

The Resurrection-01 Power of the Resurrection

by Stephen Olford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing the power of the resurrection in one's life by knowing Jesus Christ as a risen Savior and being endowed with power from on high through the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 32:43

Scripture: Romans 8:2, 1 Corinthians 15:45, Philippians 3:10, 2 Timothy 4:8

Topics: "Resurrection Power", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, Reverend Stephen F. Oldford discusses the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He emphasizes that this power is not only centered in the risen Savior, but it is also communicated by the Holy Spirit. The sermon references 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 8 to explain how the resurrection brings life and freedom from sin and death. Reverend Oldford encourages the listeners to have faith and be linked with the resurrected Christ, so that their lives may display the characteristics of a victorious and exalted Lord.

Transcript

Let's bow together in prayer. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

I want to draw your attention to a verse in our reading in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

My dear friends, I want to share with you a message which is entitled, The Power of the Resurrection. It's a very easy thing on an Easter Sunday morning like this, merely to recall the historic facts of that great event that took place some two thousand years ago and to rejoice objectively in the knowledge that this Jesus Christ who came from heaven's glory, who was crucified on a Roman gibbet, was buried in the grave, did in fact rise from the dead. There is no thoughtful or informed person in the world today who can doubt or dispute that fact.

Men and women may try to explain it away, philosophers may seek to rationalize it, scientists may seek to objectively analyze this phenomenon, but it is a proven fact beyond all dispute that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Not only on the basis of the internal evidence of the word of God, but from historic facts that are

outside of the book altogether, the writings of the younger plinic and Tacitus the historian, all stand for this historic fact that Jesus Christ did in fact rise from the dead. Or to quote a contemporary writer, it is the greatest proven fact of history.

But my concern this morning is this, the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead isn't having much of an impact upon the people who are going to course down through Fifth Avenue today to show off their good clothes and fine bonnets and the rest. The fact that he rose from the dead isn't having very much effect upon international affairs at this very moment. The fact that he rose from the dead, to be more personal, may not be having the impact upon your life as it should have.

And so I'm concerned this morning not so much with the doctrine of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as with the dynamic of the resurrection. Not so much with the historical facts of his rising, but the experimental power of his rising in your life and in mine. And my friend, unless the language of your heart and the longing of your soul this morning is that I might know him and the power of his resurrection, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, then my friend, your search after a resurrection message this morning is all in vain.

It's purely a matter of mechanics of coming to church on this great Sunday of the year. And so I want to draw your attention to three very important facts which are implicit in our text and those facts which become false as they're claimed by faith and personal appropriation. The power of the resurrection.

First of all, the source of that resurrection life and power. The source of it. That I might know him, says Paul.

Him, a person. And the power of his resurrection. You cannot divorce the power of the resurrection from a resurrected Christ.

In fact, to be more specific, the resurrection life and power of Jesus Christ are centered in a risen Savior. In a risen Savior. Paul, in Romans 1 and 4, says, Jesus Christ, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness, through or by the resurrection of the dead.

In his letter to the Ephesians, the same great apostle Paul tells us that this power and might of God which raised up Jesus Christ from the dead sets him far above principality and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but that which is to come, and has put all things under his feet. It's in Jesus Christ, the risen Savior, that all this power is centered. A power which is beyond all distinctions of human power, beyond principality and power and dominion and every name that is named.

Name any humanistic power, his excels it. Name any satanic power, his excels it. Name any angelic power, and his power excels it.

He's above all distinctions of power. Not only distinctions of power, but every description of power, every name that is named. Go right down through history and name every great leader who ever lived.

Name the great empires and civilizations that have crumbled to dust. And when you have named every power that has ever emerged and swayed the scepter of universal empire, his excels it. And not only the distinctions and descriptions of power, but he is set above every dispensation of power.

Kingdoms may come, kingdoms may go. Powers may wax, powers may wane. But not only in this world but that which is to come, his power is above every name that is named, not only in this world but that

which is to come.

And as he stands on resurrection ground and declares to his disciples, all authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, he is in fact stating this, that there is no conceivable power in any realm, heaven, earth, and in hell, over which he has not conquered by his resurrection. So that when Paul says that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, he is rising to a concept that leaves us reeling here this morning. I knelt upon my study floor and prayed through this text in the early hours of this morning.

I cried afresh in my soul, O God, teach me even if it's just an end of that mighty power which is centered in the risen Savior. But the source of this power is not only centered in the risen Savior, it's communicated by a releasing spirit. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, he became a quickening spirit.

