

## Reflections On Being Raised From the Dead

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Phil. 3:10-11 (KJV).

Easter is a different kind of holiday for me than Christmas. In the winter, it usually is cold outside and everyone is holed-up indoors. Christmas is a snug holiday. We have the promise of the baby Jesus who is going to save the world.

At Easter, the story of Jesus' earthly life is over. When you think about it, Jesus lived a tragic earthly existence: from being born out-of-wedlock in a stable; to being hunted by soldiers as an infant; to being executed as a common criminal; to being buried in a borrowed tomb. The Prophet wrote that the Messiah was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:3): and Jesus was!

My mother is 80 years old. The last time I saw her, we frankly discussed the fact that her days on this Earth are winding down.

"Death is a part of the natural order," she said emphatically. "It is built into the entire animal kingdom!"

I don't know what it was about those words of my mother, but they were somehow very comforting to me.

When I was being given the sales-pitch for Christianity, I was told that Jesus died in order to pay the penalty for my sin and He arose for my justification (Romans 4:25).

As a result of this sales-pitch, I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior. This occurred before I ever came to prison!

Since that time, I have experienced moral corruption; I have experienced “the wages of sin;” I have experienced contrition and repentance; I have experienced being made-whole from a debilitating chronic illness. I even have experienced a conditional release from prison. One thing which I have not yet experienced is being freed from the penalty of my sin.

Today’s pop psychologists have redefined the word “forgiveness.” The current stock-line is that forgiveness benefits the injured rather than the perpetrator. Under this definition, a victim can “forgive” a perpetrator, but the perpetrator still has to suffer the penalty of his actions.

This stock-line offers a form of godliness, but denies the power thereof.

Suppose I borrow Oprah Winfrey’s \$150,000 automobile, drive it carelessly, and get into a one-car wreck: totaling the automobile. I then would go to Oprah and tell her that I will work until I pay her to replace her car. If Oprah then says, “I forgive you the debt,” that means that I don’t have to pay the \$150,000. It is as plain and simple as that!

The pop psychologists will tell Oprah that forgiveness means that she is not to feel bitter towards me while I am working the rest of my life in order to pay the \$150,000.

This definition of forgiveness is a lie straight from the Devil!

Actually, as Shakespeare so eloquently wrote in “The Merchant of Venice:”

“Mercy (forgiveness) blesseth him who give and him who takes.”

No one is stating that justice should not be applied. However, the entire message of the Bible is one of God's justice tempered with God's unconditional mercy.

Again, Mr. Shakespeare offers words of wisdom:

“And earthly power doth then show likest God's,  
When mercy seasons justice.”

In my humble way of thinking, the adoption of Mr. Shakespeare's way of thinking is what it means “to raise from the dead.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:

**Amen!**

John P. Alexander  
Ambassador for Christ  
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