

EASTER SUNDAY SPECIAL
The Risen Lord's Nurture Of The Inner Man
(Matthew 28:1-28)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

This Easter Sunday, many people need to be nurtured in the inner man:

(1) After our last Sunday morning service, one of our long-time attenders told me that from his observation, the prolonged stress of the pandemic is greatly wearing on a lot of people, that it is taking a toll on the inner man.

(2) His statement is certainly true: a recent article by Dr. Melanie Greenberg, Ph. D., "Stress in America: Life and Work Disrupted by the Pandemic" (March 28, 2021; reviewed by Kaja Perina; psychologytoday.com) reported, "The National Stress in America Survey suggests a growing mental health crisis," that the death toll of the pandemic, fear of COVID-19 exposure, lockdowns, shootings, the climate change issue, political divisions, threats to democracy, the erosion of truth and uncertainty and fear about the future are all wearing on people. The survey added that 60% of adults in America now claim that they find this stress to be overwhelming, Ibid.

(3) It is affecting even government officials: Connecticut state Senator Robert C. Sampson, a Republican from Wolcott, in his op-ed, "The not-so-great divide" (Republican-American, March 24, 2021, p. 9A), told of the stress he faces, that "the Democratic Party" is "constantly . . . regulating our lives and limiting our freedoms, interfering with private contracts, censoring speech, over-regulating businesses, and making policy that ignore individual liberty, constitutional rights and due process." He added that "the campaign propaganda claiming Republicans are racists, fascists or bigots flies in the face of reason and common sense," and that "(t)here are few things we can agree on anymore -- not contemporary public policy, and not even the value of our founding fathers," Ibid.

Need: *So, we ask, "This Easter Sunday, can we find nurture for the inner man, and if so, how?!"*

- I. When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary approached Jesus' tomb in Matthew 28:1, they along with His twelve disciples were in great need of being nurtured in the inner man, Matthew 27:50-66:**
- A. These followers of Christ had witnessed His shocking crucifixion, death and burial, Matthew 27:50-61.
 - B. Adding to the trauma, Israel's religious leaders had obtained Roman soldiers to guard Christ's tomb and they had sealed the stone slab that covered the tomb opening to keep anyone from entering it, Matthew 27:62-66.
 - C. Had the women arrived at the tomb while the soldiers stood guard, the soldiers would have blocked them from their goal of adding burial spices to Jesus' body (cf. Luke 24:1), intensifying their emotional and mental pain!
- II. However, Jesus then rose from the dead, and worked to nurture the inner man of those first Christians while continuing to nurture the inner man of every believer since then who serves Him, Matt. 28:2-28:**
- A. In His resurrection, Christ exhibited power over all that afflicted the inner man of His people, Matt. 28:2-15:
 - 1. Jesus exhibited His divine power over the human opponents of God's people, Matthew 28:2-4, 11-15:
 - a. A single angel from God appeared, his presence creating a great earthquake, and he came and broke the seal on the tomb door, rolled back the stone and sat upon it, Matthew 28:2.
 - b. With the angel's face shining like lightening and his clothes gleaming white as snow, the Roman soldiers were so terrified that they trembled with fear and fainted, becoming like dead men, Matthew 28:3-4.
 - c. Thus, the power of the religious leaders who asked for the guard and seal together with the might and authority of Rome as represented in the Roman soldiers was completely overcome by a single angel from God. Matthew 28:11-15 continues to record the futile efforts of the soldiers, Pilate and the religious leaders to try to handle the absence of Jesus' body over which they had no control.
 - 2. Jesus exhibited His power over death, our last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), by rising from the dead, Matt. 28:5-6.
 - 3. Jesus exhibited His power over the great sadness and depression that afflicted His people, Matthew 28:5-9:
 - a. The angel who rolled back the stone urged the women who had come to the tomb not to fear, that Jesus was not there, but that He had risen, urging them to see the place where He lay, Matthew 28:5-6.
 - b. As the women ran quickly from the tomb in fear and great joy, Jesus Himself met them along the way, He greeted them, and they came and bowed down, clutching His feet and worshiping Him, Matthew 28:8-9.
 - B. This all-powerful Risen Lord then assigned a great calling for His people and both used and still uses His power to nurture their inner man so they can fulfill His Great Commission, Matthew 28:7, 10, 16-20:
 - 1. The Risen Lord assigned a Great Commission for His people, Matthew 28:7, 10, 16-20a:
 - a. Both the angel who met the women who came to the tomb and Jesus Himself who met them as they rushed back to contact His disciples urged the women to tell His disciples to meet Him in Galilee, Matt. 28:7, 10.

