

Dimensions of the Resurrection

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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My wife and I, the other day, were walking through a store, and we noticed there was an unusual number of people gathered in a certain spot. At first, I didn't quite understand why until I looked a little closer and saw a six-foot-high overstuffed fat rabbit.

[Laughter]

And little children were all lined up to have their picture taken with this rabbit. And we commented...I can't exactly remember the words...to each other of the folly in the hearts of people who see nothing more, at this particular time of the year, than a fat rabbit and colored eggs. And I'm reminded again of the theology of that...that the enemy always, one way or another, wants to obscure and eliminate the great realities of the Christian faith and uses all kinds of seemingly harmless means.

On the other side of the spectrum, I'm always interested, at this particular time of the year, how that the resurrection of Jesus Christ becomes a topic. And various and sundry newspapers and commentators talk about the resurrection. And usually at this time of the year, the resurrection is debated very often...it is argued against...very rarely have I ever seen it proclaimed. And so you can pick up the newspapers around the Easter season, and you'll find people arguing about whether Jesus ever even rose from the dead. And they always quote, quote-unquote, "theological experts," who deny the resurrection. One I heard today said that Jesus never rose from the dead; the disciples just didn't know where He was buried. They found an empty tomb because it was the tomb He never was in to begin with. In fact, His body was thrown in a common grave with a whole lot of other criminals.

But it seems as though, at this time of year, when we are called to affirm the great reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that Satan works overtime to obscure it, either on an intellectual or on a very unintellectual level. But my purpose today is not to argue about the resurrection or to debate it. I put theological liberals and fat rabbits in the same category, to be honest with you.

[Laughter]

I really don't have any interest in debating either group, but I would like to affirm the resurrection. And I think the Resurrection is a reality to be affirmed. You see, I believe that you don't convince people by the logic of your arguments that believe in the Resurrection. People are convinced to believe in

the Resurrection by the power of the Spirit of God. And what we must do is affirm the significance of the resurrection, not only for those of you who, as yet, do not understand its significance, but for those of us who do understand and need to be refreshed as to the centrality of the resurrection in our Christian faith.

You see, resurrection is not a problem for us because ours is a God of resurrection. In Psalm 49:15, the Psalm said, "God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol." That's a confident statement.

In Psalm 73 verse 24, the Psalm says, "Thou dost guide me with thy counsel, and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory."

In Hosea, the prophet says in chapter 6 that "God will raise us up, that we may live before Him."

Isaiah said in chapter 26 verse 19, "Thy dead shall live. Their bodies shall rise. Oh, dwellers of the dust, awake and sing for joy."

The Old Testament saint, you see, believed that God was a God of resurrection. The prophet, Daniel, affirmed that many will awake, some to righteousness and some to everlasting contempt.

Job said, "The worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh, shall I see God."

Our God is a God of resurrection. When Abraham laid Isaac on the alter and lifted the knife to plunge it into the heart of his only legitimate son through whom the covenant of God would succumb, he did it, says Hebrews 11:17-19, because he believed in God who raise the dead. In other words, the reason Abraham was willing to kill his son was because he knew God made a promise he couldn't violate. And so if he took the life of his son, God would raise him from the dead to fulfill that covenant. He believed in a God of resurrection.

In 1st Kings chapter 17, we read the story of Elijah and the widow's son who had died, and how Elijah raised that son from the dead.

In 2nd Kings chapter 4, we read about Elisha in a very similar situation. The Shunemitewoman's son had died, and he put himself prone on that little life, and God used him as an instrument to bring about resurrection.

Later on in the funeral procession, somebody accidentally dropped the body. In 2nd Kings chapter 13, it says in verse 20, "When the body fell on the tomb of Elijah and rose from the dead." God is a God of resurrection.

In Luke chapter 7, Jesus raised a widow's son. In Luke chapter 8, Jesus raised Jairus' daughter. In John chapter 11, Jesus raised Lazarus. In Acts chapter 9, Peter raised Dorcas from the dead. In

Acts chapter 20, Paul raised Eutychus, who had fallen out of a window and died. And I don't know if you remember this, but in Matthew 27:52, it says that when Jesus died, the graves burst open, and many saints came forth alive.

