



EXPERIENCING
the
RESURRECTION

The Everyday Encounter That Changes Your Life

HENRY & MELVIN
BLACKABY

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INTRODUCTION

THE VALIDATION



*That I may know Him and the power of His
resurrection...*

—PHILIPPIANS 3:10

There is power in the gospel to set people completely free from the destructive power of sin and to fill their lives with all the fullness of God. That gospel includes the cross, the resurrection, and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. All three are equally important for the believer to understand and experience.

This book will focus on the power of the resurrection as the necessary completion of the work accomplished on the cross. As much as the cross has been a central theme for believers throughout the ages, without the resurrection, the cross is meaningless.

If there were only the cross, sin would win—as the apostle Paul made clear:

If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (1 Corinthians 15:17–19)

The resurrection is proof of Christ's victory over sin and our hope of salvation.

The resurrection, however, is not a doctrine to be pondered but an invitation to experience the living Christ in your life. And that's the reason for this book. If you don't appropriate all that God has provided through the resurrection, it's of no value to your life. We want you to do more than gain knowledge of the resurrection; we want you to *experience* the resurrection in your daily walk with the risen Christ. For the resurrection is not just an event that occurred in the first century. It continues to impact lives to this day. In reality, not only was Christ resurrected—you too are raised to new life when you're in Him. This is the gift of God to all who put their faith in His Son.

In Paul's words about his relationship to Jesus Christ, he said he wanted to "know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Philippians 3:10). This word *know* is more than head knowledge. It's experiential, and it touches every part of your life.

If you watch the life of the average Christian, you'll see little or no evidence of this incredible resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead. But this is exactly the power that's available to all who have accepted the risen Christ into their lives as their Lord and Savior.

Consider the encouragement about this resurrection power that Paul gave to the church in Ephesus as he offered his prayer for them:

...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of *His power toward us who believe*, according to the working of *His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead* and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:17-23)

The resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead, then seated Him at the right hand of the Father and put Him over all principalities and powers, is the same power given to us. Should that make a difference in our lives? Should we be afraid of spiritual warfare? Is there anything we cannot overcome if we're walking with Christ?

Listen carefully: the battle is won! Don't believe Satan's lie that we have to do battle with him. Simply tell him, "You've already been defeated! And the same power that defeated you is the same power that now resides in my life." Don't get caught up in the fad of spiritual warfare that keeps you so busy fighting Satan that you have no time to follow Christ. The war's over! This is the practical expression of the resurrection, and it's available to you.

When you become a Christian, you're set in a wholly different dimension in which you can see what others don't see. As Jesus told His disciples, "It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given" (Matthew 13:11). If you've been given ability to understand the mysteries of God, are you using your spiritual senses to detect the activity of God? Or do you act like the world, ignoring God until you need Him to bail you out of a crisis? You need to know what God is doing and then make whatever adjustment is needed to participate in His redemptive activity.

As a Christian, you're to be a witness for Christ—a visible demonstration of every truth God has said. But the religious cul-

ture in which we live encourages us just to practice religious activity. As a result, we misunderstand our relationship with God and miss out on experiencing His power. Unfortunately, many Christians are living way below their potential, believing they'll never be anything but ordinary. But, as Christians, we're children of God! If we're faithful in a little, He can make us rulers over much.

You've been given the opportunity to function in the realm of resurrection power—the most exciting life you could ever imagine. What then could God

do in your life if He knew you were wholly yielded to Him? What could He do in you and through you if you believed He has *already* blessed you with every

You've been given the opportunity to function in the realm of resurrection power—the most exciting life imaginable.

spiritual blessing, delivered you out of the kingdom of darkness, and taken you who were dead in sin and made you fully alive in Christ?

Are you willing to let Him use you?

Or are you settling for the ordinary—satisfied with being insignificant?

THE LIVING WORD

As we consider the event of the resurrection and its present impact upon our lives, we'll stay close to the Scriptures. They'll be

our guide to a deeper understanding of what God has done on our behalf. They contain an accurate account of the resurrection event and its timeless application to believers today. As you seek to experience the power of the resurrection in your life, you can anticipate the living Word of God revealing to you the riches of God's provision.

All you need to know about the resurrection is found in the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit will apply them directly to your life. The key is not to "discover" truth, but to come with an open heart, into which the Holy Spirit will *reveal* truth. And that truth will set you free.

