

## GRACE FOR THE JOURNEY--RESURRECTION

Philippians 3:7-14

Grace For The Journey—Easter Sunday

April 5, 2015

Pastor Nathan Thompson

My dear friends, is there something this morning which you would like to change about yourself? Would you like to be more confident; would you like to perhaps have less fear, less bitterness, less negativity, less boredom? What would you like to change about yourself?

There are very few people in life who feel like they have attained perfection—if they do, of course, they are in a major state of denial and delirium. Most of us who are honest about ourselves are very interested in changing; we realize there is always room for improvement.

Throughout my years in the ministry an important question that people have often asked me is, *“Why is it so difficult to change? Why am I so bogged down with my bad habits, my bad attitudes and actions?”* As a result some have said, *“I really want to change, yet I don’t have the power; I really don’t know how to make this happen.”*

Some of us may go to seminars, conferences, watch Dr. Phil, read self-help books looking for the painless cure that’s somehow going to zap our lives; change us instantly; give us self-discipline. Yet the problem with self-help books and popular television is that they easily tell us what to do but they don’t give us the power to do it.

They say things like, *“Get rid of all your bad habits. Be positive, don’t be negative.”* But how? Where do we get the power to change? How do I get out of the rut I’m in? Where do I get the power to get off center?

Good news, my friends, that’s what Easter is all about! Philippians 3:10 says, *“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.”* And Ephesians 1:20 says, *“God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.”*

The word *“power”* is used in the New Testament 57 times. God’s Word is a book of power. Easter is the most powerful event that ever happened. In fact, all of history was changed by this one powerful event. What is that resurrection power? It is the power to change our lives.

So this morning we’re going to talk about power. The Apostle Paul said, *“I want to know the power of the resurrection.”* The Greek word for power is *“dunamis”*—dynamite. God says I want to give you “dynamite power” as you live each day. The exact same power that raised Jesus from the dead 2000 years ago is available to change you and me (our whole world) right now.

What is this resurrection power? It is the power to cancel our past; the power to conquer our problems; the power to change our whole existence. First of all the resurrection is the power to cancel our past; to cancel our failures, mistakes, sins, regrets.

It is important to note that when I say cancel I'm not talking about denying the past and saying it never happened. Cancel rather means to eliminate or neutralize. Have you ever been half way through a project and wished you could start all over again; like painting the living room? Lots of people feel that way about life. *"I wish I could just start over. I've made so many mistakes. I wish I could wipe away all the bad things I have done."*

Everyone of us have regrets because none of us are perfect. I know that I don't measure up to my own standards much less God's. Some people just can't seem to let go of their past and as a result they let the past control the present. Some live in a constant state of regret; they continually are saying, *"If only I had done this; hadn't done that; should have been better."*

Yet our God says that it is not necessary; it is not at all helpful for us to go around carrying a heavy load of old guilt; old hurts; memories of mistakes. Jesus has done away with all these things by nailing them to the cross.; he gives us the promise that he has forgiven all our sins.

What is sin? It is really an archery term. When a person would shoot an arrow at a bulls eye and miss the target it was called a sin—it missed the mark. That's why the Bible says, *"All have sinned and have fallen short."* We don't live up to our own goals much less God's.

My friends, the good news is that God offers us complete forgiveness. His promise is that he cancels every record of sin/debt in our lives. The words that describe forgiveness in the Bible are "blot out," "wipe out," "washed away," "canceled." It is completely forgotten.

Jesus knows the things we have done wrong and he did not come to rub it in--he came to rub it out. He did not come to condemn us—he came to change us. Jesus says in John 3:17, *"I didn't come to condemn the world...I came to save it."* He wipes the slate clean.

In Jeremiah 31:34 God says, *"I will remember your sins no more."* This has to be one of the most amazing verses in the Bible. God chooses to forget our wrongs, our mistakes, our failures—if we simply admit them and ask him to forgive us. He cancels our past; that's Good News!