So we have no problem with resurrection. All of those resurrections are mentioned but one time. But there is a resurrection mentioned 104 times in the New Testament alone, and that is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we're not shocked by that because we have a God who raises the dead. And we affirm that resurrection, and we must affirm something the New Testament affirms 104 times, or we have just eliminated the voracity of the New Testament. So I'm not here to argue the Resurrection; I am here to proclaim it.

And I want to proclaim it in four dimensions. We could call this the four dimensions of resurrection. As you look at the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, you have to see it in four dimensions. First of all, you must see the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in relation to the Father...in relation to God the Father.

Open your Bible to the 17th chapter of John. The 17th chapter of John is the high priestly prayer. I want us to look at some elements of that high priestly prayer in John 17. Jesus is communing with the Father. He anticipates His death. And anticipating His death, He anticipates His resurrection. Anticipating His resurrection, He anticipates His ascension. Anticipating His ascension, He anticipates His glorification with the Father. So He is seeing through the cross, to the tomb, to the ascension, to His glory to come.

And in verse 11, look what He says in anticipation, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee, Holy Father." You can stop at that point.

You see, as Jesus saw what the writer of Hebrews says...that He's seeing the joy that was set before Him...endured the cross...as He saw through the cross to the Resurrection, He saw that through it, He would come to the Father. "I come to Thee, Holy Father," he says. Notice verse 13...he says it again..."And now in anticipation come I to Thee."

You say, "Was that important to Him? Was it important for Him to come to the Father?" Another question: Wasn't He always in the presence of the Father anyway, spiritually? Yes. Certainly He was omnipresent and omniscient, and the Father as well. They were never separated essentially...that is in terms of nature. They were never separated in terms of person up to this point. But there was definitely, in the incarnation, a loss of some prior fullness of glory, a setting aside of something of the relationship He enjoyed with the Father. So that as He began to look through the cross to the grave, and the open tomb, and his resurrection and ascension back to the Father, He could anticipate it with an eager heart.

There's no question that, as the songwriter put it, "out of the ivory palaces into a world of woe." Jesus Christ had left that celestial dominion, had left the intimate presence of God in glory, and come to earth. He had left the pure undefiled, untouched beauty of Heaven's glory where there is no stain or spot or sin, and He entered into an ugly sinful wretched world.

There's no question about the fact that there was a forsaking of something. That there was some element of relationship between the two of them that, for the time of His incarnation, was lost to Him. Because His heart longs to go back to the Father. Why? I believe, first of all, because He longed for the Father's full fellowship. He longed for full fellowship. He had said goodbye to His heavenly home.

Philippians 2 says that "He thought it not something to hold onto to be equal with God, but He humbled himself and was found in fashion as a man, took upon Him the form of a servant, was obedient unto death"...even the death of the cross...his humiliation...something of the full expression of His equality, He voluntarily set aside for incarnation. And He longed for that to be restored.

If you read through the Gospel accounts, you find that Jesus is manifest as a lonely person. Although there were crowds around Him all the time, they didn't understand Him. And even His own disciples didn't understand Him fully. And one of the most pensive moments in all of the text of the New Testament Gospels is at the end of chapter 7 in John's Gospel where John writes, "and every man went to his own house." And that ends the 7th chapter.

And the 8th chapter begins, "But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives," because He had no house. He said, "The foxes have holes. The birds of the air have nests. The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." He went to the garden because that's where He used to go in the evenings and spend the night in prayer with the Father. It was a quiet place. And when the city was still, and darkness had enveloped the world, He reached back for the fullness of communion that He longed to have with His Father, apart from the ugliness of the sin-stained world to which He had come for redemption purposes.

