

# Attaining The Resurrection

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If you want to stand with me, we're going to read out of John, chapter 20.

John, chapter 20, beginning with verse one. Now, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him. So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together.

But the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stopping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw.

And he believed, for as yet, they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. Father, we thank you for the resurrection of our savior and Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that he overcame death, that he paid our penalty, the penalty of sin and God. That he offers eternal life to all who put their faith in him.

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And, Father, as we come before you today, just pray that your spirit would be speaking in our hearts, each one of us, God helping us to draw near to you. And we just rejoice, Father, that we have a living hope. That our hope is in Christ, that he is not dead, that he's alive, and he offers eternal life to all who put their faith in him. Pray in Jesus name. Amen.

You may be seated.

I don't know if you noticed, but in your bulletin I put a copy of one of the articles I wrote for my book, and I'm not going to go into that article so much, but if you have a chance and can read that, do. If you're interested in one of my books, they're 75 devotionals. I have copies. They're \$15, and you can see me. But almost 20 years ago, my first wife, Jan, died of cancer after a valiant 16 year battle.

Died on a Friday. I had Stacy and my daughter put some favorite running suit on her, put her in the car, and we drove into Coleman's together. That last trip took her to the mortuary, where I handed her off to the morticians. At Coleman's. Spent the next day grieving Saturday over the fact that my loved wife was gone of 32 years.

Got up Sunday, and I decided I can share a message, that I can preach the word today. And I got up, and I was doing really well until right at the end, I broke down and I started sobbing, and I ran out of the church and went back to the parsonage. And from this moment, it didn't happen. But I want you to imagine with me, what if I had gone into the parsonage grieving for my wife who had died, walking into the living room? And there I saw Jan sitting in a rocking chair, rocking back and forth.

At first I go, I must be dreaming. This must be a vision. This can't be right. I took her into the mortuary. She is dead.

But then she spoke to me. No, it's really me. I'm really alive. Can you imagine what it would be like? All of us have lost loved ones.

Could you imagine what it would be like after, you know that they're dead and gone and they came back? I share that story because that's what it had to have been like for

the disciples. They saw Jesus die on that cross. They saw him taken down from the cross. They saw him buried in that tomb.

They spent all day Saturday weeping and grieving and mourning over Christ, the one they thought was going to be the Lord. And yet, that Sunday morning, Jesus Christ appeared to them. And that evening, at first they were in shock. They thought it was a ghost. People don't come back from the dead.

But then, look at the wounds. It's me. You got some fish to eat? Ate some fish. Not a vision, but the living Christ.

They transition from hiding, from the authorities, where they'd be arrested, to joyfully and fearlessly proclaiming that Jesus was alive. They went from fear to faith as a result of the fact that Jesus conquered the grave. The resurrection of Jesus is the single greatest thing that has ever happened in the history of this universe, of all of mankind. Up until that point, everyone that died died. No one came back.

Jesus came back. He told them that he would be crucified, that he would be buried, and that he would be raised on the third day. And they struggled with that. They didn't believe it until they actually saw him. And that resurrected life of Jesus has impacted millions of people throughout history, including us, changing lives, giving them hope for all eternity, helping them to focus on, on their lord and savior, Jesus Christ.

The song he lives proclaims the difference the resurrection makes. Just one part of it because he lives. I can face tomorrow. We have hope in life because Christ conquered the dead and lives in him. One man who the resurrection probably impacted more than any other was the Pharisee Saul.

Saul considered Jesus a false prophet and thought of him as dead, and he did his best to persecute the followers of Jesus Christ. And we know on the way to Damascus, on the Damascus road, Jesus appeared to him and he fell to the ground. And his first question is, who are you, Lord? Jesus answered, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. After that encounter, Paul went from a cursed persecutor to a proclaimer, someone who did his best to stamp out Christianity, who probably did more than anyone else in

history to promote Christianity.

And the resurrection changes people's lives. And so I was thinking about that change in his life, and I came across a passage in Philippians that I think not only describes how he changed, but how every one of us that are believers how we should change. So I want you to look at that. Go over to Philippians chapter three, and we're going to begin in verse seven, Philippians three. Seven.

Paul had already shared that if anyone had a reason to boast about himself, he did, and he went into that. But he goes on. Verse seven. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.

My lord, for his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead. And I would like to assert that because Paul met Christ on the Damascus road and became a proclaimer of the risen Christ, he shares four things that happen in his life, four changes that happen in his life that I believe are indicative of everyone who put their faith in Christ. It should be something that every one of us has experienced. So let's look at these four things. First of all, he says, Paul says, I want to know Christ.

