

The Efficacy of the Atonement and Resurrection

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, April 20, 2104

If you take a diamond and hold it up to the light, you will see that through its prism the light is refracted into a myriad of different colors and, likewise, the gospel. Whenever we look at the gospel, whatever angle we turn it, we see varying colors refracting from it to give praise to our glorious God and that's what we want to do today. We want to look at the gospel but particularly that aspect of the gospel related to the atonement and the resurrection, thus, I have entitled my discourse to you this morning "The Efficacy of the Atonement and Resurrection."

Take your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians 15. We will be looking at a number of texts this morning, this is more of a topical study than a typical exposition. But I want to use this as a launching pad for our study here this morning. The Apostle Paul is speaking here to the saints at Corinth and, ultimately, to all of us regarding the doctrine of the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in verse 1. He says,

"1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

This is of first importance, Paul says, that Christ died for our sins, he was buried and he rose again the third day. There has never been any more truths that are greater than this, that are more glorious than this and because of these realities, dear friends, we are here today. Because of these truths, we have eternal life. This is the very heart, this is the very core of the gospel. Truths that should forever leave us in a state of wonder and awe. Truths that we should scatter like seed upon human soil that others might hear and believe and be born again.

So, this morning, I wish to remind you of the implications, the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection. For some of you, this information may be new. For most of you, it will be an exhilarating review. I'm speaking primarily to believers this morning but, certainly, if there are those within the sound of my voice that do not know Christ, you will hear the gospel in all of its fullness today and I pray that you will believe and be born again. Like Peter, who said in 2 Peter 1:12, "I consider it right as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder." Folks, this morning I want to stir you up by way of reminder and what better day to do this than on Resurrection Sunday.

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I want to give you a big picture overview this morning of this aspect of the gospel regarding the atonement and the resurrection. We're going to look at this under three headings: first of all, what happened at the cross; then secondly, what are the implications of Christ's death in our life; and then thirdly, what are the implications of Christ's resurrection in our life. And I want to be as clear as I possibly can, clear enough that the gospel will either be rejected or be accepted, both of which, ultimately, are in the hands of our Lord.

So, first of all: what happened at the cross? In 1 Corinthians here, chapter 15, verse 3, we read that "Christ died for our sins." In other words, an atonement for sin was made and this was according to the Scripture, referring to the Old Testament passages that repeatedly either directly or indirectly, literally or in figures of speech, foretold of Jesus' death, his burial and his resurrection.

Now, I want to remind you of why Jesus came to this earth to die. We read in 1 Timothy 1:15, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Sin is a universal problem that affects every single human being. It is rebellion against God. It is violation against his law. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 5:12, "Through one man," referring to Adam, "sin entered into the world and death through sin and so death spread to all men because all sinned." We must understand that when Adam fell into sin, the entire human race fell into sin with him and because of our relationship to Adam, every individual is conceived in a state of sin and depravity. We are conceived as guilty and culpable sinners before God. David said in Psalm 51:5, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me."

Let me be clear, dear friends: man does not become a sinner when he consciously and personally sins, rather, man sins because he is a sinner. Prior to a man being born again, all that a man is is fundamentally offensive to God. Prior to a man being regenerated by the power of the Spirit, all that a man does is fundamentally offensive to God. Because of this, he is at war with God and he is subject to God's condemnation and wrath. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 7:18, "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh for the wishing is present in me but the doing of the good is not."

God has revealed to us in his word the hideous reality of our sinful condition. Sin has penetrated, it has corrupted, the whole of our being. Every man has the native capability of committing the very worst of sins and even when the unsaved do right, it is for motivations which are less than God-centered and God-glorifying and, thus, cannot be pleasing to him. The unsaved are completely without the love of God which is the basic requirement of God's moral law: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. The unsaved man is always getting morally worse and we can see this in the world in which we live. The unsaved person has no possible means of salvation in himself. He has no ability for recovery within himself. "But God demonstrates His own

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love toward us,” Romans 5:8-10, “in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” My friends, this is the good news of the gospel: God has made a provision for sinners to be reconciled to himself through faith in Christ. The wages of man's sin is spiritual death, it is eternal separation from God in solitary confinement in the eternal torments of hell but the free and the gracious gift of God is eternal life. This is why we should celebrate the gospel every single day of our life.

