

- Resurrection -

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."
(John 5:25)*



Berean Lamp Ministries
For the Body of Christ

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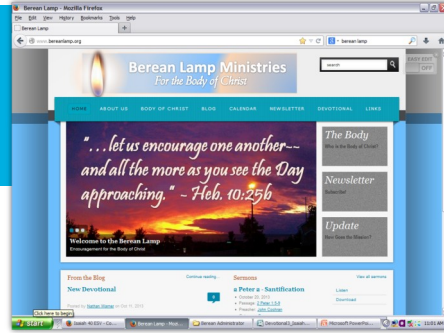


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Slavery Through Fear of Death

by Nathan Warner - Page 4

A Spirit of Resurrection and Life

by Ginny Larsen - Page 7

Resurrection Power and Life in the Spirit

by Jane Titrud - Page 13

Raised from the Mire

by Natalie Warner - Page 15

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

by Maggie Moller - Page 19

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The Berean Lamp Ministry seeks to:

1. Encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ by providing the means for each of its members to share their spiritual gifts with one another, rooted in the Word of God, thereby growing into deeper union with one another and with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
2. Minister to non-believers; be a witness for Christ and a testimony to His Body in the world.

We would appreciate your help in contributing to the content and in spreading the work of this ministry. Thank you, and God bless.

- Pastor Scott Moller

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A Metaphorical
Poem

*"The CREATION itself
also WILL be set FREE
from its SLAVERY to
corruption into the
FREEDOM of the
GLORY of the
CHILDREN of God."
(Romans 8:21)*



DEADWOOD

The dying trees.

*They are waiting.
Can't you feel them waiting?*

*For the resurrection of the woods
When plank and board
And sawn down timber
Will return to them.*

*When the wind will shake their
Unfailing leaves
And the
Sap will fill the dried up piles
of knotted lumber.*

*They will find their roots
In the soil of a new earth
In the day when
Furniture and fence and shed
Will come away with them.*

By Nathan Warner

Slavery Through Fear of Death

By Nathan Warner

“Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

(Hebrews 2:14-15 NASB)

I was in the Montana Badlands when I stepped on a flat rock protruding from the side of a slope, and something started playing a maraca. Of all musicians, the Rattlesnake is the most arresting. It gets your attention. I can tell you that I leapt for my life. Why? Why did I react differently to that snake than to the rabbit I had seen just hours before? Well, someone had told me that a rattlesnake could kill me. I’ve never been bitten by a rattlesnake before, and I’ve never seen anyone bitten by one. Yet, I trusted that this creature could take my life, because it had a reputation.

There are things in this world that we know cause death. They make us afraid. They make us fearful because they have the potential to end life – even our life. Let’s list a few: fire-arms, black widow spiders, lightening, missiles, knives, heart attacks, and old age. These things make us afraid because they could kill us. Why does this frighten us? Well, death is not natural for us. We have a desire in our hearts to live forever – craving for the immortality we had in the Garden. Death frightens us. Why?

Death is an “ending” for us in this world. We need life to have meaning for us while we are alive. Oh, how mankind tries to scrape together meaning for their lives! But as death is an end of meaning for us here in the world, what a burden to justify ourselves in it if this world is all there is! Yes, we all seek to justify our existence here. Fear of death drives this need for validation, for qualification, because we crave a justified life. This need for justifi-

cation is built into us, because we truly are unjustified, and we know it. We know we have sin. The world might call it “flaws,” “frailty,” or “mistakes,” but they know these things make us imperfect and condemnable. People in the world talk about wrestling with their inner “demons,” which they define as habits, insecurities, shortcomings, obsessions, etc., that persistently torment them and undermine their success and confidence. Humanity has always had a morbid fascination with “tragedy” — stories of people whose lives spiral out of control through mistakes, ego, lust, or one random choice, which they cannot seem to resist or prevent. They don’t like to define all this as sin (or the effect of sin), because sin is not something they can overcome or conquer themselves — sin by its definition makes them responsible to a higher authority (God), and this authority makes them feel worse because He shows them up by His perfection. Acknowledging His perfection, is a confession of their shortcomings.

Sin “un”-justifies us. Sin brought physical and spiritual death into the world and death drives us to seek justification physically or spiritually. The world seeks a solution to this in “conquering” death through scientific means, thus alleviating the pressure to justify ourselves in so short a life and side-stepping our responsibility to God after life has ended. This, however, is foolishness as no human effort can ever stave off responsibility to God. Death still rolls on. None of us want to die, but since we must, we want to die “justified” in the eyes of those we leave behind and/or in the eyes of those we go to after death. Unsaved humanity is a slave to justification all their days because of their fear of death.

There are many paths mankind seeks to feel justified: self-justification, justification by peer review, and justification by demons. How do you measure your validation? Are you justified in your own eyes, in the eyes of the world (or peers in the world), or in the spirit of a religion? The devil excels at making us feel the pressure of our sin nature, so that we will seek justification on his world’s stage, at the feet of his idols, or in the rebellious self-justification

he inspires. And if we fail? He has an answer for that too: we can turn to the comforts he has prepared for us in food, drink, drugs, sexual immorality, and anything else that will dull the ache our sin-natures inspire, albeit only for a moment.

The need for justification extends beyond sinners, as even Believers can find themselves in crisis. Have you ever asked yourself what your life is amounting to? “Am I doing everything I should do? Have I wasted my life? What am I going to leave behind? I want to do something important – something lasting.” Solomon wrestled with this. He saw mankind’s need for justification and reflected that “*there is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good*” (Ecclesiastes 2:24). Solomon then gives an objective perspective on mankind’s justification: “*I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is futility and striving after wind*” (Ecclesiastes

1:14), “*thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was futility and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun*” (Ecclesiastes 2:11). Solomon had the means to do anything he wanted. He dulled himself in pleasures, built great monuments, reformed nations, unraveled the most complex mysteries, advanced the sciences, and surpassed every king before him in wealth, power, and splendor. And yet, he saw death waiting for him – an end of the very meaning he had been seeking to establish.

“*The wise man’s eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both. Then I said to myself, ‘As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?’ So I said to myself, ‘This too is futility.’ For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the*

*“And the GRAVES were opened; and MANY bodies of the saints who had FALLEN asleep were raised; and COMING out of the graves after His RESURRECTION, they went into the HOLY city and APPEARED to many.”
(Matthew 27:52-53)*

By Lynn Warner

wise man and the fool alike die! So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind" (Ecclesiastes 2:14-17). Rather than seek solace in the validation of his citizen's praises or his own self-justified analysis, Solomon looked at life from God's eternal perspective. At that moment, he was honest with himself. Rather than ignoring his condition or basking in the legacy he would leave and the fame he had garnered, he faced the reality of death and was sobered by it.

