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THE BOOKS OF HOMILIES: Book 2—XIV. Of The Resurrection of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. For Easter Day.

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For the Easter season, I am reading the Books of Homilies, using John Griffiths' 1859 edition (https://prydain.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/the_two_books_of_homilies.pdf).

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Transcript

An Homily of the Resurrection of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. For Easter Day. The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus.

To the intent He would in His person, being now glorified, teach and instruct them, which should be the teachers of other, fully and in most absolute and perfect wise the truth of this most Christian article, which is the ground and foundation of our whole religion, before He would ascend up to His Father into the heavens, there to receive the glory of His most triumphant conquest and victory. Assuredly so highly comfortable is this article to our consciences, that it is even the very lock and key of all our Christian religion and faith. If it were not true, saith the holy apostle Paul, that Christ rose again, then our preaching were in vain.

Your faith, which you have received, were but void. Ye were yet in the danger of your sins. If Christ be not risen again, saith the apostle, then are they in very evil case and

utterly perished, that be entered their sleep in Christ.

Then are we the most miserable of all men, which have our hope fixed in Christ, if He be yet under the power of death, and as yet not restored to His bliss again. But now is He risen again from death, saith the apostle Paul, to be the firstfruits of them that be asleep, to the intent to raise them to everlasting life again. Yea, if it were not true that Christ is risen again, then were it neither true that He is ascended up to heaven, nor that He sent down from heaven unto us the Holy Ghost, nor that He sitteth on the right hand of His heavenly Father, having the rule of heaven and earth, reigning as the prophet saith, from sea to sea, nor that He should after this world be the judge as well of the living as of the dead, to give reward to the good and judgment to the evil, that these links therefore of our faith should all hang together in steadfast establishment and confirmation.

It pleased our Saviour not straightway to withdraw Himself from the bodily presence and sight of His disciples, but He chose out forty days wherein He would declare unto them, by manifold and most strong arguments and tokens, that He had conquered death, and that He was also truly risen again to life. He began, saith Luke, at Moses and all the prophets, and expounded unto them the prophecies that were written in all the scriptures of Him, to the intent to confirm the truth of His resurrection, long before spoken of, which He verified indeed, as it is declared very apparently and manifestly, by His after-appearance to sundry persons at sundry times. First He sent His angels to the sepulchre, which did show unto certain women the empty grave, saving that the burial linen remained therein, and by these signs were those women fully instructed that He was risen again, and so did they testify it openly.

After this Jesus Himself appeared to Mary Magdalene, and after that to other certain women, and straight afterward He appeared to Peter, then to the two disciples which were going to Emmaus. He appeared to the disciples also, as they were gathered together for fear of the Jews, the door shut. At another time He was seen at the sea of Tiberias, of Peter and Thomas, and of other disciples, when they were fishing.

He was seen of more than five hundred brethren in the mount of Galilee, where Jesus appointed them to be His angel, when He said, Behold, He shall go before you into Galilee, there shall ye see Him, as He hath said unto you. After this He appeared unto James, and last of all He was visibly seen of all the apostles, at such time as He was taken up into heaven. Thus at sundry times He showed Himself after He was risen again, to confirm and establish this article, and in these revelations sometime He showed them His hands, His feet, and His side, and bade them touch Him, that they should not take Him for a ghost or a spirit.

Sometime He also did eat with them, but ever He was talking with them of the everlasting kingdom of God, to assure the truth of His resurrection. For then He opened

their understanding, that they might perceive the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from death the third day, and that there should be preached openly in His name penance and remission of sins to all the nations of the world. Ye see, good Christian people, how necessary this article of our faith is, seeing it was proved of Christ Himself by such evident reasons and tokens, by so long time and space.

Now therefore, as our diligent for our comfort and instruction to declare it, so let us be as ready in our belief to receive it to our comfort and instruction. As He died not for Himself, no more did He rise again for Himself. He was dead, saith St. Paul, for our sins, and rose again for our justification.

O most comfortable word, evermore to be born in remembrance. He died, saith He, to put away sin. He arose again to endow us with righteousness.

His death took away sin and malediction. His death was the ransom of them both. His death destroyed death, and overcame the devil, which had the power of death in his subjection.

His death destroyed hell with all the damnation thereof. Thus is death swallowed up by Christ's victory. Thus is hell spoiled forever.

