

Gethsemane

by Robert Cummins

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CHAPTER TWELVE

The disciples caught the purpose of their Lord. They became witnesses of His resurrection. When they chose Matthias in the place of Judas, it was in order that he might be a witness with them of His resurrection. (Acts 1:22). When Peter preached the first sermon of the church age on the day of Pentecost, he made the resurrection the theme of his message. (See Acts 2:24-36, 38, 39). In his second recorded sermon he presents himself as a witness of the resurrection. (Acts 3:15). In the summary of the life and activity of the early believers in the 4th chapter of Acts, we read that "**with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**" (Acts 4:33). Study Acts from this viewpoint.

The evidence is overwhelming that the power of the Spirit manifested itself in the birth of a band of fearless, joyous, gracious, mighty witnesses of the risen, victorious CHRIST. Paul, the greatest of them all, to whom the risen Lord appeared as to a child untimely born, founds his whole message and theology, yes, his whole life, upon the Resurrection. The onrushing, thunderous, conquering glory of his life and ministry are epitomized in the scene in the dungeon at Philippi. His back has been scourged raw. Led into the inner chamber, his feet have been fastened to the stocks. Cramped and sore, seated in damp, foul-smelling darkness, he and his companion Silas found themselves checkmated. Their work has been stopped. Their enemies have triumphed. Is that what they are now conscious of?

Listen, their songs and prayer at midnight are bearing witness to the presence of the risen Lord. The inner dungeon and the darkness of midnight hold no terrors for them. One is with them who was bound in the inner dungeon of hell, but triumphed gloriously over death and hell. The eyes of the hearts of Paul and Silas have been enlightened, and He who said, "**Lo, I am with you alway,**" is with them in the stocks. By the eyes of faith they see the feet that were bound by spikes of iron to a dreadful cross. Those feet conquered the iron nails. What are wooden stocks to the Victor of the cross? CHRIST is in them the hopes of glory! By the eyes of faith they see the back of their Lord, cruelly gashed by the Roman scourge, but yet victorious.

Will their lacerated backs prove too much for Him who is with them in the dungeon, who after being scourged, was nailed with His torn and bleeding back to the harsh wood of Barabbas' cross? What are wooden stocks to the Conqueror of Calvary? What is the darkness of the dungeon at midnight to the Victor of the grave? To Paul and Silas, the most important facts of their immediate environment were not the visible facts of the dungeon and the stocks and their bleeding backs, but the invisible facts of the resurrection. "Our bonds, our curse, our sin, our darkness, our death, our every enemy has been conquered by the risen King who is with us." No wonder they sang songs and were taken up with the unseen Presence in prayer.

And the prisoners heard. Never before had they heard songs and prayers coming from those who had been cast into the inner dungeon. Never before had witnesses of the resurrection been placed into its stocks. But now there were two men in its dark bonds who knew the great fact of the triumph of the LIGHT of the world over the power of darkness. How could they help but sing and pray in triumphant faith? And because they trusted the great VICTOR and His glorious victory, He had the chance to vindicate their testimony to the "**And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places**" (Ephesians 1:19,20). No wonder there was an earthquake and a mighty deliverance! There would be more deliverances today if we knew the risen Lord and were true witnesses of His resurrection.

The early church was the proof of the resurrection that CHRIST desired. Its members were His evidences, for the power of the resurrection worked mightily in them.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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