

RESURRECTION POWER

**Romans 2:28-29; Chs. 6-7; 1
Corinthians 15; Colossians 2:11-12**

Walking in Freedom and Life

By

**Ric Webb
Teacher and Author
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**John 1:14 Ministries
8 Summerland Ct.
Little Rock, AR 72227**

**Website www.J114M.org
Blog rrwol.blogspot.com**

Opening.

The history of Humanity is one of rebellion; this we know. The penalty for our rebellion was death, first spiritual then physical {Gen. 2:17}; we know this as well. **“The Son of Man”** came **“to give His life a ransom for many”** {Matt. 20:28b}. And we’ve heard that much, many times. But here it is once again. Let it leave its mark in the deep places of the soul. You have been **“rescued ...from the dominion of darkness, and transferred ...to the Kingdom of”** Light— Colossians 1:12b-13. Your treachery is forever forgiven. You are pardoned for the past, every wrong thought, desire, and deed purified by the blood of the Lamb {1 Pet. 1:18-19}. It was Christ **“who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession...,”** Titus 2:14. Most of the major denominations in Christianity today teach and most of their adherents believe that’s pretty much the work of Christ, that’s the totality of the Good News. But is that all? From here to Eternity... and not a whole lot in between?

The finished Work of the Cross is an unbelievably stunning truth, and it will open your eyes to reality and bring you joy and anticipation of the Life to come. For a time, anyway. But this initial sense of joy and elation proves rather fleeting when we find, through our own failures, we need to be forgiven again and again and again. Christian author John Eldredge writes, “To be destined to a life of repeating the very things that sent our Savior to the Cross can hardly be called *salvation*. Think of it” this way: “you are a shadow of the person you were meant to be. You have nothing close to the life you were meant to have. And you have no real chance of becoming that person or finding that life. However, you are forgiven. ...This is what we mean by *salvation*”?¹ Failure and forgiveness ...then more failure, more forgiveness? Shame, disgrace, and disappointment, lingering over our lives like dark clouds of doubt?

The Good News is the forgiveness of the Cross is only a portion of the finished Work of Christ. There is a *whole lot more*. And it’s the ‘more’ which most of us have been longing for, and missing, for most of our Christian lives.

Circumcision of the Heart— Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11-12.

I would venture to say many of you understand, being well-taught and well-trained, the symbolism of circumcision. Under the Jewish covenant of the Mosaic Law, an Israelite boy was circumcised at eight days old: the flesh of his foreskin removed. It was a sign of God’s covenant with Abraham, and of the faith which he had as **“the father of all who believe”** in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Redeemer— Romans 4:11. But within the symbolism lay something even more profound, something veiled for centuries upon centuries, just as the sacrificial lamb of the ancient Jews— **“spotless and unblemished”**— foreshadowed the death of the Savior {1 Pet. 1:19}. It took a Jewish convert of Jesus’ to explain the real meaning of circumcision in the Age of Grace.

He said in Romans 2:28, **“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly,**

nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh [which is what it was during the Age of Israel]. **But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter,**” the written letter of the Law— v. 29. Here’s how this same section sounds in the RSV: **“For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal....”** **“Spiritual”** circumcision takes place at the moment of faith in Christ when our hearts, bound in sin and wedded to **“the flesh,”** are finally cut free.

Picture your sin-nature as an octopus, with tentacles reaching through your flesh as far as the mind’s eye can see. Before this moment of faith and freedom, this split second of trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, those tentacles are wrapped tightly around every corner of your heart. You don’t make a move, think a thought, speak a word, which isn’t influenced in some form or fashion by the sinful nature within. Whether it moves us to goodness or gratification, to licentiousness or legalism, it taints every last thing we do until the blinding Light of the Spirit of God comes in to shatter the stranglehold with a Message of Grace. Here’s the point, and here’s what we miss most the time: *your heart has been circumcised unto God*, the tentacles of sin have been cut and cast aside. **My heart has been set free.** It may be bound by some pain in the past, but it is not bound to evil any longer. Get it down, *cement* it in your soul. In the words of William Wallace’s father in *Braveheart*, “Your heart is free. Have the courage to follow it.” Your heart is free to follow the Spirit of Christ, the One whom the early Celtic believers called ‘the Wild Goose.’ Have the courage to follow when the Spirit begins to lead!

