

LIFE WITH HIM



**“I will never
desert you,
nor will I
ever forsake
you...”**

Hebrews 13:5b

THE HUMAN MIND HAS A DIFFICULT TIME WRAPPING ITSELF AROUND the resurrection and the events that followed. On one level, we must abandon our inherent disbelief regarding the very concept of bodily resurrection—that someone who has thoroughly and completely died could come back to life. On another level, we struggle to grasp that that body, though



corporeal, could still pass through walls and closed doors, and instantaneously be in one place and then another. On yet another level, after we finally accept the truth of the first two, we are then left wondering why Jesus, now raised from the dead and having fulfilled His reason for coming, would linger on earth forty more days. Putting ourselves in His position, we imagine we would have wasted no time racing back to heaven, and sweet reunion with the Father.

But then, we are not God.

Few things illustrate Christ's gentle condescension and compassion like His willingness to tarry on earth after His resurrection, comforting and encouraging those who would follow after. They not only would be His envoys, carrying the gospel throughout the world, but they had been and still were His dearest friends on earth. He cared about them; their feelings mattered to Him.



For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

1 Corinthians 15:3-5

When I was in junior high, the local high school football games were an opportunity not to follow the game, but to see what mischief my buddies and I could devise in the shadows behind the bleachers. One Friday night we were happily lobbing ripe berries into the stands when suddenly a man who was the high school biology teacher *and*



my next-door neighbor—stood up in the midst of the crowd, pointed a long accusatory finger in my direction, and quite loudly announced my last name to everyone in the county.

In that moment I could have crawled under a rock. I was publicly humiliated—and rightly so. And I imagine the apostle Peter must have felt something like that when, after publicly denying his relationship with the arrested Jesus, his Master turned and looked at him.

After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, “Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.” But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

Luke 22:59-62

By the time Jesus stepped out of the tomb, Peter was pretty well beaten up. After his disappointing performance during the trial and crucifixion, the impetuous, pugnacious disciple no doubt was convinced that Jesus would disown him. Instead, grace was embodied when Jesus specifically sought out the hurting disciple, and restored this one who would become a strong, founding pillar in His church.



Jesus still visits those who are confused and hurting. He still makes house calls to those who are in need of encouragement and affirma-

“But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.’”

Mark 16:7

tion. He still cares that we know the truth about our relationship with Him—that we are not left discouraged, despairing, when sin or doubt cloud that communion.

Some people forget that the one who loved enough to die, still loves. The one who cared enough about confused, frustrated individuals to put down His own life in their stead, still cares about them

on that same deep, visceral level. That is why we refer to Him as our “personal” savior. Now, as then, Jesus is not ashamed to tarry a while in our midst, to leave the pristine avenues of heaven to tread the muck of earth for those He loves. That is why we love Him—because He loved us first.

*O Love Divine! that stoop'st to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear,
On Thee we cast each earth-born care,
We smile at pain while Thou art near.*

*Though long the weary way we tread,
And sorrow crown each lingering year,
No path we shun, no darkness dread,
Our hearts still whispering, "Thou art near."*

*When drooping pleasure turns to grief,
And trembling faith is changed to fear,
The murmuring wind, the quivering leaf,
Shall softly tell us Thou art near.*

*On Thee we cast our burdening woe,
O Love Divine, for ever dear;
Content to suffer while we know,
Living or dying, Thou art near!*

Oliver Wendell Holmes
