

DARING TO BELIEVE April - 2021 (Easter)

Earlier, we heard about the first Easter morning in John 20, how *Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed. How she run to get Peter and John!*” Nobody expected the resurrection - even though Jesus predicted it and told the disciples, nobody expected it.

They thought someone stole Jesus’ body. The Bible explained that *Peter and John Got to the tomb, went inside. They saw and believed. Remember, up to this point the disciples still had not understood the Scriptures that said Jesus would rise from the dead.*”

What about you - Do you dare to believe? That’s the most important question you’ll ever be asked, your eternal destiny depends on it. Will you dare to believe?

Really what I want to do - is ask two simple questions today.

- 1) What are the benefits to you - for believing in Jesus Christ?
- 2) And do you and me, do we need to figure out what that means on our own?

Let’s start by looking at the benefits of believing in Jesus Christ. I could give you 50 benefits. But I’m only giving you the four, most important ones.

1. EVERYTHING I’VE EVER DONE WRONG IS FORGIVEN.

Everything I’ve ever done wrong is forgiven. Because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross in dying for your sins and mine, God forgives you freely, completely, instantly and repeatedly.

Even if there were no such thing as a heaven – of course there is – but even if there were no heaven, it would be worth believing in Jesus just to get a clear conscience.

Having talked to countless people, I found that most people are carrying secret guilt, secret regrets, and secret shame. And you can be completely forgiven of that.

Here’s what the Bible says. Acts 10, “... *All who believe in Jesus will be forgiven of their sins through Jesus' name.*” Romans 3 explains: “*We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done!*”

I love that last part. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done, who you've done it with, how long you did it or where you did it, you can be forgiven. Everything is forgiven when you and I, trust in Jesus Christ.

2. I LEARN GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MY LIFE

If you don't know your purpose in life, and most people don't, you end up like most people and drift through life. Life controls you rather than you controlling life. There's only one way you're going to learn the purpose of your life... you've got to talk to your Creator. You can't tell yourself what your purpose is because you didn't invent you.

Sometimes people will say if you want to know your purpose, look within. I did that! It didn't work! You can't tell you what your purpose is because you didn't create you. Only the One who Created you can tell you what you were created for. And you will never, never, never know the purpose of your life until you believe in Jesus Christ... because he is your Creator.

Paul, a guy who God used to write many of the Letters in the New Testament, he explained to Christians in Colossae, located in Asia Minor, that: *“Everything, absolutely everything... got started in Christ and finds its purpose in him.”*

Today so many people are confused about their identity and their purpose. I don't know who I am and I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing with my life. We say this because we're looking in the wrong places. The Bible says: *“It is in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for... [Who we are – that's identity. What we're living for – that's our purpose. In Christ we find that out.] part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.”*

3. Benefit - I GET GOD'S STRENGTH FOR DAILY LIVING.

I used to think this wasn't a big deal. But, the longer I live, I realize this is the number one problem most people have today. For most people, the number one problem isn't worry, or fear, or guilt or boredom or bitterness. Their number one problem is *weariness – they are exhausted.* I talk to people all the time who say, *“I'm just tired all the time - I can't get it all done. I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. I don't have enough energy to get everything done that I need to do.”*

The reason why you're tired all the time is you have a power shortage. And the reason you have a power shortage is because you're not plugged into God's power. You're trying to live your life on your power alone.

- **There's no way you can fulfill your purpose in life without being plugged into God's power.** A cell phone with a dead battery is useless, a car with a dead battery is useless - it's just plastic and metal if it doesn't have power.
- Your life can't possibly be all God wants it to be until you're plugged into God's power. That's why God told us in Isaiah 40: *"God gives power to those who are tired and worn out, and he offers strength to the weak."*
- The Apostle Paul's told his friends in Ephesus: *"I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great his power is [Whose power? Jesus' power] to help those who believe him. [The key – belief unlocks God's power in your life.] It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead!"*
- **Did you hear that?** God is promising you and me - the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is available to us, if we believe - trust Jesus.

You could ask... "What do I need power for?"

You need it in more ways than you realize. You need God's power to change things in your life you can't change on your own.

- If you're honest with yourself, there's things you don't like about you. Things about your personality, about your past, things about how you handle life. You don't like it. You've tried to change, but you can't, so you don't change.
- Willpower works for a while – but more often than not - you give up and quit.

You need a power greater than yourself to make lasting, meaningful change.

- You need God's power in your life. When you mess up and have a big failure in your life - you need God's power to start over. And when you're ready to give up, God's power keep you going.
- God also gives you power to say no to things - you know, the things that aren't good for you. They're messing up your life and they're destructive to relationships. God empowers you to say no.