Now, Scripture also teaches us that most men are not conscious of their sinfulness, they are not conscious of God's judgment. They suppress it; they suppress that condemnation; they suppress the truth of who God is in their unrighteousness. Why? Because of the hardness of man's heart. It prevents him from understanding these truths and it is the very nature of sin to blind man to these truths, blind man to his own sinfulness. Our nature would have us have a very high view of our own righteousness and a very low view of God's righteousness so that we can live up to what we perceive his righteousness to be. We are, by nature, sinners who have a very biased view of ourselves always in our favor. We're always convinced that our good works, that our religious rituals, religious affiliations, religious traditions, will save us. For example: when a person looks upon a beautiful little infant, it is utter folly for the unsaved person to understand that the seed of every imaginable evil lies dormant in that little heart and unless that child is born again spiritually, he or she will forever remain under God's condemnation and judgment.

The unsaved scoff at the idea of the wrath of God abiding upon every person who rejects the offer of grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Moreover, Satan blinds men. If it's not bad enough with our own flesh, Satan blinds men to the power and the penalty of sin. We read this in 2 Corinthians 4:4 where it speaks of the “gospel being veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” In Romans 3:23, we are told that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” In chapter 6:23, we learn that “the wages of sin is death.” The universality of sin is documented in the universality of death.

But Adam's sin also brings judgment consisting of condemnation on all. Romans 5:18 we read, “through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.” My friends, sin is a full on assault against the person of God. It mocks his holiness and, therefore, it requires his justice. God's wrath is, therefore, his just response to sin, his holy revulsion against all that opposes his holiness. In fact, sin is so repulsive to God that we learn in Romans 8 that he subjected all of creation to futility. All of creation is in “slavery to corruption,” Romans 8:21. This is the law of entropy, the natural outworking of sin. We see it all around us. We experience it in our own bodies. Richard Gaffin said it well when

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he said, “Death, including those conditions now present in the creation that tend toward death, is God's calculated response to sin, his retributive curse on sin.” My friends, every time we smell rotting flesh, we are reminded of the inherent entropy in creation, the law of death and entropy.

Furthermore, God's wrath is revealed against man, against the sinner. In Romans 1:18 we read, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” The unsaved who are alive when Jesus returns, will experience this wrath. In 2 Thessalonians 1, beginning in verse 7, we read, “the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

My friend, if you have never whole-heartedly embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ, if you have never cried out to him for undeserved mercy and grace and forgiveness of sins, if you have never confessed Jesus as your Savior and submitted to him as your Lord, you will perish in your sins and remain forever under God's wrath. Jesus made this so clear in John 3:36. There he says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” How many times I have heard people say, “I do not want anything to do with a God who would condemn people to an eternal hell.” And my response is simply this, “My friend, that is not your choice. God is your Creator, he is your Judge and he has promised that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.” “What kind of God would do such a thing?” The answer is both simple and profound: the kind of God that would judge sin in such a way is a God that is infinitely holy beyond our imagination, a God that is more glorious than we could ever possibly conceive. That is the God of the Bible.

But sin is not only high treason against a holy God in violation of his law, sin also enslaves man with its power and, surely, every fair-minded person can see this even in their own life. Man is in bondage to his sin. Man is ruled by his lusts. Man is controlled by his passions. He is a sucker for deception. I was reminded of this in a very vivid way this last Friday. I had to eat lunch over at Cracker Barrel and a young man came in and he had the hat on just the right way with all of the hair curled up just above his eye so he couldn't hardly see. He had a big hook of some sort, a big ring out of the middle of his nose and he had on a t-shirt that said “Megadeath” with some demonic drawing on it. I don't know what Megadeath is, it's probably some rock group or something like that. Then, of course, he had the shorts hanging down so you could very clearly see his underwear and he sat down in such a way that I had to be repulsed by his bare bottom that he deliberately exposed. It was very clear. I watched him get seated in such a way to make sure that everybody could see him.

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You know, my first response, especially since my daughter, Jana, was sitting next to me, was to go over and ask him very kindly to cover himself up because we are eating and that's vulgar. Then I thought, "You know, what difference will that make?" He might do it simply because he would be intimidated with me but that's no reason to have him do it. Rather, what I thought is, "Here is a man, a young man, that in God's eyes is a fool. He is completely dominated by his sin. He has no desire to, in any way, live for the glory of God. He doesn't even see his sin." So, instead, I decided to pray for him and I'm continuing to pray for him even though I have never met him. I'm praying that some day I will see him in glory by God's grace. He had no idea that the one he served was basically described on his shirt: Satan, the enemy of his soul.

