

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION IN YOU

Let's Pray...

Father, as we turn now to Your anointed Word, the Holy Bible, what we know not please teach us.

What we have not please give us.

What we are not yet please make us.

We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I say... He is risen! And you respond... He is risen indeed!

After all... that is why we are here today.

Because we believe that Jesus Christ was delivered over to death as a substitute for our sins and that He was raised to life to justify all who believe in and have faith in Him.

But here is a what if for you...

"Imagine that some archaeologist finds positive proof that he has unearthed the bones of Jesus of Nazareth.

What would that do to your faith?"

I remember a teacher asking that question in a Bible Study I attended once.

I recall that we had a long discussion, first of all trying to dispute his premise -- How could we really know that these were Jesus' bones...? etc.

--- but then, accepting his premise under duress, we tried to answer the question...

"He's still God, right? He still died for us. He still would have given the same teaching. I could still believe in him, couldn't I?"

Many of us felt that somehow, we could hold onto our faith, even though it was proven that Jesus did not rise from the dead.

However, the Apostle Paul gives a very different answer to the question in 1 Corinthians 15.

1Corinthians 15:17 he says...

17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

And in verse 19 he says...

1 Corinthians 15:19

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

Why does Paul say that?

Wouldn't our faith be just as valid if Jesus didn't come back from the dead?

Why is the fact of the resurrection central to true Christianity?

The answer to this most important question is found throughout the New Testament.

Let's focus for a moment on the answer the Apostle Paul gives in his letter to the Philippians, a letter on which our Pastor Paul just finished a series....

In chapter 3, the Apostle Paul is reacting to false teachers who were saying that we must follow the Jewish law in order to be saved.

In verses 4-9, Paul says this,

Philippians 3:4b-9

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

Now some may find that piece of scripture difficult to follow so let's paraphrase what Paul is saying so that we can see the application to us...

Paul says...

Look, I followed the Law as well as anyone, and better than any of these false teachers.

No one could have looked at any part of my life and accused me of breaking the Law. I was, on those terms, perfect.

But now I consider all that I did, all my accomplishments, all that striving to prove to God that I was good –

Now I say, “I consider all of that garbage, compared to the greatest thing of all: knowing Jesus Christ as Lord.

Indeed, I have given up everything else so I might know Him.

I am convinced that once I know Him, I will be in Him, and will be declared good by God, not because of anything I have done, but because I am identified with Christ Jesus.

Paul then writes the verse on which I want you to concentrate this morning.

The Apostle gives the reason why he has given up all claims to his own righteousness based on his zeal and works:

Philippians 3:10 a

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection,

Paul says..."I want to know Christ.

I want to know the power of his resurrection."

This is Paul's primary desire... this is what Paul wants more than anything else in this life:

To know the living, resurrected Christ, and to know the power of living a life associated with and empowered by that resurrection.

You see, if Christ is not raised from the dead, if his bones are buried somewhere in Palestine, then we cannot know him.

That man is dead. We might read about him, we might revere him as the founder of some religion called Christianity, but we cannot know Him.

Furthermore, if He was not raised from the dead, then He has no power today.

He is dead.

His words might have some influence, just like Confucious or Buddha or Lao Tsu or Mohammed -- but he himself has no power.

This is why the resurrection is so central to us as believers:

True Christianity is not a religion based on abstract principles, or traditions or teachings.

True, living Christianity is a relationship with a living Savior, a Savior we can know, a Savior God who infuses our life and empowers us, who transforms us into His likeness and Whom we can follow here and now.

But what does Paul mean when he says he wants to know Christ?

The Bible, time and again, Old Testament and New Testament, portrays the right relationship between man and God as personal.

In the Old Testament, for example, the Israelites' are always seen in relationship to a living God; they were not simply followers of a legal code or believers in a Mosaic philosophy.

That is why they were set apart to worship I AM.

...not I WAS or I DID.

Hear the Word of the Lord...

Jeremiah 9:23,24:

23 Thus says the Lord:

“Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,

Let not the mighty man glory in his might,

Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;

24 But let him who glories glory in this,

That he understands and knows Me,

That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these I delight,” says the Lord.

Knowing God is more important than wisdom, or strength, or riches.

Think about the people who are most admired in this world. They are admired for these three qualities, aren't they?

The world admires those who are bright, intelligent, and knowledgeable...

...or those who are physically gifted in strength, talent, or beauty; or those who have amassed great wealth.

But the Lord says through Jeremiah that none of those are of great importance.

What matters more than anything else, says Jeremiah, is understanding and knowing the Lord, the covenant God who delights in kindness, justice, and righteousness.

And this prominence of knowing God carries over into the gospels. Jesus himself, on the night prior to his death, prays to His Father for his followers, saying:

John 17:3

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Eternal life is... what?

Knowing God, knowing Jesus!

Without knowing Him and His resurrection, there is no true life.

Peter also emphasizes this point:

2 Peter 1:3

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

Our knowledge of Him leads to His empowering us with everything we need for life and godliness.

John makes a similar point near the close of his first letter:

1 John 5:20

20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

John says that Jesus came so that we might know God the Father.

