



On Solid Ground: Living and Sharing Jesus' Easter Victory Devotion

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Since this is a devotion on Christ's Easter victory, it is only fitting that we begin with some of the greatest words we will ever share: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

I grew up in cattle country. Since becoming a pastor, I have been blessed to help various ranchers work their cattle. I've also spent a fair amount of time in the staging areas of rodeos. I share this because anyone who has ever been around cattle knows how important it is to pay attention to where you place your feet! Sometimes you can't help but step in a mess, but it is never the desire as it is not the most secure of footing.

Good spiritual footing is also important for our witness to the victory we've been given over death and the grave. With everything around us pointing us in the way of death, including our own bodies and minds, it is vital we know without a doubt that we stand on solid ground where God's promise is concerned!

In the popular animated movie, "Aladdin", there are a couple of instances where Aladdin asks Princess Jasmine a very important question. The first time he asked was during a rather harrowing escape from the marketplace. At this point Aladdin had no idea who Jasmine was. But the second time he knew as he began to woo her and sought to convince her to join him on his magic carpet. The question he asked was: "Do you trust me?" In both instances she does and, the rest, as they say, is history.

Unlike Aladdin, God does not ask us to trust in Him—He commands it! Holy Scripture contains many passages that speak to us concerning the trust God would have us live and show! For example, we read:

- *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean not on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).*
- [Jesus said,] *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1).*
- *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act (Psalm 37:5).*

These are but three of those passages. You, no doubt, can add many more. Regardless, we are commanded to trust in Him who has loved us so. We are to trust in Him without doubt or question because He is the God of all creation! He is the God of Redemption! He is the God who lights our path and enables us to rejoice! He is the God who has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light for the express purpose of proclaiming His *excellencies* (1 Peter 2:9). He is the one and only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

When you read 1 Corinthians 15 (our devotion verse is the second to last verse of the chapter), you will not encounter the Lord, through Paul, making a case trying to get people to believe his Word. Instead, he writes about WHY we who have been given the promise ARE to believe in

what God has given us; wrapping up the chapter with his powerful declaration of Jesus' victory over death and the grave. Thankfully, this victory is given to us without any cost to us as all the "heavy lifting" has been done by Jesus. We, therefore, with Paul, are moved to exclaim: *Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

As the Holy Spirit leads us through Word and Sacrament to know the truth of God's Word and to know we stand on solid ground through faith in Him, He enables us to better live out this truth. There is no grand formula to be shared. It's simply that we trust in the Word and promise of God to be exactly what it says it is: a life-giving Word and promise. Knowing His Word well also means we know that we live in a fallen world. It means we know that we inhabit sinful flesh which means that life isn't always going to be pleasant or easy. The Lord might allow or even send a bit of ugliness to touch our lives for the very purpose of strengthening our faith – consider the books of Judges and Job. Such times needn't rob us of our faith, but enable us to say all the more: *Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* For we know that in Jesus, all has been overcome!

How different the cartoon story of Aladdin would have been if Jasmine had said, "No, thank you," to Aladdin and walked away. In a much greater way, how different is the story of a life touched by Jesus! How incredible the joy of knowing God's forgiveness and the promise of life without end! That is the joy that is ours to share as we live out the faith God has given us! We know we stand on solid ground – ground made solid BECAUSE of the victory we have been given in Jesus our Lord!

Prayer: Gracious Father in heaven, thank You for the precious gift of life given us by Your love. We especially give You thanks for the gift of life without end, given us in the victory won for us by Jesus. Bless us to be the blessings You have called us to be. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to not only speak words of faith when it is safe or convenient, but to live our faith for all to see as You lead us where You will. To You be all praise, honor, and glory! This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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