

The Power of the Resurrection

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[0 : 00] Well tonight please turn back to Philippians chapter 3 and we can read again from verse 7 to verse 12.

But whatever gain I had I counted as lost for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteousness from God that depends on faith. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or I'm already perfect but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

[1 : 05] We're going to look at these verses together and in particular I want us to focus on the words at the start of verse 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

Now here Paul makes almost a passing statement, certainly a very brief statement but one that conveys a very very significant truth. The fact that the resurrection is powerful. Now that probably seems very very obvious but as is often the case this is one of these phrases that we could just whizz through as we read the Bible and not stop and really think about it. Paul is reminding us that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is powerful. And so tonight I want us just to think about that for a wee while.

I want us to think about the power of the resurrection. So to start with we can ask what is so powerful about the resurrection?

[2 : 09] What is it that makes it powerful? Of course there's a lot that we could say and we're only going to scratch the surface as opposed to we only ever scratch the surface in our sermons.

But we can highlight four things I think which summarise the power of the resurrection. The first of these is victory.

At the heart of the resurrection is a glorious spectacular victory. Now of course the word victory implies conflict and from the very beginning of the Bible there has been a great conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil.

Back in Genesis 3 a chapter that we always repeatedly go back to. Adam and Eve sinned, humanity fell and we found ourselves under the grip of the kingdom of evil.

So instead of fulfilling our role as God's image bearers we became a broken people who have fallen from the original state and who are now no longer God's friends we are his enemies.

[3 : 21] And at the core of the kingdom of evil's power is one thing, death. That's really where the core of the power lies in terms of the kingdom of evil's grip on us.

As Hebrews 2 says the devil is the one who has the power of death. That was the curse that faced Adam and Eve, the day they would disobey God they would surely die.

And we see the reality of that at every stage of human history. You think of every age of history that we can look back over. What is the one common conclusion to every single life?

The answer is death. Death is an inescapable force, it's a formidable foe, it is a ruthless enemy and you and I know that.

Death tears our families apart. Death crushes people, young and old. Death targets everyone and death spares no one.

[4 : 37] And in the face of it you and I are powerless. For countless generations people have desperately tried to fight off death, desperately tried to force it from our experience, desperately tried to prevent it.

Has anybody ever come remotely close to stopping death? The answer is no, nobody has. You look at human history and it tells you that no one, no one has even the faintest chance of defeating death.

No one except Jesus. And that is what is so utterly astonishing about the Christian message. If you ask the question, what lies at the heart of Christianity? Is it good teaching? Is it a good example? Is it noble laws?

[5 : 43] Is it a happier way of life? Is that what lies at the heart of Christianity? No. At the heart of Christianity lies a stunning victory over death.

If you think about it, on the cross Jesus hung dead. Dead like every other human being who has ever lived. His body motionless, his soul departed, his life over.

He was dead. And if you stood there watching him you would say death has beaten that guy. Death has won.

Death has overcome him as well. But on the third day he rose again and it is that resurrection that lies at the heart of Christianity.

Without that resurrection we have absolutely nothing. We are to be pitied above everybody else. But the resurrection is a glorious stunning reality.

[6 : 44] It is a glorious stunning victory over death. There was a great battle between the kingdom of God and the forces of death and the resurrection tells us who the winner is.

The winner is Jesus. And we see in the resurrection a astonishing power. The resurrection was not a triumph over bad behaviour.

It wasn't a triumph over bad teaching. It wasn't a triumph over suffering. It wasn't even a triumph over evil people. It was a triumph over death.

It was a spectacular victory. The kingdom of evil hurled its most powerful weapon onto Jesus and he died.

But on the third day he rose again. And in that resurrection we see that the unbeatable has been beaten. The unconquerable has been conquered.

[7 : 42] It is the most spectacular victory that history has ever seen. Death is the most powerful thing that we can ever confront and yet Jesus has overcome.

The power of the resurrection shows us that Jesus is the one who has victory. We see the power of the resurrection because Jesus won victory over death.

The second point that highlights the power of the resurrection is immortality. The result of the victory of Jesus on the cross is that he has now risen to immortality.