Paul said it like this: *“I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.”*

This isn't positive thinking or a good attitude. This is not self-help psychology or pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. No. This is supernatural power. *“I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.”* That's strength.

So I get all of my sins, everything I've ever done wrong is forgiven. I get a purpose for living and I get a power for living – and next:

4. I AM GUARANTEED ETERNAL LIFE.

Now we're talking. Even if none of these other things were available. I am given eternal life because of Jesus' resurrection... when I believe in him. You see, Jesus bringing himself back to life – being resurrected, it changes everything.

The resurrection proved a couple of things.

- **First, it proved Jesus is who he claimed to be.**

Jesus frequently said, “I am God come in human form to die for your sins.” A lot of people say, “I don't believe Jesus was God, but he was a great teacher.”

He couldn't be a great teacher. Because a great teacher wouldn't claim to be God. He's either who he says he is or he's the biggest con man or lunatic in history. Just a good teacher is not an option.

If I stood up here and said, “Hi I'm Bill and I'm God.” That changes things! You'd be forced to make a decision, you either agree I am who I say I am, or I'm trying to con you, or I have serious mental health issues.

So you have to decide, did Jesus have serious mental health issues, or was He the biggest con man? If so... He was good, he conned billions of people. If that's true we should all close up and go home. **There's no reason for Christmas or Easter. No reason for church.** If Jesus was the most deluded person in the world... then Christians are the most deluded people throughout history.

Or Jesus is who he claimed to be.

Throughout history, thousands of people claimed to be God – that isn't new. But only one person said, "I'm going to prove it." That was Jesus. He said, "I'm going to let my enemies kill me. I'm going to be buried in a tomb for three days. Then I'm going to raise myself back to life." **And that's exactly what Jesus did.**

And when he came back to life, he didn't just appear to a few believers. He stayed and walked around Jerusalem for 40 more days. All kinds of people saw him. One time he spoke to over 500 people. It's kind of hard to fool 500 people.

That's why so many in Jerusalem instantly became believers. In a matter of years, over 100,000 people were followers of Christ because so many people saw Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most well documented events in history. It stood up in the court of law many times through the centuries and proved Jesus was who he said he was. He is the Son of God.

- **The Resurrection also proves there is Life after death.**

If Jesus Christ hadn't been resurrected, you have no hope of the future or hope of eternity. You would have no knowledge of heaven or anything else because Jesus Christ was the one who proved there is life after death.

Jesus said in John 11:25-26, "*...I am the one who raises the dead and gives them life again. [Buddha didn't say this. Mohammed didn't say this. Karl Marx didn't say this. Nobody else said this because nobody else has ever raised themselves back to life. **Because they're not God.** This puts Jesus in a unique position as the Son of God. Jesus said - I am the one who raises the dead.] *Anyone who believes in me, even though he dies shall live again. He is given eternal life for believing in me and shall never perish.*"*

I gave you 4 benefits of the Resurrection. Everything you've ever done wrong forgiven - a purpose for living - a home in heaven and power for living.

You can't get these amazing benefits anywhere else, but through Jesus!
But God didn't leave us on our own to try and try to find out how to:

- Get past your past! Even though your past is forgiven, you still need help living into your new life! You don't know what that new life is like – you never lived it before. You need help so you don't make the mistakes again!
- Remember, because of the resurrection, you also get a new, meaningful purpose for living. God has provided you with help for the adventure!
- You are not on your own to try and figure out how to tap into the power for living! The power the Resurrection offers you.
- Nor are you on your own to figure out what this Resurrected eternal life is!

God has prepared help for you. Help that will give you the guidance. So next week, we're starting a new sermon series called "ON TRACK."

A sermon series that will help you grow in the benefits of the Resurrection! A series to guide you in the ways where you can allow God to build your faith, trust and confidence in Him and to further discover the benefits the Resurrection offers.

In the next 6 weeks, we will talk about:

- The Way of wisdom
- Life-appliable Teaching to guide you
- God-given Friendships to assist you
- The Personal-practices you can use and Holy Spirit will empower so you can start walking in the new life God offers you
- The Plan, the destiny that God has for you. One that provides a satisfaction and fulfillment you can never create on your own!
- How to understand the Life-changing Experiences God brings to you, each designed to help you better understand God and His ways. Each designed to help you better understand the benefits of the resurrection!

There is one thing you must do to have access to all of this – you and I - we must believe. The Bible explains that God wants you trust in Him, to believe in Him. **So... how do you believe in Jesus?**

It starts with a simple prayer, you don't have to say it aloud. God knows what you're thinking. It isn't about the words, it's an attitude of, "Me too, Jesus."

Closing Prayer: