

## ACTS 10 : 34 – 43 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

<sup>34</sup> Peter began to speak: 'I now realise, how true it is, that God, does not show favouritism <sup>35</sup> but accepts, from every nation, the one who fears him, and does what is right. <sup>36</sup> You know the message, God sent, to the people of Israel, announcing the good news, of peace, through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know, what has happened, throughout the province, of Judea, beginning in Galilee, after the baptism, that John preached – <sup>38</sup> how God anointed, Jesus of Nazareth, with the Holy Spirit, and power, and how he went around, doing good, and healing all, who were under, the power of the devil, because God, was with him.

<sup>39</sup> 'We are witnesses, of everything, he did in the country, of the Jews, and in Jerusalem. They killed him, by hanging him, on a cross, <sup>40</sup> but God, raised him, from the dead, on the third day, and caused him, to be seen. <sup>41</sup> He was not seen, by all the people, but by witnesses, whom God, had already chosen – by us, who ate and drank with him, after he rose, from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us, to preach, to the people, and to testify that he, is the one, whom God, appointed as judge, of the living, and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets, testify about him, that everyone, who believes in him, receives forgiveness, of sins, through his name.'

I wonder, what does Easter, mean to you ? In the secular world, it means easter bunnies, fluffy chicks, brightly coloured eggs, hidden baskets, and lots of lovely chocolate. If you, are a child, there is nothing wrong, with this. For Easter, is a happy day, and God loves, to hear the laughter, of little children; but, if you are, an adult, and **this is all, that Easter means, to you**, then for me, there is something, tragically missing.

Now interestingly enough, the word "Easter" appears nowhere, in the Bible. The word "Easter", was originally, a pagan term. It was the name, of a spring festival, in honour, of the goddess, of light and spring, whose name, in Anglo-Saxon, was Eastre. Sometime, around the Eighth Century, the name, was transformed by the Anglo-Saxons to the Christian festival, that was designated, to celebrate, the resurrection, of Christ.

But what does, Easter, mean to you and me ? Or, perhaps, more appropriately, as a Christian, what does the resurrection, of Christ, mean personally, to you ?

Now, most of you, would probably say, "The resurrection of Christ, means that I, and my loved ones, will be resurrected, with Christ," or "The resurrection, means eternal life - everlasting life." Others might say, "The resurrection, is God's vindication, evidence, proof, of Christ's victory, on the cross, over sin, death, and the Devil." Now, all of these, are good answers. For Easter means all of this - and more, much more !

Now Peter, in the Book of Acts, gives a very unusual, and different answer, to the meaning, of the resurrection, of our Lord. In fact, Peter's words, are a really, a sermon, which was preached, by Peter in the house, of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, who was a Gentile. The sermon, is short, but tightly packed. For Peter proclaims, who the Christ is, what he did, and AND, Peter proclaims the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's Three points, perhaps Peter, was a Methodist.. only joking !!

Now, the introduction, and the conclusion, of this sermon, are pure Gospel gems, for in the introduction, Peter makes the point, that "God shows no partiality." My friends, this statement, is not as shocking, to us, as it was, to those, who first heard, Peter preach it. This is, because, there was, in those early days, of the church, a strong group, who believed, that in order, to become, a Christian, a person first, had to become, a Jew. They followed, the laws of purity, to the letter. They also, considered, the Gentiles, and even the food, they ate, as unclean.

Now, so typical, of impetuous Peter, is that, in his sermon, he hit the heresy, head-on, and he hit, it hard. "God," he said, "shows no partiality." Christ, is the Lord, of all - both Jew and Gentile. Every person, is clean because that person, has been washed, by the blood of the cross. Christ, rose from the dead, to give life, to everyone.

Moreover, it is, the conclusion, of Peter's sermon, that is so provocative, for the expansion, of our concept, of the, meaning of Easter. For Peter says, "He (Christ) commands us, to preach, to the people, and to testify that it is, He, who was ordained, by God to be, the judge, of the living, and the dead." Friends, what Peter, is saying, is that, the resurrection, means, that we, you and me, are to bear witness - to proclaim, Jesus, **as the living Christ.**

Now, when Peter uses, the word "preach", here, he does not, have in mind, the image of a minister, or preacher, perched, in a pulpit. No !!. What he means, **is that WE**, who hear the message, of Christ the Lord, and His resurrection, are not only given the, gift, of a new, redeemed life, in Christ - we are also given, the task, of witnessing, telling, proclaiming the Good News. Yes my friends, you and I, WE, are called, by the Gospel, to go out, into the everyday world, and WE, are to testify, to Christ, as the Risen Lord.