In Romans 6 Paul says, we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Jesus having risen from the dead now has an immortal body.

He will never ever die again. And that is a stunning reversal of the effect that sin has had on humanity. Remember we said Adam and Eve, the day you sin you shall surely die.

[9 : 01] A sinned death came into the experience of the human race and it is something that we could never ever ever shake off or escape from ourselves. But Jesus has reversed that.

The curse brought death into the world and that left us all with mortal bodies. But Jesus has a body that is now immortal.

And again the reality of this is something that we experience every day. We look at our own selves, our own bodies, we see that we are mortal.

Our bodies are subject to decay, they are subject to illness, to pain, to damage, to deterioration. The older we get the more and more we are confronted by the reality of this.

And it is a horrible thing to experience. You look at your body and it won't do what it once did. It's not as fast, not as strong, not as nimble as it once was.

[10 : 03] I used to be able to jump a fence, you know a fence between fields, I could jump a fence, I don't think I would even dare now. I'm only 35 but your body is not able to do what it used to be able to do.

We're subject to decay, our bodies are mortal. The power of the resurrection means that Jesus has risen to immortality.

His body is now transformed. Now don't ever think of Jesus as a sort of, we think of Jesus as the right hand of God. We shouldn't think of him as a sort of floaty spirit at the right hand of God.

Jesus has risen bodily. He has a body, a transformed body, one that is not subject to decay, one that is not aging, one that is not weakening.

The curse has no effect on Jesus whatsoever. As Paul says at the very end of this chapter, he now has a glorious body.

[11:07] His body has risen to immortality. Paul mentions this when he was preaching in Antioch in Acts chapter 13. He talks about Jesus, he says, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

His body is not rotting, it's not corrupting. Jesus now has an immortal body. The decay, the pain, the corruption of the curse has no effect on him at all.

And that is all because of the power of the resurrection. So we see the power of the resurrection in terms of victory. We see it in terms of immortality.

Thirdly, we see it in terms of liberty. The risen, victorious and immortal Jesus now has total liberty from the power of sin.

Go back to Romans 6, 9. We know that Christ, been raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him.

[12:15] The great goal of the kingdom of evil was to put Jesus under its grip along with everybody else. So when you read through the life of Jesus in the gospels, you see that he is constantly confronted with threats.

When he was born, there was a threat in his life in the horrendous slaughter of the infants. When he began his ministry, he was immediately tempted by Satan. When he went on to preach, he was constantly opposed by demonic forces.

The kingdom of evil wanted Jesus captive. And I'm quite sure that when Jesus died, it looked as though it had achieved just that.

Jesus himself said as he approached death, he says, when I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me, but this is your hour and the power of darkness.

As Jesus approached the cross, he was aware that he was going to come under the power of darkness.

[13:17] But on the day of Pentecost, after the resurrection, when Peter preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, he said something amazing. Let's read it. Men of Israel, hear these words.

Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst. As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and full knowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. Notice what Peter says there.

It was not possible for death to hold on to Jesus. Why not? Because of the power of the resurrection.

The victory over sin that was achieved on the cross meant that death was powerless. It was rendered absolutely powerless. So death has no power over Jesus, no grip, no claim, no authority, no strength.

[14:29] Resurrection is totally free from any dominion that death may claim to have. The resurrection tells us that Jesus has total liberty over death.

And that should make perfect sense because that's what a resurrection is. It's the very opposite of death.

It's the glorious proof that Jesus is free, totally free from death's grip.

The power of the resurrection means that it is utterly impossible for death to have any hold on Jesus.

He is risen, he is free. So the power of the resurrection means that Jesus is victorious. It means that he is immortal.

[15:33] It means that he has liberty. And fourthly, the power of the resurrection is seen in terms of security.

Victory, immortality, liberty, security. Let's go back again to Romans 6.9. We know that Jesus being raised from the dead will never die again.

Death no longer has dominion over him. Jesus will never die again.

The resurrection has placed Jesus in a position of total security. Death can never challenge him.

Death can never threaten him. Death cannot get anywhere near him. And the Bible uses a wonderful image to describe this. And we see it in various places in this kind of language.

