

YOU MUST BE A “GOOD FRIDAY CHRISTIAN” TO BE AN “EASTER CHRISTIAN”

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Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

“But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)

A couple of years ago, while I was out doing hospital calls, I was approached by a man who informed me that he was offended by the pectoral crucifix I was wearing. When I asked him why, he replied, “Because Jesus is alive and Christians should be focusing on his resurrection, not his death!” He then went on to explain that he would not have a problem with me wearing a cross, just not one with Jesus on it (a crucifix).

You hear this sort of thing a lot in Christendom today. Many Christians want the resurrection without the crucifixion, the glory without the suffering. It is not that the crucifixion is unimportant to them; it is just that they do not believe it should be their focus. They would rather focus on the empty tomb. I have even heard some Christians say, “I’m an Easter Christian! What kind of Christian are you?”

The problem with this kind of thinking is that there is no empty tomb without the crucifixion! To focus on Easter at the expense of Good Friday is not only unbiblical, but impossible. Doing so reveals a lack of understanding as to what Jesus truly accomplished on that sacred hill called Calvary.

You see, my friends, it was on the cross that our Lord and Savior completed the work of our salvation. It was on the cross that He was forsaken by His Father to endure the wrath and punishment we deserve for our sins. It was on the cross that He suffered Hell in our place. It was on the cross that He defeated sin, death, and the devil, that we may have forgiveness, life, and salvation.

There, upon the cross, as Christ breathes His last, He declares, “It is finished!” To be more literal, He declares, “It has been, and will ever remain, fully accomplished!” The “It” to which He refers is the work of our salvation, which He began to accomplish the moment He was conceived by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary. He continued to accomplish this work by living a perfect, sinless life, thus fulfilling God’s Holy Law in our place. Then, He completed the work on the cross, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah in the verse above.

The resurrection of our Lord on Easter morning is not the victory of our salvation, as many Christians seem to believe. The victory is won on the cross in full. So, what is the resurrection? It is the vindication of the victory Christ won on the cross. It is the Father’s stamp of approval on the Son’s salvific work. The resurrection proves that Christ’s sacrifice has been accepted by the Father. It is not the last phase of work Christ accomplished for our salvation, but the guarantee that His perfect life and sacrificial death did the job.

That is not to say that we should not focus on the resurrection, for because Christ’s work has been accepted and He has been raised to life, so shall we who believe in Him. He is the “Firstborn from among the dead” (Col. 1:18) and because He lives, so shall we. We cannot help but celebrate this

glorious truth. But, we cannot bypass Good Friday and celebrate Easter. Our focus must not be on the resurrection alone, for without the crucifixion, the resurrection is a moot point. The point is this, my friends: You cannot possibly be an “Easter Christian” unless you are first a “Good Friday Christian.”

Thankfully, the man who was offended by the crucifix I was wearing afforded me the opportunity to explain all of this to him. At the end of our conversation, he thanked me for my time and said that he was no longer offended. He expressed his regret for “skipping Good Friday all these years” and even said that he was going to get a crucifix to remind Him never to do so again. For that, all praise, glory, and honor be to God alone!

It is my sincere hope and prayer that this short article will have the same effect on many of you. If it has been your habit in the past to skip the Good Friday Services at your church and show up for Easter Service, I pray that you will break that habit this year, for it is only when you meditate upon your Lord’s Passion that your celebration of His Resurrection can be truly complete. Try it. You’ll see! In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

In Christ,

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