That same mighty communication of life is described for us in Romans chapter 8, where Paul says the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death. The question I want to ask you, my dear friends, in this packed church this morning is this. Has that risen power, that resurrection power of Jesus Christ, which freed from sin and death, has that been communicated to you? When on that first resurrection Sunday Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, Receive ye the gift of the Holy Ghost, receive ye the Holy Ghost, he was in fact communicating his resurrection life in preparation for that utter and complete fullness and effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

He became not only the center of resurrection life, he became the center of ascension life. And our Savior not only rose from the dead, my friends, he ascended. And from that place, at the center of the universe, he has poured forth his resurrection life in the Holy Ghost.

And nobody can talk about knowing the power of the resurrection life of Jesus Christ unless he can say, I have been endued with power from on high. I know the mighty power of the Spirit upon my life, and I am impelled and compelled to become a witness to this risen Christ. The source of this resurrection life and power, centered in a risen Savior, communicated in a releasing Spirit.

And where the Spirit of the Lord is in this sense, there is liberty, there is release. Release from sin, release from death. Can you claim that as your experience this morning? Oh, that I may know him, cried the apostle, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

Well, the test as to whether or not you do know that power will become very apparent as we move to our next point. For not only do we find here the source of this resurrection life and power, centered in a risen Savior, communicated by the releasing Spirit, but we find here what I am calling quite deliberately the standard of this resurrection life and power. The standard of this resurrection life and power.

Paul says that I may know him and the power of his resurrection if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. This word, resurrection of the dead, in the eleventh verse, is a very peculiar and singular word not found anywhere else in the New Testament. I am persuaded and convinced and have been for many years that this has nothing to do with a coming resurrection.

Literally, it's the out-resurrection. It's an experience of the resurrection of Jesus Christ which can be known here and now. It's a quality of life.

It's a standard of life which even excels the life that Jesus Christ lived when here upon earth. That's why Paul says in that amazing passage, although we have known Jesus Christ after the flesh, henceforth know me him no more. For if any man be in Christ, this resurrected Christ, he is a new creature.

Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. The standard of life you are now going to live by being linked with the resurrected Christ is something totally above and beyond even the life he lived here upon earth.

Although we have known Jesus Christ after the flesh, henceforth we know him no more after the flesh. For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away.

All things have become new. Liberal theology would have us relegated to a Christ who walked the dusty streets of Palestine to view him objectively and sentimentalize the total person of Christ by saying, see the way he touched the heads of little children. Look at the way he raised people to death and broke bread.

That's the Christ we want. And so they carnalize Christ, and they bring him down to a human level and say, this is the kind of Christ we want to copy. Pope, there's that purity.

Henceforth we know no more Christ after the flesh. We know him as a risen Christ, and this demands a certain standard of living. It's called the out-resurrection, the out-resurrection.

And here are the three salient, salient characteristics of the life of a risen Christian linked with a risen Savior. Here they are. Number one, a life of separation.

A life of separation. Romans 1 and 4, once again. Jesus Christ declared, horizoned, marked out, made distinctive as the Son of God with power through the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ proved that Jesus Christ was absolutely holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ proved that sin could not hold him, nor indeed could death hold him. That's the meaning of that remarkable passage quoted from Psalm 16.

His body couldn't see corruption. His body couldn't see corruption. It wasn't possible that death should hold him down.

Why? Because he was holy, he was spotless, he was harmless. And the fact that Jesus Christ is alive today proved that he lived a life of utter separation to God. And his resurrection was a sign that he was a separated man, a Nazarite indeed unto God, declared to be the Son of God with power through the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.

And beloved here this morning, I want to say this, and I want to say it right from my heart. No man can claim to know any link with this resurrected Christ, this risen Lord, unless they know the life of total separation. A complete abandonment to God and a complete, a complete separation from sin.

This is a life of holiness. That's why people don't want to think of Christ as a risen Lord. He's too unearthly, he's too unreal, he's too intangible.

A cause to a life of total separation. Is that a word to many of us here who've been hard-knobbing with sin, who are worldly and carnal, and who try to explain away evil in every area of life, instead of living the separated life that God calls all men to live, by union with Jesus Christ, alive from the dead? My friend,

we're living in an hour when this message is unpopular, when this message of a life of holiness is unwanted. We're living in an hour when men prefer the philosophy of double standards in their moral life, in their husband-wife relationships, and in relationships outside of husband and wife.

We're living in an hour when immorality rages within the Church of Jesus Christ. I want to ask how many in this audience this morning are going to say, I'm going to know Jesus Christ as a risen Savior, who demands absolute separation from sin. But there's another characteristic, which is the positive side of it, and it's this, not only separation, a life of total separation, but a life of total dedication.

When the Savior said in those words of John chapter 10, My Father, My Father, set me to do a task, and I laid down my life, that I may take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father. However, I want to point out, and point out very significantly, that the dedication of Jesus Christ wasn't complete until He rose from the dead.