If we would say this morning, *"Jesus, I ask you to forgive me of all the things I've ever done wrong; I want to receive your gift of love and faith; I want to commit my life to you."* Then if we would die tonight and would stand before God in heaven and say, *"God about that sin I committed, or that failure in my business or marriage."* He'd say, *"What sin, what mistake?"*

Romans 8:1 says, *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* On the cross Jesus said, *"It is finished."* Our sins and mistakes are paid in full. Therefore if God forgets our sins don't you think we ought to forget them? The resurrection is the power to forgive us and cancel our past.

Secondly the resurrection is the power to conquer our problems. The fact is, my friends, that everyone has problems. You've got them; I've got them; it's a part of life. If you don't have any problems check your pulse to see if you are alive.

However our real problem is not that we have problems, it's what we do with our problems. Most often we try to solve them with our own power and strength. Yet how do we know if we're trying to solve our own problems with our own strength?--we're tired all the time.

The truth is that the resurrection promise of Easter has the power to conquer and overcome our problems. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 8, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ. Shall trouble, or hardship, or danger? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us.”* We are conquerors through Jesus Christ.

There are countless numbers of people today who feel as if their lives are totally out of control: *“I am a victim of my circumstances,”* they exclaim. *“What can I do? I’m powerless.”* You walk up to someone and say, *“How are you doing?”* They say, *“I’m doing okay, under the circumstances.”*

Somebody said onetime: circumstances are like a mattress; you get on top and you rest easy; you get underneath and you suffocate; it depends on where you are. A lot of people today are under their circumstances. The truth is we can’t control our circumstances; yet we can control how we respond to them. *“But Pastor Nathan,”* you may say, *“you don’t know my problems.”*

That may be true yet the Bible says, *“We are more than conquerors.”* If we put our lives in God’s hands and trust in the power of Christ’s resurrection nothing can destroy us; nothing can devastate you. That’s the good news of Easter. No matter how dark the situation is, God can turn it around; no situation is hopeless. God loves to turn crucifixions into resurrections; the same power that raised Jesus from the dead can help us rise above our problems.

Therefore the resurrection is the power to cancel our past; it is the power to conquer our problems; and thirdly, it is the power to change our whole being...our personality, attitudes, actions, vision for life, care for others.

What would you like to change about you? What would your spouse, your family like to change about you?—perhaps that would be a little more accurate. One wife said, *“My husband is so temperamental—90% temper, 10% mental.”*

A husband went for marriage counseling one day and said, *“I want a divorce right now.”* The pastor said, *“But you promised before God to take her for better or for worse.”* The man said, *“Yeah, but she’s a lot worse than I took her for.”*

The power to change our whole being. Complete this sentence: it’s just like me to be...always late,...worry,...always put my foot in my mouth,...to blow up in anger over little things,...to always be depressed,...to always put other people down,...whatever.

My friends, the truth is that God uses a two step process to change us. It is when we claim the promises of Jesus by faith and commit our lives to him—that’s the turning point. When we are in Christ we become new people on the inside. It’s like starting over; like a new life has begun. Then it is followed by a lifetime process of growing and changing.

The one thing of course that will keep us from changing and from becoming what God wants us to be is procrastination. *“I have every intention to change,”* we may say, *“I’ll do it tomorrow.”* One of these days I’m going to get serious about being a Christian; I’m going to get active in church and worship. It’s so easy, isn’t it, to put off those changes that would be good for us?

It is important to note that any space expert will tell you that the most amount of fuel in a rocket is used up in the first few hundred yards of propulsion. It takes tremendous energy and thrust to get the rocket off the launch pad.

This is also true in life; the hardest thing for us is also to get going. Jesus cancels our past; he helps us conquer our problems; he changes our whole existence. Yet we may say, *“Yes one day I’m going to let God’s power work in my life.”*

What does Easter mean to you, dear friend? The tomb is empty; Jesus is not there; he is risen. Because he is alive he’s given you (no matter who you are) the power to change. Won't you make sure you experience the power of Jesus this Easter? Open yourself up to the dynamite power of his resurrection.