

TRIUMPH AND GLORY

By

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In reading the book of Acts and the New Testament letters, one is inspired by a continuous note of joyful expectations in spite of the bitter persecution the believers were having to endure. Jesus and the apostles portrayed God as working toward a final purpose, an ultimate and glorious triumph to be realized in the day of resurrection.

This note of joy and expectation of triumph and glory is sadly missing in the religious concepts of our day. Although faith in the resurrection may be retained in the creeds, there is a subtle rejection and opposition to it in the generally accepted Platonic doctrine that all men are immortal and do not fully die; therefore, a resurrection is not essential. This doctrine also subtly undermines the atonement, for if death is not complete, then the penalty was not completely paid in Christ's sacrifice. By regarding all men to be immortal, the evil of the wicked becomes an eternal condition, thus denying God's final triumph and glory.

If we are to regain the spirit of victory and the joyful expectation of glory, we must restore the resurrection hope. There are several reasons for this:

1. **A Purpose for Living.** Without an ultimate destiny worthy of effort and sacrifice, man has no direction or purpose. He becomes a slave to the immediate and descends from one desire and ambition to another, ever downward, until he reaches the place where life has no meaning and is not worth living.

Man was created in God's image, as the highest of creatures, with a mind to think the thoughts of God himself. Before his downfall by sin, he must have been a marvelous specimen of physical and spiritual beauty. Jesus tells us we may regain all this and more through a resurrection. We die in corruption, weakness, shame and mortality, but we will be raised in "incorruption", "power", "glory", and with a "spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:43-44). While life is a warfare against great odds, full of trials and suffering, it moves toward the Creator's own marvelous purpose. We are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17).

It is tragic that instead of holding forth this purpose before the world, modern churches present a feel-good philosophy and appeal to young people with worldly "rock" music, fun and games, while little is said of the ultimate goal of being raised to immortality in God's image.

2. **THE DEATH PROBLEM.** The original lie of Satan, "Thou shall not surely die," became the pattern by which man has sought to avoid facing the problem of death. Just deny that a person is really dead. But such denial not only undermines rationality, it also denies the atonement of Christ.

Jesus acknowledged the reality of death as well as the grief and sorrow it brings. His solution was to reverse the process by a resurrection, demonstrated when He came forth from the tomb. He said, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day" (John 6:39). Paul wrote that we are "waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

Only those saints alive when Jesus comes can transfer from the present age into the age to come without resurrection. They are to be “changed” to their immortal state when Jesus appears, but all those who sleep in death must be resurrected in order to gain that glorious victory (I Cor. 15:51–55). The only way from the temporal and mortal to the eternal and immortal is by way of resurrection.

3. **GOD’S INCENTIVE TO GODLINESS.** It IS Common practice for us to sing of the beauty of heaven and the joyful hope of living in such a perfect place. The invitational appeal often focuses on a choice between two places to live. However, the appeal in Scripture is quite different, focusing on the contrast between life and death, with the emphasis on the ultimate joy of being transformed into the glorious image of God, a person who can fellowship face-to-face with the Creator Himself.

It is this expectation which John uses to motivate believers to godliness. “Beloved, no are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that has this hope set on him purifies himself as he is pure” (I John 3:2–3).

Millions seem to be convinced that the goal of a Christian is to live in harmony with the world. Various denominations continue to lower their standards and rewrite God’s laws. Their hope is set on winning the approval of worldly man, rather than on becoming like Jesus. Where the resurrection to immortality is absent from one’s mind-set, the appeal of the world’s offerings is hard to resist.

The destiny to which one aspires determines the intermediate steps toward that goal. If one’s hope is set on being resurrected to be like Christ, then all decisions and actions will be influenced by that expectation.

Is it our aim to be as honest as Jesus is? Then we will strive for honesty in every word and activity. Do we hope to be as free of covetousness as Jesus is? Then this becomes the policy for the present. Do we hope to be obedient to the Father, like Jesus? Then we seek not to make excuses but to do His will. Do we hope to be pure and free from sin as Jesus is? Then this is our present and daily desire.

What we hope to become will govern each step we take toward that goal. We cannot fool God. If we revel in sin and make excuses for disobedience, there’s no use telling God that what we *really* want is to be like Jesus. He knows our hearts. But if we have the desire for such a glorious state, it will show, and even if we fail to match it with our performance, God knows the hope and desire is there.

The assurance of resurrection to glory removes worldly ambitions and carnal aims, making real the theme Jesus taught, that to gain the whole world does not profit if the life of glory is lost.

Think what glory it will be to finally reach the goal toward which all of life is aimed, to become all that you were created to be, to have every fault replaced with perfection, every weakness changed to strength, every spot and blemish transformed to beauty, and to stand perfect and complete before the approving eyes of our holy and righteous God.

Present affliction, according to Paul, is light when compared to the “eternal weight of glory” to be ours (II Cor. 4:17). If we are God’s children, then we are heirs of God, “and joint-heirs with Christ; it so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17).

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