

## The Resurrection: It's Glory and Conviction Acts 2:24

It is amazing to look at the two cardinal doctrines of Christianity that are taught in verses 23-24. And they are the death of Jesus and then the resurrection of Jesus. And we see both of these were under the authority and power of Jesus. And Christianity cannot stand and cannot exist without these two truths. If Christ did not die but only appeared to die, then we are individuals who are still in our sins and most miserable. Then there was no sacrifice for sin. There was none who took the penalty that I deserve. There was no substitution so there is no declared righteous standing. But the same goes with the resurrection of Jesus. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:14, **“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.”** Everything that we are doing this morning is vain and useless because we are preaching that we have hope in a living Saviour but he is not living. He goes on in that passage and says, **“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”** The resurrection of Jesus is not just an add on doctrine or the good ending of a really bad story, but absolutely essential to our salvation. No resurrection - no salvation, is the easy equation that Paul maps out. It is necessary and vital doctrine and must be believed.

And last time we were together we saw that Jesus was taken by cruel hands and he was crucified. We saw that those who took Jesus were culpable and responsible. And even though this was the scheme of the religious leaders they represented the whole nation. Their guilt is so obvious. John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, also has a book about the greatest guilt, and he lays it on those who are in Jerusalem. But if God's grace through the sacrifice of Christ is able to cleanse them than it is able to cleanse any and all. But we also saw that God was over all of the events of the cross, and what came about was exactly what he had planned. The religious leaders wanted to murder Jesus, but didn't want to do it during the Passover festival. But God is the One directing human history. And Jesus expires on the cross at the same time the Passover lambs are being offered in Jerusalem. Why? Because he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

And this morning we come to the third point in Peter's preaching and application of the warning of the coming judgment through quoting Joel, and that is the resurrection of Jesus. And I cannot overstate the importance of Peter's sermon. This is the first in the Christian era and it was certainly ordained by God. And it is incredible that the centrepiece of the early preaching of the apostles and the church was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. He is alive. And there are two things that we have to grapple with here. One is the reason for the resurrection. Why is the resurrection so critical? Why is it not enough if he died for our sins and his spirit or immaterial self just went into heaven? After all we preach that we are justified through the death of Jesus. When he cried, “It is finished” on the cross everything that was necessary to provide salvation was accomplished. He drank the full cup of God's wrath in our stead. So, why did the disciples go everywhere preaching the resurrection of Jesus? The other question that comes out of this passage is it even credible to believe in the resurrection? We live in a very naturalistic world where we do not see miracles. We do not see people rise from the dead. We do not see people instantly cured from all sorts

of maladies and diseases. But yet the centrepiece of Christianity hangs on this very miracle. Erwin Lutzer writes about David Hume and says, **“The skeptic, David Hume ... thought his essay on miracles would disprove the Resurrection. He argued: We have uniform experience against miracles, and there can be no exceptions to this rule!”** But our duty, at least intellectually is not to assume or surmise what can and cannot happen in our estimation, but to look at the evidence and see if we truly do have a rational faith, and therefore a rational trust in Jesus Christ. And I want to see a couple things that I think will help us with these questions, and I hope strengthen our love and faith in Christ. We have a rational and glorious faith in the resurrected Christ.

1. It was God that raised him. V. 24a.

Again, we realize that a miracles as we said earlier is the suspension of some natural law, or an intervention in that natural law that can only be explained by the power of God who made those natural laws. This is God’s work. It is not man’s work. Again, many will try to come up with some sort of naturalistic explanation as far as the resurrection of Jesus. One I heard in a hospital room. The gentleman in the bed right next to the person I was visiting engaged in a conversation. And he said that Jesus just appeared to be dead, but revived in the coolness of the tomb. But crucifixion left the person dead. The Roman soldiers examined the body and Jesus was dead. When Nicodemus and Joseph placed the body of Jesus in the grave, they would not have done so unless he was dead. We are led to believe that somehow Jesus revived and rolled the huge stone away and then overcame the soldiers at the tomb after going through the excruciating pain of crucifixion. There is only one answer that suffices and that is Jesus is risen by the power of none other than God. There is no other explanation.

