

# THE NEWSLETTER

*A Ministry of Cornerstone Fellowship of Coatesville Pennsylvania*

*The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor  
Mr. Peter E. Jensen, Assistant Pastor of Youth Ministries & Group Life*

610-384-1375 or 610-384-1216  
610-384-6757 (fax)  
email: fbccoatpa@aol.com  
www.cornerstonefellowship1.org

VOLUME 36, Number 4

APRIL 2017

## SUNDAY, April 9 - PALM SUNDAY

Worship services at 8:15 and 10:45 am

Believer's Baptism

Bible classes at 9:30am

## EASTER EVENTS

### Thursday, April 13 - Maundy Thursday

Service at 7pm

### Saturday, April 15 - EASTER EGG HUNT

Hunt begins at 10am

Children up to grade 5 are invited to come and hunt for Easter Eggs

### Sunday, April 16 - EASTER SUNDAY

Sunrise Service - 6am

Worship services at 8:15 and 10:45am

Bible classes at 9:30am

## THE EASTER VICTORY

2 Corinthians 2:14 *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere.*

Although he did not witness the tremendous events of the first Easter Day, the apostle Paul was obsessed with the event of Easter. For Paul the whole Christian drama begins on Easter Day. All Christian theology is an exposition of Easter. All the truths that really matter were born at Easter. In fact, Easter changes everything. It will be a liberating and transforming truth when we accept its meaning in our personal lives.

Into this world came Christ - a world in which death seemed to have the final word, a world without hope, truth, confidence, faith, assurance, security. The blasphemy and torture, the naked pain, and death of Golgotha appeared to be the melancholy finish to a great life. That was the general verdict. Even the disciples felt it. So, two of them trudged their weary way homeward along the dusty Emmaus Road, their faces downcast, their hopes shattered. And, Peter, sick of it all and ashamed of himself, returned to his fishing nets in Galilee.

But what followed was like nothing in the whole history of

humanity. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and was seen by many of those who knew and trusted Him. Those helpless and empty-hearted men and women, so broken in spirit on the day of the crucifixion, became newly recreated individuals. Hesitancy, cowardice, fear, and confusion were swept away by a new understanding of the love and power and wisdom of God. Indeed, their whole way of living and thinking was completely transformed.

When we think of eternal triumph, we are led back across the centuries to a garden outside the old city of Jerusalem, and we are shown an empty tomb. Here is the scene of God's Covenant of Conquest with us. That first Easter dawned and brought with it the recognition that God can and does assume conquest - even over death. It's no wonder the apostle Paul could bear such victorious testimony, *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads in triumph.* God meets us at an empty tomb and brings victory.

In days when despair and futility threaten to overcome us, when the problems and troubles of life get us down, Easter comes again to remind us that it is here in the **EMPTY TOMB** that we have the symbol of ultimate conquest. It is the resurrection that spells triumph. Easter stands for **VICTORY**.

## LIFE OVER DEATH

Nothing escapes death. Death, we are tempted to say, has the last word. But we know that this is not true. It is life and not death that has the last word. We all know that science cannot start life, although in recent years they have tried to make us believe that they can with test tubes and cloning. But have you ever stopped to think that it is equally impossible for scientists or anyone to bring life to an end? You might as an experiment take an acre of ground and say to yourself, "In this acre I will defeat life." First you would have to chop down every tree. When you had finished your work you might dust off your hands and say, "I have defeated life in that acre of ground." But, of course, you would be wrong. You might defeat it for a year or two in this way, But you could not do it indefinitely. Life finds a way.

Certainly, immortality is at the heart of Easter. Here is a triumph in which we can follow the victorious Christ of ours. We have been moved by the awful scene on Calvary. Finally, He cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. Christ was dead. It had been a heart-breaking ordeal on Golgotha. His message had held such promise - a new day seemed to be ahead. Then that awful moment when the night fell so oppressive about them, they wondered if the sun would ever shine again.

Then it happened. On that first day of the week God reached down His everlasting arm and rolled back the stone and released the Lord of Life. Instead of a closed sepulchre, the early visitors found an open and empty tomb, and by it an angel of the Lord with a message and an assignment: *He is not here; He is risen! Come see... and go quickly and tell...* Filled with fear and trembling, they ran.... Death was defeated! Life had conquered! Jesus lived!!

