

“The Resurrection Makes It Real” //

Romans 6:1–5 // Easter 2019

Death has been defeated! Amen!

I love Easter for a lot of reasons, but one of them is because it is **one of the two times a year** I don't have to actually think about what I'm going to talk about. Everybody in here knows what the message is going to be about today.

- In fact, **if you're one of those people who only come on Christmas** and Easter (what we affectionately call around here 'CEO Christians'), I can **partially understand** why you may not feel that compelled to come back on other weeks.
- You're like, "Well, every time I go he preaches on the same thing."

We **actually talk about a lot more throughout the year**, so you should check it out, but the **core of it is what we celebrate today**: Christ actually came, just like all the prophecies said he would (not another philosophy, an event). He actually lived, actually died, and actually resurrected from the dead; and he was seen alive by hundreds of witnesses who authenticated their testimony with their blood! (applause)

- I **did hear about one young pastor** (true story) who decided that if this was the only weekend certain people would ever come (and it's true, 50%!), he was just going to tell them everything they need to know about Christianity in one queen-mother-of-all sermons.
- He preached for 90 minutes. True story. It was a junk drawer sermon: little bit of this, little bit of that.
- The next year, Easter was the **lowest attended** Sunday of the year.

So, I'm *not* going to do that today. I'm going to stay on script. I'm going to talk about *the resurrection* and what it means for you.

At our church, *we're studying chapter by chapter through the book of Romans* and it worked out great because where we are at the place in **Romans where Paul** talks about the **resurrection of Jesus and the difference that it makes**.

So, if you brought your Bible, open it to Romans 6. If you didn't bring a Bible, then I'm going to have to ask you to leave... j/k. On the screen.

- **Y'all, I love Easter because it's the perfect time** for many of you have been considering becoming Christians to actually cross that line of faith.
 - (Some of you have been reading books, talking to people, watching messages on TV, and today you say, "OK, I think I have this thing figured out. I'm ready." Today's the day.)
- **But it's also the perfect time for those of you came in here totally closed off to Christianity to reconsider** some things because of an absolutely amazing fact.
 - You're **only here because the guilt trip your mom would put on you** if you skipped Easter is too much for any mortal to bear;
 - or maybe you're here because she's super cute and this is the only place she'd let you take her out;
 - maybe you are honestly not even sure how you got in here—a friend **invited you to breakfast** and next thing you knew you were walking in here.
- **Whatever:** You didn't come in searching, you came in with both feet on the brakes, the emergency brake pulled up; door locked and double-bolted; you're like "no way; not now, not ever"
 - **You have seen hypocrites; all kinds of harm in name of religion;** difficult questions
- **Tonight,** I want to present you with something that might make you reconsider some of your objections.

- You see, **Easter has the potential to be an “end around”** our objections.¹
 - **Think about it—if you knew Jesus raised from the dead, wouldn’t that make you reconsider some** of your objections?
 - I told our congregation that I had this realization in the midst of a lot of my own doubts: **if Jesus appeared to me and told me...** I’d be willing to punt some of those objections even if I didn’t have a good answer for them because I’d seen something that proves there is an answer.
 - IOW, if I was certain of the **the truth of the resurrection** would make me *doubt my doubts*. ***Some of you pride yourself on doubting--what would make you doubt your doubts?***
 - And so I **got into considering whether there was sufficient reason to believe Jesus really raised** from the dead and if there was sufficient **reason to believe he was who he** said he was.
 - And I found out **that there was**.
 - That led to one of my **favorite definitions of faith: Faith happens when the unexplainable meets the undeniable.**
 - If the resurrection is undeniable, then it changes your discomfort with the unexplainable.
 - **Make sense?**
 - **BTW, if it makes you feel better, evidently even the original disciples apparently had some of their own unanswered questions.** One of the most interesting verses in the entire NT is Matthew 28:17, right at the end of Matthew’s Gospel.
 - Jesus has gathered everyone on the hillside after being with them for 40 days following his resurrection. He’s talked with them, eaten with them, showed them his nail scars.
 - He brings them out the Mount of Olives and gives them the Great Commission to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth, and he begins to ascend to heaven.
 - Matthew 28:17 says that when the disciples saw all this, “Some worshipped, but some doubted.” Doubted? “He’d been DEAD for three days, and then he hung out with them for nearly 3 months and now he’s FLOATING in the air in front of them...and yet some still doubted! (I saw that David Blaine special)
 - **Why?** *Their questions were so difficult and emotionally complex (they had been under Roman oppression for 100 years; how was Rome still in charge?) that even in light of the amazing things they’d seen, they still struggled.*
 - **You have those?**
 - But they learned to trust him, not because all their questions were answered, but because they knew he had raised from the dead!
 - Bottom line: **You’re in good company** if you have objections and questions--so did the some of the Apostles!
 - **So, my hope today is that many of you might reconsider your own questions and doubts** and objections in light of the certainty of the resurrection. To doubt your doubts.
 - To **suspend judgment on some of the unexplainable in light of the undeniable.**
- So here’s what I am going to do today.** I’m going to show you how Paul in Romans establishes the resurrection as the foundation of everything.
- Already in these 1st 6 chapters,** Paul has explained that the resurrection proved 2 things to him he had not always accepted:
- **First, that Jesus was who he said he was: Romans 1:4, “(Jesus) was declared to be the Son of God in power... by his resurrection from the dead.”** (Obviously, the resurrection didn’t make him the Son of God; it proved that he was).