He realized that death would wipe away all that he did. All his justification would come to an end. Regardless of whether his work would last, its meaning to him would end with death. And after years, all his great work would be worn away, and others would surpass it. Even monuments and knowledge that would survive millennia would eventually come to an end. Solomon's slavery to the fear of death produced nothing that could justify him, though he labored hardest of all men and qualified more than any other. Ultimately, humanity's voice fades and its validation ends. Nothing we do can validate us in the eyes of eternity. Nothing we do can justify ourselves before God. Jesus declared to the Pharisees, "*You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God*" (Luke 16:15).

The only lasting and allowable justification for your life that is available comes from God and is no work of your own. God alone has the answer to Solomon's despair and the vain struggles of all mankind. It is given equally to drug addicts and dictators, cleaning ladies and oil tycoons — regardless of their "qualifications." "*So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men*" (Romans 5:18) and resurrection to eternal life—a conquered grave.

But to receive this justification of life, mankind must surrender their self-justification, the world's validation, and the justification of false

teachings. They must seek the justification from God, available only through faith in and obedience to His Son, Jesus Christ, because God sent Jesus to justify us — freeing us from the need to be justified. How did He accomplish this? By taking our sin upon Himself and entering death to conquer it in resurrection, He destroyed its power and freed us from fear of it. He freed us by offering us His friendship and protection, that if anyone were to ask if we were "good enough" or if we "measure up," He would step in and answer "yes." He answers for us. That friendship requires us to serve Him as King in our lives. As His subjects, we are justified by association with Him. "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Romans 5:1). No longer must we scramble about seeking validation for our lives, because Jesus has become the only justification that matters — justification before the Holiness of eternal and omnipotent God. Only this lasts beyond the grave. People who don't accept Christ's justification will always seek for justification elsewhere, but they will never find anything lasting nor that will stand up to God's measure.

Those who have not been justified by faith in Jesus will be resurrected after the Millennial Reign of Christ on earth to be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment. Here, Jesus will sit to judge the deeds of the whole world. At this throne, all other justifications will be tried and found inadequate. People without Christ's justification will realize they are truly still unqualified, invalidated, condemned before God's measure of justification. Self-justifications, peer-justification, and idol-justification will be shown clearly to be wholly deficient against the pure, holy justice of God.

We who have His justification as our own will be raised from death and "caught away" to be with Jesus. We who are Christ's will rise from death into His justification, which covers us for eternity — our sin forever removed. The death in our bodies, caused by sin, will be banished. We will live forever with Him in His righteous government on earth and on the new earth. Amen.

A Spirit of Resurrection and Life

By Ginny Larsen

Everything looks different when one is lifted up high above where they can see everything below them. Everything looks different in the Light of Jesus' love, sitting in the Heavens with Him. Everything in the world, in my life, inside my heart, and all around me has more meaning and comes alive when I understand I have been "crucified with Christ, and risen with Him." When I understand the power of His resurrection in me through His Spirit – the same Spirit that rose Christ from the dead – I see myself in His Light.

The Christian life can be lived as a dead life for some. How so? A Christian can be born again but not fully living according to what God has for him. Take, for example, the Corinthians, who were carnal Christians. Paul didn't say they weren't true Believers but that they were living "as dead." They were not spiritually dead, because they had the Holy Spirit in them, yet their outward life was as though they were dead. We shouldn't live like this, but sometimes we do. A Christian who is trying to live out their spiritual life by the power of their own flesh lives **as though they were dead** in the power of the flesh – as though it were all up to them. They are not dead, although they live their lives as though they were, because they are not partaking of all they have in Christ – like a rich man who still lives like a pauper. I lived the first two decades of my Christian life like this – as though dead, not walking in the rich understanding of the finished work of Christ. I see many Believers living this way, in fact many preachers, because they lack understanding of the finished work of Christ and their identification with Him in His death and resurrection. I had Christ's life in me, but I lived as if dead, though outwardly people would have thought I was a good Christian because I followed all the rules.

I was not living in blatant sin, for I sought holiness, but I struggled with the inward sins

of the flesh like we all do. We have two natures (1 John 1). We still have a sin nature as well as a divine nature, and Romans 6 tells us we are to not let our sin nature have dominion over us. Galatians tells us if we walk in the Spirit we won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. We go through this pattern until we learn of the completed work of Christ and what that means in our daily lives – that it is all of faith, not our striving to live it. I think most Christians become very aware of their flesh and struggle with it until they are led by the Spirit to see His victory over it according to Romans 6-8. Until I learned of the eternal security I had in Christ, I lived as though I could lose it, under fear of condemnation, and I had an up-and-down experience as though I were under the law of sin and death.

My life was lived under the mentality of "the law of sin and death," and I was still striving under it, just as Paul described his experience as a born-again Jew trying to live under the law of sin and death. Romans 7:14-20: *"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me."*

In Romans 8, Paul goes on to say we are now under the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus: *"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death"* (v.2). This is the freedom that Believers must grow into – a resurrected life, full of love and wonder at Him. All the motivations of our hearts can be suddenly focused on Him and filled with Him, because we do what He does, love what He loves, and think as He thinks. Everything in this world is then seen

for what it is, and its true purpose is discerned. The Christian life can be nothing but religion, rules, and always seeking but never finding. It can go from experience to experience – a false spirituality and a false “righteousness” until one understands the resurrection that belongs to us in Christ. Yes, we can be Christians and yet not know or understand that we have been baptized into His death and raised with Him, as Paul states in Romans:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His [compare this with what Paul is saying in Ephesians 1 and 2]. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:3-11)

Here is a treasure that is so wonderful, so great, and so powerful. It is full of light and life and love, and yet, we miss it and fail to walk in it. When I understood this, my Christian life came more alive. The result? His love filled my heart rather than fear of condemnation. It was like someone turned on the light in my heart and mind, and everything else in my life and the world around me was illumined. Once raised up with Him, one cannot

be brought back down to a lesser way of stumbling through the Christian life lived by the flesh and the “law of sin and death” – no longer do we struggle under fear of condemnation as a motivation to live. One who is “risen” does not want to fail to please God because he sees God, loves God, and wants only to walk with God. Unfortunately, so many Christians misunderstand the risen Believer, because they still live under the law of sin and death, and they do not understand their life in Christ or the power of His resurrection in them. These Christians do not understand this newness of life or the fullness of God that comes with it. Instead, they continually seek more “experiences” and are never satisfied. For the risen Believer, there is a fountain that continually fills us and satisfies us that we can drink from on a continual basis because of the death we died with Jesus – for His blood cleanses us and puts away our sin once and for all (Hebrews 7:27, 9:12, and 10:10). Because of our response to Christ’s sacrifice, we were put “in Christ,” and He came into us, through His Spirit. This Spirit quickened us to a resurrected life out from the deadness of what sin brought to a new life unto Him. We are now risen with Him, seated in the Heavenlies with Him. It is because of the completeness of that salvation that we are enabled to have His Spirit. Later on, we’ll look at what this completeness means.

