

The Centrality of the Resurrection

He Is Risen Indeed

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Nothing exposes the ultimate weakness of man than death. Death comes to young and old, it comes to rich and poor. Sometimes it comes suddenly without warning, sometimes it comes over a long period of time after lengthy illness. Those of you that have watched people go through illness that leads to death realize that the decline to death is really without much dignity as the human body just gradually gives out and labored breathing gives over to the silence of the departure of the soul. The weakness of man in the face of death is seen when people grieving go to the cemetery, go to the graveside, and if they had any one wish that could be granted, it would be to call that person back even if it was only for 10 or 15 minutes to have just one more conversation with that lost loved one, and yet the power to bring that to pass is utterly beyond our capacity. We simply have no power over death. We have no control, no ability to resist it when it comes for us personally. We have no ability to call anyone back to life from the grave, and if you think about it even further apart from the Scriptures, we don't know what lies beyond the grave. We don't know when death is going to come and apart from the Scriptures, we don't know what lies beyond after death comes. The reality of death, it's no wonder that our society and culture tries so desperately to deny it and to shove it out of conscious thought because it's a horrible enemy to the human race, and we have no capacity to deal with it. We have no power to resist it; we have no power in ourselves; we have no power whatsoever to overturn its verdict and to call those that we love back to life. That is the reality of death and the human race, and so, by contrast, to stand here today, for us to be together around an event called the resurrection, is to give us a sense of the power of God because God has power over the grave. God has power over the results of sin. God has the ability to transcend the power of death and thereby vindicates the infinitely greater measure of his power over the weakness of men. The resurrection declares the power of God in a way that is unlike any other event and the resurrection is centrally tied to the reality of our salvation.

The angel declared to Mary on that first resurrection morning, "Jesus is not here. He has risen." Now, in the context of what we're discussing, in the context of the incomparable weakness of man to have an announcement that Christ is risen from the dead is to pull back a veil, is to open up a world of possibilities, a world of truth, that human men and women cannot attain to on their own. We need to understand what this resurrection says and what it means. Of all times, of all times, this is not a time to be sentimental about an

annual event that some refer to as Easter, this is a time when you believe in the truth of the resurrection; this is a time to understand what Scripture says it means. This is a time to look to the resurrection because somehow in the resurrection, there is hope for the greatest enigma of the human race.

Now, there are many ways that we could approach the resurrection. There are many texts in Scripture that we could go to. What I want to do this morning is I want to survey some passages from the book of Romans to show how the resurrection is woven through every aspect of your salvation, and so I invite you, if you have a Bible with you, to turn to the book of Romans with me today. We're going to look at a number of different passages in this great book of the New Testament.

Now, the book of Romans systematically explains the nature of God's salvation of sinners. It opens up with a discussion of the wrath of God that is revealed against sinners and spends the first three chapters establishing the reality that all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Salvation is necessary because God will one day judge sinners in his wrath. The resurrection is ultimately something that cannot be separated from the reality of the wrath of God. And to see the wrath of God as Paul explains it and emphasizes it in this book, let's just look at a few verses. Romans 1:18 is kind of the opening salvo of the letter after Paul goes through some introductory matters, but Paul says in Romans 1:18, this is what the word of God says, this is what is inspired by the Holy Spirit, Romans 1:18 says that, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." Right there you see that the human race has an incalculable problem on its hands. The wrath of God is revealed against men for all of their ungodliness and unrighteousness. This black cloud hovers over the entire human race throughout every corner of the globe. Romans 2:5 says that, "because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Turn over to Romans 3:10. How pervasive is the threat of God's wrath on the human race? There is no one who can escape from it. Romans 3:10 says that, "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands," verse 11, "there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one." While it might be a bit premature in the message to say this, until you have come to a point where you unconditionally acknowledge your sin before a holy God, you are not a Christian. No one comes to Christ believing that they are somehow at least partially righteous. Jesus explicitly said, "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Anyone who claims to have their own righteousness, anyone who believes that they would go to heaven because the good in their lives outweighs the bad, is someone who is declaring that, "I don't know Christ at all," because someone who truly knows Christ would never say such a thing. Salvation that is according to the Scripture, salvation that is according to the truth, is someone who agrees with the word of God, agrees with the verdict of God, that says, "I have not done good. I am not righteous. I was not the one seeking for God at all." There is this universal condemnation of all men for their sin and rebellion against God and Scripture teaches us,