And there was a longing in His heart for that communion with God. That's why on the cross, when in the fullness of bearing all the sins of all the world, God turned His back, and there was the most severe separation that they would ever experience in that moment of time. And Jesus cried out, "Aley, aley, lama, sabac, tonie, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" That was the greatest pain of the cross, the forsaking of God...intra-Trinitarian severing. It's inexplicable, nonetheless it's true.

And so in His incarnation, Jesus gave up, voluntarily, some kind of intimacy, some kind of fullness in fellowship with God that He longed to have back. So in the Resurrection, that is restored to Him. So the Resurrection, you see, is important, not only for our sake but for His sake, and we must see that.

Look at the 14th chapter of John and the 28th verse...a most interesting statement of our Lord. The disciples are sad, broken-hearted, grief-stricken, in pain because Jesus is leaving. And they only see it from their own vantage point. And here is the one who had provided all that they had needed for three years. Here is the one who was their teacher, their comforter, and their leader. He gave them everything. They had all their hope in Him. They expected Him to bring the Kingdom. And He tells them He is going to die and leave them, and they are distraught. They can't see anything other than their own sorrow, their own pain, their own loneliness, and their own emptiness.

And Jesus introduces a thought to them and to us that we must take careful note of. He says, "You heard how I said to you, 'I go away and come again to you.' You heard that I said I'm going away." And he says, "If you loved Me, you would" what? "You would rejoice. If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I said, 'I go unto the Father, for the Father is greater than I.'" In other words, at this point, "God is at the pinnacle of the expression of His essential nature in the full greatness of all that God is, and I am humbled. Therefore, in this moment of incarnation, He stands greater than I. You should be glad that I'm going to go back and be as He is, and shed the stress of incarnation, the humiliation of humanness. You should rejoice." He says, "If you loved Me, you would." Their love was so shallow. You see, love is to care more about somebody else than you do about yourself, and they really hadn't come to that point yet.

You see, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was essential in relation to the Father, notwithstanding in relation to us. I mean if we won't even take that into account. Do you realize that if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, the Trinity would have been shattered? And 2/3 of God is no God at all. I mean if we believe in the Trinity, then we must believe in a resurrection, or we have 1/3 of the single person of the Trinity dead, and we have a dead God. You see, Jesus asks them to see...and us as well...His side. "Don't be selfish. I'm going to my Father." The fulfillment of his heart longing.

In John 17, notice again versus 4 and 5. "I have glorified thee on the earth," He says. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He says, "I've done it in anticipation of the cross and the Resurrection. Now, oh Father, glorify thou Me with thy known self with the glory which I had with ye before the world began. Take me back the way it used to be when I was proston"...John 1:1..."face-to-face with You on all the qualities of deity and its expression."

There's no way for us to conceive of the longing in the heart of Christ to be with God in full glory, because we can't think, as someone who is sinless, how it would be to leave the sinless environment of Heaven and come to the sin-cursed environment of Earth and long to be back. I mean we've seen some kind of reunions that maybe give us a hint. We've seen the reunions in our lifetime of people who were missing in action or prisoners of war, who came back after years and years of very difficult stressful situations and very horrifying circumstances to embrace again those they loved but hadn't heard from in years and years. And we saw the tears, the joy, and the expressions of reunion there.

We can only imagine, if we didn't experience it, the fulfilled longing of the heart of those people. But that doesn't even begin to come close to the longing in the heart of the sinless Savior for the full glory of the Father's presence. Time for fellowship.

Secondly, there was more than just fellowship. There was exaltation. When Jesus went back to the Father after his resurrection, he was exalted to the right hand of God. Philippians 2 says, "He was given a name which is above" what? "Every name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow."

And that's why, in verse 5 of John 17, He says, "Glorify thou Me with thy known self of the glory which I had with ye before the world began." It was not just fellowship. It was glory.

You say, "Well, does He long to be glorified?" Absolutely, does He long to be glorified. Rightly, does He long to be glorified, for He is worthy to be glorified. And he was not worthy to have suffered such humiliation, hatred, and death at the hands of man. He wanted to go back to His glory, back to fellowship with the Father.

