

Resurrection Life

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Date: 05 April 2026

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[0:00] On to the sermon, happy Easter. He is risen. Oh, man. I gotta say, it's the first time I've done that. I've never indulged in that. That was a lot of fun. That was a lot of fun.

Y'all are so good. All right, if you have a Bible, go ahead and turn to Romans 8. If you don't, don't worry. That'll be on the screens as well. And I wanna start out with this thought.

And this is from St. Paul, the Apostle Paul. In his own words, more or less, I took some license here. If there is no resurrection, then we as Christians are the greatest of fools.

We are to be pitied. And all that we do is a complete waste of time. I was just thinking about that, like singing the songs or singing, raising my hands and celebrating. I'm like, man, if Jesus isn't alive, this is really stupid.

What we're doing. I mean, legitimately. So there's a lot, right? Hanging in the balance for us. How do we know that the resurrection happened and we haven't been hoodwinked in the most, like, amazing way?

[1:00] And, you know, we can look at closely at historical accounts and eyewitnesses, and for sure that is super helpful, but I think the greatest apologetic for the resurrection is the transformation that happens to Jesus' disciples after the resurrection.

They have a new boldness, a new purpose, a new way of living and being in this world. What they're living for is something totally different to anybody that is around them. They stand out so much that people called them little Christs, right?

And they called their own thing the way of Jesus. They followed the way, a new way of life. And what you see is resurrection life was at work in the disciples of Jesus, and you know what?

It still is. You and us, we are testifying to the power of the resurrection. We are proving that it is true and it is alive and at work within us still today. And so when Jesus defeated death on Easter Sunday thousands of years ago, it launched a new age in God's great redemption plan.

And really to understand this, you kind of have to understand kind of the big plot points of his redemption plan. So bear with me for a brief history lesson of the Bible, okay? This is gonna go very fast.

[2:13] So God created all things, and he created all things good. There was no sin. There was no death. There was no corruption. He planted a garden, and he called it Eden, which means luxury or paradise.

And there he placed the first man and woman. It was the place that God would come to meet with them. Now here's what's interesting. If you were to go back in the ancient world and to ask a person then, where must I go to meet with God?

They would point you to the nearest temple. And that's exactly the idea we're meant to walk away with here. That's the first big plot point. Eden is this first temple, the connection point of heaven on earth.

Now, the man and the woman, Adam and Eve, they were put there to rule and to multiply and to fill the earth. So God's plan was to fill the earth with families and their own little garden temples where heaven and earth meant, thereby expanding this temple motif, and thereby as they filled the earth, the whole earth would become the very temple of God.

This was God's great plan for our good and for his glory, but the first Adam was tested and he failed. He sinned.

[3:22] He disobeyed God. And the result was that the first Adam walked out of the garden temple where the life of heaven was with no way to get

back in, having brought the curse of death to all creation because of the sin.

That's the bad news. But here's the good news. God had a redemption plan in mind all the time. And it was told throughout the Old Testament over thousands of years in a slowly unfolding mystery until it was finally revealed when Jesus came from heaven to earth.

He literally brought the life of heaven to earth. The gospel of John said, Jesus, he came and he put on flesh. He was, he tabernacled, he dwelt.

He was the temple walking among us. Jesus himself preached this about himself saying that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. That's what he said he went about doing. Guys, the kingdom of heaven is at hand and they probably meant, oh, it's about to come.

And he was meaning, no, no, it's very near to you right now. You can reach out and touch it. The temple, it's why people flocked to Jesus throughout his ministry on earth because there was this new thing happening that seemed to be a lot better than what was happening at the temple.

[4:42] They were running to him. The temple building in Jerusalem was no longer this exclusive place where heaven and earth met. There's this new kind of temple with flesh on.

He was walking around Galilee, preaching and healing and loving people with the life of heaven. The life of heaven broke in with the person of Jesus. God was doing something new and yet he was doing something kind of familiar.

See, the second Adam who was Jesus, he walked out of a garden. He was on the Mount of Olives and he walked out of that garden to die to atone for our sins and then three days later, he walked out of another garden, a garden of death full of tombs, having defeated death as the righteous son of God where the first Adam walked out with sin because of his disobedience.