without apology and without any question of clarity, that God's wrath abides on sinners and that all men are sinners and therefore God's wrath abides on every member of the human race.

This is of incalculable importance. And because we are sinners, because we have fallen short of the glory of God, our works cannot save us. Even the effort to try to do good in order to somehow make yourself right before God, even that very effort is a guilt ridden sin against God. It is to say, "I will try to establish my own righteousness without regard to what the Scripture says about the brokenness of my own soul." So even trying to earn your way to heaven only multiplies your guilt even further.

We have a terrible dilemma on our hands. Scripture says that all men are spiritually dead and in bondage to sin, in bondage to the devil, and under the wrath of God, Ephesians 2:1-3. And so as a race and as individuals apart from Christ, we are hopelessly and miserably lost and the wages of sin, Romans 6:23 says, "the wages of sin is death." That is why men die, that is why our loved ones depart from this life, it's because the race is under the judgment of God and we cannot save ourselves. And that has this obvious implication, my brothers and sisters in Christ and those of you who may be here and don't know Christ yet as your own Lord and Savior, what all of this teaching of Scripture would drive us to is the recognition that if there is to be any hope at all, it has to come from outside of us. We cannot generate our own salvation. Having broken the window pane of our own righteousness with our sin, we cannot put that back together. A rock has been thrown through the window pane of your righteousness and it is shattered, never to be repaired again.

You cannot save yourself and what the glory of the Gospel is, what the glory of the Scriptures is, to the glory of God what the hope is, is found in Romans 5:6. Turn there with me, if you would. Romans 5:6. Paul says, "while we were still helpless"; helpless because we are sinners under the condemnation of God; helpless because we do not have the power to save ourselves; helpless because we do not have power over death, we do not have power over hell. Helpless. While we were still in that helpless condition, "at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." And he goes on and explains the hope. He says in verse 7, "For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die." Look at verse 8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." The work of Christ on the cross was an act of divine deliverance of sinners. The work of Christ on the cross is the only hope for the salvation of your soul. Apart from Christ, you are in an utterly hopeless condition. But we see here that God has acted. Salvation was not a matter of you working your way up to God, it was a matter of God stepping down to save you.

Now, for many of you, this is familiar territory, this doctrinal ground that we're covering here in an introductory fashion, but in light of what brings us together today, resurrection day, what may be less familiar to you is how the resurrection is crucial to every aspect of your salvation. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Christ is not raised from the dead,

your faith is in vain. It is empty. There is no power to it. And if Christ is still dead, if Christ were still in the grave, we would have no hope as these passages that we're going to look at will make clear to you. In the resurrection is found your confidence in who Christ is. In the resurrection is the assurance of the forgiveness of your sins and the assurance of divine pardon. In the resurrection is the power for your spiritual growth. In the resurrection is the assurance of future glory in heaven. All of those incalculably important aspects of your salvation: who is Christ; how can I know that my sins are forgiven; how can I overcome sin now; how can I know that I will be in heaven glorified with Christ. All of those are inextricably tied to the resurrection and we're going to see that here in the book of resurrections.

We're going to look at four spiritual realities this morning that the resurrection guarantees to those of us who know Christ. This is going to strengthen your confidence in Christ, strengthen your hope in Christ, and give you a sense of the centrality of the resurrection because the resurrection says so much about your salvation. The resurrection answers at every point the need that we have, our helplessness in sin, and the resurrection delivers us over to an incomparable hope in Christ, and that's what we're going to see this morning.

