

# This Year Resurrection Sunday Fell On April Fool's Day

*"The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."... (from Psalm 14:1)*

This is April Fool's Day around the world. The origin is vague at best, with many stories and legends put forth as truth. One consistent theme apparently stems from people doing things to "prank or fool" people as far back as the 18th century. People were tricked into believing something was real that was, as we might call it today, "fake news". For the most part, in fun, people did, and still do, their best to deceive others to make them look foolish.

It may seem odd, even irreverent to some, to call attention to April Fool's Day on this Resurrection Sunday. I believe the Holy Spirit brought this to mind to remind all of us on this holiest of days that brings eternal hope to all who have received Him, there still exists in this world a fierce, real enemy whose aim is to make us look foolish by convincing people his lies are the truth and that God's truths are lies.

Jesus warned His followers about the devil and his armies on numerous occasions – calling him the prince of lies, father of lies (deception), and one who came to steal, kill, and destroy. He is clever and cunning, yet holds no power over true believers who can call on the name of Jesus and power of the Holy Spirit to resist and prevail.

If you are one of the billions of people who have been "fooled" into denying the truth of God's love for you and believing the lies of Satan, I plead with you today to turn and see the empty cross and tomb and receive your salvation bought by the precious blood of Christ. He said these words Himself.

***"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*** (John 14:6)

No matter how big a fool you have been or how many foolish things you have done, know this: God loves you. Christ died for you. And He wants you to come to Him now, just as you are...

No fooling,

*Walter*

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## **The Difference Between Suffering and Whining is the Difference Between Jesus and Me**

As I was having my quiet time this morning, and as we approach good Friday on this Maundy Thursday, I was reading a Spurgeon devotion the focus of which was the suffering of Jesus as spoken of by the writer of Hebrews in 5:8.

***"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered."***

Bam! The Holy Spirit gave me the following words that pierced my spirit because, for me, they are both convicting and true. Perhaps they are not true for you, but I was led to share them anyway.

***"There is a huge difference between suffering and whining."***

Interestingly enough, both have to do with me (and you). Jesus suffered horribly in unthinkable ways for me – my sins (and yours). But I assure you, my whining is all about me—my prayers that have gone unanswered, answers I did not like or agree with, even what someone else received that I had the pride and audacity to think should have come to me, not to mention other things that, if written, would embarrass me further.

In full disclosure, I had to remove my glasses and deal with the tears that would not stop flowing—that followed by a time of confession. Whining is all about me. Suffering is all about Jesus—His for me (and you). Because it is so contrary to our natures, the thought of suffering with or for Him is perhaps the hardest means of identification with Jesus we are given. James said, *“Count it all joy...”* What was he thinking? Obviously something very different than I was.

I hope this helps someone. But even if it does not, being faithful to write this brought one desperate man through the fire of conviction, confession, and confirmation that the love of Jesus brings forgiveness and restores the joy of His salvation bought for me (and you) on the Cross.

This is Maundy Thursday. *Maundy* means *mandate or command*. It was birthed from the passage in John 13 after Jesus washed His disciples' feet. In verse 34, John wrote Jesus' words to His closest followers:

***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”***

Today (and every day), whether we wash someone else's feet or not, let's go figure out ways to love on them.

Your desperate brother in Christ,

*Walter*

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# Billy Graham – Another Mighty Soldier of the Cross Goes Home! Hallelujah!



Chose this pic because Billy Graham always pointed people to the Cross of Christ and told them the empty tomb secured our salvation.

So many great and wonderful things have been written, posted, and said concerning Billy Graham, such an amazing, faithful man of God who finally arrived safely Home today.

I can only add to such beautiful testimonials what the Holy Spirit impressed upon me this morning as I sat praying and praising the Lord for his life during my QT. I found myself in Isaiah 50—a passage that is both poetic and prophetic. The

Servant (Jesus) spoke clearly—calling out the unfaithful nation of Israel, reminding them (us) of His power and willingness to help. He was faithful and obedient to the Father's work. Verses 4-5 stood out to me.

*"The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to **sustain the weary one with a word**. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. **The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient nor did I turn back.**"* (Isaiah 50: 4-5 NASB)

I could not help but think of Billy Graham and his amazing ministry of more than seventy years. I feel certain God would have no problem with me saying the words of verse 5 about this dear preacher and evangelist. For clearly the LORD God opened his ears, and Billy Graham was not disobedient – neither did he turn back away from this powerful and profound call on his life.