The purpose of His incarnation and the finished work of the Cross, His Resurrection, was our knowing Him.

This is central to the gospel.

So Old Testament, New Testament, gospels, letters, Paul, Peter, John - all agree that knowing God, which John tells us is knowing Jesus, the Lamb who was slain and now rules at the right Hand of the Throne of Grace, is central to our faith.

Jesus tells us Himself that if you know Him you know the Father.

But what does knowing God by knowing Jesus mean?

The first step is putting your faith in Him: believing that He is the Son of God, crucified for your sins,

AND believing that the event we celebrate today, the resurrection, really did take place, and that He conquered the grave.

That is why the Apostle Paul proclaims to us:

Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

So now that we know about who Jesus is and believe what He did, and we have accepted Him as Lord.

But how do we get to really know Jesus?

The same way we get to know a person. By spending time with Him.

We get to know a person by being in their physical presence and interacting with them over a long period of time.

Although we cannot see Jesus physically in this place, we have been given the Holy Spirit as a comforter and as a guide to be able to follow Jesus as he commanded us to do.

One way to spend time with Him is by intentionally making time to pray.

True prayer is not a one-sided conversation.

Because of the Resurrection life that is IN you and because of what He did FOR you, His Spirit will speak to your spirit, drawing you into specific prayers for specific needs of those around you.

The prayer begins with Him, goes through you in obedience and is completed in Him. You will hear His whisper if you truly desire to fully know Him.

That level of intimacy requires a relationship that is nurtured by spending time intentionally every day inviting God to use you where He has placed you.

Pray alone, and with others. Pray without ceasing.

In prayer, you can share all your joys, frustrations, and sorrows with the God of the universe, the God who cares.

Try praying through Scripture, using Psalms, or Paul's prayers, or the prayers of Daniel or Moses.

Talking to God from your position in Christ builds your relationship with Him.

Another way to nurture that relationship is by studying and spending time in His Word.

However, remember that the Bible is not a textbook. It is living and powerful.

While it is important to know about God, knowing God is more than knowing facts about God.

We must go beyond learning facts. We must absorb the wisdom of the Word, allowing it to change us on the inside.

The third step is following. Listen as you pray and read the Bible.

Be willing to walk out in faith, even when His commands don't seem to make sense.

Depend on God even when His requirements seem unreasonable to your human understanding.

When you do this -- when you step out in faith -- He will be there to support you, and you will see Jesus as a living, risen Savior.

Let's look at that last piece of Paul's scripture that we saw in Philippians 3 again.

Philippians 3:10 a

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection,

The second part of Paul's desire is "to know . . . the power of His resurrection."

Note that Paul does not ask God for more power. Instead, he asks God that he might know the resurrection power he already has.

Paul's first prayer for the Ephesians parallels this idea. This is also my prayer for you.

Ephesians 1:15-21

15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

All followers of Jesus have this power; all Christians have access to this incomparably great power, this resurrection power.

Our task is to tap into it.

Let's consider four aspects of this power.

1) The Power to be forgiven of sin

Paul puts it this way at the end of Romans 4:

Rom 4:25

He was delivered over to death because of our sins, and raised to life because of our justification

Because of this power we do not have to walk around in shame and condemnation because of past sin.

(2) The Power to Conquer Sin

Christ's resurrection also empowers us to conquer sin in our lives.

We only need to acknowledge the sin that the Holy Spirit reveals to us, repent and move on free and released.

As Paul says in Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:23-24

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The power that we have here is to put on the mind of Christ but first we must put down our carnal minds which will always want to take over wherever we will let them.

Use your free will for good not for evil and you will be strengthened to do all the will of God.

(3) The Power to Be God's Agent for Good

Christianity is not just about forgiveness and overcoming sin.

Christianity is not simply a solution to our problems.

God has determined that we are to be His agents of change in the world.

He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors.

We are also His agents to do His mighty work among those He has placed in our midst. This includes creating pathways of peace and bringers of healing and restoration as led by His Spirit.

Ephesian 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Finally, resurrection power's greatest accomplishment is conforming us into the likeness of Christ.

Not only are we forgiven for our sins, empowered not to sin, and appointed as ambassadors – we are perfected in His love.

Paul says:

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Into his likeness! Can you imagine what that means? Think of everything about yourself that you don't like, all the habits, all the negative characteristics -- the things you have wanted to change, have tried to change.

God is dealing with every one of those. You are being made into a perfect creation -- you are becoming like Jesus!

That is your destiny, you are becoming spotless, blameless, loving, kind, strong -- transformed into his likeness. That is the power of the resurrection!

As believers, we need, not just a decision, but a commitment -- a commitment to depend on the power of God, a commitment to knowing Him better and better, so that we might be conformed to his likeness in all things pertaining to Godliness.

All this to say... Jesus is risen from the dead!

Christ lives in you!

Believe it!

Know Him!

Follow Him!

Praise Him!

Hallelujah!

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THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION IN YOU Scriptures

1Corinthians 15:17

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1 Corinthians 15:19

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