Well, there are four things. The first one if you're going to take any notes is this: is that the resurrection establishes the deity of Christ. The resurrection establishes the deity of Christ, and I would encourage you to turn back to Romans 1 as we look to this. Jesus, during his earthly life, made clear that he was claiming to be God. He asserted his deity. He said in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was born, I am." He asserted an eternal existence that predated Abraham even though in an earthly sense Abraham lived 2,000 years before the time that Christ walked on the earth. And Jesus said, "I am," meaning that, "I existed before Abraham did." He claimed to be God.

Well, the resurrection proved that to be true and if you look at Romans 1:4 you can see this set forth in Scripture. Actually, let's just read beginning in verse 1, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh," now watch this in verse 4, still speaking of Christ, speaking of Christ Jesus, "who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord." During his earthly life, Jesus had performed mighty miracles and he had taught with unparalleled authority, but think with me for a moment: despite all of his claims, despite all of the miracles, despite of all the great teaching, if Jesus had died and stayed dead, if Jesus were still in the grave today, it all would have been empty and in vain. What happens with the resurrection is that the resurrection uniquely marks off Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It declares his deity in a powerful way and puts the stamp of authenticity on everything he did and taught.

Think of how we framed it at the beginning here: with utter helplessness, humanity looks at the grave. Death is the victor over humanity in that sense, and no man can conquer it on his own power, but Christ is risen from the dead and therefore the human restraints that we all know do not apply to him. There is a transcendent power at work in Christ and

the resurrection, which no man could accomplish, is verification of his deity. It declares his deity in a powerful way because in the resurrection, you have Christ separated from the rest of humanity. You have Christ separated from the curse of death. You have Christ separated from that which swallows everyone else up. Christ is exempted from death, in that sense; he conquered death, would be a better way to say it, and in that unique resurrection established for all time, the proof of his deity. And why is that important to you? It gives you, listen to me, those of you who claim to know Christ, the resurrection gives you grounds for supernatural, true, and accurate confidence that you can trust Jesus Christ to save you to the uttermost. The one who conquered death is able to deliver you as well. That's what the resurrection teaches you.

See how this worked out in the lives of one of the apostles. Look over at John 20:26, the Gospel of John, chapter 20, turning back just a few pages in your Scriptures. What should our reaction be when we contemplate the resurrection of Jesus Christ? John 20:26, you remember the story, the apostles had seen Jesus alive. They went and told Thomas and he said, "I can't believe it unless I see the imprint of his nails and I put my finger in the place of the nails and put my hand into his side." He said, "I will not believe." You see that at the end of verse 25 just above where I had you turn. Thomas said, "Unless I see them, I can't believe it." Then verse 26, we'll pick it up at that point, "After eight days His disciples," meaning Christ's disciples, "were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came," this is after the resurrection, "Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.'" And he singled out Thomas, "Then He said to Thomas," verse 27, "'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him," seeing the resurrection right in front of him, Thomas answered and said, "'My Lord and my God!'" He understood that he was seeing something supernatural in front of him. A man who had been dead was now standing in front of him alive, and his response to that was to acknowledge who Christ was, "My Lord and my God," a clear statement, a clear affirmation of the deity of Christ. And as we go through the Scriptures, what you see is that the reaction of Thomas is what the reaction that you should have to this as well. You don't have Christ physically in front of you but you have something of equal authenticity, equally self-authenticating in front of you; you have the very word of God on your lap testifying to the reality of the resurrection. You have God himself speaking through his word, affirming the historical time and space reality that a man who was dead was brought back to life, and in light of human impotence, that is a declaration of the power of God. And in light of the claims that Jesus made and the miracles that he conducted, the resurrection verifies it all to the one who reads Scripture with a believing heart.