The Spirit was not given to Believers under the old covenant, as it was under the new covenant, after Jesus rose from the dead. The fact that the Spirit was given to indwell and abide forever in every true believer who is born again was a new thing – the new commandment that God instituted. While we cannot live under the old commandment any longer, there are many today calling themselves Christians who still live by an Old Covenant mentality.

“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”’ Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet

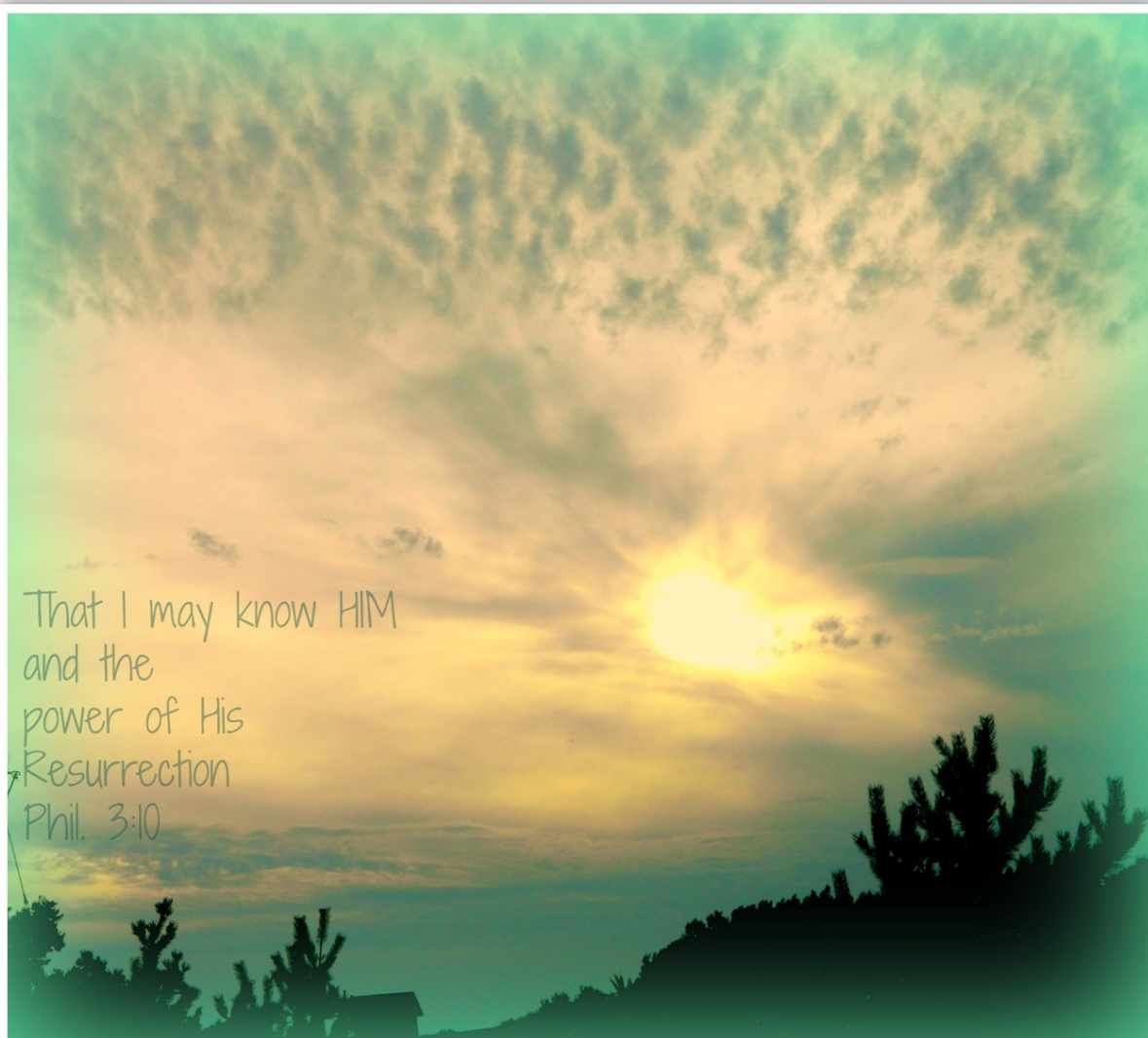
the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39).

The Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified. Under the law, there was no righteousness that was complete and pure where the Spirit could dwell in the heart and abide there forever. After Jesus came, there was true righteousness fulfilled – completed – for He was raised for our justification. Thus, the law is fulfilled in Christ, Who paid the full penalty of it, and cleansed us from our sin, once and for all, so that His Spirit could come and abide in us, making us a new creation in Him. It is only the righteousness of Christ Himself in us that makes us a place where His Spirit of holiness can dwell. It is not one single thing that we did or could ever do. Law

could never do that (Romans 8). He fulfilled the law by both paying the penalty and becoming our righteousness – a righteousness we could never attain under law.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-18).

Many preach that this proves we are still under law, but it proves just the opposite. Those who still think they must themselves keep the law in order to fulfill it are under a curse to keep it without one flaw (Galatians 3:10). It is Jesus Himself Who is the only fulfillment of the law, and only He could fulfill it.



By Ginny Larsen

He accomplished in us what the law could not for us. It is only His resurrection life in us now that is our resurrection from the power of sin and its deadness. His resurrection life is His will and law and love in our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33, and Ezekiel 36:26), which gives us true life in Him. When we are born of His Spirit, we are given a new heart – a new will. One does not obey the Lord's commandments by trying to keep the commandments, because in truth, he is not keeping them, even though he thinks he is (Galatians 6:13-15). One obeys by believing in Him (adhering, trusting in, clinging to, relying on Him – John 6:29) and walking in His love toward God and men (Romans 13:10). God's moral law fills our heart and our will when we are risen with Him, by faith. Ultimately, the final fulfillment will come when we are transformed and risen to be with Him – Heaven and earth will pass away, and there will be a new Heaven and earth, where only righteousness dwells.

