

Lake Cities Community Church parakeet  
Easter Sunday, 4-12-09  
Pastor Craig Schill

### **“What Practical Difference Should the Resurrection Make in Your Life?”**

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In the 1929 Rose bowl, Georgia Tech played University of California. In that game Georgia Tech fumbled the ball, and California recovered. The player who picked up the ball, however, became confused and started running 65 yards in the wrong direction! He would have scored, except one of his teammates ran him down and tackled him just before he hit the end zone. The name of the confused player was Roy Riegels, who became infamously known as “Wrong way Roy.”

All of this occurred in the first half, and certainly the California fans were wondering what the coach (Coach Nibbs Price) would do in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. The men filed off the field and went into the locker room. They sat down – except Riegels. He put his blanket around his shoulders, sat down in a corner, put his face in his hands, and began to cry.

The Coach – often one for a motivational speech - didn’t know what to say – I imagine it was an awkward silence. Then the timekeeper came in and announced that there were three minutes before playing time. Coach Price looked at the team and said simply, “Men the same team that played the first half will start the second.”

The players got up and started out, all but Riegels. He did not budge. The coach called to him again; still he didn’t move. Coach Price said, “Roy, didn’t you hear me? The same team that played the first half will start the second.” Then Roy said through tears. “Coach,” he said,

“I can’t do it. I’ve ruined you, I’ve ruined the University of California, I’ve ruined myself. I couldn’t face that crowd in the stadium to save my life.”

**Need:** Have you ever felt like Roy Riegels. I wonder if there is anyone here would have found themselves running the wrong way on the pathways of life? You know painfully that you have messed up, made a mistake, muffed it. Your sins may not have been in front of 100,000 people, but you can empathize with Wrong Way Roy - feeling discouraged, depressed, down-and-out and defeated. Instead of looking to run back onto the field, you are looking to quietly slip out the back door. I know I have felt that way before – and I suspect many of you have as well. Some may feel that way right now. If so, listen to what the coach said. He came over to Riegel, put his hand on his shoulder and said, “Roy, get up and go on back; the game is only half over.” The game is not finished! It is only half-time! There is time to yet snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. And even though they ultimately lost the game, no one played harder than Roy Riegels in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.

### **Wrong-Way Examples:**

Today we are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ – and nothing has ever done more to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat than the resurrection. The resurrection has for 2,000 years helped those who are running in the wrong direction to turn around, to get back up, dust themselves off, and get back in the game. Let’s consider three such people from the pages of the New Testament.

First, remember **the apostle Peter**. He was the quarterback of Jesus’ disciples, and he was running in the wrong direction. He threw up some points for the other team. You might remember the story – Jesus had been arrested, and Peter is watching to see what happens.

[Mark 14:66](#) And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, [Mark 14:67](#) and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and said, "You, too, were with Jesus the Nazarene." [Mark 14:68](#) But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch. And a 2<sup>nd</sup> time he was asked about his association with Christ. [Mark 14:70](#) But again he was denying it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." [Mark 14:71](#) But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" [Mark 14:72](#) And immediately a cock crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep. Peter ran the wrong way. He stumbled and fell in his faith when Jesus needed him most. Christian; Have you ever denied Christ? Have you ever spoken when you should have kept quiet. Have you ever kept quiet when you should have spoken up? Have you ever found the cost of following Jesus to be too high of a personal price and so compromised? If so – you can relate to Wrong Way Peter.

**Consider a second man - James the brother of Jesus?** James too, was running in the wrong direction. James and the other family members did not believe in Jesus and were trying to silence him. In John 7, I believe they upped the ante and tried to set Jesus up with the Jewish authorities – even to have him killed. [John 7:1](#) Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were [seeking to kill Him](#) (location of those trying to kill him? Judea) [John 7:2](#) Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. [John 7:3](#) Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea (!!), so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. [John 7:4](#) "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be *known* publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the

world.” [John 7:5](#) (why did they suggest this?) For not even His brothers were believing in Him. [John 7:6](#) So Jesus said to them, “My time is not yet here (not time to die), but your time is always opportune.

James, though not mentioned by name, is probably the leader of this incident – to (in my view) set-up Jesus and entrap him. Beloved, if you have ever intentionally sinned. Put your feet on the line and cross it. Intentionally worked against the will of God. Then you can relate to **Wrong Way James**.

Third, **Saul of Tarsus was** running in the wrong direction. A man in the early church named Stephen was preaching – and claimed to see the Risen Jesus in a vision. Listen to what happened: [Acts 7:58](#) And when they had driven Stephen out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul... [Acts 8:1](#) And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles... But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. [Acts 8:3](#). In hockey – there is an unofficial role called the “enforcer.” The enforcer’s job is to rough people up, he is the tough guy who seeks to fight and agitate the other team. Friend, if you have ever been physically or emotionally abusive. If you have been a bully and carried out evil plans – then you can relate to **Wrong Way Paul**.

**Peter** the denier. James the plotter. Paul the enforcer. What great choices to become leaders of the early church! No way! Yes way! Peter becomes the great apostle to the Jews. James the head of the church at Jerusalem and Paul the church planter! How did that happen?

