

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EASTER SUNDAY – JESUS IS RISEN

In the book of Revelation we read the words of Jesus,

“Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. *I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.* Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” (Revelations 1:17-18)

Because Jesus Christ arose from the grave triumphantly on Easter Sunday we can have an eternal hope

Because Jesus conquered the grave all that turn to Him in sincere repentance and faith have an eternal hope and future

Because He lives, we too as believers WILL live forevermore

For believers death no longer has any sting (John 14:1-3) (John 3:16) (John 11:25-26) (1 John 5:13) (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

Jesus Himself said, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:15)

As believers to be absent from the body is to be with the Lord

The Apostle Paul wrote, “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:8)

What Jesus accomplished on the cross was to enable us to have an eternal relationship with the God who formed us in our mother’s womb and to give us a greater quality of life which is full of purpose and meaning during our time here on earth

King David wrote, “You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11) “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” (Psalm 34:8)

Jesus Himself said, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” **(John 10:10)**

We were all created to have fellowship with God. In the book of Genesis we see that Adam and Eve were initially in constant fellowship with the LORD

However when they disobeyed God sin entered into the world and their fellowship with God was broken (Genesis Chapter 3) It was then not long before we saw the first murder in the bible when Cain murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8) We now see much violence and trouble in our world

Jesus Christ came to the earth to reconcile us back to God. He came to make a way for people to once again have fellowship with God through His death on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind

Because of His sacrificial death on the cross the barrier of sin is removed from the lives of those who receive Christ so that they can enjoy intimate fellowship with God

As a result of the fall of man, due to Adam and Eve’s disobedience in eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, man’s dominion over the earth was also forfeited to Satan. This explains why much of the world is still under the sway of the evil one and why we see so much pain and suffering in the world today

Still the present world systems are largely grounded by the limited but powerful and destructive rule of the one Jesus calls “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31) (John 14:30)

THE CROSS HOWEVER (What Jesus accomplished on the cross at Calvary) DETHRONED SATAN'S UNCONTESTED RULERSHIP IN THE WORLD

We as Christians are now called to reign with Christ here on earth through our prayers, our worship, our witness and our deeds to help see God's Kingdom expanded here on earth. We as Christians are Christ's ambassadors here on earth

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20)

TODAY I WANT TO LOOK AT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EASTER AND WHAT IT MEANS TO THOSE WHO FIRSTLY DO NOT BELIEVE AND TO US WHO HAVE BECOME BELIEVERS

1) What Jesus did on the cross demonstrated God's love for all people and His desire to have an eternal relationship with all people

Jesus Himself said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

- **Jesus Christ willingly bled and died on the cross at Calvary to pay the penalty for our sins**
- **He was buried, but**
- **Today we celebrate that Jesus Christ is risen, that HE arose triumphantly from the grave three days later and is alive forevermore**

The Apostle Paul also shared about God's incredible love for all people when he wrote, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." (Romans 5:6-9)

God is no respecter of people and loves all people the same. Jesus will never reject anyone who comes to Him. Truly God's desire is that none would perish

Jesus made this very clear when He said,

"For God *so loved the world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.* He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already," (John 3:16-18)

God loves everyone with a passion and longs to have an eternal relationship with all people.

If you have never yet opened up your heart to Jesus Christ He is today knocking at the door of your heart.

Today you can say yes to Him by saying the following prayer;

"Dear God, today I choose to turn from my sin to live for You. I believe that Your Son Jesus died for all of my sins and arose from the dead three days later. Today I invite Jesus Christ to come into my heart and live to be my Lord and Saviour and best friend from this day on. Fill me with the Holy Spirit I pray, Amen."

