

## **CCC EXPERIENCE FREEDOM THIS EASTER!**

### **Easter Messages 2008**

#### **Galatians 5:7, Colossians 1:14**

Today we celebrate the focal point of history.

Today we celebrate the greatest event that ever happened and why is this event so great? It split history into A.D. and B.C. Do you realize that every time you write a check, every time you use a date, you're referring to Jesus Christ. You're talking about A.D. and B.C. – When we say March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008.../ 2008 years from what? From the resurrection of Jesus Christ is what is being referred to...

Why is it such a big deal you may ask? Let me share something with you in the next 24 hours over a billion people will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus

Christ. Why? Because it proved who Jesus was. Jesus was the type of guy that made some amazing outrageous statements. He said things like, *"I'm God."* He said things like, *"I am the only way to the Father."*

I find it so interesting that Jesus never claimed to be a great teacher. Not once did He say that. He said, "I'm the Savior of the world. I am the Messiah... He said, "I am the only way to heaven." I would say that they are amazing... outrageous... and incredible challenging claims that Jesus made, wouldn't you

Jesus said, "I'm God and have come to earth in human form so you could know what God's like." He said, I'm going to prove it by after they kill me, three days later I'm come back to life. I would say that they

are amazing outrageous incredible challenging claims, and guess what that just what he did.

George Gallup says that 84% of Americans say they accept the resurrection of Jesus Christ and they believe it is an historical fact. So what?

The real issue this morning is not did it really happen. We have already established that 84% of Americans accept the resurrection of Jesus Christ and believe it's an historical fact.

The real issue this morning is “What difference does it make to me? What difference does Easter make?”

Today in Riva Maryland March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008 living in the land of pleasant living.../ so what that Jesus rose from the dead 2008 years ago. Why should I celebrate it? What difference does it make to me?

This is what I want to talk to you about this morning. See even though the Gallop polls say that 84% on Americans accept the resurrection of Christ. My question to you is but have you ever experience the freedom that Easter has to offer, the freedom that the Resurrection offers. There is a verse in God's Word, the Bible that says, "*Christ bought our freedom with his blood.*" Colossians 1:14

Jesus bought yours and my freedom and we can be free. See Easter is all about Jesus buying your freedom so you can be free from the four greatest problems in your life. And friends that's the “Good News” I want to bring you today; “That you can be free from the four greatest problems in your life.

What difference does Easter make: What can Christ set me free from this Easter? First:

1. **I CAN BE FREE FROM THE:**

**GUILT OVER MY PAST**

Guilt is the number one destroyer of happiness. It's the number one source of stress in people lives today. It has been found that guilt cause physical illness. It has been found that guilt is the number one cause of depression. All of us feel guilty at times. We all have regrets in our lives because none of us is perfect. I know I'm not and guess what, You're not either.

We've all said things we wish we hadn't said. We've all done things we wish we hadn't done, so we feel guilty. Here's the Good News. God wants to wipe your slate clean. He wants to let you start over this

Easter 2008. What Christ did on the cross means you can live guilt free today. Friends I don't know about you but to me that's good news!

I love this verse in the bible, It says, *"By the death of Christ, we are set free. That is our sins are forgiven."* Ephesians 1:7 God wants to set you free from feeling guilty this Easter.

The Bible says, *"He has canceled every record of the debt we owed. Christ has done away with it by nailing it to the cross."* Colossians 3:14 [Circle "canceled"]

What I am saying to you this morning is, What God has forgiven, you can forget. God says it is cancelled. So I don't have to keep beating myself to death over things I regret in the past – I don't have to

keep rehearsing the memory. It's canceled. I can quit nailing myself to a cross over things I feel bad about.../ Why? Because Jesus took my place and was nailed to a cross for me. That's good news!

How many of you, when you were kids, had an Etch-A-Sketch. When you turned it over and shook it, you flipped it back over with a clean slate. That verse we read is the etch-a-sketch verse of the Bible. God says I want to wipe your slate clean. I want to give you a clear conscious. That's good news! God wants to give it to you.

The Bible also says, "*There is no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ.*" Romans 8:1  
Regardless of who you are and regardless of what you've done, you mean a great deal to God, you matter to God.

You may not think it... But He loves you and He wants to forgive you and wants to set you free from guilt and regrets that you fell badly about. He wants to give you a second chance. It's never too late to start over. This Easter God wants to set you free from the guilt of the past. But that's just part of it.

What difference does Easter make first I can be free from the guilt of my past. But second

## **2. CHRIST WANTS TO SET YOU FREE FROM WORRY ABOUT YOUR FUTURE.**

America is known as a nation of worriers. We worry about everything – we worry about bills, we worry about problems, we worry about our health, we worry about our career, heck in America we even worry about our worries....

If you look up the word "worry" in a dictionary you'll find it means "divided mind". That's what worry is – it's a mental tug of war that's pulling you in different directions.

The greatest, most common worry that we all have is the "What If?" worry.../ What if this happens or what if that happens.../ We worry worry, worry.../ Would you like to be free from worry?

