

The Resurrection Changes Everything

1 Peter 1:3-9

ABC 4/9/23

Very early Sunday morning some women came to the tomb Jesus was laid in. It was still dark, although glimmers of the new day were beginning to shine in the east. These women included Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, Salome, & others & they arrived carrying spices to anoint Jesus' body in an act of tenderness & love. When they arrived, they found the stone in front of the tomb had been rolled away & Jesus' body was gone. In dismay, Mary Magdalene immediately left the group & rushed to tell Peter & John who, it seems, weren't with the rest of the disciples. Peter had left the other disciples in order to follow Jesus to the courtyard of the high priest the night before. It was there that he denied knowing Jesus 3x. John also had remained close by as well. After the other disciples had all fled, John remained & was addressed directly by Jesus from the cross (Jn 19:26). Peter & John weren't with other disciples & could have been staying together somewhere in Jerusalem. With Mary on her way to find Peter & John, the remaining women went into the tomb & saw 2 angels who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. With excitement, they went to tell other disciples, perhaps returning to Bethany on the slopes of the Mount of Olives to find them. Meanwhile, Peter & John raced to the tomb with Mary Magdalene not far behind them. In the tomb, they saw the grave clothes Jesus had been wrapped in lying neatly in place, but there was no sign of His body. Soon they left, no doubt in deep distress at what they must have assumed was another indignity inflicted upon Jesus. Mary Magdalene lingered at the grave, perhaps to be alone with her grief. There she met a man she didn't recognize through her tears. Thinking Him the gardener, she asked if He knew what had been done with Jesus' body. He then spoke her name, *Mary*, & suddenly she knew who this was & her tears of sorrow turned to tears of joy as she clung to Jesus, risen from the dead. But Jesus had work for Mary to do. He sent her with the good news back to the disciples. At some point that day, Jesus met 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus. When those 2 reached the other disciples to share what had happened, they found out that Jesus had also appeared to Peter. While they were all still talking excitedly about these events, Jesus Himself came & stood in their midst. *Peace to you*, He said. *Why are you troubled & why do you doubt? See, My hands & feet? It's truly Me. Touch Me &*

see, a spirit doesn't have flesh & bones as you see that I have. He then reminded them that this is what the Scriptures had promised would happen; the Christ would suffer & die & on the 3rd day rise again.

Those are the facts. Familiar. Wonderful. Worth celebrating. While the gospels give the facts as I've just tried to summarize, they don't spell out much about the implications of what it means. They don't tell us what it accomplished. The resurrection of Jesus isn't only good news because we're happy He isn't dead, although that's true. Jesus' resurrection is good news because His resurrection changes everything. Take your Bibles & open to 1 Pt 1, which is one place where some of the consequences of Jesus' resurrection are spelled out for us. Here we find 4 consequences of the resurrection I want to look at this morning. If you're a believer this morning & have experienced the results of His resurrection you know the reality of being brought from death to life. Seek to find more assurance as we look at the work of Jesus. If you've never trusted Jesus as Lord & Savior, look with me at Peter's gospel claims & see that it is all true & put your faith in Him. **3-9**

Don't you love that Peter begins his letter to these persecuted Christians with a doxology? He's about to unpack why the resurrection of Jesus from the dead matters so much but he doesn't start with a series of propositions or carefully nuanced theological statements. No, he starts with praise. **Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (3).** He wants us to see that worship should be at the heart of our response to the glorious fact that Jesus is alive. My goal this morning isn't to defend or explain or describe the resurrection. It's to adore **the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord (Heb 13:20).** If our minds have been enlightened & our convictions sharpened & our understanding deepened but we don't rise with Peter to bless **the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, then we won't yet have begun to penetrate the wonder of the mystery that Jesus is alive & what this means for us. Peter doesn't simply summon us to worship & bless **the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, he actually helps to fan the flames of worship by showing us 4 glorious blessings that flow from the empty tomb to everyone who believes. Notice with me the logic of this passage, how everything Peter talks about depends on Jesus' resurrection. We are **born again**, he says, to **a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (3).** That living hope

that comes from the resurrection is an **inheritance ... reserved in heaven for us** (4). Then, because of all this, Peter says we rejoice with **joy inexpressible** (6-9). The resurrection is the cause & new birth & new hope & new security & new joy are the results in the lives of every believer. Everything you enjoy, every blessing of the Christian life, Peter says is yours because Jesus rose again.