¹ This and the above set-up adapted from Andy Stanley intro to an Easter sermon

- **Second, in Romans 4:25** Paul says that the resurrection shows us Jesus' death accomplished what he said it accomplished. He says, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for (because of) our justification." IOW, the resurrection is the proof that the cross worked.

The resurrection proves Jesus was who he said he was and accomplished what he said he accomplished. Paul previously hadn't believed either of those things--in fact, he was vehemently against them.

But he changed his opinion on that in the space of about 7 minutes one afternoon. ***What made him change?***

He had seen the resurrection of Jesus with his own eyes!

- (Sometimes we lose the amazingness of this conversion in the 1st century.
- #1 enemy of Christianity became it's biggest proponent instantaneously!
 - In so doing, he walked away from all kinds of prestige, and power and promise in the Jewish community where he was a **rising star** to become a poor, persecuted Christian!
 - I am not **sure how even to make a modern comparison.** Imagine Coach K holding an emergency press conference tonight announcing that after a short personal retreat in the mountains, he's announcing he's now a committed Tarheel, and he is resigning from his position as head coach at Duke and returning all the money he's ever made there, and has taken a job as a waterboy for UNC's team or anything else Coach Roy has for him.
 - **That's silly**, of course, but even if it were true, it's 1/100th of what Paul's transformation cost him.

You say, "Well, I wish I could see Jesus with my own eyes like Paul did--that would settle my doubts."

- Yes, but you have Paul's testimony.
- **What else but seeing something real** and unmistakable would make Paul do this? Paul walked away from a world of prestige and privilege to become a fugitive. His leadership in the church never got him money, power or privilege--he left those things to follow Jesus.
- He even refused to take a salary from the church. He was beaten constantly; spent more time in prison than walking free and died by beheading.

One religious historian pointed out that when someone is teaching something they know to be false (and that happens), you will always find that what they are teaching is gains them money, power, respect--**Did Paul gain any of those things? No, the opposite!** But he kept on testifying because he was convinced that what he had seen was true!

In addition to that, we have the **testimony of all the other Apostles**, too. **Every one of them was tortured or went to a martyr's death** and not one of them ever went back on their testimony.

- The idea that this was some kind of myth that sprang up (which seems to be what people say today), is just crazy to me. I'm not trying to mock it, but **think about what you are saying:**
 - **You've got all the disciples out fishing** on a boat after Jesus has died. They are depressed/moping... talking about how great—really great it was when Jesus was here. How they really loved what Jesus taught and how his stories made them feel safe and special and they wished that more people would have paid attention to him.
 - And one says, "But now he's dead. I wish he could have kept teaching."
 - And one of them says, "I know! **What if we say he resurrected**, and then we can go around teaching them all that he taught us.