And think of this whole scene, because Peter is preaching. Jesus is God’s man attested by signs and wonders. You put him to death. He is God’s man. He is the Messiah. Well, he couldn’t be the Messiah. Why? Because he was cursed and hung on a tree. He was forsaken by God and therefore under the penalty of God. And much of that is true but he was forsaken not because of his sin but ours. But here is where the guilt of the Jews becomes overwhelming, because the one who they rejected and sought to kill, and killed by lawless hands, the Romans, God raised from the dead. Look at verse 24 again, **“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death.”** Who raised Jesus? God the Father.

And think of what this did. It validated all the words and work of Jesus. It validated all of the “I AM” statements that Jesus made. If Jesus was an imposter or if he was a deceiver or if he was inspired by Satan as the religious leaders maintained then he would have remained in the grave. But he rose from the grave by none other than the power of God. We have this truth stated by Paul also in Ephesians 1:19-20, **“and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward 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 his right hand in the heavenly places.”** Paul prays that believers might realize the power that is working in us as the body of Christ. And it is the same power of God the Father at work that he raised Jesus. It was God the Father, who was authenticating Jesus as the Messiah, as the

Suffering Servant of the Lord, as the One who had come who is greater than David. This is the one.

And again, it validated all the claims that Jesus made. This of some of the amazing claims he made. Just before he raises Lazarus from the grave he says in John 11:25-26, **“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’** Life is found in Jesus. What are we called to do? Believe. Do you believe this, he asks Martha.

And let me say that it would be very easy to disprove that Jesus is dead. All you would have to do, you are in the vicinity of Jerusalem, go get the body of Jesus. Joseph is probably at this scene. He can lead you to the tomb. But there are a number of things that are amazing here. One is that there is no protest from the crowd that Jesus is risen. There is no rolling of the eyes. Well, Peter you seemed to make sense but now you have gone off into fancy. No one protests. No one makes a search for the body of Christ. Even if the apostles stole the body, no one’s tries to find it. Why? It is because you cannot find a dead body that is alive. Jesus is alive. And he appeared openly and often. It was indisputable. Listen to what Paul writes to the doubting Corinthians about the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:6, **“Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.”** If you doubt the resurrection come interview the eyewitnesses. These were not mystical sightings from a distance. Later on in Acts, Paul is arrested, brought to trial before Festus, and accused of being out of his mind because he preached Jesus risen from the dead, and listen to the reply in Acts 26:25-26, **“But Paul said, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.”** None of this was done in a corner. All of it was done openly. There were none who could rationally or intellectually or honestly say that Jesus was not risen. To say that we do not have a rational or historical faith is to really go against the evidence that we see in such texts as this one.

So there were only two conclusions therefore to make. One is that this is the work of God. No one can cause someone to rise from the dead than God. Remember, most of the Jews believed in a coming resurrection from the dead. But the other conclusion is the whole point of the quote from Joel. The last days have begun, and we are on the wrong side of God. We are not in his camp but we are actually in the camp of the enemy. Our sin has been so exposed, and we are so much more worse of sinners than we could ever imagine. We killed the Lord of glory and we know this for sure because God has resurrected Him from the grave. Is there any hope for us? And that is where we come to our second point.

2. We see the righteousness of God in the resurrection. V. 24b.

Now in one sense, we realize that all the words and works and certainly the personhood of Jesus was validates by the resurrection of Jesus. We realize that the resurrection was of critical importance and announced everywhere that the gospel was preached. But couldn’t of God have validated the words and works of Jesus in another

way? Couldn't he have spoken from heaven and thundered, "This is my Son and what he has done on the cross is enough to save sinners." It gets to a critical question: was the resurrection of Jesus necessary? And if we answer in the affirmative, yes, then why was it so necessary?

And Paul announces in Romans 4:22-25, **"That is why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.' But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."** This is talking about Abraham's justification. And justification is a legal term where one is declared not guilty of the charges against him, but also declared righteous in the eyes of the law. And here is the legal declaration of God based on our faith in Jesus Christ. Our sins are not counted against us because our sins are laid on Jesus' account and his perfect righteousness is imputed or laid on our account through his substitutionary death., But notice what he says right at the end of chapter four: **"Who was delivered up for our trespasses (there is the substitution - the innocent for the guilty) and raised for our justification."** Now what does he mean by that? And what Paul is indicating is that all of us are still in our sins if Jesus is not risen. There is no declared righteousness.

