

The Power of His Resurrection
 Philippians 3:10
 ABC 4/1/18

Alfred Hitchcock wrote a story that was made into a TV episode of a convicted bank robber named John Perry. Perry is sentenced to 15 years of hard labor in a state prison camp. Determined to get out, he befriends an alcoholic inmate named Doc. Doc is in charge of the prison infirmary as well as burial of the dead. Doc makes an offer to John: If John will finance an operation for Doc's granddaughter, he will get him out of prison. Doc's plan is to hide John inside the coffin of the next inmate who dies. The coffin will then be buried in the cemetery outside the prison walls. After the gravediggers & guards leave, Doc will dig up the grave & John will make his escape.

One day, the bell signaling an inmate has died, rang. That night John sneaks down to the infirmary. It was dark, but he found the casket, lifted the lid, slipped inside next to the body, & waited. All is going according to plan. Sure enough, a few hours later he felt the casket being rolled toward the gravesite. He smiled as the casket was lowered into the hole. He heard the clumps of dirt hitting the casket & covering him up. He could barely contain his excitement.

Silence followed as he waited in the dark. Time began to drag. Hours passed, then more hours. Finally, he began to worry. Where was Doc? What was keeping him? Finally, he took out a match & lit it & saw that Doc was in the coffin with him. It was Doc who had died.¹

His only hope lay buried right next to him! The lesson for us is obvious. John Perry had placed his hope in another human being who he sincerely thought would be able to save him, but he went to his grave & ended up taking John with him as well. As Paul wrote in 1 Cor, **if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.... If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied** (17, 19). Thankfully, this is not the case. Our hope is not in someone who's still in the grave. Instead, our Savior is the living Savior. HE IS RISEN!

There are many things that distinguish Christianity from other world religions, but one of the most significant distinction is this: Jesus rose from the dead after having been crucified & that He lives today & is known by those who trust Him. The Jesus who was born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, who lived, who died, & who rose again, still lives. It isn't the crucifixion that separates the story of Jesus from all others. He wasn't the only good man to die unjustly for a worthy cause. He wasn't the only man to be crucified. It's neither the pain nor the injustice that separates the story of Jesus from all others. What makes the story of Jesus different is when you read biographies of other men who died for good causes that's where the books end. But when you read the eye-witness accounts about Jesus it doesn't end with His death. Every account of

¹ https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/The_Alfred_Hitchcock_Hour_-_Final_Escape

His life ends with an empty tomb, not a bloody cross. He who died is alive! The resurrection of Jesus is the most powerful event in history. Nothing else can compare to it. No machine, missile, or manifesto can compare to the pure power of His resurrection. If Jesus went into a tomb, was dead for 3 days, came out fully alive, & ascended into heaven to live ever more, then the resurrection is the most powerful event in history. In fact, the power of His resurrection confirms that Jesus is the Son of God. **Jesus Christ our Lord was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead** (Rom 1:4). No one else has the power to conquer death. Here's the exciting thing: If Jesus is alive, then that power is still available today. It's one thing to believe that His resurrection was powerful. It's another thing to know the power of His resurrection. Paul said it was the passion of his life **to know Christ & the power of His resurrection** (Phil 3:10). The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to transform our lives today (Eph 1:18-20; Rom 8:11). Therefore, to know Him personally, intimately, & experientially is the greatest thing any of can experience in this life. PRAY

I thought it appropriate to step aside from our study of Ps 119 to look again at the resurrection of Jesus. Easter is an international event with a variety of ways to celebrate. Many of our own Easter customs & traditions confound me, let alone some of the ones practiced in other countries. For example, if you're a female & find yourself in the Czech Republic or Slovakia on Easter Monday, it's probably best to stay indoors. All the local men & boys will be roaming the streets with willow switches, usually adorned with ribbons, looking for girls to 'lightly' whip. The whipping isn't intended to be painful, but instead is meant to encourage good health & beauty. Go figure, right? In return for getting whipped by some guy, the woman gives the man a decorated egg or a few coins as thanks for getting hit by them.² Makes sense, doesn't it? In Hungary women dress up in traditional clothes on Easter Sunday³ & men throw buckets of cold water on them to assure they don't wither & wilt like flowers.⁴ Not sure if this is better than getting hit with a stick! In Florence, Italy people will set an oxcart full of fireworks on fire.⁵ I could