He was God, after all, God who came and was born in the stable, God who had no place to set His head, God who suffered hatred, God who was abused, God who heard the jeers and the slurs of evil men, who was forsaken and mocked and ultimately killed. A bitter cup, but He took it willingly for our redemption's sake, but that's not to say He didn't long to be in the Father's presence.

There's a second relationship that must be understood in the Resurrection, and that is the relationship, not only between the Savior and the Father, but the Savior and the Spirit. The Resurrection was essential in relationship to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Turn in your Bible to Acts chapter 2 verse 32. Just a few weeks after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Peter was preaching, and he preached the Resurrection. The people knew that Jesus was not in the grave any longer. Lies had been spread around the city about the disciples stealing his body and so forth. But I believe the reason that so many thousands upon thousands of people were so soon converted after the Resurrection of Christ was in fact because they knew He was raised from the dead. And even though multitudes never saw Him, they couldn't explain the fact that everyone who saw Him gave testimony that they had seen Him and that His tomb was empty. How else could they explain the transformed lives of His followers? And I believe that it was that that becomes the heart of Peter's message, because it is that that's the most convincing reality for Him to proclaim to the people of Jerusalem.

So in verse 32 of Acts 2, he says, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we're all witnesses, therefore being by the right hand of God exalted." God raised Him up, and that's back to our first point..."took Him up and exalted Him, having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,

He hath shed forth this which you now see and hear." They had just seen evidence of the coming of the Holy Spirit. As every man heard the wonderful works of God articulated in their own language, as there was a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and clove and tongues of fire, as it were, coming out of Heaven, and then the proclaiming of the wonderful works of God, and the language of all the pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem, spoken to them by men who didn't know those languages, but were endowed and empowered by the Spirit of God. They had seen a phenomenal miraculous demonstration that God's Spirit was descending.

And Peter says that God raised up Jesus and sent the Spirit. In other words, if Jesus is not raised, then the Spirit is not sent. For the sending of the Spirit is the Father's affirmation of the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Turn to John chapter 16...back again to Jesus' conversation with His disciples. Notice verse 7...very important..."Nevertheless, I tell you the truth," Jesus says. "It is expedient for you that I go away." In other words, "It's best for you that I go away. It's profitable for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter"...that is the Holy Spirit..."will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send Him unto you." In other words, Jesus had to rise from the dead and ascend into Heaven to send the Spirit. You see, it was the Spirit's work to speak of Christ.

Verse 14 of that same chapter 16 says, "The Spirit will come." And verse 13 says, "He will not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, that shall He speak. He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for He shall receive from me and show it unto you." In other words, the Spirit carries on the work of Christ. And if Christ is dead, the Spirit has no work.

So the Resurrection impacts the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now what is that ministry? First of all, it is to testify of Christ. Back to chapter 15 and verse 26...it says that "The Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father"...the end of verse 26..."shall testify about me." The Spirit was sent to proclaim Christ in the hearts of men, and through preachers and teachers and apostles and missionaries empowered by the Spirit. The Spirit was sent then as the chief witness to Christ.

The second element of his work is in verse 8 of chapter 16..."And when He has come, He will convict the world." He will reprove the world. He comes not only to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, but He comes to convict of sin, of righteousness and judgment. Very, very important statements. "Of sin, because they believe not on me." That is the sin of all sins. The severest sins are not cultural sins. They're not social sins. They're not criminal acts. The severest sin of all sins is not believing in Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit moves in the hearts of unbelievers to convict them of that sin.

I believe that's exactly what happened to Paul, and how he came to conversion. He says, "I thought I was alive. And then sin revived, and I died." And what he is saying is, "I saw my sin." How did he see it? I believe the Spirit of God showed it to him. The Spirit is in the work of convicting. If there's

no resurrection, the Spirit isn't sinned. If the Spirit isn't sinned, he can't testify to Christ, and he can't convict of sin. And if there's no testimony to Christ and there's no convicting of sin, there's no evangelism.

