



THE
POWER
of the
CROSS

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THE CROSS

The Cross—the instrument of torture upon which Jesus died—is the most well-known symbol of Christianity. What could possibly explain a two

millennia-long fixation on something so horrible? One clue is Jesus' final words in John 19:30, uttered as He died: "It is finished." That victorious declaration, spoken in the midst of what looked like humiliating defeat, tells us Jesus saw these events as an accomplishment. But how could a tragic end to Jesus' amazing teaching and miracle-working ministry be an accomplishment?

Jesus taught that He came to "seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10) and "to give his life as a ransom for many"

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(Mark 10:45). On the Cross, a divine transaction took place. It was His life for ours—a ransom paid to buy us back from our lost condition. That's why the day Jesus died is called "Good Friday," not "Tragic Friday." Jesus' death on the Cross completed the work God gave Him to do, because His mission was not just to teach us but to die for us. All that is left for us to do is to personally accept that wonderful gift for ourselves. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes

in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

THE RESURRECTION

As grand as the accomplishment on the Cross was, the story doesn't end there.

On the third day, the stone that covered the grave entrance was rolled away and Jesus came back from the dead. He was alive, never to die again. “He is not here,” said the angel in Luke 24:6 to the startled disciples looking for Him at the tomb. The Resurrection declared Jesus as Victor over death—humanity's most

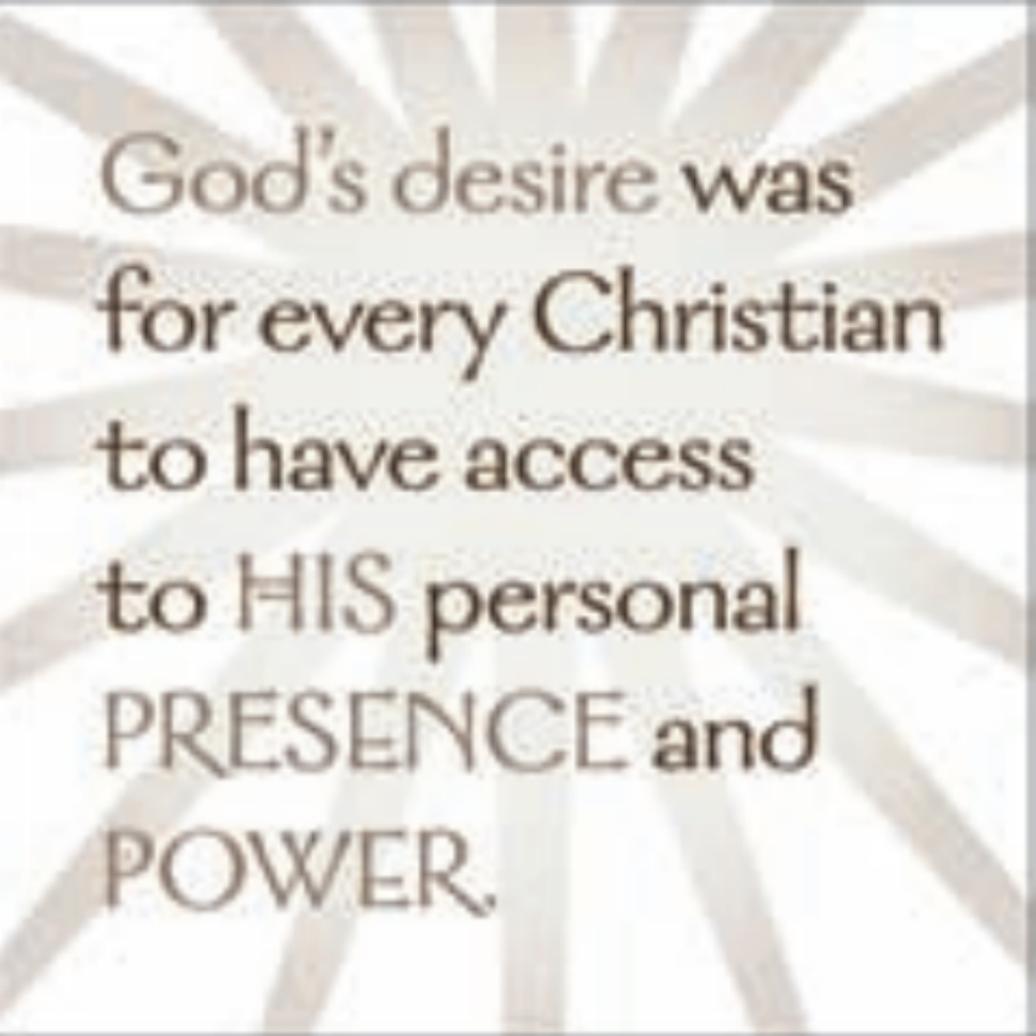
The Resurrection
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unsolvable problem. By rising, He showed that even death was no match to His power. Without the Resurrection, Jesus' life was unique but His end was just like every other human who has ever walked the earth. Faith in Him under those circumstances would be foolish—a criticism understood by both Christianity's adherents and detractors. “If Christ is not raised, your faith is futile,” wrote the Apostle Paul just a few decades after this event (1 Corinthians 15:17).

