

**Luke 24: 1-12; “The Beginnings and Actings of Saving Faith”, A Devotional
prepared for the Easter Sunday Breakfast at church, delivered
on April 5th, 2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

This particular Sunday morning ought to have been a time of great expectation for the disciples of our Lord, but it was not. His closest disciples we are told here, did not believe in Christ's resurrection when they were told of it. The Lord Jesus during the time of His earthly ministry predicted that He would rise from the dead at least three times; telling them that He would be crucified and rise again. (Matthew 20: 19, Mark 8: 31, and Matthew 17: 9 and 23) This truth holds 2 great lessons for us about our own faith which I would like to speak about now, for a few minutes.

The 1st Lesson is this – The Beginnings and the Actings of saving faith are often like the morning of Christ's resurrection.

It was still dark on that first day of the week, but dawn was coming. Jesus had risen, but His disciples were still in the dark, spiritually speaking. Perhaps it is even so with some of you who have saving faith here this morning. But let us be persuaded by the words of our text. God is faithful, and Christ is the morning star of our faith. He is the dawning of a new day for everyone believing in Him. Having saving faith, the Scriptures tell us, depends entirely upon the working of God to give light and life. But once it is given, it ought to be exercised. “The path of the righteous is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.” (Proverbs 4: 18) Here was another day that had arrived, but it was unlike any other, for the Lord Jesus had just died the day before. He was put to death by the hands of wicked men, and all of those who had followed Jesus knew about it. Those who had believed in Jesus and had followed Him faithfully during the time of His earthly ministry were His faithful followers, but you can understand why they were sorrowing. They thought that it was all over; that the cause of the Lord Jesus had come to this grievous end with Him being crucified, and now some of them thought there was nothing more to expect. Some of them were totally unprepared for what was taking place that morning. I would venture to say, that it this is true also with many of us. Perhaps we are not joyful and exuberant this morning. Actually we may be very low because we do not have our faith in exercise in the way that we should.

Well, listen on. For true and saving faith perseveres; it continues to believe in Jesus, even when it cannot see clearly what is going to happen. Are you afraid of the future? Does your soul sit in darkness? Trust in Christ. Because He has risen, even if you have never before exercised faith, your soul shall be raised from the dead by His mighty power. Because He is risen, and you have believed in Him, your body shall someday be raised from the dead, for the eternal dawn is coming. Certain of the women, very early in the morning came to the tomb where they thought the Lord Jesus still lay. They were intending to place the spices which they had prepared on His body, and around it. If you look at verse 55 of Chapter 23 you see it says this: “And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid.” “Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils.” “And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.” There is a lesson here for our faith, from their faith. Faith says this: I will do what I can to promote the cause and kingdom of Christ, even when all appears to be lost; even when I am at my lowest. Even when Christ's cause is to all outward appearances dead, yet I will believe that God can raise it from the dead because I know God raised Him from the dead. I look expectantly to the future, because I believe in the resurrection of the dead. That is what these dear ladies were saying with their faith working by means of love. Their love for Christ was greater than their fears of evil men, or what the future would hold for them. They kept the Jewish Sabbath commandment when it appeared that there would be no greater fulfillment in the Christ who had said, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath”.

Let me ask if you have the resurrection faith of Christ in your heart this morning? There are very few people who “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy” in our day. But does that mean that you should not, even though many others do not? No, if you have true and saving faith, you know that

Christ is risen from the dead. He is the first fruits of those who sleep. You celebrate this every Lord's Day. You know and you believe that the Day of the Resurrection of all the dead is coming yet; and it will be a glorious Day for you and all true believers because Jesus is raised from the dead! There is always reason for your faith to be encouraged by the Christ who is now yours, for He has overcome sin and death. Bring out your spices and your fragrant oils, but it will not be to anoint a dead body. Your spices and oils will be your praises for what God has done through Christ, who is raised from the dead. These praises will be a fragrance; they will be sweet to God for all of eternity. The morning of Christ's resurrection came then, just when He said it would. And will you not remember, that the morning of your resurrection to eternal life will indeed come, as you continue on, steadfast in your faith; you will eventually come to the dawn of eternity, and find eternal and everlasting joy!

Now, the 2nd great lesson is this – That the Beginnings and the Actings of Saving Faith all rest on the Finished Work of Jesus Christ. (verses 2-12)

Verse 2 says, "But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb." "Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." Your faith, this morning rests squarely upon this truth; that Christ Jesus not only died for your sins, but that He was also raised for your justification. In order to be justified, to be declared righteous in the sight of God, you must believe in Jesus. But what do you believe in? You do not believe in yourself and your own strength to do God's will as it is revealed in the Bible. You believe in the finished work of Jesus; the One who fulfilled God's law perfectly, and went to the cross to suffer for all of your sins and shortcomings; all of your failures to do His will; not only before you became a Christian, but also afterwards. The stone is rolled away. The work of redemption is complete. There is no body still lying there. You should understand and rejoice in this truth this morning; that Jesus is risen! Your salvation does not rest upon your perseverance in the faith, although if you have saving faith you will persevere. No, your salvation rests upon the death and resurrection of Christ. It rests upon God's imputing that finished work of His death and His resurrection to you who personally believe. Listen to what it says in Romans 4: 20 – "Abraham did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform." "And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." "Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us." "It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."

This is the message of the empty tomb. Yes, Jesus suffered. And yes, Jesus died for our sins! But Jesus also rose from the dead because God was well-pleased with what Jesus would do for you the sinner, both in your conversion and in living your Christian life. He was well-pleased to give you the grace of faith because Jesus died to purchase it for you. He was well-pleased to accept you in the Beloved, when you first believed. And thus, you not only had all of your sins forgiven, you were justified. You were declared righteous in God's sight. That imputation of Christ's righteousness not only permits God to accept you when you were first converted. Christ's righteousness imputed to you also covers all of your works after conversion. Thus, God sees you in Christ from the moment you were saved, all the way to glory. And, therefore you see, your faith is also sustained by Christ's grace each and every day until you reach that glory. You persevere in faith because your faith is a grace which Christ builds, and strengthens and establishes. Romans 1: 16 and 17 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Thus, the beginnings and actings of faith all rest on the finished work of Christ, and not on you. See to it that you exercise the faith that He is the Author and Perfecter of. To persevere in your faith in Christ glorifies God because the strength to persevere to the end of your life comes from Christ's grace. And even now, you are trusting that Christ's righteousness is being imputed to even the best of your works, each and every day until you reach glory.