Remember, studying the resurrection is not an academic exercise. Our focus is not merely information, but application. True faith is based not upon knowing about Christ, but upon experiencing Him in our daily lives. A dry, scholastic, impersonal knowledge of God does not bring life. True knowledge of God is always *personal, powerful, and life changing*. If you aren't willing to allow Christ to make significant changes in your life, this book is not for you.

The first step in this journey is knowledge. You must *know* the truth and understand what God has done in the resurrection.

Second, you must *believe* it's true for *your* life. The Holy Spirit has been assigned to help you accept the truth as real, by testifying to your spirit that what you're seeing is true.

Third, you must *receive* the truth into your life. It isn't good

enough to know the truth or even believe the truth. You must *embrace it as yours*.

Last, you must *live* the truth. That means taking what you've learned and *acting* upon it—making it a part of your daily life.

Move through this entire process, and you'll find new life in Christ—a life beyond anything you could imagine.

Abraham was someone who went through this process of living out his faith. “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘*it was accounted to him for righteousness*’” (Romans 4:20–22). Like Abraham, when you hear the truth of God in His Word, believe it with all your heart and hold on to it. Ask Him to implement it in your life. Have the determination of Paul, whose life goal included this: “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10–11).

So many Christians are missing out on abundant life in Christ because they haven't understood how the resurrection completes the cross. The resurrection is the key that unlocks the door, the validation code giving us access to what Christ accomplished on the cross. And it will profoundly transform your life.

So get ready for new life in Christ.

PART ONE

The Resurrection
in the
Heart and Mind
of God

CHAPTER 1

THE REALITY OF SIN:
WE PERISH



*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.*

—JOHN 3:16

The wonderful truth of God is a reality impossible for the average person to grasp.

This dilemma is primarily because God is holy and moves on a moral plane infinitely higher than that of sinful humanity. His nature is wrapped up in perfect love. His thoughts are pure. His ways are righteous. God exists in a place where our imagination has never been.

Fortunately, however, God reveals Himself to us so we can know His thoughts and His ways. He says, “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3). When it comes to the resurrection, that’s how we must go about learning. It’s crucial that we understand *God’s* perspective and not try to impose our thoughts upon Him.

<hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0;"/> <p><i>Our need for the resurrection is brought home to us through the conviction of our spiritual deadness.</i></p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0;"/>	<p>The clearest difference between God and His creation is found in salvation. He is holy; we are sinful. He is all-powerful; we are completely helpless. He is all-knowing; we are ignorant of spiritual things. He is self-existent; we are totally dependent upon His mercy and grace.</p>
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The gospel implies our great need. From God’s perspective, we perish apart from all that He has done for us:

The cross was necessary because of the work of sin in our lives.

The resurrection was necessary because the cross put Christ to death on our behalf.

Pentecost was necessary to implement the new life that came as a result of the resurrection.

Our need for these acts of God through the gospel is brought home to us through the reality of our guilty conscience and the conviction of our spiritual deadness.

A GUILTY CONSCIENCE

It's hard to keep up with the fast pace of changing technology. As soon as you purchase "the latest thing," it's already out of date. But when something totally new hits the market, it seems to be the envy of everyone.

When cell phones first were invented and available for public use, few people had them. There was one lady, however, who had a cell phone and was very proud of it. One day she left it on a table at a busy restaurant and walked out. She quickly ran back into the establishment. Four businessmen were already seated at the table where she'd been. She asked if they'd seen it, but they all said no.

The restaurant manager, however, had an idea. He led the woman behind the counter and let her use the restaurant's phone to dial her cell phone number. Immediately they heard the ring and followed the sound back to her original table. It was emanating from a leather briefcase belonging to the man who was the first to arrive at the table for lunch.

The man began to sweat. His face turned red. He was caught!

This man, like all of us, had a moral conscience that told him it was wrong to steal the phone, but he chose to ignore his instincts. That's our problem. We ignore that which we innately know to be true and are swayed by a corrupt nature that's utterly

self-centered. That sinful nature is a cruel master that always leads to ultimate destruction of the human soul.

SPIRITUAL BEINGS

All people instinctively know there's a God, whether or not they choose to respond to Him.

God made us in His own image. That is, we were created as spiritual beings with the capacity to know God and respond to Him as He reveals Himself to us. But the relationship for which we were created has been derailed by sin. The damaging effect of sin has been inflicted upon every human being who has ever come upon the earth.