If Christ never rose from the dead, then it would have proved that He had sinned in His own life, and God couldn't raise Him from the dead. He had to pay the penalty for it. But God raised Him from the dead to demonstrate that His life was holy, that there was no corruption in Him, that death couldn't hold Him, having paid the penalty for other people's sins.

He rose from the dead. And the very fact that He rose from the dead meant a completed and utter dedication to His Father. Listen to the words again.

They're tremendously significant. No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself.

And I lay it down that I might take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father. So that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ speaks not only a life of total separation, it speaks of a life of total dedication.

And the whole argument of the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 6 is right down this line. You remember he says, Yield yourself unto God as those that are alive from the dead. What death? What death? A death to self, a death to sin.

Paul has already spoken of identification with Christ in death. Christ not only died for me, but I died with Christ. And as I take my place as identified with Christ at Calvary so that the old life is finished with and the new life emerges, that life, that living resurrection life is to be yielded unto God as instruments unto righteousness and unto holiness.

Somebody's saying, Perhaps that's why my consecration acts and vows never seem to work out. My friend, that's right. That's right.

We go to all manner of conferences and all manner of conventions and we stand up and say, Here I am, Lord, I'm dedicated to Thee. I'm consecrated to Thee. But you don't know it.

You don't know it. God doesn't accept it. God accepts no dedication, no act of dedication, which is anything less than this resurrection life of Christ in us.

That's the whole meaning of Romans chapter 12. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, What? A living sacrifice? A holy sacrifice? An acceptable sacrifice? This is your reasonable service, not your corrupt lives, self-centered, living carnal lives, not the lives that are actually

out of the will of God, but lives that know identification with Christ in death and have burnt the bridges behind and have completely paid the last account, so far as the old life is concerned, and now are alive unto God. This is the presentation that God accepts in an act of dedication.

But the word of God goes a little further. Not only is the first characteristic the life of separation, the second a life of dedication, but the third is a life of liberation. Jesus said these amazing words during his earthly sojourn.

He said, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and I'm straightened, I'm narrowed down, I'm hampered in until it be accomplished. What was that baptism? That baptism was his death at Calvary. And he says, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and until that is accomplished, I'm not liberated.

But when I'm accomplished, there'll be no more limitation on me. I'll be no longer hampered. I'll be no longer straightened.

I have a baptism to be baptized with, and I'm straightened until it be accomplished. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead, all his life was released throughout the whole universe. That life which was held in one single body, a human body, restricted to any given area as he walked the dusty streets of Palestine, was now released, and by the Holy Spirit became available to millions and millions of people at the very same time.

That's why Jesus said to his disciples before he went to heaven, Whosoever believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do, and greater works than these shall he do, greater works than these shall he do. Will you think through the works of our Savior throughout those three and a half years? Greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father, which is in heaven. And I'm persuaded, my beloved friends here this morning, I'm persuaded that if only you and I knew something more of the resurrection life of Jesus Christ, there'd be such a liberation in our ministries, such a liberation in our living, such a liberation in our witness, as would astound the world, as indeed the early disciples shook their contemporary world.

Imagine what happened in the period of some thirty years after Jesus Christ rose from the dead. When that liberated life of Christ was released to them, they evangelized a whole of a known world. It's never been done since, it's never been done since, and proportionately it was one of the greatest miracles time has ever witnessed.

And I believe if there were a half a dozen people, only a half a dozen people, in this place this morning, who are prepared to say, Lord, I'm going to know you no longer merely as a historic figure who walked Palestine. I'm going to know you as the risen Christ, who having risen from the dead, has demonstrated omnipotent power. By the communication of the Holy Spirit, I am available to you.

And I want to know this, I want to know this resurrection power. We move out of this place living lives of separation, lives of dedication, lives of liberation, which would rock the city of New York. This is the whole meaning of our Savior's passion.

In order that through his body here upon earth he might release that life in a way he could never release it when he walked through Jerusalem, and through Galilee, and through Nazareth. It's a life which has now been liberated by his resurrection. That's the standard then of this resurrection life in power.

Separation. Dedication. Liberation.

But there's something more. Paul says to us here, and in this very context, not only does he direct our thoughts to the force of this resurrection life in power, and to the standard of this resurrection life in power, and sets it out in the way we have described, but he also gives us the strength of this resurrection life in power. And he points it right out here.

He says, Not as though I had already attained, either or already perfect, but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and pressing on to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And he links all that with this phrase, If by any means I might attain unto that out resurrection.

