

The Greatest Secret

(Power of His Resurrection)

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ is very important. By the power of resurrection the Lord Jesus Christ is raised from the dead. By this power He has been highly exalted far above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Eph. 1:20-21). This power is also gloriously manifested to make us more than conquerors, and to enable us to be with the Lord as kings and priests with immortal and glorified bodies. With a heart full of worship and praise, Paul the apostle says, in Eph. 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." In the first part of the first chapter of Ephesians Paul mentions a few of those great spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus which have been prepared for us by our loving God from before the foundation of the world. From verse 15 onwards, he goes on to explain how these blessings can be abundantly enjoyed by all of us who have been spiritually united with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection through simple faith in his finished work on the cross on our behalf. In this connection the apostle is praying very earnestly that the believers at Ephesus might know, "What is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he brought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all ... and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:19-23). The very same power by which the Lord Jesus Christ rose again and was so highly exalted after His resurrection is also poured into us. Yet, how much spiritual poverty exists today among believers because they fail to appropriate this power daily for all their needs!

THE THREE-FOLD WORKING OF HIS POWER

Firstly, we become righteous by receiving this power into us by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who, as we read in Rom. 4:25, "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." God kept Abraham and his wife Sarah waiting for a son for about 25 years even though at the age of 75 He had promised to give them one. It was only when they both became very old and passed the age of childbearing that God fulfilled His promise. Thus He showed them that unless they receive new power, death-conquering power, the power of resurrection in their bodies, they could not receive a son in their old age. Only at this point they became righteous before God. God's Word says in Rom. 4:22-25, "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him: but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." It is only by receiving the power of resurrection by simple faith that anyone can become righteous before God for eternity.

Secondly, by the very same power we shall be given glorious immortal bodies on that day when the Lord Jesus Christ will come again according to His promise with all the angels and all the saints. As we read in Rom 8:11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you."

Thirdly, we can overcome our trails and temptations day by day appropriating this power according to Phil.4:13. Just as we claim healing touch from God when we are sick, or seek wisdom from Him to understand His word, so we can claim by faith the resurrection power for all our needs. We can conquer human limitations by that power, because it is available for all situations and trails. We can bear heavy burdens and responsibilities in God's work by appropriating this wonderful power.

Thus we see how it is very necessary for us to learn the secret of appropriating that power day by day for all our needs. The Lord Jesus Christ becomes our personal Saviour when we believe that He died in our stead to bear judgment of all our sins, shed His precious blood to cleanse us from our sins and rose again for our justification. Through such a faith we recognize we are planted together in the likeness of His death and burial and in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:5). These days the best fruits like mangoes, apples, oranges and peaches are being produced by grafting. A tree yielding small and sour fruit can be made to yield nice, large, sweet and juicy fruits. One seedling of a bad tree is grafted into a tree yielding good fruits. By grafting, the seedling receives the nature of the good tree and when planted separately, grows up into a tree yielding nice and juicy fruits. The apostle Paul uses the same phrase for our union with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. By the power of His death we die daily to our old nature and by the power of His resurrection we become new creatures in the Lord Jesus Christ; all things become new as we read in 2 Cor. 5:17. The Lord expects us to enjoy this power day by day by appropriating it with simple faith according to our need.

Even though Paul the apostle was mightily used of the Lord to establish many churches and had the privilege of being called into the third heaven and hearing words which could not be uttered in

human language, he longed more and more to know the Lord, and the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10).

In the early church also the believers gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ with great power, and great grace was upon them all. Thus it is very necessary for us as believers to learn to appropriate this wonderful power of resurrection.

The Lord Jesus Christ appeared to His disciples ten times in forty days after His resurrection: five times on the Easter day and five times from the second day of His resurrection till the 40th day, the day of His ascension. Our Lord never appeared even once to those who did not believe in Him. Each time He appeared only to His disciples. When He was on the Cross, many people mocked Him saying, "Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (Matt. 27:42). But after His resurrection He did not show Himself to any of those people. This shows that this wonderful power of resurrection is meant only for those who accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and become righteous in His sight for eternity by the very same power according to Rom. 4:24-25. Through every appearance He reveals to us the great secret of appropriating and enjoying this death-conquering power which can make us more than conquerors. God appeared ten times to Abraham in about 40 years to reveal to him the secret of divine friendship. In three places in the Scriptures, 2 Chro. 20:7, Isa. 41:8 and James 2:23, Abraham is called the friend of God. Through the ten appearances of God to Abraham, we see that there are ten steps to friendship with God. Similarly through the ten appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples after His resurrection we have a tenfold secret of experiencing and enjoying the great power of His resurrection for all our needs. By this power the hope that one day we shall see our Lord face to face and shall be like Him is quickened in us. Let us see some features of the ten appearances of our Lord.