What this same man tells us in Colossians 2:11 is that in Christ **“you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands** [the same ‘circumcision’ we saw in Rom. 2:29], **in the removal** [*Apekduxis* is used literally for the ‘stripping off’ of clothes, for ‘*taking something off and laying it aside.*’] **of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ** [*Sarx* is the term Paul uses when he wants to identify our sin-nature as ‘the flesh’ {1 Cor. 3; Gal. 5}.]; [In v. 12 he tells us how:] **having been buried with Him in baptism** [Which is the 2nd stage of positional truth: death, burial, resurrection, ascension and session.], **in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead** [This is our eternal identification with Christ’s Resurrection.].”

It wasn’t just that something was done *for* us in the Cross of Christ, but something was done *to* us as well. Our **“old self was crucified with Him ...so that we would no longer be slaves to sin,”** Romans 6:6. The Living Bible translates Romans 6:6 like this: **“that part of you that loves to sin was crushed and fatally wounded, so that your sin-loving body is no longer under sin’s control, no longer needs to be a slave to sin** [I.e., a slave to the nature of Adam; you have a new nature from the ‘Last Adam,’ a *new* Man.]; **for when you are dead to sin you are freed from its allure and its power over you.”**

Paul in Romans 6:10 said, **“For the death that He died, He died to sin once for**

all [That's critical.]; **but the life that He lives, He lives to God** [And that's crucial.]. **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God...**" v. 11. We've been far more than forgiven, my friends. We've been rescued from the dominance of the enemy within, from the part of us which can sabotage even our best intentions. But that's not all.

Power in Practice— Romans 6-7.

I think most believers would readily agree the Cross is the focal point of human History, that History is indeed 'His-Story.' But while the Cross is the focal point, the Resurrection is the turning point. The lives of God's Children, the Offspring of the Almighty, will never be the same! There is a power, a provision, a protection in operation now that there never was before. For Paul said, just **"as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life,"** might live *literally* a 'resurrection life,' an Eternal Life in Time, **"dead to sin but alive to God"**— Romans 6:4b; 11b. Where? **"In Christ."** **"For sin"** said the Apostle, the sinful nature which ruled us before we came to Christ, **"shall not be master over you, for you are not under Law but under Grace,"** Romans 6:14. This is the basis for every victory you'll ever win right here: *grace*. **This is provision from our position; our role is to trust it enough to turn it into practice.** A vast portion of our Journey with God involves taking what is ours positionally and putting it by faith into practice experientially.

Christianity, for the most part, spends so much time trying to prove the Resurrection to unbelievers, to argue with atheists for its validity, that we've forgotten its incredible impact on you and I. The Resurrection is not primarily a principle of apologetics {though it is an historical fact}, as it is a point of *power* for the Followers of Jesus. The Resurrection of the Son of God and Savior of Man is not nearly so much about the body you'll have in Eternity as it is about the *Life* you live in Time. In the here and the now. While it's true that when we **"see Him ...we will be like Him,"** we shouldn't have to wait til then to get started {1 Jn. 3:2}. The point of this passage {in fact, of all Romans 6} is He wants to unveil His glory in His Sons and Daughters. He wants us to be in process *now*, moving 'in transit' **"from glory to glory... transformed into"** the **"image"** of Christ **"by the Spirit of the Lord"** {2 Cor. 3:18bc}. **The Spirit is free to work within us because the power of sin to overwhelm us was crushed at the Cross— Romans 6:6.**

The Cross means so much more than just forgiveness, the redemption of sin {Eph. 1:7-8; Col. 1:13-14}, as magnificent as this is; and the Resurrection means so much more than just a new body one fine Day in the future. It means a **"new life"** in Time: abundant, awesome, overwhelming *power*— Romans 6:4-5. My experience with believers, myself included, has been most of us live like Paul in Romans 7: **"for the will** ['the desire and determination {*thelo*}, the resolve'] **is present in me, but the doing of the good {is} not;" "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out,"** Romans 7:18b {NIV}. I desire it but I cannot do it. There it is right there, the 'dilemma' of doctrine without surrender to the Spirit, of knowledge without power.

We *want* the will of God, and we long to walk *in* it, but we have no idea how. And more importantly, we lack the strength and inherent ability to get back up and get back in the Battle once we've fallen on the Field of Fire.

