

LIVING VICTORIOUSLY

[Lazarus's Story]

BACKGROUND STORY

I. WHO I AM

My name is Lazarus—it is short for Eleazar
Eleazar in the Old Testament
One of Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Abihu
He succeeded Aaron as High Priest
His son—Phinehas
Killed the Israelite idolater with the Midianite woman
And stopped the plague that killed 24,000
Phinehas succeeded Eleazar as High Priest
It means 'God helps'—and boy—*did* God help me!
Don't confuse me with the other famous Lazarus in the Bible
Luke 16—the Parable of the Beggar and the Rich man
Some people say
I was the 'rich young ruler'—but I wasn't
I wrote the Gospel of John—but I didn't
I went into exile and became a bishop on Cyprus—again, no!
I was miraculously transported to France
and became the first bishop of Marseilles—nope!
Here is my story—I have only one claim to fame—but it is enough

II. MY HOME AND THE MASTER

Some of my family lives in Galilee—but I live in Bethany
A village on the eastern slope of the Mt of Olives
About 1 ½ miles east of Jerusalem
My family became close friends with the Master
He visited us often—and we grew to love each other

III. MY TWO SISTERS

I have two sisters—Mary and Martha
And they have very different personalities
Martha is a real talker—she never met a stranger
And Mary is much quieter—very studious

A. MARTHA

Martha has the gift of hospitality—but she also has a sharp tongue
Her home in Galilee is where the Master first visited us
But that is when Martha got really upset with Mary
Mary was not pulling her load and helping Martha
She was just sitting there listening to the Master teach
You know—women are supposed to do the housework
Only men should sit around talking theology
But the Master did not see it that way
He encouraged Mary to stay there and listen to Him

- I think Martha felt a little bad about criticizing Mary
- I know I did—He taught me something
- Women have as much right to study with the Master as men do

B. MARY

Mary has a big heart—full of mercy
But sometimes she is also very extravagant—she has a ‘boundary’ problem
Six days before that fateful Passover we were back in Bethany
The Master and His disciples came to dinner at my house
Again, Martha was serving everyone—and then it happened
Mary spent almost a *year’s* wages (300 denarii) on some perfumed ointment
Then she poured it out *all at once*—and anointed the Master’s feet
That really surprised us all—but only Judas spoke up

- Now I know better—and feel shame when I think about my reaction

IV. CLOSEST OF FRIENDS

We became close friends with the Master
Jesus and I became *best* friends—he really *loved* me
There are only three people the Bible says “Jesus loved” like this
One was the unnamed rich young ruler—(see Mark 10)
So some people have confused me with him
Another was the unnamed “disciple whom Jesus loved”
John writes about him three times
At the Lord’s Supper—he leaned upon Jesus—Jn 13
At the cross—putting His mother in his trust—Jn 19
When Mary Magdalene tells him and Peter about the tomb—Jn 20
We all think John really meant himself
But I am the only one that is identified by name!
[See John 11:3,5,36]

V. CLAIM TO FAME

My *real* claim to fame is what He did for me *that* fateful Spring day
You know—THE miracle everyone is still talking about
It was just before Passover—when I got deathly ill
I knew He could help me—but I wondered if He would come

VI. REASONS FOR JESUS NOT TO COME

1. Opposition—for about a year—he had run into a lot of resistance
He had been rejected twice in His own hometown of Nazareth
After Herod Antipas executed John the Baptist—he searched for Jesus
2. Jealousy—the rulers were jealous and fearful of His popularity
He had fed the 5000—then the 4000
He had performed many miracles of healing
He had even raised two young people—a boy and a girl—from death
3. Rejection of His divine claims to be the Messiah
I AM He—Jn 4
I AM the Bread of Life—Jn 6
I AM the Light of the World—Jn 8
I AM the Good Shepherd—Jn 10
I AM the Door—Jn 10
I AM the Son of God—Jn 10
So—He had retreated beyond the Jordan for safety—Jn 10
The rulers wanted to seize and stone Him
So His disciples told Him not to come to Bethany
Thomas was willing to come—but expected to die there

VII. THE LONG SILENCE

I waited and waited—but He did not come
I did not blame Him—they were waiting to ambush Him!
I finally went into a coma—and then it was all over—I died!
I don't remember a thing—but they tell me what happened
One day passed—then two—then three—then four
Then all of a sudden—I heard his voice calling: "Lazarus come forth!"
I obeyed—I did what He told me—and the rest is history.

