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Position and Power - The Power of His Resurrection
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Chapter 2 - The Power of His Resurrection

READING: Ephesians 2:1-6, Colossians 2:8-15 and 20; 3:3-4.

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." "HIM, and the power of His resurrection." It is the power of His resurrection with which the Lord is engaging us at this time, and we should link with that especially this clause at the beginning of chapter 3 in Colossians: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God." "If then ye were raised together with Christ...." "If" - in other words - "you were united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection": if the power by which God raised Him from the dead has also operated in you, in raising you from the dead spiritually, then there must be a certain outworking of that, that must show itself in a continuous life in relation to the Lord Jesus, where He is at the right hand of God, and in relation to heavenly things. The proof of union with the Lord Jesus in resurrection life is that: that now everything for us is related to Him where He is, and to the things above, things heavenly.

That from which we have been raised.

We come back just a little before we arrive at that to notice some of these very strong things which the apostle is saying in connection with that. In this letter to the Ephesians we notice: "when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins wherein aforetime ye walked according to the course of this age, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience: among whom we also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest." Now all those clauses are features of our past state out of which the power of His resurrection has brought us, and that represents a very serious and a very sorry condition. We were dead; that is one thing. We walked according to the course of this age; that is another thing. We were governed by the order of this world. We were also under the prince of the power of the air, in bondage to him, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience. Of course we did not know of this, we only knew of this when our eyes were opened, but this is the statement. Many of us are quite prepared to admit now that it was true. The fact that we are alive now, in contrast with what we were, makes us quite ready to say that we were dead: in comparison with what we are now, we are able to recognise what our former state was. I trust that the contrast is so great in your case that in comparison with what you are now, you are able to say "Well, I was dead, there is no doubt about it, I was dead"! You never know what it is to be dead until you know what it is to be made alive.

Paul is speaking in the afterward of a great experience of the resurrection union of the Lord Jesus. When you have that then you know what the other is, and you do not want any more of it. We were dead, and we were also in the bondage, the grip of the course of this age; and even believers, saved ones, and raised ones, are able to recognise how true and how real this is. You have a lively sense of the "old man," the flesh when you have come on to the living ground of union with Christ and then you know how influenced you are by worldly standards, worldly judgments, what the world thinks, the world's attitude towards you. It is the collision of the believer with the world-spirit that makes him know that he was once according to it, according to the course of this age: now that you are no longer according to it you know how different the thing is. You do not know how different it is until you really come out with Christ from it, then you begin to feel the clash of the world-spirit, the world's judgment, the world-state, and the very fact that you were once insensible to it, and there was no clash, shows how completely you were in it. The course of the believer's experience is the accentuating and intensifying of the clash between their spirit and the spirit of the world, and yet at one time there was not that sense of clash: many of you know that. Now we go out in the world and, well, we are strangers in it, utterly strangers in it. As we move about we discover that something has happened to us, we are not in that, we are not of that, but we are now able to look back to a time when that may have appealed to us, we did not feel the clash of that as we feel it now, which means that we were in it, part of it, walking according to the course of this age.

Is there a mighty clash of the spirit of the world with your spirit? That is a very good sign, beloved, and if you can feel at

all comfortable and at home in the world it is a bad sign. If your whole inner being does not revolt with a terrific revulsion from the course of this age, you have reason to ask serious questions about the state of your soul. We were in that, says the apostle, "walked according to the course of this age and according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." Well, here again we only discover how true that is when we recognise how completely the spirit which governs this age is not the Spirit which governs our lives. The Spirit which governs us, the Spirit of Christ in "the kingdom of the Son of His love" has made a very, very great difference in this matter of government. The world is governed by one spirit and we are governed by another, and there is no intercommunion. The bondage of Satan - we know how great that bondage is when we are out of it by realising how terrific the clash and difference is. Well, that was our state, "according to the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience, among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh...."

"The lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind"; that was another state in which we were. And then, "...and were by nature children of wrath." Now you see all the things, one upon another, representing the grave, the living grave in which we were dead, a very living grave, a very powerful grave in which we were dead. Now our deliverance therefrom represents the power of His resurrection, but oh, what power that is, what tremendous power that is!

The Hopelessness of Death

The power of His resurrection. It has destroyed the power of death, spiritual death, and beloved, taking death only, that is a desperately hopeless thing. How hopeless death is! Think about it. We say, "While there is life there is hope" and how desperately the fight is put up against death, everything resorted to to prevent, to circumvent death; great activity, tremendous resourcefulness, everything conceivable brought into play while there is any sign of life, but once that life has gone and death is there, everything falls back into utter impotence, it is no use. Death! The most hopeless thing, and when death is once accepted as inevitable, what a hopeless situation we are in, when once it is said by the final authority, "It is no use, nothing can be done, death is inevitable." We are paralysed, helpless; what can you do? Death is a mighty, mighty tyrant which renders utterly paralysed every resource conceivable.