My Friends, when we take, the statement, "God shows no partiality", and the call, to "preach Christ," the message of Peter, comes through, loud and clear, to you and me; for the resurrection, of Christ, is to be proclaimed, to all the people, everywhere, to all those, who have not heard, the Good News – that being, the Gospel, of Jesus Christ, and His victory, over death, and His Lordship, over life. Yes, this message, is for those of the secular world, the world of easter bunnies, fluffy chicks, brightly coloured eggs, hidden baskets, and AND chocolate, for all, ALL, are included, among those, for whom Christ died, and rose again, offering new life, resurrection life. For "God shows no partiality."

In his sermon, Peter points out, that God raised, Jesus from the dead and showed him openly, not to all people - but only to his chosen witnesses. Now, these witnesses, of the living Christ, are to preach, and to testify, to all the world, that Jesus Christ, is Lord. Today, we are witnesses, of the living Lord, and we, you and I, possess, a message, of good news, that cries out, to be shared.

Now, if we were to publish, in the church notices, the names, of those, who had won, a million pound lottery, and you saw, one of these people, at the supermarket, or at work, would you hesitate, to tell them, the good news ? Of course not ! You would not, be able, to keep your mouth shut. You would shout out, "Hey, did you hear, that you've, won a million pounds?"

Now, this is not to say, that eternal life is a lottery, but the Gospel, is good news, about winners. For the theology, of the Gospel, is that all people, are winners. For "God shows no partiality.", for He gives, the first prize, of salvation, and of eternal life, to all people.

My Friends, the implications, of what Peter, is preaching, to us, is that, the best evidence, of the resurrection, of the living, and the life-giving, Lord, is to be found, in our, OUR daily witness, to Jesus Christ. For God, not only desires, to give eternal life, to us; God also desires, to give the gift, of eternal life, through us ! For the Risen Lord, actually lives, is alive, and is present today, in our witness, and in our testimony, of His Gospel. For just as, the Word, became incarnate, in Jesus of Nazareth, so the Gospel, becomes incarnate, in our words, of witness, and testimony.

Friends, in a very real, sense, our lives can be, a "fifth gospel." For just as there are four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there is, a "fifth gospel" a proclamation, of the Good News, according, to us ! For as we witness, and testify, to Christ, the Gospel, becomes alive, in us, and Christ, lives through us. What a privilege, what an honour, what a responsibility.

And today, TODAY, more than ever, our world needs to hear the Good News, of Jesus Christ, Crucified, and Risen from the Dead !! The world needs, to see, hear, our message, our witness, our proclamation.

But, BUT, God, does not ask, us, to do this, in our own strength. For He gives us help. For if you read, what follows on, in the Book of Acts, you would discover, that the very next verse, states, "While Peter, was speaking, these words, the Holy Spirit, fell, on those, who heard the word." Today, you have, not only heard, the message, that you, are to proclaim, you have also, received, the power, of the Holy Spirit, which enables you, to pass, that word, on to others. For God, I believe, never asks us, to do anything, that He does not, at the same time, give us, the power, to achieve. For the living, Lord is alive, in you, and he will enable you, to proclaim his Gospel. For as a friend of mine, puts at the foot of her emails, God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called. Let me say that again, **God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called.** How true, how true.

Today, right now, there are so many people, all around, whose lives, are spent, in tombs, of despair, and depression, because, BECAUSE, they have never heard, a Gospel, that says, God loved them, so much, that he sent, His only son, to die, for them, and that he raised, His Son, from the grave, that they, might be raised, from their tombs, of loneliness, bitterness, , and despair. **My friends, we have a wonderful message, so let us, share it.**

**To Conclude** : as we continue to celebrate, the wonder, of Easter, I want to assure you, that there is, nothing wrong, with hunting, for coloured eggs or with eating, chocolate bunnies etc etc..

But, but, if that, is all there is - if our celebration, ends, when the last chocolate egg, is eaten, then Easter, will have come and gone, without any lasting meaning, for our lives. On the other hand, if we choose, to share, the gospel, and witness, to the presence, of the living Lord, **in us**; then, this Easter, will have been, not just Good News, for you and me, but for those, who hear our words, and share with us, the Easter Life, that God offers to all, ALL people.

**So Finally**: may we share, the gospel of, Our lives, the good news, that we have found, in through Jesus, as a our saviour Lord and friend.

May we live to our Risen Christ's Praise and Glory.  
Amen

## PRAYER

Well thank you for listening, and until we see each other again.  
May may the blessing and peace of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you, and those you love,  
this day and always Amen.

Alleluia Christ is risen.  
He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!