FIRST APPEARANCE (John 20:1-8)

Firstly, the Lord appeared to a woman named Mary on the Easter morning. She and other women went to the sepulchre to anoint His body with ointment. But when she found the sepulchre empty she ran to inform His disciples. After that she returned to the sepulchre and stood outside weeping. Then the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her as we read in John 20:14-15 and said to her, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" She thought He was the gardener and said to Him, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Although she had such devotion for the Lord, she was unaware of the fact that He was risen again and that the power which was manifested by His resurrection was meant for those who love Him and believe in Him. The Lord Jesus Christ stood by her and spoke to her but she could not recognize Him. That is why she was weeping. Today we find many believers throughout the world weeping for every small trial and temptation; but the Lord wants them to be more than conquerors in every situation. The reason for their weeping is that they do not know to appropriate the power of resurrection for every need.

When the Lord called Mary by name, she recognized Him. She wanted to touch His feet to show her devotion and love for Him, but the Lord said to her, "Touch me not for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). A short time later, He appeared to other women as they were returning from the sepulchre. They held Him by His feet as we read in Matt. 28:9, and He allowed them to do so. Then eight days after the resurrection He said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27). So it was for a purpose that the Lord did not allow Mary, though so devoted, to touch Him. He had to ascend for a purpose to the Father before anyone could touch Him. The Lord Jesus Christ had to ascend to heaven as our everlasting heavenly High Priest to offer His own blood on our behalf in the most Holy place according to Heb. 9:12, which reads, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." According to the prophecy of Psalm 16:10, His body saw no corruption and His blood also did not see any corruption. The Lord Jesus Christ as our Everlasting High Priest by His own hands offered His own blood for the atonement of all our sins and for cleansing us from all the defilement caused on our guilty conscience by our thoughts, words and deeds. Thus we see if we want to enjoy the power of resurrection daily, first of all we have to wait upon Him sufficiently till He speaks to us according to our need. Before He can speak to us we have to be cleansed from all the defilement caused by our thoughts, words and deeds by the precious blood of the everlasting covenant. By faith we have to keep ourselves constantly under the sprinkling of His precious blood. Then we will be able to enjoy the power of resurrection.

SECOND APPEARANCE (Matt. 28:5-10)

Secondly, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to some women who were returning from the sepulchre after finding it empty. An angel comforted them at the sepulchre with these words: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you ... And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him (Matt. 28:5-9).

In this appearance the Lord shows us that joyful and quick obedience is the secret of enjoying the power of His resurrection. If the Lord speaks to us about any matter we have to obey Him without any question, and then we have the privilege of experiencing this power in a greater measure day by day. Now even though these women clearly conveyed the message given to them by the angel, yet the disciples doubted, as we read in Luke 24:11: "And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." It is because of doubt and unbelief that we fail to experience this power. The more we obey Him joyfully and quickly, without any question or doubt and are prepared to give to Him whatever He demands and to go happily wherever He sends us, we are granted this wonderful power for the work He wants us to do.

THIRD APPEARANCE (Luke 24:33-35; 1 Cor. 15:5)

Next the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Simon Peter on the day of His resurrection as we read in Luke 24:34: "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon." We can imagine why Simon Peter ran to the empty sepulchre after Mary and other women told him that the sepulchre was empty, the angels having told them that He was risen from the dead. In Luke 24:12 we read, "Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." Perhaps while he was returning from the sepulchre the Lord Jesus Christ met Peter, thus giving him opportunity to ask forgiveness for denying Him three times. What a great joy the apostle Peter must have experienced when he tasted the abundant grace and forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The more we humble ourselves at the Lord's feet and continue in His presence with a broken heart and a contrite spirit the more we enjoy His power of resurrection. We find the same Peter writing in his first epistle chapter 5 verse 6, to all believers, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." He also says in verse 5, "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." We also read in Matt. 23:12, "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." The Lord Jesus Christ Himself washed the feet of the disciples before He was crucified giving us an example how to love and serve one another with a real sense of humility and brokenness. Our holy and mighty God lives only in two places according to Isa. 57:15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." It is only in these two places the almighty God lives. He does not live in places made by man's hands, Also our Lord said in Matt. 11:29, "...Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." We have to learn this life-long lesson to be kept humble in His presence. It is very easy for us to be proud and puffed up whenever we see God working mightily in us and through us. May the Lord keep us humble and save us from the great temptations of robbing God of His glory.

