

Text: II Corinthians 1:8-9 (Pew Bible, pg.1142)

Title: “The God Who Raises the Dead”

Most of us know what pressure is. Pressure is what comes upon us when forces outside of us “press in” on us. And we feel different kinds of pressure:

- Financial pressures – too much month left at the end of the money
- Physical pressures – when we’re sick or weak
- Time pressures – pulled in a hundred different directions by demands of family, work or school
- The pressure of performance ... of measuring up

ILLUSTRATION – Maybe that’s the kind of pressure that was being felt by this college student who was a recent contestant on the TV game show “Wheel of Fortune.” It appeared that he was just one answer away from winning \$1 million, but the pressure of performance just got to him. Watch this. VIDEO

Seriously sometimes pressure can be so intense that we wonder if we are going to make it through. It’s not just a matter of losing a little sleep, or even a bunch of money. Sometimes the pressure is so intense that we feel our very life is hanging by a thread. That’s the way it was for an important man in the Bible by the name of Paul. If you have a Bible please turn to II Corinthians 1:8-9. There’s a Bible in pew rack in front of you. Feel free to take that Bible home with you if you don’t have a Bible.

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ, a preacher and a missionary who proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. He went to places where people were very opposed to that message and was brutally mistreated for His faithfulness to Jesus Christ. He was beaten, imprisoned, went nights without sleep and was near death on many occasions. But Paul writes to some believers to tell of the strength and comfort he has received from God in the midst of his pressures and troubles. He explains his circumstances in this way: Read text.

Notice how Paul describes his situation. Maybe you have found yourself or you now find yourself in a similar situation. In v.8 he talks about

- “Hardships” = suffering and trouble
- “Under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure” = burdened beyond description
- “Despaired even of life...” = under great anxiety and fear that all would be lost

And in v.9 he said they “felt the sentence of death...” like a man condemned to die.

Now when the pressure outside of us is greater than the strength inside of us things cave in on us ... we collapse. That’s where many of us live ... under great pressure with nothing or no one on the inside to support us. However, when the strength inside of us is greater than the pressure outside of us, then we can stand up under anything.

Let me show you where that strength comes from. In v.9 Paul said ... “This happened so that...” In other words, there’s a purpose behind all these things that have happened. And that’s where hope comes from ... to know that somehow this is not just senseless suffering that we’re going through ... that there’s a reason why all this is happening to us. And what is that reason? “So that we might not

rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.” When the pressure is on you can either rely on yourself and sooner or later you will collapse. Or you can rely on the God who raises the dead ... and see what He can do.

Listen, God is in the business of raising the dead. After His Son Jesus was crucified for our sins, God raised Him from the dead. And when God did that He unleashed a power that is available to all who will stop depending on themselves and will put their trust in Christ.

INTERVIEW WITH BROOKS DOUGLASS – I want you to hear the amazing story of Brooks Douglass. Brooks lives part time in Plano and part time in California. He’s an attorney, a former member of the U.S Army Special Forces, a former three-term state senator in Oklahoma, and a film producer. In fact, he has produced and starred in a movie about his life called “Heaven’s Rain.” His wife Julea is here today, along with their children, Brody (8) and Cali (6). Welcome Brooks this morning.

- Your life starts in the home of a pastor and missionary. Tell us what it was like growing up in that atmosphere.
- As you moved from Brazil back to the U.S. your life took a dreadful turn. Describe the fateful events of October 15, 1979.
- After that you had a lot of growing up to do. What were the years like for you as a college student and young adult after the violent death of your parents?
- You didn't realize it at the time, and you did a good job of masking the pain, but what was really going on inside of you?
- Years later you came face to face with one of the men who attacked you and killed your parents. More importantly, you came face to face with what was going inside Brooks Douglass. Describe that experience for us.
- How does the message of Easter give us hope for times like this?

CONCLUSION

Friends, God is a God who raises the dead. He proved it when He raised His Son Jesus with a brand new body, victorious over death. And when you come to acknowledge your sin, your helplessness and hopelessness ... when you stop relying on your own goodness ... and when we put our trust in God’s Son Jesus Christ, that same power that raised Jesus from the dead will be unleashed in your life. The Bible says that if anyone is in Christ He is a new creature, the old is gone, the new has come.

Maybe you find yourself in a situation like Brooks struggling under a load of bitterness or an unforgiving spirit toward someone who has hurt you or abused you. Perhaps you’ll realize, like Brooks, that you can’t fight that battle alone. Put your life and your situation in His hands and watch the miracle that occurs when He raises you to a new life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just one day on a calendar. Every day of the year that power is available to people who feel the sentence of death. Maybe you’ve had a hard time trusting God. You’ve had doubts and fears and pressures. The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead ... the same power that fortified the great apostle ... can raise your heart today. He can give you

courage instead of fear ... freedom instead of bondage ... forgiveness instead of guilt. To connect to the power you've got to quit depending on yourself and begin to depend on the God who raises the dead.