Now, my point with this, dear friends, is this condition is described in Scripture as being dead in trespasses and sins. Death denotes the corruption of fallen men who live in submission to Satan who is, according to Ephesians 2:2, "the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." Disobedience being the chief characteristic of a sinful nature. The unsaved are as guilty as they are helpless. They are "by nature objects of wrath," Ephesians 2:3.

So, the word of God is clear: sin renders a man guilty, condemned and enslaved. That's the bad news but the good news is the gospel. The good news is: because of Christ's death on the cross and his glorious resurrection, all of that is remedied for those who believe in him. Jesus Christ lived a perfectly obedient life for us, obeying all the requirements of the law in our place, something we could never do. He perfectly obeyed the will of God the Father as our representative. Then, in his suffering, he took the penalty we deserve and, as a result, he died for our sins. But it is important to understand: had Christ merely earned our forgiveness, our guilt would have been removed but we would still not be able to enter into the presence of a holy God. We would only be like Adam and Eve before they sinned, still having the potential to sin.

So, the perfect life that Christ lived on our behalf is credited to us. The merits of his perfect obedience was imputed or counted for us so we were not only forgiven, we were also justified, we were also declared righteous before God's bar of justice. You see, a holy God cannot merely forgive sin because all sin must be punished, so to remedy this, the Lord Jesus took upon himself our sin and we received his righteousness and so for the believer, God no longer looks at our sin but he sees us clothed in the righteousness of his beloved Son. God is pleased with us because we are forever hidden in him, in Christ. That's the good news of the gospel.

Paul rejoiced in this amazing union with Christ. He said in Philippians 3:9, "Not having a righteousness of our own based on law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith." Then again in Romans 5:19, he says, "For

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as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one," referring to Christ, "the many will be righteous." Not just forgiven but righteous.

So, both the life as well as the death of Christ provides saving benefits. This is called the atonement. Because of Christ's life, God's love and justice came together in a miraculous, supernatural way in his death on the cross. In Romans 4:25, we read that he was "delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification." There is the imputed righteousness. And because Christ humbled himself and became obedient unto death even death on a cross, Philippians 2:8, we read that God the Father has highly exalted him. In Romans 6:4, "Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father." Galatians 1:1, "God the Father raised him from the dead." Ah, but the Son was also a part of this. There are other texts that tell us that the Son also participated in his resurrection. Jesus said in John 10, beginning in verse 17, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again." Indeed, as Jesus said in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life." So, his victory over death is the supreme demonstration of his deity. It is the most conclusive evidence that, indeed, he was and he is who he said he was and is, the Son of God.

Now, we must understand what actually happened on the cross for all who believe. Of course, here again we turn to the New Testament which is the inspired, infallible record of the efficacy of Christ's death. First of all, in brief we have already discussed the idea that at the cross Christ paid the full penalty of sin for all who believe in him: he removed our guilt; he rendered powerless sin's corrupting power; he also removed the just wrath of God that abided upon us that we deserve, because he bore our sins in his body as our substitute. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." Why? Why did he do that? "That we might become the righteousness of God in him."

Now, there are six theological terms found in the New Testament that perfectly summarize the efficacy of Christ's death: what was the effect of it, what actually happened there. The first term is that of sacrifice and I have given it to you here so that you can read: he paid the penalty of death that we deserve. Christ died as a sacrifice for us and, thus, removed the guilt of our sin. Which, by the way, another term that is used for that is "expiation." He removed the guilt of our sin. Hebrews 9:26 speaks of this. There we read, "He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Ah, but there's more: there is propitiation. Propitiation means that he satisfied or he placated, he appeased the just wrath of God against sin that we deserve. We read of this in 1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

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But there is more: there is also reconciliation. We were once separated from God but Christ brought us back into fellowship with him. 2 Corinthians 5, beginning in verse 18, “God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.”

But fourthly, there is also redemption. He redeemed us out of the bondage of sin and out of the bondage of Satan's kingdom of darkness. Redemption speaks of a ransom price that was paid to redeem someone from captivity and, of course, that ransom was Christ. Jesus speaks of this in Mark 10:45 where he said, “For even the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Then, finally, there is that concept of justification that also took place at the cross, a judicial act by which God declares us to be righteous and treats us as such. We are, according to Romans 3:23, “justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” And in Romans 5:1, Paul says, “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

So in summary, what did Christ's death accomplish on the cross? Well, as our substitute, Christ purchased our redemption from the penalty and the power of sin. And if that isn't enough: as our substitute, he satisfied the judicial wrath of God and removed our sins from his sight forever. And if that isn't enough: he will never again count our sins against us because they have already been counted against Christ.

