and holy days are done away. Of course, we don't view it that way at all. But, again, are we keeping these days as they are intended to be kept? Are we learning the spiritual lessons? That's always the big question for us.

15) When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. ... (NKJV)

"I'm not going to listen to you!"

15b) ... Your hands are full of blood. (NKJV)

Again, this is a nation of evil doers that He's addressing. These are pretty strong words that God uses towards the nation back then, very strong. Again, we have to put ourselves in these pictures too. We can say "It's good we put away leaven this week. It's good we ate unleavened bread for seven days." But it's even better if we focused on the role Jesus Christ has in our life during these days. It's even better if we learn the spiritual lessons of the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. If we put away leaven, even if we ate unleavened bread and we didn't have that focus on the spiritual lessons, so what? What does it mean to us? If there is not more to the story what does it really mean to us?

If we went back to the context in the gospels, looked at when the Pharisees and the other religious rulers of that day took Christ before Pilate, they wanted Pilate to do their dirty work. Did you ever think about the reason they wanted Pilate to do that? So they could keep the "Passover" (the fifteenth). That's why they wanted to do that. They wanted to shuffle that off.

So they knew how to do that (the Passover). They knew how to do the unleavened bread. They know what that means. The point being that we don't want to go through

the motions and do something God instructs but miss the entire spiritual point. We don't want to do that.

I used this example one other time, but it's a good example of missing the point because that happens with us; it happens amongst God's people. And that's the example of tithing because almost every time a discussion of tithing comes up, there is always the question: Is it on the gross or on the net. What is it? A lot of times that is a legitimate question if we're new. We have some new folks in the Prosser congregation. Sometimes, when that comes up, there is this closed-caption thought in there. Someone says "Tithing is kind of like taxes. We don't want to give anymore than we have to." If we could give money to God—which we can't—he couldn't use it anyway. What would He use it for? He already owns everything. What difference does it make?

What does God want? He wants us to give as we're able and He's interested in our heart and our attitude. So, He gives us the principle of tithing to teach us something. Other than the income of the church covering the basic needs and the function of the church, God wants us to learn to be giving people. That's why we have the principle of tithing and giving offerings. God is interested in the attitude, in the spiritual lesson that we learn from that. He wants godly qualities in us carnal human beings. Sometimes that's hard to bring about in us.

I read one time where successful people are very generous people. Not always, because I've known contractors who say, "Really rich people are some of the hardest people to get paid from. And sometimes they're very generous. They're generous with their time; they're generous with their money. Those are Christ-like qualities. You can't argue with that whenever we do see that. We can look at the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 where it tells you all the things you can do—have all knowledge, understand all prophecy, give your body to be burned—all those things you can do and still miss the point! There is a very powerful lesson in that chapter.

So again, we can ask ourselves during these days—we've kept the Passover and right now we're on the last holy day of this year—was our focus on Jesus Christ, His crucifixion, resurrection, and all the spiritual lessons we've learned about getting sin out of our lives? Was our focus on that? If we do have that focus, one of the things that I hope we all realize in getting sin out is that we can't do it under our own power. We just can't do it. A lot of times, we'll try and we do have to expend some of our effort, but in many cases we can't do it. It's only through that sacrifice, that living Christ that we get that power to change.

We have a timeless example of that power that is available to us back in Exodus 13. It's a very powerful example. We review that just about every Days of Unleavened Bread. Back in Exodus 13 when the Israelites were coming out of Egypt with Pharaoh chasing them, we have the story that they passed through the waters of the Red Sea but there are some other things embedded here. In Exodus 13 beginning in verse 21, we'll drop way down in the story.

Exodus 13:21. *And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. (NKJV)*

They could continue traveling or do whatever they needed to do. They could camp with light—one of the things we like to do today.

22) He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people. (NKJV)

It stayed right there. It was always with them. We don't have that visible support today but the principle is the same. There is power being stressed here. Let's go down to Exodus 14:1.

Exodus 14:1. *Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:*

2) "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.

3) For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ... (NKJV)

"They're stuck. They're going to get trapped. They're going to get lost in the wilderness. We can go get them." Verse 4:

4) Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, ... (NKJV)

God warned Moses repeatedly that He was going to harden Pharaoh's heart. He did it after every plague—even the last one, when the hearts should have been broken in Egypt, even in Pharaoh's house because he lost his firstborn. Yet God hardened his heart every time.

