

The Resurrection and the Life

By
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“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

-1 Peter 1:3-5

Happy Easter! As always during the holiday season it is important for us to remember the goodness and glory of celebration contained in holidays. Although the church doesn't have as rigid a structure when it comes to holidays as the Old Covenant, there is an amazing good that comes from collective celebration of God. It is so easy to be caught up in the drudgery of life and forget the simple, yet profound, things that give our life meaning, and the resurrection is one of those things.

For us today, talking about the resurrection of the Son of God can almost sound mundane and though it is arguably the most important event in human history, we can genuinely take it for granted. That is why it is good for us to take a season to remember this reality and celebrate the hope we have because of the resurrection. In order to do this we will take a look at one of the resurrection appearances of Christ that can teach us much of the kind of courageous lives that God is calling us to live, made possible, and necessary, through the power of His resurrection.

Holy Consummation

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this matter.”

-Acts 17:30-32

Before we start talking about the specific account, I did want to spend a small amount of time talking about the nature of the resurrection itself and why it is such a monumental event. As you can see from the above passage, the message of the resurrection was actually the least popular part of the gospel message for the pagan world. In virtually every other religion around the world, heaven is essentially a great undoing of all the wrong that has occurred before. We can almost think of it as awakening from a dream from the drudgery and the pain of our current world.

For this reason, the majority of pagans believed that heaven was a purely spiritual existence in which we would be free from the physical pains and torments of our current life. When we stop to think about this, it makes a lot of sense. This life, no matter how blessed, is filled with great amounts of torment and pain and it does seem as though our physical existence is the cause of those things. No matter how much care we show our bodies, they get sick, injured, and eventually they will succumb to death. Beyond that, the greatest emotional pains any of us will feel are bound to our physical relationships, namely, to those relationships that we care for the most.

For this reason, it made a lot of sense for most wisdom traditions to preach a type of separation from the body, a movement away from passion, love, or care for this earthly existence. We can see this philosophy in areas as far apart as eastern Buddhism as well as western Greek Stoicism. However, the doctrine of the resurrection contradicts these ideals. Instead of teaching a heavenly existence *apart* from the body, the Bible actually teaches an *embodied* eternity. To put it a different way, if Christ was preaching a purely spiritual afterlife, He would have risen as a spirit and not bodily. This means that the Christian hope is not a great undoing of our lives, but a “holy consummation”.

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

-1 Corinthians 15:42-44

Though the “body” of the fully grown tree differs immensely from the seed that was originally planted, it is not disconnected from the seed. The “body” of the tree is the consummation of the seed, it isn’t an undoing of the form of the seed. In the same way, the “body” of the resurrection will not be a wholly different form from our physical bodies, they are inextricably linked to one another. That means that our hope is not to be “rescued” from our physical lives, but like Christ, to have our physical lives undergo a glorious transformation that gives meaning and beauty to *all* that we have been through.

While there are many different ways that we can take that topic, let's take a look at Jesus' appearance to the apostle Peter to get a deeper picture of what this means for us.

Confronting Our Past

"After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea." But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish."

-John 21:1-8

This fascinating account is only preserved for us in the gospel of John, but it elaborates for us the exact way that Peter was restored in his relationship with Christ after his catastrophic failure the night of Jesus' betrayal. But in order to have a better appreciation for this moment and fully understand why Jesus approaches Peter in the way He does, we have to understand a bit more about the apostle Peter. Let's first take a look at the original calling of Peter to be an apostle of Christ.

"So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the

boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him."

-Luke 5:1-11

Hopefully you can see the many similarities between the account of Peter's first calling recorded for us by Luke, and the resurrection account that we see in the gospel of John. Peter was originally a professional fisherman when Jesus called him to "follow" Him. We also know from his response to Christ, that although he was raised as a Jew, he did not consider himself to be a "good" man. We don't know what this means, or what kind of moral life he led, but he considered it to be unworthy of the call of God. From there, Peter becomes an adamant follower of Christ and even becomes one of the more vocal members of Christ's 12 apostles.

"He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

-Matthew 16:15-18

Peter unabashedly declares that Jesus is in fact the prophesied Messiah, and this declaration seems to give Peter a special place amongst the 12. This tendency of Peter to speak first, both in good declarations and bad, follows Peter throughout the ministry of Christ, leading all the way up to the night of Christ's betrayal.

"Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples."

-Matthew 26:33-35

Even though Peter was the first to declare his undying allegiance to Jesus, Peter unfortunately goes back on this promise in a far more undignified way than his fellow apostles:

“Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, “You also were with Jesus of Galilee.” But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are saying.” And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.” But again he denied with an oath, “I do not know the Man!” And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, “Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.” Then he began to curse and swear, saying, “I do not know the Man!” Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” So he went out and wept bitterly.”

-Matthew 26:69-75

This is undoubtedly the low point for the life of Peter. After devoting himself wholly to the life and ministry of Christ, and vowing total obedience and surrender to Him, he betrayed Him at the very moment when such a betrayal would have hurt Jesus the most. Broken by the failure of his will, Peter is crushed and can only bring himself to weep bitterly at his own frailty, and unfortunately, he doesn't get to reconcile with Jesus before Jesus is killed.

But, with the resurrection of Christ, Peter is given a chance that none of us will ever get, a chance to reconcile with someone after their death. This background hopefully helps us truly appreciate the gravity of this encounter. Although Peter has already met with his risen Lord prior to this chapter, these meetings are always in the presence of others, but here he has a real chance to talk to Jesus one on one. In this, we see the beautiful, yet somewhat disconcerting, reality that is present within the resurrection, the resurrection is not a forgetting of the past, but a consummation with it.

The Reality of Consequences

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

-Genesis 3:8

The main pull of the human heart since the Garden of Eden is to flee from the consequences of our actions. When we make mistakes, we would love for those mistakes to be papered over and ignored, we definitely don't want to address those errors in any meaningful way. I believe that one of the appeals of a purely spiritual afterlife is the belief that none of the consequences of our physical actions really play a part in our eternal spiritual existence.

Even in the modern world we have constructed a belief that allows for the destruction of consequences, the multiverse. The theory of the multiverse has, believe it or not, existed in western discourse since before the birth of Christ. It was a famous philosopher named Epicurus of Samos (341-270 BC), that first, publicly, theorized that perhaps:

“[t]here is an unlimited number of worlds, some of them like ours, others unlike...”
-Diogenes Laertius - *“Lives of the Eminent Philosophers”*

Although this idea is quite old, it really didn't take hold of the imagination of western civilization until our present era in the form of comic book films. In comic books, writers early on realized that they wanted to write stories that had real extreme stakes, but yet didn't want to deal with the fallout of their own stories. They wanted to write a story in which a major character died, and yet they also wanted to continue writing stories about that same famous character. With reboots and resurrections taking up the bulk of that work, the multiverse became an all too perfect mechanism for rehashing old stories and character arcs.

The modern Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) has discovered the same thing. That if they introduce the multiverse, they can kill off certain characters in emotional stories, and then resurrect these same characters using the multiverse as a convenient excuse. The problem with this mechanism is that it cheapens the emotional impact of events when the audience *knows* that such events have no true and lasting consequences. There is something in the human heart that understands that true meaning and importance can only be derived from a world in which actions have true and lasting consequences.

This is one of the reasons why “participation awards” were such a disaster. In order to preserve the “self-esteem” of children, parents got the idea that they could issue awards to everyone, even the losers of a particular sporting event so that they all felt like “winners”. The problem is that the ones who lost, felt as though they didn't earn their award and so they disdained it, and the ones who actually won felt robbed of their achievement since they got the same award as everyone else.

This same principle is at work in all of our relationships. In order for an action of love to have real, lasting positive meaning, an action of abuse or neglect has to have the same type of lasting negative meaning. To put this point more simply, we derive meaning itself from the reality of consequences. The Resurrection of Christ teaches us that we feel this way, because this is the exact nature of reality.

This life is not a “dream” that we will awaken from, but this life is absolutely real and has eternal consequence. When Jesus rises from the grave, bearing the scars of His crucifixion, He is demonstrating to us the reality that the things done in the body are not erased by death, but are consummated in the mystery of the resurrection. However, this doesn’t mean that mistakes are in some sense “final”, only that the consequence of those mistakes can’t be erased by death. So when Peter sins against Jesus, His resurrection does not erase the shame that Peter feels towards his betrayal, nor does Jesus let him off the hook.

“Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.” Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?”—knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.”