So, my friends, a great exchange took place at the cross. I want you to hear me: it took place at the cross. It took place at the cross. This magnificent work, this magnificent exchange, all of these things took place at the cross. They do not take place because we believe or when we believe or after we believe, it took place at the cross. The work is finished. What did Jesus say? “It is finished.” He did not say, “It has begun.”

Now, let me explain: in 2 Corinthians 5:19, we read that at the cross God was doing something, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.” In other words, Christ's work on the cross did something. It was efficacious. Jesus actually paid for the sins of specific individuals at the cross. In 2 Corinthians 5:14, fascinating phrase, there we read that “one died for all, therefore, all died.” This addresses the issue that comes up from time-to-time: for whom did Christ die? Some will say, “Well, he died for the whole world.” But according to this text and I believe many others, I think that is the wrong answer. It says here that he died for “all who died in him.” It's past tense; something happened at the cross. Specific individuals died in the death of Christ who was their representative substitute. It's past tense. In Colossians 3:3, we read, “You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

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So, something happened at the cross. Again, you ask the average Christian: for whom did Christ die? The answer is, “Well, he died for everybody. He died for the whole world. Jesus paid for the sins of everyone when he died on the cross and now it's up to them to take advantage of what he did.” Well, if that's true, then what you're telling me is hell is full of people for whom Christ died; hell is full of people whose sins were paid on the cross. So, at the cross, you're telling me that his sacrifice was for no one in specific but everyone in general. So, his atonement was not actual, it was just potential. You're telling me that he bore the wrath for no one in particular but everyone in general. That his atonement was not actual, it was just potential. That he reconciled no one in particular but everyone in general. That he redeemed no one in particular, but everyone in general. That he justified no one in particular, but everyone in general. Do you get the idea? So, you're telling me that the Lake of Fire that burns eternally is full of eternally damned people whose sins Christ fully atoned for on the cross. That's what you're telling me. You're telling me that Jesus paid the sins of both the damned as well as the glorified. That God's wrath was satisfied on behalf of all people universally.

If that is so, then why don't all people go to heaven? The logical conclusion of the assertion that Jesus died for the whole world is that his death on the cross was merely an act whereby he accomplished a potential salvation, not an actual one. And many will agree. They will say, “Yes, basically he died for everyone potentially but it's up to you to accept that gift.” So, Jesus died for everyone indiscriminately so that everyone in the world is, in principle, forgiven. That's the idea so the only ones who will be saved are those who, by their own efforts, actualize this potential atonement. Said differently: the actualizing of the atonement is up to man, not God. And if a sinner chooses never to believe in Christ, the atoning work of Christ remains, therefore, an unrealized potential.

So, they believe in an atonement that is unlimited in scope but limited in its power, in other words, its effect because it is at the mercy of the will of the sinner. Now, there's a big problem with this. First of all, how can a man actualize an atonement that was finished at the cross? Moreover, how can a sinner possibly do this? He must be born again. How can a sinner do this? The word of God says that “man apart from Christ is dead”; he is alienated from God; he does evil continually; that all of them are unwilling, they are unable to understand, to repent and believe. All have darkened minds; all are blinded by Satan; their hearts are full of evil; they are desperately wicked; they desire only the will of their father, the devil. That no one is able to seek God; that all are trapped in absolute inability and unwillingness. So, how can a sinner make that choice?

Now, my friends, while this issue is not a test of orthodoxy and I would never break fellowship with those who differ. I believe that the Bible teaches just the opposite: the atonement, I believe, is limited in its scope, that Christ died for his elect, but it is unlimited in its power to save to the uttermost. The atonement was not a potential

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salvation for all, it was an actual salvation for the many, those whom God appointed unto salvation. I believe in a Christ-centered, cross-centered gospel, not a man-centered gospel. Beloved, don't miss this: on the cross, Christ bore your sins specifically in his body. When he died, you died. That moment, it was finished. He knew you intimately when he was on the cross. He knew you intimately before you were born. He knew you intimately in eternity past. This is something that constantly amazes me when I think that God set his love upon me in eternity past, that he chose me in eternity past. And all who believe, this is true. That he wrote my name in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world.