²www.toptenz.net/top-10-bizarre-easter-traditions-from-around-the-world.php

³www.wanderlust.co.uk/content/worlds-craziest-easter-traditions/

⁴www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/easter-traditions-the-six-most-unusual-customs-from-across-europe-10157133.html

⁵www.toptenz.net/top-10-bizarre-easter-traditions-from-around-the-world.php

probably get into that! & here in America, we'll eat candy, hide eggs, & talk of rabbits. Or as a current commercial tells us, the magic of Easter comes alive through a chocolate bunny!⁶ What an odd mixture of faith & folklore, of Christianity & paganism, of holiness & horseplay. &, as you know, *Easter* isn't even a Christian word, let alone found in the Bible. The calling of Jesus' resurrection by the name *Easter* seems to go back to the name of a pre-Christian goddess in England, Eostre, who was celebrated at the beginning of spring. The only reference to this goddess comes from the writings of the Venerable Bede, a British monk who lived in the late 7th & early 8th century.⁷ Some say that because Eostre was the goddess of dawn & spring, the direction from which the sun rises, *East*, shares the same root as *Easter*.⁸ Religious studies scholar Bruce Forbes summarizes:

*Bede wrote that the month in which English Christians were celebrating the resurrection of Jesus had been called Eosturmonath in Old English, referring to a goddess named Eostre. & even though Christians had begun affirming the Christian meaning of the celebration, they continued to use the name of the goddess to designate the season.*⁹

Many spring celebrations predate the resurrection of Jesus & had to do with the worship of the sun & different gods & goddesses of fertility which is where the Easter egg probably came from. The egg was a symbol of fertility & a symbol of the sun (the yolk). From ancient times, the egg has been a symbol of the renewal of life. How did rabbits get tied into Easter & eggs? I don't think bunnies lay eggs, chickens do, right? In ancient Egypt the rabbit was a symbol of birth, which makes sense if you've ever raised rabbits! Other civilizations considered rabbits to be the symbol of the moon. I don't know why. But since Jesus' resurrection date is based on Passover & Passover is determined by the course of the moon, this rabbit connection came about as well. There's a more modern story in Germany about a woman living in a time of famine who managed to get some eggs for her hungry kids. In order to make it special, she hid them on Easter. As the kids found them in the bush where they were hidden, a rabbit jumped out of the bush. The legend then began that the rabbit brought the eggs to feed the children & so the Easter bunny was born. & on & on it goes, a wonderfully ridiculous mix of rabbits, eggs, fertility

⁶ <https://milled.com/lindt-chocolate/unwrap-the-magic-of-easter-with-lindt-gold-bunny-VdmpGX41QXkawabO>

⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter>

⁸ www.bustle.com/articles/149999-where-does-the-word-easter-come-from-an-ancient-goddess-inspired-the-name

⁹ <http://theconversation.com/why-easter-is-called-easter-and-other-little-known-facts-about-the-holiday-75025>

rites, spring celebrations, pagan festivals, throwing water on each other, & whacking each other with sticks. It all makes perfect sense, right? & somehow, in the midst of all this, Jesus rose from the dead. The world doesn't pay homage to Jesus, but we must, because the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of all Christian truth. It's the thing upon which our eternal destiny hinges. Spurgeon said, *Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, I risk my whole eternity.*¹⁰ Jesus Christ's resurrection is the why. The 1st sermon ever preached, on the Day of Pentecost, was a resurrection sermon. As you follow the life of the church throughout Acts, Jesus' resurrection is the theme. We see the same in the epistles too. In Romans we see Christ is raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father (Rom 1:4). In 1 Cor 15 He rose again the 3rd day according to the Scriptures. In 2 Cor, He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up as well (15:20-21). Peter tells us, **Blessed be the God & 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.** (1 Pt 1:3). In Rev, Jesus Himself says, **I am the first & the last, & the living One; & I was dead, & behold, I am alive forevermore, & I have the keys of death & of Hades** (Rev 1:17-18). Open your Bibles to Phil 3. The constant theme throughout the NT is Jesus' resurrection. But what I want to spend the remainder of our time on this morning is Paul's statement to the Christians in Philippi where He says in vs 8-10,

I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, & count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, & may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him & the power of His resurrection & the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (Phil 3:8-10).

I want to look specifically at the phrase **the power of His resurrection**. What kind of **power** is found in Christ's resurrection?

