

**A sure solution. A firm foundation.**

Happy Easter! Remember when medicine tasted bad? You had to fight kids to take it or slip it into something they liked. 10 years after the fact my cousin would still not drink orange juice because of a round of medication that they gave to her mixed into her orange juice. We don't like medicine, and we do anything to avoid it. I had a friend on the verge of type 2 diabetes and his doctor was talking about insulin. My friend immediately started an intense workout regimen to get his weight down and see if he couldn't avoid it. I have another friend who was prescribed an anti-depressant, but he's reluctant to take it. We have learned from experiences, disappointment or often uncertainty, to question, to avoid, and to try to find any other way, even if the prescription is what we need. There are so many questions. Will it help? Will it solve my issues? Will it taste good?

Sometimes we approach God's Word and Christ that way. Is it really the answer, or should we keep God's Word on the back burner in our lives, keep Jesus only as a last resort, or one of many bets we place? It's a sinful attitude that is prevalent in our lives, maybe not in our confession, but often in practice. We strive after feeling good, pleasure, ease, or maybe because of the harshness of life, would just settle for less pain and melancholy. This pursuit isn't all bad. I don't like pain. I like to feel good. But the world's solutions and empty promises, or the temptations that make our sinful nature sizzle with delight only seek to lead us away from Christ, make the holes bigger in our hearts, and cause us more trouble. And yet we are tempted to try them. There is so much wrong and sinful out there. And there is so much wrong and sinful in here, and in here (heart).

That's what Paul saw in the Corinthian congregation too. Yes, he knew they were Christians who knew their Savior and trusted in him for forgiveness and his love like we do, but they were a mess in so many areas – worship was a circus, leadership was pitted against one another, family relations were strained and sometimes broken, marriages were in trouble, they were turning a blind eye to sexual immorality and even celebrating it, they were making a mockery out of the Lord's Supper, and many of their attitudes were loveless. They had taken the devil up on a lot of short-lived, Ponzi scheme solutions which promised everything, but delivered nothing but hurt, sin, guilt and death. And they were Christians!?! And could people say that about us, "And you are Christians!?"

Paul addressed all those issues as a patient instructor. But in all of them the solution was the same prescription and the foundation was only firm in one place. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, *"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on 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, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than*

*five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed. (1 Corinthians 15:1-11 NIV 2011).*

Troubled by our sins, skeptical of every solution – even God’s at times, struggling with life, temptations and it just seems everything, or seemingly having it all but worrying that the next shoe is going to drop, Paul doesn’t hand us a bottle of pills to cut the edge off the pain, nor does he prescribe a ten step regimen to a healthier us or rehab us. He doesn’t give us anything to do, take or feel. He points to one undeniable fact on which we find the solution and the foundation we need – the only one that answers, fulfills, and is true – Jesus Christ is Risen.

The devil, the world, and our sinful nature don’t want you to know they’ve been defeated, that they do not have authority or power over you any longer. Your sins can’t even shame you anymore. Paul got this message from the risen Lord himself. The apostles, eye-witnesses of his ministry, his life, death and resurrection, preached the same thing. This is of first importance: *“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”* Good Friday was not just a moment to feel sorry for Jesus, but it is a lifestyle to remember what price had to be paid for God to release the debt, the guilt, the punishment we deserved. Jesus suffered once and for all, hell, separation from God and all its torment, and died in our place wearing our prison garb, our name tag, our bill. The bill was paid. The punishment totally meted out, the accusations quashed once and for all. It is finished. Good Friday means Forgiveness.

*“That he was buried.”* This was unsettling. Jesus didn’t come off the cross by his own power, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took him, wrapped his body and did what they could to show it respect as they laid him in the grave, the tomb, and rolled the stone into place. He was gone. He was dead. The disciples were overcome with fear and anxiety. They locked themselves away afraid that they were next. Their leader was done. And soon they would be too. I am guessing they did not go to synagogue or the temple on the Sabbath. No celebration was heard, only doubt and fear. The women seemed to be the only ones to venture out after the Sabbath was lifted, but only to go and get supplies for properly preparing the body of their dead teacher, and to properly mourn him.

Early on Sunday morning the women went out, realizing only on the way they’d have to wait for someone to move the stone who had the right wedges or sheer strength, or for permission from the guards, but what did they find? Paul tells us, *“he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”* They were seeing with their own eyes what God had promised all along to two sinners in the Garden of Eden, through prophets, and to the women no doubt and the disciples’ own ears as Jesus foretold time and again what would happen – he must suffer, die, and rise again after three days.

Yes, they had doubted. They were confused, but Jesus rose from the dead and they saw it with their own eyes. He appeared to the women, to the Emmaus disciples, we hear here

also to Peter, to the twelve and to the other apostles, and to 500 of them all at once. Paul even tells us that many of those 500 are still living. Eye witnesses abounded. Jesus triumphed over the grave, over sin, hell, the devil and death itself. Jesus lives. That means his promises of forgiveness are true. That means he IS the Way, the Truth, and the Life. That means I need no other answer to the problem of my sin, my sinfulness and my fears and doubt. Jesus is risen. Forgiveness, life eternal and life right now. When I meet my own death, I know I will be in heaven, and my body will be raised on the last day. I know my loved ones who have died in the Lord are not lost, or forgotten, but at our Savior's side. We will see them again. All of this is ours. All of this is ours because of Easter!

*"And last of all he appeared to me also."* This was Paul's too, though no doubt he had his moments and heard about whether he deserved it or not. Did he deserve it? Paul, a Christian? Who was he to get to see Jesus? He was as good as dead – an object of God's wrath. He was a persecutor of Christians. His goal was to have every Christian, every follower killed. He was in God's crosshairs. But what was God going to fire at him – the death and hell he deserved? No. Grace – God's Underserved love. Jesus rose from the grave not so more people would die in their sins and go to hell, but that forgiveness, life and truth would be preached in his name to the ends of the earth. Paul was as good as dead, spiritually and should have been snuffed out physically. But Jesus came to save even the worst sinners. He came to save Paul and you and me. And herein we find our **solution** and **foundation** on which we can stand, live and have our being.

*"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."* Where do we go from here, from this Easter joy and victory? We go back into our world with a joy in our hearts this world cannot offer or compete with. We go into the struggle that is this life with a larger reward coming to us than all this world's riches – Life now. Life after death. Our own resurrection. Forgiveness for our sins. Grace in which to stand. Grace to salve our troubled conscience. Grace to survive what this world throws at us and the crosses God asks us to endure. It is all worth it. It is all God's gift to us. Grace to truly thrive.

While our medicine cabinet may eventually be filled with this that or the other temporary solution, we know our greatest problem has been solved. Our feet have the only foundation on which to stand. Our lives have a grace-filled purpose no matter what our task, and grace fueled strength that will sustain us. *"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, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve."* Jesus Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia. **A sure solution. A firm foundation.** A Happy Easter indeed. Amen.



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