

Resurrection & The Holy Spirit: A Neglected Emphasis

by W. J. Ern Baxter (1914-1993)

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"The Incredulity of Saint Thomas", Caravaggio, 1601-1602

A Neglected Emphasis, Part 1

Ern begins this series with a brief overview of church history. Establishing the resurrection as the central proclamation of the early church, he highlights how it has been sorely neglected in the centuries following the apostolic era up to the present day. Without minimising the importance of the impeccable life of Jesus or his atoning work on the cross, in this series Ern seeks to recover the resurrection of Christ as the true genius of Christianity; the pivotal turning point that makes available the resources for living the victorious life of Christ both personally and corporately in this present age.

Despite the neglect of the resurrection and the Holy Spirit in the church, we nevertheless live in an era that, since the turn of the 20th Century, has been marked by the activity of the Holy Spirit like no other since the apostolic era. Even so, while we may enjoy the experiential life and power of the Spirit, Ern underscores the need to maintain the inseparable aspects of the Word and the Spirit and therefore the need to make the resurrection a far greater part of our teaching.

The Emphasis in Acts, Part 2

In the second part of this series, Ern shows that the Book of Acts is the divinely revealed account of apostolic evangelism and must, therefore, inform the church's proclamation of the gospel. While the apostolic proclamation was centred in the resurrection, contemporary evangelicalism has, instead, focussed on the cross. Unpacking why the resurrection, rather than the cross, is the heart of apostolic preaching, Ern shows that by missing the resurrection's centrality the contemporary church has also missed the divine intent for Pentecost and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, he argues that an over-emphasis on the cross has resulted in a truncated and impotent gospel. He consequently advocates a more robust *resurrection-centred* theology to undergird and empower the church's proclamation of the gospel, thereby increasing its experience of the life and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Emphasis in the Epistles, Part 3

Part 3 of this series provides an overview of the emphasis in the Epistles. Exploring the centrality of Christ's resurrection as the subject of the gospel, the dynamic of the new birth, the proof of justification, the position and power of sanctification, the heart of apostolic hope, and more, Ern underscores that as integral as Christ's atoning work on the cross is, it is clearly not the end of the story.

As a historical event preceding the resurrection and ascension, Jesus' death on the cross is therefore not the end point of the gospel. Rather, it is an event on the way to his throne and rule as the representative of a new human race reigning in the earth. Consequently, only as the centrality of the resurrection is recovered will the church be enabled to live in the reality of Christ's victory in history and thus experience greater realms of influence, joy and power in the Holy Spirit.

Resurrection & The Holy Spirit, Part 4

Ern concludes this series by teaching on the mystery of the triune nature of God and the vital significance of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Countering the historical neglect of the third person of the Trinity, Ern sets forth the biblical data for the Holy Spirit, highlighting his centrality in every aspect of the life, authority and worship of the church.

Moreover, demonstrating the Holy Spirit as a correlative of the resurrection, Ern brings into view the true import of this present age, underscoring Christ's resurrection as the pivotal turning point in redemptive history that inaugurated a whole new dimension of life in God. Consequently, the church neglects the riches in the biblical doctrine of the resurrection and the Holy Spirit to its own impoverishment.

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