

## OUR ONLY COMFORT

Our source of comfort is always only in all that Christ has done for us. The source of comfort for anyone apart from Christ will end up being his own work or effort. Christianity is not at heart a religion, that is, a regulation or set of rules, but is personal faith and trust in a person, Christ alone. It is not our doing, but Jesus'. Thus Romans 3:28 says we are justified by faith apart from works of the law.

This is actually great comfort for people broken by sin and death. Because Christ alone is our Saviour, the promise comes to us by grace alone, not earned but received through faith alone.

When people refuse to believe this proclamation of Christ alone as Saviour, often the real stumbling block is the need to repent. In essence, they reject both the cross and the resurrection because they do not want, for whatever reason, to admit they need someone to die and rise for them. They seem to know instinctively that "if I accept that Jesus Christ really did rise from the dead, I will have to admit that Jesus is alive now, that I need Him, and that He has a claim on me. In other words, I'm going to have to repent." In whatever way that the person may articulate this thinking, if he is not yet ready to repent or turn from sin, he will seek to hold Jesus at arm's length. That is why the quickest way to set aside the need for repentance is to reject out of hand any possibility of resurrection. We think if we deny that Jesus rose from the dead, we can escape His claim on us.

When we do come to know our true need, when we by God's Law see the enormous reality of our sin, when we are broken by disappointments, disease, depression, or death, then Christ crucified and raised from the dead for us does become very good news! Christ has taken into Himself everything that is killing us and has let it kill Him. In the same way, Christ's resurrection victory is given to everyone who believes on Him. Martin Luther writes in his "great Galatians" commentary:

Faith must be taught correctly, namely, that by it you are so cemented to Christ that He and you are as one person, which cannot be separated but remains attached to Him forever and declares: "I am as Christ." And Christ, in turn, says: "I am as that sinner who is attached to Me, and I to him. For by faith we are joined together into one flesh and one bone." Thus Ephesians 5:30 says: "We are members of the body of Christ, of His flesh and of His bones," in such a way that this faith couples Christ and me more intimately than a husband is coupled to his wife. (AE 26:168)

"I have been crucified with Christ," Paul says. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who has loved me and given Himself for me," (Gal. 2:20). To believe in Jesus is simply to say, with Paul, that He did it all "for me." Again, Luther makes it very personal:

Therefore read these words "me" and "for me" with great emphasis, and accustom yourself to accepting this "me" with a sure faith and applying it to yourself. Do not doubt that you belong to the number of those who speak this "me." Christ did not love only Peter and Paul and give Himself for them, but the same grace belongs and comes to us as to them; therefore we are included in this "me." (AE 26:179)

Christ alone saves me, for Christ was born and alone went to the cross and rose from the dead for me. There we have the greatest certainty possible, for it is God's own word, God's promise. It is Jesus' cross, Jesus' empty grave, for you and for me. Listen to Jesus' promise, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die," (John 11:25-26).

Truly Christ alone is the way to life, for Christ alone came into this world to die on the cross, and rise from the dead, bodily. He promises to carry also you through death to a glorious resurrection to eternal life. Yes, you can count on it! This promise is for you!