Death, however, is one fact that we cannot deny. If we say it does not exist, within five minutes a passing funeral may proclaim our folly. Only a fool would treat death lightly. Its presence hushes the spirit of man. Every normal person stands in awe of its power. And, little wonder that mankind stands in awe of death. This is the enemy with which Jesus came to grips. From Friday until Easter, it looked as though death had won the contest. All the evil forces of the world had assembled for one vast assault on the soul of Jesus and it would seem that their victory was complete and overwhelming. He was dead. There was no mistaking that. When they took his body down from the cross, there was no life, no pulse, no respiration - Jesus was dead!

But against this dark, forbidding background Easter dawned with radiant splendor. Out of the shadow of the tomb stepped forth the Conqueror. Cowards were changed into heroes. Stammerers became eloquent; and confused and bewildered men suddenly glimpsed the divine purpose in the life, death and resurrection of their Master. Peter said, *It was not possible that death should hold him.*

Easter, then, is first and foremost, a celebration of the victory of life over death. *Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph.*

## GOODNESS OVER EVIL

If you want to see the real dimensions of goodness, look at Jesus. It is no exaggeration to say that in the crucifixion, Jesus appears as goodness personified. When He was betrayed, He continued to love; when he was denied, He continued to be loyal; and when He was crucified, He continue to be forgiving.

If you want to see the dimensions of evil, look at the forces that

put Jesus to death. But the message of Easter is that even these kinds of evil do not have the last word. For even though the church and the state combined to put Jesus to death, God restored him to life. Who killed Jesus? Organized religion... organized business... organized politics....the church!

The death of Jesus appeared to put evil back in the saddle again. The disappointed crowd, the plotting leaders, and conquering Romans might seem to have carried the day. People went home from Calvary and picked up the strands of life again, thinking how fine it would have been if Jesus could have been the Messiah. But evil seemed to have won.

However, Easter demonstrated that evil's control is always temporary. Evil is unnatural in God's universe. Someone has suggested that while Caiaphas may win the battle, God always wins the war.

Here, then, is God's Covenant at the heart of our Easter faith. Good will triumph over evil, because it is of God. And we share that triumph when through faith we create the climate in which faith can grow and thrive and evil shrivel. *Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph.*

## HOPE OVER DESPAIR

Easter comes to turn disaster to triumph, to provide victory for our Christian hope over the despair that seems so widespread today. One cannot see the cross without looking beyond and seeing the tomb in the garden. Today at the center of our worship we have the empty cross. There is no Christ hanging there, for the cross is the symbol of God's triumph over evil, and death and despair.

From the cross to the empty tomb, from death to life, from despair to hope - this is the direction of our faith. And, if you despair today, if you have lost hope, be assured that you are looking in the wrong direction. For the direction of the Christian points Godward and hopeward in every situation regardless of how despairing it may seem to be.

The hope of life beyond death is universal. But hope is always mixed with fear. The resurrection marks the victory of that hope over fear. Columbus as we know discovered a new world. But he did much more than that. He dispelled an ancient fear - that if you sailed far enough on the ocean you would fall off the edge. Sailing to America laid that fear to rest because he went beyond the horizon and came back. The resurrection marked the end of men's fear of death in exactly the same way. Because Jesus went beyond death and came back.

This, then, is what the resurrection stands for - the victory of life over death, of goodness over evil, of hope over despair and fear. *Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph.*

Consider how the fears and hopes of mankind are gathered up in the account of the two men walking on the way to Emmaus on Easter afternoon. They were going back to gather up the loose ends of life they had left to follow Jesus... *We had hoped...* they said. Here is all the despair of desolate hearts. Then they realized Jesus had been with them and they recalled, *Did not our hearts burn...* Their burning hearts is the part of faith that leads from despair to the triumph of hope.

## THE RESULTS OF THE CROSS

The death of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago was not just a heroic act that caught the imagination of a band of religious idealists. Nor was it an act of weakness.

It was a loving, courageous, death-defying mission of rescue. The result is that the person who trusts in Jesus Christ is changed in his relationship to God. He is changed in his relationship to his own sin. And his future is changed, both for this life and the life to come.

That change is spelled out in four basic concepts that show the results of what Christ did for us. Here is what is ours once we have accepted the sacrificial, substitutionary death of Christ.

