

The Power of the Resurrection

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1). This holiday that we call “Easter” is a Christian celebration of an event that is at the heart of our Christian faith. *But do we really understand what it is about?*

Interestingly enough, the name “Easter” has debatable origins; some claim that the name comes from the transliterated name of an Egyptian goddess of fertility, others claim it comes from a Germanic goddess of the dawn, “Eastre,” who was worshipped annually on the vernal equinox (the first day of spring). It appears that our word "Easter" comes from the same root as the English word "east," which is the direction of the rising sun. Regardless of its origins, or maybe *because* its origins may have a root in pagan worship, perhaps we Christians should use the phrase “Resurrection Day” instead for this particular holiday celebration. It does more aptly describe what it is we are celebrating.

- This “Resurrection Day” is a day that Christians set aside to remember the day when one Man, one very important Man, broke the holds of physical death and was raised out of the grave, into a place of life. This very unique Man was not only the Man, Jesus, the physical Son of Mary (being *fully human*), but He was also the Son of God AND *God Himself in the flesh*--one of the three parts of the Trinity (being *fully God*).
- The historical details of the events leading up to Resurrection Day are found in the Gospel accounts in our Bible, and we can, and should, read them and be familiar with them. Last week we covered briefly the events of the last week of Jesus’ life as He entered the city of Jerusalem amidst tremendous expectation *as their King*, only to ultimately be betrayed and killed by the very ones He had come to deliver (the nation of Israel).

2). As Christians, we need to keep our focus on the Resurrection of the Christ, *and not just on His death*. Most churches today keep their focus at the foot of the Cross and neglect the more weightier teachings that the Resurrection teaches us. *Not that one is more important than the other—they are simply two separate pictures of the complete picture of redemption, a redemption which is accomplished solely through Jesus Christ.*

- We, as Christians, need to be assured of the simple fact that through the death of Jesus Christ we have been given us something very precious that we cannot lose and cannot give back—our salvation.
- Of *extreme importance* to get right from the beginning is that it is the **death and shed blood of the Perfect Lamb of God on that Cross at Calvary** that paid the penalty of sin for everyone who would believe—*have faith*—in Him. Jesus, through His death, brought us (all of those who have believed, from the time of the Cross to the present day) out of the death and bondage to sin that we were born into...to the place of life and fellowship with God. This is what we call our initial justification, our initial salvation, the salvation that we presently

possess. This salvation *assures us* that we will spend eternity with God. It is a salvation that we cannot lose and cannot give back. Ever. No matter what.

- However, if Jesus was never raised from the dead...if He never emerged from that tomb...*we would still have that salvation*. Our salvation that we presently possess is not dependant on whether He arose or not; it simply depends on whether we believed in the death and shed blood of the Sacrifice paid on our behalf.
- But the Resurrection gives us a separate picture altogether. Let's take a look at the references we find concerning *resurrection*, and see how it is the power **of that resurrection** that we, as Christians, need to focus on. Because, as Peter tells us—

I Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again **to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

- Notice that according to God's great mercy we were born again *to* something. This something is the living hope that we have, the hope of obtaining the inheritance, which is reserved in heaven for us.
 - We could stop right here and teach for a week, but I'm trying to keep this message short. But for clarity's sake, let's see what our "inheritance" is—

I Corinthians 15:50

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...

~ Our inheritance is "the kingdom of God."

- Back to the Peter passage-- This living hope we have, after we've been born again, is **through** something. What is it through? *The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. Because He was raised from the dead, we now have this hope of inheriting the kingdom.
- And then notice **how** we are protected, *in order to obtain that inheritance*. We are protected **through our faith by the power of God**. It is that power that raised Christ from the dead and it is that power that protects us. But we must continue *to have faith*. For as Paul said—

Romans 1:17

For in it [the gospel], the righteousness of God is revealed **from faith to faith**; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

- Do you see how the “righteous man” is to live? BY FAITH. That “righteous man” is you and me, Christians, who through our faith in the death and shed blood of Jesus Christ on that Cross have been born again and washed clean of our sins *up to that point*. However, as “righteous men” we can, and do, still sin. And when we sin, we are to confess it to our Lord and He will wash us clean. This is a continual, daily, faithful life of obedience.
- And this lifestyle choice of *faith* is our choice...and these choices have nothing to do with eternity, but *everything to do with our inheritance, which is the kingdom, which is a 1,000-year period of time*.

3). Almost 2,000 years ago, this Man Jesus arose from a tomb after suffering a horrific death, after being in the place of death for 3 days. After He arose *by the power of the Spirit*, He went and ministered to His apostles, *by the power of the Spirit*, teaching them again *the things concerning the kingdom of God*—

Acts 1:3

To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

- The kingdom of God, as we know and talked about a couple of weeks ago, is a message specifically for those who have spiritual understanding—those who are in the family of God, those we would classify as “saved.” The message concerning the coming kingdom of Christ is about those with the capacity to understand spiritual things arranging their lives in such a way as to be on track with God, being faithfully obedient to the Word of God, following the Spirit and not the flesh.
- Jesus’ post-resurrection ministry was centered on speaking about the kingdom. He was raised from the dead so that we would have that living *hope* that we would inherit that kingdom. And as we saw in Romans, we are to live by faith *every step of the way*. And faith simply means believing what God has said, and acting on what God has said.
- But we have opportunities *not* to live by faith, don’t we? You and I possess free will and we, like the nation of Israel we read about in the Scriptures, can choose to disobey. We can choose instead to live according to our own wants and desires. But, if we do, it is clear what is in store—

1 Corinthians 6:9

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will **not** inherit the kingdom of God?