So in the resurrection, you have proof of the deity of Christ, and as you work that out, how this bears on your assurance, is to understand that this resurrection establishes that he is God in human flesh and therefore, "As God, he has power to save me. I believe in him. I trust in him. My faith is well grounded. My faith is in a real and living and true object. My faith is not in vain. My salvation is real because I believe and I have trusted in the resurrected Christ."

But it gets better. It gets better. The resurrection not only establishes the deity of Christ, point 2 this morning: the resurrection establishes our justification. Our justification. When the Bible talks about the resurrection in theological terms and we need to do that as well, again, I can't tell you how important it is to move beyond a sentimental approach to this day and to understand it for the theological reality that it represents because it is in the expression of truth that you find the hope for the salvation of your soul, and the Bible talks about justification and it ties the reality of justification to the reality of the resurrection.

What does that word mean, "justification"? Justification means that God has declared the believer to be righteous. Justification is a statement of the reality of the pardon of your sin and the fact that God has credited to your account, if you're a Christian, God has credited to your account the full merits of the perfect life of Jesus Christ. Justification is a legal term. It is as if you had gone before a judge charged with crimes and the judge pardons you and declares you to be innocent of the violations of the law. It's a legal declaration that you stand not guilty before God, and not only not guilty, but justification is a declaration that you stand righteous before a holy God. It's more than just being not guilty, it's a matter of positive imputation of righteousness. In justification, God forgives all of your sin and accepts you as righteous when you put your faith in Christ because he credits the perfect righteousness of Christ to your spiritual account.

We'll talk about this much more in the days to come at Truth Community Fellowship, but for those of you that are plagued by a guilty conscience as you look at the law of God, for those of you that are plagued with a sense of guilt, understand what the reality of justification means. For a Christian, justification means that the law no longer condemns you. The law no longer issues its threats of judgment against you. You have been justified in the presence of God. Because Christ has met the demands of the law, he has paid the penalty of sin when he was sacrificed on the cross, and now through faith in him, the perfect merit of his life has been given to you as a gift and you no longer stand guilty before God but you stand as one righteous in his sight.

What does that have to do with the resurrection? Listen, Scripture teaches us that the resurrection establishes the certainty and the reality of justification to the believing heart. Look at Romans 4, we're going to stay in the book of Romans here this morning, pretty much anyway. It's an odd thing to say after I just had you turn to the Gospel of John but, you know, you know what I'm saying. Romans 4, beginning in verse 22. Paul had been describing how Abraham was declared righteous by God back in the book of Genesis. We'll pick it up in chapter 4, verse 22, he says, "it was credited to him," meaning to Abraham, "as righteousness." His faith was credited to him as righteousness it said earlier in the chapter. Now, follow along here in verse 23 because you see your name written in the wounds here. You see your name written in the account of the resurrection here because Paul goes on and says, "Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him," get this, "who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." Christ was

crucified for sinners. Christ suffered the penalty of death because he bore our sins in his body on the cross. The penalty of sin is death.

Now, listen, that's what Christ did on the cross. What the resurrection declares is that the penalty of death has been satisfied. The penalty of death has been fully paid and therefore there is no longer need for Christ to stay in the grave because death is required at the account of sin but when sin has been paid for, life is once again appropriate. Christ fully paid the penalty of sin on the cross, and having been buried, having died and been buried, now raised again, raised back to life, it is shown that he had fully extinguished the penalty of death on behalf of those who would believe in him. The resurrection establishes that.

So listen to this carefully because I think this will help you: when Christ died, he paid the penalty of death in full. God had approved Christ's sacrifice as being fully acceptable on behalf of sinners. How can you know that for sure? Listen, God established the invisible act of accepting Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. That's a spiritual reality, in a sense, in the courts of heaven that we can't see. We can't see that "not guilty" verdict, that righteousness credited to our account. We can't see that, as it were. That is an invisible act when God accepted Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. So how do we know that it's real? God established that invisible act by the visible act of his resurrection. That which only God knew was established by that which only God could do, which is to raise a dead man back to life. The resurrection is God's public statement that death no longer had a claim on Christ because Christ has been released from death. That's why he walked out of the grave. The resurrection establishes the reality of your justification.