It is because of His resurrection life in us that His salvation is complete in us. If that salvation were not forever and complete, His Spirit would not be able to dwell in us. If it were dependent on our “righteousness” or sanctification, His Spirit could not indwell us until we accomplished that perfection, which we cannot. We would have no guarantee of eternal life, yet it is His Spirit in us that IS that guarantee, not our own level of sanctification (Ephesians 1:13-14). As it is, in Christ, we are complete (Colossians 2:9-15 – see below). If it were dependent on our ability to, in any way, earn it or keep it, it would be incomplete until we arrived somehow in our being able to accomplish that. God's Spirit cannot dwell in anything but complete and perfect righteousness. This is why Israel could not have His Spirit dwelling in them under the law – because they failed to keep it. For the Spirit to indwell them, they would have had to be perfect in righteousness. Even the Pharisees, who tried to keep “every iota and dot” of the Law, failed to obtain the righteousness that would enable His Spirit to indwell them and give them eternal life (Matthew 5:20). Paul knew that this kind of righteousness was useless, and

he counted it as dung in order that he could count Christ's righteousness as his (Philippians 3:3-11). Once He comes into our hearts, He abides there forever (John 14:6) and we have eternal life by Him. It can only be lost if we depend on our own imperfect righteousness, not Christ's perfect righteousness, which is forever to the uttermost. *“For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14), *“consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”* (Hebrews 7:25).

Our salvation is complete, because His work is complete. It could only fail if He failed. It gives us a new heart, a new will, and a new life. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new, because His Spirit has made us new and raised us up to be with Him (even now) in the Heavens with Christ. *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:4-6).

Back to our word “complete” in Colossians 2:9...Complete in Him, Thayer Definition:

1) to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full
1a) to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally

1a1) I abound, I am liberally supplied

2) to render full, i.e. to complete

2a) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim

2b) to consummate: a number

2b1) to make complete in every particular, to render perfect

2b2) to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, (some undertaking)

2c) to carry into effect, bring to realization, realize

2c1) of matters of duty: to perform, execute

2c2) of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish

2c3) to fulfill, i.e. to cause God's will (as made

known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment

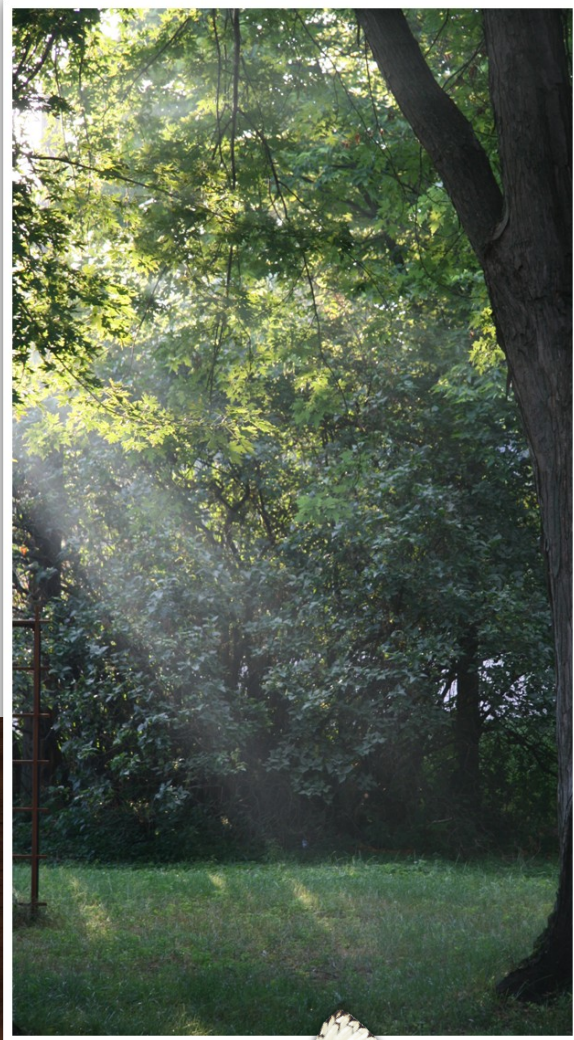
John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible
(Colossians 2:9):

And ye are complete in him,... Or "filled up", or "filled full" in him; that is, are perfect in him: saints are in Christ, and all fullness being in him, they are full too, of as much as they stand in need, and are capable of containing: for these words are not an exhortation to perfection, as the Arabic version reads then, be ye complete in him, like those in Gen_17:1; but are an affirmation, asserting not what the saints shall be hereafter, or in heaven, but what they now are.

We are complete, even now in Christ, yet it is for us in this body of flesh to learn to live by faith according to that which He has done for us, in us, and in step with the Spirit that He has given us. It is only when our eyes of understanding are opened so we can see His power in us that we are enabled to truly do so, reckoning ourselves dead to sin, self, and the world, but alive with Him. If we still see ourselves as having to attain righteousness or keep ourselves, we are still struggling to do for ourselves what He has already done. So I pray with Paul:

"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great

might that 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 rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:15-23).





By Nathan Warner



Resurrection Power and Life in the Spirit

By Jane Titrud

The resurrection of Christ provides more than just the hope that there is life beyond the grave. It also provides assurance that Christians are not doomed to live in continual bondage to sin. That is because the same power that was behind the resurrection of Christ also gives a Believer the ability to live a victorious Christian life.

One of the saddest things I have ever heard people say (who otherwise claim to be Believers) is that they are not supposed to have to worry about their sin. They seem to view it as an inevitable fact of life despite their belief in Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is sad because it shows a complete lack of understanding with respect to God's provision for victory over the power of sin in this present life.

Romans 7:18 is often cited in support of the mindset that living in sin is inevitable. In this verse, Paul himself says, *"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not"* (NASB). Hence, it is commonly believed that other Christians will fair no better. Paul also describes his condition in this context in terms of being a wretched man: *"Wretched man that I am! Who will save me from the body of this death?"* (Romans 7:24). This does not sound like victorious living.

