

# Of First Importance: The Biblical Significance of the Resurrection

Selected Scriptures

© Mike Riccardi  
<http://www.TheGraceLifePulpit.com>

## Introduction

This morning we gather together, as the people of the risen King who delight to bring Him praise, and we celebrate the triumphant victory of King Jesus, who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, who was buried in a borrowed tomb, and who three days later rose from the grave, triumphant and victorious over sin and death!

We are those whose hearts have mourned the horrors of Good Friday—that the perfect, righteous, innocent Son of God was betrayed by friends, disowned by all who knew Him, unjustly condemned as guilty by those who were themselves worthy of condemnation, brutally whipped and beaten, shamefully stripped naked, nailed to a cross—and worst of all, because He was bearing in His body the sin of His people, the innocent, obedient Son of God experienced the unmixed fury and righteous wrath of His dear Father. We have mourned over our own guilt—that our sin was the reason for that horrific scene! Our sin against God was so despicable and so contemptible that the only way for us to be reconciled to Him was for the Son of God to go through *that*.

And yet, here we are, the people of God gathered here this morning, to celebrate. On Friday, humanity's wicked hypocrisy, evil conspiring, malevolent treason, and bloodthirsty brutality were all laboring at their very height in order to perpetrate the most heinous crime that was ever committed in the history of mankind. And all of that proved *no match* for God the Son. "Where sin abounded, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ did much more abound," as three days later He rose victoriously from the dead, conquering sin and death, and is, at this very moment, alive forevermore, at the right hand of His Father, reigning over all things!

And so the mourning of Good Friday has given way to the celebration of Resurrection Sunday. We His people gather here this morning as witnesses of Christ's triumph, as beneficiaries of His triumph, and therefore, as worshipers of Him who triumphed! We *are* the people of the Risen King who delight to bring Him praise.

But the heights of our praise will not exceed the depth of our theology. Our *praise* to Christ can only soar as high as our *understanding* of His glorious person and work is rooted in the rich soil

of God's Word. Our worship of Christ *for* His resurrection will not rise higher than our understanding *of* His resurrection. And so to enflame our worship of the risen Lord Jesus Christ on this Resurrection Sunday—to ensure that He receive the worship that He is worthy of for His triumph over the grave—this morning I want us to meditate on what the Scriptures say about the significance of Christ's resurrection for our lives.

And rather than an expository sermon on a single text, this morning's message is probably going to feel a bit more like a Bible study. I want to consider several passages of Scripture and draw from them a number of implications of Christ's resurrection. And I've grouped those **implications into three categories**. First, we'll consider the significance of the resurrection for **Jesus Himself**. Second: the significance of the resurrection for **believers, the people of God**. And finally: the significance of the resurrection for **unbelievers**, those who yet remain **outside of Christ**. For Jesus Himself, for believers, and for unbelievers.

## **I. The Significance of the Resurrection for Jesus Himself**

In the first place, then, let us consider **what implications the bodily resurrection had upon the resurrected Lord Himself**. And I'll present four of them.

### 1. The Last Adam

Number one: **The resurrection identifies Jesus as the last Adam, the great progenitor of a new humanity**. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 20 to 22: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive."

So Paul says in verse 21, "by a man came death." He's referring to Adam in the Garden of Eden. God had provided Adam and Eve with the fruit of every tree in the Garden to enjoy, but prohibited them from eating from one tree. He said, "In the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:17). And of course, the serpent deceived Eve, she ate of tree and gave some to Adam, and just as God had promised, at that moment, death entered God's creation through human sin.

And the Bible teaches that in a mysterious but nevertheless real way, all of humanity—from Cain and Abel all the way down to you and I here this morning—all of us were united to Adam in his disobedience, in such a way that when *he* sinned, *we* sinned. And so from that moment, every member of the human race is born *spiritually* dead, and will succumb to the reality of *physical* death. Romans 5:12 says, "Through one man [i.e., Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

And so, Paul says, “by a man came death.” But in the very same way, he says, “by a man also came the *resurrection* of the dead.” In the very midst of God’s curse of the serpent, the man, the woman, and the whole of creation, He provides a gracious promise that He will send the seed of the woman to destroy the devil’s work and undo the damage brought by man’s sin. And as Christ rises from the grave on that Sunday morning, He demonstrates that *He* is that promised Seed, as He has defeated sin and death. And of course the very Good News of the Gospel is that all who believe in Him will overcome death, and will share in His resurrection.