Why does that matter to you? When Paul said that Christ was raised because of our justification, it's saying, listen to this because this is glorious, it's saying that God approves of those who believe in Christ in the same way that he approves of Christ himself. Those of us that believe in Christ have the full merit of Christ's perfect life applied to our account and we stand righteous before God and that is established by the resurrection. He was raised because of our justification. He was raised because of the reality of that spiritual act. You have been released from the penalty of sin if you believe in Christ. If you have repented of sin and received Christ and you rest in him alone for your righteousness before God, the Bible says that you have been justified in the sight of God. This is of monumental importance and this is of monumental importance to your assurance. This is of monumental importance as you think about the reality of your own death which will one day come; as you think about the reality of standing in the presence of a holy God. The resurrection shows that you who know Christ have no cause for fear. You who know Christ have no cause to shrink away from God because he has accepted you in Christ. That's what the resurrection establishes. The resurrection shows that the penalty was paid in full. Christ released from the bars of death now is able to save to the uttermost those who believe in him, and those of us who know him get the benefit of that act.

But do you know what? It gets better. It gets better. Someone could ask, "How am I supposed to live in the midst of this world of temptation, trials and tears? How am I

supposed to overcome the sin that still dwells within me? How do I face the temptations that come and would lead me away from faithfulness to my Christ? How am I supposed to have a hope that transcends the profound sorrow that this world brings into life?" Well, you turn again to the resurrection. Point 3 this morning: the resurrection provides for our sanctification. The resurrection provides for our sanctification.

Now, what does that word mean, "sanctification"? Sanctification is the believer's progressive growth in holiness after he becomes a Christian. The Holy Spirit conforms our character and behavior, over time and in increasing degrees, to the image of Christ. This is an inevitable reality of true salvation. If a man has been born again truly, his life will change. Someone who's life never changes is not someone who can claim to be a Christian. You can't point back to the time when you prayed up front in the church when you were four years old and say, "That shows that I was saved." No, no, not if there is not a change that follows that. Not if there is not some kind of love for Christ, love for his word, and desire for obedience that flows from that. How could someone possibly claim to have the life of God dwelling within them if they have no desire for the things of God? That's a travesty and it is a problem of immense proportions that generations have been taught to look back to a single prayer of supposedly accepting Jesus back when they were a kid, and to erase and pass over an unbroken life of sin for decades that followed and still claim to be a Christian. That is a biblical travesty. You can read the book of 1 John and see that that's evidently false. Now, some people prayed when they were young and that is a true moment of their salvation, but the reality of that is shown by the fact that they have affections and desires for the holy things of God. Absent those affections, no one has a claim to any assurance of salvation. That's just the teaching of the Bible.

Now, we're dealing with the issue of sanctification. It's not that, let me be clear on this, it's not that we pursue those good works and we pursue those desires for holiness in order to add to our merit or to complete our salvation, to somehow add to the work of Christ so that that becomes the grounds upon which we stand righteous before God. That is not the point. It is not faith in Christ plus works that equals your justification. What we're saying is that a man who has truly been born again will change. The work of God in salvation is such that he brings a man to Christ and then he changes him. That is an inevitable part of true salvation and the resurrection is the ground of the power for that change.

Now, the Bible says that you and I as Christians are responsible to pursue our own spiritual growth. We are to strive after it. 2 Peter 3:18 says that we are "to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It's stated as an imperative. We have that responsibility to pursue spiritual growth. But what we see in the resurrection, oh, this is so wonderful. This is so wonderful. In the resurrection, you see, you find that you are not left alone to your own natural abilities and your own inconsistent commitment in order to achieve spiritual growth. God gave to you as a Christian, to every Christian, God has given resurrection life in salvation and thus has given you the power to walk in newness of life. It is not a matter of trying to grow based on your own innate natural abilities, rather what we see is that God has given us such a total gift of life in salvation that it provides not only for your justification but it also provides the power for you to walk in newness of life.

