

The Resurrection (Mark Xvi, 1-14)

by Seth Rees

The sermon emphasizes the power of God to overcome obstacles, suspend natural law, and deliver us from active forces of opposition, and the importance of trusting God and having faith in His presence.

Scripture: Exodus 14:13, Psalm 34:17, Mark 16:14, Romans 8:31, 1 Corinthians 15:55, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Hebrews 1:14

Topics: "Easter Resurrection", "Overcoming Adversity"

Description

Seth Rees preaches about the devotion and love of the women who journeyed to the sepulcher to anoint Jesus, facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles like the great stone, Hebrew seal, and Roman Guard, which represent the difficulties in our Christian lives. He emphasizes that just as the stone was rolled away from the tomb, God can remove all our obstacles and challenges, no matter how great they may seem, through the resurrected Christ. Rees encourages believers to trust in God's power to overcome inert obstacles, break authority, and defeat living forces that hinder their progress, reminding them that God is always faithful to deliver at the right time.

Transcript

"And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, had brought sweet spices that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, for it was very great." Mark 16: 14.

The Company of devout, loving hearted women who lingered at the cross, hurried to the sepulcher, and the words which we have read were some of their words as they journeyed to Joseph's new tomb. In the devotion and love of their hearts they were going to do their last and best for the Lord. They seemed to have almost forgotten that there were difficulties, possibly did not remember them until they were approaching the tomb, and then said among themselves: "Who shall, roll us away the stone." "For it was very great." There were three almost insurmountable difficulties in the way of these holy women, and their difficulties, at least, strikingly illustrate the difficulties which come in our way, and lie across our path.

First, there was the stone, and it was very great.

Second, there was the Hebrew seal. Who dared to break t?

Third, there was the Roman Guard; and before they could render their love service these three must be overcome.

In every Christian life there are difficulties corresponding to these. The stone was inactive but obstinate, and too much for frail, tired women, who had passed through such a protracted strain. The stone well represents the inert, inactive obstacles that lie across our path, which seem impassable and yet do not attack us. They lie like a log or like some heavy weight, some immovable, some impassable obstacle in our way. It may be circumstances which go on for years without change. It may be an affliction that hangs like a black cloud over our way, and never seems to lift. Every person who would be a real Christian finds that there are certain great difficulties, there are certain forbidding circumstances which it seems impossible for us to overcome, but the removal of the stone from the mouth of the sepulcher was a Divine guarantee that all our stone-like difficulties shall be taken away. The fact that this great stone was removed is security, is a pledge, it gives every man and woman of faith to understand that however great or heavy or sluggish our difficulties may be, however obstinate they may seem, they must give way at the touch of the resurrected Christ. I wish to help the people this morning, who are hindered by difficulties those who succumb to opposition, to mountains that lie in your way; to circumstances which you are powerless to control. Thank God, the very greatness, of the stone is a good reason why we should expect that He will take the matter in hand. The very greatness of the difficulty is a good reason why we should not attempt to manage it ourselves. Most people rush to God for aid only in great difficulties; they undertake to manage the small ones themselves.

A Christian merchant receives a telephone message that his suburban home is in flames. He hurries to the spot. His home is in ashes. his insurance ran out last week, but his family are saved. He gathers his little family around him and hurries to God and pours out his soul to Him. He breaks down and God comforts him and sustains him in a difficulty like that; but the same man, when a tired clerk, who has worked twelve hours for ten hours pay, comes ten minutes late in the morning, flies into a passion and sins against Heaven. He does not seem to be able to manage a little thing like that, and he does not trust God to keep him in the small matters.

I am glad sometimes that our difficulties are too much for us. I sometimes rejoice that it is a great stone, for if there is a great stone, if there is a great need, we are forced to find a great Christ. If our difficulties are beyond human help, then we apply to Him who never fails. The stone will be rolled away no difference how great it may be. The very greatness of it affords a great opportunity for a great God to display his power. This truth you must remember all through your Christian experience. I wish the saints knew how to let the Lord take care of the great stones; the inert and obstinate difficulties that we cannot manage. I wish we knew how to stand still and see the salvation of God.

The next difficulty was the Hebrew Seal. This was the seal of authority, of law. To break the seal was to break authority, to defy law. It is not very common that our Christian privileges are interfered with in these days, by civil law, but it is very often the case that we come up against things that are controlled by the laws of nature, and they seem so forbidding that it is impossible for us to get through them without God. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is enough for the seal of authority. It is enough for law; it is enough for the suspension of natural law, that we may obtain the purpose of God, and know the best things which He has for us. Just as a watch maker knows how to stop a watch as well as to start it; just as he knows how to turn the hands backward, so God knows how to turn the shadow back fifteen degrees on the dial of Ahaz. God knows how to suspend all natural law and bring in the supernatural, and bring deliverance in spite of every obstacle. When as good medical authority, as Boston could furnish, told me that my loved one was

beyond the reach of human skill or aid, and that there was no human law or power by which he could be restored, the resurrected Christ stepped in, suspended natural law long enough to perform a miracle, and the sick one arose from his bed and called for something to eat. In all the miracles which are performed, there is a manifestation of the power of God in the suspension of natural laws. The Bible is filled with the history of cases where nobody could do anything until Jesus got there. Nothing could be done until the Lord came, and then the law of gravitation was nothing. The law of cause and effect was nothing. No difference what natural law stood in the way, the Author of all law said to it, "Step aside," and the work was accomplished. Glory to God! Laws often have to be reversed and set at naught, and in the resurrection of the Son of God we have a guarantee that we shall rise above all our foes.

Peter was in prison; the edict had gone forth; the sentence was passed. He was to be executed on the morrow; "but prayers were made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. "Behind that "but" was something more powerful than all Herod's armies; and when those prayers were answered another angel came down and stood in the prison. The light of Heaven filled all that dark dungeon. Peter stood on his feet; the chains fell from his limbs, and with an angel by his side he walked out of that jail. The first and second walls became as thin air, and he passed through without opening the doors; and when he came to the outer gate, which was so heavy that it took twenty men to swing it upon its hinges after it was unlatched, it opened of its own accord. Peter was free, and in less than a week Herod was a corrupting corpse. O beloved, there is nothing too great for our Christ. Even Darius could find no law by which Daniel could be relieved from going to the lion's den. He would have been glad to find some law of escape, but could find none. The author of the Hebrew seal says, "You have got to go in;" but the Author of all law says, "You must come out." It is the overcoming of the laws of nature that makes it possible for a fellow to burn and not be scorched; that makes it possible for a man to be better after he has been boiled in oil than he was before. It is this that makes it possible when a poisonous snake has fastened itself upon one's hand to throw it off and go on to Rome. It is this power that lifts us above all human authorities, and makes it possible for us, "with a conqueror's tread to push ahead," and trust God to roll the sea away. I wish we knew Him. I wish we knew His greatness. We would certainly get through with magnifying our petty difficulties and trials. We would get through with our putting our faces up to the side of the room and whining like children. In the history of the Covenanters they tell us of times when the enemy was after them, and they were in the mountains when an attack was about to be made on them, there would settle down over their little assembly a mist that would hide them from their enemies until they could escape to the ravines and caves and hide away.

John Payton tells us again and again of times when natural laws were suspended, prospects reversed, plans changed, and the victory came to him in the face of the worst things that could be imagined. O glory to God!

Who knows but that the prayers and the tears and the waiting upon God is suspending certain laws and certain rules this very hour, which gives us the privileges which we so greatly enjoy? All through your life there are going to be difficulties that seem insurmountable because natural laws are across your path, that to get victory at all will require a miracle. Thank God, the resurrected Christ can do it. He can break the Hebrew seal; He can break every stamp of authority that earth or hell puts forth.

Again, the third difficulty was the sturdy Roman guard. This may illustrate the active forces, the living powers that attack us. The things or persons that come against us with gnashing teeth, frowning countenances, and stentorian voices, demanding our surrender or forbidding our progress. Thank God, there is deliverance from even the living, acting forces! Whether they be in the form of human beings, or

be black-winged demons from the pit, thank God, there is deliverance. Who does not know that every time we take a bold stand, or plant our feet on higher ground, the atmosphere fills with opposition, and our progress is challenged by ranks of living foes from the lower regions. They call for us to "Halt," but he who knows the resurrected Christ can look a regiment of devils in the face, and one throb of the pulse of the risen Lord coursing through your veins is enough to paralyze a sturdy Roman Guard, and put them on their faces while you shout the victory. So we are not going to be afraid of a regiment of devils any more than a Hebrew seal. We have a Christ who can go the rounds and clean up the whole outfit, and give us victory, no difference what our foes.