The second Adam walked out with victory, vindicated, righteous because of his obedience, defeating death. Everything the first Adam did, the second Adam undid.

Jesus' resurrection ushered in a new age and this new age, with this new age, was the promise of new creation. Having him, having won a decisive victory over death itself.

[6:06] This is what Jesus offers to you and me today. Resurrection life. And that's what we're gonna look at. Resurrection life, what does that mean? And so my hope for today and my sermon is whether or not you are a Christian, that you would leave understanding the resurrection life that is available to you by faith in Jesus.

So Romans 8, 9 to 11, it says, you, however, are not in the flesh, he's speaking to Christians, disciples of Jesus, you are not in the flesh but in the spirit, speaking of the Holy Spirit.

If in fact the spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him, but if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

Now listen to this, 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.

If the spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

[7:22] We don't have to wait for heaven to receive the life of heaven, it has already come to us. How does that happen? Through faith in Jesus. Which means you've heard and responded with belief that his death and resurrection has defeated what Paul earlier calls the law of sin and death and has brought a new law that sets us free from that old law of sin and death.

What is this new law that now reigns over us? In verse 2 of this same chapter, Romans 8 verse 2, you can read it there, it says, Paul calls it the law of the spirit of life.

The law of the spirit of life, the Holy Spirit. He works it in us. So then for all of us who are in Jesus, this law of the spirit of life is our new reality.

Or as Paul, which means this, as Paul puts it in verse 11, the same Holy Spirit that resurrected Jesus dwells in his disciples. To say it another way, this new law of the spirit established by Jesus' resurrection means that the life of heaven has arrived and manifests itself in you because the spirit dwells in you.

Think of this change of law, I think we might kind of like downplay how like radical of a change this is. Think of this change of law as if gravity suddenly ceased to be the governing law of the universe. [8:47] That would change things just a little bit, right? Right now we live in a reality where gravity does its thing. We're kind of like, okay, we know what this is. We know how to kind of live in this.

We know not to jump off high buildings. So if that law suddenly changed, life as we know it would change for us in no small way, right? That is the difference.

That like kind of gets a little bit to the difference here. It gets close as we can get to understanding this shift in law from sin and death by which governed everything and reigned over us and which we were subjected to to this new law of the spirit of life that we step into because of Jesus' resurrection. It is, guys, it is radically, radically different. We couldn't even have like imagined this or drawn it up of ourselves. This came from God. And God's spirit, he comes to us.

We live in this. And one of the big changes here is that God's spirit dwells in his new temples, Jesus' disciples. And that's now where heaven and earth meet, both individually and corporately when we're together.

[9:55] Think about that. I mean, that is amazing, meaning the life of heaven in us and in our togetherness. Now, perhaps you're a Christian and thinking, okay, Jesse, I've been walking this resurrection life out for a while and I would think I need a little more heaven in my life because there's a lot of hell in it.

Right? Fair enough. The apostle Paul gets you. He's confident. The Holy Spirit dwells in him and dwells in any who are saved by Jesus.

He is confident in the resurrection power at work in his mortal body. But he also learns something of living this out in a body of flesh and a sinful world. He goes on to say this in verse 12.

So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

A form of suffering there. Jesus said something similar. He said, whosoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

[11:02] And this is part of the law of the Spirit of life. Resurrection life comes through death. The life of heaven broke in with Jesus, but it came to his disciples.

It broke in after Jesus died. The life of heaven comes to us after salvation, which is a dying to ourselves. And if doing life our way, it's a dying to ourselves of doing life our way.

Where we have to surrender and submit to Jesus as Lord and Savior. And this is symbolized in water baptism. It's why believers get baptized. We get buried in a water grave joining Jesus in his death.

That's what it symbolizes. But we come out of that water grave to join Jesus and to walk in resurrection life, newness of life with him. And then also, we have this promise that one day we all will die.

We will cease to breathe. But until then, we track with the apostle Paul who said, I die daily. I die daily. What does that mean? You and I die daily to ourselves, to our self-reference life that puts us at the center and is fed by sins of lust and greed and pride and power and control that are constantly pulling at us and working out of us.

[12:15] Daily, we are called by the Spirit, the Spirit and the law of life to recognize these desires that are within us and to put them to death. But here's the thing.