- We'll say that his death was actually pre-planned to die for their sins and then he got resurrected."
- And one says, "**But that's not true!**" And he says, "**Who cares?** It will still make people accept and love Jesus. We can keep the dream alive...!
- So, one says, "**Will we get rich and popular** doing this?" And they say, **No, because all the influential people** hate this message and have forbid us from preaching it, so we'll be hated, cast out, and our families will be impoverished.
- "**Well, will we at least have the satisfaction** of knowing we are pointing people to eternal salvation?" No, because we know that what we're telling them isn't true.
- And **one of them stands up and says,** That's great! I'm in.
- And they **all say the same,** and **out they go,** and **one by one they are hunted down.** And as they watch each other and the people they love are being drug off to be killed they are winking at each other saying, 'Stick to the story! Keep the dream alive! This is going to be great!'
- **Chuck Colson: everyone caved!** The reason this group didn't cave is that they had seen something real and were willing to testify to that with their own blood!
- BTW, **one of those who would not stop preaching** and ended up dying a martyr's death was Jesus' own younger brother, James! (Actually, half-brother means...) Let me ask: **How many of you grew up with an older-brother?** *What would it take to convince you now that he was actually God the whole time?* (You say, "The incarnation of Satan, maybe...")

So, Paul says, "**The resurrection proved to me that Jesus is who he says he is** and **his death accomplished** what he said it accomplished."

Now, in chapter 6, Paul explains another thing the resurrection shows us about Christianity, which might be the most convincing proof... but before we get to that, let me ask you a question:

- **For those of you with doubts:**

- Can't the resurrection convince you that there is an answer out there to your questions even if you can't grasp it right now?
- Can't you live with some of the unexplainable in light of the undeniable fact of the resurrection?
- You pride yourself on doubting. Won't you doubt your doubts?
- **I get it; you have questions.** But if Jesus raised from the dead, and he did, can't you suspend your objections and trust he has an answer? What would it take?

OK, chapter 6: **Paul shows us in chapter 6 that the resurrection shows us one other thing about the gospel--it is power.** It's not just another competing theory of religion, a new way to live or a better set of morals.

It is actual life-giving, heart-regenerating power, and the proof of that is the way it changes lives.

Chapter 6 begins with a question: ^{6:1} **What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?**

- This is a natural question the reader of Romans has at this point, because for 5 chapters Paul has been arguing that arguing that salvation as a free gift that comes to all who will receive it.
 - Every other religion in the world operates on the premise, "I obey, therefore God accepts me." And **that's your motivation to be good.** *He's making a list and checking it twice...*
 - The gospel flips that on its head—it says, "God has accepted me, therefore I will obey." God has **accepted me by a free act of grace.**
 - All I have to do--all I can do--is receive it, like a gift.
 - Last Thursday I went on a mission trip to the DR. Guy in our church: What time is your flight? 5 am. One of these 6 million miler guys. "I want to tie you to my account and use my status to upgrade you to FC."

- If I had said, “No, no, I insist on using only my own status...” then I’d be stuck back there in the cattle car (with the rest of the Summit team).
- **All I could do was receive it!** *He gave up his points; I got his status*
- **Jesus offers to give you his status**, but you have to receive it as a gift.
- **Well, Paul knows that raises the question, then: If Jesus paid it all**, isn’t like we **now have this divine visa card** with an unlimited balance that we can just flash whenever we want?
- **And in an even sicker twist**, Paul says, some say maybe, **if God gets glory** by showing grace, maybe our sinning just gives him more space to be glorified!

Paul’s answer: **2 By no means!** Btw, this is the **strongest way of saying ‘no’** in Greek. (I have a friend who, when he’s asked to do something he really doesn’t want to do, will say, “Do you want a one-word ‘no,’ or do you want the deluxe ‘two word’ edition? **This is Paul’s “deluxe two word edition.”** Heck no...) **How can we who died to sin still live in it?**

Now, what does Paul mean that we have **“died to sin”**?

