

Resurrection Power

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"You will die unless you deny your God!" said the agent of the state. "I cannot deny Him! He has shown me a vision that means more to me than life itself!" responded the man through the pain he was enduring from being tortured.

We can easily visualize such a scene as we read the Eleventh Chapter of Hebrews. That chapter vividly portrays a radiant picture of biblical heroes of the faith dying for their belief in God. ". . . Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. . . still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. . ." (Heb 11:35-37 NIV).

Can you imagine a vision so powerful that it causes people to submit to torture, be maimed, and even die for it? For those mentioned in Hebrews Eleven, this power was so great that they endured horrible pain and even death for something they only saw from a distance but did not possess. We read that none of these suffering heroes of faith actually even entered into the vision:

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised, they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. (Heb 11:13 NIV).

What kind of vision, what kind of power would create such stubborn tenacity? I believe the answer to this question is that they had glimpsed the resurrection power of Christ. These martyred saints were driven by this resurrection power as described in verse Thirty-Five:

. . . Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

The Apostle Paul Saw It

The same compelling vision and force also seemed to grip Paul. But Paul goes further in describing the power that drove him. For from within the walls of a Roman prison he wrote:

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. . . . (Phil 3:10-11 NIV).

Thus, Paul tells us that a portion of his heart's cry is to know "Christ and the power of his resurrection."

Today, can we still see what the heroes of the faith in Hebrews, Chapter Eleven and Paul saw? Might a vision of resurrection power capture its beholders today as forcefully as it did long ago? I fully believe the answer is an emphatic YES! I believe with all my heart that this same mighty power is available to the church today. Only we are not moving in it. Many of us don't really even know it is there.

What is the Power of His Resurrection?

To properly answer this question we must view Jesus' resurrection from three perspectives. It is important that we understand not only what this resurrection power is, but learn to appropriate its power in our Christian walk.

Perspective One: First, we recognize that this power is so strong that it resurrected Jesus from physical death. Scripture declares:

"We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.' The fact [is] that God raised him from the dead, never to see decay. . . ." (Acts 13:32-34 NIV).

Here we see clear evidence that resurrection power includes God's power to raise Jesus' physical body from the dead.

Perspective Two: Next, we must focus on Jesus and His authority after His resurrection. Before Jesus' death, He moved in the authority of His Father. According to Jesus' own words, before His death on the cross, He did what He saw His Father do.

"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." (Jn 5:19 NIV).

Thus, before His death, Jesus' authority, or power, was an extension of Father's power. But after His resurrection, there is no doubt about Jesus' authority. He moves in all authority - both in heaven and on earth. After His resurrection He declares, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. . . ." (Matt 28:18 NIV).

Perspective Three: Finally, we see that after His resurrection, Jesus had total mastery of the physical realm.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them. . . (John 20:19 NIV).

Jesus certainly demonstrated occasional mastery over the physical realm before His resurrection. But after His resurrection He did not restrict Himself in any way by the laws of nature. He appeared and disappeared at will. His authority and power transcended natural laws.

To summarize these three aspects of resurrection power as seen in Christ, we have: 1) the power of God which energized Jesus and raised Him from the dead, 2) the power of "all authority" which was given Jesus after His resurrection, and

3) Jesus' power to move above natural laws.

Why We Have Access to This Same Resurrection Power

Our standing in Christ is the key to our access to this resurrection power. Let us examine certain Scriptures which illuminate the principle.

First, we know that Jesus was in the Father. He declared to the Jews:

"I and the Father are one." (Jn 10:30 NIV).

By this statement Jesus explains that He is in the Father and derives His power from His standing as one with the Father. In John, Chapter Eight Jesus explains His relationship with the Father in considerable detail. I recommend the reader read all of John, Chapter Eight for Jesus' explanation of his relationship with the Father. After Christ's death and resurrection, He ascended to heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father (see Col 3:1). From that point in time Jesus' primary place is with the Father. We, His church universal, are His agents here on earth. In other words, each of us is a representative of Christ on earth.

T. Austin-Sparks in his book In Christ¹ states that the phrase "in Christ," (or a variant of the phrase such as "through," "by," "with," "in him," etc.) appears in Scripture over two-hundred times. According to Austin-Sparks, it is the most often repeated phrase in the New Testament. Scripture tells us that "in Christ" we are given creation, life, acceptance, redemption, righteousness, sanctification, hope, spiritual blessings, consolation, peace, promises, effectual prayer, and One Body. Furthermore, as we are in Christ, in one sense we are with Him in heaven, at least in spirit, for Ephesians tells us, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. . ." (Eph 2:6 NIV).

