

THE POWER THAT DRAWS AND KEEPS IN CHURCH

John 12:32 *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

John 12:33 *This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

There is a power, an infinite and unstoppable power, which draws and keeps us in the church. This power is the same power that raised up the body of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. This power is the power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus. Are you struggling to go to church? Are you struggling to stay in church on a regular basis? Then this message is for you – look to the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ who draws by his Holy Spirit and will sustain your church life until he returns. Firstly, understand that the Devil threw everything he had in his power to shut down the body of our Lord and silence him by burying him in the earth. Satan first used outsiders such as Herod, the Pharisees and Sadducees. When they failed, he attacked the Lord from within – he put doubt in John the Baptist and, when that failed, he recruited one of Jesus’ own apostles, Judas. The bitter kiss of one of the Lord’s own was the final undoing of the Lord, thought Satan. The body of our Lord lay still in the tomb and all who had anything ever to do with the Lord were scattered. Death scatters! The death of our Lord scattered thousands who put their hope in him. The greater the hope invested, the greater the disappointment and dispersal!

Mark 14:27 *And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.*

Three women came to mourn at the Lord’s tomb that Sunday morning. Jesus’ Spirit does not draw us to mourn and grieve over his dead body, but to worship and glorify his risen body. Suddenly, his resurrection power began to attract souls left and right to fulfill a 700 hundred-year-old prophecy. “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isaiah 26:19). The earth and the tomb admitted defeat; the body of the Lord Jesus could not be kept silent in the bosom of the earth. Satan has thrown and will throw more evil at us. Be sure of this! Nevertheless, just as he could not keep the body of the Lord silent in the earth, the resurrected power of the Lord Jesus will not allow us to be buried by the powers of this earth. Say with me by faith, “I will arise together with the body of the Lord Jesus Christ”. “After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep” (I Corinthians 15:6). The death of the Lord scattered, but his resurrection power attracted – “If I be lifted up, I will draw

all men to me”. Do you feel the resurrection power of Jesus Christ attracting you like an all-powerful cosmic magnet? This is the reason the apostle Paul calls himself “the prisoner of the Lord” four times in the New Testament. “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Ephesians 4:1). The resurrection power of the Lord Jesus makes us prisoners of his love.

***Numbers 21:9** And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.*

Attending church and staying in the church has parallels with the brass serpent in the wilderness. Satan made Israel murmur and they accused Moses of conspiring to kill them in the desert. The Devil must have delighted to see fiery serpents attack the people. However, God commanded Moses to raise the brass serpent high for the people to behold steadfastly. There may be problems, troubles and diverse challenges trying to keep you from attending and staying in church, people of God, but all you need to do is keep your eyes on the resurrected Jesus Christ, like the brass serpent, and you will live and make it to heaven. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (John 3:14). You may have been bitten, and even feel the power of the poison working, but behold the brass serpent steadfastly and you will overcome. This is not the time to stay away from church and the Word of God – feel the power of the resurrected Christ drawing and keeping you in the church.

***Ezekiel 37:7** So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.*

There were stages or sequences to Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones in the desert. Note that death always brings chaos and scatters: the bones were scattered all over the valley. In the first stage of the prophecy, there was a noise, shaking and bones coming together bone to his bone. The resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ first brings us together with other brothers and sisters in one accord in one place. Did you stop attending church? Like these bones of Ezekiel, have you been estranged and separated from the body of Christ? Have no fear! The power of Christ’s resurrection will find you and bring you “bone to his bone” to be in one body of the church of Jesus Christ. “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Ephesians 5:30). However, that is not enough. Ezekiel himself notes the limitation: “And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them” (Ezekiel 37:8). Jesus gathers us

together physically in church but he does not want a lifeless, breathless church. Once we are together, the next stage unfolds. “So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (Ezekiel 37:10).

***Act 2:1** And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

There would be no outpouring of the Holy Ghost if the church was not in one place and one accord. The rest of the Book of Acts was clearly predicated upon the church being in “one place and one accord”. I plead with the Apostolic Church of Europe: please attend your local churches and be in one accord with your local pastor and church members! Once this is accomplished, the Spirit of the resurrected Christ will rush to your meeting place and do amazing things through you. “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2).

Had the apostle Thomas been in the room where the apostles were gathered after the resurrection of the Lord, we would never have called him “doubting Thomas”. “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came” (John 20:24). We do not know his excuse for being absent, but the plain fact is that he was not in church. How do you explain to someone who is not in church the awesome visitation of the Lord on Sunday? The Lord is good, though! He made another appearance just for Thomas. “And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you” (John 20:26). He had to wait eight days though. Please do not compel the Lord to repeat his words or actions only because we were not in church! Allow him to bless us all together while in one place and one accord.

The children of Israel were in one place when the brass serpent was raised, the bones of Ezekiel were in one valley and the apostles were in one house on the Day of Pentecost. I pray this message will encourage you to do your utmost to be in one place and one accord with your local church. Once we do our part, the Spirit of the resurrected Lord Jesus will infuse eternal life and power into us.

***Hebrews 10:25** Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Why did the writer of Hebrews exhort us to seek fellowship “so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”? Obviously because Satan knows his time is short and the Lord’s return is imminent. “Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Revelation 12:12). The enemy is using an array of tactics to weaken and dilute the faith and spiritual resolve of the church in these last days. We will be well advised to heed the warning of the apostle Paul:

2Ti 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2Ti 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

2Ti 3:3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

2Ti 3:4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

2Ti 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

We cannot fight these burgeoning attacks of the enemy alone. We need each other, saints of God in these last days. This is one reason the Lord sent the apostles two by two. “And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits” (Mark 6:7). Listen to what the wise man Solomon said, “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up” (Ecclesiastes 4: 9, 10).

God sent the clean animals by sevens into the Ark of Noah, but even the unclean went two and two. “Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female” (Genesis 7:2). In other words, even unclean animals needed to encourage and remind each other about the importance of heading straight to Noah’s Ark. How much more we who have been washed by the blood of Jesus and sealed with his Spirit of promise? May God send us by a multiplicity of many sevens into his Ark of salvation in these last days!