He also convicts of righteousness. What does that mean? The world thought Jesus was unrighteous, and they killed Him. The Holy Spirit confirms in the hearts of people that He is righteous. And that is why He went to the Father, and you see him no more. The world may have said He is unrighteous, He deserves to die, but God said, "He is righteous, He deserves to be in My presence," right? You see, when God received Jesus Christ, He was stamping Him as righteous because God let's no unholy person into His presence. And when God received Him...when He said, "I go to my Father," He was affirming that God saw Him as righteous.

So the world is convicted, not only of the sin of unbelief, but of the sin of wrongly evaluating Jesus Christ. And the world does that. The world sees Jesus Christ as unrighteous, unworthy. God sees Him as perfect.

Thirdly, look at verse 11. It says the Spirit comes to convict the world of judgment...of judgment. What is the judgment? Because the prince of this world is judged. Listen, if Satan, who is the most powerful created being sent against God is judged, do you think less powerful beings will escape that judgment? No. And Satan was judged on the cross. The serpent's head was bruised on the cross. The serpent, at that time, had the power of death. Jesus conquered death; therefore, he conquered Satan. So when Jesus defeated Satan on the cross, judged him, and assigned him to Hell forever, He assigned along with him all those lesser powerful beings among men and ages who rejected Him.

So it is the Spirit's work to come into the world, to convict of the sin of unbelief, to convict of a wrong estimation of Jesus Christ, to convict about the inevitability of judgment...that's the Spirit's work. And the Spirit is sent because the Resurrection was accomplished.

Another thought, thirdly, in relation to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit was sent to teach and instruct us. Verse 13 of chapter 16 says, "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth." It is the Spirit's ministry to teach truth. In fact, it says essentially the same thing back in chapter 15, as we saw, verse 26. "I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth."

The Holy Spirit is said to be our teacher. First of all, when He came to lead us into truth, it was the apostles who the New Testament, right? He led them to the writing of the New Testament. That's why Peter says, "And we have not some prophecy that came to us by the will of men, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved along by the holy Spirit." So the Scripture is the Spirit's teaching.

And then John tells us in 1st John, "We have anointing from God who teaches us all things.' So we have the external Scripture taught by the Spirit. We have the internal teaching of the Spirit in our own

hearts, and so He comes to be our teacher. No resurrection, no ascension. No ascension, no sending the Spirit. No sending the Spirit, no testimony to Christ, no conviction of sin, and no instruction. Then the Bible is a human book, and we have no spiritual teacher either if there's no resurrection.

There's a third category, and that is the Resurrection in relation to God's people...the third dimension in understanding the Resurrection...in relation to God's people. Look at Romans chapter 4. In Romans 4, the Apostle Paul says that if we want to be Christians, we must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we must believe, not only in Him as a person, but as a resurrected person. And verse 24 says, "We believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead. We believe in the God of resurrection like Isaiah did, and Daniel, and Josiah, and the psalmists, and all the Old Testament saints. We believe in a God who raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead"...listen to this..."who was delivered for our offenses"...that is, delivered from the grave for our offenses..."and raised again for our justification. Delivered over to pay the price of our sin, delivered out of the grave to make that price, that full payment, accomplished, and raised for our justification." The phrase, "raised for our justification," is the point.

In other words, if Jesus isn't raised, we aren't right with God. You see, to be right with God, we have to be delivered from sin, right? Because God cannot look on iniquity. The soul that sins, it dies. The wages of sin is death. Any of us to whom sin is still bound are doomed to Hell. And so we must be delivered from sin. And that's what happened in the Resurrection. He was raised to deliver us from sin.

You say, "Well, I thought He died to pay the penalty." Yes, but it wouldn't have done any good if He hadn't have been raised from the dead, for He would have died just another man attempting to do something He couldn't pull off. He had to die for our sin, but He had to conquer death in our behalf, so show indeed that His death satisfied God. He died the death that ultimately satisfied God, so that God could raise Him from the dead, and all who are in Him. And so we are delivered from sin by His resurrection. He proves, in rising from the dead, that He conquered death, sin, and Hell.