4b) ... so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." And they did so.

5) Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" (NKJV)

"What have we done?" Their entire economic system collapsed. Maybe Pharaoh had some advisors that told him that he had to have support for all the projects he was doing. Too bad we don't have some good advisors today. They didn't have the opportunity to have a bailout.

6) So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him.

7) Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. (NKJV)

Maybe this is like the Republican Guard that Saddam had. These were elite troops.

Isn't it really clever of God to give us this analogy to rehearse this every year of leaving Egypt? It's just like us leaving sin, being pursued and we're pursued. There are no more harder hearts than Satan and his demons. Satan pursues us relentlessly. Exodus 14:10.

10) And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, ... (NKJV)

They were terrified. I know I mentioned this example before. I used to work with a man who was in the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. He said it was the most terrifying thing. All of a sudden there were German tanks all around them and nobody could get away. Everybody was getting machine gunned or run over. He said it was terrifying thing. It was the kind of situation maybe with that type of fear that the Israelites had here.

10b) ... and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.

11) Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?" (NKJV)

"Are you just torturing us?" The Israelites complained. They thought they were being freed. That's what they thought. Here they look up and—they weren't tanks, but they may have been something just as terrifying—there were horses, chariots, weapons. "These Egyptians are going to capture us again and it will be ten times worse than we had it before." That's what they probably were thinking, but they continued to whine.

12) Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? ... (NKJV)

"We like it. We're real comfortable in Egypt. We don't want to go out in the wilderness and camp out all the time. We don't want to have to deal with the bugs and snakes."

12b) ... For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." (NKJV)

Here's an interesting thing, too, because we have to think about this a bit in relation to ourselves. Here are individuals, human beings, and this is a trait of human nature to rather be enslaved than have perfect freedom in some cases. That's just the way it works. It takes a lot of maturity to have freedom. Sometimes, even in the church of God, we don't really see too much of that. We see it with our children. We want to raise our kids so that they gradually let go of us and they are free. At some point we have to stop running their lives and let them take responsibility.

And it takes responsibility to be free. We know that the Israelites abused that. They had a little help from Aaron. People claim to value freedom but in some cases they

would rather have the addiction, the dependency on other things just to stay comfortable. They can't handle the freedom in that way.

Politicians take advantage of that trait all the time. Don't they? They stay in power by creating dependency. Pretty soon—it's not going to be too many years if all the laws go through with the marijuana—we're going to have not only a nation of evil doers we're going to have a nation of potheads. Particularly the young are going to get sucked into this. It's a horrible thing. People are resisting it but we know how things work.

*13) And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.
14) The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." (NKJV)*

In a lot of cases, that's all we need to do! I'll give some examples here when I get through with this section of scripture. Sometimes that all we need to do is to stand still. Christ is going to stand between us and our problems. He's going to give us the power that we need, the help we need with the things we're facing. Sometimes we forget that.

*15) And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? [Why are you griping at me?] Tell the children of Israel to go forward.
16) But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it.... (NKJV)*

And we know this story—the sea divided and the Israelites walked through. Verse 17, here they go again.

Exodus 14:17. *And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, ... (NKJV)*

All of their hearts are hardened now. Satan has a hard heart. His demons have hard hearts. And they're pursuing the Israelites.

17b) ... and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. (NKJV)

People are going to remember. We have the record; we have the account. Hollywood tries to portray that and in some respects they don't do too good a job.

18) Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen." (NKJV)

And we know that the angel went before the camp of Israel. Verse 20:

20) So it [the pillar of cloud] came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, ... (NKJV)

That's interesting because here we have a cloud or maybe the fire. You can think about the refraction in a cloud. How could it be light on one side and dark on the other side? That's an interesting phenomenon. That's supernatural. Verse 21:

21) Then Moses stretched out his hand ... (NKJV)

And the sea parted. We know the sea parted.

22) So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (NKJV)

We know that's a type of baptism. It tells us about that in the New Testament as we'll see that later on. And that ties into all of this.

23) And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. (NKJV)

We know that the waters came back and drown everyone. Verse 25 talks a little bit about that.