God's Word declares that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Nobody has escaped the influence and effect of sin—and that effect is fatal. Not only has it separated you from a relationship with God, but it keeps you from restoring that relationship on your own.

Paul's words in Romans 3 describe what sin does:

1. It makes you unrighteous and separates you from God.
2. It keeps you from understanding God.
3. It keeps you from seeking God.
4. It causes you to turn to other things, leaving you worthless, setting you on the road to depravity.

5. It ultimately causes you to lose the fear of God. And when you lose that, there's no deterrent to the destructive powers of sin. You can't stop your downward plunge away from God.

There's no way to keep yourself from these consequences of sin and eternal separation from a holy God. So is there any hope?

Absolutely! But only because there's a merciful God who loves us.

Read over the following passage from Romans 1:16–25, 28 as we consider the human condition and a merciful God who desires to save us from sin. Paul here describes the tragic predicament of every human being and our need for God's intervention:

*When you lose the fear of God,
you can't stop your downward
plunge away from God.*

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is

manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.... And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.

This is a profound passage that we aren't able to fully dissect in this book, but we want to impress upon you its basic intent. Let's summarize what Paul is saying with two statements.

First, by *accepting* the revelation of God, you are brought into a relationship with Him that produces blessings in your life.

Though you're a sinner, God imparts His righteousness upon you as you put your faith in Christ and turn from your sin.

Second, by *rejecting* this revelation of God, you are kept from a relationship with Him and are brought under the bondage of your own ignorance. God gives you freedom to choose your own course of action, but you remain a sinner under the wrath of God.

To accept or reject God is your choice—but you'll be held accountable for your actions. You're absolutely free to determine the direction of your life, but you're not free to determine the consequences of the choices you make.

GOD SPEAKS

God reveals Himself to all mankind in two ways: through *the gospel* and through *His wrath*. The former delivers the repentant one *from* sin, and the latter delivers the unrepentant one *to* sin.

Both revelations are parallel and continuous. That is, *God's righteousness* is being revealed at all times through the preaching of the gospel of salvation. But also, *God's wrath* is always being revealed through His abandonment of humans to the consequences of their sinful choices.

Sometimes we aren't ready to respond to the gospel until we go through the wrath of God.

The presence of evil and sin alerts people to the presence of God and His mercy. God's mercy, however, is at work in both His righteousness and His wrath. For both prompt men and women to repent and turn to God. Sometimes we aren't ready to respond to God's revelation in the gospel until we go through the wrath of God and recognize our need for salvation.

Let's look more closely at a few verses within the Romans 1 passage quoted above. Paul says in verses 16–17 that the gospel has the power for salvation that makes one righteous before God. In a right relationship with God, the believer can experience the joy of life as He intended. Through faith we receive the gift of salvation and begin to walk in an intimate love relationship with the God of the universe.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is God's clearest revelation of Himself. The incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the sending of His Spirit together represent mankind's only hope.

Although God has revealed Himself in many ways, Jesus Christ is the climax of that revelation. When you receive Jesus into your life, you receive all the blessings of God. He's the answer to the question, "Who is God and how can I know Him?" Scripture says, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5–6). Through Christ, we can be in right standing with a holy God.

Paul, however, also says that the rejection of God's revelation

leaves you unrighteous and destined for utter ruin. Romans 1:18–32 describes what it looks like to turn away from God and live a self-centered life. Because we were created in the image of God, we have the capacity to recognize Him and therefore respond to Him. In every step that people take toward Him, He gives them opportunity to know more. For as verse 19 says, “What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.”

SIXTH SENSE

We each have a soul. We each have a spirit that can perceive God.

Don't stop with your five senses—move to the sixth sense. We see, hear, smell, touch, and taste so that we can experience the physical world around us. But we also have a spirit that allows us to experience the spiritual world in which we live. *You are a spiritual being.* It isn't just that we “know” deep down there must be a God, but that God Himself is causing us to sense His presence deep within. He responds to our sincere seeking and our longing to know our Creator.

Jesus said that He would send the Holy Spirit to testify to our spirits that we might know Him: “When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (John 15:26).

Our world is so sophisticated in technology and the complexities of scientific discovery, yet many are content to live in a

self-imposed ignorance in the area of the spiritual. They feel very comfortable to express ignorance of spiritual things and to be indifferent and complacent. They say, “Nobody can know God, so why waste time seeking Him?”

