

PAUL'S SECRETS OF "THE OUT-RESURRECTION FROM AMONG THE DEAD" AND "THE PRIZE OF THE UP-CALLING"

by Kenneth F. Dodson

In one small volume it is utterly impossible to give even a glimpse of all the spiritual secrets that made the Apostle Paul what he was. The depths of his spiritual insight; the almost infinite variety and freshness of his thought-life as he piled superlative upon superlative in his kaleidoscopic revelations of truth; the sheer magnitude of his achievements in his missionary journeys which covered most of the Roman Empire of his day; and finally, the courage and fortitude with which he faced sufferings and hardships which would have crushed the spirits of many lesser men — these make it evident that all that can be done is to investigate a few of the neglected areas which have been overlooked by many commentators. The study of even a few of these areas of neglected truth will bring a spiritual transformation in the life of the hungry-hearted Christian who realizes his own spiritual need.

For example, what reverent student of Paul's life can read without deep emotion the Apostle's own list of his sufferings for Christ:

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?

If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my infirmities — II Corinthians 11:23-30.

Consider what kind of motivation a mere man must have had to carry him triumphantly through such pain and anguish and yet describe himself "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (II Cor. 6:10). Whatever Paul had, the Christians of this day desperately need. Too many of them are saying what a wealthy woman who professed to be a dedicated Christian said to a spiritual counselor,

"Sir, I have so many burdens and cares. Sometimes I think I just cannot go on. But really, I suppose I am doing pretty well, in my own weak way, down under the circumstances."

Imagine the Apostle Paul being "down under the circumstances!" By faith, he accepted the spiritual fact that he was dead with Jesus, buried with Jesus, risen with Jesus, ascended with Jesus, and seated on the throne with Jesus, "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in the age to come" (Eph. 1:19-21; 2:6, Greek). By victorious faith, he was daily "possessing his position" in the Lord Jesus Christ. And a little study of another neglected area of Paul's life and letters reveals the secret of his matchless motivation.

PAUL'S MAJOR MOTIVES

Paul had three major motives. As seen in previous chapters, they were (1) The love of God and of Christ, "shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 5:14); (2) The terror of the Lord, even for Christians (II Cor. 5:10, 11; Heb. 10:30, 31; 12:28, 29) and (3) The goal of reigning with Christ in His glorious kingdom (II Tim. 2:12; 4:6-8, 18).

If Christians today had even one of these powerful motives, in the same degree of intensity that Paul had all three, they would be able to face every circumstance of life victoriously. Just how lightly Paul's motives are considered by Christians today becomes evident in a statement like this, from the lips of a professedly Christian woman:

"Why should I want to reign with Christ over five cities or ten cities in His kingdom? I don't want to reign with Him. I thought heaven would be a place of rest. And besides, it would be selfish of me to want to get a crown, I would just lay it down at the Lord's feet, so why should I worry about it? If I can just get inside the 'pearly gates,' that's all I care about!"

Such Christians (if they are Christians at all) either know little or care little about the eternal verities, which should be the passion of the true Christian's daily life on earth. No Christian can be victorious in the face of a thousand daily major and minor irritations unless he is living a life of faith in the light of eternity. It is pitiful to see an intelligent human being, whom God created in His image to be the eternal companion of the Son of God, in the eternal kingdom of God, living like an animal. How can such a being satisfy the deepest longings of his soul with the temporary titillation of his physical senses or the man-made gadgets of a Twentieth Century civilization?

Imagine the Apostle Paul saying, "Why should I want to reign with Christ?" This was the very goal of his life. His soul was filled with such passionate love for his Saviour and his heart was so fearful of displeasing the Lord Jesus, that he could have no other goal. He was a love-slave of Jesus and Jesus had said,

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but *lay up for yourselves* treasures in heaven.... Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.... Well done, thou good and faithful servant (Greek, "slave"): thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.... To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Matt. 6:19, 20, 33; 25:21; Rev. 3:21).

In the light of such statements from the lips of his Lovely Lord, Paul could say, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed in us.... For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (Rom. 8:17; II Cor. 4:17, 18).

Paul believed and taught that there is a "disinterested self-interest in the Christian life which is not selfishness." Since the Lord Jesus has commanded Christians to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, it is certainly not "selfishness" to obey His command. When the Lord says that He will reward the overcoming Christian with a seat on His throne, it is not "selfishness" for a yielded Christian to desire that privilege and to strive to obtain it. This formed the background for Paul's race for "the out-resurrection from among the dead" and for "the prize of the up-calling."

THE SECRET OF WINNING THE RACE

There are three major passages in the Pauline Epistles in which Paul describes his race for the prize. He compares himself to a runner in the Greek games and envisions his whole Christian life as a race for the prize. The first two passages describe him in the heat of the race, striving with complete concentration and dedication to win the prize, and the third shows him as the winner, ready to be crowned with the *stephanos*, or laurel wreath, which was given to every winner in the Greek games.

First, Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians (as seen in a free translation of the Greek):

"Do you not know that those who compete in the stadium all run, but one receives the judge's award. So run that you may obtain the award. But everyone that competes in the games controls himself in all things. Now they do it that they may

receive a corruptible wreath of leaves, but we compete for an incorruptible award. I, therefore, run in no uncertain manner. I fight, not as one who shadow boxes. I beat my body and make it my slave, lest, after I had preached to others, I, myself, should be disqualified [from the race for the prize] — I Corinthians 9:24-27.

Paul urges every Christian to be a winner — “so run that you may obtain the reward.” Then he tells of the extreme discipline he exercised over his own body, lest he, himself, should be “disqualified” from the race for the prize. Because, in the King James Version, this Greek word (*adokimos*) is translated “a castaway,” some have taught that Paul was afraid of losing his salvation. However, he who taught that nothing in the universe could separate him from his Lord (Rom. 8:38, 39), was not afraid of losing his salvation. He was afraid that he might be cut off from further competition in the race for the prize. This could happen through sin in his life, which would disqualify him from further service, or even by “the sin unto physical death,” which would cut him off in the middle of his race before he could win the prize.

“THE PRIZE OF THE UP-CALLING”

The second passage is found in Paul’s precious epistle to the Christians in the Church at Philippi. It was written after the Apostle had most of the amazing achievements of his lifetime of Christian service behind him. He was nearing the end of his own “race-course.” But his determination to win the prize had not weakened nor had his burning zeal to reign with his Master abated. In a free translation of the Greek, he wrote,

I am counting all things loss for the sake of the excellency of the experiential knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but refuse in order that I might gain Christ . . . that I might know him experientially, and actually experience the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if by any means I might attain unto *the out-resurrection from among the dead*.

Not as though I have already attained or have already been made experientially perfect, but I am still pursuing, if that I may lay hold of that for which I am laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have laid hold; but *this one thing I do*, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching out to those things which are before,

I am bearing down upon the goal for *the prize of the up-calling* of God in Christ Jesus.

As many, therefore, as are positionally perfect should be thus minded and if anything you are differently minded, God will reveal even this unto you. — Philippians 3:10-15.

These wonderful words of the Apostle, probably written from the dungeon of the Mamertine Prison in Rome, are a revelation in themselves. They not only reveal the indomitable courage and triumphant faith of Paul. They lay bare the deepest motives of his very soul. The revelation has four facets.

The Apostle was determined to count everything else "but dung or refuse," in order that he might come to a richer, fuller, experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ. Though he had known the Lord Jesus as Lord and Saviour and had been indwelt by "The Spirit of Christ" for many years, he was not satisfied. To him, the special knowledge he desired involved four things:

1. To know Christ in the power of His resurrection life for his physical body. He knew and taught that the human bodies of believers will not be fully redeemed and transfigured into Christ-likeness until the first resurrection at Christ's return (Phil. 3:20, 21; Rom. 8:23). But he also knew that no Christian could endure "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings," without experiencing a degree of the quickening power of the Holy Spirit in his present mortal body. "If the Spirit of him that raised up the Lord 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 (Rom. 8:11; see also II Cor. 4:10, 11).

2. To know by experience "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings." In his "prison epistle" to the Colossians, Paul explained this in a verse which most commentators leave severely alone: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24). He knew that his Lord's sufferings did not end on Calvary — that they will not end until the last soul is won into the "body of Christ" and the last "tribulation saint" has been delivered from tribulation to glory (I Cor. 12:26, 27; Rev. 7:9-17). Paul longed to share the very sufferings of Christ so that he might also share His glory. Consider these conditional promises:

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ *if* so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17).

"If we endure suffering, we shall also reign as kings together with him: *if* we deny him, he also will deny us [the privilege of reigning]" (II Tim. 2:12 — literal Greek).

"And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, *if we faint not*" (Gal. 6:9).

No Christian has a right to expect to reign with Christ in His earthly kingdom, unless he is willing to suffer with his Lord now. No cross — no crown; no tribulation — no throne!

Paul, himself, made it clear that every Christ-like Christian will suffer, when he said to Timothy, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution!" (II Tim. 3:12). The only reason many Christians in America are not suffering with Christ now, is that they are not enough like their Lord and Saviour.

3. To "attain unto *the out-resurrection from among the dead.*" In his earlier epistles, Paul made it clear that all believers would have a part in "the rapture" and "the first resurrection." "For the Lord, himself, shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16, 17).

"Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep [die] but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (I Cor. 15:51, 52).