Yet, in the very next verse, Paul gives credit to Christ for providing the necessary salvation: *"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (Romans 7:25a). There is a subtle hint here that God actually did make provision through Christ for dealing with sin in practice and that Paul is about to reveal what that is. The need is certainly evident in that the rest of verse 25 seems to describe someone caught in a trap from which he cannot free himself: *"So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin"* (Romans 7:25b). Moreover, this summarizes the situation de-

scribed in the preceding verses of being sold into bondage to sin (vv. 14-24).

Unfortunately, however, many Christians also tend to interpret what follows in Romans 8:1 as if Paul were talking about justification in terms of being released from guilt. After all, it says here that, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1), and *justification* and *no condemnation* generally go hand in hand. But since this verse follows a discussion about the power of sin in the flesh, interpreting it in terms of being released from guilt makes it seem like Paul is saying that living according to the dictates of the flesh no longer matters — just so long as one has faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. Hence, this interpretation can actually become an excuse for sin.

Nevertheless, such an interpretation clashes with teachings about the power of resurrection life in the verses that follow in Romans 8. It also contradicts other verses such as Romans 6:11, 12: *"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts."* Hence, it is not likely that Paul was talking about justification in the sense of being delivered from the guilt that accompanies sin. Instead, he was more than likely using this as an introduction to reveal the basis by which Christians are delivered from the very power of sin and death.

The verses that follow will show this. Romans 8:2-4 says: *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."* In other words, he is beginning to explain *why* there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, as he said back in verse 1. What Christ accomplished on the cross paved the way for the gift of the Spirit. So, Paul is talking about being free from the power of sin and death through

the law of the Spirit of life.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life. We can see this by skipping ahead a little to verses 10-14: *“And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive [or “life”] because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”* One can see that this is referring to the resurrection and the provision of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Believer.

The basic idea is that the same Spirit of God Who raised Jesus Christ from the dead now lives in us and is, therefore, capable of leading us to victory over the flesh by the very same power that resulted in the resurrection of Christ. There is still some responsibility here on our part. We have to follow the leading of the Spirit and put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit if we are to live above the control of the flesh. Similar instructions about walking in the Spirit are also expressed in Galatians 5:16: *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”* This is an admonition to Believers. It is not something that God forces upon us. Nevertheless, this must be something that is possible to do by faith and the power of the Holy Spirit if the Word tells us to do so.

Of course, it is all too easy to follow the flesh instead of the Spirit. That is what we are used to doing. That is what comes most naturally. The flesh wants to have its way. We are also living in a world that tends to redefine “sin” in terms of a “disease” in order to take away personal responsibility before a Holy God. Christians can even fall into this same line of thinking if they are not careful. Yet, the world can offer nothing by way of deliverance from the bondage of sin in the flesh. The only true hope is in the power of resurrection life.

In the end, it all comes down to what one chooses to believe. The Bible characterizes deeds of the flesh as incompatible with the kingdom of God (see Galatians 5:19-21). It also says, *“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him”* (Romans 8: 9). Hence, all true believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This means that every born-again Believer must, therefore, also have access to the power of God to live above sin and its consequences of death.

We may fail at times — no one is perfect but God. But the truth remains: if we belong to Him, we can live the resurrection life He intended for us through the resurrection power of His indwelling Spirit. Learning to walk in the Spirit is a process, which takes time to develop. Even so, it is doable by faith in the power of God and persevering in that faith. It is not about the strivings of man according to one’s own ability.

The point is that setbacks are no excuse for giving up. No one who names the name of the LORD should live in complacency with regard to his or her sin. We are to press on in order to live in the power of the resurrection as God intended. Remember, *“for all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God”* (Romans 8: 14).

The ultimate goal is to be led by Him. Therefore, praise God for His provision of power according to the resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to do so.

Raised from the Mire

By Natalie Warner

*"Out of the lowest pit...
You have heard my voice."
(Lamentations 3:55b-56a NASB)*

While reading the book of Jonah recently, I found how similar I often am in my daily struggles to Jonah in his willful disregard for God's plan and desires. Much of Jonah's recorded physical actions obviously stemmed from fleshly decisions; my emotional responses produce fleshly actions. Jonah's blatant acts of disobedience can be easily overlooked and regarded as "his problems" – we, after all, would *never* even *think* to go against God's wishes. The further I read, however, the clearer the application to my own life became.

Interestingly, the account of Jonah is a significant type of the blessed rising of our Savior. It is because of this resurrection of Christ that we can live our lives in assurance, trust, and hope. Jesus Christ Himself connected the testimony of Jonah to His own resurrection. He told this to the Pharisees and Sadducees: *"The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He replied to them, 'When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times? An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.'"* (Matthew 16:1-4) Four chapters earlier, Scripture records Jesus telling the scribes and Pharisees that *"for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than*

Jonah is here" (Matthew 12:40-41).

I also see the account of Jonah as picturing the Lord raising *us* to life in Him – a different type of resurrection unto life from a fleshly grip on sin which we who trust and repent experience. Throughout the life of a Believer, he or she falls back into fleshly desires and actions once and a while. We can get stuck in the mire and pulled down into hopelessness and would stay there if it wasn't for the eternally secure, unconditional love of the unforsaking Father.

So what can we learn from the small book squished in the Old Testament? It begins, *"The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.'"* This wasn't what we may be tempted to call a difficult interpretation of the Spirit's leading. This was a direct word from God to Jonah, and it was detailed! Jonah's excuse was not ignorance. He knew where to go, when, and what to do there. And yet, *"Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish"* (Jonah 1:3a).

I wonder how much thought he put into his actions. The Word doesn't tell us how much time passes, but I know for myself, I am apt to disobey (by action and thought) on impulse, and that's dangerous. On the flip side, we do know that Jonah planned his getaway, at least to the point of going down to the ships, finding one heading as far away as he could get from Nineveh, and paying for his fare. He wasn't a stowaway, guiltily hiding on a ship he scurried aboard. He wasn't a plain ole rat ducking behind the barrels and ropes. He was a rat who paid his fare and went with a plan in his head.