Let me share what God word says, *"God's spirit has been at work in your heart through Jesus Christ. May God grant you increasing freedom from anxiety and fear."* 1 Peter The Bible says, Don't worry, Don't panic, pray! Don't worry! Don't panic! Cast all your cares on the Lord."

When you start to worry, if it's worth worrying about it's certainly worth praying about. Worry has never solved the problem. Worry has no benefits it's useless. Worry cannot change your past, worry cannot control the future and all worry does is mess up today.

Philippians 4:13 *"I am ready for anything through the strength of Christ who lives in me."* The secret of worry free living is trust your future to Christ. You Say, "God, I don't know what the future holds but I know who holds the future -- You do. So I'm not going to sweat it because with Your power in me... I can handle whatever comes my way with You. I can handle everything and anything through the power of Christ."

What difference does Easter make: You can be free from the guilt of your past. You can be free from worry of your future.

### **3. CHRIST CAN SET ME FREE FROM LIVING WITHOUT PURPOSE TODAY.**

See deep inside each and everyone one of us God has put a desire for us to know Him. You may not recognize it, but it is deep inside you. God has given each of us the desire to know what really matters in life, and that is to know God.

It comes out in questions like: Why am I here? What am I here on earth for? What is life really all about? Does my life count? Does it matter? Is there a purpose to my life?

It comes out in questions like, “Am I here just to take up space, breathe the air, use resources and then die?”

It comes out in questions like: “Is there more to life than me just getting up in the morning, going to work, coming home, watching tv, then going to bed, getting up the next morning, going to work, coming home, watching tv, going to bed... and relax on the week end, retire and then die. Is there more to my life than just that? It comes out in questions like:

The good news is you're not an accident. I don't care what the circumstances are of your birth, You're not an accident. God made you for a purpose. The Bible says God planned you even before you were born. Ephesians 2:10 *"We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as He meant for us to*

*live.*" God uniquely designed you – you're a "work of art". God has shaped you uniquely like nobody else in this world and He has a personal life mission for you that He wants you to fulfill. The tragedy is that many people go all the way through life never discovering their purpose.

The Bible says, *"Life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus."* Acts 20:24 He's saying, you have a purpose. If I don't fulfill my purpose I'm not living, I'm just existing. If there's anything I want to say to you this morning it's this: I beg you – Find your purpose.

Number four: "What difference does Easter make?"

#### **4. JESUS CAN SET ME FREE FROM HAVING TO EARN MY WAY TO HEAVEN.**

The Bible says, *"Christ has set you free from following the world's idea of how to be saved by doing good and obeying various rules."* Colossians 2:20

Earning my way to Heaven God's word, the bible says, that's the world's idea. If I were to go down to the corner and take a personal survey on the street and ask everybody who came along "Are you going to heaven?" George Gallop says, 99% would say, "I hope so."

Then if I were to follow it up with the another question "On what do you base that hope on going to Heaven?" George Gallop says, 99% would say, "I try to be a good person." God says "Wrong answer!"

That what the world says.../ That's the world's idea of how you get to heaven is by keeping rules and

regulations and that kind of stuff, trying to be good. You know what we call that.../ that's called religion.

I'm going to give you a summary of the entire Bible in a few sentences. Here's what the Bible says about your future and I would suggest that you trust God's Word , the Bible, rather than what Hollywood says, or some religions say or somebody else says – including myself.../ God knows more about this than you or I. Here the deal:

1) Heaven is a perfect place. Absolutely perfect. There's no sin in heaven. There's no crime in heaven. There's no bad motives and moods in heaven. There's no disease, no mistakes. Heaven is a perfect place.

2) You have to be perfect to go there.

You say, "I don't stand a chance." Right! Neither do I. Nether did Mother Theresa and all her good works she did. She wasn't perfect either and you have to be perfect to be there.

That's why God invented Plan B. Heaven's a perfect place and if God let you in, being imperfect, then it wouldn't be perfect any more would it.

The Bible says that there are two ways to heaven. Plan A is to be perfect. And what that means is from the day you're born you never sin, you never do anything wrong, you do everything right and you're always perfect. And if you were to live a perfect life and you were to die and go before God and He say, "Why should I let you into heaven," you'd say, "Because I never did

anything wrong." God would say, "You earned it.

Come on in."

But the likelihood of that happening to you or anybody is about the likelihood of getting into the baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown having to have batted 1000 and played error free ball your entire career. There's not a chance of any of us being perfect our entire life!

But see.../ It's God's desire that you and I spend eternity with Him in Heaven. He doesn't want to spend eternity without you and me. So God comes up with Plan B.

Plan B is He came to earth in human form and showed us what it's like to live a perfect life. We call that person Jesus. Plan B is we get to heaven on God's ticket in trusting in Christ, the only person who was perfect to get you there.