We need a source of *unfailing* strength, which is exactly what Christ offered in 2 Corinthians 12:9a when He said, **“My grace is sufficient for you [Arkeo means- ‘be possessed of *unfailing* strength.], for power is perfected in weakness;”** ‘My omnipotence is brought to perfection within you only by grace.’ We have an unending flow from the fountain of Jesus Christ, as Paul said in Philippians 4:13 when he made one of the boldest statements of Truth ever uttered, **“I can do all things— no matter what this entails or includes— by the One who keeps on infusing His strength into me, who keeps on pouring His power through me!”** The power we so desperately need is found in the Resurrection of the Lord of Glory. And it's this we gather to celebrate every Sunday morning.

Understand this: **Sin does not define you {or me}.** Your story does not begin with sin... nor does it end there. The Story starts in Genesis 1:27 with something powerful, something glorious— **“the image of God.”** Sin is not *who* we are— Romans 7:17-21. The **“sin which dwells in me”** {vv. 17 and 20}, the flesh as a partner in evil, is not who God created me to be. And it is not who He recreated me to be in Christ. **Sin does not define who you are as a Child of God.** Don't miss this. **Its power to dominate us has been crushed at the Cross— Romans 6.** In Christ there is sufficient power, abundant power, glorious power through His Resurrection to **“walk in newness of life,”** 6:4. Take your place on the Field in *that* position... and live from it! Live in freedom and in grace.

The Cross: Not the Only Image.

The Cross was never meant to be the only image of Christianity. Are you over the shock of this statement yet? The Cross is not the only rallying point of our Faith. It was Paul who said so in 1 Corinthians 15, **“if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless and so is your faith,”** v. 14; **“and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins,”** v. 17. What was the point? The *power* of His Resurrection. Art historian Kenneth Clark writes,

We have grown so used to the idea that the Crucifixion is the supreme symbol of Christianity, that it is a shock to realize how late in the history of Christian art its power was recognized. In the first art of Christianity it hardly appears; and the earliest example, on the doors of Santa Sabina in Rome [around 430 AD], is stuck away in a corner, almost out of sight. ...Early Christian art is concerned with miracles, healings, and with hopeful aspects of the Faith like the Ascension and the Resurrection.²

What!? Are you kidding me? The Cross did not become an image within Christianity, and certainly not the ‘one and only’ it is today, until *four hundred years* after the Life and Death of the Lord Jesus Christ? Four hundred years of the most vibrant, the most powerful, the most soul-wrenching, life-changing Christianity goes by without the Cross as *the symbol*. Those who walked with Jesus, who lived and loved right by His side,

who heard the Word's wisdom fall from His lips, and those who lived and learned from those who walked with Him, did not make it the axis around which everything revolved.

What about the early Church; what did the Apostles preach? Hand in hand with the sacrifice of the Son of God they preached the power of His Resurrection. In Peter's preaching on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the major theme of what he has to say— from vv. 24-35— is occupied by the Resurrection and Ascension. In Romans 1:4 Paul said, Jesus **“was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of Holiness....”** Acts 4 tells us, as Peter and John **“were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple {guard} and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead,”** vv. 1-2. It's the same thing in v. 33, **“and with great power the Apostles were giving testimony to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.”**

We could go on: the apostle Paul before Greek philosophers in Athens— Acts 17:18 and 32; Paul before Jewish theologians in Jerusalem— Acts 23:6; 24:21. Paul speaking in his own defense before Festus said in Acts 26:22, **“having obtained help from God I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place: that the Christ was to suffer, {and} that by reason of {His} Resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim Light both to the {Jewish} people and to the Gentiles,”** v. 23. And Peter again in 1 Peter 1:3 said, **“blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”**

The Resurrection was simply astounding to the first few centuries under Grace. Those early believers understood it as central to the Christian Life, as crucial to living in the Larger Story. It's Life that Christ promised; and it's Life that we need. **“In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men,”** John 1:4; **“he who believes in Me... ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water,’”** 7:38; **“the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have Life, and have {it} to the full,”** 10:10. The Resurrection gives us this... in abundance. According to Paul in Romans 5:17, **“those who receive the abundance of grace and ...the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”** The Greek verb *basileuo* means- ‘exercise kingly power, rule and reign as royalty.’ Now *this* is a life worth living.

A dead man is not a great deal of help to you and I in the here and now; a dead God is even worse. But real Life, true Love, shining Light for the darkness of our days, the power of God to *restore* your soul and *redeem* your life, that's an entirely different matter. Christ did die for us, that's true; but He was also raised for us— 1 Corinthians 15:12-22. What this means is **“I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me,” Galatians 2:20. **“Even when we were dead in our transgressions,”** God **“made us alive together with Christ...,”** Ephesians 2:5. According to Paul in Colossians 3:4 we have a new life, the very Life of Christ which is ours now to live. It’s time we started to live it.

