

Title: The Weight and Glory of the Resurrection  
Text: Romans 4.23-25  
Theme: The place of the resurrection in soteriology  
Occasion: Resurrection Day 2015  
Prop Stmtnt: The resurrection of Christ is an essential part of the gospel

This weekend is opening day in baseball. I love baseball, but we are celebrating an Opening Day that is infinitely better. Russ Moore wrote, "Part of the curse Jesus would bear for us on Golgotha was the taunting and testing by God's enemies. As he drowned in his own blood, the spectators yelled words quite similar to those of Satan in the desert: 'Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe' (Mark 15:32). But he didn't jump down. He didn't ascend to the skies. He just writhed there. ... That night the religious leaders probably read Deuteronomy 21 to their families, warning them about the curse of God on those who are 'hanged on a tree.' Fathers probably told their sons, 'Watch out that you don't ever wind up like him.' Those Roman soldiers probably went home and washed the blood of Jesus from under their fingernails and played with their children in front of the fire before dozing off. This was just one more insurrectionist they had pulled off a cross, one in a line of them dotting the roadside. And this one (what was his name? Joshua?) was just decaying meat now, no threat to the empire at all. That corpse of Jesus just lay there in the silences of that cave. By all appearances it had been tested and tried, and found wanting. If you'd been there to pull open his bruised eyelids, matted together with mottled blood, you would have looked into blank holes. If you'd lifted his arm, you would have felt no resistance. You would have heard only the thud as it hit the table when you let it go. You might have walked away from that morbid scene muttering to yourself, 'The wages of sin is death.' But sometime before dawn on a Sunday morning, a spike-torn hand twitched. A blood-crusted eyelid opened. The breath of God came blowing into that cave, and a new creation flashed into reality."

Read Text:

Underneath all of the baskets, bunnies, bows and traditions is an event that is so profound, so miraculous, so significant, so compelling, so threatening, so universally authoritative and so publicly demonstrable of an authority, power, might, glory and dominion that it demands our attention. It demands our affection. It demands our investigation. It demands our focus. The resurrection of Jesus Christ demands all of these things because Jesus Christ demonstrated in his triumph over the grave that he is the undisputed King of Glory who demands the absolute surrender of your allegiance and faith, your life, your soul, your all. And there is no one else or nothing else in all the world that is worthy of your worship than Him.

How can I say that? I say that because the resurrection of Christ finished the sentence in which God addressed your greatest need. That is why I have entitled this message the weight and glory of the resurrection. If we are going to rightfully understand and bask in and revel in the glory of this event, then we must first understand and bow under and grieve under the weight that drove the absolute necessity for this event.

Let me explain what I mean. Bernard Nathanson was a wealthy doctor. His professional life brought him much material success. He had the homes, the cars, the wine cellars, the horses, the wives, and the divorces. Money was not a problem for him. Morality was. But, he had convinced himself that there really no such thing as morals. When he was in medical school, he got a girl pregnant. He was not ready to get married and he did not want to be responsible for this child's life, so he gave her money to get an abortion. It did not seem to bother him that he would rather be responsible for this child's death and not responsible for the child's life. Though now, he was both. Forty years later, he was in a similar situation. Bernard was in his mid-sixties. He had already gone through three marriages and his lover informed him that she was pregnant. He was not prepared to get married and did not want to be responsible for this child's life, so he had her get an abortion. This time he did not give her the money. This time he did it himself.

Bernard Nathanson was an abortionist. He describes himself, as being clinical, detached, professional and cold, even as he killed his own child. He said, "The procedure went on without incident, and I felt a fleeting gratification that I had done my usual briskly efficient job and the left the operating room while she was still struggling up from general anesthesia. Yes, you may ask me: That was a concise terse report of what you did, but what did you feel? Did you not feel sad – not only because you had extinguished the life of an unborn child, but, more, because you had destroyed your own child? I swear to you that I had no feelings aside from the sense of accomplishment, the pride of expertise. On inspecting the contents of the bag, I felt only the satisfaction of knowing that I had done a thorough job. You pursue me: You ask if perhaps for a fleeting moment or so I experienced a flicker of regret, a microgram of remorse? No and no. And that ... is the mentality of the abortionist: another job well done, another demonstration of the moral neutrality of advanced technology in the hands of the amoral."<sup>1</sup>

