

I Love a Great Ending
Acts 2: 22 – 28
Easter Sunday, 2010

I love to read a good book; one of my most enjoyable vacation activities is to while away a summer afternoon with a good book. I especially enjoy books with a good ending: where good triumphs over evil; where the unlikely guy wins the hand of the popular girl; where the mystery is solved by the persistent detective. Now that's a good book.

By the same token, I feel cheated somehow when the story line is not brought to a good ending chapter; sometimes the author seems to discover he has exceeded the publisher's word limit, and so he slaps together a half-baked conclusion that either leaves me wondering what happened to this character or that story line, or causes me to cry out, "Why did I waste my good time on that book?!"

Well, this morning I have great [news](#): I have a great ending to a compelling story – there is a hero, wrongly accused, brutally mistreated and publically killed, and finally deposited in a borrowed tomb as his friends wept over his fate on that Friday. But the ending is shocking to many, too wonderful to believe for others, and glorious for all of us: On Sunday, there is no body to be found; an angel gives an explanation that seems too unbelievable to be repeated; and finally, there is a face-to-face meeting – Jesus is alive! He once was dead because of my transgressions and sins, but now He is alive!

The most awesome aspect to this story is that even God Himself was satisfied with the ending to the story of Jesus' life and death and now resurrection. In fact, it is the only ending to the story that could satisfy the Father. I want to share with you four reasons why this is the only ending that could satisfy God.

Our Scripture is from Acts 2: 22 – 28 (read)

This is the only ending that could satisfy God because:

1. This is the only ending that could make nothing impossible (Acts 2: 24)

*Please excuse my use of the double negative; I use it because the verse requires it.

A. We all know people who seemingly can extract themselves from situations we would consider impossible; they can somehow turn around the situation and walk away victorious.

B. But there is one situation no one has ever walked away from permanently: death, until Jesus came to earth.

1. Death snares every person; the mortality rate for human beings is 100%.

2. But death could not hold Jesus' body in the grave.

C. On that Easter morning, the ground shook, the stone sealing the entrance to the tomb was rolled away, and further inspection confirmed Jesus was no longer in the grave.

1. Life's final, undefeated enemy was now defeated.

D. The implication for you and me is we know nothing is impossible for God.

1. He can do anything in my life: heal me; protect me; deliver me; save me; He can do all things.

2. The Apostle Paul understood this; “*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*” **Philippians 4: 13**

E. This is the only ending that could satisfy God because it is the only ending that allows God to do the impossible in my life.

1. At Easter I am reminded I can be at peace with myself because whatever my impossible situation, God can deal with it.

Second, this is the only ending that could satisfy God because...

2. This is the only ending that completely defeats all evil (v. 23).

A. From the beginning of time, from the creation itself, when God made everything and said it was good, evil couldn't stand it and rebelled.

1. We know the story: Satan tempted Eve, then Adam, in the Garden; they fell into temptation, and sin entered the world. For eons it seemed as if evil was winning out.

B. Then Jesus came into the world, and the devil threw every weapon he had against Him:

1. He tried to cause Jesus' murder as a newborn;

2. He used slander, lies, and accusations against Jesus throughout His life;

3. He inflamed opinions in the population until a mob driven by hysteria succeeded in getting Jesus crucified.

C. But the devil never planned on Jesus walking out of the tomb in the power of God.

1. Jesus effectively defeated death; he defeated the devil and – praise God! – He defeated hell.

D. It is the only ending that could satisfy God because the devil is now a defeated foe, and death now longer has victory over Believers

Third, this is the only ending that could satisfy God because...

3. This is the only ending that assures me the grave has no power over me (vs. 26 – 27).

A. To believing Jews, the resurrection of Jesus from the grave meant more than just victory over death. It also meant the bodies of those who died prior to His return would, at that return, resurrect from the grave and go to be with the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4: 13 – 17).

1. At death our soul and spirit go to be with the Lord and our bodies go to the grave.

2. But one day our bodies will not stay in the grave; they will be reunited with our soul and spirit. In other words, there is nothing death can keep from me!

Finally, this is the only ending that could satisfy God because...

4. This is the only ending that gives me resurrection power to live every day (v. 28).

A. I have saved what I consider the most significant truth about Easter for the very last: the divine power that brought Jesus Christ out of the grave is the very same power working within me through the Holy Spirit so I can live every day in Resurrection power.

A. Let me share **Three applications of resurrection power**:

1. Acknowledge I have power because the Holy Spirit dwells within me; I can live confidently and positively because of that resurrection power.

2. Accept the Holy Spirit's work in my life; I know He is not pushy – in other words, if I want get out of messes in my own power the Holy spirit will just sit back and let me try. More often than not, I will just make a bigger mess out of a smaller mess!

3. Assure myself through prayer and Scripture God is working in my life; no need for “woe is me” living; everything is not hopeless; my life is not falling apart. God is at work in my life – yes, I *am* a work in progress, but the Master is at work!

Our relatives up north have endured a particularly brutal winter. It seems as if the imps of winter have been trying their best – or worst – to hold life in the tomb of the frozen ground. But no matter how hard they tried to keep it hostage, Spring burst forth.

No matter how hard the devil tried, the tomb couldn't keep Jesus hostage. He sprung forth from the grave on that first Resurrection Morning. His resurrection assures us that one day our bodies will spring forth from the grave and meet the Lord in the air. We will spend eternity in His presence.

Today, someone here may not have that personal relationship with the Lord. I invite you – even challenge you – to take that step of faith to receive God's offer of that relationship based upon the ending to the story of Salvation – the only ending that could satisfy God Himself.

Let's pray!