Jesus specifically affirms that we are in Him and are His agents here on earth.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (Jn 17:20-23 NIV).

Paul tells us that we are "laborers together with God." (I Cor 3:9 KJV). The NIV puts it another way, "For we are God's fellow workers." Thus we are called to be co-laborers with Christ for the accomplishing of God's plan for planet earth.

We are also called to be servants, as Christ was a servant. ". . . and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:14-15

NIV). Thus Jesus demonstrates the tone which we must set as we move into this power. We are to be servants of all, even as we move with the great power He has made available to us by His death and resurrection.

We are also told that we are all children of God and co-heirs with Christ. (Rom 8:16-17a NIV). As co-heirs with Christ we have access to every single thing that Christ had access to as a Son and heir of God. That is what being a co-heir means. In law, an heir takes all that is left to him through a will. To be a co-heir means to share equally with other heirs in the entire estate.

Part of the estate that God has bequeathed us, through Christ, is that resurrection power. If Christ experienced that resurrection power, and surely He did, then we, as His co-heirs of God, can also experience it. Remember the three aspects of that power? It is strong and powerful enough to raise the dead, to move in the full authority of Christ, and to transcend physical laws and boundaries.

How Do We Gain Access to This Mighty Resurrection Power?

I believe there are two things that we must do to gain access to this resurrection power.

First, we must go through the death of our carnal self-life. We must go to the cross. Again, we turn to Paul for a description of the process:

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal 2:20 NIV).

Paul went on to say,

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Phil 1:21 NIV).

Paul also explains,

We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves **but on God**, who raises the dead. (II Cor 1:8-9 NIV).

Literally speaking, all we have and are must go through the death process - every natural ability, skill, relationship, and ministry. . . yes, even the things given us by God Himself must die. Everything must die. This must happen that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who is waiting to give us that power which can even raise the dead, **resurrection power!**

To the reader who has made it a life's ambition to fully serve the Lord, I ask, "Have you tried to serve the Lord and are yet falling short? Have you launched out in obedience to Christ only to end up frustrated or even disgraced? Are your health, finances, relationships, youth, and so forth, slipping away because you are trying to serve the Lord? Have there been times

when you have almost given up?" If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes!" don't give up! Your power cord is almost plugged in!

This is a spiritual metamorphosis process. Just as the ugly, hairy caterpillar has to enter his tomb (cocoon) and die to his "worm-freedom" in order to enter the majestic beauty and freedom of the butterfly, we also must die to our self-life in order to see what those heroes of the faith saw. Paul explains it this way:

Therefore do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (II Cor 4:16-18 NIV).

Moving Into Resurrection Power

Now we turn to the second part of the answer to the question, "How do we gain access to resurrection power?" I have had much teaching over the years regarding death to the "self-life." To my remembrance the teaching (or my learning) generally stopped there. Yet the dying to self is only the first half. Sadly there are many fully committed Christians who have died to all things of "self" but haven't moved into His resurrection power! And that is a tragedy, because it is through sharing in His resurrection power we may fully fulfill the call of God on our lives. It is through His resurrection power that we can achieve what He has directed us to accomplish for Him.

You see, the key to the second part of the moving into resurrection power is that it must be used by us to accomplish God's plan and purposes here on earth. In other words, as we more fully die to self and move into God's call on our lives to accomplish His purposes through us, the more we have access to His resurrection power. It is then that nothing can stop that power from accomplishing His work through us.

Indeed, the great commission as declared by Jesus Himself after His resurrection is the very heart of this matter. He stated: . . . "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20 NIV).

Thus, in this passage, after His resurrection, Christ affirms that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him. Then, in the very next verse, He tells us to go and make disciples all over the world teaching them everything He commands us. In so doing, He promises that He and His power will be with us always, to the very end of the age.

Does this passage only apply to "missionaries" who go "overseas?" Of course not! It applies to every believer who reaches out to another family member, a neighbor, a co-worker, or a fellow church member. It applies to every believer who has moved into the process of self-death in order to more fully fulfill

God's call on his or her life.

Let's be more specific. What kind of activities have access to resurrection power? Scripture assists us here:

" . . . I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (Jn 14:12-14 NIV).

Here Jesus promises that He will do whatever we ask in His name IF by so doing, the Son may bring glory to the Father. Here the condition Jesus imposes on His answering our prayer is that it will bring glory to the Father. Now suppose you ask the Lord for a Mercedes when you already have a perfectly good car. Will that Mercedes bring glory to the Father? Probably not.

