

# Horizoned by Resurrection

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*T. Austin-Sparks explores the transformative power of Christ's resurrection, emphasizing its implications for believers as a new creation and the establishment of a spiritual order led by the Holy Spirit.*

**Scripture:** John 3:8, Romans 1:4, Romans 6:4, 1 Corinthians 2:10-16, 1 Corinthians 15:1, 1 Corinthians 15:12-22, 1 Corinthians 15:45, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, 2 Corinthians 5:14-18

**Topics:** "New Creation", "Resurrection"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that the resurrection of Christ is not only a demonstration of divine power but also establishes Him as the horizon of a new creation, transforming believers into a new order of spiritual beings. He contrasts the natural man, who is self-centered and unable to grasp spiritual truths, with the spiritual man, who is Christ-centered and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The resurrection serves as the pivotal point that shifts the focus from human wisdom and partisanship to a unified identity in Christ, highlighting the need for believers to embody the character of the risen Christ. Sparks argues that understanding the resurrection is essential for recognizing the new spiritual order and the transformative power it holds for the Church today.

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## Transcript

Romans 1:4 (1 Corinthians 15:1,12-22,45; 2 Corinthians 5:14-18).

"Declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead."

The word 'declared' or 'designated' there is the verb horizo, i.e., "horizoned the Son by resurrection".

In resurrection Christ is declared or made the horizon or frontier of a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). This is positively stated in 1 Corinthians 15:12-30, and that chapter or part of the letter should be read in that light.

When we refer - as we so often do - to resurrection, we usually and almost entirely have in mind the idea of power, i.e., "the power of his resurrection". It is in this connection that the matter is mainly referred to in the Bible, and essentially so, for it is here that the uniqueness and exceedingness of Divine power is displayed. But there is another aspect which governs the power-factor, it is the character-aspect. Resurrection means a kind of person who comes into being thereby. For the power and life of resurrection to be continually effective the risen ones must correspond to the Risen One in the deepest reality of their being. There is a "like as" in this matter, and a "so also" (Romans 6).

This brings us to the particular significance of the two Corinthians letters.

The first reveals a painfully disgraceful state of things amongst the Christians there. The word which could rightly cover so much of the first letter is the word 'shame'. The word which is so much in evidence in the second letter is 'glory'. The turning-point is Christ in resurrection. This is the inclusive and predominant thing. Indeed, it would appear that the Apostle brought this very matter forward as the answer and solution to the problem of that shameful state. Note the approach by the Apostle to this situation. It was by nailing the Corinthian Christians down to the name of Christ.

#### Christ in Resurrection the Great Corrective

In no letter is the name of Christ so continuously introduced and reiterated as it is in First Corinthians. It occurs no fewer than nine times in the first nine verses.

This gives the name a comprehensive application to all that needs dealing with. but it can be instanced in a particular way in relation to the making of names into rallying points. e.g. "I am of Paul", "I am of Apollos", "I am of Peter", "I am of Christ" (in a partisan and wrong sense).

Paul will have none of it as to his own name, and, while not being rude and discourteous to his brother apostles, he equally rejects their names as focal points of partisanship. It is important to note that Paul designates the Gospel as the Gospel of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1).

To understand the Gospel is to understand the meaning of resurrection as that of "a new creation". The great basic statement is: "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation", but being "in Christ" means being in Christ risen, in resurrection, and Christ in resurrection implies or postulates a new order of man - "not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

This is why the Bible is a book of people.

#### The Bible a Book of People

The people imply living experience; not doctrines, forms, orders, systems, techniques, things. All these can be found in the Bible, but there they have to do with living people. God is not interested in things in themselves; e.g., places, names, systems, etc. He may use them as instruments, and then - as history overwhelmingly shows - He may discard them: "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living".

If God raises up something to serve a special purpose, and that purpose is discarded, lost, or abandoned, the instrument may have a measure of life for a time, like the branch severed from the tree, but its days are numbered, its continuance is in increasing limitation; man will be put to it to keep it going. Its remaining tenure will be the history of human effort to maintain it. The world has very many examples of such things, places, and names, which once had a name rightly and truly for life, power, faithfulness, but today are either merely shells or organizations. Like the churches in Asia their great former testimony has gone. The Lord leaves to its own resources that which ceases to fulfil the purpose for which He exercised His power of resurrection. God has but one interest, it is His Son in resurrection: its meaning, and then its power.

#### The Two Racial Men

The two Corinthian Letters circle around two representative men, or two types of men.

##### 1. The Natural Man.

This is the man on the pre-Calvary side, conditionally. This man - as Paul shows - may be positionally in Christ, but conditionally he is not living according to his position. He is a contradiction to the meaning of resurrection in Christ.

This failure to understand the meaning of resurrection-ground is drawn in dark lines in First Corinthians. The word 'natural' is 'soulical' - the man of soul. The soul is the human ego, or selfhood. This man is ego-centric, or self-centred.

Paul focuses this condition very largely upon the 'mind' or 'judgment' (1 Cor. 1:10; 2:16).

This is connected with:

(a) "The things of the Spirit of God", and it is categorically stated that this man, not living in the meaning of resurrection, is totally incapacitated as to understanding or 'judging' those things.

(b) Fellow believers.

This man only judges others after the flesh. His estimate of them and his conduct toward them is a wholly uncrucified one: he judges as other men do.

(c) The World.

The standards of the natural man are those of worldly-wisdom, the wisdom of the world, and it can be so false as to have dictated the crucifying of the Son of God.