You see, all that sin can do is kill us. It can kill us physically. It can kill us spiritually. It can kill us eternally. But Jesus shows that its physical power is broken, its spiritual power is broken, and its eternal power is broken. When Jesus conquers death by resurrection, he shows that sin's great power is shattered totally. And so He is delivered from the grave so that we might be right with God. And when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in a very real sense, we die His death; we rise His resurrection.

Romans 6 says that "We were buried with Him in His death. We rise in Him to walk in newness of life." And so the Resurrection then, as far as we're concerned, delivers us from sin. Secondly, it gives us life.

At the grave of Lazarus, as Jesus was talking to the family before they actually went out to the tomb, Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the life." He didn't say, "I give it." He said, "I am life. I am the Resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and who so ever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Do you believe this? He said that to Martha, who was doubting His resurrection power. Then he demonstrated it by going right out and raising Lazarus from the dead. But what He said there was, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will never die." In other words, "I will give you life."

So the Resurrection not only delivers us from sin but gives us life. What good would it be just to deliver us from sin? To put us into nothingness? In other words, we aren't saved to keep us out of Hell and put us into nothing. Some people believe that. They believe you just die, the lights go out, and you cease to exist...that's it. That's better than Hell, but that's not what God has for us. He not only delivered us from sin, but he gives us life...the fullness of all that eternal life is. In John 14, Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

I remember reading a book by G.B. Hardy, who was a Canadian scientist, many years ago. He said, "Look, everybody faces Boxing Day." That's the day they put you in the box. He called it "Boxing Day." "Everybody faces Boxing Day." And he said, "That specter haunts my mind and the mind of every mind." And he says, "I only have two questions to ask religion. One, has anybody ever cheated death? Two, did they make a way for me to do it?" Fair enough.

He searched the religions of the world. He says in his book, "I checked out the tombs of all the religious leaders and found them occupied, except the tomb of Jesus, which was empty. I studied history and Scripture, and it was confirmed to me that He indeed had risen from the dead. That's question one...yes, there was someone who rose from the dead...Jesus Christ. Question number two, 'Did he make a way for me to do it?' And I discovered the truth of John 14:19, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' And I embraced Christianity."

That's the Christian message. And when we come alive in Jesus Christ, it isn't just that we escape Hell. It is that we enter life...life abundant, life eternal, life with all of its inconceivable marvels and fulfillments.

In fact, it not only delivers us from sin, not only gives us life, but He is alive today to prepare a place for us. Remember what he said to his disciples? "And if I go"...John 14..."I will go and prepare a place for you and come again to" what..."receive you unto Myself." So that He rose from the dead to go and prepare a place for us.

Martin Luther said, "This is the best and most comforting sermon the Lord ever delivered on Earth. It is the treasure and jewel that is not to be purchased by the world's goods."

To think that Jesus Christ is alive today preparing a place for us in His own celestial glory...that's what He meant when He said, "In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. But I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I'll come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. In My Father's house are many rooms, and I'm getting one ready for you." What a scene...a place in the Father's house.

That's why in John 17 verse 24, He prayed that the Father would give Him His own beloved, that they may be with Him where He is in the Father's glory.

No, you see, it isn't just that the cross delivers us from sin, and then the lights go out, and we're spared Hell. It is that He gives us life. It isn't just life as we know it. It is life in God's dimension involving a place which He is now preparing for us.

But there's even more than that. The Resurrection in relation to us is another dimension. And that is that the living Christ empowers us now for Christian living. Because Jesus is alive now, He infuses His power in us...great truth.

Ephesians 1:19 talks about the "exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of His mighty power" which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. In other words, the power that God used to raise Christ from the dead is the same power infused in us.

And later on in chapter 3, he says, "Now, unto Him who is able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all you can ask or think according to the power that works" where? "In us." The living Christ infuses us with power...resurrection power for living.

