

The events of the first Easter weekend are the pattern for all who follow Jesus.

There is the **Cross**, the **Wait**, and the **Resurrection**.

### The Cross

The Cross has two major elements for us: the submission of Jesus to the Father, and the violence of evil.

Jesus chose the way of righteousness, love for His enemies, intimacy with God, and ministry to His people. He trusted the Father with His life, even to the point of death. He suffered for His goodness and did so knowing that God would bring healing to the world through His terrible death:

*For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, **because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.** 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 **When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.** 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Pe 2:19–24).*

We too must entrust our lives, our health, our families, our daily bread, and our safety from harm to Him who judges justly. If we are in danger, we trust God to decide whether to deliver us to death/heaven or to more service on earth. We trust God to undo and correct--in His own time--wrongs committed against us and against our loved ones. Jesus trusted the Father in this way.

The violence of evil was so vivid on Good Friday. All the evil powers of spiritual darkness--both human and demonic--struck a mortal blow against the gentle and innocent Lamb of God. With His execution of shame, betrayal by His most trusted companion (Judas), denial by His chosen leader (Peter), abandonment by all His disciples (fleeing in the Garden), rejection by His people, ridicule by the Rulers of the Land, Jesus seemed to be the loser. He seemed to be the one conquered by evil. He seemed to be crushed by evil on the Cross.

Yet we know that the Cross was an overwhelming victory over the powers and was an outflow of overwhelming grace:

*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 **He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.** (Col 2:13–15).*

*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that **through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,** 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb 2:14–15).*

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of **our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death** and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, (2 Ti 1:8–10).*

Yet, this victory was hidden from the world and it looked like evil had won.

So it is in our lives and our world. Evil often seems to reign supreme, yet we believe and know that God works in all things, to bring good out of evil, life out of death, righteousness out of sin, and love out of hate.

We trust God--like Jesus did--to bring a fruitful crop of good out of the sufferings, pain, and loss that evil inflicts on us.

### The Wait

The Wait is that period between the burial of the body of our Lord and the appearance of the Risen Jesus. During this time, the disciples are huddled in fear and shackled by doubts. "Were we wrong in believing that Jesus was God's Son--since God the Father did not deliver Him from dying or from His enemies? Were we wrong in believing that He could give eternal life--since He was killed in shame? Were we wrong in trusting God with our lives, our families, and our futures--since Jesus seemed to be abandoned on the Cross ("My God, My God--why have You forsaken Me?")?"

They--like us--were challenged to hold on to their confidence in the word of the prophets (that Christ would rise from the dead) and in the words of Jesus to the same effect. Do we hold our confidence firm in the face of seeming victories of evil over good, or of Satan over God?

This wait--the gap of time before God intervenes--is a tool God uses to help us understand where we are in our trust relationship with the good-hearted God. It is something the Potter uses to shape us into vessels which carry grace and love to a world that does not welcome us--a world that rejects, hates, and even persecutes us. We are being shaped to be vessels of living water to a thirsty and empty world.

Patience endurance is our strength and our comfort during our individual periods of 'the wait'

*More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that **suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character**, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Ro 5:3–5).*

*May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, **for all endurance and patience with joy**, 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col 1:11–14).*

## The Resurrection

The Resurrection of Jesus from the dead was God's final proof that evil had not won. Evil had killed the Christ, but God the Father reversed that act--and went beyond simple restoration. Instead of raising Jesus to the body of weakness He had before His death, God the Father raised Him to the immortal, glorious, spiritual body which is vastly superior to the mortal, decaying body of Adam's descendants. The resurrection showed the disciples that their faith during the Wait was vindicated, and that God will ultimately overcome evil completely.

The resurrection was God's demonstration to the world that Jesus was indeed His Son, and indeed the David ruler and redeemer:

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and **was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead**, Jesus Christ our Lord, (Ro 1:1–4).*

And the resurrection was proof that Jesus' submission in trust to the Father was wise. God did not deliver His son from **dying**, but delivered Him from **death**--by a resurrection:

*In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. (Heb 5:7)*

As the perfect, obedient, sinless, and righteous Son, He was exempt from the condemnation of death--and therefore the unjust death at the evil hands of humans and demons could not continue:

*Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 **God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.** (Ac 2:22–24).*

For us too, there will be a reversal. We will receive comfort and reward and recompense beyond our level of suffering--as did Christ. Our sufferings and loss of health, life, and security will be remembered before God. Not only will He use our suffering for good in this world (the Cross), but He will bless us beyond measure in the next world for His using of our pain for the healing of others:

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are **not worth comparing** with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Ro 8:18).*

*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us **an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison**, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Co 4:16–18).*

## **Conclusion**

This pattern of Cross (Evil appears victorious), Wait (our trust and confidence in God is challenged by this apparent victory of evil), and Resurrection (God's vindication of our trust and His proof that He will triumph over evil and even bring life out of it) appears throughout the experience of the early church. The martyrs and persecutions and rejection of the early Apostles and disciples show this pattern often.

And our lives are filled with the same pattern. We are surrounded by the devastation and decay created by evil, and we are challenged to maintain our confidence in our God, in His good judgment, and in the life-giving victory of His ultimate plan.

This is not a blind faith, but one that has seen God's work of bringing life out of death and healing out of injury in the stories of the bible, in our personal experiences of this pattern, and in the shared experience of the Church.

May we live our days on earth in light of this pattern. May we submit our lives and fortunes to God's judgment and will. May we trust Him for victory over evil in our lives. And may we look forward to rejoicing in His presence as He 'rights all wrongs' and exalts those who have suffered for His sake.