But suppose you are immersed in a mission project somewhere close to your home and you need a good, dependable truck to carry supplies. Is this mission project task part of your moving in the call on your life to accomplish God's will? If the answer to this question is "yes," then a truck will bring glory to the Father, right? At this point you do have, and should expect, the ability to move into that resurrection power to overcome any obstacle that stands in the way of your receiving whatever you ask (i.e., a truck) for the accomplishing of God's work. Thus, the questions relevant to our moving into His resurrection power are questions such as, "Is this need or desire part of the Lord's work for me? Is this need a tool to assist in accomplishing what He has told me to do? Is He the Lord of the Harvest? Is my prayer properly related to His harvest?" If you can honestly answer these questions "yes," then I believe you qualify for that resurrection power in whatever you are asking from the Father.

Jesus knew that those who would obey His "go" mandate would encounter opposition from Satan and his host of demons. In anticipation of this warfare, He extended His resurrection power to His disciples. He said, "I have given you authority. . . . To overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you." (Lk 10:19 NIV). Here He is assuring us that as we move in His will to accomplish His purposes, we will have all the authority we need to overcome any demonic opposition which we will surely encounter along the way.

From Scripture we find many examples of those who have died to self and have moved into resurrection power. To cite just a few, Peter was freed from prison by an angel, Paul raised the dead young man at Troas, Peter moved in such power that those needing healing were healed when just his shadow fell on them, and so on. We know that this power did not end with the first century church. We are all aware of examples of God's mighty resurrection power at work today. For example, I recently was in the country of Cameroon [west Africa]. There I met a pastor on an airplane who was returning from Congo, a neighboring nation. He was a relatively obscure pastor of a small church. He told me an amazing story. One day the Holy Spirit told him to go to Congo and hold evangelistic meetings. He knew no one in

Congo but, in obedience, he gathered together what money he could and, taking one of his elders with him, he began his journey to Congo. During the course of his journey his money was stolen yet someone he didn't even know gave him plane tickets and fifty dollars. . . when he arrived he met a low ranking military officer who introduced him to a general. . . who introduced him to the president of Congo and his wife. . . the president's wife became a Christian. . . the general gave the pastor enough money to rent a large stadium. . . he held evangelistic crusades where thousands attended and many were saved. . . fifteen hundred people attended an all night prayer meeting. The entire trip was one incredible display of the resurrection power of Christ. When I spoke with the pastor on the plane he was truly in awe of what God had done. So was I! Why were this obscure pastor's efforts so fruitful? Because the pastor responded to God's call to accomplish a task God wanted accomplished as part of His eternal plan. That's why Christ's resurrection power was so present.

To repeat, the kinds of activity through which we have access to this incredible resurrection power are those things which fulfill God's call on our lives and which assist in the achieving of His purposes in this world.

This power is not for the gratification of the flesh or for self-aggrandizement. "You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." (Jas 4:2-3 NIV).

Here Scripture plainly tells us that we won't even get our prayers answered when we ask with wrong motives. The King James Version says when we ask "amiss," a very descriptive term which I like better. If we are not likely to get our prayers answered when we ask amiss, can we expect any resurrection power to come forth in this kind of prayer? Absolutely not. But what we may observe is what I call "flesh-power." That is, things may happen in apparent "answer to prayer" but often it is

just the flesh in all of us performing to make it happen. Then we "thank Jesus for it!" This is not true resurrection power and it will always come to an end of itself. There is never a permanent end of resurrection power, although it may certainly appear to end for a season once the needed task has been accomplished.

As we have seen, we can be prevented from tapping into God's resurrection power by our love for the things of this world, our asking amiss, and our refusing to die to self.

But in many instances, I believe it is a case of our just not realizing that we can share in His resurrection power. It is simply not moving into that power to accomplish a God-given task. It is like carrying a closed bag around with a million dollars in it and not realizing what is inside the bag. It is there for our use, we just don't know it. But once we open the bag and catch a glimpse of that enormous sum, we can accomplish great things. Yes, we are "in Christ," just as He was in His Father. This is our heritage. And that wonderful, awesome heritage includes our access to His resurrection power. But unless we take bold, deliberate and continual steps to enter into this resurrection power, we will not fully enter into the call God has on each of us. God has called us to be a part of His army for the accomplishing of His plan in these last days.

Lord, open our eyes that we may see your resurrection power. Create in us such a hunger for this power that nothing this world offers can compare with our desire to enter into your resurrection power. Then show us what you are doing each day, that we may do the same thing - let us hear your voice each day that we will say the things you want said. Let us lay hold of your resurrection power in every situation or circumstance in our lives so that you may bring glory to the Father and that your will be accomplished.

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