Yet if, in fact, the Resurrection did occur, Jesus' life and mission become the most powerful events this world has ever seen. Therefore, faith makes sense. And if we fail to trust in Him—in light of what He did for us—disbelief seems foolish.

The Resurrection assures us that power beyond human comprehension is available to the followers of Jesus. Everything changes when we visit the foot of the Cross and stare in wonder at the open doorway to the tomb.

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A background of light gray rays radiating from the center, resembling a sunburst or starburst pattern.

God's desire was
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to have access
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PRESENCE and
POWER.

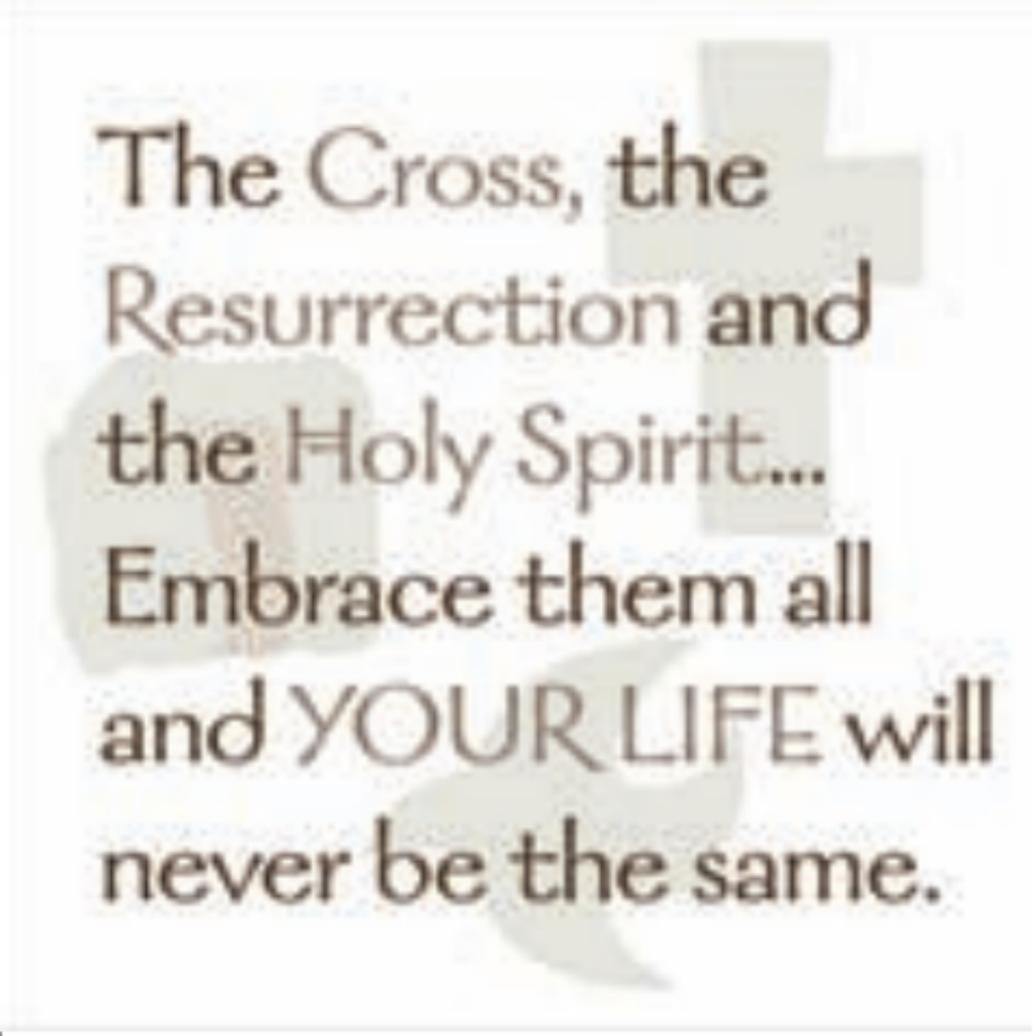
THE HOLY SPIRIT

And there's more! The power of the resurrected Jesus comes to us through His Spirit. After His resurrection, Jesus told His followers that the same Holy Spirit who showed up at His baptism in the form of a dove would be in them. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8). God's desire was for every Christian to have access to His personal presence and power. At Pentecost, 50 days after His resurrection, that's what happened.

What does this powerful Person do in our lives? Jesus was clear: the Holy Spirit comes on us so we can be His witnesses by being like Him. The character and power Jesus had, we can have. His Spirit produces fruit in us, and the Apostle Paul describes exactly what that looks like: "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). In other words, the Christian life. These characteristics demonstrate

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The background features a large, faint, light-colored cross in the upper right and a faint dove in the lower right, both serving as subtle religious symbols.

The Cross, the
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Embrace them all
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that God is at work in Jesus' followers. And when His power produces these qualities in us, the natural result is that non-Christians sit up and take notice. If the fruit of the Spirit is the Christian life, the fruit of the Christian life is more Christians.

The Cross, the Resurrection and the Holy Spirit. These set Christianity apart from every religion. Take any one away and you don't have the whole story. Embrace them all and your life will never be the same!

Credits: Judson Poling, writer

*We would love to
hear from you!*

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