Bernard Nathanson wrote an article for the New England Journal of Medicine in which he estimates that he personally oversaw the death of 60,000 babies. And yes, something happened that caused him to stop calling them fetuses and started calling them babies. It is interesting to note that when Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge gets pregnant, no refers to the child as the royal fetus. For Bernard, the invention of the ultrasound made it too obvious to ignore what he had attempted to suppress for all of these years. That fetus was alive. There was a heart with four chambers clearly defined and major blood vessels carried that blood to the rest of the infant's body. Slowly, but surely Bernard began to change. At first he stopped his enthusiastic support for abortion. He had been a champion for it back in the day. Now, he was changing. He wasn't ready to call it wrong, just yet. Because, if he called it wrong, that meant he was accepting guilt. And what does one person do with guilt like that? Actually, they do the same thing that anyone else does with guilt or shame. Dealing with guilt and shame is akin to facing the problem of evil. Dealing with the evil that you do, or the evil that is done to you, or the evil that you do in response to the evil that is done to you is all connected together.

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<sup>1</sup> (Bernard N. Nathanson, *The Hand of God: A Journey from Death to Life by the Abortion Doctor Who Changed His Mind* [Washington, D.C.: Regenery, 1996], 58-61.

## I. How do people deal with their guilt?

### A. Deny that God exists.<sup>2</sup>

If there is no God, then there is no personal cause, no personal creator of life and therefore no meaningful purpose and no authority to give laws. The concepts of good and evil are nothing more than temporary tools to promote the evolution of life. If you deny that God exists, then intellectually, there is no problem of evil because evil does not exist. But, the attempt to intellectually deny the existence of God does not work because we are more than intellect. We are whole rational beings whose rationality is governed by a sense of morality. The very person who claims there is no God scoffs and mocks poor, ignorant people like us who believe in God. But why scoff and mock? Why say that we are wrong to believe in God when there is no such thing as right and wrong? Why devote so much energy to debunk the idea of God? Why the moral outrage against the idea of God? If God does not exist then there is nothing to get upset about because there is nothing. But the atheist is betrayed by his anger. He is morally outraged if you would break into his home and steal his stuff or worse, murder his son or rape his daughter. But why? Why would an atheist think that it is worse to murder his son and rape his daughter than it is to steal his stuff if intellectually there is no difference? If there is no God, then there is no moral scale to say that stealing is wrong, or that material stuff is of any different value than human life. Why be so angry? In the famous words of Hillary Clinton, "What difference does it make?" If there is nothing but this natural universe then nature is only doing what nature does. It is surviving at the expense of others. Surely, as an atheist you know that. You believe that. You preach that and scoff at the poor, ignorant theists who blindly hold on to the notion of a personal Creator. But, if there is no God as you claim, then why are you bothered when someone threatens your kids? You are bothered because you have moral outrage. And your moral outrage is the betrayal of your heart against the futile attempt of your mind to dismiss your Maker. **For all of its pomp and elitism, atheism and an indifferent universe have no explanation for the existence of tears and no answers for those who cry.**

### B. Deny that suffering and guilt exist.

This is the approach of some eastern religions (Hinduism) and Christian Science (that is neither Christian nor science). The idea is that if we can train our minds to deny sickness, suffering or guilt then they will not exist. But, if you deny that it exists, then you are in no position to deal with it. This idea is dangerously similar to the heresy promoted by the feel-good, prosperity gospel preachers. Tell yourself positive things. Speak positive things and positive things will happen. Overcome negativity by only speaking positive words. In other words, they are saying that we can change reality by the authority of our words. Do you not see the absurdity and blasphemy of that? I am the creation. I do not possess the power of creation with my word. Jesus is the One who spoke the universe into being. Jesus spoke and Lazarus, come forth and the dead man came alive. I can say

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<sup>2</sup> Some points adopted from Colson/Pearcey's book, *The Problem of Evil*.

all the happy things I want, and it won't change reality. It reminds me of the boy who went to the Christian Science minister and told him that his grandfather was sick and asked him to pray for him. The minister said, your grandfather is not sick, he only thinks he is sick. Go home and tell him to stop thinking that he is sick. A few days later the minister asked the boy how his grandfather was doing. The boy said, "Now he thinks he is dead." Obviously, this approach does not work either.

### **C. Deny the power of God.**

If God is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving, then he would never allow evil to exist. Therefore, God may be all-loving, but he must not be all-powerful. Or all-knowing. He means well. He cares for us. He hurts when we hurt, but ultimately he cannot do anything other than give group hugs.