And that's what Paul had in mind when he said, "Oh, that I may know the power of His resurrection." Power for life, power over sin, power over temptation, power for ministry, power for service, power to love, and to have joy and peace, power to do that which pleases God, power to break the control of Satan. Christ's resurrection is everything to us because it gives us not only deliverance from sin, but life. Not only life, but the promise of a place which He is now preparing, not only a place in the future which He is preparing, but power right now, that we may be blessed with all spiritual blessings in the Heavenliest in Christ Jesus, and that we may see Him do in us exceeding, abundantly, above what we can ask or think.

There's another element. The resurrected Christ who now stands at the right hand of God, as it were, is interceding for us. And that's why in Hebrews 4 it says, "Look, we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like, as we are yet without sin. Therefore, let us come boldly unto the throne of mercy, that we might find grace to help

in time of need." In other words, we have one there interceding on our behalf. We can run into His presence, whatever the need might be. And if we ask anything in His name, we know that He hears us. And we have the petitions we ask of Him. He intercedes for us. So the living Christ in his resurrection has provided for us resources, a point of intercession.

He advocates for us, standing before the Father, when Satan comes, as it tells us He does in Romans 8, and accuses the brother, and it is Christ who is our advocate...Christ who stands to secure us against all enemies, against all accusations. "Who shall lay any charge," Romans 8 says, "to God's elect? Shall Christ that justifies."

"He constantly keeps on cleansing us from sin," says 1st John 1:9. He is our intercessor, our advocate.

Not only does the resurrected Christ in His resurrection deliver us from sin, give us life, prepare a place in Heaven, give us present power, advocate and intercede for us, but one other thing...He promises to return for us to take us to be with Himself, to right the world. Our citizenship is in Heaven from which we look for the Savior who returns for His people to take them to be with Him. See, it's all based on the Resurrection...pretty simple.

Remove the Resurrection; everything comes down...everything. There would be no deliverance from sin at all. No life, no Heaven, no power, no intercession, no Second Coming, no nothing without a resurrection.

Finally, the Resurrection in relation to those who reject. We see it in relation to the Father, the Spirit, God's people, and even in rejecters. You say, "Well, I don't even accept the Resurrection; it has no relation to me." Oh, yes, it does. Because in Revelation 1:18, it says, "Jesus has in His hands the keys to Hell and death." When He went to the cross and destroyed him who had the power of death...that is Satan...He took the keys from Satan's hand and holds them eternally in His own. And He is going to unlock the graves, and all men are going to be brought before Him for final judgment.

Even the ones who reject Jesus Christ will be resurrected; did you know that? Look at John chapter 5. In John chapter 5 verse 24, he talks about the fact that the one who hears His word and believes on Him that sent Him has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment. And there he introduces the idea that there is everlasting life on the one hand and judgment on the other hand.

And in working this out, verse 25 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." He speaks about the fact there of calling people to spiritual life out of spiritual deadness.

But he takes it a step further in verse 28. "The hour is coming. This is the future judgment in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice." All that are in the graves...righteous or unrighteous, believing or rejecting...they'll all come forth because He's going to unlock every grave and bring them to Him. They that have done good...that is by believing in God, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall enter the resurrection of life. They that have done evil by the rejection of that principle of salvation in Christ unto the resurrection of damnation. Everybody gets resurrected...resurrection of life for believers, resurrection of damnation for unbelievers. So you may not believe in the Resurrection, but you're still going to get resurrected.

And if you are resurrected, and the resurrected of damnation, you can read a full description of that resurrection in the 20th chapter of Revelation. It says there in verse 11, "I saw a great white throne. Him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was no place for them. I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was open, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works, and the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them. And they were judged, every man according to his works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire." This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. That's the judgment of all the ungodly dead brought from the sea and the land before God and judged by their works. Why? Because they don't have faith in Christ. All that's left is their works. And by the works of the flesh, shall no flesh be justified. So they stand bankrupt before God to be cast into the lake of fire. All men will be raised from the dead because Christ rose, took the keys of death...He controls all that ultimately.