We have illustrated in the natural, the physical realm, but, oh, beloved, carrying that into the spiritual realm, what a terrific thing death is, spiritual death. Have you ever met a soul who has definitely and fully accepted the idea, the thought, that they have sinned beyond forgiveness and that there is no more hope of their forgiveness, that there is nothing even in God Himself which can be found for their forgiveness? Have you ever met such a soul? (and there are such). You know the helplessness, the utter helplessness of the situation. There is nothing you can say, or touch, or do that can in any way help that case, and what is more, that is a living hell, a living torture day and night. That is spiritual death when you become conscious of it, and the Word of God says that the whole creation is there by nature, but it does not know what spiritual death is. If the creation could suddenly be awakened to this state of spiritual death, hell would almost be universal; and that creation which rejects Christ will one day wake up to the fact that hell exists, but hidden from their consciousness; it is only becoming alive to the fact that they are cut off from God, dead to God, dead to salvation, dead to hope. What I am getting at is this, that we were in that state, though we were unconscious of it. The state existed, it was a true state.

If we had been made suddenly alive to our awful condition, in the fulness of God's knowledge of it, ours would have been a desperate state of soul. It is a desperate day when a soul wakes up fully to the light that it is lost; a terrible thing is spiritual death. The power of His resurrection has conquered that, broken that, destroyed that, and if we have been united with Him in His resurrection, if the power of His resurrection has brought us to new birth, we need never know anything about that. We have been delivered from that for all eternity and never need taste it, but the others will taste it; the full consciousness of that evil state in which they are, but concerning which they are blinded. It is the blinding work of the Devil to hide from souls the real nature of their condition. When God opens eyes souls cry out in agony. The Devil keeps them blinded to their state, but for us there never need be an awakening to such a condition. The responsibility, of course, is with us once we have heard this word of Life. The power of His resurrection has come into the most hopeless realm, where there is no power whatever in the universe that can help but the power of His resurrection. But that is only the beginning. We have been delivered from the course of this age. What is the course of this age? Well, it is a state of things which lies definitely under a Divine curse. A curse, as we have often pointed out, in the Word of God, always bears certain signs and has certain features, and those features are there, that a thing that lies under a curse can never realise the object for which it was created. The realising of that end of its creation has been rendered impossible and it will go so far and then it will fall, never get further than that. As you know, in the case of the curse pronounced by Joshua upon Jericho, later the people came to the prophet Elisha and said "The situation of this city is pleasant, but the waters are bad and the trees cast their fruit before their time." That is the curse, that nothing comes to ripeness, everything falls before it reaches perfection. That is the course of this age. It can never attain unto God's end, God's purpose in its creation, it will break

down, it will fail.

Men talk about the conquest of this and that, supremacy in this realm and that. There is no such thing. The conquest of the air! There never will be the conquest of the air. They may bring things to a certain point of efficiency, but the thing will break down. The conquest of the ocean! Yes, when the Titanic was launched the chief officials who saw her launched said, "God Almighty could not sink that ship"; there goes the conquest of the ocean; and on her maiden voyage they were banqueting in honour of the conquest of the ocean and the 'unsinkable' ship, and suddenly the crash and down she went within seven minutes, the most terrible marine disaster in history. You see what I mean? There is no consummation, no finality, no completeness, no perfection, no attainment unto supremacy, but a breakdown when it reaches a certain point. And we were in that realm of activity where it was utterly impossible for us to reach the destiny God had intended for us because we were under the curse of God upon a creation that had departed from Him. A hopeless situation; born into it, children of it. Here in this age, in this world, born under a curse, "children of wrath," impossible of realising the end for which the world was created, and we were created; a hopeless situation, by nature utterly hopeless. But the power of His resurrection has dealt with the curse, He was "made a curse for us" in order that we might be delivered and reach God's intended end, the manifestation of the sons of God in glory. The power of His resurrection has done that, broken in upon this cursed creation and delivered us out of it so that we can go right on to perfection. That is only the second feature.