In any case, he was deliberately attempting to avoid the Lord. In fact, twice in verse three of the book of Jonah, it says that he was fleeing *"from the presence of the LORD."* I presume it isn't hard for us to dismiss this as naïveté, because who would bet his life on thinking we could leave and avoid God's being everywhere? I think, however, that we can (in a way) look at His omnipresence as not always being the same as when we are "in His presence." He is present on earth, but because of

sin, the unbeliever is out of His presence and is separated from Him. God's omnipresence still is real: the unbeliever does not have power to cast Him away. Through repentance and the Spirit's work, they can be brought into His presence. Those who are still unbelieving at their death will also be fully "in His presence" when they are judged. To us as Believers, He is not only the Ordainer of our days and the Author of life – He is *everything* to us. He is our Life. He is our King. Fleshly sins will creep in, though, as I have felt, and as a result, we can also be away from His presence – even though He is all around us. The Holy Spirit convicts us then, and through repentance and His forgiveness, we draw nigh once more to Him. There is a greater depth to being *in the presence of the Lord* than we may at first think. Is it so far-fetched, then, to realize that all of us are Jonahs at times – fleeing willingly from the Lord's presence? I believe it is easy, and the reality of this danger should not be overlooked.

After Jonah set sail, "*the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up*" (Jonah 1:4). If He chose to, God could have easily stopped Jonah from going on the ship, and He could have made Jonah go directly to Ninevah. Instead, He used His power to teach Jonah – to bring him to a knowledge of his sin. I wish God would intervene and show me *why* I have to go through certain trials – and then let me avoid them... but I have to submit to the thought that He may be letting me learn a lesson though I may mentally follow what Jonah did. God desires obedience — not a robotic following but a *willingness* and a *desire* in US to follow and obey His Word when He speaks.

Amazingly to me, while this is happening and the lives of the shipmates are threatened, Jonah "*had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep*" (Jonah 1:5b). Sound sleep is a characteristic of a clear conscience. I would think that if Jonah was troubled by his disobedience, he would have had fitful – if any – sleep. How often do we ignore our consciences? How often do we

beseech the Lord to prick our conscience, and how much do we pray "*create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me*" (Psalm 51:10)? A conscience kept clear is tender and easily troubled. A guilty conscience needs to be tended to – the weeds in its furrows removed by repentance so that good fruit can grow again. If it isn't dealt with, the weeds overrun it, and now we have a dead conscience. A dead conscience is dull to sin and can result in a life lived in deceit until by His grace, God awakens us with a trial. I've found that if I haven't felt convicted in a while, I need to pray for it, because I'm in danger of nursing a dead conscience.

And when this happens in the life of a Believer, shouldn't it be our heartfelt prayer to have someone near to care enough to ask, "*How is it that you are sleeping?*" (Jonah 1:6a) In this instance, Jonah, deadened to a stinging conscience and at that moment the consequence of his actions, awakes to the astonished ship's captain. It's an excellent question that could easily be asked of us all from time to time. As Believers, we should be able to – gently and lovingly – both reach out and accept another's helpful boost back on track.

Jonah wasn't at a loss for the cause of the storm. Likewise, we know (as does all mankind) and cannot forget the righteousness and holiness of our God. "Christians" can water it down, cushion it with love and giggles, and walk around hugging people bound for hell, but everyone will fall down before the throne of God, whether it be the Judgment Seat of Christ or the Great White Throne. I think Jonah knew without a doubt his sin and the consequence. When he told his shipmates straight out, "*I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land*" (Jonah 1:9), they were struck with fear and "*knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them*" (vs. 10). And they asked a GREAT question: "*How could you do this?*" (vs. 10) How patient God is: to know precisely when and how we'll stray and yet never forsake us. We blunder through our sin and trials and wonder ourselves, *How could we have done*

this? Yet His kindness is constant and unconditional.

How? His plan goes on despite our stumbles. His purpose is not usually clear to us, and that seems almost unbearable to accept sometimes. But in the case of Jonah, His ultimate plan also included the ship captain and his crew. After Jonah bid them toss him overboard, the crew tried to row to shore but to no avail. Then they cried out to God for their safety, adding, *“for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased”* (Jonah 1:14b). They threw Jonah into the sea, and the Scripture says, *“Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows”* (Jonah 1:16). Despite Jonah’s disobedience, the Lord used this for His glory and brought these men to belief in Him. It might help us as Believers that our trials may be for another’s sake. Perhaps our struggle and resurrection from that struggle could point others to His power and grace. It’s difficult to keep that in focus, and from personal experience, it’s most often because struggles cause our focus to remain that way on US. Why is God allowing *me* to suffer this? Why won’t He raise *me* from this?

The first chapter of Jonah draws to a close with verse 17: *“the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.”* Jonah’s actions did not take God by surprise or cause Him to scramble for a second option. His sovereignty is evident here. He knew Jonah would disobey and used this to show Jonah His omniscience and to show the ship’s crew His omnipotence.

The rest of Jonah’s account is familiar to us all. After three days, God appointed the fish to spit Jonah out, and Jonah headed to Nineveh (though he had to learn another lesson there, too!). What I found extraordinary about the book of Jonah is that just in this first chapter, we find the essence of the Gospel and a foreshadowing of Christ’s work – both on the cross and out of the empty grave. And just as God delivered Jonah out from the fish’s belly, so He also raises us from the miry pit of sin we’re in, whether it is a life of death in sin (as in the

unbeliever) or in a trial or backslidden state (as in the Believer).

Indeed, no matter how entrenched in sin or how much we have strayed down our own path, God has the power and the desire to bring us back to communion with Him. It may not just be a gentle reminder. The call back to a right relationship with Him can be painful and humiliating beyond degree. Sometimes bringing us up from sin requires His disciplining us. Although it’s easier said than done, we ought to be grateful for God’s just discipline. The writer of Hebrews wrote, *“Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness”* (Hebrews 12:9-11).

This is not to say that all trials we face are on account of sin we are being punished for, and we should not be as Job’s friends to our fellow brethren who are struggling. We personally, however, upon encountering a trial, should be reminded to examine our relationship to the Lord. The Bible speaks about Biblical discipline – what would this be if not trials that draw us back to Him? Instead of being punished, however, we are being *chastened* – a loving reminder to set our focus on Him again.

Jonah had an experience that likely trumped all other experiences he’d ever had. It wasn’t easy and definitely not pleasant, but it was worth it – because through God’s direction and discipline, He drew Jonah back into obedience. His raising us from the mire back into a relationship with Him won’t always be painless and most certainly will require humility on our part, but praise be to the Lord Who hears our cry and does not leave us wallowing in the muck! *“I called on Your name, O LORD, ... You drew near when I called on You; You said, ‘Do not fear!’ O Lord, You have pleaded my soul’s cause; You have redeemed my life”* (Lamentations 3:55a, 57-58).

