

The Power of Resurrection

Յարութեան Չօրութիւնը

Acts 9:1-9

On Easter morning, I usually read the story of resurrection. Earlier during this service, we read it from the Gospel according to Luke. Today I would like to elaborate on how the resurrected Jesus touched people. We will highlight two men from the book of Acts.

1. Saul of Tarsus who become Paul

Why not to start with the man who wrote half of the New Testament, Mr Paul.

Here is how Luke describes Saul-Paul in Acts chapter 9

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. (Acts 9:1 NIV)

breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples (KJV)

breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord (ESV)

Saul was passionately eager to capture and kill the followers of Jesus.

He was like a **wild beast** chasing Christians.

He goes and takes permission from the High Priest to continue his mission in Damascus. Why there? There was large a Jewish community in Damascus.

Saul had a conversion on hi way of Damascus.

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." (Acts 9:3-6 NIV)

-Luke described this story in detail. Please notice that the early church people knew about Saul in a negative way; he had a dangerous reputation.

-Later we will find that Saul of Tarsus would become Apostle Paul, the Apostle of Jesus. To be considered an Apostle of Jesus had some requirements.

They were the ones who **met Jesus in person**, and they were also **eyewitness** of the **risen Lord**. The event that happened on the road to Damascus is so profound that it fulfills these requirements.

Let us analyze the passage:

There was a light from heaven **flashed (shone)** around him.

The Greek word **“shone”** (flashed) is the same word used “to describe the light that comes with a bolt lightning.”¹

That light from heaven was enough to knock Saul on the ground.

Then the voice: **“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”**

In any Biblical narrative, when you see God calling a name twice, there is an important event happening.

-God called Abraham: **“Abraham, Abraham, do not lay your hand on your son Isaac...”** (Gen 22:11-12)

-God said to Moses: **“Moses, Moses... do not draw near this place, take your sandals off your feet... holy ground...”** (Ex 3;4-5)

-God called Samuel third time: **“The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”** (1 Sam 18:33)

-Jesus spoke to Martha: **“Martha, Martha... you are worried and upset about many things...”** (Luke 10:41)

Jesus wept over Jerusalem: **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem....”** (Matt 23:37)

Jesus on the cross cried out: **“My Lord, My Lord, Eli, Eli, why have you forsaken me...”** (Mark 15:34)

-Jesus also warned us on sermon on the Mountain: **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.** (Matt 7:22)

Jesus is not seeking people who can call his name twice, but Jesus is interested in genuine heart surrender, heart transformation.

Coming back to our story, before his resurrection, Jesus had an encounter with the High Priest Caiaphas, and he also met Pilate and many other dignitaries.

Yet Jesus revealed himself to **Saul of Tarsus.**

And Jesus called him in an intimate way, **Saul, Saul....**

-Let me tell you: Jesus until now is calling each of us by name, Nerses, Nerses...

I pray that you hear his call...

Then what?

“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

Saul uses the word Lord, in capital letters, not any lord, the LORD.

The answer:

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” Jesus replied. ⁶“Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

In other words, “If you are persecuting my followers, you are persecuting me...

Get up... (I like that), go to Damascus, and you will see what is coming next in your life.”

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. (Acts 9:7-9 NIV11)

Theophany, God appeared to Saul in an amazing way. We see here a visit by **the risen Lord** who transformed Saul into Paul. And instead of persecuting Christians, Paul became **an evangelist** who reached out with the Good news of the gospel to not just the Jewish world, but to the gentiles all the way to Europe.

2. Ethiopian Eunuch

-Just before Saul’s conversion, we find another event in the Book of Acts this time through **deacon Philip**. He was led by God to go to the desert, where he met an Ethiopian Eunuch.

“He was an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” (Acts 8:27-29 NIV)

The Ethiopian guy is reading from Isaiah 53 (What we read last Thursday night).

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth....” (Acts 8:32)

He doesn’t understand the text and asks Philip to explain to him.

He is not Jewish, but he has respect and faith towards Yahweh. He wants to know who is this lamb of God?

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. (Acts 8:35 NIV)

The Ethiopian believed and eventually they stopped the chariot (the limousine), and went down to the water and he was baptized. And the scripture says, Philip disappeared and Ethiopian continued his journey with joy.

Two events:

- Saul of Tarsus, who was viciously persecuting Christians,
- The Ethiopian person **an important official in charge of all the treasury** from the palace who wanted to know more about the Scriptures.

Both met the risen Lord Jesus.

The risen Lord works in mysterious ways.

So what?

“Everything in Christianity depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

No resurrection?

No joy, for the Messiah remains dead.

No forgiveness, for his payment proved to be insufficient.

No hope, for “your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17) and every claim of Jesus was a lie.²

But Jesus is alive. He is risen, and that is why I am here standing preaching.

He is alive, when we have funerals or memorial services the risen Lord reminds us that that is not the end. it is only the beginning.

Listen how Saul who became Paul describes the resurrection of Jesus saying:

“don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. (Romans 6:3-10 NIV)

Oh how liberating is this passage. We are no longer slaves to sin; we are set free.. Death is defeated.

Welcome to Easter Sunday. You are here to celebrate that Jesus Christ is risen! You are here because you recognize that on Friday Jesus died and he paid the penalty of sin.

“The resurrection of Jesus declared that his payment for the debt of our sin had indeed been accepted.

The resurrection of Jesus announced the defeat of Satan and the funeral of death. He has done it all! For Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and the peace that he gives will never come to an end (Isaiah 9: 6-7)”³

I have wonderful memories celebrating Easter. I cherish my childhood memories from Aleppo to Beirut all the way to the USA.

Yet I will not forget the easter in San Francisco year 2015. During that year a visitor came from a country that I don't want to say; she belonged to another religion, but had met Christ and become a follower. She had to flee her country without informing her family for fear of her life. Somehow, she got a visa and came to the US. She was residing in SF legally and studying in the University. She came to our church not knowing anything about us and about our Armenian heritage. She started regularly attending our services and Bible studies. She approached me before Easter and asked me if she could be Baptized on Easter morning service. Of course, I agreed, and she gave her testimony. We did not record that day the service for safety reasons. I baptized her that morning. What a day for me to celebrate the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.” (Philp 3:10 NIV)

Let us go and experience the power of the resurrection

Amen

1. R.C. Sproul, *You Will be My Witnesses to the End of the Earth*, Acts. P 127

2. Adam Ramsey, *Truly, truly, I say to You*, P 175-176

3. *ibid* P 176

**Would you be free from the burden of sin?
There's power in the blood, power in the blood;
Would you o'er evil a victory win?
There's wonderful power in the blood.**

Chorus:

**There is power, power, wonder-working power
In the blood of the Lamb.**

**There is power, power, wonder-working power
In the precious blood of the Lamb.**