When we do that, we die to these things. What we do on the other side of that is we begin to experience the resurrection life. That is why the life of the Christian is a life of repentance.

You just don't repent one time and then you're good to go. We live out this life of repentance. We constantly repent. We constantly die to ourself but because we know that through those little deaths, through dying to ourselves in all those little ways, we are brought into this wonderful new glory as Kirk talked about last week.

We're being transformed from one degree of glory to another. That is the power of the resurrection life at work within us manifesting itself in us and you can't get through that without dying.

You can't get to that. There's no shortcut to that unless you're willing to go down and die to yourself to come back up into resurrection life and it feels like dying if we're honest with ourselves.

[13:20] When you and I, when we say no to lust in any form, whether that is pornography or food, overeating, you are dying to pleasure that brings a false comfort and a false satisfaction.

When you overlook an offense or take time to thoughtfully and graciously respond rather than pay it back in kind, you are dying to your own sense of justice through vengeance.

Anytime you give away your valuable resources of time or energy or money to help someone else, you are dying to better yourself and to exalt yourself and you're doing that by getting lower and lifting others up.

When you are slow to speak and quick to listen, you are dying to pride, you are dying to have the last word and so not making yourself the center of the world and the greatest in the room.

See, the life of heaven doesn't have you at the center, it has God at the center. Now, don't misunderstand that to mean that God acts like some feudal Lord who makes us his slaves and uses us and milks us for his own personal gain and glory till we have nothing left to give.

[14:34] Nothing can be further from the truth. Paul actually brings this home in verses 15. He says, you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry Abba, Father.

A respectful, dignified, yet intimate way of relating to God your Father. And the Spirit himself inside of you, he bears witness with your spirit that you are children of God and if children then heirs. We'll get into that in a moment. Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. So God at the center of resurrection life is great news for you and for me because he is a good father.

He is not a feudal Lord. He is not a mean taskmaster. He is a good father who shares his good things with his children that he loves and you know the best thing that he shares with us is his Holy Spirit.

It's the best gift that he could give to us. And if we believe that to be true then we are not those who shrink back in fear from the many small deaths that we daily walk through or the ultimate one we're gonna all face one day.

[16:00] Now resurrection life today it gives hope for greater glory on the other side of suffering. We just read that if we have the spirit we have already we have already have already received adoption as sons which means we are children of God and so we are heirs provided we suffer with him in order to be glorified with him.

But then it goes on in verse 18 to 23 to talk about how creation is groaning and there's suffering to come and we live in this suffering but you know what this suffering that we experience is light compared to the glory that is to come but creation is groaning and anticipating like something because it's also under the futility of sin and death and here's where things get interesting.

Like creation is waiting for its release from that well when is that going to happen? Paul says for we know the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth till now and not only the creation but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies for in this hope we were saved.

Did you notice that? Verse 23 we wait eagerly for adoption as sons and until then we grow inwardly. Well which is right are we adopted as God's children right now as it said in verse 15 or is that going to happen when Jesus returns which is it? Yes to both. Yes to both.

[17:40] The picture used to help clear this confusion up Paul uses this term called first fruits and that's a farming term right? Back in that day they were a major agrarian society everybody would have understood this and that term first fruits describes the early harvest which happens prior to the final first harvest now to a farmer the first fruits were a good sign that the greater final harvest will come it's like oh my goodness the grapes these first grapes came in this is really good news that means the full amount is going to come in the harvest is going to work there's joy to come the spirit in you today is the first fruits of the full resurrection life that is to come and this is the hope that

can't be taken away despite the sorrows and sufferings that we face through life that Paul was talking about we are adopted as sons of God and yet we will receive the full adoption at the redemption of our bodies the apostle John he said it this way in 1 John 3 2 beloved we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared oh that's interesting tease that out John but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is what we will be has not yet appeared and I say to that thank you Lord because I don't want an eternity stuck in this version of Jesse right now no thank you my back aches my knees hurt mind leaks can't keep any information in my head emotions are confusing and volatile the things that I shouldn't do

