

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

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NOTE.

'The Power of Christ's Resurrection' forms the second of two sermons issued in a tiny volume in 1638 (18mo). The former has already appeared. See Vol. II. pp, 200-208. The general title-page will be found at page 198; the separate one is given below.* In footnote at page 198, read Cotes, not Coates. The present sermon takes its place naturally here along with the others from the Epistle to the Colossians. G.

* THE SECOND
SERMON.
THE POWER
OF CHRIST'S
RESURRECTION :

OR,

A SERMON UPON
COLOS. 3. 1.

Preached by that Faithfull and
Reverend Divine, *Richard Sibbes*,
D. D. and sometimes Preacher to
the Honorable Societic.

of *Grayes-Inne* ;

And Master of *Katherine Hall* in
Cambridge.

EPHES. 2. 4, 5, 6.

*According as he hath chosen us in him,
before the foundation of the world,
that wee should be holy, &c.*

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.—COL. III. 1.

THIS verse hath dependence on the second chapter, and the twelfth and thirteenth verses of that chapter, where the apostle tells the Colossians that 'they were risen with Christ from the dead by faith, and quickened by his Spirit;' and thereupon follows this inference: 'If therefore ye be risen with Christ,' shew it by seeking after those things which are in heaven, and are heavenly.

The apostle hath much ado to root out those dangerous conceits, which false teachers had settled in the hearts of the Colossians, touching some legal ceremonies, as 'touch not, taste not, handle not.' These dead things he tells them have no more use now; and therefore, 'if you be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above.' These ceremonies were indeed appointed by God at the first, but now they are ended and brought to their grave; and therefore no more to be revived, because they were not only dead, but deadly. *Non solum mortuæ sed mortiferæ.*

Now the apostle finding their hearts tainted with this false doctrine, having first sought to purge it out of their hearts, he then begins to season them with heavenly doctrine; and he begins with general instructions, and so proceeds to particular callings, as of husbands and wives, and children and servants. Now because the well managing of the particular duties of these particular callings depends on a good general; therefore he begins first to season their hearts with grace, knowing that it is so much the easier to be good in their particular callings, when they are first good in their general. But if not good in general, then never good in the particular. If a good man, then a good husband, a good father, a good master, fit for any good service; but if not a good man, then good for nothing. So a woman, if a good woman, then a good wife, or good in any calling. So for children and servants, if good in the general, then good in every particular.

These words contain a ground, and an inference upon the ground: 'If you be risen with Christ.' There is the ground. 'Then seek the things that are above.' There is the inference. From the ground observe two things: first, that Christ is risen himself; secondly, that we shall rise.

Doct. 1. For the first, It is an article of our faith,* and the Holy Ghost

* In margin here, *Fiducia Christiana.*—G.

hath taken a great deal of pains to prove it. It is the confidence of Christians.* It is the main freehold that we have, for we hold all by the resurrection of Christ. Therefore we had sixteen apparitions of Christ to make it firm and evident. It was impossible that he should be held of the bonds of death, Acts ii. 24. Impossible, first, as he was invested with these three offices, a king, a priest, and a prophet. Impossible, first, as he was a king; for how then could he have triumphed over his enemies? Secondly, impossible as he was a priest; for if he had not risen, how could he have made daily intercession for his people? Thirdly, impossible as he was a prophet; for else how could he have instructed his people?

Use. Now as Christ rose the third day—manifesting thereby that he was dead—to his greater glory, so is it with his members. Never nearer help than when they are at the worst. Then that it may appear to be God's work, he will raise them apparently,† that he may be glorified. So likewise when we are in any distress in the world, void of the help of man, then comes God in and raiseth us up, whether in our credit, estate, &c., as he will do our bodies at the last day. Let us therefore have patience for a while.

Doct. 2. Secondly, *As Christ is risen, so shall we rise.* He is the meritorious cause of our resurrection, he hath deserved that we should rise; he is the worker of it. By that same power whereby he rose again, by the same will he raise us up at the last day. He is every way the cause; and which is something more, we are risen with him. He was a public person. Upon the cross he stood in the place of all the world, and all their sins committed, or foreseen to be committed, lay upon him. 'He bare the iniquity of us all,' Isa. liii. 6; and then he freed himself, and so us, by his resurrection. First, freeing himself of his suretyship; and we are freed in him; and he rising, we also rise with him. This resurrection is twofold, spiritual and corporal: spiritual, when we take life from Christ; and being quickened by him, then we begin to rise with him when we believe that Christ is dead for our sins. Christ is then crucified to thee, when thou beginnest to believe in him.

Use 1. And every true Christian may draw from hence water of life to comfort him in all distresses; for Christ hath conquered all our spiritual enemies; and his resurrection is an evidence of his conquest. For if he had not conquered he could not have risen; and therefore when he rose again he bade his disciples not to fear, Mat. xxviii. 10. Fear not death, for I have overcome death; and witnessed the same by my resurrection. Fear not sin, for I have satisfied for it. Fear not the devil: I by my resurrection have bruised his head; nor the world, for I have overcome it. He hath trode upon the necks of all our spiritual enemies, and conquered them all. Fear not, for if once you be risen with Christ, you are begotten to a lively hope. Where spiritual resurrection is, there is hope of life, as the apostle doth soundly reason, 1 Peter i. 3. A ground of precious comfort to every true Christian.