*"So also is the RESURRECTION of the DEAD.
The BODY is sown in CORRUPTION, it is raised
in INCORRUPTION."
(1 Corinthians 15:42)*

By Maria Madsen



Sing A New Song

Words by **Charles Wesley**

Music by **Unknown**

"Where thy victory, O grave?"



268 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today
Now is Christ risen...and become the first fruits of them that slept. 1 Cor. 15:20
 CHARLES WESLEY ARR. FROM LYRA DAVID

1. Christ the Lord is risen to-day, Al-le-lu-ia!
 2. Lives a-gain our glo-rious King; Al-le-lu-ia!
 3. Love's re-deem-ing work is done, Al-le-lu-ia!
 4. Soar we now where Christ has led, Al-le-lu-ia!

Sons of men and an-gels say: Al-le-lu-ia!
 Where, O death, is now thy sting? Al-le-lu-ia!
 Fought the fight, the bat-tle won; Al-le-lu-ia!
 Fol-lowing our ex-alt-ed Head; Al-le-lu-ia!

Raise your joys and tri-umphs high, Al-le-lu-ia!
 Dy-ing once, He all doth save; Al-le-lu-ia!
 Death in vain for-bids Him rise; Al-le-lu-ia!
 Made like Him, like Him we rise; Al-le-lu-ia!

Sing, ye heav'ns, and earth re-ply, Al-le-lu-ia!
 Where thy vic-to-ry, O grave? Al-le-lu-ia!
 Christ has o-pened Par-a-dise. Al-le-lu-ia!
 Ours the cross, the grave, the skies. Al-le-lu-ia! A-men.

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

By Maggie Moller

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

(I Corinthians 15:51-52)

With the theme this month being "Resurrection," I chose to write on a hymn most would say is an "Easter hymn." Easter is the special day when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. However, as Christians, shouldn't every day be Easter? Our lives should be lived as one continual celebration of Christ's sacrifice and His triumph over the grave! I am ashamed to ad-

mit how many days I do not live as a reflection of celebrating what my Lord has done for me. The Lord has recently been reminding me how our lives are a continual journey towards being transformed more into the likeness of Christ. It can be discouraging if we focus on the here and now with our sinful hearts and the constant struggle of sacrificing our will to the will of the Father. But if we look at the final result, Christ's promise to return for us and take us to be with Him for eternity, we can persevere through all the trials and tests! In the end it will all be but a faint memory in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ!!

The Lyricist – Charles Wesley

Charles Wesley was born in Epworth, England, on December 18, 1707. He was the 18th of 19 children born to Samuel and Susannah

Wesley. Sadly, only 9 of his siblings lived to adulthood.

Charles had a rough entrance into the world. He was born prematurely and his parents thought he would not live. Miraculously, after spending many weeks barely alive, he began to grow and thrive. Clearly, God had a plan for the life of this little baby boy. His father, Samuel Wesley, was a minister as well as a poet. His mother was also a scholar. She taught her children Greek, Latin, and French as their primary education.

After completing his mother's early training, Charles was sent to a private school where he studied more of the classics. He finished his education with a master's degree from Oxford University. At Oxford, Charles and a group of friends started a Bible study group they called the "Holy Club." Due to the club's strict religious observations and devotion to the Scripture, other students began calling them the "Methodists" because of their methodical way of studying the Bible.

After obtaining his education, Charles followed in the footsteps of his father and elder brother John into a life of ministry. He was ordained in 1735 when he was 28 years old. He is often overlooked in the spotlight of his older brother, John, who is known as being the founder of the Methodist denomination. However, it was Charles who gave the new denomination its hymns. Through all his hymns Charles focused on writing lyrics that taught the same messages John spoke from the pulpit: messages on the Holy Spirit, God's love, and Christ's sacrifice.

In 1749, when Charles was 42 years old, he married Sarah Gwynne. Sarah, who was also known as Sally, was 19 years his junior. Despite their extreme difference in age, their marriage was very happy. Throughout their marriage, Sally always accompanied Charles on his evangelism journeys with his brother John. The couple had 8 children together; however, only 3 lived to adulthood. Both of their sons, Charles Junior and Samuel, inherited their father's love for music. They were proficient organists at an early age and both pursued a career in music. Charles Junior served as the

personal organist for the English Royal family of the day. Samuel became one of the most acclaimed musicians of his time and was nicknamed the "English Mozart."

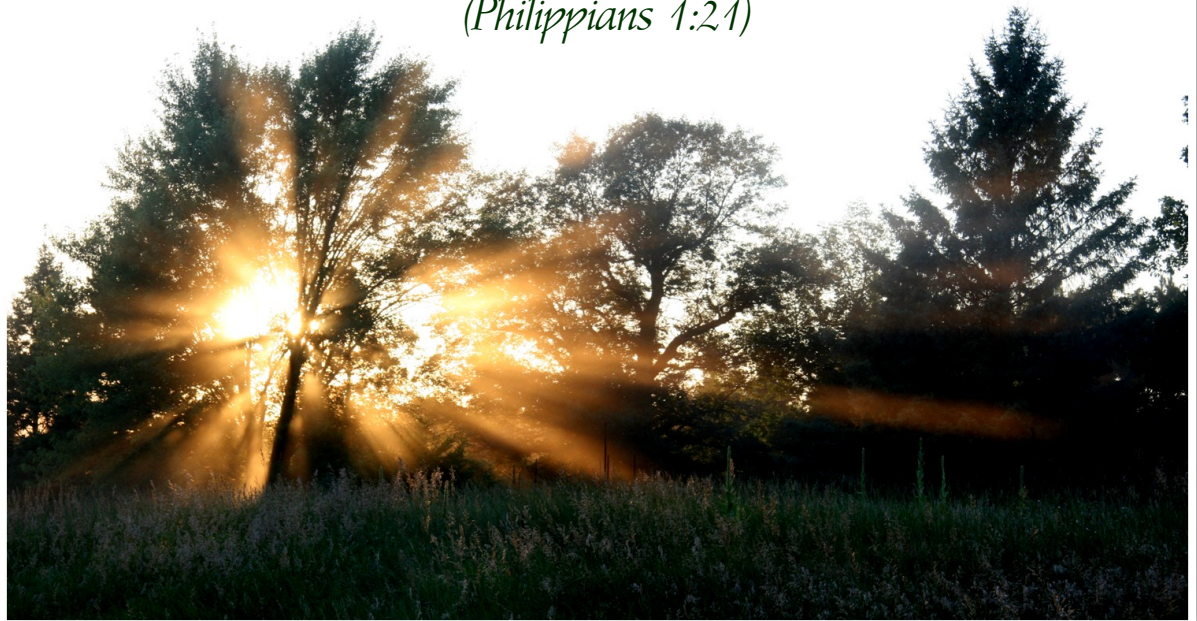
Throughout his life, Charles Wesley is attributed with writing over 6,000 hymns. One source has credited him with writing as many as 8,989 hymns. It is not certain exactly when "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" was written. It was written as a variation of a 14th century Latin hymn "Jesus Christ is Risen Today." Charles Wesley simply added his own lyrics to this hymn's musical score. Many of his hymns are very familiar to us, such as, "And Can It Be That I Should Gain?", "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus", "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing", and "O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing." Charles Wesley passed away on March 29, 1788, in London, England, at the age of 80 years old. Despite the many trials he faced in his life, Charles Wesley was fully devoted to his Lord and Savior. He knew he could withstand all the difficulties of this life because of his hope in the One to come! We too can stand firm because we know Christ has risen and has defeated the grave for all eternity!!