25) And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; (NKJV)

They got stuck. That's a common military strategy. What happens to the ones in the back of the column if the wheels just came off of the first ones in the column? Nobody could move. You would be caught. And the Israelites would go out the other end. They get up on the dry land and they're milling around. Horses are screaming. You can picture the whole scene there. Then there comes the water. God tells Moses to put his rod down and the sea will come back. And it did.

25b) ... and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."

26) Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, ... (NKJV)

Verse 28:

28) Then the waters returned ...

29) But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (NKJV)

Again, this was a supernatural powerful intervention on their behalf.

What happened in chapter 15? The Israelites were so excited they composed a song, which is interesting. Wouldn't it be nice if we have the music and the melody to that

song? We don't have it. We don't know if it was peppy. We don't know if it was Country Western. We don't know what it was, but they were excited.

And isn't that a type of first love? They were delivered. We have the picture of a type a baptism. For us, we can say "Our sins were forgiven." And we were excited at that point. I hope that we've retained just a little bit of that but it kind of goes away. But this was kind of a first love for the Israelites. It says in chapter 15 verse 20 that they were even dancing with timbrels, making a lot of noise. They were hopping around. They were excited. They were free. They were excited that they had been delivered by God. Wouldn't it be nice if we had that same excitement today?

Again, in a sense sometimes we can see Satan pursuing us, nipping at our heels, especially when we thought we were doing good. Maybe we had some distance between us and whatever particular sin we were battling. So we can kind of relate to the scene that was going on here. They escaped by water kind of like we do. That's how we have our sins forgiven. That's when we actually go through that symbolic burial in the water. We have that forgiveness from God for our past sins. We have that undeserved grace (that we didn't like to talk about too much in the past) but we were excited about that.

Again, the point I'm trying to make is our relationship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ—the risen Jesus Christ, the living Jesus Christ—has to be more than head knowledge. It has to be more than just understanding. It has to be more than just intellectual pursuit for us. It should be something we're excited about.

Again, sometimes it's hard to hang onto that but as we go through the holy days, as we rehearse the holy days—the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles—all of these things, hopefully, become clearer to us every year. We get another little piece of the puzzle that we put into place in our lives and it should generate a bit of excitement for us. At the very least it should make us want to ask God, "What do you want me to do? How do you want me to treat people? How can I conduct my life better to please you? How can I become more like Christ?" That's the kind of excitement that we should have because God, just like with the Israelites, He brought us out of a sinful tragic life. He rescued us and He gave us that way of escape. That's all pictured here in the Passover and the way the Israelites came out of Egypt.

Let's go over to Romans 6 now, where Paul is going to reiterate some of this. As you recall Romans 6 is the baptism chapter. It is generally where we go when we are helping someone as they're approaching baptism. It brings the living Christ right into the picture. Romans 6 beginning in verse 3:

Romans 6:3. *Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (NKJV)*

We picture His death on the Passover.

4) Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father [by His power], even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5) For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, (NKJV)

We were forgiven, raised in that sense by the power of God, and we should walk in newness of life. We want to deeply appreciate our Savior. He died for us, but we can't worship a dead Christ. Paul tells us that in 1 Corinthians 15:13-15. There was some argument. Possibly some individuals had come into the church (maybe Sadducees) saying, "There is no resurrection." Paul's response to them (and I like the Fenton Translation), there it says, "If Christ isn't risen from the dead, then our preaching is vain and your faith is vain. The Fenton says, "Our preaching is worthless and your faith is worthless" if it's just a dead Christ. But we have a resurrected Christ, resurrected by the power of God. This opens all those spiritual doors for us and it gives us the power to change if we will tap that power.

I'd like to go over to 1 Peter 3. This is a bit of an introduction to what Peter is talking about here; he's talking about Noah and the flood. He talks about the flood being like baptism and how that pictures saving us. Interestingly enough in verses 21 and 22, there is a parenthetical statement there. Like Peter says, it's not about taking a bath. It's not about washing the body and getting the dirt off. It's not about scrubbing all that off. We're not saved by a bath, but we're saved—the answer is a good conscience toward God—and it says here "by the resurrection of Christ." Let's go down to verse 21.