#### **RECONCILIATION: We are at peace with God.**

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He made it possible for us to be reconciled to God and restored to fellowship with Him by faith in Christ. Enmity is turned to friendship, alienation to sonship, hostility to faith, and hatred to love because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Romans 5:1,10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20-22).

#### **JUSTIFICATION: We are declared right before God.**

When Jesus Christ died, He absorbed our punishment. Therefore, when we believe in Him, our sins are no longer held against us (Romans 3:24; 4:5; 5:1,9; 8:30-31; Titus 3:4-7).

#### **REDEMPTION: We are ransomed from our sin and condemnation.**

The death of Christ also means we have been bought out of bondage to sin and Satan. The ransom price for our sin has been paid in full (Matthew 20:28; Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 3:13; 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

#### **PROPITIATION: We are free from God's wrath.**

This is possible because an acceptable offering has been made on our behalf. The offering has been made to appease God, to turn His wrath from us (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

Look again at the cross. Look at the One dying there. He never sinned, yet He is on the cross to bear the penalty for the sins of the whole world. He is dying there on your behalf. That should be you on that cross.

It's an ugly scene, isn't it? It shows us how terrible sin really is, and what a horrible price had to be paid to set us free from it. If you are a Christian, coming one more time to the cross should fill your heart with gratitude for what Christ did for you there. As your sacrifice and substitute, He made it possible for you to be forgiven and to be saved from your sin. Why don't you give Him your thanks right now? Then determine to walk in obedience to God.

If you are not a Christian, won't you trust Him as your Savior? Your sin is real. You cannot do anything at all about it – except to trust in Jesus Christ. Don't wait. Tell Him that you believe in Him as your personal Savior. Ask Him to save you. He will, because it was for you that He died on that excruciating cross. He was your sacrifice. He paid the penalty for your sin. Trust Him now!

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16*

## **HE IS RISEN**

(Part 1)

Over 20 centuries ago, in the darkness of a sealed tomb in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire, an event took place so tremendous that it humbles the mind and staggers the imagination. Some time between sundown on the day we now call Friday and sunrise on the day we now call Sunday, life came back to a lifeless form within that tomb. Death had claimed the spirit that inhabited that body, but death was not strong enough to hold it. That spirit was so good, so powerful, so loving, so free, so divine that it overcame the ultimate terror that all men must face and proclaimed the triumphant message: "Because I live, you shall live also!"

The realization that something stupendous had happened came very gradually and gently to the sorrowing followers of Jesus. Early on the morning of the day after the Sabbath – a Sabbath filled with gloom and despair for all of them – Mary Magdalene and some of the other women came to the garden tomb bearing additional spices with which to anoint the body of Jesus. They wondered, as they walked, how they would remove the heavy stone that sealed the tomb, but when they came to the grave they saw that it had already been rolled away.

All sorts of anxious thoughts flashed through their minds. Perhaps the Romans had come and removed the body. Perhaps the servants of the high priest had discovered it and taken it away. Through the narrow opening they could see that it was gone. Full of alarm, they ran to find Peter and John, and told them that the Lord's body was missing.

Equally dismayed, both men ran as fast as they could to the sepulchre. John, slender and younger, outran the big fisherman. Arriving first, he was afraid to go into the tomb, but he saw the linen burial clothes lying there. When Peter came panting up, he did not hesitate, but in his impetuous way pushed straight in. The tomb was empty. Both men stared wordlessly at the linen that had wrapped his body. John's Gospel tells us, in vivid and compellingly authentic detail, that the napkin that had been around the head of Jesus was not with the other grave clothes. It was wrapped together in a place by itself.

Baffled and deeply troubled, the two disciples went back home. But Mary Magdalene stayed behind, weeping. Suddenly she saw two figures, dressed in white, sitting where the head and feet of Jesus had rested. When they asked her why she was weeping, she replied confusedly that it was because someone had taken the Lord's body away and she didn't know where they had put it.

Perhaps she heard a sound behind her. In any case, she turned and saw someone standing there. The rising sun may have been behind him, and at first Mary thought it was the man in charge of the garden. She begged him to tell her what had happened. But then the figure spoke to her in the wonderful, resonant voice she knew so well. Just one word: "Mary!" but it was enough. "Master!" she cried out in an indescribable blend of love, of joy, of incredulity, of awe, of wonder. She fell at His feet and tried to embrace His knees, but He told her gently not to touch Him. He instructed her, rather, to go and tell the disciples that He was preparing to ascend to "my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

When the overjoyed woman burst into the house where Peter and John were, they could not bring themselves to believe her. Was she hysterical from grief? Was she hallucinating? Had someone played a cruel trick on her? They made her repeat her story over and over. It did not vary. The Lord was risen. He was

alive. She had seen Him, spoken with Him.