Praise God, not only for not turning away from our sinful nation, but loving us enough to send Jesus as our Savior to redeem us from death into life eternal. Those of us who are in Christ long to join you, our dear brother. And until He also calls us Home, may He find us faithful as you were.

For Christ's sake

*Walter*

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# Homeless Men – Not all of

# them live on the street!

**Homeless Men – Not all of them live on the street!**

*“Not all homeless men are without places to live”* were the words the Holy Spirit brought to mind this morning as I sat praying and journaling. The fact of the matter is many “homeless” men live in mansions and palaces, mountain retreats and homes on the beach, rescue missions and prison cells. For the Word of God teaches us that

***any man who lives without a relationship with Jesus Christ is “homeless” indeed.***

But for those of us born-again in Christ, He gives us both **provision** of our *home* now and the **promise** of our Home to come.

His Provision:

*Jesus answered, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our home with him.**”* (John 14: 23 HCSB)

His Promise:

*“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for **I go to prepare a place for you.**”* (John 14: 2 NASB)

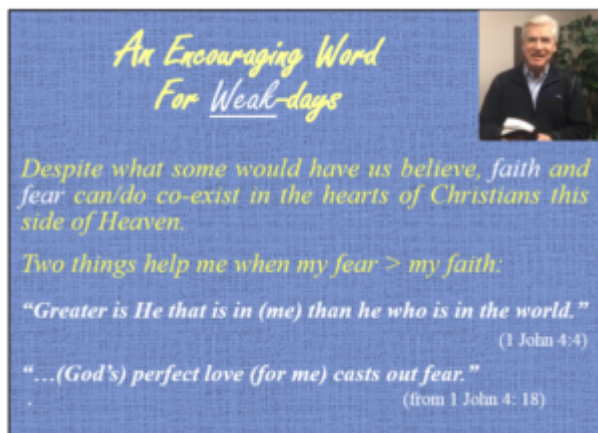
Jesus lives in us now. AND we will live with Him forever. As Christians, the first should fill us with unspeakable joy—the second with unshakable expectation!

*Walter*

Missionary, Messenger, and Minister to Men

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# Faith and Fear in the Hearts of Christians



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## The Greatest Impossibility of All – Eternal Life

### The Greatest Impossibility of All – Eternal Life

#### *Exchanging Difficulties for Impossibilities (Part Four)*

*But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, **but with God all things are possible.**” (Matthew 19: 26 ESV)*

While this sounds encouraging, the disciples were very disturbed over the whole conversation. The preceding verses contained the discourse between Jesus and the rich young ruler who asked Jesus the question, “*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*” He was ill-prepared for Jesus’ answer. Most

of us know the story well. (Matthew 19: 18-23) The rich young man did a good job of justifying himself based on his obedience to the law – keeping the commandments.

**The Difficulty:** When Jesus gave him the final qualification, the rich young man did not like the terms of the deal sheet (as we might say today)—*go sell everything, give the proceeds to the poor, and come follow Me.* We are told he walked away *grieving* because he was very rich. Jesus took this teaching opp to say what has become troubling to many today because of our wealth as individuals and a nation because we are so financially blessed compared to most of the world.

*“I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”* (vs 23-24)

The stunned disciples responded by asking Jesus who *could* be saved. They must have thought *the rich man wanted to know the answer to eternal life and lived a good life, obeying the commandments.* Just because he would not give up his possessions and become a follower of Jesus, he would be kept out of Heaven? Really? Not really.

**The Impossibility:** In the lesson verse today, Jesus gave His disciples the only correct answer to rich man’s question—one asked by millions who want to know how they can live forever – get to Heaven; avoid Hell (if either really exist—get “fire insurance” of a sort).

The rich young man gave the answer many do today. I have been “good” and done “good things”. As Christians, we know our best behavior and works do not qualify us for the Kingdom of God. Jesus said it best, ***“with man this is impossible.”*** Simply stated, that means *you cannot work your way to Heaven,* nor are you *good enough* to ever get there.

But Jesus also gave the simple answer to everyone who seeks



the Truth with a contrite, repentant heart, “*with God all things are possible.*” That is the great news of the Gospel. When we had no way to God—lost in our sin and without hope, God made THE WAY. It cannot be any more simply stated than the first verse taught to children in Christian churches.

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”* (John 3: 16 NASB)

God made the ultimate *impossibility possible* through Christ. The rich man’s issue was his money had become his ‘god’ and stood between him and becoming a follower of Christ. Money is just one of many ‘gods’ that can do that. Are there any in your life doing the same or keeping you from going deeper in your relationship with Him?