VIII. SPECTACULAR MIRACLE

No one had done anything like this before
Sure—there had been several immediate resuscitations
Like I said—even Jesus had done this a couple of times already
But—I had been dead *four* days—and I stunk!
We Jews believed that after the third day—the spirit left the body
Where was I?—I don't know—I have no idea
But I do know this—He gave me back my life
Like He said: "He who believes in Me will live even if he dies!"
He *proved* this—and it caused everyone in the land to sit up and take notice
And many Jews—even leaders—believed in Him after this—Jn 11:45

IX. THE GREAT RISK

Like I said—my friend Jesus risked his life even to *come* to Bethany
But by raising me—He took a far greater risk
 He knew my resurrection would cause Him to become even more popular
 He knew this would cause the rulers to plot against Him—and they did so
They even came after me—Jn 12:10-11
 After His triumphal entry, my home became His headquarters—Mt 21:17
 But I did not mind—I was glad to take Him in and claim Him as friend
This was one of the great turning points in Jesus' life—and world history
 Like Luke 9:51—when He "set his face toward Jerusalem"
 My resurrection set the stage for Jesus' own death—and resurrection

X. WHAT THIS PROVED TO ME

That my friend Jesus really cared for me—that He *really* loved me
That He was willing to *risk* everything for me
That Jesus had *all* power—even over life and death
That He was *able to do* what He said
That Jesus always *keeps His promise*

XI. JESUS' GREAT PROMISE—JN 11:25-26

He who believes in Me will live even if He dies
Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die

XII. TWO PARTS OF THE PROMISE

1. First—being saved:

- Whoever believes in Jesus will live again after they die
- This is life beyond death—so death is not the end
- True Life begins with belief and continues from *that* time onward

I WAS THE FIRST LIVING PROOF OF THIS PROMISE

2. Second—salvation is secure forever:

- Whoever is **in Christ** will never *really* die
- Being in Christ means two things—two conditions
 - Live in Him—die to self—be raised—walk a new life
 - Believe in Him—trust in Him for this daily walk
- There will never be a death powerful enough to stop this life

I AM STILL LIVING PROOF OF THIS PROMISE

TWO DIMENSION OF THE PROMISE: ETERNAL AND TEMPORAL

I. ETERNAL DIMENSION

A. The never-ending promise—the promise that will never die

1. Death is not really the end—but a doorway into eternity
2. What matters ultimately is the eternal, not just the here and now
 - a. Jesus *did* care about this life we live now
 - b. But the ‘now’ is made *full* by a seamless transition to the eternal
 - c. Jn 10:10—abundant life is never-ending life—fulfilled in eternity
 - d. Sermon on Mt—do not store up treasures on earth, but in heaven
3. In other words—we do not have to wait for eternity to begin
 - Some say eternity begins at death
 - But eternity does not have to wait until our *physical* death
 - Eternal life can begin now

B. Put in negative terms—we must first die spiritually

- We end our old life—that had a beginning
- In order to begin a new life—that has no ending

C. Put in positive terms—we begin living eternally now

1. This is a ‘never-ending’ promise
2. It *produces* a future without ending—eternal life
3. The promise *itself* is everlasting—it is for *all* generations

II. TEMPORAL—HERE AND NOW—DIMENSION

A. Jesus was concerned about *this* ‘life’ now—as well the one after death

1. This continues His theme of John 10:10—abundant life
2. This is not *just* about eternal life—but also about God’s daily care
 - a. Jesus showed great emotion about my physical death—vv 33,35,38

b. When Mary said she expected the resurrection on the last day—v 24

- He did not wait—but raised me right *then* and *there*

B. He was proving three more important things:

1. He was confirming His identity and power *right then* (and before)

- Not just later in His own resurrection
- He could *always* raise from the dead—anytime
- He *was* already The Life—then and always—see John 1

2. He showed us His concern for life *here and now*—not just the future

3. This was not just a ‘pie in the sky’ promise

- He delivered *then*
- And He can—and He will—deliver *here and now*

III. WHAT THIS DID FOR ME—LIVING VICTORIOUSLY

A. CONTENTMENT AND SECURITY

1. No anxiety

a. The Sermon on the Mount is a reality to me

b. About all necessities of life—and life itself—**Mt 6:25-34**

For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing. . . . So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will take care of itself.