## HE IS RISEN

(Part 2)

### THE REST OF THE STORY

As the sun rose higher, they summoned all the disciples they could reach. Most were in hiding, because they were afraid that the same forces that had crucified Jesus would now try to destroy them also. When most of them had gathered, they locked the doors and began a tense and uncertain discussion of what Peter and John had found and what Mary Magdalene had said. What did it mean? Had someone robbed the grave? Why? Had Mary had a vision? Had she seen a ghost? Was she just hysterical? How could Jesus possibly be alive when dozens of witnesses had seen Him die, had handled His lifeless body, had sealed it in a tomb?

Luke tells the story slightly differently. After Mary had seen the Master, and after Peter and John had verified that the tomb was empty, Luke says that two of the disciples were walking to a village called Emmaus, not far from Jerusalem. As they walked they were talking of the shattering events of the past twenty-four hours. Suddenly they met a stranger on the road. It was Jesus Himself, but they did not know Him – evidently there was something about Him or His new condition that made recognition impossible until he willed otherwise.

The two disciples were amazed to find a person who apparently knew nothing of the grim happenings of the past few days. When they tried to share their sorrow with the stranger, he began to explain to them why the Messiah had to suffer, citing Scriptural references so compelling that when they reached their destination they begged Him to stay the night with them.

He agreed, but when they sat down to supper and He took the bread, broke it and blessed it, and gave it to them, something in the way He handled the bread – an old-time gesture – revealed Him. Then suddenly “their eyes were opened, and they knew him.” But before they could say a word, He vanished out of their sight. Astounded, they said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?” Every time I read that wonderfully human phrase I think that if only we were more attuned spiritually, our own hearts would burn more often with an intuitive realization of the unseen presence of the Lord.

Hurrying back to Jerusalem in “the same hour” (you may be sure they wasted no time!), the two disciples told the others what had happened. And while they were telling the story, in what surely was the most dramatic confirmation any story ever had, Jesus appeared among them.

Again, they were “terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.” But again He calmed and soothed them, showing them the wounds in His hands and feet, urging them to touch and handle Him, for, as He said with a smile, “a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” When He saw that some of them still “believed not for joy,” he asked for food, and ate a piece of broiled fish and part of a honeycomb to show that it was truly Himself, alive and in the flesh.

On still other occasions during the next forty days the Lord appeared to this little band of men. Their own actions are proof of it. From a terrified and disorganized group of demoralized and leaderless men, they suddenly became the inspired and fearless vanguard of a movement that was to change the world. Something out-of-this-world must have happened to them. Something out-of-this-world *did* happen to them. The risen Christ

happened to them.

The last time the Lord was with the disciples was in Jerusalem. He had promised them that when He left them He would send the Holy Spirit to comfort and strengthen them. Now he told them not to leave Jerusalem until this happened. Then he led them out of the city to the little town of Bethany, where He had raised Lazarus from the dead. There, Luke says, “He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”

While His followers watched in awe and reverence, two angels appeared to them promising that “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” This prediction, which Jesus Himself also made, is one that Christians everywhere are waiting patiently to see fulfilled.

Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples gathered for the harvest feast known as Pentecost. Suddenly the house was filled with “a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.” At the same time, the Holy Spirit descended on them in the form of “cloven tongues like as of fire.” Enormous power flowed into each individual present, power to speak in such a way that no matter who heard them, the hearer heard their words in his own language. This was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which many faithful Christians are receiving in our own time.

So our story ends here, on this mighty note of hope and faith. Hope that each one of us someday will be with our Savior in the many mansions of His Father’s house. Faith that, as He promised, He is with us always, even to the end of the world.

