

**Love Reigns**  
**Pastor Joe Oakley**  
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I want to begin today by asking you a question: Why did Jesus die?  
 If you say – to save us from our sins – you would be right.  
 If you say – so we can go to heaven – you would be right.

But what is the motivation for that? The most memorized verse in the Bible – John 3:16 – answers that question.

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

It was the love of God that caused Jesus to come to earth and to offer Himself as a sacrifice on the cross to forgive the world of its sins. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the greatest demonstrations of love in history. You can put all other love stories together and they do not equal the extent of God's love!

My message today is titled Love Reigns. Easter shows us that God loves us unconditionally and beyond reason! God loves us because as 1 John 4:16 says: *God is love.*

This means more than God loves or God has love. It means He is defined by love. And 1 Corinthians 13:8 says *Love never fails.*

God's love never fails, never ends, never lessens, never falters. You cannot do anything to make God love you any more than He already does because He loves you infinitely. And you can never do anything to make God love you less than totally. God's love never fails! Love Reigns!

Today we will be discovering how God's love transforms our past, present, and future. How His love reigns over our past, present and future. That's because the resurrection of Jesus Christ changed everything! Easter is all about change. God took the worst possible situation – the death of His Son – turned it around, used it for good and changed the world.

Easter changed history. Every time you write a date, the focal point is Jesus Christ. Every time you write A.D. or B.C. it proves that the resurrection is the most important event of history. More than that it is still changing individual lives like me, like you, today. Love reigns over our past, present and future.

We need to understand that salvation is past, present and future. I'm not saying you get born again over and over – but I am saying that salvation is more than getting born again. Where do I get this? From the Bible!

2 Corinthians 1:10 says:

*(For it is He) Who rescued and saved us from such a perilous death, and He will still rescue and save us; and on Him we have set our hope that He will again deliver us.*

This passage shows us how we need to be saved on 3 levels – past, present and future.

Another way to say it is:

- We have been saved – past tense
- We are being saved – present tense
- We will be saved – future tense

- 1) Past Salvation – justification – freedom from the penalty of sin
- 2) Present Salvation – sanctification – freedom from the power of sin
- 3) Future Salvation – glorification – freedom from the presence of sin

If you're not sure about this – let me read you several Scriptures that prove it.  
Romans 5:1-2 says:

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith (PAST), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand (PRESENT). And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (FUTURE).*

Philippians 1:6 says:

*Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you (past) will carry it on to completion (present) until the day of Christ Jesus (future).*

Hebrews 10:14 says:

*For by one offering (Past) He has perfected forever (Future) those who are being made holy (Present).*

We were saved the very moment that we committed our lives to Jesus Christ. We were saved from Hell and saved from the wrath of God. But there are still some things in us that need to be saved!

We are being saved right now as we are being changed into the image of Jesus Christ. And one day - in the resurrection - our salvation will be complete. We are saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved.

### **1- Love Reigns Over our Past**

Think about how often we say, “You can’t change the past.”

And there's truth to that. What's done is done. But God's love and resurrection power are so powerful that they change the way we view the past and the way our past can impact us today.

For many people – the past is reigning over them. Something they did or something that happened to them in the past is still ruling their lives today. It is with them constantly. It runs through their mind frequently. And it causes shame or condemnation or pain to the extent that it negatively impacts their lives today. It causes them to behave in certain ways or respond to people negatively. It might have happened years ago, but it holds them back – it holds them captive today.

And that's what God's love can change! God's love and resurrection power can transform the way we view the past and the way it impacts us today.

Past sins can haunt us today – but God's love reigns over that by forgiving all our sins! Resurrection power cancels out your past life and gives you new life. Things that happened in the past can give us a false identity – one that is not the way God sees us. But God's love reigns over that by giving you a new identity in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

When you are born again through faith in Christ – the old you is dead and you are a new creation. You were dead in sin – now you're alive in Christ. God took out your heart of stone and gave you a heart of flesh. You once were headed to destruction – now your destiny is heaven.

So – when Satan brings up junk from your past – just tell him – “That's the old me and the old me is dead! I am no longer defined by my past – I'm a new creation in Christ!”

But Pastor Joe – you don't know how bad I was. Maybe not – but I know what 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says:

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And **such were some of you**. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

I know it's popular today to believe that people cannot change their sexual identity or sinful behaviors. But the word of God says otherwise!

God's love and resurrection power reign over our pasts!

## 2- Love Reigns Over our Future

I opened this message talking about how the love of God was the motivation for Jesus dying to save us from sin and give us a home in heaven. He also died to deliver us from the fear of death! Hebrews 2:14-15 says:

*Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could He die, and only by dying could He break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could He set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.*

One of the biggest things people fear is death. That's because they have no clue what happens after. Nothing? Heaven? Hell? But the love of God delivers us from that fear! We see that in 1 John 4:18:

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears has not reached the full maturity of love.*

If you are fearing punishment, your understanding of God's love has some growing to do! This is especially true concerning death. A believer should not fear death because we know that death is not the end for us. Death is just a transition from life on earth to life in heaven. Our last breath on earth is immediately followed by our first breath in heaven! There we will experience no pain or tears – only everlasting joy in the presence of God. When you understand and believe this – God's love will reign over your future instead of fear!

