

EMPTY = LIFE

April 16, 2017

Little Philip, born with Down's syndrome, attended a third-grade Sunday School class with several eight-year-old boys and girls. Typical of that age, the children did not readily accept Philip with his differences. But because of a creative teacher, they began to care about Philip and accept him as part of the group, though not fully.

The Sunday after Easter the teacher brought Leggs pantyhose containers, the kind that look like large eggs. Each receiving one, the children were told to go outside on that lovely spring day, find some symbol for new life, and put it in the egg-like container. After running about the church property in wild confusion, the students returned to the classroom and placed the containers on the table.

Surrounded by the children, the teacher began to open them one by one. After each one, whether a flower, butterfly, or leaf, the class would say, "Ooh" and "Ahh." Then one was opened, revealing nothing inside. The children exclaimed, "That's stupid. That's not fair. Somebody didn't do their assignment."

Philip spoke up, "That's mine." "Philip, you never do things right!" the student retorted. "There's nothing there!"

"I did so do it," Philip insisted. "I did do it. It's empty. The tomb was empty!" Silence followed. From then on Philip became a full member of the class.

Not long after this event, Philip died from an infection that most normal children would have shrugged off. At the funeral service, this class of eight-year-olds marched up to the altar, not with flowers, but with their Sunday school teacher, to lay on the top of the casket an empty pantyhose egg.

Philip understood that the tomb of Jesus was empty because of the Risen Savior and he, too, could have hope of eternal life in God through Jesus' resurrection.

We need to look into a few things about the resurrection of Jesus.

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Romans 6:8-9 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important of all biblical truths. It is foundational. It is the bedrock. Many other aspects of the Christian faith depend and rest on the fact of the Resurrection. Let me share with you just three essential Christian truths that depend on the Resurrection.

1) Life beyond the death depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

Jesus' victory over death promises us that we, too, will overcome death. When we overcome death, we get to have eternal life in heaven instead of eternal death in hell.

2) God's future judgment of the world rests upon the Resurrection.

Acts 17:31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

This promise reminds us that God will judge the world of the unbelievers one day. Those who are born-again will receive the rewards according to what they have done.

3) The resurrection of Christ gives us power to live the Christian life.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The Resurrection, therefore, promises us that God will not only give us life beyond the grave, but He will give us power to live the Christian life on earth.

B. THE REASON FOR THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The Bible teaches us that the root cause of our problem goes back to the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve committed the sins of pride and disobedience by eating the forbidden fruit blatantly. As the consequences of our ancestors' sin was transmitted, every human being is born with the sinful nature. We are sinners because we have the sinful nature and due to the sinful nature, we have an unending tendency to commit sins, unless there is a divine intervention.

I know that some of you might be reasoning within yourself that you are a good person and have not committed any crime. But in God's standard, your single little white lie or a murderous thought toward someone is good enough to sentence you to hell. You should not measure yourself with another human being, rather you must measure yourself to the holiness and righteousness of God. The final consequences of our sin is eternal death in hell.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

When we talk about death, we automatically think in terms of bodies, funerals, and graves. This is physical death, and it is not the only kind of death. The Bible speaks of spiritual death.

An animal has a body and a soul, in the sense, is personality. The Bible teaches that every person has a body, a soul, and a spirit according to 1 Thessalonians 5:23. God has placed in humans that which animals do not have. A human is a spirit indwelling a body.

1 Timothy 5:6 But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.

According to this verse, a person can be alive and lives in pleasure, but in reality, that person is spiritually dead. Let me put it in another way: If you are not a born-again Christian, you are not much different than an animal that has a body and a soul with a dead spirit within you.

What does a spiritually dead person need more than anything else? That dead person needs eternal spiritual life. He needs spiritual life. And Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life" in John 10:10.

There are thousands who have no appetite for God; no activity that resembles God's holiness, righteousness, and justice; and no awareness of God. They live as though God does not exist. Most of them will admit that something is missing in their life, but they probably will not admit that they are already a living dead person.

When we read our newspapers and watch the news on television, we know that something is dreadfully wrong, not only with American society but with the whole world. Death is all around us.