-John 21:9-17

Instead of Jesus pretending as though Peter’s betrayal never happened, He, lovingly, confronts him about what he did. By asking Peter “do you love me?” Three times he is intentionally calling Peter back to his betrayal, but at the same time giving him an opportunity to amend his relationship with Jesus. This is why it says that “Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time...” Peter was aware of what Jesus was doing, and was grieved to recall his shameful behavior.

This event should give all of us a strange sense of peace in our earthly relationships. Many people who suffer the untimely loss of a loved one struggle to find some sort of closure that they never got with the one that they lost. Because of this, many seek after psychics, mediums, they consult ouija boards, and even talk to therapists all to resolve the tension of the things that were left unsaid. This account teaches us that the resurrection doesn’t erase the wrongs done in the body. Jesus, although He has risen, seeks the closure with Peter that they never got before He was killed. This doesn’t

mean that we should treat relationships casually, but on the contrary, we should seek closure and resolution in all our relationships, understanding the reality of consequences. But, if we never find that resolution on the earth, there is a comfort in knowing that this can be achieved in the resurrection.

This is also interesting because it seems that if Jesus never did this, Peter would have never addressed the “elephant in the room”. Peter was content to awkwardly avoid the topic of his betrayal, but Jesus wouldn’t let him do this. In fact, there is evidence from this chapter that Peter was so broken about what he did, that he was abandoning his calling to minister as one of Jesus’ apostles. This seems to be why Peter is the one who volunteers to go fishing, (verse 3) and why he is the only one “stripped for work” (verse 8). It seems as though Peter had resigned himself to go back to being a fisherman instead of ministering in the call of Christ.

While on the surface this sounds like Peter is taking in the consequences of his actions, but in reality he is doing the opposite. By studiously avoiding the topic of his betrayal, and sentencing himself to a punishment that he deemed fit, he isn’t dealing with his betrayal, he is going around it. Oftentimes we can do the exact same thing. We hurt someone and instead of talking to them about it, we avoid the topic and “give them space” in order to avoid “offending them”. In our minds we are rationalizing that we are avoiding the topic because the other person wouldn’t want to talk about this, or because we are busy showing repentance and therefore we don’t need to talk about it. Which all have the sound of nobility, but are unfortunately, cowardice masquerading as virtue.

This helps us understand the key difference between Peter and Judas. Both Peter and Judas betray Jesus in some way, though Judas’ was clearly worse than Peter’s. However, both men feel regret over their betrayal:

“Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!” Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.”

-Matthew 27:3-5

In some sense, this is what suicide is, an ultimate rejection of the reality of consequences. Judas couldn’t face the other disciples with what he had done, and he certainly couldn’t face Jesus. His refusal to face down the consequences of his sin caused him to take his own life. I’m not saying that guilt or regret are the only causes for suicide, but to take your own life is the ultimate example of refusing to confront reality.

And while there are certainly circumstances that make this decision much more understandable, at bottom it is a rejection of the principle of the resurrection. Our decisions have consequences, and if we refuse to face the consequences of our own actions, the ones who love us the most will be the ones left without closure and with the burden of our decisions.

Whenever I do something wrong, whether it is losing my temper or falling to a sin like lust or selfishness. I find a deep embarrassment and shame come over me and I don't want to talk about what I did. All of these excuses will rise up in me, and they all sound pretty reasonable when they are spoken in the quietness of my own heart, but all of them are avoidance strategies. I don't want to face down the consequences of my actions with the person, or people, that I hurt, and so I avoid them and refuse to bring up the subject.

This explains a really difficult to understand phenomenon that we all have either performed or been on the receiving end of. Why is it that the person who did the wrong ends up despising the person that they hurt? To use a well-known example, let's say a parent abandons their child, and then later in life, that same child tracks down the parent and tries to have a relationship with them. What they find is that, even if they aren't asking for any money, or even an apology, their parent will be aloof and dismissive of them. Why is that? Because our shame over our sin motivates us to avoid the person who reminds us of our sin.

In our modern culture we are studious not to "offend" or "shame" anyone. We are taught to simply affirm and help those who are committing wrong. We are even taught that every wrong action is actually the result of some greater wrong done to them. Whether it be the way they were raised, a past trauma, or even a mental illness, it is never the fault of the one who committed the wrong, it is always the fault of some other entity. The reason why this philosophy doesn't actually help is because of what we have been talking about, the nature of meaning indicates that actions have real consequences that need to be acknowledged.