Isn't it incredible that we have that access that we can have that relationship with the Son of God who sits on the right hand of God the Father? That's an incredible source of power. We have to ask ourselves sometimes, "How real is that relationship that we have with that being at the right hand of the Father?" We know that He died, that He forgave all of our sins at the point of our baptism. That should be a tremendous motivation for us, but, again, when we get enough years between then and after the fact, we have a tendency to drift away from that. We always know that we need to continue to change.

***1 Peter 3:21.** There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), ... (NKJV)*

And how?

*21b) ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ [who made that possible],
22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. (NKJV)*

Dropping down to chapter 4 verse 1, which is where Peter starts making the point of what he's saying:

1 Peter 4:1. *Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, (NKJV)*

Theoretically, we should have ceased from sin from that point of forgiveness that we were given at baptism. Christ never committed any sin and our response to that should be that we don't commit sin either; that we cease from sin. We should be like-minded in the sense that we should look at our mistakes and put all those mistakes of the past behind us. I think for the most part we've done that.

2) that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God [as we should].

3) For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, ... (NKJV)

And look at this list.

3b) ... in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. (NKJV)

If you put all those together, there is Egypt, Sodom, Babylon, and Gomorrah. It embeds all of those.

Our reaction to these holy days, to the death of Christ—He suffered for our past mistakes and we don't want to repeat these things. That's what these days picture. Theoretically, we had a clear conscience at baptism. We all did because our sins were forgiven at that point. We have to struggle to maintain that state in our lives. And sometimes it is a struggle, which we'll talk about a little bit more as we go along here. We have to believe and trust God for that power.

I made a little short list of "What ifs?" We can do this sometimes.

- What if you have been diagnosed with cancer?
- What if you have suffered a broken back?
- What if you are paralyzed all of a sudden? We've had brethren that those things have happened to, certainly.
- What if you've had job pressure?
- What if you're afraid you're going to lose your job in this kind of economy? It looks pretty bleak out there if you're trying to get a new job.
- What if you're struggling with an addiction? We have brethren that do. What if you're struggling with that?
- What if you're struggling with your own personality and your own character flaws? When you think about that, it's "I've got a temper" or something and we kind of

blame it on our ancestors maybe. “Dad had a bad temper. Granddad had a bad temper. So, I can’t really help it. I’m just going to have a bad temper. It goes with my genes. It’s just there.” But when you think about that, that’s your battle and we all have to face that to a degree.

- What if you’re struggling with discouragement or depression? That happens to all of us at some point or another. It certainly happened to us in the past from time to time.

You can make up your own list if you have the ambition to do that, or the motivation to do that. Any one of those things can weaken us. They can weaken us spiritually. And where do we get the strength to face those things? To overcome those things? Paul tells us the source over in Philippians 4:13. There is only one source. We can do some things ourselves, but there are a lot of things we can’t do by ourselves.

Philippians 4:13. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (NKJV)*

Now if we just ate unleavened bread, got rid of all the physical leavening in our lives, but we haven’t thought about our temper, haven’t thought about our tongues, haven’t thought about our hurt feelings, haven’t thought about our repressed anger, or whatever our problems might be, if we’re not willing to deal with those things head on and ask God for the help that we need, are we failing to take advantage of that power that we have? We have that power; we have that source just like Paul is talking about here. We have that resurrected living Christ who is willing to help us with everything.

We have a choice. We can choose to never address those issues. We can stay angry all the time. We can stay depressed all the time. We can even choose the way we conduct ourselves; we can choose not to ever forgive anybody for anything. That happens. That happens in the church. We can choose just to eat unleavened bread, get rid of the physical leavening and call it good for the Days of Unleavened Bread. We have a choice to do that. We have the power to do that.

But shouldn’t we be concerned about how God and Jesus Christ look down on us and what They’re thinking when we do that? What if They look at each other and say, “That’s it? That’s all they’re getting out of this?”

When you think about putting out the physical leaven—and I think we used to put maybe an unhealthy emphasis on getting out the leaven. When you think about that physical leaven, how much of that are we going to put out or consume in our lives? What if we put out a ton of that in our lives and didn’t spend one ounce of effort on the issues we really need help with—the spiritual issues? What if we did that?