Look at Romans 6, beginning in verse 4. Romans 6:4. We'll read through a significant portion of Romans here. Romans 6:4, Paul says, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death." Now, that's not a reference to water baptism. How do you know that? Because it says it's a baptism into, what? Death, not water. A baptism into death. We have been joined with the death of Christ, is what he's saying, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father." Going back to that first resurrection day, he says, as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, "so we too might walk in newness of life." Look at that: the power to walk in newness of life for you is somehow tied to the reality of the resurrection of Christ 2,000 years ago. And he goes on and he explains that, he says in verse 5, "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."

Now, let me stop there for a moment. If you're a Christian, the Bible says that you are no longer a slave to sin. The dominating power of sin in your life has been broken. That is part of the purpose of salvation is to break the power of sin that dominated your life before you came to saving faith in Christ. That is part of the whole reason you have been saved unto holiness. It's not simply a future deliverance from hell that salvation gives to us, it is a present deliverance from the dominating power of sin. Listen, if you are a Christian, Paul says that you personally share in the resurrection power of Christ and that you have the power to increasingly overcome sin in your life; to increasingly put sin to death and walk in a holiness that is befitting of a holy Lord that you serve and know. This is amazing truth. This is spiritual reality as God has defined it for us in the Scriptures.

Now, continue on in verse 8 because Paul expands on this point. He says in verse 8, "Now if we have died with Christ," if you have become a true Christian, "we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that," verse 9, "knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him." Listen, once you've died and come back to life, death has no more power, that's what he's saying. In the resurrection of Christ we see that he has an indestructible life and he will never go into the grave again. Now, listen, when God saved you, he did more than cancel the penalty of sin and deliver you from hell, he imparted new life to you. The Holy Spirit took up residence in your life. You have a new nature. In salvation, you have a new nature, and that new nature is animated, get this, by the same power that raised Christ from the grave. The power that raised Christ from the grave is the power that is at work in your life as a believer so that you may overcome sin. You share in that life.

Look at verse 10 of Romans 6, "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives," the life that Christ lives, "He lives to God." Verse 11, "Even so," in like manner, "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Verse 12, "do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness," look at this, "but present yourselves to God as those alive from the

dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Paul says, "Take that resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead and that God has imparted to you in salvation, conscience of that resurrection power, now go put sin to death in your life." It is not a matter of self effort that you generate, but it is a matter of conscious recognition of your union with Christ and the impartation of resurrection life into your soul that gives you the grounds to overcome sin.

Now, let me call a timeout here and speak to you pastorally and help you to understand something important. If you are at all like me, there are days when sin just seems to cling to you, right? There are times where things come out of your mouth that you look back on in shame. There are thoughts and wicked desires that animate your heart and there are things that you do and you detest that and you know that it's wrong, you know it's inconsistent with the desires of your heart, and you think, "What is wrong with me? I'm a Christian, at least I say that I am, and yet look at the filth that still comes out of my life."

I won't take a roster of those of you that are nodding in agreement in understanding with me, but you know what I'm saying. This is the common experience of Christians. How does that fit with what I just said about the resurrection power that gives us power over sin? Well, let me say something that should be a great encouragement to you. This is so very important to understand the nature of Christian life and to have your assurance grounded in truth and not in the fluctuating way in which you inconsistently obey the God of your salvation. Listen: those days when sin seems to cling to you, do not contradict the reality that resurrection power is at work in you. They don't. We know that because Paul said in Romans 7:15, he said, "What I'm doing, I don't understand. I'm not practicing what I would like to do but I'm doing the very thing that I hate." He says, "There is still this element in my life where I find myself plagued by sin and I'm not living out the perfection of resurrection life that I know that God has given to me. I hate it that it's like that but sin just clings to me and I detest it, and yet here I am."

