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What the Resurrection Accomplished(s)
Romans 6
April 16, 2017 - Easter Sunday
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Today is Easter. Every year around this time we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. If I were to ask the average person what the resurrection accomplished I wonder what some answers would be. Of course, it would very much depend on the background of the person. I think we would have a variety of answers, from “Nothing, because it is a myth,” to “Everything.”

It's important that we think about this and have a good answer to the question. Perhaps if the question was put to the average person who grew up in the church and spent most of their Sundays listening to sermons and worshipping together with other Christians, they most certainly would say that the resurrection of Jesus means that those who have received him as their saviour get to spend eternity in heaven with him, after die. And then when Christ returns they too will experience a resurrection. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter wrote that we should always be ready to give an answer for the hope we have. Is the hope he was talking about only for the next life?

Did the resurrection of Jesus accomplish anything more than our ticket to heaven? Our hope for eternity is the greatest truth we have. We have hope because Jesus defeated death. But, did the resurrection accomplish anything more than something we wait for in the future? Do we now just go on with our lives, as normal, and wait in hope of our resurrection? Or did the resurrection of Jesus accomplish more than that?

If we assume the resurrection simply bought our ticket to heaven, and that's it, we will think that our time down here is meant to be just about waiting passively until such time as we die, or Jesus returns, which ever comes first. In the meantime we do whatever we can to get the most out of our lives by building our heaven on earth.

Avoid pain; accumulate wealth and toys; do whatever we can to justify our existence and try to fill the void we feel in our soul. My prayer this morning is that we will all see that there is much more to life than just waiting for Jesus. Jesus has called us to follow him into the abundant life and joy he promised us.

Today, after the sermon, a couple people are going to publicly profess their devotion to Jesus by being baptized. And, if after the sermon you recognize your need for Jesus and have not yet been baptized we are going to give a call out to you to come on up and take a step of faith as well.

Baptism symbolizes both death and life - death to sin and the resurrected life with Jesus. If you look at the Gospels, when people got baptized, what they were saying was that they were ready to follow Jesus into his resurrection life. Let's take a look at Romans 6 and see, not only what the resurrection of Jesus accomplished, past tense, and what it will accomplish, future tense, but what it is accomplishing, present continuous tense, in an on going way, now.

Let's read the whole chapter and then let's come back and draw out a few truths about the wholistic nature of the resurrection of Jesus.

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Romans 6:1–23 (NLT)

¹ Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? ² Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? ³

Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death?

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⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. ⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. ⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.

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⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. ⁹ We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God.

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¹¹ So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. ¹² Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. ¹³ Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.

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¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace. ¹⁵ Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! ¹⁶ Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

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¹⁷ Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. ¹⁸ Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living. ¹⁹ Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

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²⁰ When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. ²¹ And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. ²² But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Just prior to this, in chapter 5, Paul was saying that God has so much grace. He said, the more sin there is the more grace available. Some people will respond to that by saying things like, "Okay, so if there is more grace when we sin more then it should be okay to go on sinning because God's got me covered?" To that, Paul answers:

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I have actually heard people justify their sinful behaviour by saying, things like, "It's okay, God will forgive me." Yes, God has us covered, but if we have that sort of mindset, we have misunderstood God's grace. We think God's grace is cheap.

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Here's the deal, **God's grace came at a huge price - the death of his Son.** God sent his only Son into the world to die and pay the penalty for our sins. **God's grace is free, but it is not cheap.**

The idea that we can just go on living however we want because God has enough grace for us is a slap in the face of God. Paul says,

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³ Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death?

Imagine that, because of your great love for someone special in your life, you want to buy them a car as a gift. They didn't do anything to earn the car. It's not their birthday. It's not Christmas. You just want to let them know you love them. You are not a wealthy person so you have to get an extra job and sacrifice your free time so you can give the person you love the gift of a car. You slave away for three years, putting every extra penny you have into a savings account for that new car.

Then the day comes when you can pay cash for the car. You are very excited about presenting the gift to them. You tie a huge red bow around the car and secretly drive it in their driveway so when they wake up in the morning they will be surprised by the car. You come over and present them with the keys. They excitedly receive the gift that cost them nothing, and cost you a great deal of sweat and effort. They say, "Wow! Thanks. I love it." They take the keys and drive off spinning the wheels gleefully as a huge puff of burned rubber follows them.

Now, imagine that for the next few months they don't contact you. They are busy partying, and having fun and showing off their new car to their friends. And you find out that they aren't taking care of the car. They don't give it regular oil changes. They drive it recklessly, without thinking about the people around them that they might hurt. How would you feel? Wouldn't you feel like they are slapping you in the face?

That is a very weak illustration about what Paul says we do when we forget the great cost God paid by sending his Son to pay the penalty for our sins. When we get baptized we are remembering and publicly professing our love and devotion to Jesus for giving us life. To go on living recklessly without any regard to Jesus is a slap in the face of God. Paul continues:

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⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. ⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. ⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.

Here's the Good News.

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The Good News, or the Gospel, is much bigger than Jesus died for my sins so I can have a ticket to heaven. The Good News is that because Jesus was raised from the dead, sin's power over me is broken.

"But," you might be thinking, "You don't know me. I can't stop sinning. I have tried to get control of my anger and I just can't do it. I've tried to be more gentle or more loving and I just keep flipping out. I try and I try, but to no avail."

First of all, let me say that this kind of change does not happen over night. Jesus called us to learn from him. He said in **Matthew 11:28–30** (NLT):

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28 “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

How many of you have some kind of sin that you struggle with and can't seem to get control over? Think of the fruit of the Spirit that Jesus wants to develop in you: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Are you always filled with these qualities in all your relationships? Maybe you've given up because you just never seem to gain any progress.