1. New Birth The ancient Egyptians mummified their rulers in an effort to preserve & prepare them for the afterlife. Pharaoh Ramesses II, known as Ramesses the Great, was born around 1303 BC. His remains were discovered in 1881 & were stored in Cairo for 90+ years. In 1976 his remains were sent to specialists in France for urgently needed preservation. There was a problem though. French laws required that anyone living or dead had to have a passport in order to enter the country. After 3,500 years of not getting around much, Ramesses was issued an Egyptian passport & flew to Paris.¹ Not quite a resurrection but as close to one as many people believe can ever happen. Whatever the case with Ramses, Peter says Jesus is the King who did in fact rise again (3). & because He did, we can have new birth, new life, here & now & forever. **3**

New life, being **born again** comes **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**. Being **born again** doesn't mean to turn over a new leaf or to take your religion more seriously. Remember Nicodemus? Very few ever took their religion more seriously than Nicodemus, yet Jesus told him, *Nicodemus, you must be born again* (Jn 3:3). Nicodemus' problem wasn't that he needed to improve his theology or try harder to be a good person. His problem was the same as our problem. What is it? Eph 2:1 says we **were dead in our trespasses & sins**. Dead. Destitute. Lifeless. A corpse. We can't help ourselves from that predicament. Sin has condemned us & we can't rescue ourselves. Spiritually speaking, we are no more alive by nature than Ramesses is today. **The wages of sin is death** (Rom 6:23). We are all sinners, spiritually dead, needing forgiveness & new life. A fictional story was written back in the 90s that goes like this:

In that place between wakefulness & dreams, I found myself in the room. There were no distinguishing features save for the one wall covered with small index card files. They were like the ones in libraries that list titles by author or subject in alphabetical order. But these files, which stretched from floor to ceiling & seemingly endlessly in either direction, had very different headings. As I drew near the wall of files, the first to catch my attention was one that read *Girls I Have Liked*. I opened it & began flipping through the cards. I quickly shut it, shocked to realize that I recognized the names written on each one.

¹ www.inside-egypt.com/passport-pharaoh-of-ramesses-ii-the-great.html

Then, without being told, I knew exactly where I was. This lifeless room with its small files was a crude catalog system for my life. Here were written the actions of my every moment, big & small, in a detail my memory couldn't match. A sense of wonder & curiosity, coupled with horror, stirred within me as I began randomly opening files & exploring their content. Some brought joy & sweet memories; others a sense of shame & regret so intense that I would look over my shoulder to see if anyone was watching.

A file named *Friends* was next to one marked *Friends I Have Betrayed*. The titles ranged from the mundane to the outright weird. *Books I Have Read, Lies I Have Told, Comfort I Have Given, Jokes I Have Laughed At*. Some were almost hilarious in their exactness: *Things I've Yelled at My Brothers*. Others I couldn't laugh at: *Things I Have Done in My Anger, Things I Have muttered Under My Breath at My Parents*. I never ceased to be surprised by the contents. Often there were many more cards than I expected. Sometimes fewer than I hoped.

I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the life I had lived. Could it be possible that I had the time ... to write each of these thousands or even millions of cards? But each card confirmed this truth. Each was written in my own handwriting. Each signed with my signature....

When I came to a file marked *Lustful Thoughts*, I felt a chill run through my body. I pulled the file out only an inch, not willing to test its size, & drew out a card. I shuddered at its detailed content. I felt sick to think that such a moment had been recorded.

An almost animal rage broke on me. One thought dominated my mind: *No one must ever see these cards! No one must ever see this room! I have to destroy them!* In an insane frenzy I yanked the file out. Its size didn't matter now. I had to empty it & burn the cards. But as I took it at one end & began pounding it on the floor, I could not dislodge a single card. I became desperate & pulled out a card, only to find it as strong as steel when I tried to tear it....

& then the tears came. I began to weep. Sobs so deep that the hurt started in my stomach & shook through me. I fell on my knees & cried. I cried out of shame, from the overwhelming shame of it all. The rows of file shelves swirled in my tear-filled eyes. No one must ever, ever know of this room. I must lock it up & hide the key.²

Have you ever felt like that? *No one must ever know of the sins I've committed*. I think a lot of us feel that way. We are all sinners. Our sins are uncountable & every one of them demands our death. But the resurrection changes everything. Because of Jesus' resurrection, we can have new life, forgiven life. No one takes any credit for being born. It's something that happens to us. It's the result of God's mercy in giving us a new birth.³ Look again at **vs 3**.