FOURTH APPEARANCE (Luke 24:13-35)

Our Lord's fourth appearance was to two disciples on their way from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. They were discussing the strange things that had happened at Jerusalem. They had been told by the women who had been to the sepulchre that they had seen the Lord. The women had been told by the angels that He was risen from the dead. As they were going the Lord Jesus Christ walked a long distance with the two disciples expounding to them the scriptures with great authority, but they could not recognize Him. In the evening when He came to stay with them at their own request, at the meal, according to the Jewish practice, He took bread, gave thanks and broke it. Then they recognized Him; in the act of breaking of bread they remembered what He said at the time of the last supper, "Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you." Now they understood the significance of His statement that He was going to give His body to be broken, His precious blood to be shed, as atonement for the sins of all people.

It is only as we thank our Lord with all our hearts for dying Himself for our sake, for dying upon the cross for our sins and giving His whole body to be broken for us, that we begin to experience this wonderful power of resurrection. That is why our worship gathering on Sunday morning around the Lord's Table is so precious and helpful. We have seen that wherever believers have learnt to gather together Sunday by Sunday around the Lord's Table to remember His death in the manner He taught and to spend sufficient time in pure heartfelt worship and then taking part in the Lord's table after searching their hearts and putting things right, there has been spiritual growth and enlargement. Unfortunately the Lord's Table has become a ritual and ceremony for many believers. They do not realize the value of pure worship before taking part in the Lord's Table. That is why their lives remain barren and comparatively dry. It is very important for believers to learn to worship the Lord around His Table. Then there will be very rapid growth in them spiritually, and they will grow in the grace and knowledge of God.

FIFTH APPEARANCE (John 20:19-25)

The Lord appeared the fifth time on Easter evening itself when the disciples were gathered together in a room in Jerusalem. The Lord came into the room, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst. His first words were, "Peace be unto you" (John 20:19). He repeated these words in verse 21, thus showing us that it is only by maintaining our peace that we can continue to experience His power of resurrection. The enemy is bent upon disturbing our peace. To this end he brings into our hearts all kinds of fears, doubts and subtle temptations of the flesh. But as we humble ourselves and keep on claiming the cleansing power of His precious blood we can enjoy His great peace which passeth all understanding. God's Word says, "Great peace have they which love thy law and nothing shall offend them." (Psa. 119:165), and "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20). The more we have peace the more can we enjoy victory over every attack of the enemy. But we must exercise our faith more strongly to make this peace reign in our hearts and flow like a river, not allowing the enemy to rob us of our peace. In case we have to put right anything with God and man we should do so immediately by His grace and with humility. It is also by this growing, multiplying inward spiritual peace that we can be sure of His will, because the work of righteousness is peace (Isa. 32:17). Then again, our Lord told the disciples in John 20:21, "...as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Only when we have this inward peace shall we be willing to go anywhere He may send us, and be prepared without any question to give Him all what He demands for His glory. When He had said this to the disciples He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (vs. 22). As we obey Him, He anoints us afresh with the Holy Spirit to help us carry out His commands joyfully.

SIXTH APPEARANCE (I Cor. 15:6)

The sixth appearance was to five hundred brethren according to I Cor. 15:6. As the news of His resurrection spread the believers began to gather from different places, where they had been

hiding. The number reached above five hundred. Then the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to them who gathered together in one place. By this appearance we see how we can experience His power of resurrection when we meet together as one family overcoming all man-made differences. The Lord Jesus Christ prayed before He went to the garden of Gethsemane, "That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). In this chapter we have the record of the most inspiring prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. He prays for four-fold oneness among us as believers. Firstly, oneness in relationship; secondly, oneness in love; thirdly, oneness in perfection; fourthly oneness in glory. The more we live together as one family, forgetting all national, communal and social differences, the more closely are we drawn to our Lord. At the same time our closeness to the Lord and to one another helps us to appropriate His power with stronger faith. In these days we find believers being divided over trifles. This brings a great spiritual loss to many and results in prolonged infancy in some. Wherever believers gather as one family under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ with forbearance towards and service to one another with true love, we find much spiritual growth, a deeper understanding of the Word of God and the ability to enjoy His abiding presence. We see from God's Word that wherever the early Christians came together as one family, the Lord worked deeply and freely. This has been our experience always for the past 34 years, especially during Holy Convocations, which have been held in different parts of India. In these times of fellowship we have the privilege to welcome and serve all equally, without any partiality.

SEVENTH APPEARANCE (I Cor. 15:7)

Seventhly, the Lord appeared to James. "After that, he was seen of James" (I Cor. 15:7). James was among the chief apostles and the others referred to him in case of any doubt as we read in Acts. When Peter was released from prison by the angel he continued knocking at the door of Mary, the mother of John Mark, and when the door was opened the believers saw him and were astonished. "But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go, show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed" (Acts 12:17). We read further about James in Acts 15:13: "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me." From these two references in God's Word it becomes clear that any matter which needed advice, and final judgment was referred to James. For this reason the Lord appeared to him in order to prepare him for this future great spiritual responsibility. The Lord gives extra strength and grace to those who have to bear extra responsibility in the House of God. But many believers just go to meetings to receive something and they are much more concerned about the message and singing rather than finding out what part they can take in the building of the House of God. The more willing we are to help others in serving them and accepting heavy burdens for His glory in the spreading of the Gospel and in the building of His Church, the more fully can we enjoy this aspect of the power of the resurrection. That is the reason why Paul says, "I count all things but loss that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:8, 10). And also, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

EIGHTH APPEARANCE (John 20:24-29)

The Lord Jesus Christ appeared the eighth time to Thomas. This was eight days after His resurrection. When the Lord first appeared to the disciples (John 20:24), Thomas was not with them. As soon as they saw him they told him, "We have seen the Lord" (vs. 25). Thomas in disbelief replied, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." So, for the sake of Thomas the Lord appeared again and said to him, when he was with the others, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." And Thomas answering exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." Jesus said unto him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Thus we see that the power of His resurrection is experienced by us only as we believe His Word with simple childlike faith and do not depend on our own feelings or signs or dreams for our soulish satisfaction. A large number of believers depend upon signs for spiritual growth and for receiving the power of God, and as a result they remain barren spiritually. We shall have the privilege of enjoying His power as we exercise simple faith in claiming His promises in reading His Word, and obeying Him without question in every matter.

NINTH APPEARANCE (John 21:1-23)

The Lord appeared to the disciples at the lake of Tiberias at Galilee, where they had gone fishing. The disciples had toiled all night and had caught nothing. Early in the morning Lord Jesus Christ appeared to them and said, "Children, have ye any meat?" They answered Him, "No." And he said unto them, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find" (John 21:5,6). They obeyed Him immediately, and were not able to pull the net into the boat for the great number of fish. There were 153 large fishes and yet the net was not broken (John 21:11). By this miracle the Lord taught His servants, the disciples, the secret of an abundantly fruitful ministry in His service. Many of us go on struggling hard in the Lord's work and yet see no results because we go here and there without finding God's plan. We depend too much upon our own zeal and wisdom. But when we learn the secret of finding God's plan for our ordinary activities we find the Lord coming in and making our labours fruitful. At the same time He taught His disciples that just as the fishes obeyed the Lord Jesus Christ when He commanded them to go into the net without struggling, we have to obey His command and do what He asks and give Him what He demands from us. What an orderly manner these great fishes came into the net without any striving because they had heard the voice of the Creator. Similarly, in His service we have to keep ourselves under His subjection free from any spirit of striving or Jealousy.

When the disciples came to the shore they saw a fire, and fish upon it, and bread (John 21: 9). Thereby the Lord showed them that as they obeyed Him He made every provision for all their needs. The same applies to us. Fire speaks of the Love with which He prepared it to keep them warm. At the same time it speaks of the fullness of the Spirit, which we enjoy in His service when we obey Him

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fully. The fish speaks of the souls who are saved through us as we obey His commandments, and the bread, speaks of the Word of God upon which we have to feed daily to receive extra strength. Then the Lord questioned Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? ... Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-16). This shows how our love can be real only when we learn to feed His lamb and His sheep and shepherd them. It is only by helping others in their need and in bearing the burdens of each other with joy and sacrifice that we bring satisfaction to the loving heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Chief Shepherd.

TENTH APPEARANCE (Luke 24:20-53)

Finally, our Lord appeared to His disciples at Bethany before He ascended (Luke 24:50). He gave them the command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. "A cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, Which is taken up from you into heaven, shall SO COME in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11). And thus they were made the witnesses of His ascension and were given the promise of His second glorious appearance, when, according to John 14:3, He will return to receive His own to Himself. We can experience the power of resurrection day by day by preaching the Gospel to the people all around according to God's plan. This power will also increase as we help other believers get ready for His second appearing by taking part in the Sunday Worship gatherings and Breaking of Bread regularly and faithfully.

May the Lord help us to appropriate the power of His resurrection for all our needs.