So, Paul already was assured that he would have a part, along with all other true believers, in "the first resurrection." Now he was determined to "attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead." This is the only time in the New Testament the term "out-resurrection (Greek, *eksanastasia*) is used. Apparently, Paul was referring to a group of overcoming Christians out of the first resurrection who would be receiving special rewards from the Lord. This is why he wrote to the Hebrews, "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a *better resurrection*" (Heb. 11:35). Some have said that Paul was teaching a "partial rapture" in which only the overcoming Christians would be caught up. Such he never taught. All true Christians will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air at the judgment-seat of Christ, but only the victorious Christians will "attain unto the out-resurrection."

Concerning this very passage, Dr. R. E. Neighbour, for many years the Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Elyria, Ohio, wrote,

Some may desire to place all of the raised saints into one glorious class. This cannot be scripturally done. There is life, and there is life more abundant. There is entrance and there is an abundant entrance. There 'are the disapproved and there are the overcomers. There is the resurrection out of the dead and there is the *out-resurrection out of the dead*. Paul had life, but sought the life more abundant. Paul had entrance, but sought an abundant entrance. Paul had a place in the race, but sought to be not disapproved but crowned a victor. Paul had assurance of his resurrection from the dead, hut sought to attain to the out-resurrection out of the dead ones....

Strive to appear before His face
Confessed a victor ever;
Seek but to run a winning race
And wear a crown forever,
Press toward the prize that lies before,
The prize of His up-calling;
Then, when you reach the other shore,
You'll have no fear appalling.¹

4. To win *the prize of the up-calling*.

Paul said, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have laid hold; but *this one thing I do*, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching out to those things which are before, I am bearing down upon the goal for *the prize of the up-calling* of God in Christ Jesus" (Greek). The Greek words, which in the King James Version are translated "high calling" really mean "upward calling" or "up-calling." There can be little doubt, in the light of all Paul's other teaching about the, rapture of the church, that he was here referring to that, event. What a day, when all the millions of Christians living on earth suddenly and simultaneously disappear "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

What then is "the prize of the rapture"? Since all of the Christians will be caught up, it cannot be the rapture itself, as the "partial rapturists" have taught. Paul knew that when he was "caught up" to meet his Lord "in the air" at His judgment-seat, he' would face reward or judgment, a so-as-by-fire entrance or an abundant entrance into the Lord Jesus' heavenly kingdom on earth. Therefore, he was determined, at any cost, to get the victor's crown. This becomes even more clearly in the light of the third great passage from his pen.

PAUL, THE WINNER

The third great passage is in Paul's second letter to Timothy. It is one of the most deeply moving farewells in all human literature, written by the aged Apostle to his beloved spiritual son, just before he was taken to the head-man's block to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote (in a literal translation of the Greek),

Faithful is the word: for if we died together with him, we shall also live together. If we endure suffering, together, we shall also reign as kings together; if we deny him, he also will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he continues faithful; he cannot deny himself...

But you, be calm and alert in all things; endure hardships; do the work of an evangelist and fully perform every detail of your service.

For I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time of my release is come.

I have agonized the good agony; I have finished my race-course; I have safely kept the faith;

Henceforth there is laid up for me the victor's laurel wreath of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall award to me in that day; and not to me only, but also to those who have loved and keep on loving His appearing.

And the Lord will draw me to Himself away from every evil work and will keep me safe for His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory unto the ages of the ages. Amen!
— II Timothy 2:11-13; 4:5-8, 18.

What a song of triumph, every word fraught with the deepest meaning! Paul knew that he had won "the prize of the up-calling" and "the out-resurrection from among the dead." He had the assurance that he would reign with Christ in His heavenly kingdom, "unto the ages of the ages." What did it matter that in a few days or weeks a Roman *lictor* would kill his body? What mattered now all the sufferings of a lifetime? His Lovely Lord was about to "draw him to Himself" away from all the shame and anguish of a wicked world and would "keep him safe" until the first resurrection. Then, at Christ's judgment seat, he would stand before his Lord as *Judge* to receive from Him "the victor's laurel wreath of righteousness" and to reign with Him forever.

Paul is the only one of Christ's Apostles who ever said, before he died, that he was going to reign with his Lord. The Lord Jesus had told the Twelve Apostles that they would reign with Him:

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

"That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and may sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30).

Yet, neither Peter, James nor John, in their Epistles, ever said what Paul said to Timothy.

This is one of the reasons why some believe that Paul is the man chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ to sit with Him upon His throne and reign with Him over all redeemed humanity. This is why they have dared to call Paul the greatest human being who has ever lived. Is it any wonder that he could say to the Christians of all the centuries:

"Be ye followers of me, even as also I am a follower of Jesus Christ."

How many Christians today will so "keep on loving the Lord's appearing and "purifying themselves" in the light of it (I John 3:3), that they may "attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead" and win "the prize of the up-calling"?

THE PRIZE OF THE UP-CALLING

Chapter 8: Paul's Secrets of "The Out-Resurrection From Among the Dead" and "The Prize of the Up-Calling"

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