- Well, it doesn’t mean we have lost all interest in sin, or that we are **slowly moving away** from it.
- **Two reasons** we know that:
 - First, **“died” here is in the past tense**. We’re already dead. It’s not something happening to us, but something already done.
 - Second, **in chapter 7 Paul will explain that the Christian can indeed still be tempted and even seduced by the power of sin.**²
 - *So, it **doesn’t mean we’ve just lost interest in sin.***

No, what Paul means he explains in vs. 3: Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

- When we accept Christ, we “die to sin” in 2 ways:
 - **First, we renounce it once and for all.**
 - **The picture of this, Paul says, is baptism.** Which is why one of the questions we ask people say when they get baptized is, “Will you follow Jesus, going wherever...?”
 - This is called “repentance.” Repentance means literally “a change of mind,” an “about face” toward sin.
 - Not, “God is my co-pilot”
 - And then we put you under symbolically, showing you have renounced sin.
 - And if his didn’t **happen at your conversion** then your conversion is not legitimate.
 - **I don’t mean a Christian is perfect**, but a Christian is someone who has unequivocally renounced sin and their life proves that.
 - **So, that’s the first way we die to sin: we renounce it.**
 - Second, **saying we are “dead to sin” means that through his resurrection, Christ has destroyed the reign of sin in our lives.**
 - **When we accepted Christ**, Jesus poured the power of the resurrection in our hearts.
 - **Again, this is pictured in baptism.**
 - You **go under the water showing you are buried with Jesus**, and then come out, showing that his life is becoming ours.
 - **The water doesn’t save you--it’s just a symbol.** We always say that baptism is a picture on the outside of what the Spirit does on the inside.

² Tim Keller, *Romans for You*, 139.

And because of that, Paul says, we have access to Christ's resurrection power over sin.

- See the next verse says? 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.
 - "United" is a horticultural term, like where you'd take branches off of one tree and graft them into another tree.
 - When you accept Christ, the Spirit takes the dead branch of your life and grafts it into Christ's living root and his life starts to flow into you.

So, follow the logic: If we renounced sin through our baptism, and it's dominion over us was broken by the power of resurrection, how can we continue willfully to practice it?

- If we willfully continue to practice sin, that means we were either insincere in our repentance or God's resurrection power has never come into us.
- Make sense?
 - I've told you before that in college a couple of my friends lived in a house off of campus which was the nastiest place I'd ever stepped foot. They never did dishes. Cat not in litter box. When Mary came, it smelled like roses and clorox.
 - If I'd been greeted by the odor, I'd say, "No way. If Mary had come, this place would be different. Either you never opened the door to her or the woman you let in was not Mary."

That's what Paul is saying. *If we willfully continue to practice sin after becoming a Christian*, we either were insincere in our repentance or God's resurrection power has never come into us-- IOW, **we didn't really accept Christ**.

- Listen: Your confession of faith has to be more than words or some little prayer you pray or some ritual you go through-- walking an aisle, praying a prayer, joining a church.
 - Praying a prayer doesn't save you. People in every religion pray.

- Just believing in God doesn't save you. The book of James says even the demons believe, and tremble.
- Going to church and getting involved doesn't make you a Christian. My youth pastor used to say, "Going to church don't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a quarter pounder with extra cheese."
- **What makes you a Christian** is renouncing sin and surrendering to Christ as Lord and receiving his free offer of salvation and allow his power to start changing you.
 - It is a **confession of faith that not only** comes out of your mouth; it is **matched by the actions** of your life.
- **When that happens, the power of Jesus** makes a real, tangible difference in your life.
 - **Again, it's not that you become perfect**, or that lose all desire for sin
 - (As I said, Paul will show us in chapter 7 that for even the most mature believers the Christian life is a continual struggle with temptation and sin.)
 - **Just that your life will show evidences** of new resurrection life.
- **How could it not? How can you encounter something as powerful** as the resurrection and not show its effects?
- **Illus. Say you are out in the parking lot and your little Honda Civic has a dead battery**. got a Ford 250 (with big battery), and you, said, "Well, first i want to see if it is giving off power," so you attached both pos and neg nuds to your tongue, and you were like, "**Yep, it's giving power**," we'd say, "Nope... if you really did that, we'd have seen some effect." You'd walk different. Your hair would look different. You'd talk different.

So, here's my question:

Have you experienced its power in your life, and does your life show that?

According to Paul, the **resurrection is not just a fact of history past**; it is **power to make new in the present**.

- **The gospel**, he says, is not a new philosophy to live by, a new set of moral regulations, or new resolutions to do better. It's about the **infusion of resurrection power**.
- The gospel is not about **turning over a new leaf**, it's about receiving new life.