If any man doubt of this victory, let Christ's glorious resurrection declare him the thing. If death could not keep Christ under His dominion and power, but that He arose again, it is manifest that His power was overcome. If death be conquered, then it must follow that sin, wherefore death was appointed as the wages, must be also destroyed.

If death and sin be vanished away, then is the devil's tyranny vanquished, which had the power of death, and was the author and brewer of sin, and the ruler of hell. If Christ had the victory of them all by the power of His death, and openly proved it by His most victorious and valiant resurrection, as it was not possible for His great might to be subdued of them, and then this true, that Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification, why may not we, that be His members by true faith, rejoice and boldly say with the prophet Ose and the apostle Paul, Where is thy dart, O death? Where is thy victory, O hell? Thanks be unto God, say they, which hath given us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ. This mighty conquest of His resurrection was not only signified afore by diverse figures of the Old Testament, as by Samson when he slew the lion, out of whose mouth came out sweetness and honey, and as David bare his figure when he delivered the lamb out of the lion's mouth, and when he overcame and slew the great giant Goliath, and as when Jonas was swallowed up of the whale's mouth, and cast up again on land to live, but was also most clearly prophesied by the prophets of the Old Testament, and in the New also confirmed by the apostles.

He hath spoiled, saith St. Paul, rule and power, and all the dominion of our spiritual

enemies. He hath made a show of them openly, and hath triumphed over them in His own person. This is the mighty power of the Lord whom we believe on.

By His death hath He wrought for us this victory, and by His resurrection hath He purchased everlasting life and righteousness for us. It had not been enough to be delivered by His death from sin, except by His resurrection we had been endowed with righteousness. And it should not avail us to be delivered from death, except He had risen again, to open for us the gates of heaven, to enter into life everlasting.

And therefore St. Peter thanketh God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for His abundant mercy, because He hath forgotten us, saith he, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death, to enjoy an inheritance immortal, that shall never perish, which is laid up in heaven for them that be kept by the power of God through faith. Thus hath His resurrection wrought for us life and righteousness. He passed through death and hell to the intent to put us in good hope, that by His strength we shall do the same.

He paid the ransom of sin, that it should not be laid to our charge. He destroyed the devil and all his tyranny, and openly triumphed over him, and took away from him all his captives, and hath raised and set them with himself among us the heavenly citizens above. He died to destroy the rule of the devil in us, and He arose again to send down His Holy Spirit to rule in our hearts, to endow us with perfect righteousness.

Thus is it true that David sung, *Veritas de terra orta est et justitia de celo prospect sit.* The truth of God's promise is in earth to man declared, or from the earth is the everlasting verity, God's Son risen to life, and the true righteousness of the Holy Ghost looking out of heaven, and is in most liberal largesse dealt upon all the world. Thus is glory and praise rebounded upward to God above for His mercy and truth, and thus is peace come down from heaven to men of good and faithful hearts.

Thus is mercy and truth, as David writeth, together met, thus is peace and righteousness embracing and kissing each other. If thou doubtest a so great wealth and felicity that is wrought for thee, O man, call to thy mind that therefore hast thou received into thine own possession the everlasting verity, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to confirm to thy conscience the truth of all this matter. Thou hast received Him, if in true faith and repentance of heart thou hast received Him, if in purpose of amendment thou hast received Him, for an everlasting gauge or pledge of thy salvation.

Thou hast received His body, which was once broken, and His blood which was shed for the remission of thy sin. Thou hast received His body, to have within thee the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for to dwell with thee, to endow thee with grace, to strengthen against thy enemies, and to comfort thee with their presence. Thou hast received His body to endow thee with everlasting righteousness, to assure thee of everlasting bliss and life of thy soul.

For with Christ by true faith art thou quickened again, saith St. Paul, from death of sin to life of grace, and in hope translated from corporal and everlasting death to the everlasting life of glory in heaven, where now thy conversation should be, and thy heart and desire set. Doubt not of the truth of this matter, how great and high soever these things be. It becometh God to do no little deeds, how impossible soever they seem to thee.

Pray to God that thou mayest have faith to perceive this great mystery of Christ's resurrection, that by faith thou mayest certainly believe nothing to be impossible with God. Only bring thou faith to Christ's holy word and sacrament. Let thy repentance show thy faith.