"The prince of the power of the air." You see we have got first of all a state in ourselves, spiritual death. And then we are in a state immediately around us, "the course of this world," the death, the curse. And then you widen the circle, "The prince of the power of the air" around that. How hopeless the situation. The whole satanic force holding the creation and the age and every one in it in bondage and in death. The tremendous power of Satan! The tremendous range of his organised kingdom to see to it that so far as his ingenuity and cunning and wit and strength can possibly affect the end, not one soul shall escape, and if one soul does escape he will pursue, persecute that soul right on to the end to try and recover his lost property. "The prince of the power of the air." When Christ went to the Cross He "stripped off principalities and powers." The power of His resurrection has dealt with that also. The power of His resurrection has become effective for our deliverance. "So great salvation," Paul calls it. Are we rejoicing in the greatness of our salvation? Have we apprehended the meaning of this verse, "...the power of His resurrection"?

Unto What We are Raised

The apostle goes on and shows what the power of that resurrection did in Christ. It not only raised Him from the dead, not only took Him out from this age, but took Him through the ranks of principalities and powers as a conquest; for as He passed through He stripped off, He broke through and triumphed; but not only so, God put Him there at His own right hand far above all these, and put all things in subjection to Him. That was all the outworking of this power of His resurrection, what God "wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above principality and power and might and dominion... and hath put all things under His feet...." The Holy Spirit says, through the Apostle, "that power is to usward who believe," and He is able "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us...." that power! You see how far that life that you and I received in new birth is capable of taking us. We have received it, as it were, in its infant form in new birth, but oh, within that infant life there are all the potentialities of that vast range of triumph right up to the throne. All that which was accomplished in Christ is possible in us by exactly the same power that worketh in us; it is all there.

What the Believer Must Do

Now, then, the fact that we have possessed that, become possessed of that, puts us under an obligation and a responsibility, "If, then, ye be risen with Christ set your affection on things above," "Where Christ is." It is only another way of saying "Put yourselves in line with the direction of the life that is in you, for the direction of that life is thitherward to Christ, in conformity to His image." Put yourselves right in line with the direction of the life within you, that is the way it is going. Set your heart upon that, get into oneness with the upward movement, the spiritual and moral upward movement of that life. Because of the tremendous potentialities of that life you must be in fellowship with it in its direction, otherwise you will not come to the realisation of those possibilities and potentialities. Because it is the life of Christ, victorious, it is intended to lead you on in victory in every realm. The hope of victory over spiritual death is in that life; the hope of victory over the lusts of the flesh, the desires of the mind is in that life which is given to us, a life which is a victorious life in its very nature. The hope of our being delivered from all forms and phases of the operation of that curse which brings us under arrest, that we go so far and no further, is in that life. The hope of our rising triumphant over spiritual forces, intelligences, principalities and powers, is in that life. The hope of our reaching Christ and gaining Christ, and being conformed to the image

of Christ is in the life that we have already received.

Therefore, for all these reasons, put yourself into line with it, co-operate with it, consent to it, adjust yourself to it. "...Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth...." Seek, and set your affections upon the things that are above where Christ is if you be risen with Christ. There is a responsibility resting upon us to see to it that voluntarily we do not in any attitude, or in any contact, touch the thing from which we have been raised. If we do we counter the operation of that life, we bring ourselves again under arrest and under defeat. Let me illustrate. When Israel crossed the Jordan, they in history, typically, did what is put here before us spiritually in the letter to the Colossians, they passed typically by way of the cross, which represented the passing from an old life of bondage to the flesh and an earth life where nothing came to perfection, into the heavenlies, into a resurrection union with Christ. The Jordan for them was the cross and the grave by which they passed from one set of conditions to another, and they passed into this resurrection union with the Lord, in type, when they passed through Jordan and came out on the other side.

Now they enter upon an entirely new phase, a new order of things. They have come into a spiritual realm, they have come, in type, into Ephesians where the seven nations of the land represent "principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness, and spiritual hosts of wickedness." How are they going to be dealt with? Jericho illustrates an entirely new order of things. Not a sword drawn in the flesh, not a sound made in the flesh, all fleshly activities are silenced, are ruled out. All the recourse to natural means put aside. It is a strange, mysterious kind of thing this, marching silently around a city, besieging a mighty city in silence, without a weapon being used, day after day, seven days, and then on the seventh day seven times, and then a shout. But that was not a shout in the flesh, that was the shout of a perfect faith in God. If you had been in the realm of nature according to men, after having been round that city fourteen times silently and seen nothing happen, you would have said "Well, what is the good of shouting; it is a ridiculous thing to shout, all this is futile." But that is the flesh talking. But the flesh is so thoroughly gone that after all this seeming futile kind of thing, which was according to the commandment of the Lord, they believed; and it was the obedience of faith, faith brought to maturity. Well, they shouted and Jericho went down. It represented the nature of spiritual warfare in the heavenlies. So different from carnal warfare in the earthlies.

