

“A Fledged Shaft”
 Pastor Sam Richards
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 Texts: 1 Peter 1:3; Romans 6:8

Romans 6:9 'Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.'

How should death have, on the basis of Jesus' resurrection, no more dominion in my life? If I truly believe in resurrection, is it likely that I should be stuck in the mourning process? Or, should I have an aversion to certain places closely associated with the loss of loved ones? On 20 November 2024 I awoke to a realization. That a near death experience (coming down with encephalitis at the funeral of my grandson in the Hio Ridge Cemetery—a horse born viral infection spread by mosquitos, we think) coupled with the loss of my own first-born gave grief, fear of death and trauma (namely those losses and life-threatening illness) a pathway to dominion. Yes, they subtly became controlling passions which altered my attitude to Bridgton from a place of joy, peace, provision and vibrant life/hope to a place of fear, danger, susceptibility to death and disease. I developed an antipathy to Hio, without warrant if I be a resurrection Christian. It doesn't matter if the shift was irrational and, well, faithless. And it wasn't until I faced my denial of the resurrection in my particular case, it wasn't until I considered that I was spiritually stalled—mired as it were in understandably sad misapprehensions. Yes, misapprehensions—that I could repent of unbelief . . . undo the curse.

Losing a child is traumatic, and losing a grandson similarly so. I remember the cold, dark autumn day, that Lynne and I went to the Hio Ridge Cemetery to scatter the ashes on the grave of my deceased brother, Jonathan. I had been there before with my mother and paid tribute to our ancestors with whom he was interred. We had put this off. And God graciously allowed the sun to breakthrough—and the unanticipated warmth took some of the chill away. And through the patch of blue, I envisioned our son being welcomed by Jonathan in heaven. That was such a comfort, but it was not a completion. I mean, apparently, our mourning of this loss was hardly over. That was decades before we came back, to our family plot to inter the ashes of our grandson. That was very hard. And, unfortunately, while there I was infected by a mosquito and a health crisis ensued: encephalitis. I loss everything: sight, balance, memory and thought myself as good as dead. Lynne was enormously burdened and, praise God, family and friends gathered around her and she was trying to get the Bridgton House ready for Taylor and Bonny-Ann! The chaos from that has never ended. But slowly, subtly and gradually I was surrendering to death's dominion. I had not mourned my way through these griefs—as one must do. And, frankly, I began to believe a lie. The lie was two-fold: first it was lying to myself about my grief process (I was not done with it, and I was not doing it well) and the second lie was that in allowing death, disease and fear to supplant the former happiness, joy, peace and contentment of God's provision for us (my family) I had lived in that place, I had relinquished dominion to the dark side. I had been wounded, bound and plundered. Dereliction, disintegrating, decay and decomposition (letting things deteriorate and rot) were not the final words they appeared to be). God has said, he **will turn our mourning into joy** (Jeremiah 31:13). Psalm 30:5 says **joy comes in the morning!**

And God has done just that in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead! I simply needed to pick back up my living hope. Hope is like a shaft shot

into the dark heart of Satan—it mortally wounds at first . . . and finally, it slays! I am sure the curse is lifted by what the Son has done.

Please note, as the ministry of Jesus proceeded, the tension mounted—like the tension on a bowstring!—and the resurrection, like an arrow’s shaft. Notched, at the ready, ready to be flung at the breastplate of the enemy with lethal penetrating force . . . kill shot. It would mortally wound Satan and it, the fiend, would never recover. All he could do is seek to cover it up, convince whom he could that nothing had happened that changed everything not just one thing. When Jesus rose from the dead, he was restored to many and through those many, he was restored to us all. This product of God’s astounding mercy (**his much pity**) towards us what Peter calls a **lively**, or **a living hope ignited my heart this past week**. . . it quickened singing, awoke a song of praise, of gratitude and of thanksgiving in here

We who were once hopeless, wretched and miserable, or, as it is written, **dead in our trespasses and sins** were deeply blessed, blessed with a superabundant favor: Jesus was crucified, dead and buried **and then he rose from the dead!** That historical moment, the resurrection, disrupted the whole course of the entire cosmos. It was lively, living, or fraught with the power to entirely transform people: from social animals to spiritual beings—a change vaster than, say, an animal becoming a human! Imagine that. The mercy of God produced resurrection and redeeming, sanctifying power infused the inner being of all who received it by faith! The natural man was **born from above** or **begotten all over again**, becoming a **new creature in Christ** through the power of the resurrection. It spelled radical, total change:

A complete change in the condition of man.