- Let’s make sure that we understand that this verse is not referencing the unsaved; it is referencing those *who have been saved*, but who choose to live their lives

unrighteously—meaning, *self*-focused and not *God*-focused. For all sin is unrighteousness—

I John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

It is clear that those who live their lives unrighteously *will not* inherit the kingdom...meaning they *will not* participate in that 1,000-year period of time.

4). The good news today is that God has given us, *by His grace*, everything we need to live a life of faith and He has given us, *by His grace*, everything we need to be successful. So what does it look like to live by the power of the Spirit, by the power of the resurrection? Let's focus on that for the remainder of today.

- Many of us, as Christians, have probably been taught in the traditional “church” about living our life for God the best way we can once we become “saved.” For many of us, we probably didn't understand exactly what that meant. Think about the statement, “living our life for God” for a moment. In actuality, the concept of “living **our** life for God” is actually quite foreign to the New Testament. The New Testament simply does not explain our Christian life in such a way as to infer that once we receive the gift of forgiveness—become “saved”—we are to follow some sort of “self-improvement plan.”
- Rather, the New Testament speaks about a *self-replacement* plan. In other words, we are to experience the death of one life with the substitution of Another Life.
- Through the blood that was spilled on that Cross by the Perfect Lamb (God Himself), we experienced—through believing in the Provision that God gave—the “passing over” of all our sins up to that point. The blood of Jesus that was spilled on that Cross did indeed release us from the bondage to our sins...but remember that it is a release from *bondage to sin*, not a release from sin itself (since we as Christians will still sin). The death sentence given to each one of us at our natural, physical birth due to Adam's transgression was severed on that Cross, because Christ died in our place.
- And we are to then reckon ourselves, our former selves, dead—

Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives in me"

- Please be clear on this point. It is not that we are to become mindless robots, devoid of personality (or worse yet, mimics of someone else's personality). No, we are to consider *our old sinful nature*—that which was separated from God and lived according to the ways of this fallen world—*dead*. This has nothing to do with our personalities, gifts, uniqueness as individuals, etc.

- Without an understanding of the cross severing us from our first birth (our flesh-life) and bringing us into a union with the resurrected life of Jesus, we can spend years living **our lives** for God, rather than becoming vessels of **His Life**.

5). Living by the power of the Spirit and by the power of the resurrection does not mean that we strive to transform the old nature; rather, it is a crucifixion of that old nature—

Romans 6:6

"knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with"

- And after that crucifixion, we are to allow the filling of our earthen vessel with something (Someone) *entirely new*.

Ephesians 3:14, 16-17, 19-21

14 For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father...16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, **to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man**; 17 **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**; 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, **that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God**. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, **according to the power that works within us**, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 4:19

"My children, with whom I am again in labor **until Christ is formed in you**."

Ephesians 4:22

"... lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit...**and put on the new self**..."

- The Christian life is not about an *imitation* of Christ's works; it is the impartation of Christ's life so that His life could have full expression through His body (the Church)--

II Corinthians 4:11

For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

- It is not about the flesh becoming spiritual or becoming better or being "fixed", because that would be impossible—

John 6:63

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing;"

Romans 7:18

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh"

- It's about the death of our old self, our old nature, our soul, our life in this age, in order that we can gain our *life*, our *soul*, in the age to come (which is the kingdom)—

Mark 8:34-38

34 And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. 36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37 "For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

6). We can see this presented in a particular way by Christ Himself as He speaks to His disciples about how they can "bear much fruit."

John 15:4-5

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

- Notice that the branch *does not become the vine*. But it is grafted into a joyful participation with the life of the vine, so that that ONE LIFE can have expression in and through the many branches. Christianity is not about many people imitating one Life. **Quite the contrary! It is about the expression or manifestation of that one Life through the many.**
- We are brought into participation/union with the life of Christ so that *God bears fruit through us...* just as a branch is merely a living conduit for the sap of the vine. It is the sap that both gives life to the branch, and produces fruit on the branch.
- But as we saw before, we have that choice to allow God to do this work in us, or not allow Him to do this work in us. And we are told that there will be a just recompense by Christ Himself according to what we choose—

II Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- We can see this same thing—consequences for our choices—in the words of Jesus Himself as He spoke about the vine and the branches—

John 15:2, 6

2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He [God] takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He [God] prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.

6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he [the one who is a branch, who has been grafted in to the vine, i.e. *the Christian*] is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

7). The purpose of any body is to give expression to the life dwelling within it. God calls us "the body of Christ", and thus we are to become an expression of His life. And this we can do, by the power of the Spirit and by the power of the Resurrection—

1 Corinthians 6:17

"But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him."

Galatians 5:25

" If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

- And so as we close today, please listen to the following passage written by Paul and make that commitment to God to do whatever it takes to allow Him to transform you and to guide you by the power of the Spirit, by the power of the Resurrection.

Romans 6:3-12

3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.