### READ YOUR BIBLE

*As EASTER approaches, let’s continue the habit of reading the Bible through completely each year. May God bless you as you immerse yourself in His word.*

The month of April

- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. 1 Sam 24-27, Psalm 85       | 16. 1 Kings 12-14, Psalm 98    |
| 2. 1 Sam 28-31, Psalm 86       | 17. 1 Kings 15-17, Psalm 99    |
| 3. 2 Sam 1-3, Psalm 87         | 18. 1 Kings 18-20, Psalm 100   |
| 4. 2 Sam 4-6, Psalm 88         | 19. 1 Kings 21-22, Psalm 101   |
| 5. 2 Sam 7-10, Psalm 89:1-18   | 20. 2 Kings 1-3, Psalm 102     |
| 6. 2 Sam 11-12, Psalm 89:19-37 | 21. 2 Kings 4-5, Psalm 103     |
| 7. 2 Sam 13-15, Psalm 89:38-52 | 22. 2 Kings 6-8, Psalm 104     |
| 8. 2 Sam 16-18, Psalm 90       | 23. 2 Kings 9-11, Ps105:1-36   |
| 9. 2 Sam 19-21, Psalm 91       | 24. 2 Kings 12-14, Ps105:37-45 |
| 10. 2 Sam 22-24, Psalm 92      | 25. 2 Kings 15-17, Ps 106:1-15 |
| 11. 1 Kings 1-2, Psalm 93      | 26. 2 Kings 18-20, Ps106:16-48 |
| 12. 1 Kings 3-5, Psalm 94      | 27. 2 Kings 21-23, Ps 107:1-22 |
| 13. 1 Kings 6-7, Psalm 95      | 28. 2 Kings 24-25, Ps107:23-43 |
| 14. 1 Kings 8-9, Psalm 96      | 29. 1 Chron 1-3, Psalm 108     |
| 15. 1 Kings 10-11, Psalm 97    | 30. 1 Chron 4-6, Psalm 109     |

### SERVICE OF BELIEVER’S BAPTISM

On Palm Sunday, April 9, we will have the honor of witnessing and participating in the service of Believer’s Baptism at both services. On that morning a number of people, young and older, will profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and follow Him through the waters of baptism. As each one is baptized, we have the opportunity to renew our own baptismal vows as we hear them acknowledge their belief in God as their Father, Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and the Holy Spirit as their Comforter. What a GLORIOUS WAY to begin Holy Week! You won’t want to miss this beautiful service!

SEARCH PUZZLE

The following is provided as a Bible search puzzle. Find the words printed in bold type in the following. When a phrase is bold and underlined, those words will be found together in the puzzle grid. Once you have found all the search words, begin at the top left-hand corner of the puzzle and read the leftover letters in order – they will spell out the trivia question for the puzzle. If you run into the letter “X,” the question is complete. The translation used is King James Version.

THE RESURRECTION – Matthew 28:5-10

I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen... Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Grid of letters for the search puzzle. The grid contains 15 rows and 13 columns of letters.

When the angel rolled back the stone, why did the grave keepers shake and become like dead men? (for fear of Jesus Matthew 28:4)

GRACE

The story is told of a judge presiding at a court in the poorest section of the city. It was a bitterly cold night during the hardest years of the Great Depression. A haggard, shabbily dressed old woman was brought before him. Charged with having stolen a loaf of bread, she made no attempt to deny the charges. Her daughter’s husband had abandoned the family, she said. Her daughter was sick, and her two grandchildren were starving.

However, the victimized shopkeeper refused to drop the charges. He felt he needed to set an example for a bad neighborhood.

The judge let out a deep sigh. Looking at the woman, he told her the law left him no alternative. She was guilty, and the penalty was ten dollars (an obviously impossible amount for the woman) or ten days in jail. But, as he pronounced her sentence, he pulled out a ten-dollar bill and gave it to the bailiff to pay her fine. Then, with a bang of the gavel, it was over.

That old woman must have gone home exhausted from the roller coaster of emotions she had experienced. She had escaped a penalty she legally deserved and received an unexpected and undeserved blessing.

When we hear the word GRACE, we may think of the judge’s actions. Or we may picture attributes of elegance, charm or beauty. But when Christians talk about “grace,” they mean something much more significant. God is completely holy and without sin, and He requires that we also be holy. However, we are all sinners and can never meet His perfect standard. But God is a God of grace and that changes everything. Grace is the generous character of the God who displays unmerited, undeserved, and abundant favor to undeserving sinners.