*Walter*

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# What Men Can Learn from the Most Amazing Girl in His-Story

**What Men Can Learn from the Most Amazing Girl in His-Story**

*Exchanging Difficulties for Impossibilities* (Part Three)

*“For nothing will be impossible with God.”* (Luke 1: 37 NASB)

**The Difficulty:** Biblical experts put her age as young as thirteen—no older than sixteen. By our standards today, if age is the discriminator, she was just a girl. But God in His

infinite wisdom chose Mary, out of all her gender who came before or would follow, to be the earthly mother to bring His Son into the world. Wow! is about all that comes to mind.

This divine decision brought huge, possibly horrific, consequences. She was unmarried, although engaged to Joseph.

She was a virgin and planned to remain that way until she and Joseph were married. If what this angel said came true, she would face embarrassment, ridicule, and, possibly, death.

**The Impossibility:** Who would believe such a ridiculous story from Mary? *“An angel showed up, told me God was going to get me pregnant, and I will give birth to the long-awaited Messiah.”* Let’s review this: (1) talking angel from God, (2) pregnant virgin, (3) and that with the Son of God-Messiah. Who among us would believe such a story?

### **Mary’s Response:**

*“And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.”* (Luke 1:38 NASB)

Regardless of her physical age, here we are introduced to a very godly, young woman. No wonder she “found favor with the Lord.” (v. 30) Mary’s praise and prayer (known as the Magnificat vs 46-55) speak to her spiritual maturity as she quotes scriptures and accepts this incredibly difficult, yet awesome, assignment and responsibility. No equivocating or fear. Just incredible faith that her God was real and would do what He promised. Again, I say, Wow!

**Our Response:** What then do men of God learn from such a woman of God? Let me suggest (at least) three things. No matter how difficult our circumstances or God’s assignment may be today, our response must be that of Mary.

- **Surrender** our will to God’s will—His sovereignty.
- **Submit** our lives as “living sacrifices” as the Apostle Paul urged, and Mary demonstrated.

- **Serve** the Lord with gladness as David exclaimed and as Mary lived.

So easily said. So hard to live. Let us die trying.

LORD, thank You for incredible difficulties that grace our lives—particularly those that come at the worst times and are most unwelcome. Give us Mary's strength and courage to walk in faith knowing, as she discovered nine months later, there really is "*nothing impossible with God.*" Amen.

*Walter*

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# The Strangest Real Estate Transaction in History

## The Most Ridiculous Real Estate Transaction in History

*Exchanging Difficulties for Impossibilities (Part Two)*

*"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?" (Jeremiah 32: 27)*

Like most prophets of his day, Jeremiah was often the bearer of bad news. He continued to warn the king and God's people of the coming judgment for their ongoing disobedience and sin. Jeremiah prophesied that Judah, the southern kingdom, would soon go the way of the Northern Kingdom—be completely overrun and captured by their enemies (see vs 28-36) . The king's officials were fed up. Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern (water reservoir) that contained mud not water. They later thought better of that and moved him to a guard-house.

Then a strange thing happened. Still in jail, Jeremiah's nephew came and asked him to buy a piece of land on which he had first right of refusal to keep it in the family. What a ridiculous request! Jeremiah had prophesied they were about to be overrun and captured. Why did he go ahead with the deal? Jeremiah got the money together and went to great pains to seal the deal legally and preserve it for posterity. (vs 9-14) Unlike his fellow Israelites, Jeremiah was not only a faithful servant of the LORD, but he believed God even when His words sounded completely ridiculous:

*"For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Houses and fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.""* (v. 15)

God told Jeremiah that Judah would endure a 70-year captivity. (Jeremiah 25: 11) But at the end of that time, God put it in the heart of another pagan king to allow some Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the ruins of their beloved City of David that had been completely destroyed.

Three lessons we should learn from this story.

- God demands our obedience no matter what our circumstances or where we are in life. Jeremiah was obedience to his prophetic calling even though he ended up in being thrown in a cistern and put in jail. God gave him favor with his captors.
- God keeps His promises and redeems His people no matter what. The nation of Israel and the two kingdoms into which it split, were constantly disobeying and defying God. Yet despite all of that, we find Him always making ways to redeem them to Himself because of His love and the covenant He made with Abraham.
- Despite his steadfast faithfulness, even Jeremiah questioned God about the apparent foolishness of buying property amid total destruction and defeat. God answered with the question we must ask ourselves during personal

times of crisis and apparent defeat,

***“Is anything too difficult for Me?”***

We know the answer to that question. But it takes ***faith in the One Who made that promise*** to cling to the Truth of it when all we see around us are walls crumbling, darkness falling, and strong enemies at the gates.