What's the cause of new life when it sprouts in a dead sinner's heart? It's no our decision, not our wisdom, not even our choice. If we're to have a new birth, it will only be **caused** by the **mercy** of God the Father who causes us to be **born again**. Out of His infinite compassion & abundant & **mercy**, He chose to grant us eternal life. It wasn't because of anything we could do or deserve (Ex 33:19;

² Joshua Harris, *The Room*, www.gracegems.org/14/room.htm

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary, p 61

Rom 9:11–13; 10:20; 2 Tim 1:9). No wonder Paul called God **the Father of mercies** (2 Cor 1:3). Without God’s mercy, we would have no hope. God gives us what don’t deserve. Some of us walked in today carrying that burden of our sin. It doesn't have to be that way. & that's the good news of Easter! If we’re willing to admit our sin, Jesus is willing to give us new life & He has the authority to do so. God, in His mercy, can forgive sin through the sacrifice of His sinless Son. & the resurrection is the proof that Jesus paid that price. We can’t earn this. It’s given to us as a gift, because of God’s mercy. & since this gift was given freely to us as an undeserved mercy & not as a reward for what we’ve done, we have confidence that it can’t be taken away from us because of anything we do. The giving & keeping of the gift isn’t dependent on us, but on God & His mercy. Jesus' right to forgive sin is so closely tied to His resurrection that Paul wrote, **if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins** (1 Cor 15:14, 17). No resurrection, no new life. No resurrection, no forgiveness. To be able to offer us forgiveness & new life, He had to rise from the dead. If He hadn’t risen, then we’d know that God wasn’t pleased with His sacrifice & it wouldn’t have atoned for our sins. On the other hand, if Jesus was raised from the dead, taken to the right hand of God, seated at the throne of God, affirmed by God as having perfectly accomplished our redemption, then there is forgiveness of sins & new life. Jesus, who came for the purpose of dying to put away death & sin, accomplished His purpose. As **Heb 2** says, **He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful & faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people (17)**. His sacrifice was sufficient & efficient. Our sins were completely paid for & the Father affirmed this by His resurrection. That's why Easter is so important. It validates the offer of new life in Christ. Paul put it this way:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, & what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead & seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (Eph 1:18-20).

God’s mercy reaches us **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**. Easter Sunday happened to give new life to dead sinners. **Eph 2:4-6** tells us, **God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive**

together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), & raised us up with Him. If we've been given new life, we're the cars in the train all linked to Him, the engine. What does this mean? When He rose from the grave He pulled His people along with Him up out of spiritual death & into newness of life. If you're a Christian today it's not because your folks had faith, not because you're a good person (remember The Room), not because you're wise & saw the good news about Jesus in a new light. No. You're a Christian today ultimately because Jesus died in your place for your sin & rose again. You're a Christian today because of Easter Sunday. Because He lives, you live. We have new life, we are **born again**, because Jesus rose from the dead. But that's not all!

2. New Hope We have new hope because Jesus rose from the dead. God has caused us **to be born again to a *living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** It's a living hope, because we have a living Savior. Death couldn't defeat Him. Because He now lives, as we believe in Him, death can't hold us either. That's the Christian hope. Look down at vs 4 where Peter explains a little more about it. It is **an inheritance *which is imperishable & undefiled & will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you* (4).** In the OT the inheritance of God's people was the Promised Land. Interestingly, the opposites of all 3 words Peter uses to describe our inheritance are used to describe what happened to Israel's inheritance in the land. It was perishable. It was defiled by their sin & rebellion & so they lost it. It faded in its glories. But when you trust in Jesus, who triumphed over death, yours will be an inheritance that can't perish, can't be defiled, & will never fade away. He's talking about heaven & its blessings. Our hope isn't some vague desire. It's not a wish, a longing for something that's an outside possibility. That's how we tend to use the word *hope*, isn't it? *I hope it won't rain on our family's Easter gathering & egg hunt, but I'm not sure it won't. I hope, but I'm not sure.* When we talk about **hope**, it's mixed with uncertainty. But when the Bible talks about the Christian's **living hope** given to us because Jesus rose from the dead, it's not talking about a feeling of hopefulness; it's talking about the certainty of the thing hoped for. Jesus' resurrection is the guarantee of that destiny. If you're a Christian, there's no question, there's no ambiguity, there's no uncertainty at all about your destiny. Yours will be resurrection glory. & it's a only because the tomb is empty & Jesus lives. We have new life & we have new hope because Jesus rose from the dead.

