

THE MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION
 or
 THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION
 Ephesians 1:19-23

Intro: There are five persons mentioned in the Scriptures who raised the dead. They are Elijah, Elisha, our Lord, Peter, and Paul. All of the disciples had this power.

Elijah raised the son of the widow of Zarephath. Cf. 1 Kings 17:17-24.

Elisha raised the son of the Shunamite woman. Cf. 2 Kings 4:18-37.

In 2 Kings 13:21 we read of the Moabites, who had invaded the land of Israel at the time of Elisha's death, were burying a man and, taken by surprised by "a band of men," cast the dead man's body into Elisha's grave, and the dead man was raised back to life when his dead body touched the bones of Elisha.

These are the only three instances of resurrection in the OT although there are prophetic passages which speak of future resurrections.

In the Gospels we read of three people who were raised from the dead by our Lord (although there were probably many more which were not recorded). The three were:

- 1) Jairus' daughter (Matt. 9:18, 19, 23-26; Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Luke 8:41, 42, 49-56).
- 2) The widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11-18).
- 3) Lazarus (John 11:1-46).

When our Lord was crucified, we learn from Matthew alone that . . . the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many (Matt. 27:52, 53).

Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36-42).

Paul raised Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12).

It is possible that Paul himself was brought back from the dead after he had been stoned at Lystra (Acts 14:19, 20).

BUT ONE THING THAT WE CAN SAY ABOUT ALL OF THESE PEOPLE WHO WERE RAISED FROM THE DEAD IS THAT THEY DIED AGAIN!

I have purposely passed over the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ because that was a unique resurrection. OUR

LORD WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD NEVER TO DIE AGAIN!

When He appeared to John toward the close of the first century, this is one of the things that He said:

I am he that liveth, and was dead;
and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen . . .
(Rev. 1:18a).

Paul, in writing to the church at Roman, said this:

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead
dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him
(Rom. 6:9).

The writer of the book of Hebrews said that our Lord "continueth ever," and that "he ever liveth" (Heb. 7:24, 25). And it was in part because of the nature of our Lord's resurrection that Paul in writing to the Corinthian church spoke of the resurrected Christ as "the firstfruits" (1 Cor. 15:23).

When the Lord Jesus first sent the twelve out to minister, He conferred upon them the power to "raise the dead" (Matt. 10:8). When John sent his disciples to the Lord asking, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" part of the answer that the Lord gave as proof of His Messiahship was that "the dead are raised" (Luke 7:20, 22).

Resurrection always required power, divine power. Although men other than our Lord were used to raise the dead, yet the power always came from Him. No one has ever been able to raise the dead in such numbers as our Lord did!

However, when our Lord was raised from the dead, all Three Persons of the Godhead were involved.

- 1) "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. 6:4b).
- 2) Christ was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Pet. 3:18b).
- 3) Our Lord Himself said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17b).

These statements alone set the resurrection of Christ apart from all other resurrections. Although every resurrection required the power of God, yet the resurrection of Christ was because of the greatest possible manifestation of divine power!

No man in and of himself has the power to raise the dead. Only God has such power! Therefore, we should have no problem with the passages in the Bible which speak of God raising the dead. Paul used this argument with King Agrippa in Acts 26:8 when he asked,

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you,
that God should raise the dead?

If we believe that God is God, then we should have no problem

with the Biblical doctrine of resurrection, whether it be the resurrection of the widow's son from Nain, or the resurrection of Eutychus, or the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The power to raise the dead is a attribute of the Triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Paul very conclusively showed in 1 Corinthians 15 that, if we deny the doctrine of the resurrection, then we destroy the Christian faith. Nothing is left. Everything that is dear to us as Christians concerning our hope of salvation rests solidly upon the reality of the resurrection, and, specifically, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only does the NT in many, many places support this statement, but we have many confirmations in the OT as well.

Now let me take you to Ephesians chapter 1, verses 19 through 23. I have been laying this foundation on the resurrection of Christ to emphasize one particular thing about the resurrection AS IT RELATES TO THOSE OF US WHO ARE THE LORD'S PEOPLE! Not only have we been justified by the death and resurrection of our Lord, BUT THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST HAS SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR OUR LIVES EVERY DAY THAT WE LIVE! This is what I want you to see today as we consider Christ's resurrection.

The first thing I want to point out (and this will be a reminder for most of you) is that what Paul wrote here about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was:

I. A PART OF HIS PRAYER.

God back to verse 15, and read through the prayer.

What was Paul concerned about? He was concerned about what the Ephesian believers needed to know! Obviously he was indicating that it was not enough that they had heard him teach these things. Nor was it enough that he had written to them in this letter about these great truths. It was necessary that God Himself teach each one of His people what these truths meant!

And so he was praying this prayer for them, not just once, nor once in a while, but continuously praying this prayer for them. It was essential that they understand what kind of power it took to resurrect the Lord Jesus Christ. It took an exceedingly great power. It took "mighty power." It took nothing short of the omnipotence of God Himself!

