

# Resurrection, the Hallmark of Sonship

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the transformative power of resurrection in establishing and manifesting sonship for believers in Christ.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 8:18, Matthew 12:39, Matthew 27:46, Luke 23:46, John 20:17, Romans 1:4, Romans 8:19, Galatians 3:26, Ephesians 1:19, 1 Peter 1:3-5

**Topics:** "Sonship", "Resurrection"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of the resurrection as the foundation of our sonship in Christ. He explains how Jesus, after experiencing abandonment on the Cross, was able to declare God as 'Father' again, marking a restoration of sonship for humanity. The resurrection not only confirmed Jesus as the Son of God but also established our identity as children of God, allowing us to experience continuous resurrection power in our lives. This sonship is not merely a past event but a present reality that manifests through our faith and experiences in the world. Ultimately, the resurrection life empowers believers to be signs and wonders, showcasing God's glory amidst the challenges of life.

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## Transcript

In the terrible darkness of the Cross, Jesus uttered the cry of desertion and forsakenness in which He could only use the term: "My God..." (Matthew 27:46), but before He died He was able to say: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). After He had risen from the dead, among the first words that He spoke were these: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father..." (John 20:17). The battle was won. All that the first cry meant of sonship being obscured, had been set aside. In perfect tranquillity the Lord could not only speak of His Father but of our Father too.

Such passages as: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee", and "declared to be the Son of God... by the resurrection from the dead" can make for intellectual difficulty. What about the eternal Sonship? Was He not God's Son before the resurrection? The words: "This day have I begotten thee" evidently refer to the resurrection, as the first two chapters of the letter to the Hebrews confirm. In what way is the Lord Jesus God's Son by virtue of resurrection?

Let us at once state that this is related to the first and the last Adam. The first Adam was called God's son (Luke 3:38) and in a sense this was true, but that sonship was never fully realised - all its meaning, all its potential, all the divine intention, was never known. It was sonship on probation which never attained to

determination. In the case of the Lord Jesus, however, we are told that He was "determined the Son of God..." (Romans 1:4 m.). The first Adam failed, and in him the whole race lost its sonship. That was why the Lord Jesus went to the Cross as representative of the whole race, to meet the final consequences of that lost sonship. Those consequences were known in that eternal period of unspeakable agony, when there was the awful consciousness of what it means to be abandoned by God. By nature we are out of Christ, without God and without hope in this world, but we are not fully aware of it nor of what it involves. In that phase of the Cross, the Lord Jesus was, so to speak, projected into the full realisation of that complete consciousness of what God-forsakenness really means, that which is the very terrible destiny of all deliberate rejectors - to find themselves rejected.

Well, having suffered that judgment, and having carried all the agony of it to the disrupting of His soul and the breaking of His heart (for when the soldiers came to inspect, they found that He was dead already, while those crucified with Him were still alive) - when that was accomplished He came to the moment of consciousness that the judgment was past, and so could return again to use the word, "Father". Now, however, He used it with a meaning that it had never borne for man until that time, so that the last word of the cross is not "forsaken", but "Father". Sonship had now come on to a new ground of resurrection, restoration; the alienation of the race had been overcome. Restoration is made for the race in Christ, and so everything begins with "Father". What a wealth there is in the phrase: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" when it is seen in the light of the Cross! It is the ground of our approach, our appeal. It carries with it the full meaning of the triumph of His Cross over all the alienation that had come to the human race with the loss of God's meaning of sonship.

Briefly, then, that is the doctrine and the explanation of "This day have I begotten thee". It speaks of a begetting not of the eternal Son, not of Christ as the Son of God; but the begetting of the Son of man, of the last Adam, and of sonship for man in Him. Sonship is ours in Christ, so Peter cries: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance." (1 Peter 1:3-5).

But while our sonship through the Cross and the risen Christ is to be appropriated and entered into by faith as an act, yet for the purpose of our testimony here, it is something which has to be continuous as a spiritual experience. It is accepted in an act, but it has to be borne out in a continuous process. The New Testament shows that sonship is something which relates to the whole life of the believer in a practical way of expression, so that inasmuch as it is inseparably bound up with resurrection in the case of the Lord Jesus, for us it demands a constant experience of His resurrection power. How do we know sonship? Well, there was a time when we believed, and in believing were made children or sons of God. "Ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). Because we believe, we have the sonship. That is very good, and of course we have always to cling tenaciously by faith to the fact that it is so. But that may have been years ago. Did the Lord just mean it to be something in our past history, something which took place years ago? We have always to hold on to that transaction with the Lord and believe, but does it not call for a reinforcement as we go along? Is there no opportunity for it to be more and more confirmed? Surely the Word teaches that there is; and so not only the origin but the experience of the believer should be that of sonship being freshly demonstrated and manifested on the same ground as its origin - that is, resurrection.

What is God's confirmation of our sonship? It is that He gives us continual experiences of being raised from the dead. He has left us here in a setting and a background of death: we are called upon to live and to walk amidst death. This world is a tomb, which sooner or later will engulf all those outside of Christ; but

here we are in this very tomb, this scene and realm of death, living. We are not a part of it, we are living, and this is the testimony, this is sonship. Sonship is meant to be manifested. The end of this process is the full manifestation of the sons of God according to Romans 8:19. Here, in a spiritual way, the manifold wisdom of God is shown in the Church, to the glory of His name and to the confounding of principalities and powers.

Our new birth is our first taste of resurrection life. We notice that, after quoting the passage concerning Christ: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee", the Scriptures present a further quotation: "I and the children whom God hath given me" (Hebrews 2:13). The completion of the original statement is: "Behold I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs and wonders..." (Isaiah 8:18). It is clear that Isaiah's words are put into the mouth of the Lord Jesus who links the announcement of His own Sonship by resurrection to the fact that by that same resurrection He has begotten us again unto a living hope. We are the children given to Him by virtue of His resurrection. And we are for signs and wonders. What does this mean? Well when the evil generation of Jews demanded a sign from the Lord Jesus, He replied: "... there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matthew 12:39). He went on to point out that this sign of Jonah was connected with death and resurrection. So the signs and wonders associated with Christ and the children whom the Father has given Him are the miracles of resurrection life. This is the experience of the spiritual Christian, he repeatedly knows the impact of death and the glory of Christ's resurrection. So it is that the Church has survived. There is no other way of accounting for the continuance of the Church through the ages than the wonder-working power of Christ's resurrection. The powers of hell and death have come like a deluge upon the Church through the centuries and have sometimes almost seemed to quench it, but it has sprung up again in greater fullness than ever before after every such time.

What is true of the Church as a whole is true in smaller ways in our individual experience. In our own hearts we sometimes become encompassed by death; we almost fear for our own faith at times, wondering if we shall survive; but we have gone on, and we are still going on. This is the marvellous outworking of "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe" (Ephesians 1:19). It is not our endurance: it is the power of His resurrection. This is the testimony - for signs and wonders. The story is not to be read openly, but one day it will be revealed for His glory. It is now a hidden story. Everyone knows his own dark, deadly hours in the spiritual life, but he also proves the superior power of Christ's resurrection life.

Thank God that since Christ bore the bitter tasting of death for us, there is none left for us to taste. Spiritual death is the complete consciousness of what it means to be finally abandoned by God. There is no more of that for those who are in Christ; that death has been swallowed up in Him. So may the Lord give us faith to stand on that ground in the darkest hour. If we are children by resurrection, then we are for signs and wonders in Israel. However gloomy the prospect, we know that God's answer in His sons is the victory of resurrection life.

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