It may feel "good" for someone to not have to deal with their problems, but this isn't actually a helpful thing. For me, after I got back from Afghanistan, I found myself having over-reactions to people on a regular basis. It was easy for me to justify my behavior because of what I went through, and I was far too ashamed at my wrath to admit that what I was doing was wrong, and so I ignored the problem altogether, and my friends and family let me do this, since they believed that this was what was best for me.

Unfortunately, this didn't make me any better, but instead only provided fertile soil for my problems to grow and become more severe. The only way for me to deal with my problems was by facing them, not by running from them. I needed to learn the humility to acknowledge my bad behavior, regardless of my "good" reasons, and try my best to make things right with the ones that I had wronged. By confronting Peter, Jesus isn't trying to shame him or break him down, but instead He confronts Peter so that Peter has an opportunity to repent and make amends with the One whom he had wronged.

The doctrine of the resurrection means that the relationships that we have on this earth are in some sense eternal. It isn't as though we awake in our new bodies with no memory of our past. Instead it means that all of our past, good and bad, will be integrated, consummated, into our eternal existence. The scars of Christ are integrated into His resurrection body, not as a mark of ugliness or humiliation, but instead as a mark of what He did for us. In the same way, everything that we have done in the body will be integrated into our heavenly existence. I love how the Christian author Vaneetha Risner puts this point in her book "The Scars that Have Shaped Me":

"The disciples recognized Jesus when they saw his scars. And Thomas needed to feel the Lord's nail wounds to verify that the risen Savior was before him. Jesus didn't need to have scars on his resurrected body. His body could have been perfect, unblemished, unscarred. But he chose to keep his scars so his disciples could validate his identity. And even more importantly, so they could be assured that he had conquered death. Michael Card's song, "Known by the Scars," expresses this truth so beautifully. "The marks of death that God chose never to erase The wounds of love's eternal war When the kingdom comes with its perfected sons He will be known by the scars." God chose not to erase these marks of death—the wounds of his love for us—so our Savior will always be known by his scars. Rather than physical imperfections, Jesus's scars are breathtakingly beautiful. They represent his love and our salvation."

-Vaneetha Risner - "The Scars That Have Shaped Me"

Later on when she talks about her own scars she says this:

"My scars remind me that God is sufficient and that physical perfection is not our goal. A life lived to God's glory is infinitely more valuable. Scars represent more than I ever realized. They can be beautiful. The dictionary says "a scar is a mark left by a healed wound." A healed wound. My scars signify healing."

-Vaneetha Risner - The Scars That Have Shaped Me

This doesn't mean we will wear our mistakes around as a sign of shame or failure, but it does mean that even our mistakes will have to be integrated into our eternal story. And

that the glory of healing and redemption will outpace the glory of innocence. Jesus' resurrected body that bears the scars of His crucifixion are more beautiful than the His body before He received those wounds.

This is why stories like this one are preserved, not in spite of the resurrection, but because of it. Peter himself is the one that preserved the details of his failure and it became a part of his testimony. This story made Peter's story about God's faithfulness in his life and not about his perfect obedience to God. It shows how relationships can be broken, and how they can later be mended. And Peter's relationship with Christ, from this moment until the moment of his death, incorporated his betrayal of Christ, *and* their reconciliation. Peter is a symbol of this great principle of resurrection. God doesn't erase wounds, the glory He intends for His people will "perfect" our wounds.

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

-2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Confronting Our Future

"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." Do not envy the burden of another. Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"

-John 21:18-23

After Jesus causes Peter to confront his past, he then encourages him to confront his future, to count the cost of his obedience to Christ. And Jesus is telling him in no uncertain terms, that his decision to minister as an apostle will eventually cost him his life. While we are not told explicitly within the Bible how Peter was killed, we know from this passage and writings from the early church that he was indeed martyred for his

faith. Take this passage from an early church father named Clement of Rome who died around 99 AD:

“But not to dwell upon ancient examples, let us come to the most recent spiritual heroes. Let us take the noble examples furnished in our own generation. Through [envy](#) and jealousy the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the church] have been [persecuted](#) and [put to death](#). Let us set before our eyes the illustrious [apostles](#). Peter, through unrighteous [envy](#), endured not one or two, but numerous labours; and when he had at length suffered [martyrdom](#), departed to the place of [glory](#) due to him.”