### **D. Deny the goodness of God.**

If God is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving then he would never allow evil to exist. If he knew what was going to happen and did not stop it. He cannot be good. Therefore, God may be all-powerful, but cannot be all-loving. He does not mean well. He does not care for me or anyone else. He is nothing more than a masochist who gets pleasure from our pain, or a cosmic Nazi scientist who is conducting experiments on his subjects.

Bernard tried to hold on to some of these ideas but nothing removed his guilt. He said that early in the morning he felt that he had already gone through the entrance of hell where it was marked "No Exit" and that he had become "the Mayor of Hell." During this time he witnessed an intensity of love from some of the pro-life activists that astonished him as well as the change of one of his teachers. Karl Stern had gone from nominal Judaism to Christianity in a way that transformed the way that he practiced medicine from medical technique to medical care. Bernard longed for that. He longed for forgiveness. But, he and you can only find that in Christ.

Some of you, like Bernard, do not know what to do with your guilt. But God does. And that is good news, because you are not capable of managing your guilt. But, apart from the gospel, the only thing that you are left with is guilt-management. The 15-year old sits in her room with a knife and slowly cuts herself. Why is she drawn to that? Someone has to pay for her pain. The young man who refuses to talk to his dad or the 30-year old woman who rages at her family, or the 27-year old pilot who kills himself and 150 others, why? Someone has to pay for my pain. Someone has to be punished. No one knows what to do with guilt and its shame and the pain of sin or being sinned against. And sadly, that is what so much religion would have you do; experiment with different theories of guilt-management. But God does not want to manage your guilt; he wants to eradicate it. So...

## **II. What does God do with our guilt?**

The New Testament book of Romans answers the question: How can a person be right before God? In order to answer that question, the Apostle Paul goes back and takes a

rather exhaustive look at the issue of our sin (1.18-3.20). He painfully demonstrates that if you are an immoral person that you are a sinner who is under the just and righteous wrath of God. He then painfully demonstrates that if you are a moral person that you are a sinner who is under the just and righteous wrath of God. He then painfully demonstrates that if you are a religious person that you are a sinner who is under the just and righteous wrath of God. His conclusion is what? We are all sinners who are under the just and righteous wrath of God. And since we have offended an infinitely holy God, we have no hope of ever providing a payment that would appease his infinite wrath. So I understand why people who have shame to try to pay for it, or try to get others to pay for it. But, no one is ever satisfied. No matter how much you pay or demand from others, the debt is never paid in full. God knows that so, he provided one for us. He provided himself. God sent Christ to live the life that we could not live and his life of perfect righteousness qualified him to be the sacrifice of infinite worth. The offering up of his life on the cross satisfied the righteous demands of God that our sin be paid for. But, how does that payment that Christ made actually become ours. How can we get credit for something that he did?

**A. He demands that we own it.**

a. Confess it.

That means that we must confess it. No excuses. That is probably the most difficult step for you to take since we are so prone to believe that we are better than what we are, that we are better than others, and that we are really ok. We are not ok. When we say that we are ok, John says that we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But, “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1.8-9) **True confession is more than an admission of the fact of guilt; it is an admission of the guiltiness of guilt.**

For the past few weeks, the trial of the Boston marathon bomber has been going on in Boston. You may remember that two brothers planted pressure cooker near the finish line of the Boston Marathon two years ago and killed 3 people and injured several dozens, many of them severely. In the ensuing manhunt, the older brother was killed and the younger brother, was captured. The trial is of the younger brother. The prosecution began with a damning presentation of the facts that implicated the younger brother. The defense, in its opening remarks admitted guilt and said, “He did it.” What the defense is seeking to do is demonstrate that he did it under the duress and intimidating influence of his older brother and that he was just caught up in a plot. However, he has shown no sense of guilt, no weight of guilt, even as a father described what it was like to leave his 8-year old son dying in the street because his life could not be spared because the dad had to tend to the life of his daughter who was hanging in the balance. Day after the day this man listens with no affect. He sits emotionless, bored, with no expression, no connection, no remorse. It is as if he is not even human. His confession is a legal admission, but it is not a biblical confession. When we confess our sin, we own it. That means that we own the wrongness of it and we feel the wrongness of it and we agree to the wrongness of it. We make no excuses for it. Confession goes along with repentance.

b. Repent of it

To repent not only means that we identify it as being wrong, it means that we turn away and we go in the other direction. When I confess and repent of my self-righteousness I admit to God my pride of actually thinking that I am better than another person and I not only admit to him that I am not better than another, but I seek to stop thinking like that. In my confessing and repenting I am admitting the truth that God knows about me and I am admitting the reality of my condition. I cannot save myself. I cannot fix myself. If God does not rescue me I have no hope. But, God sent Christ. My confession of my need drives me to trust in Christ.