And although there was a far greater display of the power of God in the resurrection of Christ than we can ever fully comprehend, yet, with all of the outlay of that

power, that power was not exhausted! God is still as strong as He was on the day that He raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. The same is true of our Lord. And the same is true of the Holy Spirit.

Now let me say this.

If it were necessary for Paul to pray this prayer in that day, and to pray it continuously, DO YOU NOT THINK THAT WE OUGHT TO BE PRAYING THIS PRAYER FOR OURSELVES AND FOR EACH OTHER.

Illus: During our vacation Lucille and I had the special joy of getting in touch with a niece of mine, the daughter of one of my brothers. I had not seen her since she was a baby, and now she is married and the mother of two very sweet little girls, one eight, and the other six. I have been praying for her daily for a long time even though until recently I did not know where she was. Gary has been corresponding with her because he is our family historian, and he told her (her name is Cathy) that I have been praying for her. As we sat and talked to each other last Wednesday morning, she turned to me and mentioned what Gary had told her. And then she said (and she knows the Lord), "What do you pray for when you pray for me?" It took me a little off guard because I have not been asked that question very often. So I told her how I had been praying for her--that I had been praying that the Lord would teach her, and guide her, and strengthen her, and use her with her family. Several times I have used this very prayer of Paul's for the believers I pray for. This is how Paul prayed for the believers at Ephesus. He wanted them to know from the resurrection of Christ what a mighty God and Savior we have!

But notice the particular point he was making about the mighty, resurrection power of God. His request had to do with:

II. THE POWER OF GOD TOWARD US.

Note the statement, "That ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." Or, as we would say it today, what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe.

What power is God exercising toward us, and in us, and for us?

It is the very same omnipotence, inexhaustible power, that God exercised when He raised His Son from the dead!

That is incredible, isn't it? Only God can help us to understand what that means.

But the power of God was not only exercised in the resurrection of Christ, but in His exaltation at the Father's right hand in heaven! Whenever you think about the resurrection of Christ's body from the tomb, think also of His exaltation to the Father's right hand in heaven. It is all a part of the great victory which the Lord accomplished at the Cross.

But what about His exaltation?

Not only has He taken His place at the Father's right hand, but:

- 1) No other power is as great as His power.
- 2) No other name is as great as His Name—past, present, or future.
- 3) All things are under His feet, made to serve His purposes and the outworking of His will.
- 4) And He is the One Who with absolute sovereignty over all things has become the Head of the Church.

What was Paul trying to tell those early Christians at Ephesus?

Let me mention two things.

First, He was telling them that it took this very same power to save them. When we were saved we were raised from spiritual death into spiritual life, and that required the same power that raised our Lord from the dead, and exalted Him to the Father's right hand.

Secondly, He was telling them that God was perfectly able to fulfill all of His will concerning each and every one of His children, that nothing and no one could stand in the way of God in caring for His people, in purifying His people, in blessing His people, or in using His people. Trials would come and go. They might at times be very severe. People would rise up against them. Their own hearts would often lead them astray. But the sovereign power of their heavenly Father, and of their exalted Savior, were sufficient to make sure that nothing and no one could stand in the way of the full realization of God's hope for them in salvation.

What did Paul say at the end of chapter three just after he had told them about another prayer that he often prayed for them. Cf. Eph. 3:20, 21.

Concl: How are things going with you in your life as a

Christian? Things often get tough, and discouraging, don't they? Trials can be very hard for us, especially when it is impossible for us to see what purpose they have. We often fail the Lord when we want to be the most faithful. Life in this world never has been easy, and it never will. If we look at ourselves and at our resources in ourselves, the burdens get heavier than ever.

But how different it is when we keep our thoughts centered on the Lord! How different it is when we understand more and more about His power, His sovereign power, His victorious power, His inexhaustible power, His sufficient power.

This is the one Sunday in the year when the world is reminded of the resurrection of Christ. Unfortunately it has deteriorated into a day that has been commercialized, a day of Easter eggs and Easter bunnies. But we as Christians know that every Sunday, every Lord's Day, is Resurrection Day for us! We refuse to be limited to one day in the year. The day our Lord was raised is a day we can never forget. That was the day our Savior was raised because His work was not only finished, but fully accepted by the Father. The resurrection of Christ was the day of our emancipation from sin and from Satan and from death and the grave. That was the day of the new creation, the day in which God displayed His mighty power, power that is sufficient to bring all of God's people to glory.

May our hearts rejoice anew in the Lord on this day. May we praise and worship Him. And may we, as we have seen in our text today, pray faithfully for ourselves, and for each other, that we will know with greater and greater understanding that the same power that God exercised to raise His Son from the dead, is the power that God displays toward us and for us, guaranteeing that we will finally get to heaven, and that we will be then all that the Lord intends for us to be, conformed to the likeness of His dear Son.

Are you on your way to heaven? If not, will you join the rest of us by forsaking your sins, and trusting in Christ to save you? I hope you have been able to see from the Scriptures that salvation is not what we earn from God, nor is it even a cooperative work between God and us. Salvation is God's mighty power displayed in us as we trust in Christ, delivering us from eternal death, forgiving us of our sins, and making us His children forever. Put your trust in Christ today. He has promised not to turn anyone away who comes to Him. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).