The Bible says, *"You don't earn the right to heaven. It is a gift. If a person could earn it by being good then it wouldn't be free. But it is."* Romans 4:4

You just trust Christ. In the verse it says you are not saved by obeying various rules and regulations or rituals. You don't get to heaven by keeping rules. You don't get to heaven by regulations. You don't get to heaven by rituals. You don't get to heaven by religion.

Not once in the Bible does it say religion saves you or some type of ritual saves you. You may be Catholic, you may be Protestant, you may be Jewish, Buddhist, Baptist, Methodist. I don't care if you have been christened and confirmed. I don't care what you are. Religion is simply man's attempt to get to God.

But you can't get to God.../ that's why He came because we couldn't get to Him.../ so He came to you and me in the form of a person we call, Jesus. God says it's not rules and all that kind of stuff; it's about a relationship. It's knowing and trusting my son, Jesus Christ, in a personal way, It about a relationship.../ And it's a free gift.

One day you're going to stand before God and God's going to say, "Why should I let you into a perfect place?" You can either say, because of Plan A -- I was perfect." Or you say, Plan B "because I trusted in Your son, Jesus Christ, who said You'd let me because of Him." Because of what He did.../ that's it you had the right relationship with the right person.

Notice it says you don't earn it; it's a gift. The Bible says, *"The free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ."* Romans 6:23 Circle "eternal life".

It says *"The free gift of God is eternal life."* How can I be certain what happens to me after I die?

Accept the free gift.

The obvious question is to me for you today is, "Have you received it?" Every one of us came to Easter Sunday this morning for different reasons. Some of us came out of habit. Some of us came out of tradition. You came because that's what you do on Easter -- you go to church. Some of you came because a friend invited you.

Regardless of why you think you're here you're not here by accident. God knew you'd be out here with

me this Easter hearing the “Good News.” God drew you here today to get your attentions. God wanted to get you to slow down long enough to get your attention and say, "You matter to Me. I don't want you to just exist in life. I, God want you to make the rest of your life, the best of your life and you do that by accepting My gift.

What difference does Easter make: What can Christ set me free from this Easter? These four benefits we talked about today – I can live guilt free, I can live worry free, I can live with a purpose in my life, and I can live not having to earn my way to heaven -- that's the good news of Easter. That's how you experience the freedom this Easter. Those four benefits we talked about are summed up in one word – it's called, salvation.

Have you ever heard of that word. Salvation. Jesus came to be the Savior of the world.

I can't give you Christ's salvation. You have to ask Him for it and how do you do that? You just say to God, "God, I'm scraping Plan A. The me being perfect plan.../ I know now there's not a chance in a million of me being perfect. And I ask You to allow me to work Plan B in my life and I'll start today putting my trust in Christ. I will start today being a follower of Christ.

Can I share one more thing with you before closing.../ There is absolutely nothing more that I want for each of you than for you to know Christ personally like I do. But if I could make that choice for you, I wouldn't do it. See, I am not here today to manipulate you to change. I am not here today to manipulate you to

turn from your ways and turn to God's ways... See because that type of change never last. But this Easter, if you're ready to say, "I'd like to experience the freedom of Christ this Easter, I'd like to get to know God, I'd like to begin that special journey." I invite you to read this prayer with me that's in your bulletins.

**Prayer:** "Dear God, I believe Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be, Your son, and that He proved it by rising from death. Jesus Christ thank You for dying for me on the cross. I want to get to know You personally and experience the freedom You offer. As much as I know how, I ask You to come into my life and be my Lord and Savior. I accept Your free gift of salvation. Amen."

If you sincerely meant that prayer in your heart, there is no question that God heard you. Friends this is

the beginning of the first step in the journey for the rest of your life. What do you do now?

1) Share your decision that you made today with somebody else. Find someone who you know for sure is a Christian and share it with them.../ That's the acid test of if you really meant it today. Tell somebody else, "I committed my life to Christ today. I'm trusting in Him for salvation."

2) You need to find a church family that will support you. There are lots of good churches, many, many good churches. As long as they preach Christ, find one and say, "That's where I fit." We welcome you here at Calvary. You can be a part of us if you don't have a church home. Some of you were close to God in the past and you kind of drifted away. Or you moved to

this area and never found a church home. We welcome you to be a part of our church family. You need to become a part of a family to get that nourishment, that spiritual encouragement on a regular basis.

What if I've been close to God and I've fallen away from Him? Does God have anything to say to me this Easter?

Yes. Isaiah says, "*With deep love I will welcome you home.*" This Easter come home to God.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for this beautiful morning. Thank You that many people today are opening their lives to You and saying, "Yes, I want to step across the line. I want to experience the freedom of Christ and follow Him. I want a relationship, not a religion or ritual." May we, as a church, help them to grow and become all

that You want them to be. We thank You for this.

Thank You, Lord, that because of Jesus Christ at Easter we can be set free from guilt, from worry, from purposelessness in life, and from having to earn our way to heaven. Thank You, Lord, that we're free at last. In Jesus' name we pray this. Amen.