

## THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

**“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection” (Phil 3:10)**

On July 14, 1789 the people of Paris stormed the Bastille. The Bastille was a prison with walls 10 feet thick and towers 90 feet high. This infamous prison had become the symbol of a corrupt monarchy. The free thinking Voltaire had himself been imprisoned there twice. The mob outside the prison had confiscated 32,000 rifles but had no ammunition. Expecting to be attacked by the army, and hearing that there was ammunition at the Bastille, they made the daring move to scale the walls. The prison was defended by cannon, 80 French soldiers and 30 Swiss guards. Once the draw bridge was dropped, however, the prison surrendered and the severed head of Governor deLaunay was paraded by the mob.

The stage was now set for revolution. Louis XVI was constrained to accept the Constitution of 1791 but later was executed with his queen, Marie Antionette. 50,000 priests and 132 bishops, however, refused to accept the new constitution. The Catholic Church had lost control in a Catholic country. A tidal wave of change had come.

At this stage of history a member of the French Directory stepped into this spiritual vacuum and started a new religion. His name was Louis Marie la Revelliere Lepaux (also known as the Holy Hunchback). I am told that he borrowed what he thought best from the world's great religions and called his new church "Theophilanthropes" or, "The New Morality". He wanted his followers to be "Adorers of God and Friends of men". Obviously it failed! Most of you have probably never heard of it. When probing for an answer for the failure, the statesman Talleyrand gave Lepaux this salient advice. "If you really want your new religion to succeed, you need to go get yourself crucified, then rise from the dead three days later".

Touche!

Christ was raised from the dead and 2,000 years later Christianity is still succeeding. The number of believers is still growing all over the world and the resurrection, no doubt, has played a pivotal part in this success. Paul put it like this: **“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor 15:14-20)**

But the power of the resurrection means far more than what happened in the past to validate the claims of Christ. It also means far more than the blessed hope we have for the future. It is an ever present reality that has been promised to Christians in every generation. Thirty years after Christ had been raised from the dead Paul was still praying for the power of the resurrection. Yes, he had some of that power, but obviously he wanted more. He wrote to the Ephesians that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead in the past, was available to them in the present (see Eph. 1:18 - 23). He further promised that this power would be able to accomplish far more than we could ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20).

It is a common problem for people to have faith in the past, and faith in the future, but no faith in the present. Psalm 44, for example, extols the miracles God did in the days of Moses while saying nothing of His power in the present. In the days of Moses, however, they had the same problem. Even Moses questioned the power of God to solve the problems of his own generation. God cancelled out his excuses, however, by reminding Moses that He is the Great "I Am." Yes He "was" a Great God in the past, and yes He "will be" a Great God in the future, but He is also a Great God today, and every day. So let us pray with Paul that we may also come to know the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His suffering, and be like Him in His death.