Again, is God saying to us, “Come on! Don’t you see anymore to these days than that?” We don’t want those questions to be asked of us. Just as baptism pictures, we are a new creation. Then through the laying on of hands, we get God’s holy spirit. And He gives us some power to overcome and to grow. But most importantly, what does that do? It gives us that connection to the real sustainable source of power that we all need

to tap at one time or another. It gives us a direct line to Jesus Christ. We can say with Paul:

Galatians 2:20. *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ [lives] in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, ... (KJV)*

I don't know whether you've noticed different translations, but the King James is the only one that gets this one right. It's "of," not "in." Other translations will say "in the Son of God." It's the same faith, living faithfully as He lived.

20b) ... who loved me, and gave himself for me. (KJV)

So, getting rid of the old man is what these days picture. And that's what we need to be doing even more of.

No matter how hard we try, it's getting harder and harder to be a Christian in this world. A lot of people believe that Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," is an empty platitude. But we know that we can get that strength. We can get that strength today. The following reference scripture has to do with how we live our lives.

Proverbs 14:15. *The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps. (NKJV)*

It's just saying that we need to conduct our lives with wisdom. Where is that going to come from? Where is the source of that wisdom?

I always liked the epistle to the Philippians because Paul gives encouragement to a pretty successful church there. He's encouraging them but he also knows they are not naïve. They are mature enough spiritually; they're not naïve because he says in Philippians 3:17:

Philippians 3:17. *Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.
18) For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: (NKJV)*

So Paul knew and they knew there were problems in the church and outside the church.

19) whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — who set their mind on earthly things. (NKJV)

Purely sensual and purely carnal! Again, looking at the society around us, we understand who the enemies of the cross are, the enemies to Christ's way of life. We can look at our entire culture today—educational system, governmental system, our

own Supreme Court. Look at the rulings that are coming out of the Supreme Court. As we get more and more liberal in those areas, those things are going to become law. You're not going to have a choice because it's going to be forced on you. There will be no getting around it. Everything is up for a vote. Everything is decided according to the polls—which way the wind is blowing. That's what's going to happen.

There are some people that try to make you feel that if you are a Christian, you have to love everybody. And again, we're talking about not being naïve. We know that's not really true. Some people you have to love from a distance. You just can't do that. There are syrupy religions that say you have to be nice to everybody. Again, Christ wasn't nice to everybody. He exposed and condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the rulers, and the lawyers of those days. So, it is not a requirement for us to love everybody without any wisdom, without any knowledge, without any understanding behind that.

Sometimes we don't love people because we simply can't. We don't want people to control us. Unfortunately, sometimes that happens within the church. We need to be civil with everybody but we need to have enough wisdom and understanding to stay away from people that are going to try to control us. A lot of people will try to do that by guilt, saying, "Well, you're a Christian. You have to love me." Unfortunately, we've seen some of that. That is relational abuse. And that's happening.

Back to Philippians 4, beginning in verse 4.

Philippians 4:4. *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*
5) *Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.*
6) *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (NKJV)*

That's the source of that strength! That's the source of that power.

7) *and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard [keep] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (NKJV)*

That's the only power that enables that.

8) *Finally, brethren, ...*
9) *The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*
10) *But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me ... (NKJV)*

Paul commends them for providing for him. Verse 11:

11) *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: (NKJV)*

Paul says that there is a tremendous lesson there for us. No matter what the stimulus is he has learned to react properly. No matter what the environment is Paul says he's learned to react properly. "No matter how other people treat me, I've learned to react properly." That's the lesson Paul's giving us here.

12) I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (NKJV)

Do you see the lesson there—the spiritual lesson? And, again, Paul knows they are not naïve. He knows they are going to have good days and bad days. We're going to have challenges on the good days, whether we know it or not and challenges on the bad days! He knows that. That's what he's telling them. He's telling them too that the rain falls on the just and the unjust. That's another scriptural principle.

We really need to have the attitude that we can do all things through Jesus Christ! And if we do, we'll have the determination to handle those bad days to get us through those things. Just like Paul learned here and he went through a whole lot more than we have. Hopefully, we'll never see some of the things that he went through. Again, he says and I'll put this in the context of what we just read:

Phil 4:13. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (NKJV)*

What he's saying here is "I can handle whatever life throws at me as long as I have that support, as long as I have that help."