Resources:

- 1) Wikipedia "Charles Wesley" and "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"
- 2) <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/poets/charleswesley.html>



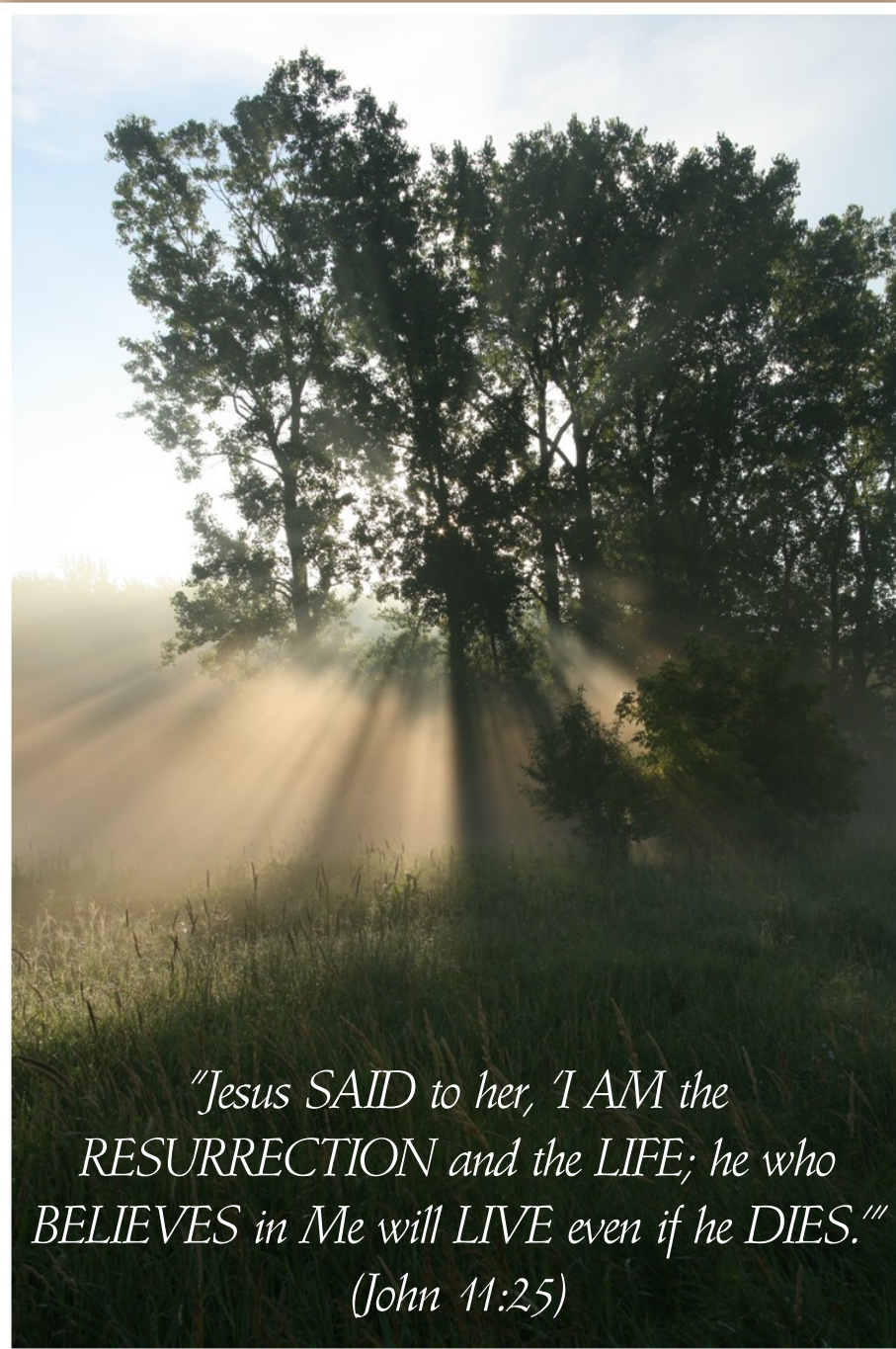
*"To LIVE is Christ, and to DIE is gain."
(Philippians 1:21)*



By Nathan Warner



*"For if WE have become UNITED with Him in the LIKENESS of His DEATH, certainly we SHALL also be in the LIKENESS of His RESURRECTION."
(Romans 6:5)*



*"Jesus SAID to her, 'I AM the RESURRECTION and the LIFE; he who BELIEVES in Me will LIVE even if he DIES.'"
(John 11:25)*

September/October Newsletter Theme—WITNESS

Submission Deadline: September 28

Publish Date: October 7

Witness...

- What does it mean to be a witness?
- Why are witnesses called in a courtroom?
- Why do they give their testimony?
- Are we called to be witnesses?
- Is there a difference between evangelism and witnessing?
- What happens when there are false witnesses and false testimony?
- What is the importance of being a witness?
- Is witnessing without convincing people still witnessing?

Verses on Witness (from the NASB version)

Exodus 23:1 — “*You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious **witness**.*”

Proverbs 14:25 — “*A truthful **witness** saves lives, But he who utters lies is treacherous.*”

Matthew 15:19 — “*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false **witness**, slanders.*”

Acts 1:8 — “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My **witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*”

Matthew 10:18 — “*And you will be dragged before governors and kings for My sake, to bear **witness** before them and the Gentiles.*”

Luke 21:12-15 — “*But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for My name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear **witness**. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.*”



Further Out—Nov/Dec 2014: IDOLATRY