The first Adam’s sin in the garden brought death to all those who were in him: the entire human race. But the life, death, and resurrection of the second Adam brings resurrection from the dead to all those who are in *Him*, through repentance and faith. And so, the resurrection identifies Jesus as the last Adam, the great progenitor of a new humanity.

## 2. The Son of David, Israel’s Messiah

Number two: **The resurrection identifies Jesus as the promised Son of David, Israel’s Messiah.** Turn with me to Acts chapter 2. In Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he quotes from three Psalms written by David, which Peter uses to show that the resurrected Christ is the fulfillment of the promises God spoke to David. In Acts 2:25, Peter quotes from Psalm 16 where David confidently declares that God will not abandon his soul to Hades, nor allow His Holy One to undergo decay. And then in verse 29 Peter says, “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.” In other words, David *did* undergo decay, so how can what he wrote in Psalm 16 be true? He says in verse 30, quoting Psalm 132, “Because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne,<sup>31</sup> he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of *the Christ*, that *He* was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.” Skip down to verse 34, “For it was not *David* who ascended into heaven, but he himself says,” in Psalm 110:1, “Yahweh said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’”

You see, Peter’s argument is that David was not speaking of himself when he spoke of Yahweh not letting His Holy One see decay. Since he knew that God had promised to seat one of his descendants on his throne, and since he knew that that descendant would be God Himself—which is why he can call him his “Lord” in Psalm 110:1—he was writing these things about the *resurrection* of Messiah! And so Peter’s conclusion is, verse 36, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for *certain* that God has made Him both *Lord* and *Messiah*—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

And so when Jesus rose from the grave, God was providing *certain proof* that Jesus was that promised Son of David—that Jesus was Israel’s long-awaited Messiah and Savior.

### 3. Covenant Fulfillment

And in identifying Jesus as the promised Son of David, **the resurrection also identified Him as the One in whom all of God’s covenant promises would find fulfillment.** Turn to Acts chapter 13. Paul is preaching in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, and his sermon sounds remarkably similar to Peter’s Pentecost sermon. Look with me at Acts 13, starting in verse 32: “And we preach to you the good news of *the promise made to the fathers*,<sup>33</sup> that God has fulfilled this promise to our children *in that* He raised up Jesus.” And then Paul goes on to quote Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 55:3, and Psalm 16:10, demonstrating, just as Peter had in Acts 2, that Jesus was the fulfillment of the promise to David.

But here in verse 33, Paul says that the resurrection is not merely the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, but is the fulfillment of the promise God made to the *fathers*. Who are the fathers? The fathers are the Israelite patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. And so Paul is saying that the resurrection is proof that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham as well—that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. In Galatians 3:8, Paul identifies that universal blessing as finding fulfillment in *justification by faith*. And here in Acts 13, just a few more verses down in verse 38, Paul comes to the climax of his sermon when he says, “Therefore,” that is, on the basis of the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead, “*Therefore* let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.” Because Jesus has risen from the dead, forgiveness of sins—justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law—is available to all who believe in this risen Son of David. Thus all the families of the earth are blessed in Abraham’s seed.

And so the resurrection identifies Jesus as the second and last Adam, the seed of the woman, the Son of David, and the Seed of Abraham.

### 4. Vindicates Jesus’ Testimony

One more implication of Jesus’ resurrection for Himself. Number four, and this is very important: **The resurrection vindicates Jesus’ own testimony about Himself.** And to see this I want you to turn first to John chapter 5.

Now, you are all familiar with the fact that during His earthly ministry, Jesus made a number of startling and remarkable claims about Himself. Well, a number of them are grouped here in John 5. In verse 18 we learn that He was calling God His own Father, which was effectively making

Himself equal with God. Elsewhere He makes outrageous statements like, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), and “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In verse 21 He says, “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.” And in verse 26 He says, similarly, “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.” In verses 22 and 27, He declares Himself to be the rightful Judge of all people and all things. “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son.” In verse 23, He says that all must honor the Son *even as* they honor the Father! He is commanding that everyone worship Him, just as they would worship God! And He says if you don’t worship Him as God you dishonor the Father! So, you can’t worship the Father without worshipping the Son! In John 14:6, He says “No one comes to the Father but through Me.” And back in John 5, verse 24, He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” Believing or not believing in Him is the basis of your eternal destiny!