We can look at all those scriptures and we can look at the lessons of these Days of Unleavened Bread of putting sin out of our lives and we know that we can have more success if we do actually make those requests known to God, go to Him whenever we need that help. We can have more overcoming. We can change. We can grow, but sometimes we're going to fail. Again, that's one of the lessons Paul tells these individuals here. They're a pretty mature church and he tells them that sometimes they're going to fail.

I'm an old bad golfer but I can't help but to relate how some of those analogies work so well to life. One of the things that golf instructors, golf teachers will tell a student is that the most important shot in golf is the next shot. Of course, what they're telling you is that once you've executed a shot—once we've done something in our lives, messed up—you can't take it back. You have to go on to the next thing. It's just like the golfer has to go to the next hole. He can't undo that shot. I'm reminded of that sermon I gave one time, Play It Where It Lies. Wherever it falls, that's what you have to do. That's kind of the approach we can take in our lives too. We can get the help from Jesus Christ to help us deal with the failures we have in life because we're going to have failures.

Just talking about and thinking about that support and power we have, it does mean the power of change, but it also means that we have the joy of grace whenever we fall short. That's mentioned in Hebrews 4. In the context of what we're talking about, this is a great section of scripture here. I believe Paul wrote this or had this written; however he did it it's his words, his thoughts. Beginning in verse 14:

Hebrews 4:14. *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.
15) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses [with our failures], but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (NKJV)*

He didn't fail to the point of sinning. He didn't fail in that respect.

16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (NKJV)

Sometimes those "times of need" are more often than not. That's just the way things happen. Over in Psalm 51, there is a tremendous example here about dealing with failure because David certainly failed in his life at this one particular juncture. Remember at this point, David's life was a total disaster, a king-size mess by any definition.

Psalm 51:1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.
2) Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
3) For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
(NKJV)*

He couldn't get it out of his head—the guilt.

*4) Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight — that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.
5) Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.
6) Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.
7) Purge me ... (NKJV)*

He wanted to be cleaned up.

*7b) ... wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8) Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice.
(NKJV)*

He was so broken mentally and emotionally he felt like he was crushed. That was a consequence of these horrible sins he committed at this point in his life.

- 9) *Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.*
10) *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*
(NKJV)

In no way we can do that on our own. There is no possible way. Not then. Not now. David goes on:

- 11) *Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.*
12) *Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.* (NKJV)

David had almost everything at that point in his life, but he almost threw it all away because of sin. At the same time, he experienced the generosity and the mercy of God. He had to go through some things the hard way. Let's hope that we don't have to go through that and suffer the way he did. We also need to remember we have that same exact powerful source today. Hebrews 1:1.

Hebrews 1:1. *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,* (NKJV)

The entirety of the Bible points to what goes on to be said here including everything we rehearsed during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

2) *has in these last days* ["Now," we can say.] *spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;* (NKJV)

He made the universe. That's power! That's power that we can tap.

3) *who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,* (NKJV)

And that's where He's still at today. That's where He's still available today.

I'd like to revisit 1 Peter 3 in closing, verses 21 and 22 again with a little more added.

1 Peter 3:21. *There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, ...* (NKJV)

Not just putting out the physical leaven. Not just eating unleavened bread for seven days.

21b) *... but the answer of a good conscience toward God), ...* (NKJV)

And we're not living at that point of baptism. We're freed from it just like the Israelites were freed from Egypt. But at our baptism we made the agreement to follow Him, putting away the sin, unleavening our lives, if you will, not only during these days but throughout our lives. And it's all done by that power, that love, that grace, and that mercy of God the Father and Jesus Christ because it goes on to say in the very last part of verse 21:

*21 continued) ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ [the living Christ],
22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and
authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. (NKJV)*

And if these remain subject to Jesus Christ, how much more should we be subject to Him? How much more should we focus on Him each and every year? How much more should we rely on that power and support of our living Savior? How much? These are questions we all need to ask ourselves.

So, as we leave these Days of Unleavened Bread, let's try to take these spiritual lessons with us and follow Christ the remainder of our lives.