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Re: made in the Image of God

Shalom once again to all of our ministry partners! In this newsletter I want to share with you the hope of the resurrection and the victory that we can have because of that hope. Recently, I was given an assignment at school to write a sermon on "Easter." And although I do not like the term "Easter" as it has pagan connotations, I love the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and know it is a reality.

So, I preached a sermon entitled "He is Risen." You see, that is the hope of the gospel! If Jesus had merely died, He would not be our savoir! But He is risen from the dead, and He lives forevermore, our hope that we too will be raised from the dead at the last day. John 11:25-26 in the Contemporary English Version of the Bible says, "Jesus then said, 'I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die. Do you believe this?'"

When we talk to people about the resurrection, what are we telling them? You see, I know all the Historical evidence that points to the fact that Jesus is raised from the dead - but head knowledge is not what the world needs in order to believe the resurrection is a reality. What they need is a spiritual reason to believe. For myself, I have two very real reasons spiritually for believing in the resurrection: 1. I was raised from the dead, and 2. The Word of God says it.

For those of you wondering, you did read reason one correctly. I have not often shared this part of my life, partially because of fear. My main fear has been that my parents would find out the cold hard truth of what happened to me almost twenty years ago. But, It is time for me to get beyond my fears of what they will think or say, and just say this to them if they are reading this: it was twenty years ago. I am not that person any more. My parents raised me in church. But what I heard in church was simply that I was a sinner. I'm sure that they said other things, but that was about all I remember, because I remember feeling guilty for the sin I would commit, ask God to forgive me for my sin, but then go back and commit the same sin again because I was not told that God could give me power over that sin. So, I rebelled against God.

My rebellion simply started with skipping school, but ended up with me overdosing on drugs. One night, I passed out in my room. I was dead. How do I know I was dead? I could feel myself leaving my body. Now, unlike all those nice stories you may have heard, the first thing I felt when I left my body was the sensation of falling. The falling sensation was accompanied by a sensation of spinning in every direction all at once, and hearing voices (that you could also feel - I cannot fully explain it) that told me that it was too late and I had gone too far. With each passing moment, each sensation grew even stronger, and I knew I was being pulled into hell itself.

There is one other thing I remembered from my childhood at that point. That was being told that Jesus Himself had gone into the very depths of hell. I cried out to him and said, "Jesus, if you are really real, save me now!" - suddenly I felt myself returning to my body.

As I said, I not only have my testimony to the fact that the resurrection is true - but I also have the testimony of the Bible. But in case someone is reading this that does not even know how or why Jesus had to die and then be raised from the dead, let me first relate this part of the story.

When people were created, they were made to be like God. One of the things to be like God is to have a freedom of choice on who or what you listen to and do. So, man was

given a choice by God to obey one simple command, and he disobeyed. That brought sin into the world.

In Romans 3:23 the Bible says, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” That means that all of us have been given a choice, and at one time or another we have fallen short of God’s holy standard. Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death.” In other words, what we deserve for our sin is death. Because God is love, and He loves us, however, He had a plan to redeem us from sin and death. That plan was revealed through a sacrifice that would once for all time take away the sin of the entire world.

That sacrifice was God’s own Son, Jesus, known as the Christ (Messiah, Anointed One). We can read the entire story leading up to His death in all four Gospels. In Matthew, it starts at chapter 26 and goes through 27. Mark 14 and 15, Luke 22 and 23, and John 18 and 19 also include accounts of what happened.

Here is part of the passage accounting how He died in Mark 15:25, 33-39. 'And it was the third hour when they crucified him.

And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"'

If this had been the end of the story, however, we would not have assurance of victory over sin and death. But, these same four Gospels tell of His raising from the dead on the third day after being crucified. Here is part of Mark’s account once again:

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back--it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

Earlier I said that Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death. That is true. However, it goes on to say, ‘but the gift of God is Eternal Life through Christ Jesus His Son.” Jesus proved this gift by rising on the third day. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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 dwells in you.

(Rom 8:10-11)

He also said:

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

(1Co 15:20)

The scriptures state that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may stand. I

have given you two reliable witnesses for the resurrection. If you are reading this and have never accepted Jesus Christ as your savior, what you must do according to the word of God is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in your heart that he is risen from the dead. Confess with your mouth that God raised Him from the dead, and you shall be saved.