Understand this, this is so important: resurrection power is not seen, it is not made known in your life, by unbroken spiritual ecstasy. It is not seen in sudden perfection of life where sin is suddenly an utterly foreign element to your existence. You have to have the right conception of what resurrection power does in your life. It does not make you perfect in this life. It does not eliminate the struggle with sin. What resurrection power does is it breaks the controlling power of sin. It changes your affections, for one thing, so that what you formerly loved in the world of sin is now something that you hate and if you could get rid of it, you would. You know, for those of you that are Christians, wouldn't you choose if you had the power to do it, if you could just utterly get rid of the remnants of sin in your life, wouldn't you do that in an instant? The things that tempt you and draw you away from Christ? If you could utterly divorce yourself from that you would do that in a heartbeat, right? That affection against sin and toward holiness is a mark of resurrection power in your life. The fact that you don't live perfectly in accordance with that is not a denial of the reality of your salvation; it's not a denial of the resurrection power. It's not seen in that instantaneous change that young immature Christians sometimes think is available for them. No, rather, it's completely different in that.

What resurrection power does is that it strengthens you to change over time in increasing degrees of increasing growth and holiness, and it causes you to persevere in the faith. There is an underlying power that is ever urging you on to continue to pursue Christ despite the obstacles that come your way. There is an ever present power that is keeping you in the faith so much that if you were a true Christian you could not walk away from it and you wouldn't if you could. There is a new dominating power, there is a new underlying controlling force at work in the life of a Christian, that is always urging him on to take the next step. To continue on. To not give up. To continue to love Christ and to grow in him. Resurrection power makes Christ and the Bible sweeter to you over time even though you fall short along the way. Resurrection power doesn't make you perfect but it changes your whole orientation toward life and keeps you in that orientation until the day that you die.

So you have to have the right expectation about what resurrection power is going to do or you'll trip up on that. Here's the point: those attitudes of loving Christ, loving his word, persevering in the face of obstacles, persevering when those closest to you make it most difficult for you to walk with Christ and you continue on anyway, listen, listen, those kinds of spiritual attitudes are not natural. Men who do not have new life will constantly fall away and turn away from Christ when it starts to cost them something. Men who are motivated by their own natural desires do not continue in righteousness, eventually they give up the hypocrisy and like a pig they go back to wallowing in the old slop again. Those spiritual attitudes that cause you to persevere are not natural. Here's the point, beloved: when you see those kinds of spiritual attitudes and affections, you can know that the resurrection is at work in you providing for your sanctification. The now invisible reality of the resurrection is made visible in your transformed heart.

When Christ was raised from the dead, there was a visible act of resurrection that hundreds of witnesses saw at the time. It was visible to them then. Now to us today, the resurrection is an indivisible reality revealed in his word but the reality of the resurrection is made visible as you and I grow in our sanctification because that is the only power that could explain it, is that God has done a powerful work in our lives and that's why it is so destructive to assure people of their salvation when they're living in sin. You say, "I remember when Johnny prayed, of course he's a Christian." Well, maybe not. You know, Jesus said there were going to be many people on the day of judgment who say, "Lord, Lord, I thought I knew you?" And Jesus says, "No, I never knew you."

So you see the resurrection at work as you have desires for holiness in your life. But do you know what? It gets better. It's better than having the deity of Christ established for us. It's better than having our justification established for it. It's better than knowing that we have power provided for our sanctification. It gets better than that because I ask this question: well, what about when I die? What happens then? Fourth point, final point this morning: is that the resurrection guarantees our glorification. It establishes our justification. It provides for our sanctification. It guarantees our glorification. Glorification is the final step in salvation. When you die, your spirit goes to be with Christ even as your body goes to the grave. One day Christ is going to return and it says

the dead will be raised to life meaning that he will raise us from the grave, he will raise our bodies from the grave, and give us resurrection bodies that are like his, and somehow have a continuity with our present earthly bodies. God raised Christ from the dead and because you are in union with Christ, you too will be raised from the dead.