[16:37] Hebrews 10. But when Christ had offered for all time a sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

You think of Christ's enemies. You think of all the forces of the kingdom of evil that are opposed to Jesus and that would want to topple him from the position that he is now in.

You think of all that is against Jesus and what he has done. Hebrews 10.13 tells us that these forces are nothing more than a footstool for Jesus' feet.

It's the idea that they're trying to get Jesus. They're trying to attack him and they're just under his foot. Nowhere near him. He is in total security.

And that's because he has total authority. He has been raised to that position that is above all else. He has been raised to a position of absolute security.

[17:45] Paul speaks about this in Ephesians 1. This is just entering into that big long sentence which Paul begins this letter with. Have in the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he's called you and what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints 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 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come.

So think of all evil rule, all evil authority, all evil power, all evil dominion. Jesus is far above it, far above it all because of the power of the resurrection.

He is at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places. He is untouchable. He is unthreatenable.

He is totally, eternally secure. And all of that is showing us that the resurrection is incredibly powerful.

Through his resurrection Jesus has victory. Jesus has immortality. Jesus has liberty.

[19:24] Jesus has security. Now we have to pause here for a moment and recognize the fact that in order to gain all of these things Jesus had to endure the very opposite of them all.

So in order to gain security Jesus had to become totally vulnerable. He was exposed to all sorts of horrible abuse.

He was in a sense left helpless before a vicious mob seeking his destruction.

In order to gain liberty Jesus had to be betrayed, captured, tried and condemned.

He was far from free as he hung on the cross. He was gripped by all sorts of opposing forces.

[20:41] To gain immortality Jesus had to take on the frailty of human flesh. He had to take a mortal body that was subject to pain and suffering and even death.

So to gain security he had to become vulnerable. To gain liberty he had to be captured. To gain immortality he had to take on mortal human flesh. To gain victory over death.

He had to taste death. Hebrews 2 sums it up so well. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood he likewise partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil.

A great reminder that Jesus' mission came at a huge cost to himself.

But the glorious reality of the resurrection means that we now know that Jesus has succeeded in his mission.

[21:55] That suffering, that vulnerability, that captivity, that frailty, that death was not fruitless or pointless but it was a triumph over death and Jesus rose again as the great demonstration of the fact that his mission has been succeeded.

He has victory, he has immortality, he has liberty, he has security and that's why we worship him.

That's why we gather in the name of Jesus Christ our risen Lord, our God, our King.

And we read all of this and we think about all of this and we marvel at Jesus or at least we should marvel at him.

Because he is the one who's done what no one could do. He is the one in whom we see power to which nothing else can compare.

So reminder that Jesus is unique. Jesus is a hero. He is the greatest hero that the world has ever seen. His resurrection is the greatest demonstration of power that the world has ever known.

[23:10] So it is no wonder that Paul says, I want to know the power of his resurrection. Because the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most exciting, inspiring and thrilling news that the world has ever known.

That's why Christianity has spread over the whole world. That's why it has grown. That's why the message has been so astoundingly transformational in the history of the world because nothing has a message like this that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Paul wants us to know all about it. And so it's a great thing to let our minds think of Jesus, to think of his victory, his immortality, his liberty, his security.

We want to know all about the power of the resurrection. But you know what is even more amazing than that?

When Paul talks about knowing the power of the resurrection, when he says, I want you to know the power of the resurrection, he does not mean that we should just know about it.

[24 : 43] And the great goal of the Christian message is not that you would simply be an admirer of Jesus. Although of course at one level we are that. But that is not the goal.

The goal is not that you would simply be admiring Jesus. The goal is that you would be united to Jesus. That is the goal.

Always remember that. The goal of the Gospel is not simply that you would know about Jesus. It's not simply that you would be like Jesus. It's not simply that you would learn from Jesus.

It's not simply that you would respect Jesus. It's that you would be united to Jesus. That is what Christianity is all about.

And that union with Christ means that the power of the resurrection is not something that you know simply in terms of intellectual understanding.

[25 : 41] Because if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, then the power of the resurrection is something that you are going to experience for yourself.