For those of you who already know Jesus as your personal LORD and savior, We must make His resurrection a reality in our everyday lives. He rose from the dead not so that we could live melancholy Mondays, terrible Tuesdays, whacked Wednesdays, Thursdays in turmoil, freaked out Fridays, sad Saturdays, and somber Sundays. No, according to John 10:10 He came to give us life abundant, to the full, till it overflows. That means that every day can be full of His resurrection power, if we let it be!

If you have drifted away from Jesus as your first love, have questioned if you are really saved, or know for sure that you have never asked Jesus to come in and make Him your savior, say the following prayer out loud, and mean it with your heart:

Dear Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive me of my sin. Wash me and cleanse me. Set me free. Jesus, thank you that you died for me and that you are risen from the dead. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Thank you that I am saved, forgiven, and on my way to heaven because I have Jesus in my heart.

If you said that prayer, I want to first let you know by the power of the word of God, and the Holy Spirit that all of your sins are forgiven you right now. I would like you to contact me at tzelemministries@gmail.com if you said that prayer. God bless every one of you. Amen.

A quick word from Deb:

Hello all and blessings on you.

God is sooo goood. He's sooo loving, gracious, kind and forgiving. Larry gave a word about the resurrection. Jesus said that "whosoever believeth in Him shall not die but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Some of you reading this may have once walked with God but have drifted away or grown cold for whatever "reason". Jesus is still there. He's holding out His loving arms to you saying, "Come on home. I miss our time together. I love you still. Let's spend time together again. All you have to do is just come home." You see, He doesn't and hasn't left. He said He would never leave us or forsake us. If you feel He is distant then do a heart check. Perhaps you have grown a bit cold or built a wall around yourself. He is still there. Waiting. Calling. Longing for you to come back.

Things that someone did or said may have hurt and perhaps you've chosen not to let it go. If you would let it go you would feel a burden lifted. You would feel lighter. You see, when we hang on to things we hurt ourselves more than the other person. Sometimes we're not hurting them at all, but, only ourselves. It can cause us to distance ourselves from God as well. We can't hang onto those hurts. It eventually turns to bitterness. Bitterness, unchecked, can eventually eat at our bodies and cause all kinds of health problems. I know people that are like this. They don't see it, but others do. When we truly forgive someone, we let it go as well. We don't hang onto it and keep reminding

ourselves and others about it all the time. When we keep talking about it, it keeps it in our mind and in our heart and keeps that "wound" festering. It doesn't heal. It's like getting a cut. When we get a scab over it we should let it be so it can finish healing properly. Instead, what we do a lot of times is keep picking at that scab and when we do, it bleeds again and takes that much longer to heal. It's the same way with unforgiveness and bitterness. When we let it go though and let God have it then it can heal. Letting God have it is like the medicine that we put on natural wounds. He is our medicine for hurts in our hearts. He is the best medicine. I know of a song that says, "Jesus is good medicine." He is.

Let's not hang onto the hurts. Let's let it go and give it to Jesus and let Him be the medicine we need to bring total healing. When we do we will find our step feeling lighter, our day looks brighter, our hearts lighter, and a song within. Jesus takes that care and He deals with it better than we ever could.

I'm so glad I'm not God. If I were, things would not be so good for some. There's a saying that time heals all wounds. Well, the better and more accurate thing to say would be that Jesus heals all wounds. That's not to say that there won't be times that we won't remember, but, rather that in the remembering that we can realize, if we have given to God, that we can remember without anger or bitterness because we have chosen to forgive and give it to God and let Him help us to walk in that forgiveness. We can grow and learn from the experience. We can be a better and stronger person and have reached the other side because we chose to forgive and let God have it instead of hanging onto it. We will feel so much better for having done so.

So, if there is something you're hanging onto, let it go. Give it to God. Don't keep picking at it and keeping the wound from healing. It will only prolong the hurt and perhaps even cause greater damage to yourself than the initial thing itself. Like that natural wound or scab that we pick at get infected if we're not careful. It's the same with those hurts that we just don't want to let go. We have to let it go and give it to God in order to get healing and be able to move on with life. Let it go. Jesus is there asking you to give it to Him. He's asking you to let it go. He's asking you to come home. He'll give you new life. He'll give you freedom you haven't known. Scripture says that "he whom the Son sets free is free indeed." John 8:36 Let Him set you free today. Don't hang onto to the past and it's hurts. Let it go. Let God have it. Let Him carry that old hurt and burden. You'll be happy you did. Nehemiah 8:10 says the joy of the Lord is our strength. Let Him give you joy in place of the hurt and burdens of the past. He loves you!

God Bless you all and may you learn to mount up and soar on eagles' wings!

Sincerely with love and prayers in Him,

Deb