Let thy purpose of amendment and obedience of thy heart to God's law hereafter declare thy true belief. Endeavour thyself to say with St. Paul from henceforth, Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour, even the Lord Jesus Christ, which shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like to His glorious body, which He shall do by the same power whereby He rose from death, and whereby He shall be able to subdue all things unto Himself. Thus, good Christian people, forasmuch as ye have heard these so great and excellent benefits of Christ's mighty and glorious resurrection, as how that He hath ransomed sin, overcome the devil, death, and hell, and hath victoriously gotten the better hand of them all, to make us free and safe from them, and knowing that we be, by this benefit of His resurrection, risen with Him, by our faith unto life everlasting, being in full surety of our hope, that we shall have our bodies likewise raised again from death, to have them glorified in immortality, and joined to His glorious body, having in the meanwhile His Holy Spirit within our hearts as a seal and pledge of our everlasting inheritance, by whose assistance we be replenished with all righteousness, by whose power we shall be able to subdue all our evil affections rising against the pleasure of God, these things I say, well considered, let us now in the rest of our life declare our faith that we have to this most fruitful article, by framing ourselves thereunto, in rising daily from sin to righteousness and holiness of life.

For what shall it avail us, saith St. Peter, to be escaped and delivered from the filthiness of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, if we be entangled again therewith, and be overcome again? Certainly it had been better, saith he, never to have known the way of righteousness, than, after it is known and received, to turn backward again from the holy commandment of God given unto us. For so shall the proverb have placed in us, where it is said, The dog is returned to his vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire again. What a shame were it for us, being thus so clearly and freely washed from our sin, to return to the filthiness thereof again! What a folly were it, thus endowed with righteousness, to lose it again! What madness were it to lose the inheritance that we be now set in for the vile and transitory pleasure of sin! And what an unkindness should it be, where our Saviour Christ of his mercy is come to us to dwell within us as our guest, to drive him from us, and to

banish him violently out of our souls, and instead of him, in whom is all grace and virtue, to receive the ungracious spirit of the devil, the founder of all naughtiness and mischief! How can we find in our hearts to show such extreme unkindness to Christ, which hath now so gently called us to mercy, and offered himself unto us, and he now entered within us! Yea, how dare we be so bold to renounce the presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for where one is, there is God all whole in majesty together, with all his power, wisdom, and goodness! And fear not, I say, the danger and peril of so traitorous a defiance and departure! Good Christian brethren and sisters, advise yourselves, consider the dignity that ye be now set in.

Let not folly lose the thing that grace hath so precious offered and purchased. Let not willfulness and blindness put out so great light that is now showed unto you. Only take good hearts unto you, and put upon you all the armour of God, that ye may stand against your enemies, which would again subdue you and bring you into their thralldom.

Remember ye be bought from your vain conversation, and that your freedom is purchased neither with gold nor silver, but with the price of the precious blood of that most innocent Lamb, Jesus Christ, which was ordained to the same purpose before the world was made. But he was so declared in the latter time of grace for your sakes, which by him hath your faith in God, who hath raised him from death, and hath given him glory, that ye should have your faith and hope toward God. Therefore, as ye have hitherto followed the vain lusts of your minds, and so displeased God to the danger of your souls, so now, like obedient children, thus purified by faith, give yourselves to walk that way which God moveth you to, that ye may receive the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

And as ye have given your bodies to unrighteousness, to sin after sin, so now give yourself to righteousness, to be sanctified therein. If ye delight in this article of your faith, that Christ is risen again from death to life, then follow ye the example of his resurrection, as St. Paul exhorteth us, saying, As we be buried with Christ by our baptism into death, so let us daily die to sin, mortifying and killing the evil desires and motions thereof. And as Christ was raised up from death by the glory of the Father, so let us rise to a new life, and walk continually therein, that we may likewise, as natural children, live a conversation to move men to glorify our Father which is in heaven.

If we then be risen with Christ by our faith to the hope of everlasting life, let us rise also with Christ after his example to a new life and leave our old. We shall then be truly risen if we seek for things that be heavenly, if we have our affection upon things that be above, and not on things that be on earth. If ye desire to know what these earthly things be which ye should put off, and what be the heavenly things above that ye should seek and ensue, St. Paul in the epistle to the Colossians declareth, When he exhorteth us thus, Mortify your earthly members and old affections of sin, as fornication, uncleanness, unnatural lust, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is worshipping of idols, for

which things the wrath of God is wont to fall on the children of unbelief, in which things once ye wrought when ye lived in them.