1. Confirming Power Jesus' resurrection is a confirmation, a verification, a seal, a sign that He is all He said He was & is able to do all He promised to do. He is the long-awaited Messiah, the promised One of God, & it's proven by His resurrection. In Rom 1:4 Paul writes, Jesus **was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. Declared to be means**

¹⁰ Sermon preached on 3/6/1890 titled, *The Simplicity & Sublimity of Salvation*

shown to be, evidenced, attested to, or verified. How was this done? By His **resurrection from the dead**. When the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign that He was the Son of God, He said, **no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS 3 DAYS & 3 NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be 3 days & 3 nights in the heart of the earth**, implying the resurrection to follow. Jesus' claims, God's claims, are authenticated by Jesus' resurrection. His resurrection from the dead is a demonstration of the power of God. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that created the universe (Gen 1:31; Eph1:19-1). Rom 8:11 tells us that Jesus was raised by His own inherent power. He said in Jn 2:19-21, **Destroy this temple (this body), & in 3 days I will raise it up**. In Jn 10:17-18, He says, **I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, & I have authority to take it up again**. Can you imagine a mere man going to the grave saying, *I have the power to rise from the dead & live again?* Not any sane person, anyway. But Jesus said it & did it. His resurrection is the authentication that He is God the Messiah, the Son of God Himself (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:27; 13:35). Not only does this power authenticate Him, it's also a...

2. Converting Power Without the resurrection there's absolutely no salvation. Jesus hung on the cross in agony, shame, & condemnation. If that's the end of the story, then Jesus' death is nothing more than an example of self-sacrificing love. Inspiring maybe, but completely useless to make us right with God. The resurrection is an act of God the Father vindicating His Son (Acts 2:22-24), showing that His sacrifice for our sins is sufficient, acceptable, & good. It's Jesus' victory over sin & death & it secures our forgiveness & right standing with God (Rom 4:25). Having faith in Jesus means staking your entire eternal destiny on Him. Your life depends on Him having been raised from the dead. But if you don't put your faith in Him, you're saying He didn't rise from the dead & if you're wrong, the consequences are eternally disastrous. When you die, you'll face God & answer for the way you've lived your life. If you stand on your own record, you'll face God's wrath against you. But because Jesus defeated death by rising from the grave, our record can be replaced with His so we can be welcomed into the presence of God. The

resurrection is a demonstration of God's delight in His Son; & since, if our faith is in Jesus, we are God's children, God delights in us too! As Paul says, our faith is not in vain (1 Cor 15:17, 20). Because of His resurrection, He is able to pardon & forgive our sins as we put our faith in Him, in His perfect life, substitutionary death, & victorious resurrection. God tells us, **The soul who sins will die** (Ezek 18:4). Sin requires death. Where sin is, life must be given, & there's no turning aside from that truth. The Bible repeatedly says things like, **in the day that you eat from it you will surely die** (Gen 2:17). **The man that sins shall die** (Ezek 18:20). **Just as sin entered the world through one man, & death through sin, so also death was passed on to all men, because all sinned** (Rom 5:12). **The wages of sin is death** (Rom 6:23). God linked sin & death together. God makes the rules, whether you want to accept this or not doesn't change the truth of it. Sin separates us from God & there is nothing we can do to change that. Our works, our desires, our good deeds cannot bring us into a relationship with God. That's the bad news. What could solve this problem? Here's the good news. The answer is Jesus. He came to earth, lived a sinless life, willingly gave His life in our place, & was resurrected all to bring us back into fellowship with God. We're delivered because Christ is our substitute. He gave His life for us, in our place (2 Cor 5:21). He paid the penalty for our sins (Col 2:13-14) & died in our place as our substitute (1 Pt 2:24). Jesus, 100% God, 100% man, was sinless. He didn't deserve to die. He died for us, not for Himself (1 Jn 3:5). The Bible tells us death had no dominion upon Him (1 Pt 2:21-22). Death had no hold upon Him; death had no right to Him; death had no claim on Him (Acts 2:24). But He willingly gave up His life bearing the wrath of God for our sins. He died, He was buried, & He rose the 3rd day (1 Cor 15:3-4) as a sign, as a receipt that our sins had been atoned for. The sacrifice was adequate, acceptable, ample, & sufficient. Because of His resurrection, all who place their faith in Him are forever forgiven & delivered from the penalty of our sins (Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:17). The great authentication that the death of Jesus is the power of God to atone for our sins is that He was raised from the dead. His resurrection is a converting, life-giving power. The resurrection of Jesus is the verification of all of the great doctrines of the gospel of Jesus. Our being made righteous in the sight of God isn't a figment of our imaginations. It's the experience

of those who place their faith in Jesus Christ alone. This adoption into the very family of God (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5) isn't a fictional fairy tale; we truly become God's children. Those who have followed the Lord, who believe in Him, & who trust in Him can know **the power of His resurrection**. His resurrection power gives us new life (2 Cor 5:17). As Spurgeon said,