Use 2. Now in that we are raised by the same power to a spiritual life, whereby Christ rose from the grave, it teacheth us how to conceive of the work of the new birth, of the image of God, of the new creature. The work of grace in a Christian is not a slight work, a word and away, as many think; but it is a powerful work, as appears in that there are more hindrances to keep a man dead in sin from rising out of it, than there was to

* In margin here, Tertullian, *de resurrect.*, cap. i.—G.

† That is, 'openly,' 'visibly.'—G.

keep Christ from rising out of the grave. Yet in his resurrection did the power of God mightily appear, as Eph. i. 19, 20. As Christ was killed and had a stone rolled on his tomb, so he that is dead in sin hath the stone of custom rolled upon him, which is as great a work of God's power to remove as it was to raise Christ. Wherefore let those that find a change in their hearts break forth into hearty thanksgiving unto God for his inestimable favour, especially for this powerful work, more powerful than the making of the whole world, because there are many oppositions.

Use 3. Consider this aright, partly *for thanksgiving*, if you have been wrought upon, and partly *for prayer* if you are not, seeking unto God in the use of the means, who only is able to work this change in you.

To cut off many things, we shall now speak of the inference: 'If you be risen,' and risen 'with Christ' by his power, 'then seek those things which are above.' The reason depends thus. They that are risen have a new life, for every resurrection notes a new life; if spiritual, then a spiritual life; if bodily, then a glorious life, Rom. vi. 5, *seq.* Life is suitable to our resurrection. You are risen with Christ from the death of sin. Therefore manifest your resurrection by actions proportionable and suitable to your estate. From hence we note this doctrine,

Doct. 3. That every life and state requireth answerable actions. 'If you be risen with Christ,' and so have a spiritual life as you profess yourselves, then carry yourselves answerably, and 'seek those things that are above,' that may maintain that life of yours. This is the apostle's reasoning in this place. This is so in nature. It is so in corrupt nature. It is so in grace, and shall be so in glory.

For the *first*, Those creatures that are in the water, they delight in it, because it is their proper element, and they cannot live out of it; *secondly*, it is so in corrupt nature. He that is covetous, the very conceit that he hath of his riches doth as it were feed him; and he cannot live without them. For he that lives a carnal, brutish life, he dieth if he be taken from it. He is like a fish upon dry ground. *Tanquam piscis in arido.* Take him out of his element and he cannot live. It is so in grace, and shall be so in glory. When the body is risen unto glory, there is a forsaking of all communion with sinful men here, and we have communion with God and Christ. Christ shall be all in all unto us, Col. iii. 11. Then that which all creatures supply to us here, Christ supplieth to us there. Then our songs are holy and our actions holy, fitting such a glorious estate. Now heaven is begun here, or else never begun. Grace is therefore called heaven, because heaven is begun here. Glory must begin in grace.

Use 1. So then a Christian that is risen with Christ, *must have nothing to do with carnal men, no further than he is thrust upon them, or that he may convert them.* They must not accompany with men of a contrary spirit; seeking by all means to express the love of piety. Thus should the life of a Christian be suitable to his state that he is in and called unto.

Use 2. If we should try all by this rule, *how few then would be found to be risen with Christ.* How few delight in heavenly company, in heavenly actions! as to praise God, or to commune or partake with God in prayer. This is a death to most men to have such company, or to exercise themselves in such actions.

Explan. 1. The apostle saith here, 'we must seek those things which are above with Christ.' Seeking implieth, first, *want*; for a man will never seek for that which he hath; secondly, it implieth *a valuation and esteem of the excellency of the thing that is sought for*; thirdly, it implieth *hope to*

get it, else none would seek it, but leave it as a thing desperate; fourthly, it doth imply *means and use of means* to attain to that we want, esteem of, and hope to attain; lastly, he that wants a thing which he doth highly esteem and hopes to attain in the use of the means, will by all means *avoid all contraries that may hinder him from attaining thereunto*.

2. Now consider what this thing is that we must seek for. Briefly this is here meant, viz., Christ Jesus the joy of our hearts, in whom are hid all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, Col. ii. 3, together with all those things which are above, or whatsoever tends thereunto. And indeed all the excellency which we have or can hope for, is from above. Our full happiness and glorious inheritance is kept for us in the heavens. All our privileges are from above. Our kingdom is in heaven; qualification for this happy estate is from above. Our holiness and heavenly-mindedness is from above, fulness of grace is from above, and all graces to lead us to that perfection are from above. Power to enable us to any holy duty is from above; yea, the means, as the ordinances, the word and the sacraments, are from above. Here then is the sense of the words, seek for a nearer communion with Christ, for a further assurance of heaven, for a further qualification for heaven, that you may be more and more in heaven while you are here, by enjoying through faith your heavenly privileges, prerogatives, and excellencies. Seek for further actions of holiness; for fulness of grace; for grace to bring you to the fruition of all from above. Therefore attend upon the word of God, upon the sacraments, upon holy conference, where Christ will be present in a special manner; and by holy actions seek for glory in the use of the means. Reach not for things above your reach. That is arrogance. But seek for heavenly things, such as before named.