Look at Romans 8, beginning in verse 28. Paul says, Romans 8:28, "we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Follow his logic here, his chain of salvation, he says, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." That's God's plan of salvation from beginning to end. There is an eternal end to which we are all moving. God's plan for salvation includes your ultimate glorification.

Now, watch how Paul ties the intentions of God with the resurrection in this passage. Look at verse 31. He just said God glorified them. It's still future but it's so certain that Paul can speak of it as a past act. Verse 31, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies." Now watch this in verse 34, "who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." So Paul has given this marvelous overview of salvation from justification to glorification and he says, "How do we know this is going to happen? It's because God raised Christ from the dead. It is the guarantee of your glorification. You will most certainly, if you are in Christ, you will most certainly be with him in heaven. You will most certainly one day have a resurrected body. You will most certainly be in glory forever." The resurrection is the guarantee of that. Just as Christ was resurrected and went to heaven, so it is his perfect purpose to bring with him, to raise all those who know him up into heaven with him. The resurrection is the guarantee of that. There is no aspect of the work of Christ from which you will be separated. And just as we have been spiritually joined with him on the cross where our sins were paid for, one day we will literally be with him in heaven, raised from the dead. The resurrection is the guarantee of that. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:14, "Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power." 2 Corinthians 4, it says, "He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus." The resurrection is a promise yet to be fulfilled to those of us who know Christ.

The best part of your salvation, beloved, is still to come. It's still ahead. God will raise you in perfection, never again to sin, never again to fear, never again to grieve, never again to die. All of those elements that we just know intuitively to be a part of this life will be gone and we will be with our glorified Lord in heaven, seeing him and adoring him face-to-face without interruption throughout all the unbroken generations upon generations of ages to come. That is the promise of the resurrection. As good as it is now to know the forgiveness of sin and have the power to live a sanctified life, the best is still

to come. We haven't even entered into the fullness of the riches of our salvation. They are still ahead. Rejoice, beloved. Nothing will be better than that.

Well, one thing would be better than that, one thing could make that better, that would be if every one of you knew Christ like this. There are enough people in this room that I can't assume that. I wouldn't be faithful as a minister of the Gospel if I just assumed that and didn't appeal directly to you. If you are not a Christian, come to Christ for salvation. We have been speaking of magnificent spiritual realities today and yet I fear that some of you are on the outside looking in. Come with me to heaven. Come with these other believers that are gathered together. Come with us to heaven. Believe in Christ for the salvation of your soul. The resurrection applies even to you in your unsaved state. Romans 10:9 says that, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord," get this, "and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." The resurrection has an appeal even to you who have been outside of Christ. You see, the offer of the Gospel is for everyone who believes. Look at verse 13 of Romans 10, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Based on the promise of Christ, I can authoritatively and unconditionally offer eternal life to you if you would come to Christ for salvation, if you would turn from sin and give your life to him. That would make these glories even better if you would come to Christ today.

Bow with me in prayer, would you?

Our Father, we thank you for the glories of the resurrection. We understand that it was ultimately an act to your glory and yet we have so greatly participated in the wonders of it. You have just overflowed blessing upon blessing, giving it into our lives as a result of the resurrection. Those of us who know Christ, we see that the resurrection guarantees our justification; that our sins are forgiven; that the law no longer condemns us. We see in it the power to live a godly Christian life because if the power is so great that, Father, it could raise Christ from the dead, then surely it can give life to our mortal bodies as well. And we see in the resurrection the promise of heaven, of being with you in glory. Father, we're lost in wonder, love, and praise this day. We thank you for the resurrection. We thank you for our salvation, and we pray for those here who do not know Christ. Father, may they understand that you are calling them and that today is the acceptable day of salvation for them. Work in their hearts and draw them to a saving faith in Christ. We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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