Now what does a dead person need? A dead person does not need a good example. He does not need just encouragement. He does not need better living conditions. He does not need a change of environment. He does not need more education. The only thing a dead person needs is life!

If people are spiritually dead, there is only one thing that they need; and that is spiritual life! Jesus said the reason He came into the world was to give people this life, and life "more abundantly".

On that summer day when Jesus stood outside the tomb of Lazarus and wept, because He saw so many alive people around Him were dead spiritually. He declared to the group of people gathered around, "*I am the resurrection and the life*" in John 11:25. That was the greatest claim that any man has ever made in the history of the world.

Why? Because either Jesus Christ was the greatest liar who ever lived, or He was the greatest con artist who ever lived, or He was a mental case – or what He said was truth. Then to prove that He was the Truth, He said to the dead man, "*Lazarus, come forth.*" Wouldn't you know, Lazarus walked out of the grave alive from his death.

If you are not a born-again Christian as I told you before, you are a spiritually dead person. The place of your spiritual deadness is your daily existence. Your physical body is the tomb of your spiritual death.

John 11:38-44 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

As Jesus cried out, "*Lazarus come forth,*" He is calling you out of your spiritual deadness today. He is asking you to respond to His offer of life. He wants to live within you. He wants you to commit your life to Him in order that His life and all the power of His resurrection might be released in you through the Holy Spirit. That could happen to you today.

If you are not a born-again Christian, please hear me well. What do you have to do at this point? First, you must repent of your sins. Now you do not have the ability to repent, as a spiritually dead person. But God will give you the ability to repent if you will say, "Yes" to Him. He will also give you the ability to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your only Savior.

We cannot save ourselves. We cannot pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Because though you are physically alive and soulishly alive, but spiritually dead. We need life that only Christ can give by His resurrection. And He offers it to us today if we will come to Him by repentance and faith in Him.

Will you receive His offer? It's free. You can have life and have it more abundantly. Don't say to yourself, "I will do it later," because your "later" may not come. You get it right now. When you accept Jesus into your heart as your Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the Trinity will come to live within you, and the Holy Spirit will empower you and He will help you grow in Him.

C. JESUS' TOMB IS EMPTY = OUR RESURRECTION

Jesus' tomb is empty, unlike the tombs of other religions' leaders. If we know where the tomb of Mohamed of Islam is located, his DNA can be found. The same goes for Buddah, Confucius, Joseph Smith, and many others. They couldn't overcome their own death, but Jesus did, because He is God. He is the first fruit of the resurrection and we who are born-again, too, will have our own resurrection like Him.

1 Corinthians 15:23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

The word "firstfruits" here speaks of a sampling, a foretaste, a glimpse. He is the first-fruit. Jesus has died and has risen, so we know that our resurrected bodies in some way will resemble His resurrection body. To what extent, we cannot be certain. But if they were completely like His, it would mean that we would be clearly recognizable.

D. INVITATION

The Word of God says that all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Because the wage of our sins is eternal death in hell, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. God knew that we couldn't come to Him with our sinful nature. But He loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Jesus clearly tells us that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and there is no other way to get to heaven except through Him.

You no longer have to live in turmoil, unrest, and uncertainty of the future. God will give you hope and peace on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ our Messiah. It is available for you right now. You don't have to do something good or special before you get saved. Just come to Him as you are. He will change you from inside out.

Let's stand up and pray.

The invitation from Jesus has been given. It is up to you to take that invitation of eternal life. Everybody close your eyes and bow your head, please.

If you want to accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord and follow Him to have eternal life in Christ Jesus, raise your hand, please. Raise your hands high so that I can see you and make eye contact with me.

Including those people, I want all of you to repeat this prayer after me:
"Lord, I know that I am a sinner, and I am sorry for my sins. I know that my sins have separated me from you. I repent of my sins and I turn to You by faith right now. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son and God Himself. I believe that He died on the cross for my sins and You raised Him to life. I now want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as my Lord from this day forward. Please come into my heart and fill me with your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."