

LORD'S DAY 17

45. Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

A. First,
by His resurrection
He has overcome death,
so that He could make us share
in the righteousness
which He had obtained for us
by His death.¹
Second,
by His power
we too are raised up
to a new life.²
Third,
Christ's resurrection
is to us a sure pledge
of our glorious resurrection.³

1. **Romans 4:25**...who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

1 Corinthians 15:16-20 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

1 Peter 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

2. **Romans 6:5-11** For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin.⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:4-6 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit

together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

2. **Colossians 3:1-4** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

3. **Romans 8:11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1 Corinthians 15:12-23 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up; if in fact the dead do not rise.¹⁶ For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Having dealt with Christ's humiliation in Lord's Days 14-16 the Catechism now directs its attention to Christ's exaltation or His glorification. (Lord's Days 17-19). After humbling Himself to the very deepest reproaches of death, He was honoured and glorified by the Father. The resurrection is the first step in Christ's exaltation.

It is interesting to note that the Catechism does not seek to prove the reality of Christ's resurrection, but refers only to the benefits thereof. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that the resurrection was a fact accepted by all at the time of the Reformation. Sadly, it is not the same today. There are those who not only question, but flatly deny the resurrection of Christ. Many today say that Christ lives, but only in the hearts and memory of His followers.

Scripture, however, goes to considerable lengths to impress upon us the reality of the resurrection. Christ appeared to Mary and the other Mary (Matthew 28:1-10). He appeared to Simon (Luke 24:34). He appeared to the two walkers on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32). He appeared in the upper room to His disciples, and then again when Thomas was with them (John 20:19ff.). He appeared to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1). He appeared to more than five hundred at one time and also to James (cf. I Corinthians 15:6,7). He appeared to all these before His ascension (Acts 1:1-3). And lastly He spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus (I Corinthians 15:8).

In these appearances Christ manifested Himself as raised with a physical body, the same as He had while He lived on earth. Thomas could touch the marks of His crucifixion. Jesus could eat with His disciples in the upper room and again at the Sea of Tiberias.

It is important to stress that Christ rose with a physical body, for the Lutherans believe that the resurrected body of Christ was a spiritual body. There are some texts that first appear to support this idea. Christ was able to leave the tomb,

though the stone was not moved from the entrance of the tomb. Christ was also able to enter the upper room where the disciples were gathered though the door was locked. After speaking with the men travelling along the road to Emmaus, Christ suddenly disappeared. However, we should remember that God's divine power can defy the laws of nature. Think of Peter, for whom an angel of the Lord unlocked the prison doors (Acts 5:19). Surely the risen Christ is as powerful as the angels! Think also of Philip, who after speaking with the Ethiopian eunuch, suddenly disappeared and was found in Azotus, kilometres away (Acts 8:26-40). Just as the laws of nature were suspended for men like Peter and Philip who had physical bodies, so the laws of nature were suspended for Christ Who rose with a real, physical body like that which He had while living on earth.

Christ was not the first and the only One to rise from the dead. The prophet Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:34). Christ raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14). Christ also raised His friend Lazarus (John 11:44). However, Christ's resurrection is not to be viewed in the same light as these other resurrections. There is the obvious difference in that these others rose from the dead, only to die again later, but Christ rose never to die again. Yet more importantly, Christ did not rise just as a single individual, but as our Representative, just as we died with Christ, so also we were raised with Christ. Christ's resurrection is our resurrection, just as Adam's sin and death is our sin and death. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:21,22: "*For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*" By His resurrection Christ did not only break the power of death that held Him; He also broke the power of death that held us captive. The Catechism acknowledges this when it focuses upon the benefits, which we receive from the resurrection of Christ.

The Catechism describes the benefits of Christ's resurrection. The benefits are threefold: our justification, our sanctification and our glorification.

Justification

When man fell into sin he became guilty of breaking God's law. He incurred judgment upon himself. He brought upon himself the just wrath of God. Man had to be punished but Christ took our guilt upon Himself, and bore the punishment for our sin in His body on the cross. In this way our sins were removed. He satisfied God's justice for us. He paid the penalty that we would have had to pay.