And you might ask: how can that be? We pointed out earlier that when Jesus cried out: "It is finished," it was a cry of victory. He gave up the ghost or he decided to die because the work of securing salvation was accomplished. So why would Paul ever say that our salvation hinges on the resurrection, without it, there is no justification? And the reason why is because of the truth stated by Peter here, **"It was not possible for him to be held by it."** Now again, the "it" in this verse is death. It was not possible for Jesus to be held by death. So Jesus is resurrected by the power and the will of the Father, and we also find that death could not hold him. How do these two truths intersect? And how they intersect is with the truth that we all know as believers in Jesus Christ. One truth is found in Romans 3:23 and that is **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** None of us have met the standard, all have sinned and not glorified God as he deserves. And as believers, we realize the severity of that truth and our guilt. Romans 6:23 says, **"For the wages of sin is death."** The penalty that the sinner earns and deserves is death. And this death is certainly physical but it is also spiritual and eternal. The sinner will be cast out of God's presence in a place of punishment and horror for all of eternity because we have sinned against him of eternal value. What we deserve is eternal punish - eternal death.

And we realize through the death of Christ, Jesus paid that wage or debt, so that those who trust in Jesus will have eternal life. Well, here is a question, and especially if you have struggled with the enormity of debt that you have before Christ, was the sacrifice of Jesus enough? If we look at our thought life itself, and the amount of anger, vengeance, hatred and lust that is in our hearts, that would be more than enough to convince of our guilt. And our thought life is unending, and remember every wrong thought is against God. And we have even gotten to our words and actions. How do we know that the death of Christ to pay the incredible debt of sin before an all holy God?

And the reason we know is that God the Father raised him from the dead because it was impossible for death to hold him. In other words, the all righteous Father above would not be all righteous if he did not resurrect the Son. Why? It is because the Son paid the debt in full. If you have trusted in Jesus then Jesus is your sin bearer. And if he cannot cancel out even one sin then it would be impossible for him to be released from death because the wages of sin is death. The resurrection of Jesus announces or screams that every sin has been paid for in full. If Jesus satisfies the justice of the Father completely then the righteous Father, and delighting to do so, resurrects the Son because death cannot hold someone who is absolutely righteous.

So here is the question: what hope have the people who were responsible for the death of Christ, whether it be the chief priests who arranged for the arrest of Christ and plotted to kill him, or the crowds that cried out, "crucify Him, crucify him," or the thieves on the cross who joined in with the mocking of Jesus as he hung in anguish on the cross, "He saved others, can you not save yourself," or the people who just go about their daily lives with no thought about God, as if sin is no big deal even though God has given them life? And the answer is that what Jesus has done on the cross is more than enough to save a sinner like me. How do I know? It is because the call is for anyone and everyone to come and believe on him for eternal life. And the resurrection screams out, the debt has been paid, death cannot hold him.

And there is another announcement. just as death cannot hold Jesus, it cannot hold any and all who have trusted in him. Certainly now there is no eternal death. There is no separation from God in a place of torment, but to be absent from the body, in other words death, is to be at home with the Lord - with Jesus Christ.

But death cannot hold the Christian because Jesus perfect work on the cross, and the validity of our justification through his resurrection, guarantees that we will rise also. Listen to 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, "**But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.**" There is an order. Just as Christ died the vast majority of believers will taste death. But when Jesus comes back there will be a resurrection from the dead of all that have trusted in him. We will be given by a humanity just like Christ. These verses never get old in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, "**So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.**"

So is the resurrection of Jesus just wishful thinking or fantasy? For believers in Jesus, we have a verifiable and historically accurate accounting of the resurrection of Jesus. Anyone who examines the evidence has to come to that determination. But was the resurrection necessary? And the answer is a resounding Yes!! It gloriously announces that "**my sin not in part but the whole was nailed to the cross and I own it no more, praise the Lord, Praise the Lord oh my soul.**" And it announces that if Christ has risen and I am in Christ I will rise also. There is nothing more glorious, encouraging, life giving, and more sanctifying for the believer than rehearsing the

gospel hope. And it all centres around these three truths that Peter articulates. Jesus is the Christ, he really did die, but he is risen!!!