We see from hence this further to be observed:

Doct. 4. That heavenly duties have their spring from the articles and grounds of religion. 'Seek those things which are above.' Why? Because you are risen with Christ.

The ground of our faith is the cause of holy duties. Whosoever is corrupt in faith, is corrupt in obedience in that degree. Evil opinions breed an evil life, and a sound understanding breeds an holy life.

Use. Understand therefore *the main grounds of religion*; and labour to digest them, to see the truth of them; and labour with God by prayer that he would write them in your hearts by his Holy Spirit.

Again, in that the apostle willeth them to seek heavenly graces: and that because they are risen with Christ, note further this inference.

Doct. 5. That as a Christian ought to be heavenly-minded, to seek heavenly graces, so he must do it for this reason, viz., because he is in an estate fitting for it.

Use. Therefore let none say, *he cannot for outward troubles or business*, unless thou wilt deny thyself to be a Christian at the same time. He that will be a Christian must pretend no impossibilities herein. Art thou risen with Christ? Then thou hast power to seek those things that are above, to be heavenly minded. A Christian or no Christian! God doth not as Pharaoh, bid us do our work, and we must gather straw ourselves; but he bids us do, and quickens us by his Spirit, and enables us to do. He fits us for such actions; he gives us power to do them.

Doct. 6. Again, *So far as a Christian is raised by Christ, so far he cannot but seek those things that are above.* We need not teach a bird to fly, for it will learn it of itself; it is natural to her. So a Christian cannot but do

the things answerable to his nature. He is of a new nature, and therefore cannot but be heavenly minded. He cannot profane the Lord's day; he cannot swear; he cannot lie; he cannot blaspheme; he cannot delight in carnal courses. He cannot do these things, so far as he is a Christian. In the hour of temptation he is not himself. It is in this sense that the apostle saith, 'He that is born of God sinneth not,' 1 John iii. 9. So far as he is born again he cannot sin; he can do no evil.

Again, as a Christian may do it, and ought to do it, and cannot but do it;—

Doct. 7. So I add further, *he glories in it.* To be heavenly-minded, and exercised in spiritual duties, is his happiness and his joy. He is never so well, never so much himself, as when he is most possessed with heavenly-mindedness, and most frequent or exercised in spiritual duties. So far forth as he is a Christian, and enlarged with the Spirit of Christ, so far forth he glories in holy actions, in heavenly-mindedness.

Use. Is this in all true Christians? *What then may we think of the most part in the world, that profess religion but from the teeth outward?* They are not risen with Christ, as the ambitious man, the covetous man, the voluptuous man. They savour not the things that are above. They have no new nature; for if they had, it would lead them higher than these things. Those that live in defilements of the flesh, shew that they have no new natures; for if they had, they should get strength against them, at least they would have a continual conflict and wrestling in themselves to overcome them.

For trial of thy estate, see what power is there of the Spirit of God in thee to make thee heavenly-minded: to joy in things that are above, more than in all the world besides. If thou find this power in thee, then thou art a Christian indeed. Thou canst then speak by experience what is the work of the Spirit; and thou knowest well what is the virtue of the resurrection of Christ. Then thou canst say with St Paul that thou art still striving to find the virtue of Christ more and more in thee, to make thee more fully assured of thy part in Christ, and to find the power of his Spirit subduing corruption in thee more and more, Phil. iii. 9 and 10. Let us therefore labour for this power. This is to 'seek the things that are above.' Labour to find a want of them, that we have not so much of them as we have need of. Labour then to know the excellency of them: esteeming of them to be more excellent than all other things. When all other things leave us, then they will comfort us. Labour also to see an hope to grow in them. Thou hast hope to attain unto them, because the same Spirit is promised thee that raised up Christ from the dead. Use then all sanctified means for the attaining of these spiritual good things. Use heavenly means for heavenly things. Attend upon the ordinances of God, labour with him in prayer, that he would make us such as he may delight in, fit us for that estate that he hath provided for us. Labour to increase in all holy actions; take heed of all contrary courses, of worldly-mindedness, of the pleasures of the world, that they draw not away thy heart from an earnest seeking of heavenly things as we should be. We are all seekers. We are a generation of seekers. As the psalmist saith, we are seeking while we are here; our possessing is hereafter, Ps. xxiv. 6.

Labour, therefore, to see the want of heavenly graces, and to esteem of them aright; and to see hope to attain them, and hope to increase them; and use the means, and avoid all contrary courses. So shall you find the virtue of Christ's resurrection raising you up more and more to seek after heaven and heavenly things, 'those things that are above.'