**B. He calls us to trust in Christ alone.**

The weight of sin is so heavy, that you cannot bear it. Nathanson knew this. He tried all sorts of things to get rid of his guilt (therapy, counseling, meds, self-help books and more). But, he said, *“I felt the burden of sin growing heavier and more insistent. I [had] such heavy moral baggage to drag into the next world .... I [was] afraid.”* God’s call for you to trust in Christ and accept the fact that he died in your place as the payment for your sin is not only merciful but it is effective because Christ was counted guilty of committing your sin. Our text is speaking of Christ when it says that he was *“delivered up for our trespasses”*. Christ was delivered up. That is history. Christ was delivered up for our trespasses. That is gospel. That is glorious gospel.

When you trust in Christ God places our sin on Christ. Can you imagine the weight of guilt that Christ bore? The Father viewed him and treated him as if he had actually committed every one of your sins. The full and final weight of all your guilt crushed him and in the offering up of his life, he paid for your sin, in full. **He was able to pay for your sin in full because your sin in full was placed upon him.** That is astounding. He knows every one of your sins. He felt them all. He was crushed by them all. And he paid for them all. It is humbling to realize that he knows them all. It is glorious to realize that he did not miss a one and that he paid for every single sin, once and for all. And now, there is no condemnation. If you are in Christ, there is no condemnation left for you. The condemnation bucket was emptied out on Christ and there is nothing left in the bucket, not even a drop. Do you now realize the magnitude of the payment? The payment that Christ made was accepted by the Father. The payment met the demands. The payment satisfied the terms. The payment settled the debt. The payment appeased the wrath. The payment emptied the bucket.

The last book in the Bible is the book of Revelation. That book describes the bowls of the wrath of God that are poured out upon this world of people who do not trust Christ. If you trust Christ, he takes your wrath. If you do not trust Christ, you are on your own and you cannot handle that. If it was not for Christ, we would all be in that predicament. Is there anyway that we can fathom the relief that is ours because Christ has made a way? But there is more. God not only takes our sin from us and places it on Christ, but when we trust in Christ, God credits us with the righteousness of Christ. He treated Christ as if

he had committed all of our sin, and now he treats us as if we had done everything that Christ has done. That means that there is nothing left for me to pay, and nothing left for me to prove. I am free to live in a manner that reflects that change that He has made. Justification (4.25) has two parts: It means to have my sins removed and placed upon Christ which means my condemnation is taken away. It also means I am credited with the righteousness of Christ. You see, God does more than forgive us and pay for our debts; he credits us with the infinite righteousness of Christ. He counts us righteous, like his Son because we are imputed with the righteousness of his Son, which means that we are now viewed as, called as one of his own. We are adopted into the family. So, how does God deal with guilt? He eradicates it and replaces it with the righteousness of his Son.

### III. **How do I know?**

#### A. **The resurrection is God's public announcement that the debt has been paid.** - *"raised for our justification"*

Christ was raised for our justification. The resurrection of Christ was the proof that God accepted the payment in full. The debt was settled. The account is whole. The wages of sin has been paid and accepted. Death is done. The death that Adam brought by his sin, was a separation from God that has now been restored by the second Adam, Christ and is given to all those who are in Christ. This also means

#### B. **The resurrection is God's promise of your life with him forever.**

When you trust in Christ, you become united with Christ. That union is so perfect and so complete that you get credit for his death, which means that your sin is gone, you get credit for his righteousness which means that your standing before God is right, and you get credit for his resurrection.

The weight of my sin is why the resurrection of Christ is so important. But the completion of Christ's work is why it is so glorious. Do you know what this means? The day is coming, when this life is over. For some of you, your body will die because it will give out. It will succumb to disease and surrender to death. For others of you, your life will be taken from you. Perhaps because of your faith in Christ. But in either way, this body which was born from the first Adam will die. But that's okay because if you are in Christ, you have a check. It is a cashier's check. That means that the funds are already there. It is a cashier's check for a new body. And you get to turn that check in. And you will get a body, like unto his glorious body. Because he lives, you too can live.

The culture and the government have essentially turned against us. Do not be surprised. It was against Jesus too. But, cheer up beloved. For today, Pontius Pilate is still dead and Jesus is feeling just fine. In fact, he is handing out cashier's checks for new bodies to everyone who trusts in him. It won't be long now. We're getting closer to home.