The power of the resurrection is something that you are going to experience yourself. Because through our union with Christ everything that the resurrection meant for Jesus is going to apply to you as well if you are a Christian or if you become one.

As Paul says in Romans 6, 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.

That's what faith does. Faith unites you to Jesus Christ. That's what the Gospel is all about. That's why we need to put our trust in Jesus so that we will be united with him.

We are not simply united to his death. We are also united to his resurrection. That means that everything that the resurrection meant for Jesus is going to apply to you as well.

[27 : 06] So let's go back to our four things. The victory that Jesus won in the resurrection is your victory too.

Look again at the words that we read at the very beginning. These amazing words. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God. Does it say who got a victory through Jesus Christ? No. It's the victory to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The victory is given to us. It's ours. Just think about that. If you are a Christian or if you become a Christian, which you can even tonight, then you can look at the most formidable, merciless, brutal enemy that humanity has ever known.

You can look at that enemy of death and you can celebrate victory. And if only people realised that that is what the Gospel is offering, if only people would realise that's how good it is, that you can stand in the face of death and you can say, we've won.

[28 : 26] We have the victory. To Jesus Christ, the power of the resurrection means that victory has been won and boy, that should make us celebrate.

It's no wonder that we sing when we worship. It's no wonder that the Bible tells us to rejoice because in the face of the bitter, horrible, vicious enemy of death, Jesus' resurrection means that you are going to know victory.

You are going to know victory if you are trusting in Jesus Christ. And that is the most amazing news that the world has ever heard because think of everything, everything that causes death.

We look at the world, we see so many awful, awful things. We see things like violence and war. We see illnesses like cancer and horrible things.

We see people being neglected. We see people dying in awful circumstances of suffering. And every one of these things is awful because in them, death defeats us.

[29 : 30] These things are like the weapons that death uses to defeat us. But in the Gospel, through our union with Jesus Christ, death does not defeat us.

We defeat death. Jesus' victory is your victory if you are trusting in Him.

The same is true of immortality. The immortality that Jesus has through the resurrection is not just for Him. It's for you as well.

As Paul says, this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality.

Just think of that. Think of every way in which mortality is affecting your body. Think of pain. Think of illness.

[30 : 30] Think of weakness. Think of aging. Think of all your frailty and vulnerability.

Look at your body and listen to what Paul says. This perishable, mortal body is going to put on immortality.

Your body is going to undergo the same transformation that Jesus experienced at the resurrection. Jesus has got the power to make your body just like His.

That's what Paul says at the very end of the chapter that we're studying. He says, our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.

That means that you are not going to have a lowly body forever and you are not simply just going to see and marvel at Jesus's transformed body.

[31 : 46] You are going to experience the very same transformation yourself if you are a Christian or if you become one. That's why in the new creation you will never be sick.

You will never suffer. You will never decay. You will not age. You will not weaken. You will not stumble and fall like we do in this world because Jesus is not going to be the only one with a glorious body.

You're going to have one too. And on that last day when Jesus returns, our bodies will be raised and for every single one of us who has put our trust in Jesus, our bodies will be transformed.

The mortal will put on immortality. So just as Jesus won victory, we share in that victory.

Just as Jesus is immortal, we will also be immortal. And just as through the resurrection, Jesus was liberated, the resurrection is so powerful that you are going to have that liberty too.

[32 : 59] So just think about that. Death could not hold on to Jesus and in exactly the same way, death will never be able to hold on to you.

That's what it says in Hebrews 2. We can go back to it again. We read verse 14, therefore, since the children shed flesh and blood, he likewise himself partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

If you trust us in Jesus, then the power of the resurrection means that you are free. You are free as free as Jesus is.

Free from the grip of death. Free from the power of Satan. Free from the fear of dying. Now just think about that.

If you are a Christian or if you become a Christian, then you are free from anything bad that death can do to you.

[34 : 10] The only thing that death can do to you is send you straight into paradise. This grip on you has been left powerless through the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

And again, that is why the Gospel is such utterly brilliant news, because Hebrews 2 is dead right. All our lives, we are enslaved to a fear of death.