When Christ rose from the dead, He overcame death. Death was the curse that rested upon us because of our sin. By submitting to death, Christ made payment for God's wrath. Since the payment was made in full, it was impossible for Christ to be held by death. Where the guilt of sin is removed, the punishment for sin must also be removed. The fact that Christ rose from the dead gives us assurance that payment was made in full and that we who belong to Christ are thereby freed from that curse. We are now declared "Not Guilty" by God the Judge. We have no payment to make for our sins. Christ made full payment for us. He did this once for all time in His earthly suffering. His payment was a one-time act accomplished in the past. As a result of Christ's payment, God looks at us as though we never committed any sin. He looks at us as law-abiding people. Thus we may define ***justification as the legal declaration of God whereby He declares us "not guilty" (on the basis of Christ's suffering and death), and "perfectly obedient" (on the basis of Christ's obedience or righteousness).***

This justification is not a gift that we receive automatically. Christ must apply to us this gift which He acquired by His death. We distinguish between acquiring salvation and applying salvation. If a child burns himself, his father might go

to the chemist and acquire (purchase) some medicated ointment. Yet it is not enough to acquire it. The ointment must be applied to the wound. In like manner, Christ must apply to us the benefits that He has acquired (purchased) for us by His death. He must make us share in this gift. How does He do this? By incorporating us into Himself by faith. By faith we come to share in all of Christ's benefits (Lord's Day 7). Thus we see another need for Christ's resurrection.

In the example above, the child might be capable of applying the ointment himself. Yet in the case of our redemption, man cannot apply Christ's benefits to himself because man is dead in sin. He cannot believe of himself. The risen Christ not only has to acquire salvation for us (which He did during His life and death on earth). He must also apply salvation to us by working faith in our hearts (which work Christ performs from heaven through the Holy Spirit).

The Arminians disagree with this. They teach that Christ acquires certain benefits, but it remains for man to apply them to himself (cf. Canons of Dort, RE II 6, Book of Praise, pg. 550). They can say this because they do not believe that man is dead in sin. He is sick, but he is still capable of doing something, namely, of applying Christ's benefits to himself by faith. Thus the Arminians deny the ongoing work of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, of applying salvation to us.

Sanctification

Sin did not only affect man's *legal standing or state* before God, it also affected his *condition*. When man fell into sin, he incurred not only *guilt*, but also moral *depravity*. He became a corrupt being, inclined to all evil and incapable of doing any good. Man's mind was polluted and darkened; his heart was made callous and hard; his will was perverted and bent towards evil.

When Christ rose from the dead, He received from the Father the authority to send the Holy Spirit to dwell in the

hearts of men (cf. John 14:16,26; 16:7). Christ was crowned King of kings, and He was given the authority to rule the hearts of those whom the Father gave Him. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, we who are by nature dead in sin, are made alive. The old sinful nature that we all inherited at birth is crucified more and more. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we are restored more and more to the image of Christ.

Whereas justification is based upon the one-time act of Christ's suffering and death, sanctification is based upon the continuing work of our living and glorified Lord. Sanctification is not a one-time act, but an ongoing process of renewal, which the risen Christ performs in us from heaven. Thus we may define ***sanctification as the process whereby Christ puts to death our old nature and renews us in His image through the working of the Holy Spirit.***

Glorification

We have now seen that the fall into sin has affected our state before God (we are guilty) and our condition (totally depraved). Although through Christ we are justified as well

as sanctified, we are not completely free from sin. There remains in us remnants of the old nature. Furthermore, there remain consequences of sin which affect our bodies, and which are not removed in this life. There is sickness, disease and death. Even though we are being renewed after the image of Christ, there is at the same time a continual deterioration of our bodies. The life we now experience will come to an end by death (unless our Lord returns before we die).

However, that does not create a dark future for us. Rather, there remains for us a bright future. At death, we leave our bodies behind while we go to dwell with Christ in heaven. Yet the time will come when our bodies are raised and renewed, and then we shall receive a glorified body. Christ's glorious resurrection is a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection because He is our Head and Representative. If the Head is glorified, so shall the body. ***Glorification might be defined as the change which the saints will undergo at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, when all the remaining effects of sin are removed and death itself shall be no more, when man is made perfect again.***

Questions

1. What does the Catechism deal with in Lord's Days 17-19? What does that mean? What is the first "step" in Christ's exaltation?
2. Why doesn't the Catechism prove the reality of the resurrection? Is there a need for such proof today? Does Scripture give ample evidence of it? Give some examples.
3. Did Christ rise with His real physical body, or was it a spiritual body? Can you give evidence of this?
4. Who denied that Christ rose with a physical body? Are there some events that would seem to suggest that Christ's risen body was spiritual? How can we explain these texts?
5. Christ's resurrection was not the first and only resurrection from the dead. Name some others. What important difference is there between Christ's resurrection and that of others?
6. The benefits of Christ's resurrection are threefold. Name them.
7. Define justification. How does the resurrection of Christ assure us of our justification?
8. We distinguish between *acquiring* and *applying* salvation. Explain what these words mean?
9. Regarding the application of our salvation, explain why Christ must be raised.
10. Define sanctification. Regarding our sanctification or renewal, explain why Christ must be raised.
11. Define glorification. How does the resurrection of Christ assure us of our glorification?