Paul utterly opposed this attitude. He said in verse 18 of Romans 1 that man is ignorant of the truth not because this truth is difficult to learn but because man has “suppress[ed] the truth” that is uncomfortably clear.

Our biggest problem is that we’re afraid to give God control of our lives.

Man’s problem is an ungodly *response* to the truth. The biggest problem for human beings is that they’re afraid to give God control of their lives. They’re content with a self-centered existence, for sin feeds their selfish desires.

THE CHALLENGE OF TRUTH

The Polish astronomer Copernicus made great strides in the field of astronomy. Copernicus realized that the earth was not the static center around which the rest of the universe revolved. Rather, the earth was a planet revolving around the sun. But Copernicus was reluctant to publish his findings. He knew the trouble he would have in convincing his contemporaries that people and the earth are not the center of all existence. He was right—the pride of the human race resisted clear evidence of this truth.

Man has always felt that he is the center and everything revolves around him. Our sinful nature doesn't want to accept the fact that the core of all truth is in God and not in man.

We hear people say, "I don't believe the Bible." Okay, but what do you base that conviction upon? "Well, nothing. I just feel that way." Then what *do* you believe? "I don't really know. I just don't think God would send people to hell."

People create an image of God based upon what they think is right, what they're comfortable with, or how they feel about it. What's amazing is that they don't see how foolish this is. *We* don't determine what God does—He is God! He's the center of the universe and the Creator and sustainer of all life. Who are we to tell Him how He should run our lives?

CONSEQUENCES OF FREEDOM

God has revealed Himself to the world—and now each of us must choose what we'll do about it. If that choice is to reject God in your life, He simply gives you over to what you've chosen above Him.

In our passage from Romans 1, Paul said three times, "God gave them up." What a tragic statement! He let them be enslaved to what they chose over Him: "God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts" (verse 24), "God gave them up to vile passions" (verse 26), and "God gave them over to a

debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting” (verse 28). Can you think of a more dreadful state than for God to give us over to that which will utterly destroy us in time and for eternity? God gives us up...and steps back.

People are enamored with being free from any restraint; we steadfastly resist God telling us what to do. But when anyone chooses to exercise freedom to break God’s laws, he’s like a person who climbs to the top of a tall building and jumps off. On the way down, he feels great for the first several stories. There are no restraints, no restrictions, no hang-ups. But about ten stories before he hits the ground, he realizes that his choice of freedom is leading to some dire consequences he doesn’t want to encounter. Can he reverse the falling process? Can he stop the fall? No. And for the final ten stories of his fall, he’ll reexamine his prior definition of freedom—and realize it was wrong!

Once God steps back and leaves you to choose something other than Himself, a downward progression begins. There are many who put their hope in the mercy of God, the loving-kindness of God, the patience of God, or the grace of God—but fail to recognize that God shows His mercy, loving-kindness, patience, and grace to those who repent and turn from their sin. Those who refuse to turn to the truth of God remain under His wrath. He leaves them to suffer the consequence of their choice. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

A SIMPLE CHOICE

But here's the good news: God has revealed Himself in much more than nature and in much more than our conscience in our inner being. He revealed Himself in Jesus Christ—to make clear once and for all how to have a relationship with God. For all who recognize their need for God and turn to Him, God will forgive their sin and cause their spiritual nature to be healed. They can start to relate to God as He intended from the very beginning.

How does this happen? Through experiencing the cross, the resurrection, and Pentecost.

Sin had to be removed before we could move toward our holy God. Sinful humanity cannot come into the presence of a holy God, so the holy God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin. He took your sin and died on your behalf.

Whereas the cross put to death your old life, the resurrection brings new life. The old life of sin cannot enter a holy place called heaven; new life in Christ is required. And this new life of resurrection power is made a reality for us through the Holy Spirit.

*The cross put to death your
old life, while the
resurrection brings new life.*

And here's the most amazing thing about the gospel: the power of the cross and resurrection is just a prayer away. It's that

simple. To be simple is not to be shallow or insignificant. To choose Christ is the most profound and substantial decision of your life.

You were created by God to know Him. Do you know Him? Are you seeking to know Him? If you choose to seek Him, you *will* find Him. You'll experience abundant life on earth...and for eternity, life everlasting.

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