Sunday March 31st sermon: "Our Joy in Christ's Resurrection! The God of All Comforts (Pt 51)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS, by John Pittman Hey

John 20:18-20; Romans 8:10-11

God's comfort for His people is primarily His salvation of His people by the death of His Own Lamb, our Lord Jesus.

But this Easter Sunday, we especially celebrate the resurrection of Christ. It is a most glorious thing! It brings joy to all believers!

But there was a time when the prospect of our salvation was a sad thing. That was true before salvation had been accomplished, and before the purpose and consequences of Christ's death dawned upon the disciples.

Jesus had told them many times that He would be put to death by wicked men, and then raised again the third day. Christ connected His death and His resurrection.

But the prospect of His death made His disciples very sad. They seemed not to grasp the promise of His resurrection at all.

The night Jesus was betrayed, He warned of their impending sorrow, and how it would be turned into joy that nobody could ever take away!

The disciples were at that time so fixated on an earthly kingdom, that they didn't understand how a dead Savior could actually save them!

Why did not they believe Christ's promises to them? Why did they ignore the Psalmist's prophecy of Messiah's resurrection?

Indeed, sorrow comes at midnight, but joy comes in the morning!

The Lord Jesus rose in victory and power and glory that Sunday morning, and the joy of it spread very quickly!

The disciples wouldn't believe Mary Magdalene's testimony that Christ had risen from the dead. Only when Jesus appeared in their midst, and showed them His wounded hands and side, did their sorrow turn into joy, just as Jesus had promised them.

Their sadness suddenly drained right out of them, when they believed that Christ had risen from the dead.

In fact, there would be no comfort at all in Christ's dying for us, had there been no resurrection of the Savior!

All of God's comfort of His people depends upon the Lord Jesus not only dying as God's Lamb for us, but also upon His rising from the dead! This is true both for theological and practical reasons.

We could never know whether Christ's death for us had really taken away our sins, had not Christ risen from the dead.

So long as Christ lay dead in the ground, under the penalty of our crimes laid upon Him at Calvary, there was no proof He had completely discharged our sins before God.

Paul described how Abraham's faith in God's promise was imputed to him for righteousness, apart from good works. So too, our faith in Christ's sacrifice and promises to us is imputed to us for righteousness!

But note well: Paul demands that we believe on Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead! Thus, Christ's resurrection is tied together with His obedience and His offering for our sin.

Paul then states that Jesus was delivered for our sins, and raised up because we are justified!

Christ rose again, because we are justified by His death! Christ paid all the debt to justice for our crimes laid upon Him, but then He took out our acquittance when He rose from the grave!

Christ could not longer be subject to wrath or judgment once His dying had justified His people. As Matthew Henry puts it, the prisoner must be set free, once the crime has been discharged and paid for!

So Christ was delivered from death when God was satisfied by His cross-work for poor sinners.

Practically, we are comforted by Christ's rising again, because we know He is able to raise up us also!

Christ had promised us that He would not lose a single one of the people the Father had given to Him, but would raise us all up at the last day!

Paul describes the comfort of the Holy Ghost indwelling His people, stating that while our bodies are dead from sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness! We have been raised to newness of life by the imputation of Christ's work, and the power of the Holy Ghost in us.

But then Paul takes it that last step: since the Spirit of God that raised up Jesus from the dead is in us, that Spirit will also raise up us, by the same power whereby He raised up Jesus from the dead!

Finally, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul connects the death and resurrection of Christ as fundamental to the Gospel.

Then, Paul addresses a heretical teaching against the bodily resurrection of believers. This heresy is still being taught today by full preterists and others.

Paul argues from the greater to the lesser. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen, and if Christ be not risen, the gospel is a lie, our faith is in vain, and we are of all men most miserable!

But now IS Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of the resurrection of all of God's people who have trusted in Jesus!

All death comes from Adam, but all eternal life comes by Jesus Christ!

Note well that Paul is arguing that, without the resurrection of Christ, there is no salvation, and there is no comfort from God.

Christ's resurrection is like the sparkling diamond atop the comfort of God for His people!

For all these reasons, the Lord's Table would have been abandoned, and faded into the mists of time, had not Christ risen from the grave. With no sure salvation, there would be nothing to celebrate about Christ's dying for us.

But Christ IS risen from the dead, and so shall we one day!

That clinches the great comfort God has given to His people!

In a way, Christ's resurrection and His supper completes the Old Testament Passover feast.

That Passover lamb was slain, and the blood marks brought deliverance from the death angel.

But in the end, that lamb was dead and gone for all time.

But our Lamb is alive forevermore! The saints in glory adore and worship our Lamb Who was slain, and yet lives forever, because He has redeemed us to God by His blood!

Therefore, there is no sorrow left for us and our Lamb! At the Lord's Table, we know that Christ died, YEA RATHER is risen again!

Therefore we celebrate and rejoice in God's salvation, without any taint of sorrow or regret or fear at all!