*If you have Jesus Christ, you have the resurrection & the life! All the power there is in Christ is there for His people. He went on to say, Wonder at this—that the risen Christ is able to give us an entirely new life! May you know, in this respect, the power of His resurrection! May you know the peace, the repose, the power of your risen Lord!*¹¹

What is this power? It's a life-giving power. Jesus said, **I am the resurrection & the life** (Jn 11:25). We don't say, *I believe in Jesus & want life*. No, Jesus is life itself (Jhn 14:6). When I have Jesus, I have life (1 Jn 5:11-12). When I have Jesus, I have resurrection, & the power of His resurrection is a life-quickening power that reaches down to our hearts. He is the power, the life-giving power of the living Son of God. & that life, the power of His resurrection, the life-giving power that comes from the resurrection of our living Lord, is a new kind of life for us. It's a different kind of life. It's an eternal & a celestial life. It's a heavenly life. It's an abundant life. It's a life that's not a slave to sin but a slave of our Savior.

How did Paul want to experience this power? In the living of a godly life. He knew that a life lived with Jesus meant a life of holiness. But he also knew that such a life was impossible if it depended upon his own natural powers. He knew the natural human can't even understand spiritual things, **for they are foolishness to him, & he is not able to understand them, because spiritually they are discerned** (1 Cor 2:14). He had learned by experience his own inability to live as God intended. In Romans he writes,

For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.... I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind & making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? (7:19, 22–24).

Paul longed for deliverance from such defeat through Christ's resurrection power. Paul was knowledgeable about power. His world was a world of power, most of it originating in Rome & controlled by the Roman authorities. Jews were proud of their religious heritage. Greeks were

¹¹ Sermon, *The Power of His Resurrection*, preached 4/21/1889

proud of their wisdom. But the Romans were proud of their power. To them it was the greatest reality in the world. This was Paul's environment & Paul had a genuine respect for Rome's power. He appealed to it on several occasions. But Paul knew that at best it was only the 3rd strongest power in the world. The 2nd strongest was sin, for it held people in a viselike grip through a tyranny far more terrible than Rome's. & the strongest power was the resurrection power of Jesus. Paul knew this power could overcome sin & death & that it was far more powerful than Rome's armies. This knowledge enabled him to write,

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ... Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin & of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh & as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom 7:25; 8:1-4).

The power of Jesus is a great reality. Many have come to know it. That's why we sing:

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean—
His blood availed for me.¹²*

Above all, Paul wanted to experience the resurrection power of Jesus Christ over sin daily as he strived to live a holy life before God.

Let's review: When Jesus died, God laid on Him our iniquities, the punishment that we deserve for our sins. Had there been anything lacking in Jesus' sacrifice, if His death wasn't sufficient to cancel the penalty of our sins, God wouldn't have raised Him. His justice couldn't have allowed Him to raise Jesus from the dead. But the very fact of the resurrection shows once & for all that Jesus' sacrifice is all that's necessary to pay the penalty for our sins. Whenever Satan accuses us, saying, *God could never forgive you for what you've done! Just think how terrible you are!* We can say, *Jesus rose from the dead & because my faith is in Him, I am justified & righteous in God's eyes.* That's the power of the resurrection! But resurrection power doesn't end with our forgiveness. Christ's resurrection also empowers us to conquer sin in our lives (Eph 4:24). In Christ we are a new creation, His Spirit lives within us. We've been renewed & given new life so

¹² Charles Wesley, *O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing*

that we might be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), truly righteous & holy as God intends us to be. Can such a change occur in you? Of course, it can, because God does the changing. He can turn Saul into Paul; Simon the braggart into Peter the Rock; John the son of Thunder into John the Evangelist; & you, whoever & whatever you may be, into the kind of person in whom Christ's holy & loving character may be seen. This is God's greatest purpose in saving you. Oh that we would **know Him & the power of His resurrection** (Phil 3:10). I have said the power of His resurrection is an authenticating power. It is a seal. Jesus is God who died, was buried, & raised from the dead. Because of this, the gospel, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ is all true (Acts 13:29-39). It is authenticated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection is a converting, life-giving power. It touches a man's soul. It makes a new creation out of him (2 Cor 5:17). 3rd ...