I want to know Christ. I know this is obvious, but you can't get to know a dead person, can you? You can say, hey, how you doing today?

You want to go to town? I mean, on and on. You can't get to know a dead person, they cannot respond to you. You can only know a living person. And he says, this persecutor of Christ who became a proclaimer of Christ, I want to know him.

And the idea is he wants to know him better. You can know all about Jesus and not know him at all. We can know about people in history. Oh, I read about them. They did

this, they did that, but you did not know them.

You have to have a personal relationship with somebody to know them. And that's what he's saying he wanted. I want a deeper relationship, a living relationship with the risen Lord. In a sense, it's being aware of his presence in your life. It's knowing that Jesus is alive and that he walks with me, he talks with me.

And the joy we share is above any that anyone has ever known. Knowing Christ demands that we have communion with him, that we spend time with him, we talk to him in prayer, we listen to him through his word and through his spirit that speaks into our hearts. And he wants to take that time, the time that we carve out of a busy day. And we're all busy, and with all the modern conveniences we have, we're busier now than we ever were, it seems like, and yet we need to take time. You can't have a relationship with someone, you can't get to know them unless you spend some time with them.

We call this devotions and spending a little time in prayer, reading the scriptures, communing with our Lord and savior, fellowshiping with other Christians devotions because it says we are devoted to him, devoted to him because he is alive and has overcome death and offers eternal life to all who put faith in him. Real Christians want to know Jesus more and have a deeper relationship with him. The second thing that Paul says is he wants to experience the resurrection power, the power of the resurrection in his life. Whether we realize it or not, every Christian is involved in a spiritual battle, and it's not a wimpy battle. It takes power to win that battle.

We fight against the powers in the heavenly places. And in order for us to be victorious in that battle, we have to have that same power that resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead. One of the tactics of the enemy is to keep you from experiencing God's power in your life, because he knows that then you're weak and you can be defeated by him. It doesn't take your salvation away. It just keeps you from being effective in the spiritual battle that every believer is in.

If we're going to win this spiritual battle. We have to experience that resurrection power. And Paul doesn't just assume that, oh, I've got it, I'm saved. He says, I want it, I desire it. We have to go after that.

Just like anything in life, if you want to get stronger, you've got to put the effort in to gain that strength. And the same thing is true spiritually, Paul told the Ephesians, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power to us who believe, according to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly places? We will never comprehend the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. But we can experience that power maybe in measure, but more and more, we should desire his power in our life. God's power raised Jesus from the dead.

The grave could not hold him. And that power is available for everyone who has put their faith in Jesus Christ and is a follower of him. And you and I, as followers, we need that power to fight against the enemy, to be victorious in this life, to share daily victories over the enemy of our souls who seeks to destroy our faith. And Paul understands, and he shares with us that the only power that's available is the resurrection power, the power that God used to raise Jesus Christ from the dead. And when we seek that, I believe the Holy Spirit works in us to make us stronger and stronger in Christ.

And so he wants to experience the power of Jesus resurrection. Third, he says, Paul says he wants to share in Christ's sufferings, becoming like him in death. Now, we mentioned the first two. I want to know him. I want to experience his power.

And then we come to this one, huh? He wants to share the sufferings. Why would anyone want to share someone else's sufferings? And we struggle with this. Why would we want to share in Christ's sufferings?

The reason is because real spiritual power only comes out of suffering. And it's only as we go through the hard things in life that he makes us stronger and stronger in our walk with Jesus Christ, Hebrews 2:10 says. For it was fitting that he for whom and by

whom all things existed, and bringing many sons to glory should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. I think all of us can testify if we were really seeking the Lord, as when we went through suffering, that we grew the most, that we were the most dependent on Christ, that we understood what he went through for us, and we loved him all the more and wanted to be even more faithful than we'd been before. And the fact is, people want spiritual power the easy way.

Hit me, you know, come on, I'm ready. But the reality is the spiritual power only comes as we sacrifice our life for Jesus Christ and we become weak, as Paul said, and then become strong in Christ. Okay, I've got two first pages.

Every one of us goes through hardships in this life. We can do it alone or we can do it with Christ. When we do it with Christ, we get stronger. I was reminded of my wife Sondra, when she went through cancer. Her husband was in a coma after being attacked and later died as a result of that and then found out she had suffering.

And what it did is it drove her to the foot of the cross, and she was completely dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ and praying that God would meet the needs, her physical needs, her emotional needs, her spiritual needs. And God came through, and she ended up stronger going through that than she was when she began. And that's been the testimony of Christians throughout the ages, that what Satan meant for harm, God meant for good. And he uses that to touch other people's lives. Our testimony of how God was faithful to us.