Brother, do you practice it? Is it a fact in your every day life? Do you have victory in those hours when it would seem that the hosts of earth and the legions of hell have agreed against you? There is power in the resurrected Christ to stretch them out as unconscious as the Roman guard slept on the ground that morning. A difficulty is harmless while God has His hand on it. Under the Divine touch of a Divine Christ the Roman guard lay on their faces while the angel rolled away the stone. Beloved, if we have wisdom enough to keep Him between us and difficulties, if we have sense enough to trust Him, to make Him responsible, we will find His touch will answer all our needs and defeat all our enemies.

I notice in the lesson that the stone was not only against the women but it was against Christ. He was on the other side of it, and if He had to get out they certainly could get in. If we could remember that everything that is against us is against Him; that all our enemies are the enemies of Christ; if we will let Him deal with them as His, since they are His, He knows how to manage them, and we may simply commit the matter to Him and shout the victory through all. There are things that seem to be against us and that seem to be against Christ, but really and truly nothing can stand against Him, and if He be for us who can be against us? O, I want to help somebody. O, that we might get a new vision of the power of God, of the resurrected Christ, and understand that He is more than a match for all the foes that earth and hell can bring against us. It is here I find my safety. If I could not hide away, many a time I would fall. Here is my hope; here is my victory. I keep my eye on an all conquering Christ, and they must down Him before they down me; and they are always paralyzed when they come into His presence.

Notice in the lesson that when these devout sisters called to mind, just as they were approaching the sepulcher, that there were difficulties, they did not turn back. Many of you would have said, "It is of no use to go any further. Mary, do you not remember how big that stone was?" The most of us would have turned back, but though they remembered the stone, the seal and the Roman guard, their hearts fired with devotion, love, and loyalty to their Christ, hurried them to the sepulcher where they were to find that the stone was rolled away. How many times that has been true with us? We have thought about difficulties in the distance, we have thought about bridges that had to be crossed, we have looked ahead and imagined that there were lions in the way; we saw great stones lying in our path; we saw gum logs we never could split; there have been circumstances that it seemed impossible to overcome; but when we came to the place it was gone. Sir, if you will walk on, if you are faithful, just when you get over the top of the hill where the thing was, you will see that the stone has been rolled away.

Notice in the teaching of the lesson that God is always faithful to be there just in time; not too soon, not a second too late -- just in time. The stone had not been rolled away long, for the angel was still sitting upon it. How often Satan says, "Now, this thing is upon you and the time is short, and there are no signs of deliverance, and the Lord is going to fail you." The devil says, "I know the Lord has never failed you in the past, but this is different, this is an emergency; something must be done at once, and you see He is not here." Ah, that is devil talk. God is always there just in time. Many a time faith has to walk right up against

a stone. God does not waste any time, but He is there just the right minute to deliver us; just in time to display His wondrous power and grace.

Moses must lead the people into, what seems, the very jaws of death. There was no opening. Mountains were on either side, the roaring enemy in the rear, and the sea stretched out in front of them. The case looked hopeless, but God was there just in time.

Joshua's test of faith was even more severe. He had to make the priests put their feet in the water before there was anything done. God never fails. As faith is tested and you are true, the triumph is sure to come.

Notice that the stone was removed without their touch; without an effort; without drawing a sword. Don't you know, sir, there are certain things God does not want us to do? And when this is the case we are never stronger than when in the attitude of perfect silence. Paul says, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Some of the mightiest victories come when we stand absolutely still and see what God will do. "Ye shall not fight in this battle." That does not mean that you shall not go forth, possibly with a ram's horn, or a shepherd's sling at some other time, but there may be occasions upon which you are only to stand still and sing a holy song. There will be times when the best thing in the world you can do is to do nothing. There will be times when the devil will try to hurry you and make you do a lot of things, hasty, unreasonable things, but you stand still and wait until God makes it plain.

Again, there was deliverance by a celestial messenger who sat upon the stone, as if to say, "My difficulties are my thrones;" Thank God they do come to this earth. They are represented in some places in the Bible as living down here. Jesus said, "They shall ascend and descend;" as much as to say they are already down here. How could they go up before they come down? The angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation." They are all about us today, no matter what the difficulties, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him."