So firstly what Jesus went through on the cross at Calvary demonstrated God's incredible love for all people

I will now look at the significance of Easter Sunday to us as believers given that Jesus triumphantly conquered the grave and is alive forevermore, Hallelujah

2) Christianity is all about relationship and not rules and religion

When we come to Christ we are immediately in a right relationship with God, (JUSTIFIED) because all of our sins are forgiven and forgotten by God the moment we commit our hearts to Jesus Christ

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (**Ephesians 2:8-9**)

When we come to Christ, God has a unique unfolding plan for our life which is full of great purpose and meaning

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (**Ephesians 2:10**)

As we walk in relationship with Jesus Christ He will guide our steps in life and give us the wisdom that we need to do life well. (Psalm 37:23-24) (Proverbs 16:9) (James 1:5)

God wants to help us to succeed in life and for our lives to bear much eternal fruit. (John 15:16) For this reason we need to allow the Holy Spirit to direct our steps in life

Jesus Himself said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” **(John 14:26)**

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” **(John 16:13)**

In the book of Proverbs we read, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” **(Proverbs 3:5-6)**

As we walk in relationship with Jesus Christ He will give us the wisdom that we need to do life well, even disciplining and correcting us at times to help us to stay in the will of God for our life and to prevent us from making poor choices in life that could cause us much pain and suffering

So Christianity is all about relationship and not rules and religion. It is about having an ongoing intimate relationship with God, who loves us more than anyone could ever do and simply allowing Him to direct our steps in life

3) That when Jesus Christ comes into our heart and life He begins to do the work of change in us

When a person opens up their heart to Jesus Christ they become a new creation in Christ

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, **all things** have become new.” **(2 Corinthians 5:17)**

The moment a person receives Jesus Christ into their heart and life to be their Lord and Saviour, their spirit is born again from above and the Holy Spirit comes to live and dwell within them so that they have a new heart and nature as well as new desires

When a person is truly born again, (a genuine believer), it should no longer be natural or comfortable for them to sin and to live in the way that they did before they came to Christ. This changed nature is evidence of a person being a true believer in Christ

The Apostle John wrote, “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.” **(1 John 3:9)**

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” **(1 John 4:7-8)**

This does not mean that we will never sin and make mistakes at times as believers, but it should no longer be natural for a true believer to be comfortable living in sin, or not loving his brothers and sisters in the Lord

This is why the Apostle John also wrote, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” **(1 John 2:1-2)**

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **(1 John 1:9)**

God loves us too much to leave us the same as he found us

As we walk with the Lord He will lovingly bring change and correction into our lives so that we become more Christlike over time, so that we can realise our full potential in life and make a great difference in our world for eternity

When Christ comes into our heart we have the ability through the power of the Holy Spirit to change and to become more loving and Christlike

Religion can never change the heart but when Christ comes into the heart and life of a person, He gives them a new heart, (a heart of flesh) and the power to change through the Holy Spirit dwelling in their lives

The Holy Spirit sent by Him (John 15:26) then begins to do a work of change in their life from within

The Apostle Paul wrote, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:28-29)

The Apostle Paul also made it clear that it is God’s enabling grace and ability that helps us to become more like Christ over time **AS WE CONTINUE TO WALK IN INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST**

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:11-14)

We must simply allow Christ to do the work of change in our lives by yielding to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives

ONLY JESUS CHRIST CAN CHANGE A PERSONS HEART AND GIVE THEM THE ABILITY TO LEAD A GODLY AND OVERCOMING LIFE FULL OF GREAT PURPOSE AND MEANING IN A WORLD THAT IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE UNGODLY

The Apostle Paul wrote, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Only Jesus Christ can give us the power to live a godly life in a world full of lawlessness and temptations. Religion can never change a person’s heart

The bible says in relation to the human heart that it “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9) Only Jesus Christ can change our heart

4) When we come to Christ we have a new start to life. A new beginning.

Our past does not define our future.

Jesus Christ paid in full the penalty for all of our sins on the cross at Calvary.

He took our shame and guilt so that we can have a new life in Him and a future full of purpose and meaning.

In the book of Isaiah we read,

“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.” **(Isaiah 43:25)**

King David wrote, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, And **forget not all His benefits**; Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, **who redeems your life from destruction**, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” **(Psalm 103:2-5)**

Given what Jesus did for us on the cross at Calvary we as believers must never allow our past failures to sabotage our future in Christ

God has so much planned for our future, both now and forever

This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; **but one thing I do**, *forgetting* those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” **(Philippians 3:12-14)**

5) As believers because of what Jesus did on the cross at Calvary we can enjoy God's continual presence in our lives. In His presence is fullness of joy

The barrier of sin was taken away when we gave our life to Jesus Christ and became a believer

We as believers can now enjoy continual intimate fellowship with our Creator

In the book of Acts we read the words of Peter,

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3:19)