These are *outrageous* claims to make about yourself! But then He claimed that He would rise from the dead. Mark 10:34: “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. <sup>34</sup>They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again.” And not only that! He also said that He would raise Himself from the grave! John 10:18: He says, “No one has taken [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and *I have authority to take it up again*.”

Now this claim tops them all! All the others—claiming to be equal to God, to be the rightful Judge of all, demanding to be worshiped as the Father is worshiped, claiming He’s the only way to the Father—every one of those claims could have just been the rhetoric of a deceiver or a madman. But this claim—that He would be killed and would raise Himself from the dead after three days—this was falsifiable. He could have made all those other claims and nobody could test them. But people could test whether or not He would rise from the dead. And the point is: if He could make good on that claim, there could be no good reason to reject any of the other claims He made. If Jesus rose from the dead, then He is who He says He is, and you are bound to obey Him. The resurrection demands allegiance.

If you’re here this morning and you have an outward attachment to Christianity—you call yourself a Christian, you make it to church once and a while (but definitely on Christmas and Easter), you’ve grown up in the church and you may even read your Bible every now and then—but it’s pretty evident, both to you and to people around you—that you’re the lord of your life. *You* set the agenda for your life, and when following Christ begins to make real demands on how you spend your time, on how you spend your money, on how you treat your spouse and your

family, on what things you entertain yourself with well then all that “Jesus” stuff is just a bunch of nonsense for religious fanatics. My friend, the empty tomb does allow for casual followers of Jesus. Did He rise from the grave or didn’t He? Oh, indeed He did. And because He did, that means He *is* Lord, He *is* God, He *is* Judge, and His Word is Truth! The resurrection makes a totalizing claim on every aspect of your life. And if you’re not living for Him, if you’re still clinging to your sin, I would just invite you this Easter to recognize that despite what you call yourself, you never really have believed in Christ as your Savior and Lord, and to look upon this risen Savior with the eyes of faith for the very first time, and repent of your sins.

## II. The Significance of the Resurrection for Believers

Well, we’ve seen the significance the resurrection has for Jesus’ Himself. It identifies Him as the Second Adam, the seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, and the Son of David. And it also vindicates the testimony He had given about Himself. Let’s turn, secondly, to consider the **significance of the resurrection for believers**. What implications does the resurrection have for **the people of God**? And there are a number of these, so with some of them we’re going to move through them pretty quickly. But I want you to grasp the full breadth of how the Scriptures present the significance of the resurrection. Every aspect of our salvation—our regeneration, our justification, our sanctification, and our glorification—is tied in some way to Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

### 1. Regeneration

Well number one: **The resurrection is the ground of our regeneration**. 1 Peter 1:3 says, “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*.” So our new birth comes *through* the resurrection of Christ. Our new spiritual life that is born in our regeneration has its source in Christ’s resurrection life. And we are made to share in that resurrection life through union with Him. Ephesians chapter 2 says that while we were dead in our transgressions, God “made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with Him.” Because of the union that believers have with Christ, Scripture says that our spiritual resurrection in our being born again has its source in Jesus’ bodily resurrection. And so the resurrection is **the ground of our regeneration**.

### 2. Conquers and Delivers from Death

Number two: **The resurrection conquers the enemy of death and delivers us from its fearful slavery**. And to see this I’d like you to turn to Hebrews chapter 2. Hebrews 2, verses 14 and 15: “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the

devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.” If you were to survey 100 people on the street and ask them what their greatest fear is, I bet you at least 95 of them—if they were being honest with you—would say that their greatest fear is death. For those without the sure hope of eternal life in Christ, death is the great unknown. And this text describes human beings as those who are so afraid of death that we are subject to *slavery* all our lives. This fear of death controls people, such that they go to great lengths, pay large sums of money, and make significant sacrifices to avoid it.

But in the resurrection of Christ, Jesus conquers this great enemy of death. Acts chapter 2 verse 24 says, “God raised Him up again, *putting an end to the agony of death*, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” Because Christ has been raised, and because we are promised to be raised with Him through repentance and faith in the Gospel, the agony of death has been ended. The tyrannical slavery that is fueled by the fear of death is broken. The believer in Christ has nothing to fear in death, because to be absent from the body in death is to be present with the Lord in heaven. In the first chapter of Revelation, the Apostle John falls like a dead man before the ascended Christ. And Jesus says, verse 17: “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” Hebrews 2 said that Satan held the power of death. But because of the resurrection, not only has Christ broken free from death's bonds, but He is now the *ruler* over death, such that He has its keys—He has the control over who is released and retained in that realm (cf. Beale, 191). And if He is in control over death, we as His people need not fear it at all. Just as He said in John 11: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.”

### 3. The Very Foundation of the Gospel

Number three: **The resurrection is the very foundation of the Gospel.** When Paul explicitly identifies the nature of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15, he includes the resurrection as a central component in the things “of first importance.” In Romans chapter 10 he describes the message of faith which the Apostles preach as “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God *raised Him from the dead*, you will be saved.” Paul views the resurrection as so central to the Gospel that he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 14: “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, and your faith also is vain.” And again in verse 17: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.”

Now why is that so? Why is the case that if Christ has not been raised that we are still in our sins? Wasn't it Christ's sacrificial death that paid the penalty for our sins and satisfied God's wrath? Yes, but it was the resurrection that *certifies* that sufficient atonement was made for sin. Turn to the end of Romans chapter 4. Romans chapter 4 verse 25 says that Christ “was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised [for] our justification.” The resurrection is so

central to the Gospel that Paul here ties our justification directly to it. We cannot separate the death and resurrection of Christ, friends; both are necessary for our justification, because just as His death was the payment for sin, so was His resurrection the certification and vindication of that payment. If Christ had truly made full payment for sin such that He could ransom His people—if He had truly satisfied the wrath of His Father against the sins of His people—it had to be that the consequences of sin would no longer have power over Him. Calvin asks, “For how could he by dying have freed us from death, if he had yielded to its power? How could he have obtained the victory for us, if he had fallen in the contest?” (*Institutes*, II.xvi, 447). Charles Hodge said, “If [Christ] remained under the power of death, there is no source of spiritual life to men; for He is the vine, we are the branches; if the vine be dead the branches must be dead also” (*Systematic Theology*, 2:627).

But the resurrection is the Father’s testimony that redemption had been accomplished and that wrath had been satisfied. I love the way the great Scottish theologian, Thomas Chalmers, put this. He writes, “You know that when the prison door is opened to a criminal, and that by the very authority which lodged him there, it evinces that the debt of his transgression has been rendered, and that he stands acquitted of all its penalties. . . . And when an angel descended from heaven, and rolled back the great stone from the door of the sepulcher, this speaks to us, that the justice of God is satisfied, that the ransom of our iniquity has been paid, that Christ has rendered a full discharge of all the debt for which he undertook as the great surety between God and the sinners who believe in Him” (*Select Works*, 2:84). And so we read, in that confession of the early church recorded in 1 Timothy 3:16, that Christ “was revealed in the flesh, *was vindicated in the Spirit*, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” The resurrection was the great vindication of Christ, that the Father had approved of His work, that it was completed, and that there was no more penalty left to pay, no more wrath left to bear, and that sin and death could no longer lay legal claim to Him (cf. Grudem, 615).

And friend if you are struggling under a sense of guilt and punishment—if your conscience is condemning you before God because of your sin—I just want to entreat you to battle for assurance at the doorstep of the empty tomb. He was raised for your justification, friend. You’re right to feel the pang of sin in your conscience, and you’re right to despair of doing anything about it before God. But Christ has lived and died in your place, and in His resurrection the Father testifies that righteousness is accomplished! There is nothing left for you to do but to trust in His work, and by trusting you are united to His life, death, and resurrection.

The great Dutch Reformed theologian, Wilhelms a Brakel, teaches us how to plead for assurance upon the resurrection of Christ. He says to go to God and say, “Are not my sins punished? Has not my guilt been atoned for? Has not my Surety risen from the dead and thus entered into rest? Art not Thou my reconciled God and Father? Am I not at peace with Thee?” He says, “May such a person thus wrestle to apply all this to himself on the basis of the promises



made to all who received Christ by faith, until he experiences the power of Christ's resurrection unto his justification and being at peace with God" (*The Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:632).

Indeed, may the resurrection cause us to rejoice in the glorious Person and sufficient work of our risen Lord.

#### 4. The Holy Spirit

Number four: **The resurrection guarantees the New Covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit.** Back in Acts chapter 2, again in Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter is explaining the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit that has manifested in the disciples speaking in languages they had never learned. And he says in verse 32: "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. *Therefore*"—that is, on the basis of this raising up of Jesus—"having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear." So the Scripture links the coming of the New Covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit to the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

Jesus Himself teaches this in John 16. As He is with His disciples in the upper room on the eve of His betrayal, preparing them to live the Christian life without His physical presence, He says in verse 7: "I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." So Jesus says that the Spirit will come to permanently indwell the disciples because He is going to the Father. If Christ had simply died and remained in the grave, He would not have gone to the Father, and the Spirit would not have come.

And note how glorious Jesus views the privilege of the indwelling presence of the Spirit. He sees it as so valuable that He Himself says that it is to the disciples' *advantage* that *He*—their Lord, their Master, their Savior, the Author and Perfecter of their faith, the one in whom all things hold together—go away from them! This must be a phenomenal blessing! And it is ours as a direct result of the resurrection of Christ.

#### 5. Christ's Intercessory Ministry

Very related to that, **the resurrection provides the ground for the intercessory ministry of Christ.** He ascended to the Father not only to reign over all things and wait until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. He also ascended to be our Great High Priest—to intercede before the Father on behalf of His people. Hebrews chapter 7, verses 23 to 25: "The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,<sup>24</sup> but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.

<sup>25</sup>Therefore He is able also to save forever”—or, “save to the uttermost”—“those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

So often we conceive of Christ’s priestly work to have ended on earth. Since His atonement was a perfect sacrifice to which nothing could be added—since on the cross He cried out, “It is finished!”—since He passed through the heavens and *sat down* at the right hand of the Father—we tend to think that Christ traded His roles as prophet and priest for His role as king at His resurrection. But this passage teaches us that Jesus holds His priesthood permanently—that He always lives to make intercession for His people.

Now, this doesn’t mean that His priestly sacrifice of Himself was insufficient. May it never be! Indeed, “by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified,” Hebrews 10:14. Rather, Christ’s priestly ministry consists of His continually applying to His people the *benefits* of His once-for-all sacrifice. He prays for and provides strength for His people in the midst of temptation, Hebrews 2:18. He provides mercy and grace in times of need, Hebrews 4:16. He prays for our continued communion with the Father, Hebrews 10:21 and 22. He prays that the Father would accept our feeble and failing efforts at serving Him, as 1 Peter 2:5 says that we “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God *through* Jesus Christ.” The Apostle John says in his first epistle that if we sin, “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). If our sin and even Satan himself were to rise up and bring charges against our righteousness, Jesus is ever-present to, as the hymn says, “show His wounded hands and name us as His own.”

Romans 8:33 and 34: “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 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.” Our salvation is eternally secure, because everything that we would need to bring our blood-bought redemption to its consummation is secured for us by the intercession of the risen Christ on our behalf. That great saint, Robert Murray McCheyne, famously wrote, “If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He *is* praying for me.” And He is praying for you, ever living to make intercession for you, because He rose from the grave on Resurrection Sunday.

## 6. Grounds and Drives our Sanctification

And with that kind of rock solid assurance that He who began a good work in us will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus, it is no wonder that Scripture also teaches that **the resurrection fundamentally grounds and drives our sanctification**. And this is so precious. Turn with me to Romans chapter 6. Paul has just finished extolling the great doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from works in chapter 5. And in chapter 6 he responds to the objection that such a

grace-filled Gospel that is not at all based on works will produce unholy and undisciplined people.