2. No want

- “The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want.”
- Interpretation—The Lord is My Shepherd, and He is enough.”

3. No fear

a. After I died once—what else is there to fear?

b. He is now the Shepherd of my soul—and I am His fearless sheep

“I will lie down and sleep in peace, for He alone causes me to dwell in safety.”—Ps 4:8

EXAMPLE—YOUR SONG—‘BECAUSE HE LIVES’

‘BECAUSE HE LIVES’

God sent His son, they called Him Jesus
He came to love, heal, and forgive.

He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives, All fear is gone.
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

B. CONFIDENCE

1. Boldness and assurance (Phil 4:13)

I can do whatever Christ wants me to do—when He strengthens me.

2. Certainty of belief

- a. My faith was made stronger through a real-life experience
- b. I *experienced* something the other disciples did not fully understand
- c. Even before Jesus' resurrection—I had a foretaste of eternal life!
- d. I don't just know *what* I believe—I know *whom* I believe

I know **whom** I have believed and am persuaded that **He** is able to keep that which I have committed unto **Him** against that day.
(**II Tim 1:12**)

C. CLARITY

- Ability to focus on what really matters (Mt 6:33)
 - Because I have no anxiety about worldly things
 - I am able to stay focused on His Kingdom and His righteousness

D. URGENCY

1. I was given a second chance!
2. I see the pressing need to prepare others—the end is coming!

I was there—I felt the earthquake—I saw the temple foundation split!

3. Now is the accepted time—Now is the day of salvation! (**II Cor 6:2**)

He is coming again!

E. GRATITUDE

- How can I show my thanks to my friend who loved me so?
- By telling others—so they can know my friend Jesus too!
- Christ's love *compels* me to do this—because He died for all (**II Cor 5:14**)

APPLICATION

If you know my friend Jesus
If you have made Him your Savior and Lord
If you have died to self
If He has raised you to new life
If you live and believe in Him

Then you too should claim the **victorious living** of

CONTENTMENT

No anxiety
No want
No fear

CONFIDENCE

Boldness and assurance
Certainty of belief

CLARITY

Focus on the King—the Kingdom—and His righteousness

URGENCY

People of the second chance
Prepare for His coming

GRATITUDE

Share His gift with others

MY FAITH HAS FOUND A RESTING PLACE

**My faith has found a resting place,
Not in device or creed;
I trust the ever living One,
His wounds for me shall plead.**

Refrain

*I need no other argument,
I need no other plea,
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me.*

**Enough for me that Jesus saves,
This ends my fear and doubt;
A sinful soul I come to Him,
He'll never cast me out.**

**My heart is leaning on the Word,
The living Word of God,
Salvation by my Savior's Name,
Salvation through His blood.**

**My great Physician heals the sick,
The lost He came to save;
For me His precious blood He shed,
For me His life He gave.**

PIE IN THE SKY

American phrase by Joe Hill in 1911. Swedish-born laborer, moved to the USA in 1902. Leader of radical labor organization *The Industrial Workers of the World*—the Wobblies. Phrase appeared first in Hill's *The Preacher and the Slave*. Parodied Salvation Army hymn *In the Sweet Bye and Bye*. Criticized Army's emphasis on saving souls instead of feeding the hungry.

Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;
But when asked how 'bout something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet:

Chorus:

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land above the sky;
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

The starvation army they play,
They sing and they clap and they pray
'Till they get all your coin on the drum
Then they'll tell you when you're on the bum:

Holy Rollers and jumpers come out,
They holler, they jump and they shout.
Give your money to Jesus they say,
He will cure all diseases today.

If you fight hard for children and wife
Try to get something good in this life
You're a sinner and bad man, they tell,
When you die you will sure go to hell.

Workingmen of all countries, unite,
Side by side we for freedom will fight;
When the world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

You will eat, bye and bye,
When you've learned how to cook and to fry.
Chop some wood, 'twill do you good,
And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye.