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The Glory of God in Resurrection

by T. Austin-Sparks

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You notice that the opening of John chapter 5 has to do with the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, and the Lord's making him to rise up and walk, and the resultant persecution. Then at verse 17 we have, "Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work... Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what he seeth the Father doing; for what things soever He doeth, these things the Son also doeth in like manner... As the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom He will" (vv. 17-21).

"And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked Him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. We must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:1-4).

"But when Jesus heard it, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby" (John 11:4).

"Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John 11:40).

Our brother has led our thoughts in the direction of that all-important work of the cross in clearing ground for God and for us. We are able to pass over for a few minutes to the other side of the cross, the Life side, and these words in John 11:4 contain the essence of things: "not unto death, but for the glory of God". You notice things which are set over against each other there, not even, "not death, but Life", or "not unto death, but unto Life"; it does not say that (although that is how it works out, or that is the way) but the opposites are death and the *glory* of God. Death stands against the glory of

God and the glory of God is altogether ruled out where there is death. But, on the other hand, the glory of God rules out death, and where the glory of God is, there is no death.

Now, we have in these several passages references to the work of God or the works of God: "My Father worketh and I work", "My Father worketh", "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him", "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" So that the work of God, or the works of God which are unto the glory of God, are works of *resurrection*. Resurrection is God's way of getting glory, and if we are really coming into the sphere of Divine activities and the works of God, we must expect that everything in those works of God leading to the glory of God, will be in terms of resurrection; so that the works of God in us and through us by His Son, Jesus Christ, will be resurrection works. And in order that glory might really come to the Lord, we, being brought into the presence of the works of the Lord, will always be brought into the presence of the utter necessity for the Lord to work. There will be no doubt about it that the Lord has got to work and unless the Lord does work, then that is an end of it. And if the Lord's works are resurrection, then the necessities unto which we shall be brought will be necessities for resurrection. This will mean that we shall have to have a very deep realisation, on the one hand, of the hopelessness of the situation, and a deep strong apprehension, on the other hand, of the God of resurrection. And the Lord will see to it that we have a very lively sense of how bad things are and how necessary it is for Him to enter in.

No Place for the Glory of God in the Flesh

This story of Lazarus, for instance, does bring out, among other things, this: that the Lord will see to it that we have a horror of the uncovering of the flesh. You notice when they came to the tomb and the Lord said, "Take away the stone", they stood back horrified. "Lord, by this time he stinketh." A horror of really what the flesh is from God's standpoint: the real corruption that is there, the real hopelessness of things there.

Do you realise, that it is an important factor in the realm of the works of God that we have a horror of the flesh? There is a necessity for the cutting off, the putting away, of it. It does not come into the realm of the work of God. Let me just add to the strength of what he said by this: that the Lord would have us, rather than work in the energy of the flesh, have a perfect horror of the flesh in the presence of the Lord Jesus. It is not until we have that loathing, that awful sense of what the flesh is before God, that we can come into the great work of God on that side of Divine life. That is one thing. I do not think that anybody ever really knows the works of God and glory of God in resurrection until they have come to a very deep apprehension of the utter worthlessness and abhorrence of the natural life as in the sight of God, so that it cries out, "Woe is me, I am undone!" That is what Lazarus would have said if he could have spoken from the tomb. At any rate, that represents his position. "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). Until we come to that, we cannot know the glory of God because there is no place for the glory of God in the flesh. No flesh shall glory in His presence.

When we come to the sense of the weakness and futility and worthlessness of the natural life as before God and hate it, and are horrified at the thought of it being exposed at all, we do not want it to be seen, oh, how different this is from so many who display the flesh, even in the service of God. It is themselves you are meeting all the time in the work of the Lord. They like to wear labels, their office written in large letters on the label, displaying themselves in the work of the Lord; "I am So-and-so and this and that!" Even if they do not wear a label, you can read it. What you meet is the natural man, his love of prominence and love of being seen and heard, known; rushing about with bundles of papers under his arm, so official. That never can result in the glory of God; that, or any

other form of the flesh, does not bring glory to God. It is taking glory *from* God to the flesh. However, when we have been brought very low, to shrink from the very thought of that, of any flesh coming into view, taking the attitude that they took at the tomb, "Lord, don't you uncover that, it is too awful to contemplate now!" that is a very good position, because, once we have got there, there is the possibility of seeing the glory of God.

The Sovereignty of God Working for the Glory of God

Now, as our time has practically gone, the only other thing that I must say is this - the element, the feature, of sovereignty in all this for the glory of God; how the sovereignty of God is working for the glory of God. Take the man lame, for instance. Well, he had been there many years and the story would imply that others had been there and got healed, but every time he lost the chance, and still he was kept there all those years, "and when Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had been now a long time in that state..." Why? Was it an accident? The man might say, "Oh, how unfortunate I have been!" He might have spoken as men of the world speak today - "How unlucky I am! When there is healing going and the waters are disturbed, others get the good, I miss it every time; what an unlucky man I am! Somehow or other, I must be the one left every time!" Was it chance, misfortune, bad luck, anything like that?

Again pass to chapter 9, the man born blind, the enquiry: "Who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" The man might have said, "How unfortunate I am! I, among thousands, am born blind, I am the unlucky one, mine is an unfortunate lot, destiny has played a hard trick with me!"

Pass on to Lazarus. He is sick, desperately sick, and either Lazarus, or his sisters, or both, might have said, "What a misfortune, how unfortunate! We do have to suffer, others do not suffer like this, a lot of people escape, but we here are the unfortunate ones, the ones who seem to catch what is going every time".

And the Lord's reaction every time is, "Oh no, it is not like that, this thing has been in hand from the beginning, the Father and I have had it in hand!" Strange as it may seem, this man lying there was not there by accident, and did not miss the opportunities because he was unlucky. The Lord saw to it that he did not get them. The Lord had that matter in hand. The man born blind - it was not an accident of birth. The Lord had the matter in hand, that the works of God might be shown in him. Lazarus - oh, it was not just that he was caught and overtaken by some sickness, that they were the unfortunate family. No, "this sickness is not unto death but for *the glory of God*". God has it in hand.

The thing that I do want to say is just this: that if we are called into the sphere of the works of God, that is, into the way of the glory of God, we are going to be *made* the sermon, we are not going to preach a sermon. It will not just be that we are preaching the truth. We are going to be *made* that, and what happens in our lives under the hand of God will preach far louder than any words of ours. The Lord is going to make us living epistles and going to take hold of our lives and do those things in our lives which make it necessary for the power of His resurrection to be seen. And then, not by the teaching that we give, but because that truth, the doctrine, has been made a living thing in us in the power of God, others are able to look on and say, "Well, that one is the embodiment of the truth!" and that matters far more than all the addresses and discourses that could be given; that is far more powerful. "Now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10) that is, by the things through which we go.

That is a challenge, of course. It is not a pleasant thing. You would far sooner go to a Bible College and go and preach to the heathen than to present your body a living sacrifice to God and let Him take you down again and again into situations where the miracle of resurrection is necessary in order to preach through you like that. But that is the thing that counts, that matters. I am not always sure that a great deal of glory comes to God by the things of the Lord preached, but I am positive that a great deal of glory comes to God when the thing is done in a life and the work of God is resurrection, the work of God leads to His glory. That is a difficult way, a painful way, no way which you or I would covet for ourselves and rush after, but nevertheless it is the way of Divine glory. And when we think again of being in the work of the Lord, do not let us think about taking so many meetings and organising so much activity, let us think rather, the work of God is this: raising the dead to get glory to Himself. There is no place and way and sphere in which more glory comes to God than in resurrection. Oh yes, there is glory to God in resurrection. I do like the apostolic rejoinder, "You crucified Him, hanging Him upon a tree, but God raised Him" - you went as far as you could, you determined that should be the end, but God raised Him, and the laughter of God comes in there, the laughter of all heavenly intelligences comes in with 'but God'.

Well, may the Lord give us to see His glory as in what He does in resurrection.