3. New Security Thirdly, Peter says we have new security because Jesus rose. We've already seen some of that when we saw our hope is sure & certain & guaranteed. Not because we secured it by our best efforts or our good works, but because Jesus secured it by His resurrection from the dead. That's why Peter goes on to say that the inheritance for which we hope is **reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time** (4-5). **Reserved** means *guarded* or *watched over*. It conveys the idea of an already existing inheritance being carefully guarded in heaven for all those who trust in Jesus. Not only is the inheritance divinely guarded, those who possess it **are also protected by the power of God** from doing anything to forfeit it or be severed from it. God's **power** is His sovereign command that continuously protects His people.⁴ The inheritance that Jesus has secured for us is **reserved in heaven**, it's **imperishable, undefiled, & unfading**. **We are protected by the power of God through faith**. God's power protects us because His power is the means by which our faith is sustained. Our inheritance is final & forever. It won't fail us, it won't disappear, it won't be corrupted or diminished, & it won't fade in its glory. Just the opposite, it will become greater & brighter & more glorious the closer we get to it & the more our eyes are capable of seeing it. Nothing can diminish the glory that awaits because Jesus lives. But that's not all. We ourselves here on earth are also being kept & guarded for our inheritance. Because Jesus lives, the same power that raised Him from the dead is at work to keep & guard & secure & preserve us forever. Both sides of the equation are ensured & guaranteed by God. You are kept for heaven. Heaven is being kept for you. You are doubly secure. Doubly safe. Your destiny doubly guaranteed, but only because the tomb is empty & Jesus lives.

4. New Joy New life. New hope. New security. Now Peter says we have new joy because Jesus rose again. He says, **In this you greatly rejoice** (6). **In this**, referring to all we've already looked at, the new life, the salvation guaranteed by the power & mercy of God, secured by the resurrection of Christ, **in all this you greatly rejoice**. **Greatly rejoice** is an intense term that means to be supremely & abundantly happy. It isn't tentative or based on circumstances or feelings. It conveys the notion

⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., *1 Peter*, MacArthur NT Commentary, p 36

of *continual* joy & happiness.⁵ Christian joy isn't a reaction to good circumstances. Christian joy is a settled gladness of heart coming from a deep satisfaction from the lavish grace of God in Jesus that comes to us because He rose again. That's Christian joy & it's incredibly realistic. It's not glib or superficial or fake or worked up or pretended. It's real. **In this you greatly rejoice**, right now, today, no matter your circumstances, **though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials** (6). **Distressed** refers not just to physical pain, but also to mental anguish, including sadness, sorrow, disappointment, & anxiety. By God's design, trouble is painful in order to refine us for greater maturity. Believers rejoice despite suffering because we know it won't last forever. When Peter said **a little while**, he wasn't promising that suffering on this earth will be brief. The difficulty is only brief when compared to future glory, but it may endure for a lifetime.⁶ Rejoicing is present tense & so is the stress from various trials. **Now**, he says, **you have been distressed or grieved** (ESV). In other words, Christian joy is a true joy that isn't touched by trials. It coexists in the same heart at the same time alongside real grief. Ever lost a loved one who was a Christian? You had a real grief but not like those who have no hope (1 Thes 4:13-14). No, there was a deep-seated joy as well knowing they were with the Lord. When a person is born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus, that new birth creates in them a capacity for both joy & grief at the same time. Grief in circumstances. Grief in painful trials. Grief in remaining sin in our lives. Grief that this world around isn't the way it's supposed to be. Grief that the death of loved ones bring. & yet nothing, not even grief like that can touch the settled joy that rests upon & flows out of the fact of Jesus' empty tomb & the fact that He is living today. Peter's point is clear: Believers who suffer aren't dashed to the ground by their troubles. They love Jesus & rejoice in Him, even though they've never seen Him & don't see Him now. Their lives are characterized by a hope that fills the present with love & joy. Part of God's purpose in these trials is spelled out for us. What is God doing in allowing the joyful Christian heart to be grieved? They are all, Peter says, **7.**

⁵ MacArthur, p 41

⁶ Schreiner, p 67

God is doing a refining, purifying, sanctifying work in us by the trials we encounter. Peter wants us to see that there's cause for joy even when trials make your tears flow. Because Jesus rose again, we know what the world cannot know. We know that none of our sorrows & none of our sufferings are aimless, pointless, useless things. No, God is at work in us to prepare us even through our trials in life with the risen Christ so that when He returns we'll be ready to live with Him forever. In the meantime, we trust an unseen but living Christ & receive **the outcome of our faith the salvation of our souls** (9). Right now, today, we **greatly rejoice**, he says, **with joy inexpressible & full of glory** (8). Our joy is *higher than speech* can express. Those who live in Christ experience a **joy** so divine that they can't communicate it. Do you have that joy today?