I do and the things I don't do are the things I should be doing or as St. Paul said in Romans 7 24 who will deliver me from this body of death oh but thanks be to God there's the hope thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord he's anticipating what he's about to get into about resurrection life so though you and I though we have resurrection life right now when Jesus appears again at his second coming we will receive what Paul says the redemption of our bodies in another place he calls it being glorified the glorification of our bodies and then when that happens we will be like him in every way according to what John 3 2 tells us that's an amazing promise can that really be true will we really be like him Romans 8 28 we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he

Jesus might be the firstborn among many brothers and those whom he predestined he called he also called and those whom he called he also justified and those whom he justified he also glorified listen to that all things all things work together for the good for those who are in Christ Jesus and love God all things work together for the good and that is the promise of the future hope and the appearing of Jesus at his second coming on resurrection day that is to come so how do all things work together for good for you and for me well it says God's work will be done to conform us to the image of his beloved son that will be completed you can bet on that happening how can you bet on that happening well let me draw our attention to verse 30 right the verb tenses Paul uses indicates that he uses a verb tense that says

God has already completed each of those things that he said you've been predestined you've been called you've been justified you've been glorified we read those things and we see it in linear time here's the problem Paul's saying all that's already done somehow that's already done but you might say yeah but we haven't been glorified yet we have not received the redemption of our bodies like that's gonna happen when Jesus returns again and sin and death will be no more that's when that is gonna happen we'll receive these new glorified bodies just like Jesus had after his resurrection the perishable will put on the imperishable so if our glorification is in the future sorry I'm getting a little nerdy here if our glorification is in the future why does Paul say it's already happened and here's the thing friends it's the mystery of salvation by an eternal God who exists outside of linear time and yet works his salvation into linear time it's a sure thing predestined being called justified glorified conformed to the image of Christ it's a sure thing what does that mean for you and me right now then verse 31 what then shall we say to these things if God is for us who can be against us he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also with him graciously give us all things who shall bring any charge against God's elect it is God who justifies who is to condemn

Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who is at the right hand of God who is indeed interceding for us who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword as it is written for your sake we are being killed all day long we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered yes they're suffering but no in all these things we are more than conquerors through him not on your own through him who loved us for I am sure that neither death nor life angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord you can clap to them this is Paul's conclusion if all that is true if somehow in God's mystery of salvation he called he conformed he justified he glorified and those things are already somehow in him complete even though he is working out in us then Paul

says without a shadow of a doubt

[25:07] I can be sure of all of these things I do not need to shrink back in fear I can stand firm in my faith if the spirit who raised Jesus from death is at work in us then we can face anything with confidence knowing that our future glory is a sure thing we can know resurrection life is lived with confidence that God's redemption won't fail this life that you live in the body right now you can live with confidence that his redemption won't fail if he said he is going to do it he will do it if he says he has done it he's done it this is the hope that we need this is the hope that we need nothing is more necessary for life as a disciple of Jesus than the hope of resurrection life and the power that is at work in us because of it what is hope why is hope so important

Viktor Frankl was a holocaust survivor he wrote a book called the meaning of man and he recalls in his the concentration camp he was in the false hopes prisoners would create to just carry them one more day in that grueling place hope he argues is a powerful force in the human experience but he also goes on to say a false hope is going to fail you Frankl saw what happened to men when their false hope failed them he tells a story of one man who was convinced the allied forces would rescue them on a certain day he thought he had seen a vision of it and when that day came and went and nothing happened he became sick and died within a week see hope his hope had helped him to endure his hope had carried him on in the most hellish of circumstances day after day after day but when the thing that he put his hope in didn't come and it failed him he died his strength gave out he lost endurance hope is powerful if we are to endure if we are to persevere and be faithful as disciples of Jesus to the very end but we must put our confidence in the right things friends you have to put your confidence in the right thing if you are living in the resurrection life you have to know

God is for you and if he is for you as Paul says then who can be against you we have to believe that God did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all and if that is true then God is truly for you and he will graciously share all things with you all things that you truly need why because we are adopted as sons we are fellow heirs with him with Jesus and so because of that God says too if this is true of you and you are in Christ the resurrection life is true of you another hope that you have is that there is now no more condemnation that you need to live under there is no charge against you that God will entertain Jesse are you sure that doesn't sound right yes because think about this no one can bring a charge against Jesus and according what Paul said what is true of Jesus is now true of you nothing can separate you from the love of God are you sure