It wrecks our lives. It destroys our families. It separates friendships. It breaks our hearts. And we look at the risen Jesus and we think, well, wouldn't it be amazing to have the freedom over death that Jesus has?

Wouldn't it be great to have that liberty that he enjoys? Wouldn't it be great to be free from death just like Jesus is? The amazing thing is that through the power of the resurrection, that's exactly what you are.

That's exactly what you are. You are free from the power of death, as Jesus is.

[35 : 19] That's why when the Bible talks about Jesus, it often talks about him as first fruits and as a forerunner. The idea that Jesus is going ahead of us, but also that he's bringing us with him.

And that simply means that what he already is, we are going to become. You are going to know the reality of Christ's level of liberty, all because of the power of the resurrection.

So just as Jesus won victory, you have victory if you put your faith in Jesus. Just as Jesus has immortality, you have immortality if you put your trust in Jesus.

Just as Jesus has liberty, you have liberty if you put your trust in him. And finally, just as the risen Jesus enjoys security, the power of the resurrection means that you are utterly secure as well.

Now think about the security of Jesus. Think about Jesus, think about all the chaos and nonsense that goes on in the world and the fact that he is above all power and dominion and rule and authority.

[36 : 42] He is untouchable. He is unshakable. He is unthreatenable. Utterly above everything that could challenge him.

He is above every principality and power. He is above every rule and authority and force of darkness. He is king of kings and lord of lords.

Totally untouchable. The resurrection has placed Jesus in a position of perfect, total, eternal security.

And if you are united to Christ, then you are every bit as secure as he is.

You are every bit as secure as he is. Look at what Paul says in verse 12. He says, not that I've already obtained this or I'm already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus made me his own.

[37 : 53] This Jesus, who through the power of the resurrection now dwells in total security, he has made you his own if you're a Christian.

And if you pray for salvation tonight, he will make you his own as well. Now the Greek word there for made me his own is a really interesting word because it basically means to grab hold of something.

Conveys the idea of grasping something with force. So in other words, if you are a Christian or if you become one, then the risen Lord Jesus Christ is holding on to you with an unbreakable grip. He has grasped hold of you and he will never let you go. And when we get to heaven, we are going to know exactly what it means to be eternally safe and eternally secure.

You are as secure as Jesus is if you put your trust in him. So Jesus's resurrection is powerful.

[39 : 14] It brought him victory. It brought him immortality. It brought him liberty. It brought him security. But the power of the resurrection is not just confined to Jesus.

Union with Christ means that if we trust him, we are united to him by faith. And that means that all the power of the resurrection is applied to you and to me as well.

So we have victory. We have immortality. We have liberty and we are secure forever. And the resurrection gives us such amazing hope.

The resurrection is amazing. The gospel message is amazing. And Jesus is utterly amazing. The power of his resurrection is so great that that power can be poured out on you as well.

And that's why it is no wonder that Paul says everything else is rubbish compared to this.

[40 : 25] That's what he says in Versheth. I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for his sake I've suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

Whatever we achieve in the world, whatever status we have, whatever possessions we get, whatever successes we have, whatever these things are, these things are good in and of themselves but compared to knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection, it's just rubbish because Jesus, knowing Jesus, is so, so good.

And that is really the choice that God is putting before you tonight. You can choose the ways of the world which will ultimately prove to be as worthless and as useless as rubbish.

Or you can choose to follow Jesus. Now that's not complicated. I know it can seem complicated but Jesus asks us to come with a simple childlike faith.

All you have to say is, Lord, please make me your own, please have mercy on me. You can choose to follow Jesus.

[42 : 02] You can know him and the amazing power of his resurrection. May God make that through of us all.

Amen. Our Father, we thank you so much for our risen Savior and all that we might know him and the power of his resurrection.

Lord give us eyes to see how much you have done for us and help us also to see that the things that we chase in the world are ultimately going to prove worthless.
Lord give us hearts that just long to know you and to follow you. We thank you for our risen Savior.
We thank you for the power of the resurrection.
Blessed be your name, O God, Father, Son and Spirit. Amen.