And he says, verse 3: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ”—or, immersed into union with Christ—“have been baptized into His death?” In other words, “Don’t you know that, because of our union with Christ, we have died *with* Him?” “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” Did you catch that? Just as all true believers have been united with Christ in His death—so that the punishment which fell on Him counts for the punishment of our sin—in the same way we have also been united with Christ in His resurrection, so that we might walk in newness of life—so that we might live a resurrection life—a life characterized by holiness, free from the bondage of sin! Look again at verse 8: “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup>knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. <sup>10</sup>For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. <sup>11</sup>*Even so* consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

You see, the resurrection freed Christ from the influence of sin—“the death He died, He died to sin once for all.” And because we are united with Him in His resurrection, we too can walk in that newness of life! The resurrection has freed us from the power of sin! This is our new nature!

One theologian puts it like this: “Since the Lord Jesus as my Surety has removed all my sin by His death, and as evidence of this has arisen from the dead, should I then yet live in sin? Should not I then arise with Him from the death of sin and live with Him in all holiness?” (Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:634). Yes indeed. The resurrection fundamentally grounds and drives our sanctification.

## 7. Reorients our Thinking

There’s a seventh implication the resurrection has for the believer in Christ. And that is that **the resurrection fundamentally reorients the pattern and focus of our thinking**. In the opening verses of Colossians, Paul writes, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup>For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” You see, the one who has been *raised up with Christ* is to set his mind on the things above, where Christ is. His mind is not to be dominated with the thoughts and concerns of all things carnal and mundane, but rather by the truths of Scripture, the promises of God, the glories of Christ, and the sure hope of heaven.

## 8. Empowers us for Holiness and Ministry

Number eight: **The divine power demonstrated in the resurrection mightily works within believers to empower us for holiness and ministry.** Paul speaks about this in that glorious prayer that he prays in Ephesians 1:18 and following. He writes, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,<sup>19</sup> and what is the *surpassing greatness of His power* toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might<sup>20</sup> which He brought about in Christ, *when He raised Him from the dead* and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,<sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.” So the surpassing greatness of His power is in accordance with the strength of His might, which was demonstrated when He raised Christ from the dead. And that same power is at work in us who believe.

In Philippians chapter 3 verse 10, just before Paul launches into a paragraph about earnestly pursuing holiness, he prays that he would know the *power* of Christ’s *resurrection* all the more deeply. So this resurrection power is at work in us for holiness. And then in Colossians 1:29, Paul is in the middle of describing the essential nature of his ministry, and writes, “For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” And so this resurrection power is also at work in us for ministry.

## 9. The Ground and Guarantee of our Glorification

And that resurrection power will continue at work in us until we are entirely free from sin. A final implication of the resurrection for the believer: **The resurrection is the ground and guarantee of our glorification.**

Jesus said it plainly in the upper room in John 14:19. He told His disciples, “After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.” Because He lives in resurrection life, so also we will one day share in that resurrection life, perfectly free from sin. Paul says as much in Romans 8 verse 11. He says, “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” You see, your bodies are *mortal*. They are fraught with the effects of sin and will therefore one day succumb to death. But if the Spirit of the living God dwells in you—and He dwells in all true believers in Christ—then our God who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to—will also raise—your mortal, dying, decaying body through the power and agency of the Holy Spirit.

And friends, if you are in Christ here this morning you know what it is to groan, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, being burdened by the weakness of our flesh as a result of sin. Ever since our father Adam sinned in the Garden, our bodies have reaped the corruption of that seed of disobedience and rebellion. It is because of sin that our bodies decay, and are beset with sickness and infirmity, and will finally succumb to death. And of course, we groan not only under the physical weakness of our body, but we groan in a body that is still beset with sin itself.

But the Gospel promises that same Lord who rose from the grave—the same Lord who presently tends to our every need as He intercedes before the Father—that same Lord is coming again from Heaven! And when He does, the Scriptures tell us that “He will transform the body of our humiliation into conformity with the body of His glory” (Phil 3:21)! 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that our bodies are sown perishable, but raised imperishable. They are sown in dishonor, but raised in glory. They are sown in weakness, but raised in power; sown as natural, but raised entirely submitted to and in perfect harmony with the Holy Spirit! And so Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:54, “[And] when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up’ in victory!”