Yes, there were other armies there that Sabbath morning beside the Roman guard. The armies which Elisha saw when one hundred and seventy-five thousand of his enemies fell in a single day; the armies which are in the galleries all about us, witnessing our conduct, and whenever we need assistance, are dispatched to aid and guard us. Where is the Christian who can not cite back to hairbreadth escapes; to times when you can not explain why you were not killed in some awful accident? The angel of God was there just in time to take care of you as you stood on the very precipice of ruin. How many of us can look back and remember times, even when we were sinners, and we cannot understand why it was that we did not drop into hell. Even then, God had the holy angels guarding us. If the Divine protection were withdrawn from the sinners in this audience while we preach, they would suddenly drop into hell. Have you ever noticed how a man will live through a dozen things? You thought any one of them would kill him; it seems as if nothing can kill him; and finally, some day, some little thing, utterly insignificant, the same he has passed many a time before, occurs, and he drops dead. O, there was a time when God was guarding and protecting him; his cup of iniquity was not yet full, but the day came when the angels retired, and he was dead. It does not take much to snap the thread of life and send a man to hell when he has crossed the dead line, and there is no more hope of his turning to the Lord. O, we have a little idea what is going on overhead, just above us, but there are companies of angels with the saints, and there is a certain restraining, protecting power over the sinner for a time, for which they ought to stop and thank God. God help us to appreciate the company of angels who are delegated to journey with us here below. Sometimes we almost seem to feel their wings, and some of these times when we are passing through the severest trials, and it seems as if all hell were howling and raging against us, the angels of the Lord are fanning our

brow, and we get unspeakably happy in the absence of anything in the world to make us happy. If you get God, if you get the Holy Ghost and your Pentecost, you will get linked up to Heaven, and the angels are pledged to take care of you. Thank God, our Christ can lift us above difficulties as well as roll stones away.

I find no Scriptural authority for saying that the stone was rolled away in order that Jesus might rise, because I find after the resurrection that He passed in and out through closed doors, and if He could do that, He could go through a stone just as well. And then I notice another thing, that when he appeared to Mary, He was not coming from the tomb but from the garden where he had been taking a walk. The probability is that He got up long before the angel got there, and was walking about in the morning air. This proves to me that circumstances do not have to be taken out of the way: our Christ can go through them. It is a wonderful thing to have the stone rolled away, but I reckon it is even greater to be up and gone before the angel comes. When Jesus Christ went into Joseph's new tomb, He went in with the intention of knocking the other end out of it; I believe He went out the other way, and by His resurrection has knocked the bottom out of all the graves, and guaranteed the resurrection of all the saints.

The entirely sanctified do not live on this side of the tomb, the dark death side, but on the resurrection side. I know there is a gloomy side to religion; there is a cheerless, gloomy, north side, but I know there is a sunny side, a tropical side where flowers bloom and birds sing, and we can bask in the sunlight of eternal glory. O, I wish the Church knew it -- knew the resurrection side of life. Almost everybody is sitting on the north side of religion. They are chilly, their hands are cold, and their teeth chatter. O, I wish they could get around on the south side. Do you know, sirs, that the fact of the resurrection is the great hinge on which swings the whole plan of salvation. Do you know that as Christ arose, so will we get up, and there are not devils enough to keep us down? Do you know that as He got up in the early morning, sanctified saints are going to get up a thousand years before the other folks? And we will walk out in the morning air. The delicious fragrance, the music that fills the air, the charming voices of the early morning, we will witness, and we will walk and sing and praise God a thousand years before the other folks are out of their graves. I can almost smell the fragrance of the morning air now. How bracing! There is something about it that puts the electricity, the elixir of life, that puts the hop, skip and jump in a man's soul. Glory to God!

If you will get sanctified wholly you will get up before the angel gets there, and I think the trumpet sound is going to be the sweetest music we have ever listened to. The trumpet that calls the nations of the dead in Christ to rise up and meet a glorified and descending Lord. The trumpet that calls the living saints to drop their mortality and be translated in the twinkling of an eye, and go to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This is going to be the climax of the ages. This is the great day to which all other days are pointing. I am going to be there!

"And, the stone was rolled away." Do you want the blessing! He will, roll away the stone, break the seal, speak to the guard. It would be tantalizing to preach to you this way if I did not know that you can have the blessing. I am sure I love you too much to tantalize you with something you cannot have. If you will meet the conditions God will break every Hebrew seal, roll away every stone, paralyze every guard, and this resurrection life, coursing through your being will make you a giant, "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

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