*Walter*

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## **Exchanging Difficulties for Impossibilities (Part One)**

***Exchanging Difficulties for Impossibilities*** sounds on the surface like a bad swap or, at a minimum, moving in the wrong direction. But when LORD inserts Himself into the equation amazing (supernatural) things happen.

***Negative numbers become positive, fractions become whole numbers, and division becomes multiplication.***

There are so many great, encouraging examples in Scripture, it was difficult to choose which ones to share in these brief devotions. I chose four that were great encouragement to me, hoping they will encourage your hearts and breathe fresh wind in your sails. Since each promise/miracle is unique in its own right and application, I decided to create four devotions to honor God as much as possible.

**The first miraculous conception.** A little background review might help. When Abram was 75 years old, God promised him a son (Genesis 12), and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. More than a decade passed and still no heir. His wife (Sarai) intervened,

due to God's apparent slowness, and insisted Abram sleep with one of her maids. That resulted in a son, Ishmael, a rightful heir in those days when a natural son could not be had. But oh how that choice created generational issues for Abraham's descendants – a consequence of not trusting God and running ahead of Him.

Fast forward twenty-four years, God confirmed His covenant promise of a son (Genesis 17). Abraham (name changed by God) fell on his face and laughed. He would be 100 and Sarah 90 if that really happened. Sarah also laughed when she heard. Of course, humanly speaking,

***that was not difficult...it was impossible.***

God's response reads as if He was insulted and in disbelief at their unbelief.

*"Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."* (Genesis 18: 14 NASB)

We know the end of the story (or perhaps, better said, the new beginning of the story of the nation God is birthing.) Isaac was born to a 100 year-old man and 90 year-old woman, just as God promised 25 years before.

My dear friends, if you are a biblical, believing Christian, struggling to believe God for something you know in your heart He promised, the best advice I can offer you is to watch and pray. (I am sure we all wish we had taken that advice at times.) God is faithful, and in Him His promises are Yes and Amen. (2 Corinthians 1: 20)

To my friends who may be reading this who have heretofore not believed God loves you, nor received His Promise of salvation in Jesus Christ, consider His patience, love, and faithfulness over twenty-five years to a man and woman whose faith wavered just as our does. God is patiently waiting for you as well. Will you believe today and receive the Gift (Jesus) He freely offers to all who confess their sins and come seeking His forgiveness and help? I pray you will.

## Oil of Gladness – Pour It On!

Even those of us who do little cooking are familiar with the acrostic, EV00 – Extra Virgin Olive Oil. It has great use in healthy cooking and possesses proven health benefits related to cholesterol and CV disease.

The use of olive oil for anointing purposes throughout biblical history is well-documented. (Anointing typically means pouring over someone's head.) We first see this used on Aaron (the brother of Moses and first high priest (Exodus 30). David, the shepherd boy who became King, used this well-known phrase in his most eloquent psalm. *"Thou anointest my head with oil."* (Psalm 23: 5). I imagine its greatest use was anointing Jesus' body for burial (olive oil and spices).

There is another reference to the use of oil for anointing that grabs my attention every time I read two passages of Scripture where we find it—***the oil of gladness***. The first use is found in a beautiful, messianic psalm.

*you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions; (Psalm 45: 7 ESV)*

The writer of the book of Hebrews began by diving immediately into the fact that Jesus is God's answer for mankind. He quoted these verses from Psalm 45 in Hebrews 1: 8-9. Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness.

The second use occurs in Isaiah 61: 1-3. This chapter also contains promises of God, reassuring the Israelites He would

deliver them from their sufferings and captivity in the future. These verses also contain great messianic prophecy. Jesus read parts of this passage when He first taught in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth. (He did not quote verse 3.)

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the LORD has anointed me, to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners...to grant those who mourn *in* Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, ***the oil of gladness instead of mourning,***"

Gladness. Perhaps when I give you my definition of that word, you will understand and even share, my conviction concerning this powerful anointing. Webster may disagree, but the Holy Spirit has impressed upon mine that...

*"gladness is the absence of whining and the presence of joy".*

I can be a real whiner sometimes. My wife has even asked (sarcastically) if I want some cheese with my "whine"! This year I am committed to experiencing more of the joy of the Lord, so ***His oil of gladness can pour over me*** and, just maybe, touch those with whom I come in contact.

*Walter*