Personally, I'm tired of seeing Christians who think of the Christian life as simply ascribing to some creed and trying to be a decent person.

- The **gospel is about power**. Raw, life-changing, heart-starting power.
- The **power to heal**, to forgive, transform and to make new.)

At the center of Christianity is not a new moral code or a new perspective on life, but an **empty tomb** that literally changes everything.

(MUSIC)

It declares:

Death has been defeated.

And that means:

Guilt has been defeated

Injustice has been defeated

Addictions have been defeated

Sorrow has been defeated

Despair has been defeated

Listen, if Jesus raised from the dead, that means,

- **Guilt doesn't have the last word in our lives.**
 - Jesus took the full penalty of our sin on the cross so that there is no more condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus.
- **...injustice doesn't have the last word.**
 - Yes, we live in a world where unfair things happen.
 - But the resurrection shows us that God is going to overturn all those bad things and redeem us into a world where all wrongs are righted and he heals us for eternity.
- **...addictions don't have the last word.**
 - In the resurrection God released a power on earth that can renew all that sin has destroyed.
 - Maybe you've messed up (your family, or your marriage,) or your own life.
 - This resurrection means that if you ask him, he can make all things new in you.
 - I'm **not saying it's a quick and easy process**--you may struggle every day for the rest of your life.
 - I'm just saying that in the resurrection is the promise of ultimate healing and the motivation to get up tomorrow and keep pressing forward.
- **...sorrow doesn't have the last word.**
 - This world has been described as a veil of tears where we watch everything we love eventually fall apart—everything departs at some point: our families, our bodies.
 - Maybe you've watched someone with Alzheimer's in their last terrible days.
 - Maybe you've experienced the death of a loved one; maybe a child.
 - The **resurrection shows you that that kind of pain** does not have the last word.

- Through Christ, we are being redeemed to place where there are no more tears or crying.
- ...**Despair doesn't have to have the last word.**
 - Listen, as long as Jesus is alive, there is hope for you.
 - As a friend of mine says, If you're not dead, God's not done. He can still redeem you!

The empty tomb means **death doesn't have the last word!**

- Those who die in Christ are raised with him to an eternal existence—life forever with him and those that love him.
- I love this quote by **Billy Graham**: "One day you will hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe it. I'll be more alive than ever, I will just have changed addresses." (PIC)

The **resurrection changes everything. It changes people.** 4 Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Just **think about the change** it made in those first Christians.

- **Paul** was harsh and abrasive and a bigot--even a murderer, but his encounter with Jesus made him a man who considered himself the chief of sinners and the bondservant of the church.
- **Peter** was a coward--but his encounter with the resurrected Jesus transformed into a man of courage, the rock on which Jesus built the church and who would one day die crucified, upside-down, for his testimony.
- The **Apostle John** was arrogant and vengeful--but his encounter with Jesus led to him being the Apostle most known for his beautiful and tender expressions of God's love, who gladly submitted to torture and exile so that others could come to know that love.
- **Several of the prominent women** in the early church had very shady pasts. Some had been oppressed and abused. Some were prostitutes and some were demon possessed. But their

encounters with Jesus made mighty women of courage, beauty and strength.

He can change you!

So, have you experienced its power?

- **Not:** have you prayed a prayer or decided to be more spiritual or be a better person or get back in church?
- But have you **been born again**? Have you **received Christ** into your life and experienced his power in your heart?

You can *today*. **As I said toward the beginning, you have to receive it like a gift.**

So, let me be clear:

- **The gospel is that you are condemned under sin.** Look at the last verse in chapter 6, which we'll get into more next week: Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- **wages:** there are two ways to pay for sin. You pay for it yourself; Jesus pays in your place.
- **gift:** has to be received.

To be saved means you stop trying to earn your way to heaven by being **good enough, going to church** enough, and just **receiving his free offer** to save you.

- You stop trying to do and accept his done, surrendering yourself to him.

You ready to do that? You can today.

- **Every head bowed:** "God, give me the courage to do what I need to do." (*Pray for them*).
- Raise hands if need to be saved

Come forward to receive Christ