

“The Eternal Gospel: He Is Risen”  
Pastor Wally Contreras  
April 4, 2021

“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” (Mark 16:1-8)

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Zechariah 13:7 tells me “‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.’” Imagine that it’s been two days since Jesus was crucified and buried in a borrowed tomb. Pastor Wally said for me to “put [myself] in the disciples’ place.” When is the last time I found myself in a position that left me asking myself “now what am I going to do” and how did I handle it?

R.C. Sproul once pointed out that “[t]he priests and leaders of the Jews who put Jesus to death did so for their own evil purposes, but the Lord was behind it all, working through them so that the Suffering Servant would bear His wrath in order to save His people from their sin (Acts 2:22–24). Thus, the scattering of the Lord’s sheep as a consequence of the striking of the Good Shepherd would not be an end in itself. Instead, it would be the means to their redemption. Zechariah 13:8–9 indicates this as well, for it predicts the refining of the scattered sheep and their return to God’s fold. And Jesus echoed this as well, for He also told the disciples that although they would be scattered, He would meet them again in Galilee (Mark 14:27–28). Jesus would not be under the power of death forever, but He would rise from the dead and His sheep would return to Him. Indeed, the hope for all of God’s true servants who seem to fall away is that they “will resemble for a short time scattered and wandering sheep, but will at length be brought back to the fold” (John Calvin). Those who have been truly grafted into Christ by faith cannot fall away finally, but they may fall away temporarily. Let us be on guard lest we think it impossible for us to fall into grave sin for a time. If we are confident in ourselves and not in the Lord, we will fall (emphasis added).” In what way(s) is it comforting to realize that those “who seem to fall away...will at length be brought back to the fold” and why?

How disconcerting/unsettling is the warning to me that if I am confident in my own strength and abilities and not in the Lord that I will fall and why?

Pastor Wally regaled us with a story of an event that caused him to panic which then caused him to make one mistake after another after another because he wasn't "thinking clearly". We probably don't think clearly because our minds are trying to make sense out of what we believe is the source of the panic... "How could this possibly have happened?" The default remedy is often someone saying, "Hey! Slow down and take a breath." On the other hand, the angel gave Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome specific clarifications to calm their alarm... "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." To whom do I tend to go in order to find clarity of thought in moments of panic and why?

"Boarding the SS Dorchester on a dreary winter day in 1943 were 903 troops and four chaplains, including Moody alumnus Lt. George Fox. World War II was in full swing, and the ship was headed across the icy North Atlantic where German U-boats lurked. At 12:00 on the morning of February 3, a German torpedo ripped into the ship. "She's going down!" the men cried, scrambling for lifeboats. A young GI crept up to one of the chaplains. "I've lost my life jacket," he said. "Take this," the chaplain said, handing the soldier his jacket. Before the ship sank, each chaplain gave his life jacket to another man. The heroic chaplains then linked arms and lifted their voices in prayer as the Dorchester went down. Lt. Fox and his fellow pastors were awarded posthumously the Distinguished Service Cross (Today in the Word, April 1, 1992)". Pastor Wally reminded me of Jesus' statement found in John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." Do I tend to disregard this passage as not applying to me because I don't see myself ever being in a position to have to "lay down [my] life for [a] friend"? If so, how so? If not, why not?

"Fifty-six men signed the Declaration of Independence. Their conviction resulted in untold sufferings for themselves and their families. Of the 56 men, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army. Another had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six fought and died from wounds or hardships of the war. Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships sunk by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in poverty... John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. His fields and mill were destroyed." (Kenneth L. Dodge, *Resource*, Sept./ Oct., 1992, p. 5.) Hebrews 10:12-13 reminds me that "...Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet (emphasis added)." Webster's 1828 dictionary defines "sacrifice" to mean: "To destroy, surrender or suffer to be lost for the sake of obtaining something; To devote with loss." Do my religious convictions truly rise to such a level that I am willing to sacrifice my freedom, my well-being, my home, and/or my family for my beliefs...for Him? Explain.

According to an *Open Doors USA* article written by Lindy Lowry dated January 18, 2021: “An average of 13 Christians are killed every day. That’s nearly 400 Christians dying every month...just because they follow Jesus. These are staggering and sobering statistics. But our research for Open Doors’ 2021 World Watch List (WWL)—the most in-depth investigative report focusing on global Christian persecution available—reveals that each day of the reporting period for the list, from October 2019 to September 2020, an average of 13 Christians were violently killed for their faith. This year, the total number of Christian martyrs increased from 4,305 (WWL 2020) to 4,761 (WWL 2021).” Was my heart troubled in the least bit last week (or even yesterday) about the fate of Christian martyrs before I read these recent statistics? Explain.

In Luke 21:1-4, Jesus tells me that He “... looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.” Erwin Lutzer once said that “Those who give much without sacrifice are reckoned as having given little.” How do I think Jesus will characterize the “sacrifices” that I have made in His name and why?

Pastor Wally issued a warning: “With regards to salvation, there is such a thing as ‘too late’”, (Luke 12:16-21 and Hebrews 9:27-28). When it comes to my “Who’s Your One”, how much am I really willing to “lay down” for his or her eternal life? Explain.

The United States Constitution, our nation’s founding document, has undergone twenty-seven amendments (changes), including one amendment that repealed a previous one and yet the Gospel does not and has not changed with time. In what way(s) does this reality give me peace, hope and/or strength and why?

Pastor Wally pointed out that “saving faith is child-like in that it does not require total knowledge of all things for it to be true faith (Mark 9:23-24).” What is required of someone to have a “saving faith” and where do I find it in Scripture?

John MacArthur once pointed out that “[t]he resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single greatest event in the history of the world. It is so foundational to Christianity that no one who denies it can be a true Christian. Without resurrection there is no Christian faith, no salvation, and no hope. ‘If there is no resurrection of the dead,’ Paul explains, ‘not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain’ (1 Cor 15:13-14)...If Christ did not rise from the dead, then no redemption was accomplished at the cross and ‘your faith is worthless,’ Paul goes on to say; ‘you are still in your sins’ (v. 17).” What is my response to be that I believe is both appropriate and warranted for “the single greatest event in the history of the world” and why?