They each met the resurrected Jesus Christ. Listen to Paul's account in the first letter to the Corinthian church, chapter 15:

1Cor. 15:3 For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 1Cor. 15:4 that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 1Cor. 15:5 and that He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the Twelve. 1Cor. 15:6 Then He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time, most of whom remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. a 1Cor. 15:7 Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 1Cor. 15:8 Last of all, as to one abnormally born, He also appeared to me (Paul).

I find it significant that only three people are referenced individually in that passage: Peter, James and Paul. Why? Because these three were the NT's Wrong Way Roys – running in the wrong direction and scoring for the wrong team. They had messed it up. Saul had the best religious education, and missed the Messiah. James grew up with Christ and didn't understand him. Peter lived for three year with him and denied him. *And if these three character's lives could be changed because Jesus rose from the dead – than yours can too.*

When the risen Jesus met Peter on the beach, he cooked some fish and said, "Peter do you love me?" "Of course I love you Lord." And Peter's life changed. The risen Jesus met James at some point – we don't know the details. I imagine Jesus tapping him on the shoulder – "*Hello James – I'm back.*" And James' life was changed. The risen Jesus met Saul on the road to Damascus and– "Saul Saul Why are you persecuting me?" Saul said, "*Ahhh. Ok. Sorry about that.*" Paul's life changed.

And the risen Jesus comes to you today and says – **Your life can change today.** I know that you have been running in the wrong direction. But maybe the Holy Spirit is about to tackle you at the knees before you hit the end zone. The practical difference the resurrection of Jesus can make in your life is that you would get up, dust yourself off and get back in the game. If Peter, James and Paul can change – then you can, too. If you like Peter know Jesus but have denied Him – confess him again today – get back onto the field. If you like James have never believed in Him – you have been a skeptic – Jesus says – friend I’m back – believe in me. I’m here. If you like Paul have been fighting against God – Jesus says –join the team, become a Christian and I will help you to run the race of life. I would like to conclude with a poem, called “The Race.”



## The Race by D.H. Groberg

"Quit, give up, you're beaten"  
They shout at you and plead  
"There's just too much against you  
This time you can't succeed."

And as I start to hang my head  
In front of failure's face  
My downward fall is broken by  
The memory of a race.

And hope refills my weakened will  
As I recall that scene  
Just the thought of that short race  
Rejuvenates my being

Children's race, young boys  
Young men, how I remember well  
Excitement sure, but also fear  
It wasn't hard to tell

They all lined up so full of hope  
Each thought to win that race  
Or tie for first, or if not that  
At least take second place

The fathers watched from off the side  
Each cheering for his son  
And each boy hoped to show his dad  
That he could be the one

The whistle blew and off they went  
Young hearts and hopes afire  
To win and be the hero there  
Was each young boys desire

And one boy in particular  
Whose dad was in the crowd  
Was running near the lead and thought  
"My dad will be so proud"

But as they speeded down the field  
Across a shallow dip  
The little boy who thought to win  
Lost his step and slipped.

Trying hard to catch himself  
His hands flew out to brace  
And amid the laughter of the crowd  
He fell flat on his face

But as he fell his dad stood up  
And showed his anxious face  
Which to the boy so clearly said  
"Get up and win the race"

He quickly rose, no damage done  
Behind a bit that's all  
And ran with all his might and mind  
To make up for the fall

So anxious to restore himself  
To catch up and to win  
His mind went faster than his legs  
He slipped and fell again

He wished then that he had quit before  
With only one disgrace  
"I'm hopeless as a runner now  
I shouldn't try to race"

But in the laughing crowd he searched  
And found his fathers face  
That steady look which said again  
"Get up and win the race"

So up he jumped to try again  
Ten yards behind the last  
If I'm going to gain those yards he though  
I've got to move real fast

Exerting everything he had  
He regained eight now ten  
But trying hard to catch the lead  
He slipped and fell again

Defeat, he lay there silently  
A tear dropped from his eye  
There's no sense running anymore  
Three strikes. I'm out. Why try?

The will to rise had disappeared  
All hope had fled away  
So far behind so error prone  
A loser all the way

"I've lost, so what", he thought  
I'll live with my disgrace  
But then he thought about his dad  
Whom soon he'd have to face

"Get up" the echo sounded low  
"Get up" and take your place  
You were not meant for failure here  
"Get up", and win the race

With borrowed will "Get up" it said  
"You haven't lost at all"  
For winning is no more than this  
To rise each time you fall

So up he rose to run once more  
And with a new commit  
He resolved, that win or lose  
At least he shouldn't quit

So far behind the others now  
The most he'd ever been  
Still he'd give it all he had  
And run as though to win

Three times he'd fallen, stumbling  
Three times he'd rose again  
Too far behind to hope to win  
He still ran to the end

They cheered the winning runner  
As he crossed the line first place  
Head held high and happy  
No falling, no disgrace

But when the fallen youngster  
Crossed the line, last place  
The crowd gave him the greater cheer  
For finishing the race

And even though he came in last  
With head bent low, unproud  
You would have thought he'd won the race  
To listen to the crowd

And to his dad he sadly said  
"I didn't do too well."  
"To me you won," his father said.  
"You rose each time you fell."

So when I'm tempted to despair  
To quit and fall disgraced.  
I hear my risen Savior say  
"Get up and win the race."