But now put ye also away from you wrath, fierceness, maliciousness, cursed speaking, filthy speaking, out of your mouths, lie not to one another, that the old man with his works be put off, and the new put on. These be the earthly things which St. Paul moveth you to cast from you, and to pluck your hearts from them, for in following these ye declare yourselves earthly and worldly. These be the fruits of the earthly Adam, these should ye daily kill by good diligence inwithstanding the desires of them, that ye might rise to righteousness.

Let your affection from henceforth be set on heavenly things. Sue and search for mercy, kindness, meekness, patience, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. If any man have any quarrel to another, as Christ forgave you, even so do ye.

If these and such other heavenly virtues ye ensue in the residue of your life, ye shall show plainly that ye be risen with Christ, and that ye be the heavenly children of your Father in heaven, from whom as from the giver cometh these graces and gifts. Ye shall prove by this manner that your conversation is in heaven, where your hope is, and not on earth, following the beastly appetites of the flesh. Ye must consider that ye be therefore cleansed and renewed, that ye should from henceforth serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of your lives, that ye may reign with him in everlasting life.

If ye refuse so great grace, whereto ye be called, what other thing do ye than heap up to your damnation more and more, and so provoke God to cast his displeasure unto you, and to revenge this mockage of his holy sacraments and so great abusing of them? Apply yourselves, good friends, to live in Christ, that Christ may still live in you, whose favour and assistance, if ye have, then have ye everlasting life already within you, then can nothing hurt you. Whatsoever is hitherto done and committed, Christ, ye see, hath offered you pardon, and clearly received you to his favour again, in full surety whereof, ye have him now inhabiting and dwelling within you. Only show yourselves thankful in your lives, determined with yourselves to refuse and avoid all such things in your conversations, as should offend his eyes of mercy.

Endeavour yourselves that way to rise up again, which way ye fell into the well or pit of sin. If by your tongue ye have offended, now thereby rise again, and glorify God therewith. Accustom it to lord and praise the name of God, as ye have therewith dishonoured it.

And as ye have hurt the name of your neighbour, or otherwise hindered him, so now intend to restore it to him again. For without restitution God accepteth not your confession, nor yet your repentance. It is not enough to forsake evil, except ye set your courage to do good.

By what occasion soever ye have offended, turn now the occasion to the honouring of God, and profiting of your neighbour. Truth it is that sin is strong, and affections unruly. Hard it is to subdue and resist our nature, so corrupt and leavened with the sour bitterness of the poison which we received by the inheritance of our old father Adam.

But yet take good courage, saith our Saviour Christ, for I have overcome the world, and all other enemies for you. Sin shall not have power over you, for ye be now under grace, saith St Paul. Though your power be weak, yet Christ is risen again to strength you in your battle.

His Holy Spirit shall help your infirmities, in trust of his mercy take you in hand to purge this old leaven of sin, that corrupteth and soureth the sweetness of your life before God, that ye may be as new and fresh dough, void of all sour leaven of wickedness. So shall ye show yourself to be sweet bread to God, that he may have his delight in you. I say, kill and offer you up the worldly and earthly affections of your bodies.

For Christ our Easter Lamb is offered up for us, to slay the power of sin, to deliver us from the danger thereof, and to give us example to die to sin in our life, as the Jews did eat their Easter Lamb and kept their feast in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt. Even so let us keep our Easter feast in the thankful remembrance of Christ's benefits, which he hath plentifully wrought for us by his redemption and passing to his father, whereby we be delivered from the captivity and thralldom of all our enemies. Let us in like manner pass over the affections of our old conversation, that we may be delivered from the bondage thereof, and rise with Christ.

The Jews kept their feast in abstaining from leavened bread by the space of seven days. Let us Christian folk keep our holy day in spiritual manner, that is in abstaining not from material leavened bread, but from the old leaven of sin, the leaven of maliciousness and wickedness. Let us cast from us the leaven of corrupt doctrine that will infect our souls.

Let us keep our feast the whole term of our life, with eating the bread and the pureness of godly life and truth of Christ's doctrine. Thus shall we declare that Christ's gifts and graces have their effect in us, and that we have the right belief and knowledge of his holy resurrection, where truly, if we apply our faith to the virtue thereof, and in our life conform us to the example and signification meant thereby, we shall be sure to rise hereafter to everlasting glory by the goodness and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all glory, thanksgiving and praise in infinita secularum secular. Amen.