God sent His Son Jesus – who is without sin – to pay the debt for our sin. Because He died and rose again, people who deserve God’s penalty for their wrongdoing can receive the very opposite – forgiveness and life that never ends. All who accept Jesus’ payment for sin are declared perfect and holy and can now enter into a relationship with God. That is why “grace” is a one-word explanation of why Christians celebrate Easter.

The Bible says it simply: “You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make us rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). The Lord Jesus, God’s eternal Son, was rich beyond imagining. Yet He willingly left heaven and set aside the privileges that were rightfully His to embrace the poverty of our humanity. As a man, he did not embrace the lifestyle of the rich, famous and powerful. Rather, He lived as an ordinary working person, surrounded by poverty and suffering. Most of all, He died a cruel, violent, unjust death at the hands of evil people. Nothing was further from the wealth of heaven than His ugly death on the cross.

Yet that painful death was the very reason He came from heaven to earth. By His death, He paid the penalty of human sins. He was not a helpless victim. He died in the place of all who would put their faith and trust in Him. That His death was no ordinary one was confirmed by His triumphant resurrection on the first Easter morning. That is how we become rich through His poverty. Through His death, those who believe are fully and freely forgiven, brought into the family of God, and blessed with countless spiritual blessings. The Easter events are the fountainhead from which God’s grace flows freely.

In most cases the world works on a very simple principle: “I worked for it; I earned it; I deserve it.” But the grace of God is something radically different. We can’t do enough to earn God’s favor, not because He is hard to please, but because our sins always bring us up short of God’s holy standard. Grace is God taking the initiative to solve the problem. It comes as an amazingly personal gift. It isn’t an impersonal force or a commodity He dispenses. Grace is God giving Himself because of who He is, not because of who we are, and despite what we’ve done. He is under no obligation to treat us with grace. Yet He

does. What we cannot deserve or earn, we can receive because He gives freely and fully through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The one qualification we need bring is the humility to recognize that we do not deserve God's grace. Grace means not getting the punishment we deserve and instead receiving the opposite: God's approval, acceptance, and forgiveness. These are ours through the death of our Lord Jesus in our place and on our behalf.

God's grace comes as a full payment, not a partial one. He does it all. We have nothing but our own sins to contribute. Despite what most people believe, we aren't asked to contribute as much as we can, so that God can "top off" our efforts to meet the basic requirements. We are saved completely by grace; it is a gift of God and we can do nothing to earn it (Ephesians 2:8-9). But just because salvation comes free to us does not mean it is without cost. God's salvation comes at the cost of the death of His one and only Son. He doesn't simply excuse our debt or ignore it. He eliminates it by paying it fully, transferring it to His own account on the cross.

When the old woman left the judge's courtroom, her debt had been paid in full. The courts had no further claim on her. So it is with God's grace. At every point of our life experience we encounter the grace of God. That is why the Bible says He is "rich in kindness and grace" (Ephesians 2:7). At every stage of life, with all of its challenges and difficulties, God's promise is that His grace will be both sufficient and available (2 Corinthians 12:9).

When asked what made Christianity unique among the world's religions, C.S.Lewis declared with certainty, "Oh, that's easy. It's GRACE." Every other religion, in one form or another, claims that one has to *earn* the favor of the gods. Details differ, but the message is clear: *DO* something. But the Christian gospel is entirely different. The message is *DONE*, because God Himself took the initiative to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our guilt, shame and brokenness on Himself and offers eternal life and forgiveness to any and all who will trust in Him. Salvation is not earned; it is given, and given freely.

And that is only the beginning. We don't just "get in" by grace, we live by it. God's grace is always there, whatever our need. From first to last, the Christian life is all about the amazing grace of our gracious God. That is why the Bible says of Jesus, "From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another"(John 1:16). There is an inexhaustible fountain.

Easter is all about an empty cross and an empty grave. And because they are empty, our lives can be full. "He is not here! He is risen from the dead!" (Matthew 28:6).

#### MAKING IT PERSONAL

- 1- WE NEED TO ADMIT OUR LOST CONDITION!
- 2- WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US!
- 3- WE NEED TO PERSONALLY BELIEVE AND RECEIVE GOD'S GIFT OF GRACE!

#### GRACE

God's  
Riches  
At  
Christ's  
Expense

**GRACE** = GETTING WHAT WE DON'T DESERVE

**MERCY** = NOT GETTING WHAT WE DO DESERVE



HAVE A BLESSED AND JOYOUS EASTER!