

Resurrection Power changes Everything

This morning we are celebrating the Power of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. For many people, however, Easter Sunday brings a major crisis of faith. Easter confronts them with this essential question: *“Is the Christianity natural or is it supernatural?”* A lot of people avoid this question – even while attending their Easter celebrations. The following poem exposes such shallow beliefs. The first two verses say;

- *On the third day we eat breakfast wear bright dresses munch on chocolate eggs and marshmallow bunnies*
- *On the third day we go to church and sing hymns if we can find a parking spot nearby.*

Unfortunately, it is possible for Easter to be nothing more than that. But to those of us who are alive in Christ, we can confess the third verse of this poem with gratitude and praise:

- *And on the third day this God of ours recovers from death in a way that changes everything.*

In 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul explains his conviction that the resurrection of Jesus Christ does in fact change everything – not just for his generation but also for those to come. Easter puts human history in perspective. The **resurrection of Jesus Christ** brings creativity, vitality, and a confident hope for the future. Paul knows that he will be raised from death to *live eternally*. The supernatural power and brilliant glory of God is consistently displayed through the Easter perspective of past, present, and future. Paul's powerful confession of faith in **2 Corinthians 4:3-15** explains why people cannot see the *supernatural truth* revealed in the Easter story. It can be paraphrased as follows:

“If our Message is obscure to anyone, it's not because we're holding back in any way. No, it's because these other people are looking or going the wrong way and refuse to give it serious attention. All they have eyes for is the fashionable god of darkness. They think he can give them what they want, and that they won't have to bother believing a Truth they can't see. They are stone-blind to the brightness of the Message that shines through Christ, who gives us the best picture of God we'll ever get. ...If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. For we carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. And this is done to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that! ...But we're not keeping this quiet – not on your life. Just like the psalmist wrote, “I believed it, so I said it,” we boldly say what we believe. And what we believe is that the One who raised up our Master Jesus will just as certainly raise us up, alive.”

That incomparable **power** of God, and the **brightness of His glory**, was visibly displayed in the resurrection. Matthew's account of the resurrection emphasises both these dynamics. Although Jesus had already been *raised from the dead*, God's **power** was still evident in the violent earthquake and in the boulder being rolled away from the tomb. Also, the brilliance of His glory shone through in the blinding, dazzling white of God's angelic messenger (Matthew 28:1-8). The same God, who said, **“Light shall shine out of darkness,”** is the One who has shone into our hearts to give us the “light” of the knowledge of the glory of God – in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Easter message that the apostle Paul and the early church preached declares that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Lord of ‘life’ itself. He died a voluntary death and suffered crucifixion. He bore our sins in His body on the cross, yet He died victorious. In His voluntary death, He won the victory over sin, death and hell, and was raised to the newness of **resurrection life** on Easter morning. The New Testament always links Christ's absolute sovereignty as Lord of Life to that awesome event. The resurrection endorsed, proclaimed and demonstrated the victory that Jesus had won at the cross. He died as our Saviour, but He now lives as our Lord.

We must understand that **resurrection power** is like no other power on earth. It is unique, and has no possible rival. For one thing, it is the kind of power that operates in the midst of death. It works when everything around it is dull, dead and barren. It worked in the midst of a cemetery, for that is where it was first demonstrated. When Jesus Christ was resurrected, He came out from among the dead. Therefore, if you learn to live by resurrection power you can be alive and vital when everything and everyone around you is dead or lifeless. **Resurrection power** is also irresistible. It cannot be thwarted or turned aside. It takes absolutely no account of any obstacles thrown in its path, except to use them for further opportunities to advance its cause. When Jesus came bursting from the grave, He paid not the slightest attention to the obstacles man had placed in His way. There was a large stone in front of His tomb; but He passed through it. He himself was wrapped in yard after yard of linen cloth; yet He left the grave-clothes undisturbed behind Him. There were Roman guards in front of His tomb; He ignored them. He took not the slightest notice of the decrees of Caesar, or the orders of Pilate, or the protests of the Jewish priests. For He had His eyes on the prize set before Him!

Furthermore, **resurrection power** makes no noise. Most other kinds of power that we know usually make some kind of sound; they pound, pulsate, throb, hum, buzz, explode, or even roar. But resurrection power is quite silent! Without any display or pretentiousness it quietly accomplishes its purpose, even though there's nothing audible or visible to mark it. When you are living by **resurrection power** you do not advertise it or seek to dazzle others by its display. Your effect upon others is quiet and unobserved at first, but soon there are evident changes that mark the inevitable effect of resurrection power at work (in and through you).