3. Comforting Power The power of Christ's resurrection is also a consoling & comforting power. Why? Because it has in it a promise to us, who will all face an inevitable death & burial (Rom 5:12; Heb 9:27). What's the promise? Is our destiny to face the snuffing out of our existence? To be blotted out completely? Stephen Hawking's funeral was yesterday. He believed there was nothing after death. He once said, *I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark.*¹³ I pray that you're smarter than that. We aren't afraid of the dark because Jesus is our Light. Is Hawking's conclusion the future God has for us? Thankfully, no. Do you know what it means that Jesus conquered death? It means that for us to die is only to begin a new life. The grave isn't a dead end road but a freeway into eternal life. The grave isn't an ending but a beginning. The grave isn't sorrow but joy. Why? Because Christ lives. & because He lives, we can say, **O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? The sting of death is sin, & the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ** (1 Cor 15:55-57). In 1 Cor 15 Paul asks, *What if there was no resurrection?* & then he lists 7 disasters if there was no resurrection. 1) Christ is not risen. 2) The

¹³ www.independent.co.uk/news/science/stephen-hawking-death-dies-atheist-god-brief-history-time-quotes-explained-a8254846.html

gospel is useless. 3) Our faith is empty. 4) The apostles are liars. 5) Sin's power is unbroken. 6) The dead are damned. & 7) Christians are the world's most pitiful people. & then he says, **But now Christ has been raised from the dead**, & because He lives, you shall live also (20). What an incredible, glorious, comforting truth! Jesus, the Bible says, is **the first fruits of those who die** (1 Cor 15:20). **First fruits** imply more fruit of the same kind, right? Therefore, our bodies will also one day raise (1 Thes 4:14-17).

How is it with you? As you look to the day of your death, what does your eternal future look like? Are you going to be judged for your sins or has your sin already been judged & punished? What is your comfort & consolation as you look to your own death? Shortly after Paul's day, the cry in the Roman coliseum was, *Away with them (Christians) to the lions!*¹⁴ During Nero's persecution of Christianity, he'd have Christian's bodies covered with pitch & set on fire.¹⁵ I can imagine him saying, *They said, 'We are the lights of the world.' Watch them burn!* What was the strength & comfort of those Christians? If they found an early grave between the jaws of a lion, they knew they'd rise again (1 Thes 4:16). If their bodies were covered with pitch & fire consumed them, God would give them a new body (1 Cor 15:42-45, 52-53). They would be glorified with the Lord. That is to be our stay & strength as we go through this life & face our final & inevitable death: We know the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If I die, I shall live again (Jn 11:25). If I am buried, I shall rise again (1 Thes 4:16). If I am defeated in this life, I shall reign with Christ (2 Tim 2:12). It is the power of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus that assures us of all this.

Have you given yourself to Jesus? Have you embraced Him? Have you reached out to Him? Have you received Him as your Lord? Have you confessed your faith in Him & His resurrection (Rom 10:9-10)? If you were to die tonight, are you prepared? Are you ready? Do you know the power of His resurrection? Is there that assurance in your soul: **if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him** (2 Tim 2:11-12)? Do you have Christ? Have you found in Him your Savior? Are you trusting His death for the pardon of your sins & His resurrection for your justification (Rom 4:25)? Are you done with your self-righteousness &

¹⁴ Tertullian, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damnatio_ad_bestias

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero#Great_Fire_of_Rome

casting yourself upon the mercy & grace of God in Christ? Are you ready to die? Do you believe in the resurrection from among the dead? Are you persuaded you'll be one in that glorious & matchless number? Are you ready? Are you saved? Is He yours? If not, today should be the day of salvation for you (2 Cor 6:2). We'd love to talk with you & tell you more about the love, mercy, & grace of God. If your faith is already in Jesus, are you experiencing the power of His resurrection in your life? If so, rejoice & thank Him, no matter what life may throw at you. That's why Christians don't despair as much as others. We know the worst things in this life are not the last things. No situation is hopeless. God loves to turn crucifixions into resurrections. He loves to turn death into life. He lives to cancel sin & give us His righteousness. So don't live your life like Christ's tomb is still occupied. Live confidently, courageously, & cleanly by the power of His resurrection working in you today. No matter how you celebrate today, whether buckets of water or sticks or eggs or whatever, may it be done in the knowledge & power of Christ's resurrection.

PRAY