Likewise the natural man's ideas of power are entirely those of this world; the idea that human strength, strength of soul, will achieve Divine ends. This is wholly false and deceptive, and Paul has no compromise with this false idea. He gives a large place to weakness and dependence upon God. He knows that God has said: "By strength shall no man prevail", and, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord...". He also knows the terrible history of the Satan-energized human soul and how Satan originally made his link with man by means of his ego. Egoism brought Satan's downfall, and is always his hallmark upon his instruments. Power-politics is the mark of this world's policies, and is proving to be its doom.

(d) The Lord's Servants.

The natural man as in Corinth appraises the Lord's servants wholly on human and natural grounds. "Paul", "Apollos", "Cephas" are not appraised for their spiritual value, but because of human likes or dislikes, approval or disapproval. Paul had a bad time with these natural-minded Christians because they allowed any features which they did not like in him to eclipse his great spiritual values. This is a common fault of Christians who do not know what it means to be "raised together with Christ", although they may be well-versed in the doctrine, as such.

The ruination of the Church today lies largely in this very direction. Christendom at large, and many a local community of Christians is wrecked and ruined by this failure to make as much as is possible of the spiritual values present, and to know as much after the spirit as can be.

This brings us to the opposite.

The spiritual man, or the man after the Spirit, is the man who is truly on the after-side of the Cross. Not ego-centric, but Christ-centred is this man. Here we are at the very heart and core - not only of the two

Corinthian letters, but - of Christianity itself.

Christ in Resurrection - A Spiritual Order

Upon this fact and its meaning the dispensations completely changed. If Christianity today is not what it was right at the beginning; if its impact and effectiveness is less than in its first decades; if it is lacking in authority, so that the world no longer regards it as something to be reckoned with seriously, the loss can be largely traced to failure to recognize the nature of this dispensational change. The tragedy of the Corinthian lapse has, for the same reason, become the tragedy of so much Christianity today. The error of the Corinthians was to exalt the natural man instead of to recognize that he was displaced. The natural man may be learned, - as the world calls him - 'wise'. He may be in power. He may be successful. He may have great natural ability, influence, and prestige. But with all, he may not account for anything spiritually.

This crisis change did not come first to be intimidated by Paul. Jesus Himself was always speaking of a coming change in what He called "that day", and He clearly and emphatically indicated what the change would be. It was implicit and explicit in His words to Nicodemus in John 3, but in John 4, to the woman of Samaria, He was most definitely explicit. Said He, "...the hour cometh, and now is, when, neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall men worship God. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

"Neither... nor... but" marks a transition and a change. To Nicodemus it was "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit". To Sychar's woman it was "in spirit and in truth".

The "neither... nor" indicated the past system of fixed localities and orders, which is now set aside. The "hour" which has come is the day of the Spirit. The "whosoever" of John 3:16 in relation to salvation leads on to the "wheresoever" of Matt. 18. Neither Israel nor Jerusalem exclusively, but "whosoever" and "wheresoever" govern the new day of the Spirit.

With the resurrection of Christ and Pentecost a new spiritual order was constituted, an order of essentially spiritual men and women, with spiritual capacities, consciousness, and abilities. The embargo resting upon the natural man is removed, and "he that is spiritual judgeth all things". The darkened mind and understanding of Corinthians 4:20-24\* has been released and enlightened; "God, who said, Let light be, has shined into our hearts...": the "veil" (2 Corinthians 3, 4:6) has been taken away; the "second man", the "last Adam", "the life-giving spirit" has given birth to a "new creation" race of men.

Behind the Corinthian conditions we see the incursion of the results of the first Adam's fall, Cosmic and earthly strife, confusion, dissension, rivalries, factions, enmities - these are Satanic in origin, and Satan ever pursues his original quest for an open door by the soul of man to reproduce these evil works. They have become so elemental, constitutional, inherent in human nature that "Christ crucified" and "Christ risen" is the only answer.

This represents the overthrow of an entire régime, to make way for an utterly new one.

The character of this new order is

The Absolute Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit

This is implied in 1 Cor. 2:10-16, where we have "Spirit" five times; "spiritual" and "spiritually" four times. It is definitely stated in 2 Cor. 2:14-3:17,18 margin.

Christ had taught it, i.e., John 3:8; John 16.

"Acts" demonstrated it, chapter 2; 10:17.

Paul was a supreme example of it. His teaching concerning the Spirit issued from what had happened to him. He called this event in his history a being "apprehended". He conceived that he had been brought under arrest, perhaps like a fugitive slave. Hence he continued to speak of himself as "the bondsman of Jesus Christ", and as "bearing in his body, branded, the marks of Jesus Christ".

It was for Paul, as for the whole Church, a meeting with and union with Christ risen that led to the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit always waits upon such an apprehension. Resurrection is the Spirit's work, and is His ground of every new beginning. There may have been all the teaching of Jesus: there may have been the commission: there may have been the work of the Cross, so far as Christ was concerned; but all was in suspense. Forty days marked a period of inaugurating and establishing a new spiritual régime. Everything was to be new and different. In their apprehension and knowledge of Christ: in their relationship to one another: in their influence in the world: in their authority among men, and so on; the resurrection constituted an entirely new horizon.

We shall later see what this meant as to the individuals to whom Jesus appeared during that period, for it is in them that the effect of this changed relationship is so clearly seen.

There is a sense in which - in most ways - the end of the phase of Christ's earthly life has to have 'failure' written over it - failure in the world: failure in Israel: failure with His disciples: the failure of His teaching: the failure of His works and of His claims. These latter failures especially were due to the natural and earthly level or horizon within which they were living. It was in themselves that He was "straitened"; their spiritual bondage and mental limitation. The Forty Days were not only the evidence of His resurrection, but of the change which the resurrection makes.

This, as we have said, is demonstrated in the cases of His contact during that period.

In our next chapter we shall take up these instances.

\* We are unsure exactly what reference the author was intending here, presumably 2 Corinthians 3 & 4 which he went on to quote from.

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