The big key is to know that the resurrection of Jesus not only bought us our ticket to heaven, but it also broke the power of sin. We now have a choice to live for ourselves, or to live for the glory of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. 8 And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. 9 We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. 10 When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God.

I've told you the story on a previous occasion about the man who had two fighting dogs, a black one and a white one. And he would get people to bet on which one would win. He would put odds on the one he knew would win to entice people to bet on the loser. Sometimes the black one would win and sometimes the white one, but he always knew which one would be the victor. People begged him to tell them how he always knew. He refused to give away his secret of course. A good friend finally wore him down and convinced him to give up his secret. He said, "I feed the one I want to win, and starve the one I want to lose."

In subsequent chapters in Romans, Paul talks about the old and new natures we have living in us. Because Jesus defeated sin and death on the cross by rising from the dead, we have the nature of Jesus living in us if we have received his forgiveness. So, Paul says, in verse 11, because that is true;

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11 So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. 12 Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. 13 Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.

Feed the new nature and starve the old. How do we do that? Let's say the sin you are trying to overcome is pornography. You are addicted. You can't seem to make any progress. It seems the harder you concentrate the worse it gets. That's because you cannot overcome on your own strength. The key is to know that Jesus defeated sin. It no longer has power over you. You need to, not only starve the old nature, you also have to feed the new.

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Feed the New Nature

Psalm 34:8 (NLT)

8 Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!

Spend time in God's Word. Start your day with Jesus. Remember, his invitation to take his yoke upon you and learn from him. This is Jesus' invitation to make our burdens lighter, not heavier. He is gentle and humble in heart. He wants us to learn from him.

This is what discipleship is. Take, even just fifteen minutes of the first part of your day, with Jesus in the Bible. Start with a couple minutes of quiet meditation, getting your heart ready to receive whatever it is he wants to say to you. Then take your Bible in a translation that is easy to understand. Read a few verses and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you. We are going to be starting a series in Colossians in a couple weeks, so that would be a great place to begin. This is feeding your new nature.

Also, get into a Growth Group if you aren't already in one. This is where you will grapple with God's Word and get accountability from a group of people you trust. It's a place where you can feel free to open up and share your struggle because you will not be judged. They are broken people just like you. That is another way of feeding the new nature. One of the things the resurrection of Jesus accomplished is the power to overcome our sinful desires and change.

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Starve the Old Nature

But, then you also need to starve the old nature. If you continue feeding the old nature pornographic images, that desire will get stronger. Starve it. Do not allow yourself to go there. Put limits on yourself. Have an accountability partner who give permission to courageously and lovingly ask you hard questions.

Starve the old nature, and feed the new nature. Whatever the sin you are trying to overcome, or the virtue you are trying to nurture this is what you must do, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Let's read the rest of this chapter now with this in mind.

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¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace. ¹⁵ Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! ¹⁶ Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

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We are free from the powerful grip of sin because Jesus rose from the dead. There is no greater truth than that. Because of the resurrection we can be released from the grip of sin. There is no better news than this. This is the Good News. The Gospel is much more than a ticket to heaven. It is the power to live a full, satisfying, abundant joy-filled life today, and into eternity.

It's easy for us to think we are getting away with something if don't get caught. But sin is an evil, cruel taskmaster that will destroy us. Jesus' resurrection broke sin's power so we could be free to live the life we've always wanted.

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

No matter what you are struggling with, there is power in the resurrection of Jesus to overcome. That is a promise from the almighty God who created the heavens and the earth.

We are going to sing a song called *Jesus Messiah* and then we are going to baptize a couple of people. If you have never been baptized before, but you have asked God to forgive you through the death of his Son you can make your way up here as well. We brought extra shorts and t-shirts just in case others wanted to say “Yes” to following Jesus today.

Or, maybe you have just today believed Jesus. You don’t know all the ins and outs of what it means to follow him, but the Holy Spirit is tugging at your heart. You can, ask God to forgive you for all your sins, past, present and future, and receive a clean slate. The Holy Spirit will come in to your heart and give you the power to live the life he’s called you to, the joy filled, abundant life with Jesus. Don’t let fear stop you. Don’t refuse to come because of what others might think of you. Don’t wait for someone to go first. If you know you need Jesus, courageously step out, walk around to the back of the stage while the worship team is playing this next song.



What the Resurrection Accomplished(s)

Romans 6

Week of April 16, 2017

Easter Sunday

Objective of this study: To understand more fully that the resurrection of Jesus gives us power to live our lives today.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 34:1-8** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything jump out at you?**

Welcome (5 minutes)

Dogs or cats? Why?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word (30-45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Break up into smaller groups or pairs read Romans 6 carefully. Find everything you can about what the resurrection of Jesus accomplished, will accomplish and is accomplishing. Dig deep. Don't settle for pat answers. What was new or surprising to you? Regroup and share your findings.

Work (30-45 minutes)

3. What did you find encouraging or life giving in Romans 6?
4. What are you struggling with in your life right now that you feel the need of the power of Jesus to help you overcome?
5. Use the fruit of the Spirit as lenses through which you evaluate your spiritual growth. Which do you see lacking in your life?
6. What are you doing to starve the old nature and feed the new?
7. Read Matthew 11:28-30. Share something you have been learning from Jesus, or ways he has been helping you grow.
8. Spend the rest of the time praying for each other. Start by praising God for helping you grow.

[Be sure to have an outward focus in your prayers. Who is the Holy Spirit laying on your heart to reach out to with the love of Jesus?]