-1 Clement

From this we can see that his death was indeed a martyr's death, and that it was caused by "jealousy" meaning that it was more than likely orchestrated by political authorities who did not like the power of the growing church. Much later it was rumored that Peter was crucified upside down, but regardless of the exact nature of his death, what is clear is that he was murdered, and beyond that, that he suffered much for his testimony throughout his life.

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

-1 Peter 4:12-13

This is an element of the resurrection that we would rather not consider. When Jesus returned, He did not set up His kingdom on earth, nor did He deliver His followers out of the earth, or promise them a life without death. The resurrected Lord becomes our ultimate example of what it means to follow God unto death. Now Peter responds to this call in the same way that most of us would, he points to John and asks about his fate. But Jesus responds by telling him to not worry about others, but make the personal decision to follow after Christ no matter the cost.

“Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?”

-Luke 9:23-25

It is easy to compare our sufferings to others. Either looking at extreme examples like Peter and telling ourselves that we have nothing to complain about, or looking at others

who are seemingly suffering less than us and becoming envious of their life of relative ease. The reality of the matter is that Christ has asked each and every one of us to take up our cross and follow after Him. We are all asked to take up horrible burdens of grief, suffering, loss, and pain in our pursuit of Him, and one of the greatest burdens that God has asked all of us to bear is the burden of death itself. It is important to not become envious of the burdens of another, and instead train ourselves to simply be faithful to the burden that God has asked us to bear.

The resurrection does not teach us that this life will be free from pain, far from it, instead the cross teaches us that our pain is worthy. Just as the wounds of Christ's crucifixion now adorn His resurrected body as a sign of His faithfulness unto death. In the same way, none of the pain that we go through will go to waste, all of our burdens will be redeemed by our loving Father and will be consummate in our eternal home.

This is a good way to understand the difference between martyrdom and suicide. In both instances, the person has willingly accepted death. But, suicide is a rejection of a burden, whereas martyrdom is an acceptance of our burden. In a mysterious way, the true Christian martyr is the one devoted to life in their acceptance of death. They understand, through the reality of the resurrection, that what they are enduring is in service of the calling of God and His intent for their life, and they know that their life does not end with their death, but is consummated *through* their death.

The one who commits suicide is rejecting life itself and all its subsequent burdens. Judas doesn't want to live and therefore would be afraid of the reality of the resurrection, that his decision to avoid the consequences of his behavior would also be consummate in heaven. I am not saying that suicide *guarantees* that someone will go to Hell. But I am saying that since it is a rejection of life, it does constitute a sin that needs to be addressed. I believe that Christ's forgiveness can cover this decision, and as I said before, some circumstances are far more understandable than others, but it is not something that is merely forgotten in the resurrection, it has to be integrated.

The decision of the martyr is easily incorporated into their resurrection, they were faithful unto death. While the martyr is an extreme example, there are numerous ways in which you and I are called to regularly confront terrifying realities. For the sake of time, I will only mention one.

"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we

walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”

-1 Peter 4:1-4

Peter here tells us that we are all called to bear the cross of our own sanctification. It would be easy to join the “flood of dissipation” that sweeps away the world. But we are called to something higher, and the only way to move in the right direction is through daily sacrifice. It will always be easier to feed resentment than to do the hard work of forgiving, to run from our problems instead of facing them head on, to give into sexual lust as opposed to disciplining ourselves into resisting our urges... And all of these various temptations will visit us time and time again throughout our lives. And each time we have to resist this temptation and say no to something that we want, it constitutes a sacrifice and requires a strong and courageous will.

But it is equally difficult to build up virtue. In order to really learn what it takes to be truly honest with ourselves and others as opposed to telling convenient lies that enable us to ignore our own faults, or to learn what it means to truly trust another person which leaves us open to betrayal, or to learn to be truly hopeful even though hoping sets us up for terrible disappointment, or to learn to love, knowing that truly loving another person requires massive self-sacrifice and the more we love someone, the more tragic will be their loss.

These are the daily sacrifices that a child of God must willingly choose and confront. We don't do this out of a naive confidence that these decisions won't cost us, but only under the conviction that the price we are paying is not worthy to be compared to the glory that is awaiting us. In the knowledge of the risen Lord, we have determined that the supreme love of God truly is better than life and we desire to run after Him and the power of His cross and resurrection.

“This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”

-1 John 21:24-25

“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the

victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

-1 Corinthians 15:54-58