

The Resurrection Victory

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"Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54).

Somewhere I have read an Indian legend of a tribe which lived in a great forest at the foot of a lofty mountain peak. One day the old chief summoned the lads of the tribe to his side. He called upon them to clamber to the top of that lofty summit and win the renown of its conquest. It would test their mettle and prove their worth to the tribe, for it had been many a day since a young brave had mastered that sky-piercing pinnacle. The lads started out to obey. Hours went by and they began slowly to return. One of them brought a tuft of moss which he had torn from the mountain side, as a token of the height to which he had climbed. Presently came another with the broken twig of a tree which stood still higher up the mountain, but yet not upon its summit. By and by came another grasping a beautiful flower which grew well up toward the summit of the peak, but still not upon its top. After a while all the lads were back save one. For hours he came not. Then as the gloom of the night began to fall they heard his voice calling in the distant forest. Nearer and nearer he came until he stepped into the fire-lit circle of the waiting

camp. He had no token in this hand but when they saw his face they did not need to ask him if he had conquered the towering peak. For it was lighted with the glory of vision, and he cried aloud, *"I have seen the crystal sea."*

Next to our Lord Jesus Christ probably no man who walked this earth knew the secret of victory better than the Apostle Paul. He knew the way of death, through union with His Lord Jesus Christ. He knew the way of life, for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus thrilled and pulsed through his whole being, physical, mental, and spiritual. He knew, too, the way of consecration, for he was Jesus Christ's bond-slave in an utter abandonment of devotion and obedience. He knew, too, the way of practical cleansing from the daily practice of sin, for the vision of the risen Christ in all His holiness was like a consuming fire in the purging of sin from his walk and life. But as he reaches this mountain peak of the resurrection victory he is like a man who has scaled the loftiest summit of vision who has seen the splendor of the crystal sea; and whose face is radiant with the foregleams of coming glory. For with all his wondrous experience of victory, yet the sentence upon his mortal body is "the body is dead because of sin." But now he sees the crystal sea of coming triumph over the death itself which is stamped upon these mortal bodies. It is the resurrection vision which now enthalls him. It is the resurrection lips as he cries out, *"Death is swallowed up in victory."*

The Story of the Resurrection

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." . . . "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Thess. 4:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54).

The Lord Jesus shall come again in glory.

The dead in Christ shall be resurrected.

The living in Christ shall be instantly glorified.

Both shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Both shall be forever with the Lord.

Thus is death "swallowed up" in victory.

Such is the wondrous resurrection story in all its Scriptural clearness, simplicity, and certainty. It is the blessed hope of the church; the consummation of this gospel-age; the climax of God's great purpose of glorification;

the long awaited instant of all time when death shall be swallowed up in the supreme victory of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself the "first-fruits" of that mighty miracle of God, and "they that are Christ's at His coming."

The Pledge of the Resurrection

Many years ago we were traveling through a Southern State. It was the month of February and the time of the blossoming glory of the peach tree. By and by our train pulled by a great peach orchard. In it were one hundred thousand trees. Each individual tree was robed in the glory and splendor of its pink and white bloom. As the train slowly wheeled past the great orchard the south wind which blew into the car windows was heavily laden with the rich perfume of the vast orchard of peach trees. Suppose you had stood at the same spot in the dead of winter, a couple of months before. Those peach trees were all there in the same place, but how different. There was not a sign of life, nor bloom, nor beauty. There they were stretching their dead, bare, leafless limbs toward the winter sky as though in mute appeal for the life, beauty, and blossom to come, of which there was yet no sign. Suppose as you bent over those peach trees you were to whisper to them, "Peach trees, as you stand there so dead, and dry, and bloomless, what is your hope that you will some bright day be clothed with the splendor and glory of the spring blossom time?" If those peach trees

could answer you, they would call back as with one voice, "*The peach life in us is our hope of glory.*"

Just so Paul tells the Colossians he has a wonderful mystery to reveal to them. It is a mystery which God had never before revealed: a mystery which was not made known to the prophets of old; a mystery which was the most wondrous truth that the great apostle could pass on to these children of God; it was

"Christ in You, the Hope of Glory"
(Col. 1:27).

That Christ who had come into them at regeneration; that Christ who, dwelling in them, was their promise and power of sanctification; that same Christ would in the resurrection moment be their glorification. For He Himself had said it while He walked the earth. Not simply "I will some day bring you the resurrection"; not merely "I am the power of that resurrection"; but

"I AM the resurrection and the life."