Now what am I saying? Listen carefully. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a negotiable event. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is not some isolated theological thought. You take away the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and you have just destroyed everything. Because if there's no resurrection, then Jesus never went back to be with the Father, and the fellowship was never restored, and He was never exalted, and the Trinity is destroyed, and there's no God left. And if there is no resurrection, then Jesus never went back to Heaven and sent the Holy Spirit. So there's no power here to testify of Christ, and there is no convicting source in the hearts and souls of men, and there is no word of God inspired by God. And there is no truth teacher who can lead us, and there is no Spirit to guide us.

You see, we're bankrupt. And if there is no resurrection, then we have not been delivered from our sins. We do not possess eternal life. There is no Heaven, and there's no place for us there. There is no one interceding on our behalf. We're absolutely hopeless. There will be no Second Coming. You see, you just can't tear the Resurrection out. You can't debate about it. It is not negotiable. It destroys everything to deny the Resurrection.

So we affirm the Resurrection. And against those who would deny it, we say God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. And He's going to bring to judgment everyone who rejects Christ by that man whom he has ordained to be the judge, whom he raised from the dead. That's what Paul told the Athenian philosophers in Mars Hillin Acts 17..."Jesus is risen from the dead." And that's so hopeful. Because with no resurrection, we have no hope...nothing...absolutely nothing.

I had occasion a week ago to re-read something I hadn't read in many years: Sophocles's classic play, Oedipus Tyrannousor Oedipus Rex. It's a story of Oedipus, king of thieves, who was cursed from infancy with a curse that he would murder his own Father and marry his mother. And so he spent his entire life trying to avoid doing those things so that that curse wouldn't come true. And to his ultimate horror, he did exactly what he tried to avoid. Unwittingly, he murdered his Father. Equally unwittingly, he married his own mother.

And when all of that truth has dawned upon his proud mind, the horror is more than he can bear. He rushes into the chamber of his mother and wife and finds her, having hanged herself, dead upon the bed. He reaches down on her corpse, rips off the brooches that she wears of gold, and with the pins that extend from the brooches, pokes out his eyes so that he may never see another day of life, and then cries out, as the play ends, "Call no one happy who is of this mortal race." And the whole thing is a statement of absolute and utter despair.

And when you analyze Oedipus Tyrannous, what you see there is inevitable fate. No matter how you try to avoid it, you can't. You're doomed, you're damned, you're cursed, and that's all there is, and there's nothing else. And try as you can, try as you may, the curse will come true because the forces are greater than you are.

And having read that, I was reminded again of how it really is for people who have no hope. It may not always work out the way it did for him, but it's equally hopeless. Unless you know Jesus Christ, and when you do, there is life abundant, life eternal, here and now, then and there, forever and ever. We affirm that Christ has risen from the dead. That's the basis of our faith.

Let's bow in prayer. Thank you, Father, for the reminder again this day that Jesus Christ is alive. Everything depends upon it.

While your heads bowed...and just a closing moment...we'd like you to stay where you are for just a moment, and we'll be dismissed.

The Apostle Paul said, "If you confess with your mouth, Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved, delivered from sin and death and Hell."

Two things...believing in the Resurrection of Christ and confessing Him as Lord...there are many who believe in the Resurrection but have never confessed Him as Lord. What folly...tragedy. It's bad enough not to believe, but to be able to say, "Yes, the Resurrection may be true, but I'm not interested in affirming His Lordship"...oh, what guilt goes with such knowledge and such rejection.

This day means nothing to anyone who doesn't embrace the risen Christ as Lord and Savior. I trust in your heart you'll do that if you have not.

Father, for this day, we express our gratitude with grateful hearts. We have come together to celebrate the living Christ. He is not here. He is risen just as He said. May we, as were those early believers instructed by the angel, go and tell the truth of the risen Christ. And may no one let this day drift away into tomorrow without putting their faith in Christ. We thank You, Father, for all that the Resurrection means to us. And we give You the glory, in Christ's name, Amen.

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