What is the strength? What is the strength of this resurrection power? Here it is. Strength, first of all, to fulfill life's purpose. Strength to fulfill life's purpose, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am also apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Paul is thinking of the day when Christ broke into his light on that Damascus road, when he was split into the dust under the light of that meridian sun, and he saw beyond the sun a greater light, and that light was none other than the light of the world Jesus Christ, and he heard the words from heaven saying, For, for, why persecutest thou me? Why persecutest thou me? My friends, in the original language, the word Jesus used that day, why persecutest thou me, is the very word Paul uses here. I follow after. Same word.

I persecute. I pursue. I throw everything into that for which Christ is now laid hold of me.

What was he doing before when he persecuted? He was hailing men and women to prison. He was causing them to blaspheme. He was doing havoc in the church of God, and as one historian puts it, he did pants like an animal for the blood of the church.

Now Paul says God has taken hold of all this, and by the strength of his resurrection, he has put it into another kind of persecution, another kind of pursuit, another kind of following, following after that for which Christ has apprehended me. God had laid hold of him. God had a purpose for his life, and now all his energies are strengthened by the resurrected Christ to pursue that purpose for which Christ had apprehended him.

My friend, did you know this, that God has a plan for your life? Did you know this, that God has a purpose for your life? Ultimately it is that you might be conformed to the image of his Son, that you might be Jesus again, identified with him in character and conduct, not only down here, but by and by when you get to glory, that the whole purpose of the passion of Christ, his death and resurrection, is that he might bring many sons to glory and that he might make people look just like Jesus. Now it's only through the strength of the resurrection that we can follow after and pursue that full purpose of life. Secondly, Paul says, I know this strength of the resurrection, not only to fulfill life's purpose, but to forsake life's preoccupation.

Reverend, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind. Telling you, my friends, one of the greatest problems in Christian living is to live in the past, to remember our failures and successes, and fail to go beyond them. Paul says, if you know the strength, if you know the strength of resurrection, you'll be able to forsake and forget the things which are behind.

Sir Winston Churchill, who was honored so remarkably a few days ago, said when he was over here during the war, or just after the war, an amazing statement. He said, if the present quarrels with the past,

there can be no future. If the present quarrels with the past, there can be no future.

If we keep on quarreling with the past and stay with it, we ruin our future. There is a strength that God gives us to be able to say, why? What is behind is behind. Failure? God forgive me.

Success? God be praised. But I'm not holding back, and I'm not looking back. I'm forsaking the things which are behind, and I'm moving forward.

Why don't we move forward as a Christian church? Why don't we enter the new areas that God is calling us to open up? Why aren't we exploring great distance of new experience in the Holy Ghost and evangelism and missionary enterprise? Why? We haven't the strength to forget the things which are behind. But in the last place, not only strength to fulfill the purpose of life, and strength to forsake the preoccupations of life, but I say finally, strength to foresee the promotion of life. I press toward the mark for the prize, for the prize, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ.

My dear friends, I have never been more convinced in all my life of the imminence of the Lord's return as I am in these days. I believe Jesus Christ is coming back again, and we're all going to be ushered into His presence. We're going to stand before that judgment seat of Christ.

Paul foresees that day. He says, I press toward the mark. He uses the same word.

I persecute. I pursue. I follow through toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ.

In this very last letter he says, I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith. I have finished my course.

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not unto me only, but unto them also that love is appearing. He can see the crowning day. He can see the very crown of righteousness.

He can see that symbol that spells faithful service and the pleasure of his Lord and the reward at the Savior's hand. He can see that eternal kingdom, and he can see his place of responsibility given him at that day. And with confidence he says, Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.

I wonder what would happen if I asked this morning for everybody who has that confidence to stand up on their feet and say, If Jesus came this moment, if I was struck down and had to go to death, through death, to my Savior, I have absolute confidence without any shadow of a doubt that that crown is awaiting me. I wonder how many of you could say that. Have you the strength to foresee life's promotion? Have you the strength to forsake life's preoccupation? Have you the strength to pursue and fulfill life's great purpose? If you haven't, then will your prayer this morning be that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

We've seen the force, the standard, and the strength. Do you know this dynamic of his resurrection in your life? That's the purpose of our service this Easter morning. God give you the strength to enter into it by faith through the communication of the Holy Spirit and the mighty, mighty link with this risen Savior.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, oh, write this word upon my heart and our hearts and grant that not one of us shall leave this place this morning until we can honestly say, I am linked, I am linked by faith indissolubly with the Christ of resurrection, the Christ of triumph. That our lives may display all these glorious characteristics of a resurrected and exalted Lord.

Write this word then upon our hearts and make it a word of victory for every one of us. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

You have just heard a pre-Easter message brought to us by the Reverend Stephen F. Oldford, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of New York City.

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