A complete change in the prospects of man.

A complete change in the man himself.

So **born from above** harmonizes with a **new, fresh creation**, with **regeneration** (Titus 3:5), with **begotten of God** (not of the flesh, or the will of man, John 3:3)) and with the idea behind **he brought us forth** (James 1:18) We are talking about something on a par with the creation of matter, light and force in Genesis 1:1-2; or the creation of life (Genesis 1:21) for by the power of the resurrection we are **made partakers of divine nature/life** (2 Peter 1:4).

Before the resurrection there was, actually, nothing to look forward to! Some sense there might be something beyond this weary world, but not many and certainly not all. Most though human consciousness vanished like a mist, or a vapor and we simply ceased to be. A world beyond this world came into view! This generated energetic expectations—it had not been seen before. And we had to become new creatures to “see” it! ***When the fact of the resurrection is acknowledged, its significance begins to be realized!*** But this is not merely a conscious realization. That is why we use the terms like **begetting**. **“His historical resurrection did, through baptism, in some ineffable manner, infuse us with the grace which makes new creatures of us”**—and we live the rest of our lives filling, or fleshing out what this means. Resurrection is the efficient cause of our new birth; it is how we are spiritualized.

Still, the mystery of our union with the Incarnate Word remains—which also connects with the mystery of our union with Christ, the Bridegroom, and we, His unworthy, but chosen bride. That unworthiness is our wretchedness coupled with our hopeless apart from his mercy, love and grace. “As God is the Author of our life in a natural sense, so He is the Author of our second life by regeneration,” writes A. Barnes.

“The Saviour said, [John 3:3](#) that "except a man be born again," or "begotten again," (γεννηθῆναι ἀνωθεν gennēthē anōthen,) "he cannot see the kingdom of God." Peter here affirms that that change had occurred in regard to himself and those whom he was

addressing. The word used here as a compound (ἀναγεννάω anagennaō) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

We might spare ourselves some unnecessary confusion if we used the phrase “begotten again” rather than “born again” because that would signify that we are talking outside the biological paradigm which corresponds to our birth. The truth is that the worldly desire to escape the boundaries of our biology is actually, and truly achieved through resurrection! It is not by extending our lives, or altering our biological nature as in our gender/identity, or even attempts at population control! Truthfully, heaven is such a capacity that it cannot be filled up, or over-populated!

So, if the salvation of our souls is the true end of our faith (and it is) and if that is the final purpose for which Christ came to liberate us from bondage to limits such as death, sin and evil—then all is well, yes, very well indeed. God has chosen to populate heaven through the harvest of souls and He so loved the world as to secure for those who believe real assurance of eternal life, eternal fellowship with Him. As a result humanity is released from mindlessness, cluelessness, indifference and ignorance all at the same time, and all in the same way. **No one comes to the Father except through Me . . .**well, then, we should be up and moving and encouraging others to join in! That is the consequence of our **living hope** and of **the resurrection** as well. And towards this end we have been kept—in at least nine ways. I will conclude with this encouragement:

1. We are kept safe. God hides His people, God guards His people, and God guides, governs and protects His people.
 2. We are kept up. Our souls, our spirit life, is not subject to decay, or corruption—either internally, or externally; neither physically, or materially.
 3. We are kept back. There are cautions, warnings and constraints—given the tendencies of our heart—so we are kept by restraints.
 4. We are kept on. We persevere and keep running by his strength, grace and supply.
 5. We are kept through. God helps us bear with life with equanimity (calm) and unceasing zeal—that is through faith’s trial as well as in faith’s service.
 6. We are kept clean. God purifies those He sanctifies.
 7. We are kept in order. God places us within authority structures and governs our instruction.
 8. We are kept perpetually. That is always, until the end of time. He supplies resurrection power sufficient for each day, each trial.
 9. We are kept for a public exhibition. (Eph. 2, Heb. 12) Before all created beings, and exhibition of love, justice, truth and mercy—for all to see forever.
- Receive it by faith and you will do well!

Amen.