In the book of Hebrews we read how we can have continual access to God's presence so that we can obtain mercy and help in time of need;

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16)

In the book of Psalms we read,

“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” (Psalm 46:1-2)

6) As Christians we can experience God's strength and resurrection power in our own daily lives. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness

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

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us," (Ephesians 3:20)

The Apostle Paul also wrote,

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Corinthians 3:5)

As Christians we can depend on God's enabling power to do all those things that He calls us to do in life

Like the Apostle Paul I have seen in my own life that during times of physical weakness I have seen God's strength flowing through my life in a greater way

The simple fact is that the Holy Spirit will always empower us to do those things that God calls us to do in life

In chapter twelve of 2 Corinthians we see the Apostle Paul describing his thorn in the flesh;

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **(2 Corinthians 12:7-9)**

AND

7) BECAUSE OF WHAT JESUS CHRIST DID ON THE CROSS AT CALVARY AND HIS TRIUMPHANT RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD THREE DAYS LATER, IN CHRIST, WE CAN NOW HAVE TRUE FREEDOM AS BELIEVERS

Jesus Himself said,

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” **(John 8:36)**

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” **(Ephesians 1:3)**

In Christ we have been forgiven, accepted and adopted into God’s family

As Christians we can experience true freedom because;

i) All of our sins have been forgiven and forgotten by God. Our shame and guilt has been dissolved in the Blood of Jesus

**ii) Because we can enjoy God's divine health as believers. "...by whose stripes you were healed."
(1 Peter 2:9)**

iii) Because we no longer have to be subject to fear

The Apostle Paul wrote

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)

iv) Because we do not have to worry about the everyday things of life. God promises to meet our every need in life when we put Christ and the things of the Kingdom first in our life

Jesus Himself said,

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' Or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:31-33)

v) Because as believers we can see all of our prayers that are in line with God's will for our life being answered. "For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37)

The Apostle John wrote, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” **(1 John 5:14-15)**

vi) Because in Christ we have a future full of purpose and meaning; life and life more abundantly

In the book of Jeremiah we read,

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” **(Jeremiah 29:11)**

vii) Because we can enjoy God’s peace and joy even during the storms of life

Jesus Himself said, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” **(John 16:33)**

Jesus also said, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” **(John 15:11)**

viii) Because we can be assured that God will never reject or abandon us

In the book of Hebrew we read, “...For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” **(Hebrew 13:5-6)**

And

ix) Because even death no longer has any sting for those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ (The best is still to come)

What awaits us in the life to come as believers is far greater than we could ever imagine

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

Nor have entered into the heart of man

The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.”

(1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

For Christians death no longer has any sting. For believers to be absent from the body is to be with Jesus. As believers we have eternal life

Jesus Himself said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die...” **(John 11:25-26)**

Jesus also said, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” **(John 14:1-3)**

TRULY AS CHRISTIANS WE CAN BE FREE INDEED

So in conclusion because of Easter and what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross at Calvary, we as believers have a great hope and future and the power within to live a VICTORIOUS and OVERCOMING Christian life

The key to experiencing the abundant Christian life that Jesus spoke of is to fully surrender our lives to Jesus

When we look at Christ sacrificially laying down His life for us to pay the penalty for our sins, before triumphantly rising from the grave three days later, what a privilege it is for us to also lay down our lives for Him during our time here on earth

This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

We have one gift of life to store up treasures in heaven

It is only in fully surrendering our life to Jesus Christ that our lives will truly make an impact in this world for eternity

This is why Jesus Himself said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour.” (John 12:24-26)

It is only in wholeheartedly living for the Cause of Christ that our lives will have true purpose and meaning IN EVERY SEASON OF OUR LIFE

True fulfilment in life can only ever be found in Christ

We must never allow the ways and philosophies of the world to pull us away from this simple truth

This is why the Apostle Paul wrote,

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all the principality and power.” (Colossians 2:8-10)

So may I encourage you to always make your relationship with Jesus Christ your greatest priority in life! WE CAN DEPEND ON HIS FAITHFULNESS AT ALL TIMES

I will finish with the words of the great Apostle Paul,

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:7-8)

“and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” (Philippians 3:9-10)