Think about this: when Christ went to the cross, he already knew your name. He knew the color of your eyes. He knew the color of your skin. He knew the sound of your voice. He knew how many hairs would be on your head. He knew your strengths. He knew your weaknesses. He knew your frame. He knew the thoughts and the imaginations of your heart. And my friend, he knew your sin and mine when he went on the cross. And yet, the Father drew me and he drew you and Christ died for those sins, for us specifically and the Spirit quickened our souls at the right time all because of what happened at the cross.

So, his atoning work accomplished my redemption. A redemption, dear friends, that was never in doubt. God was never at the mercy of some preacher or some pianist and choir constantly singing "Just As I Am" to get people to come forward and make a decision for Christ. Christ knew exactly who were his and the Father did all that was necessary to draw them unto himself. You see, the atonement was not potential, it was actual. What happened on the cross is deeply personal. His atoning work was not some universal indiscriminate act. Jesus came to save all whom the Father had given him before the foundation of the world.

Matthew Harmon summarizes this so perfectly. He says, "When the Father sent the Son into the world, his ultimate purpose was to display the glory of God. The means chosen to glorify the Father was the death of the Son for the people whom the Father gave to him in advance. These elect are drawn from every tribe and tongue and language and people to constitute the one people of God. The Son also intercedes for his people to ensure that they will, indeed, experience all that God intends for them. This conclusion does not exclude non-salvific benefits that the non-elect experience as a result of the death of Christ, nor does it deny that God loves his fallen creation, not does it invalidate the genuine offer of the gospel to all the nations. It simply affirms that the ultimate purpose of the atonement is God-centered rather than man-centered. The Son came down from heaven in order to glorify his Father by doing his will which was to save those whom the Father had given him."

So, to summarize it and to make it real simple, dear friends: Jesus died for all who will believe in him and all who will believe in him are those whose names had been written in

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the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world and the Father's redeeming love will do whatever is necessary to draw those who he has chosen for his Son, who accomplished all this work once and for all on the cross for it was there that he finished his saving work. It was not some potential act subject to us. There he died in our place. He satisfied the wrath we deserved. He brought us into eternal fellowship with God. He redeemed us out of the bondage of sin and exchanged his righteousness for our sin.

But what are the implications of Christ's death now in our life? Well, he died not only for the consequences of our sin but for sin itself. Let me give you a couple of thoughts here. First of all, his death rescued us from this present world order. Galatians 1:4, "Christ gave himself for our sins that he might deliver," that is, rescue us from danger, "deliver us out of this present evil age." "Evil age" speaks of a world order that is ruled by Satan and marked by the hideous effects of sin. 1 John 5:19 says, "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one." So, as a result, people apart from Christ are victims of Satan's world system: all of his deceptions, his desecrations, death. They live for themselves in this life only: lives that are meaningless, hopeless, lives filled with guilt and anxiety and hedonism like the ancient Greeks who denied the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:32, they say, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die."

In John 17, Jesus says that we are still in the world but no longer of the world, and we along with all of creation, await the consummation of human history. A totally new world order that will be marked by the absence of sin, by righteousness and unimaginable splendor all because of the cross. And although we await the fullness of eschatological life, at some level, it's already a present reality. Think about it: in Galatians 6:14, Paul boasts, "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." In other words, because we are united to Christ in his death, all the stuff of the world is now a dead issue for a true believer. We don't want any part of it. Paul didn't want any part of Judaism anymore when he saw Christ.

Beloved, again, this is all because of the atoning work of Christ. 1 John 5, beginning in verse 4, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world," John tells us, "and this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" Think of all the world systems that you and I were once entrapped and now we have been freed. Reminding the Ephesians of their pre-Christian lives, Paul said in Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 1, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived," here it is, "in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

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But not only has his atoning work rescued us from this present world order secondly, it has delivered us from the bondage of sin. Romans 6, beginning in verse 6, “our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.” Yes, dear friends, sin remains but it no longer remains. We all know people who are, to this day, trapped in life-dominating sins because they have never been freed from them through faith in Christ. But not so the Christian. 1 Peter 2:24, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” 2 Corinthians 5:17, “If any man is in Christ he is,” what? “He is a new creature.” So, the atonement, my friends, is the power unto holiness. Galatians 5:24, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” I would ask: is this true of you? I pray that it is.