And that same life of Christ within us will, in the striking figure of the prophetic Word some day "*swallow up*" death (1 Cor. 15:54). As the swift-advancing prairie fire swallows up every tiny pool of water which lies in the fiery path of its advance; as the beauteous dawn of the breaking day swallows up every den and cavern of darkness before its swift march; as the music of a great symphony orchestra swallows up all the discords which have been

filling the ears of the listening multitude, so Christ within us shall some day swallow up these dead bodies of His own in one marvelous moment of miracle and glory.

"The body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10).

In these bodies which bear even now the hidden seeds of death there is also dwelling the hidden life of the resurrection Christ and—

"He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11).

Wherefore the pledge and the power of the coming resurrection of God's own children is the life of His own resurrected Son within them.

The Instanteousness of the Resurrection

"Do you remember our Lord's wondrous statement about these resurrection bodies when the Sadducees tried to entrap Him by one of their foolish questions? They had supposed the case of a woman having seven husbands in succession, and then sought to bring Him to confusion before the multitude by asking Him whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Back came His marvelous teaching that in heaven there would be neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but that all of God's children would be "*children of the resurrection.*" Do you note the striking phrase and its significance? Plainly it is this: Marriage

was given by God for the perpetuation of the race. Through its holy relationship children are born into the world with their natural bodies. The pangs of birth and the long, slow years of growth fashion these natural bodies of ours. But neither marriage, nor natural birth, nor the long progress of years will be needed to fashion the new, glorified bodies of His redeemed children. That body is fashioned in an instant, the glory-instant of the resurrection. It needs no human union for its creation. It leaps into being at the supernatural touch of God's resurrection power. Heaven shall be filled with a new race of beings, who, as to the body, will flash into it in a second of time, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." It shall be peopled with millions of glorious bodies of God's children which were never born in human wedlock. Thus they are "children of the resurrection." And heaven itself is waiting for the blessed hope of the Lord's coming which shall bring to it myriads of its children whose bodies are swift-born by the Spirit of God from the womb of the resurrection of glory.

And how quickly will this mighty miracle of glorification be wrought! As swift as the passage of the lightning flash across the heavens shall be the coming of Christ (Matt. 24:27). And in the same instant, in lightning-like fulfillment of His Word, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," shall follow the marvel of the resurrection of God's children. In that instant the Divine Artist's great masterpiece shall be unveiled; in that instant earth's

graves shall be burst asunder, and, ravaged of their contents, shall yield up in incorruptible glory the bodies which went into them in corruption.

The Joy of the Resurrection

We do not realize the joy of the resurrection victory as pictured in the Scriptures. We note the seeming paucity of statement concerning it, and are misled thereby. For do we not realize that the highest, deepest joy of the heart finds utterance in the fewest words? When that boy came home from the suffering, struggle, and death of that awful world-conflict was your joy a voluble one, of much speaking and many sentences? Nay, you could only throw your arms about him and cry out with quivering heart, "Oh, my boy!" And your strong-armed, stout-hearted lad could only take you in his arms, and with tearful voice and glad heart cry out, "Mother!" The deepest emotions of a true heart find vent in the fewest words. And is not this why we have failed to see the well-springs of joy in the resurrection forty days of Christ's presence with His own? Think of that morning when He stood in the garden in the dimness of dawn. When the weeping Mary began to speak to Him, how did He reveal Himself? By a single word. It was the word by which love most richly and deeply expresses its joy toward a loved one—the name of the loved one. "Mary!" That seems terse, and barrenly brief to us. But the thrill of resurrection joy and glory

back of it must have been such as never vibrated through that single mention of Mary's name in all the years of her earthly life. And then when doubting Thomas reached forth his hand and touched the scarred side, how much did he say? Only "My Lord and My God!" But can any human imagination picture the joy that must have flooded Thomas' heart as he realized that Jesus Christ was really risen from the dead and that he was touching Him with his own hand! And when John, with spiritual instinct, was the first to recognize the risen Lord upon the lake-shore in the faint light of that momentous morning what did he say? Only "*It is the Lord!*" Yet that little sentence sent headlong into the waiting sea the man whose heart had been broken by his denial of his Master, and opened the flood-gates of a joy so boundless and ecstatic that no human being could possibly picture it.

And so may it be some glad, golden day with us. If, suddenly, radiant faces should swarm into our astounded presence; sweet familiar voices of long ago whisper our name as our Lord spoke Mary's; the thrill, uplift, and splendor of glorification sweep through our whole being in one jubilee instant of time; and then we should be "caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air," resurrection joy would be no mere dream as it seems now to many, but the same marvelous, thrilling reality of bliss and glory that it was twenty centuries ago there on the quiet shore of Galilee.

Only then it was "*Christ the first fruits,*" but

for us it would be *"they that are Christ's at His coming."*

The Reunion of the Resurrection

"The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Here is the inspired picture of the marvelous reunion of the Resurrection. The dead in Christ are raised first. Then the living in Christ are instantly "changed," that is, glorified. And thus re-united the glorified living are caught up *"together with them,"* that is, together with the glorified resurrected ones, and so shall they *"ever be with the Lord."* Whether we are dead or alive when Jesus comes, we must all be changed, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Not carnal, natural bodies, but only glorified, spiritual ones, shall enter there. With but a breathless instant intervening, the glorification of God's living children shall accompany that of His dead ones. The corrupted ones will put on incorruption, but the mortal ones shall immediately put on immortality without ever seeing corruption, and then, with this wondrous reunion brought to pass, as if by a rushing mighty wind, in one outflashing of supernatural glory, living, working, waiting men and women shall be whirled up to meet the Lord in the air. So sublime is the simple statement, *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with*

them to meet the Lord in the air," that our feeble human imagination, striving to soar to this lofty height, falls back like a spent bird, gasping and breathless with its failure of the wing to reach the dazzling summit which the eye has scanned. Caught up! Who can picture it? While men and women walk the busy streets they shall be caught up! While they bow in the secret chamber of prayer they shall be caught up! While with burning hearts they ponder the Word that tells of His coming they shall be caught up! While patient, suffering ones lie in beds of pain they shall be caught up! While the living stand before the open graves of the dead they shall be caught up!—and as the startled world wonders, the only record left shall be that of Enoch's—"And they walked with God, and were not, for God took them!"

From the pen of a missionary writer comes this beautiful story. A faithful missionary in distant Korea sat by the bedside of his dying wife. For fifteen years they had toiled together in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And now her summons had come. The heart-broken husband sat waiting for the end. She knew what the parting meant to him. She realized the keenness of his suffering. So, with her last thought an unselfish one for him, she left him this last message of eternal comfort, "Do not grieve for me, my dear. You'll get me back; you'll get me back." A month passed and the grief-stricken husband sat by the same bedside watching the spirit of their only child, a little

four-year-old boy, take its flight to the same Lord to whom his darling mother had gone. Again the father's heart was crushed. Again he faced a parting which meant untold anguish to him. But the little fellow had the same message as his mother for the sorrowing father. "Don't cry, daddy," said he. "Don't cry. Daddy, I see a great, shining light. It's coming nearer, daddy, it's coming nearer. And daddy, it's mudder; it's mudder! And I want to go, I want to go. But don't cry, daddy, don't cry. You'll get me back; you'll get me back!" A few days later the stricken father was riding in the funeral train behind the body of his dead boy. From behind the curtains of the chair in which he was being borne by the natives he heard the voice of a woman weeping. Presently the voice of another Korean woman spoke up and said, "Why are you weeping?" The sorrowing woman answered, "I am weeping for the foreigner who has lost his little boy." "Don't weep for the foreigner; weep for yourself, woman," came the answer. "You have lost a little girl, and you will never get her back. I have lost a little boy, and I shall never get him back. But let me tell you something. These foreigners have a strange way of getting back their dead!" And then as the stricken father laid the white lily upon the coffin of his little one, he bowed his head before his Lord and gave himself anew to Him to preach to these heathen people that blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ which would give back their dead to all who believed in Him as Saviour and Lord of the glory that is one day

to come with Him. For he knew that if death came he would go to them, but if resurrection first, they would come to him.

These bodies were the bodies of the sons of God, yet they went down into the dust like the beasts of the field. These bodies, laid away in the darkness and night of the tomb shall some day "swarm up the steeps of light." These bodies, now crumbling to dust and ashes, shall some day, changed, sit down with Him on His throne. These bodies, the prey of corruption and decay, shall live on, changed, through all the ages of eternity in deathlessness and incorruption. These bodies, now chained to the narrow limits of a grave, shall some day, changed, sweep in an instant of time through the boundless spaces of the universe. Sown in dishonor indeed! But we will get them back. For they shall be "raised in glory." Like the glory of the sun blazing in the midday heavens: like the glory of the planets in their pathway through the midnight skies; like the glory of the seven times heated furnace which fills the skies with the red glare of its presence so shall be the glory of these resurrected bodies. Sown in dishonor, forsooth, but we will get them back in glory. For we, His children, are "in Christ Jesus" and "the dead in Christ shall rise" in the stupendous glory of that resurrection instant.

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