And we go through sufferings. Nobody can escape that. But Paul is saying, I want that. I want to be able to humble myself and be a servant so that I can learn to depend on Jesus Christ more and more, that his power would be manifested through my life. And it ends up testifying to other people that Jesus Christ really is alive.

He met my need in the midst of my deepest hardships, and we can testify of that. Last thing Paul says is he wants to do everything he can to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Everything he can to attain from the resurrection from the dead. This should be the ultimate goal of every christian. We realize we live in a world that's temporary,

that our lives are like a mist that's there in the morning and gone in the evening.

And it's amazing for us that are older how quickly it goes by. They tell us that when we're young, didn't they? Nah. No. Doesn't work that way.

Yes, it does. It goes by very quickly. And we look back and we see the things that we did and didn't do. And I know for me, I wish that I'd been more faithful to Jesus, that I'd been more zealous for his glory, that I'd worked harder, prayed more. Because the only thing that matters is the resurrection from the dead, where we will stand before Jesus Christ and give an account of our lives and I say this all the time.

When you stand before Jesus Christ and God the Father, he's not going to ask, were you happy down there? Did you have a lot of fun? Did you do this? Did you do that? He's not going to ask that.

You know what he's going to ask. Did you love my son?

I love my son so much I was willing to send him to die for your sins. There would be no resurrection if Christ had not been sent in the world. For you and I, in that sense, we owe everything to him and we should be willing to give everything back to him. Everything in this life is passing away and quicker than we realize. The only thing that does not pass away is that relationship that we have with Jesus Christ where he becomes greater and greater in our life and we know him better and better.

And we experience his power more and more. And we go through the things that he went for the sake of his glory. We're not working for eternal life. It's a gift that Christ gives to everyone who puts their faith in him. But there's a sense that we want to attain everything we can in this resurrected life.

And Paul says, that is my desire. Paul told Timothy at the end of his life, henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to have loved his appearing. I don't know about you, but I love life. The boundary lines in my life have fallen in pleasant places and I thank God for that.



It's a gift from God. But it pales in comparison to the joy that is set before us when we have a relationship with Christ, when we love him and we're looking forward to spending eternity with him. I want eternal life more than anything that this world can offer. Because everything this world offers passes away. It will let you down.

It will disappoint you. It will turn on you. We are in a spiritual battle. We have a powerful enemy. But our faith in Jesus Christ will be rewarded forever.

Ages upon ages. I will just close with a verse out of one of Charles Wesley's songs. And I think I mentioned last week he wrote over 5000 songs in his lifetime. Spirit of God was working him mightily and sharing his faith through music. But one of his songs goes change from glory to glory, till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our crowns before thee.

Lost in wonder, love and praise, Jesus experienced glory on the cross. He was willing to die for our sins. He experienced glory when the father raised him to life, it said, for the joy set before him. He endured the cross, enjoying the shame and the joy. You can imagine what it was like, the disciples walking around and moping for us.

We're probably next. No way out of this. We thought he was the savior, the messiah, on and on and on. And then they saw the risen Christ, and he saw their fear and lack of faith turn into joy that he was alive. Can you imagine what that must have been like for Jesus to see the faces of those that he loved, who finally believed that he was the true messiah, to start to understand why he came into the world, not to be an earthly king, but to be a spiritual king, to give us eternal life when we put faith in him.

The Bible says that whenever anyone turns to the Lord, there is joy in the presence of God, because he knows there is another person that is going to spend eternity with him. And it is worth it all because he lives. Let's pray.

Father, we have put our hope in the risen Christ. We believe that Jesus Christ died on that cross for us. He didn't have to. He could have gotten off of that cross at any moment. But he chose to stay on the cross because he loved us and he took our sin upon himself.

He died in our place. He suffered for us, knowing that he would die, that he would be buried, but that he would rise to life on the third day, never to die again. Lives forevermore. To give eternal life to all who have repented of their sin, have going their own way and decided to follow Jesus Christ. Father, I pray that everyone here will have made that decision.

They will understand that that is the whole point and purpose of life. To know you and to know Jesus Christ, to know you better, to experience your presence in our life, to have your power working in us, giving us victory over sin and the things that we face in life. Even a willingness to come alongside Christ and suffer for the sake of that gospel so others can hear the message. And then somehow, nothing we could have attained, somehow through Jesus Christ to attain the resurrection from the dead. We rejoice in that, Father.

We rejoice in our savior Jesus. I just pray that that power that raised him from the dead would be working in each one of us in Christ's name. Amen.