Finale.

In the words of Erwin McManus, “We have put so much emphasis on avoiding evil that we have become virtually blind to the endless opportunities for doing good.” The great theologian L.S. Chafer said we can wage war with the idols of the world, the lies of the devil, and the lusts of the flesh— in the strength of the Spirit— and *win* ...and still not live and love as servants of the Master. He spoke of it as winning on the negative side of the Christian Life, and never stepping into the positive. I.e., there is still an outpouring of love and life, of power and production, waiting to be released.

“We have defined holiness,” says McManus, “through what we separate ourselves from rather than what we give ourselves to.” I.e., we’ve gotten so focused on what we’re *not* supposed to be that we’ve forgotten who we truly *are*. **We are the Sons and Daughters of a grand and glorious King, the sovereign God of Heaven and Earth, a Father of infinite love and consummate compassion.** And that is *very* Good News. Because His Work is finished forevermore, because a Death was offered on our behalf, a Resurrection unto power, an Ascension into glory, and a seat at the right hand of all Authority, we can live as ‘overcomers.’ And the promises of the Risen Christ abound to those **“who overcome.”** This turn of phrase {from *nikao*- ‘conquer on the field of battle, *overcome* militarily’} is used *seven* times in the first three chapters of Revelation for riches and reward we can scarcely imagine.

And last but not least, our author writes, “I am convinced the great tragedy is not the sins we commit, but the life ...we fail to live.” **The life we fail to live.** The undiluted offer of Christianity is Life, pure and simple: a life lived by the power of Christ *now*, in Time, and in the presence of Christ *then*, in Eternity. **God does not save men and women just to sit them on the sidelines.** He did not give His Son over to the sins of this world, nail up His hands, cry out His heart, and pour out His Life to show us His love, just to make us nicer people, good little boys and girls. I refuse to believe He did all of this just so we could become the kind of people who never say certain words, never get frustrated or irritated, and who may or may not attend a 10:30 service for an hour or so on Sunday morning {or Heaven forbid at 9:15}. Sons and Daughters who throw a token ‘nod to God’ every now and again, a bone of worship for the Father to fetch. **No, this is *not* the purpose behind the Plan.**

He has a mission for each of us to execute: the ‘mission of our ministry.’ And the only way to find it, and thus to find a Life worth living, is to step into the Stream of Life, to wade into the waters of Truth which flow from the fountain of Grace. This is His offer and this is His Message because this was His Mission: to bring *Freedom* and

Fullness, Love and Light, Honor and Hope. My prayer is that these would overflow through us and to us, both now and forevermore, as a gracious gift of the “**Spirit of Life**”— Romans 8:2.

Summary.

1. “**Spiritual**” circumcision takes place at the moment of faith in Christ when our hearts, bound in sin and wedded to “**the flesh**,” are finally cut free— Romans 2:28-29.
2. Your heart has been circumcised unto God, the tentacles of sin have been cut and cast aside; *your heart has been set free*— Colossians 2:11-12.
3. We’ve been *far* more than forgiven; we’ve been rescued from the dominance of the enemy within— Romans 6:6 and 10.
4. We have eternal *provision* from an eternal *position*; our role is to trust this enough to turn it into practice— Romans 6:4 and 11. An enormous amount of our Journey with God involves taking what is ours positionally and trusting it into practice experientially.
5. The Spirit is free to work within us because the power of sin to overwhelm us was crushed at the Cross— Romans 6:6.
6. The unfailing power we so desperately need is found in the Resurrection of the Lord of Glory— 2 Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:13.
7. Sin does not define *who you are* as a Child of God— Romans 7:17-21.
8. The Cross, with its picture of suffering and of death, was never meant to be the *only* image of Christianity. The power of Christ’s Resurrection is the critical point of the Christian Life {Acts 4:33; 1 Cor. 15:13-19}; we cannot walk along the Way without it {Rom. 6:4}. In 1 Corinthians 15:19 Paul wrote, “**If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.**”
9. It’s Life that Christ promised us; and it’s Life that we need— John 7:38; 10:10; and Romans 5:17.
10. A dead man is not much help to you and I; a dead God is an even worse proposition. But real Life and genuine Love, the Light of Christ for the darkness of our days, His power to restore our souls and redeem our lives... that’s another Story entirely. One worth living in, to be sure.

¹ : John Eldredge, *Waking The Dead*, pp. 61-62

² : Ibid., p. 64