But what are the implications of the resurrection as we bring this to a conclusion here this morning? What are the implications of the resurrection in our life? Well, we can see it in Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 5, God “made us alive together with Christ.” He goes on to say, “and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus in order that in the ages to come, he might shown the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Notice he says: he's raised us up with him and seated us, past tense. He uses the past tense to underscore the absolute certainty of this promise by describing it as if it has already happened. This is the power of the resurrection in our life. Once we were dead in our trespasses and sins but now we are not only dead to sin but we are alive unto righteousness through the resurrection of Christ and one day we will experience the full manifestation of his exaltation. We will even share in his glory. We have been delivered from spiritual death unto spiritual life together, it says, with Christ because we are “in Christ.”

Ultimately, we will experience the fullness of all of this in our resurrection bodies but this is also a present reality today. Think about it: because we have been renewed at the very core of our being we are no longer slaves to sin. 2 Corinthians 5:15, “We no longer live for ourselves but for him who died for us and was raised again.” So, because we are united to Christ in his death and resurrection, everything in life has been radically changed. This is why we hate the things of the world. This is why the people of the world hate us.

Secondly, the implication of the resurrection of our life is it's a picture of our regeneration. Regeneration is that instantaneous, supernatural impartation of spiritual life to the spiritually dead. We are the firstfruits of his creation. James 1:18, “He has caused us to be born again that we might be given an inheritance as joint heirs with Christ that God might produce in us good works to honor himself, that God might give us in this life in earnest of what will be ours in the eternal state.” And here is where that great text comes in, Romans 6:4, “We have been buried with him through baptism and death in

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order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father so we too might walk in newness of life for we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” This speaks of newness of life, a totally new quality. Scripture says we receive a new heart, we receive a new spirit, a new song, a new name, we are called a new creation, a new creature, a new self.

And then, finally, his resurrection is a pledge that we, too, shall live again and rise in a glorified body like that of Christ's. You know, when Christ revealed himself, he did not reveal all of his glory here on earth after he was raised from the dead. If he had done so, the disciples would have fallen down like dead men. But think of the glory that will be ours, “Because I live, you shall also live.”

Oh, dear friends, these are the great truths of the gospel, the power of the resurrection. I want to leave you with a very practical application: the next time you experience Satan's foot upon your neck and you find yourself discouraged and defeated and despairing, perhaps, of life itself, you need to take your sword, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, you need to take it and recall these great truths that we've rehearsed this morning. As Bunyan described them in Christian's battle with Apollyon, here's what he said: “Fierce combat went on for more than a half day until Christian's strength was almost completely spent. Because of his wounds, he grew weaker and weaker. Apollyon saw his most opportune moment and drew up close to Christian. He began to wrestle with Christian and threw him forcefully to the ground. Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Gloating, Apollyon said, 'I am sure I have you now.' With that, he assaulted Christian nearly to the point of death so that he began to despair of life itself. But as God would have it, while Apollyon was preparing to strike his final blow to completely annihilate his foe, Christian quickly stretched out his hand and grabbed his sword saying, 'Do not gloat over me, my enemy, though I have fallen, I will rise again.' With that, Christian gave Apollyon a deadly thrust that made him fall back as if mortally wounded. Seeing this, Christian attacked again saying, 'No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.' Apollyon then spread his dragon wings and sped away in defeat and Christian would see him no more.”

Oh, dear child of God, the power of the atonement, the power of the resurrection to overcome sin and Satan. This is why Paul's #1 priority in life was to know him and the power of his resurrection. It's for this reason it is incumbent upon us to contemplate these things and live lives of worship and praise. A reality that is so perfectly captured in the lyrics of Matthew Bridges' great hymn,

“Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne,
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,

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And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

“Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife for those He came to save.
His glories now we sing, who died and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.”

O God, may it be so! In our hearts and in our minds. I pray that the seeds of these great truths will bear much fruit to the praise of your glory and, Lord, for anyone who does not know you as Savior, O God, will you not by the power of your mercy, this day quicken their soul, cause them to see the reality of their sin and the Savior that they might be born again this day, this Resurrection Sunday, that they might experience the miracle of the new birth. We ask these things in the precious name of the one who died on our behalf, the Lord Jesus Christ in whom we have been hidden for eternity. And all of God's people said, Amen.