

"Were You There When Jesus Rose from the Grave?"
— Romans 6:4-5

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "Were You There When Jesus Rose from the Grave?", is Romans 6:4-5 → *We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

"It is finished." These last words of Jesus on the cross could easily be viewed as the mantra of many who claim to be Christian in our culture. Lately a common question has been, "What are you doing for Easter?" Preparations need to be made for the family to get together for a special meal with grocery shopping, cooking and baking. If there are young children involved preparations may be made for Easter eggs hunts, filling Easter baskets with candy and maybe a new set of "Sunday dress clothes." Of course, there is worship on Easter Sunday and the Easter breakfast provided at church. I wonder how many conclude their Easter

celebration with a sigh of relief and the words, “It is finished.” And all because we’re celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead?

Unfortunately for many, they act as if it really is finished for them. The sanctuary of the congregation becomes a “stranger” until the next big holiday (or maybe the death of a loved one) because one is finished with the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ in divine service for the rest of the year. However, Jesus’ last words on the cross tell you that because He finished all that was necessary for you to be forgiven of your sins and have eternal life, **it still continues**. So, instead of asking, “Were you there when Jesus rose from the grave?” the better question would be, “Are you still there living a new life today because He did rise from the grave for you?”

Even though you were not physically present at Jesus’ resurrection how do you respond to the news you’ve heard about His resurrection from the dead? I would hope by faith in Him as your Lord and Savior, with joy and excitement over such a miracle of God! The resurrection of Jesus works victory over the power of sin, death and the devil **for you!** The resurrection of Jesus provides new life **for you**, giving you hope amidst a world filled with hopelessness and despair! The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead **makes you alive** in the Holy Spirit’s power! So how does His resurrection and all these blessings **for you** become

yours?

Our text tells you how the benefits of His resurrection are yours: Through your baptism. Verse 4 of our text says: *We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* Baptism is a means through which the Holy Spirit conveys or gives you God's grace as accomplished in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 3:21-22 says: *Baptism . . . now saves you . . . **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**, Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.*

Because of Jesus' resurrection you have the promised assurance that your faith is not in vain as you look forward to eternal life in heaven with Him! Verse 5 of our text reassures you: *For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.* In your baptism the Holy Spirit united you with Jesus in His death where He paid the punishment of hell which your sins deserved as well as united you with Jesus in His resurrection from the dead, defeating the power of sin, death and the devil in your life forever!

As we strive to *walk in this newness of life* today we still have to deal with the presence of the devil who uses a world blinded in the darkness of sin to tempt us to sin daily. He is constantly tempting Christians to act

as if “It is finished” applies to not continuing to *walk in newness of life* by obeying God’s Will. This can even happen by a total misunderstanding of baptism life. How?

Based upon God’s promise that baptism is a means through which the Holy Spirit saves you, a Christian may bring their child to be baptized so he can be saved from eternal suffering in hell. Once the baptism has happened, satan strives to delude them into believing that “It is finished.” Thus, the “fire insurance” is in place and there is no need for any further obedience to God’s will and commands, no further need for continued forgiveness of sins or no need to follow Jesus’ command connected with baptism in Matthew 28:20 → *Teaching them **to observe** all that I have commanded you.* Giving in to such satanic delusion leads one away from worship in the congregation where faith is sustained and strengthened through the means of grace.

God’s Will for your life is expressed in the word of Jesus from John 6:40 → *This is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, **and I will raise Him up on the last day.*** Jesus’ resurrection has opened the door to eternal life in heaven for all who place their faith and trust in Him alone! Our text reminds you that you have a part in Jesus’ resurrection right now! This association with and taking on Christ’s death, burial and resurrection is

lived by faith in **God Who does all the work in us** as Colossians 2:12 says: *Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him **through faith in the powerful working of God, Who raised Him from the dead.***

The true celebration of Easter happens daily as you *walk in newness of life*. It is seen by the way you live with the desire to serve your Lord and Savior. God describes what this looks like in the verses following our text. He says: *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.* (cf. Romans 6:12-13) In other words, you strive to be faithful to your living Lord Jesus Christ in your behaviors, words and thoughts.

Walking *in newness of life* daily also happens when the Holy Spirit convicts you of your sins, “missing the mark” of God’s perfection in your thoughts, words and deeds. You will recognize this conviction in guilt and in sorrow over your sins continue to receive His means of grace in the divine service at worship with other believers regularly. There you are forgiven of your sins through the Gospel proclaimed, the Absolution pronounced and the body and blood of Christ distributed and received. You live whom God has made you to be in Christ in your baptism as you

walk in newness of life.

Because of your connection with Christ, being *united with Him in a death like His*, you get to experience and live His resurrection power **right now!** It is not just something that happens in the future as you confess in the words of the Nicene Creed: “I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come” in heaven. Nor is it just some experience in your past such as your baptismal date. Rather, it is an on-going resurrection in your life **today** by faith in Christ Jesus as you continue to *walk in newness of life* with Him by the power of the Holy Spirit in your thoughts, words and actions. Amen.

Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior,

the Lord Jesus Christ,

Who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body,

by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.

(Philippians 3:20-21)

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.