Deb's sister used to be very afraid of flying, so she traveled by bus. When she came to Dallas it would take her 31 hours on a Greyhound bus to get here. Then it took her 31 hours to get home. She hated it but she was terrified of flying.

But one day she became a believer in Jesus Christ. Since that time she overcome her fear of flying. When Deb asked her what changed, she said that now if the plane crashes she knows where she was going. So that fear does not rule over her anymore.

What's ruling your future right now? Fear or faith in God's love and resurrection power? Today God can set you free from your fear of the future! Not only does God's love reign over our past and our future, but...

## 3- Love Reigns Over our Present

Since Jesus resurrected from the dead and since we will be resurrected to live with Him forever – how does that impact us now? What does the love that reigns over our past and future do for us today? Colossians 2:13 says: *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.*

Before you are born again – you are dead in your sins. But when you are born again – you receive the life of Christ. Colossians 2:6 says:

*Having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

Notice that our salvation is based on faith in the resurrection power of God. The power of the resurrection is also the power that changes people. Paul said in Ephesians 1:19-20:

*I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great His power is to help those who believe Him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the place of honor at God's right hand in heaven.*

Paul made it emphatically clear that no power has ever equaled or rivaled the power that was required for Christ's resurrection. It was the greatest manifestation of power that the universe has ever witnessed. And the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to those who believe in Him.

I know many people are skeptical about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. One of the greatest skeptics of all time was a man named Saul of Tarsus. He was alive in days of the early church in Jerusalem. He hated anything to do with Christianity, so he persecuted believers, had them thrown in prison and even watched them be killed for their faith.

His goal was to stamp out Christianity, so he traveled from Jerusalem to Damascus to attack the believers there. But on the way something happened that changed the course of history. It changed Saul from a zealous skeptic to a zealous believer.

From one who fought against Christianity to one who fought for it.

From one who wanted to destroy the church to a builder of the church.

From one who took letters to Damascus authorizing him to arrest Christians to one who wrote letters to the churches of Christ.

From one who went on journeys to attack Christianity to one who went on missionary journeys sharing the Good News of Christ.

The thing that changed Saul the skeptic to Paul the apostle is the fact that he had an encounter with the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. An encounter that changed him forever. That change is a proof of the resurrection. Another proof is the amount of eyewitnesses who saw Jesus alive after His resurrection. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-10

*I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and He was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.*

*He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, He was seen by more*

*than 500 of His followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then He was seen by James and later by all the apostles.*

*Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw Him. For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church. But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out His special favor on me—and not without results.*

Paul was changed forever by an encounter with the risen Christ. After that – he wrote many times about how God’s love and resurrection power changed him and reigned in his life. I’ve read some of those verses in this sermon. I’ll just read one more passage that shows how God’s love and resurrection power reign over our past, present and future. Paul starts out in Ephesians 2:1-7 talking about our past.

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

Now Paul talks about how God’s love reigns in us now because of how He changed our past.

*But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,*

Now Paul talks about how God’s love triumphs in the future. in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. God’s love reigns – past, present and future.

So – if you’re thinking that no power can change your life, you’re wrong. The resurrection power of Jesus can overcome anything! That same resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead 2000 years ago is available to change your life today.

- Some of you have lost your hope - resurrection power can change that!
- Some of you have wounds from the past that you think will never heal – resurrection power can change that!
- Some of you are struggling with a sin or an addiction – resurrection power can change that!
- Some of you have believed and prayed for something for a long time and you’ve given up hope of ever receiving an answer - resurrection power can change that!
- Some of you are so down on yourselves that you don’t even want to go on living - resurrection power can change that!

- Some of you don't even know if you believe in God anymore - resurrection power can change that!

Many of you are desperate to make a change in your life. But some of you can't let go of your past failures and mistakes. Some of you feel powerless over the challenges you are facing right now. Some of you feel hopeless about your future! The resurrection means that no situation is too hopeless! No problem is too big for Jesus!

Friends, your life can change today. Maybe you've thought that you've hit a dead end because of a mistake you've made, or a destructive habit you're caught in.

I've got good news for you: It's not over. Just as it wasn't over when Jesus died on the cross and was buried, it's not over for you. Jesus Christ offers you forgiveness today. He promises to cancel your sins and wipe them off your record. He offers you a chance to start over!

This is how love reigns! Because Jesus took our sins upon Himself on the cross—because God raised Jesus from the dead in victory over sin and death—it is not over. God is still in the resurrection business and He can change your life!

So, when Satan brings up a past sin - you tell him God already saved you from your past.

When Satan brings up something you are currently struggling with – you tell him God is saving you from that!

When Satan tries to make you fearful of your future by saying, “You'll never get free,” – you say, “God has saved me, God is saving me and God WILL save me!”

You see God started something in me – and my Bible says that what God starts God will finish! My God is able to save me to the uttermost!

He saves me past, present and future!

He saves me in all times, all places and all circumstances.

I'm doing what Peter said to do in 1 Peter 1:8-9

*Rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

I rejoice because God's love reigns over my past, present and future.

Can you thank God for saving you and for reigning in your life?

Can you thank Him that He HAS saved you?

Can you thank Him that He IS saving you?

Can you thank Him that He WILL save you?

Love reigns!!!