How did the apostle Paul evidence **resurrection power** in his own life? We read that in spite of his afflictions he was not crushed. Although people abandoned him, he kept the faith. He knew in his heart that he was not forsaken by God. And

even though he was struck down, he was not destroyed. He believed that the 'life' of Jesus was made public, or "manifest," in his own body by the way he lived. There is always a tone of celebration in his writings. Even though circumstances had knocked Paul down at times, they never knocked him out. His life constantly demonstrated *creativity* and *vitality* because he experienced God's power and glory first hand. If we are God's "resurrection" people like Paul, we are a lot tougher than we usually think. It's encouraging to know that each of us can cope with great pressures (the violent storms of life) because we have the **power of the resurrection** within us.

Calvary expresses the love of God, the resurrection expresses the **power of God**. Think about all the amazing Epistles that Paul has written. He has the best track record of any man that has ever lived (outside of Jesus): He raised the dead, he opened the eyes of the blind, he cast out demons, and he has written more epistles than all the other writers put together. Yet he wholeheartedly says, "***I want to know Him and the power of His resurrection.***" No other religion in the world believes in a resurrection. This was the crowning miracle of God. Paul builds this truth, like a pyramid upside-down, using all his 14 epistles (if you count Hebrews as his). And putting Hebrews at the top, he turns them all over and balances them on one razor-sharp point - the **Resurrection** of Jesus Christ. But what is so unique about it? Other people had been raised from the dead by Jesus Himself. Yes, that's true. However, no man other than Jesus Christ was ever able to declare: "***I am the resurrection and the life.***" No one was able to swallow death up in victory!

Apart from Jesus Christ, the fear of death is universal. The comedy of Woody Allen speaks to his obsession with it. In an Esquire magazine interview, Allen is quoted as saying, "*It's not that I'm afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens.*" Most of the article shows that he is filled with dread. He says, "*The fundamental thing behind all motivation and all activity is the constant struggle against annihilation and death. It's absolutely stupefying in its terror and it renders anyone's accomplishments meaningless.*"

The Easter message proclaims that Jesus rescues His followers from the horror of death and places them into eternity. We will not only survive death - we will be raised from it! ...*And on the third day, this God of ours recovers from death in a way that changes everything.* The **resurrection of Jesus Christ** from the dead does, in fact, change everything - the past, the present, and the future. And the Easter message affects our understanding of everything. It makes a way for us to personally experience the amazing creativity and vitality of **resurrection life**.

Jesus gave up His life twice. Firstly, He humbled Himself by giving up His life as God to become a man. The Bible says He made Himself of "*no reputation*", and this means that He completely emptied Himself of His divine life. Jesus then received life as a man, and once again, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death. Finally, on the cross He emptied Himself of 'life' as the perfect man. On the cross, Jesus gave up all of His 'man-life' through death. But three days later He was raised from the dead. Hallelujah! **Resurrection Life** was imparted to Him by the Holy Spirit! "*Have you seen the glory of God in the face of Christ? Has God driven back the darkness of sin and unbelief from your heart? Are you experiencing the resurrection power of Christ in your life? Has Jesus rescued you from bondage to the fear of death?*" If your answers are no, do you perhaps realise that you are spiritually blind, and that you are living in the darkness of sinful rebellion against God? Is your life dull, dead, and barren? Are you in bondage to the fear of death?

The good news of the Easter message is that Jesus can open your eyes to spiritual reality. He can forgive your rebellion, dissipate your fear of what happens after you die, and He can give you life to the fullest right now. All you need to do is turn to Him. Romans 10:9-10 explains that "*...If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness [being made right with God], and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*" What better way to celebrate Easter than to accept the **new life** Jesus offers today?

Trust Him, surrender your will to Him. Then you will know the thrill, the joy, and the security of the resurrected Christ living inside of you. So, if you have never asked Jesus Christ to come into your life, I want to invite you to open your heart and accept the salvation He offers. Jesus says to you, "***Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him, and will dine with him, and he with Me***" (Revelation 3:20). Please respond to His gracious invitation. Come to Him right now - because He cares for you. **Resurrection Life** is yours today!