- b. When the disciples met the Risen Lord in Galilee (Matthew 28:16), He told them to disciple the nations, Matthew 28:17-20a: (i) Jesus said that all "power and authority to act" (from the Greek noun *exousia*, Th. Dict. of the N. T., v. II, p. 568) in heaven and on earth were given unto Him, Matthew 28:18. (ii) Thus, in going into the world, His disciples were to disciple all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Triune God, teaching them to observe all that Jesus had commanded them, Matthew 28:19-20a.
2. The Risen Lord then both used *and also CURRENTLY USES* His divine power and authority to nurture the inner man of His people so they could and can fulfill His Great Commission, Matthew 28:20b:
 - a. Jesus said that as His disciples heeded this calling, they were to "behold" (*idou*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 117), what points to what **follows** (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 371-372).
 - b. What **follows** is Christ's explanation of His nurture of the inner man, and we explain: (i) Jesus said, "I myself" (*ego*, emphatic pronoun) "am being (*eimi*) with you" (Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.), so the Risen Lord Who in infinite power over all the foes, sadness, depression and even death of His people (Matthew 28:1-17) and as the Lord Who was given all power and authority over the universe (Matthew 28:18) would be "with" (*meta*) or "be in the company of" (Ibid.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 509-511) those who served Him in His Great Commission! (ii) That fellowship would be the experience of Christ's servants "all of the days until the consummation of the age" (*pasas tas hemeras eos tes sunteleias tou aionos*; Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) (iii) Thus, the nurturing spiritual fellowship of the all-powerful Risen Lord will be the constant, daily experience of God's people as they serve Him in fulfilling His Matthew 28:18-20 Great Commission until the very end of each believer's earthly life!

Lesson: *When Jesus' disciples faced their lowest ebb of health in the inner man, in His resurrection, Christ exhibited His great power over His people's foes, He assigned them His great discipling ministry and He provided and still provides great, constant nurture of the inner man as they perform His assignment throughout their lives.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) May we rely on the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:16) to fulfill God's personal assignments for us, and our all-sufficient, all-powerful Risen Lord will provide ongoing nurture of our inner man for the rest of our earthly lives!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In view of the sermon, we **explain** our *personal assignments* in the Great Commission *and* God's *nurture*:

(1) First, Scripture teaches that each of us believers has an assignment in the Great Commission: (a) Romans 12:3 ESV directs that none of us should think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think "with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." None of us should consider himself to be a spiritual "Renaissance Man," proficient in all of the spiritual gifts of the Church. (b) Rather, Romans 12:4-5 clarifies that we have been given different spiritual gifts for different ministries in the Great Commission. (c) Romans 12:6-8 with Ephesians 4:7-16 then direct that we use the spiritual gift God gave us to minister in the local church, that as we thus function, the whole church grows to become a great ministry in the Great Commission of discipling the nations.

(2) Second, to discern **what** gift we *personally* have, (a) Scripture does **not** indicate that we must "discover" our spiritual gift, but the rhetorical questions that expect a negative answer in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30 (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 1 Corinthians 12:29-30) reveal that the Apostle Paul expected his readers to know who had what spiritual gifts. Thus, as we serve the Lord, He clarifies to **other** believers around us the identity of our gift. We should then rely on feedback from reputable believers to identify our spiritual gift. (b) Also, Philippians 2:13 claims that God works [in believers who rely on the Holy Spirit] to "will" and to "do" of His good pleasure, so as we rely on the Holy Spirit, we need to pay attention to what God motivates us to **want** do, what also identifies our spiritual gift.

(3) Third, as we use our gift in ministry, God may redirect or broaden our ministry, but that is His concern, not ours! This occurred to Philip in Acts 8:4-40: the Holy Spirit led him to evangelize Samaria, then sent him south of Gaza to evangelize an Ethiopian eunuch before sending him back north 20 miles to Azotus and Caesarea, Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Acts 8:40. We should thus focus on serving God where we are, letting Him redirect or broaden our efforts.

(4) Finally, as we rely on the Holy Spirit and use our gift to serve Christ (Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:16; 2 Tim. 1:6-14), our Risen Lord provides constant nurture of the inner man until the end of our earthly lives, Matthew 28:18-20.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we then occupy ourselves with God's assigned roles for us in the Great Commission, relying on the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:16) for our Risen Lord's continuous nurture of the inner man.