And friends that day is certain! We know it is because Christ Himself is the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:23). God has given us *proof* of the certainty of our glorification by glorifying Jesus Christ our Lord in His resurrection! And so that triumphant victory cry that we will shout on that day—that conquering cry that *taunts* death, our last enemy—that is ours to cry out *now*! Precisely because of Resurrection Sunday, we can joyfully celebrate and cry out, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

### III. The Significance of the Resurrection for Unbelievers

Regeneration, the conquering of death, the foundation of justifying grace, the guarantee of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the present intercessory ministry of Christ, the ground of our sanctification, power for holiness and for ministry, and the promise of a body free from sin and decay! All of this is what the believer enjoys because of Christ’s resurrection!

But what does the bodily resurrection of Christ say to the **unbeliever**? What is **the significance of the resurrection** for you who yet remain **outside of Christ**? Perhaps not even the out-and-out pagans who identify themselves as atheists or agnostics, or Buddhists or Hindus, or any other word religion. But even those who have a superficial, outward attachment to Christ and to His people—who would call yourself a Christian, who would regularly attend church, and even read the Bible and listen to sermons—but who have no *vital union* to Christ, no *living relationship*, and who still cling to their sin and aim to be lord of their lives. What is the significance of the resurrection for *you*?

## 1. The Proof of Judgment

Well, first, **the resurrection is the proof and guarantee of God's coming judgment.** And I want you to turn to Acts chapter 17 so you can read this with your own eyes. Paul has just confronted the pagan philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens, and verses 30 and 31 form the climax of his sermon to them. Acts 17:30 and 31: "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere [must] repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

The empty tomb of Joseph of Arimathea stands throughout the ages as the sure guarantee and reminder of the coming Day of Judgment. And *you're* going to be there! And *Christ* is going to be there!

These days you see people walking around with shirts and hats and some even with tattoos that say the most ridiculous thing: "Only God can judge me!" You ever see that? As if to say, "*You* don't dare pass judgment on me or my sinful lifestyle! Only *God* can judge me!" And I can't for the life of me figure out why in the world that is a comforting thought to them!

My friend, God *will* judge you. He has fixed a day when He will judge the whole world! And His standard will be *righteousness*, measured not by how well you've done in comparison to other people around you! No! He will judge all the world in righteousness *through a Man* whom He has appointed! The standard of righteousness by which you will be judged is the standard of *Christ's* righteousness! Of *perfect* righteousness!

And when you stand before Him to answer for your life, what are you going to present before Him? Painted Easter eggs and a stuffed Easter bunny?! The filthy rags of your own so-called "good works," mixed with the filthiness of unrepentant sin?! My friend, you have no hope if you are trusting in yourself to avail with God in the Day of Judgment! The only hope for the forgiveness of sins and for reconciliation with the Father on the Day of Judgment is to be clothed in the perfect righteousness of the risen Lord Jesus Christ—to have the perfectly righteous life of Jesus Christ *counted* to be yours, because your filthy life of sin and shame has been *counted* to be His on the cross. And both of those "countings"—that double imputation—happens through repentance and faith *alone*. That's why it says that God is now declaring that all must *repent*. Turn from your sin, and lay hold of Christ this Easter morning.

## 2. The Ground of Gospel Mercy

For that same empty tomb that is God's pledge of certain judgment, is also the empty tomb that is **the solid ground for the offer of Gospel mercy**. "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that *God raised Him from the dead*, you will be saved," Romans 10 verse 9. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance...and forgiveness of sins," Acts chapter 5. And again in Acts 13: "*Therefore*"—because Christ did not undergo decay, but was raised from the dead—"Therefore let it be known to you that through Him *forgiveness of sins* is proclaimed to you! And through Him *everyone* who believes is freed from *all things*, things from which you could not be freed through your own works!"

Oh friends, remember what we said before when we talked about justification. The resurrection as God's vindication of Christ—the proof that what He accomplished in His life and in His death had been accepted as a full payment of sin, that all of the righteous wrath of the Father against your sin was satisfied! The resurrection is God's receipt that full payment has been made—that all that is necessary for your salvation is accomplished by Christ!

Abandon your hope of entering eternal life on your own merits. Receive the resurrection life of Jesus Christ by trusting in Him alone. What Jesus said to Martha on the day He raised her brother from the dead, He says to you this morning: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Do you believe this?