Now notice, God intended that to establish forever the nature of their triumph; that their triumph, their victory was not according to the methods of men; that their ascendancy, their conquest was not on any natural, ordinary, fleshly, human basis: that it was a spiritual thing in the heavenlies where man's reasoning, man's wisdom is ruled out. But this thing is a thing in heavenly union with the Lord, and they could have gone on and swept the seven nations out of the land on that principle, but you notice how that course of things was arrested, checked, and the whole course was upset and they did not go on in that way. One man, like a link in a chain, brought a union between them as up there and the cursed realm as down here: brought them back into touch with that which lay under the curse. Achan took the accursed thing and all Israel by that link of one man was brought again into a contact with the thing that was under the curse, and their next movement was disaster, defeat, and the whole thing had to be investigated and brought to the light. "Set your affection upon things above." If we have been raised with Christ, what is contained in that union with Christ is victory over all the power of the enemy. Victory in the spiritual realm back of things seen. The enemy's strategy to bring that victory to an end is to get us to mind something earthly, to just form the link again between us and that which is the realm of death and the whole of our conquest is paralysed, we have touched something that is under the Divine ban; we have just reversed the direction of our inner life; we have violated the law of "the Spirit of Life in Christ."

Beloved, if we will adjust ourselves to the course of that resurrection life we can go on in victory, and from victory to victory, and go right on to God's end: but there is a responsibility with us to see to it that voluntarily we do not form a link between us and that from which we have been delivered in the power of His resurrection. We set our affection on things above, not on things that are upon the earth, we mind heavenly things: all our life is above. It is a blessed thing, and it ought to be a constant source of strength and comfort to us that having received eternal life in being born again we have received, potentially, the perfect work of God in Christ, and that now, God, by that very life, is bringing us to His own finality of perfection in Christ.

A Change of Dispensations. The Seventh Day and the First Day

We have often tried to explain this. Perhaps the best illustration of it is the change of the dispensations between the Jewish and the Christian. You know that the dispensation changed when Christ rose from the dead. In more senses than one it was a change of dispensation - His resurrection; but do you notice what it says in John 20. Something is introduced, almost imperceptibly it creeps in there, and unless you are very much awake you do not notice what has crept in; something

ng has come in which is absolutely startling if only you are alive to it. "On the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdale ne early" - you have changed the dispensations. The Lord's day is the first day of the week; in Judaism it was the seventh day - but do you notice what that carries with it? The Jews worked six days and rested on the seventh. The believers rested on the first and worked the six. Believers start their work with a day of rest, and work six days. Jews work six days and rest on the seventh. You have got a change of dispensations, but it carries with it this tremendous truth that God is now working, from rest, not to rest; the old dispensation was working toward rest; in the new it is working from rest. God has come to His rest in the work of Calvary in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and having reached His finality, His fulness, His rest in Calvary in the resurrection, now He is working from that, and He is working with us from a position of perfection, out from a fulness, not toward a fulness; He has got the fulness and it is of His fulness that we are receiving. And unless you apprehend that rightly you will be in unrest, but when once you see that God, having given us resurrection life, has given us - with that - rest, His own finality, His perfect work, the completeness, the finality of His work in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; given to us in the life that He gives us in resurrection union with Christ; and with the gift of that life He has given us everything; then you are in the place of power. But the danger is that we should fall short of what we have got, that we shall fail of the realisation, the possibilities of the life that is in us. So we must place ourselves in perfect sympathy, and direction, and co-operation, with the life that is in us and come into line with it, because in it is all the perfection that is in Christ, given to us.

We have seen something, I trust, and while we see great vistas, vast ranges, tremendous possibilities, let us recognise that this has got to come down, must come down to the practical matters of our daily lives. We are to know in a multitude of ways, here, every day of our sojourn on the earth, the operation of that life; and we can put that life to the test daily and it will prove itself equal to any test if we are not wilfully, persistently, in opposition to it. That is, doing the thing which is against it; permitting the contact, the interest, the association which violates it. But if we are in sympathy with it, in adjustment to it, it will take the strain of any test. It will take the strain of a physical test (Romans 8:11): "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." It will take the strain of a moral test, of a circumstantial test, when you are in a difficult situation circumstantially, carry you through triumphantly; it will take the strain of any test so long as you are in sympathy with it. And forgive me that I have said so much about "it" because after all, it is "Him." "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." We must not regard this life as something apart from the Person. It is "Christ in us the hope of glory," but Christ in us in the mighty energy of His resurrection life.