There is new birth, new hope, new security, & new joy all flowing from the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Do you need a new life? Without Christ you're dead in your sin, dead under the wrath & curse of God. But because Jesus rose again, there's new life available because of the mercy of God. You must be **born again**. You must look to the living, risen Christ & call out to Him. He is the fountain of the mercy of God. Do you need new hope in hopeless times? Not a desperate hope, a blind or foolish hope, a naive hope, or a forlorn hope. But a living hope. If you've never known Jesus as Lord & Savior, come to Him today & be assured that everything He claimed is true because of the resurrection. Trust the living Jesus today. His death & resurrection is the only thing strong enough to save us from our sins. If your faith is in yourself or your own goodness you'll perish. If your faith is in what God has done through Jesus because of His great mercy, then no matter what problems you face now, you can join Peter in proclaiming, *Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has saved me according to His great mercy. Because my salvation is not from myself, but from God, I am saved unto eternity!* You need confidence that no matter what comes, God is working His purposes out. You need to find a way to face tomorrow confident that you're being kept by the power of God. That kind of hope can only be found in Jesus who defeated death & brings life to all those who are in Him. To have a living hope in dark days means to trust a living Savior.

What about new security? Do you need new security? You can know that you're safe, not because you're strong or smart or spiritual. You can know that you're safe because sin, death, & Satan were

all defeated on the day Jesus rose from the grave. If you trust in the risen Christ today you can say, *Because He lives I can face tomorrow, Because He lives all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future. & life is worth the living just because He lives.*⁷

Do you need new joy? This world is full of joy-killers. Turn on the news & feel your joy leach away, right? But when you trust the risen Christ, not even distress, deep sorrow, & grief can do that to you. In fact, the very sufferings that grieve us, Peter says, are refining us, strengthening & deepening faith in us, preparing all who trust in Jesus to be with Him in glory. In the meantime, that faith that God is at work strengthening & deepening & refining in us, that faith in an unseen but risen Jesus, is a fountain of joy.

Face it, Christians are mysteries to the world. We have new lives amidst the decay of the old. We have new hope when all around is depressing & despairing. We have new security when there seems to be every reason to be afraid. & we have new joy even when sorrow strikes. Peter says the key to unlocking the mystery of how that's possible is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It's Easter Sunday. That's the explanation for all of it. Jesus rose from the grave on the 3rd day. Jesus' resurrection is the only explanation for the blessings of the Christian life in a difficult world. It's got nothing to do with us & everything to do with the Jesus in whom we trust. The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. That's the message of Easter, the promise for all who put their faith in the life, death, & resurrection of Jesus, complete forgiveness & power to live a new life. The empty tomb means there's forgiveness. The empty tomb means our sins can be washed away. The empty tomb means Jesus has won the battle over sin, death, & the grave. The Lamb of God has come. **He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, & by His scourging we are healed (Is 53:5).** Healed from what? The eternal punishment for our sins. Humble yourself before God Almighty. Open your card-file room to Him & you'll find mercy. The risen Christ invites you to come to Him that you might know resurrection life for yourself. Here's how the story ends:

As I pushed away the tears, I saw Him. No, please not Him. Not here. Oh, anyone but Jesus. I watched helplessly as He began to open the files & read the cards. I couldn't bear to watch His

⁷ *Because He lives*, Gloria & William Gaither, 1971

response. & in the moments I could bring myself to look at His face, I saw a sorrow deeper than my own. He seemed to intuitively go to the worst boxes. Why did He have to read every one?

Finally, He turned & looked at me from across the room. He looked at me with pity in His eyes. But this was a pity that didn't anger me. I dropped my head, covered my face with my hands & began to cry again.

He walked over & put His arm around me. He could have said so many things. But He didn't say a word. He just cried with me.

Then He got up & walked back to the wall of files. Starting at one end of the room, He took out a file &, one by one, began to sign His name over mine on each card. *No!* I shouted rushing to Him. All I could find to say was *No, no*, as I pulled the card from Him. His name shouldn't be on these cards. But there it was, written in red so rich, so dark, so alive. The name of Jesus covered mine. It was written with His blood. He gently took the card back. He smiled a sad smile & began to sign the cards. I don't think I'll ever understand how He did it so quickly, but the next instant it seemed I heard Him close the last file & walk back to my side. He placed His hand on my shoulder & said, *It is finished.*

It is finished. In God's mercy, Jesus has provided for us new life, new hope, new security, & new joy. Have you received it by faith? Has His resurrection changed everything for you?