Jesse yes because God the Father will never stop loving Jesus the Son what is true of Jesus is now true of you that is a confidence for you and I to be sure of and to walk in every single day of our lives and from that confidence you and I we can live a life devoted to glorifying God living in that hope which can manifest the life of heaven we don't need to live look hope is a hope is a new thing because of Christianity one of the old one of the things that the Greeks used to do they used to do these plays and it would depict life and there was two two things they would do either had a tragedy or you had a comedy right the Stoics would do tragedies because they looked life honestly in the face and they said this is terrible life is but a tragedy and it ends in tragedy or you had the Epicureans who they didn't look life in the face they said oh let's just pretend it away let's eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die let's avoid looking at life altogether and so they treated it as a joke neither really had hope and then Christianity came along and they gave us real hope it gave us real hope the hope of Jesus the only true hope that you can have in this life so you have two options three ways to live without Jesus you could be honest about life and it's just a tragedy right or hey let's let's just party it up let's let's live like tomorrow we're gonna die make it our last day but avoid all the thing together life really has no meaning either way but now in Jesus you have this hope you have this hope that this life means something right now living in this body of death until Jesus returns and you're released from it guess what it still has some serious meaning what we do in this body still counts right now

N.T. Wright puts it this way the point of the resurrection is that the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die what you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it what you do in the present by painting or preaching singing sewing praying teaching building hospitals digging wells campaigning for justice writing poems caring for the needy

loving your neighbor as yourself all those things will last into God's future these activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly or a little more bearable until the day when we get to leave it behind all together as the hymn so mistakenly puts it little cheeky there they are part of what we call building for God's kingdom the life of heaven breaking in to us and through us that's the hope that we live in and that is the hope that God is bringing through his people to this world this beautiful redemption plan in this age as we await the one to come where the final resurrection will happen we get to live in the first fruits of it now amen as the band comes up and we look to respond

[32:11] I want to ask each of us today whether you're a Christian and whether you're not a Christian where does your confidence and hope rest where does your confidence rest where does your hope rest and if you're not yet a follower of Jesus we're going to be taking communion in a moment but I don't want to say don't come to the table doesn't make any sense come to Jesus who died so that you could live with him he has that on offer for you today you can come to him just as you are friend everything that would keep you away from him everything in your head in your heart that is saying no I'm not worthy Jesus saying yeah exactly but I died for that sake come to me just as you are every burden every shame every bit of guilt that you are carrying come and lay it at his feet he died for you he died on the cross to atone for your sins and he doesn't just invite you to lay those down and die to those things to release them to him he says those can be buried and you can come up with me and walk in newness of life with me filled with the spirit of God filled with the spirit of Christ set free to walk in this new law of life life in the spirit resurrection life come and be a part of that today and there's going to be a prayer on the screen for you to pray if that's you now if you're already a follower of Jesus we're going to come to the communion table now and there's tables over here there's tables in the back and we have another one right there in the back as well and if you're on the kind of the second half of the room if you could go to those back tables if you're in the front half go to these front tables just so we can make sure we have communion for everyone but as we come to the table let's let's prepare our minds and our hearts let's think about what

God has been saying and doing speaking to us through his spirit and as we consider what we're about to do in this meal as we come to it reminds us of Jesus his death that atone for our sins so that we can walk in life with him and as his disciples we also partake of it because he says you're going to suffer this call us to suffer with him and you know what there's a crown of suffering for those who endure that we get in heaven suffering is not meaningless like the stoics in that be curious see and we get to come and we get to share in his sufferings but because we do that because we share in his sufferings we also share in his life this points to the fact that despite these light and momentary affliction there is a glory that awaits us unlike anything else pray with me Jesus we're coming to you some of us for the first time trusting you as Lord and Savior and repenting surrendering our lives some of us are coming to you as your disciples considering man is my confidence and my hope still in Jesus and may we find that resurrection life even now even in our weakness has been at work in us your life at work in us that we could say yes and amen to that Lord we thank you for your body that was broken for us that we're going to eat of today we thank you for your blood that was shed for us that we're going to drink of today reminds us that you died a death we couldn't die so that we could live a life unlike anything else we could ever live for ourselves thank you Lord amen