

Fallen Asleep

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that death for believers is like falling asleep—peaceful, restful, and secure—assuring Christians of eternal life beyond this world.

Scripture: Luke 23:43, Psalm 23:4, Revelation 14:13

Topics: "Christian Death", "Resurrection", "Eternal Rest"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the comforting biblical metaphor of death as 'falling asleep' for believers. He emphasizes the peaceful rest and security that Christians experience after death, contrasting it with the despair of the world. Spurgeon encourages believers to trust in God's sovereign plan, reminding them that death is not to be feared but embraced as a passage to eternal life with Christ.

Transcript

(C. H. Spurgeon Memorial Sabbath).

[Just 10 years before he fell asleep in Jesus.]

"Some are fallen asleep." 1 Corinthians 15:6.

Writing concerning the brethren who had seen the Lord Jesus Christ after His Resurrection and of whom "above five hundred" were present at one time, Paul said, at the date when he was writing this Epistle, "the greater part" remained alive, "but," he added, "some are fallen asleep."

We might have thought that God, in great mercy, would have preserved the lives of those 500 brethren to an extreme old age, that, in every part of the globe, there might be extant, as long as possible, someone who would be able to say, "I beheld the Son of God when He was upon the earth. I heard Him preach. I saw Him die on the Cross and then I looked upon Him again after He had risen from the grave." Every one of these witnesses would have been worth his weight in gold to the Christian religion! Wherever such a man lived, he would have been, under the blessing of God, the means of convincing many people of the truth of our glorious faith! Yet, dear Friends, it does not appear that these invaluable brethren were spared the shafts of death. These witnesses of Christ's Resurrection died as other men did. They had no immunity from death and no extreme old age was granted to them, for the Apostle, writing not so very long after the event, said, "Some are fallen asleep."

From this fact I gather that lives which appear to us to be extremely necessary, may not be so regarded by God! Your own observation will, I am sure, agree with mine, that the Lord sometimes takes from us those whom we can least spare. Those who seemed to be the pillars of the Church have been suddenly removed. The fathers among us—those who have been the bravest confessors of the faith—or the most useful servants of the Savior, have been called away. This should teach us—if we are wise enough to learn the lesson—to regard the most invaluable person in our own Israel as being only lent to us by the Lord, for a season, and liable to be summoned to higher service at any moment! Possibly, God takes some men away from us because we think them absolutely necessary. He will not let us trust in an arm of flesh—and if He is so condescending as to use human feebleness and we go and confide in the feebleness—and suppose that God's strength is tied up to it—in secret jealousy He removes the instruments that He has used, that men may learn not to glory in their fellow men, or to make idols out of their Christian brethren and fathers!

It is probable that these witnesses of Christ's Resurrection enjoyed a large measure of reverence from the members of the Christian Church. Had they lived very long, they might have been regarded with a superstitious and almost idolatrous reverence. God intended that His Church should increasingly live by faith, not by sight, so, while she was in her infancy He gave her the prop of miracles and also the support of living witnesses. But when she had somewhat increased in strength, He no longer gave the power to work miracles, but left her to rest upon His Word, alone. And as she further progressed, He, in a few years, took away the earthly witnesses of Christ's life, death and Resurrection, that the Eternal

Spirit, working through the Word, might stand, to all time, as the living and unfailing Witness of the fact that Jesus lived, died and "rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

The lesson for us all to learn is just this—let us not set too much store by any of God's servants and, especially—let us never reckon that we are essential to the carrying on of His work! The fly upon the chariot wheel was easily to be dispensed with and so are we. Like shadows we have come—like shadows we shall go. We may be missed—I hope we shall all live so that many will miss us when we are gone. But they will brush their tears away and both the world and the Church—and especially the Church—will continue to go on without us! While Jesus lives, whoever may die, we shall never have to say, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" But still shall the Church of God flourish and increase, for the Spirit of God is with her.

Paul wrote, "Some are fallen asleep." Of course all the witnesses who personally saw Christ have long ago fallen asleep, but, among ourselves, it is also true that, "some are fallen asleep." And the Truth of God is impressed upon us more and more forcibly every week. I never expect, now, to come to this place on two succeeding Sabbaths without hearing that some one or other of our friends has departed. Our death-rate, for many years, has been wonderfully small, for God seems to have favored us by sparing us to one another. We must not forget that in past days more of our number were young than is the case with us now and, as we all march onwards towards the inevitable river, the deaths will naturally be more numerous among us than they have been. They are beginning to be so, already, and I am continually hearing of one or another of our most useful Brothers or Sisters being "called Home." Almost every day this Truth of God is impressed upon me—"Some are fallen asleep." I suppose that all the year round, almost as regularly as the clock ticks, about two a week of our Church members, beside others out of the congregation, are taken up to dwell in the Master's Presence. So my subject concerns us just as much as it did those of whom and to whom the Apostle wrote.

I. Now, coming to the text, I call your attention, first, to THE FIGURE USED HERE—"Some are fallen asleep." In the heathen part of the catacombs of Rome, the inscriptions over the place where their dead were buried are full of lamentation and despair. Indeed, the writers of those inscriptions do not appear to have been able to find words in which they could express their great distress—their agony of heart—at the loss of child, or husband, or friend. They pile the mournful words together to try to describe their grief. Sometimes, they declare that the light has gone from their sky now their dear ones are taken from them. "Alas! Alas!" says the record, "dear Caius has gone and with him all joy is quenched forever, for I shall see him no more." Heathenism is hopeless to afford any comfort to the bereaved!

But when you come into that part of the catacombs which was devoted to Christian burial, everything is different. There you may constantly read these consoling words, "He sleeps in peace." There is nothing dreadful or despairing in the inscriptions there—they are submissive, they are cheerful, they are even thankful! Frequently they are victorious and the most common emblem is—not the quenched torch, as it is on the heathen side, where the light is supposed to have gone out forever—but the palm branch, to signify that the victory remains eternally with the departed one. It is the glow of the Christian religion to have let light into the sepulcher, to have taken the sting away from death and, in fact, to have made it no more death to die!

The figure used here is that of falling asleep. It describes first, the act, and then the state. "Some are fallen asleep." That is the act of death. Having fallen asleep, they remain so—that is the state of death. For a Christian to die, is, according to Scripture, an act of the most natural kind, for it is but to fall asleep. What that act really is, in its literal meaning, I cannot fully explain to you, though I know by long personal experience—and all of you know, and will soon know, again, if you are permitted to fall asleep, tonight, and to wake in the morning! Yet you never knew exactly when you went to sleep. You have often wanted to go to sleep, but you could not and, probably nobody has ever gone to sleep while he has tried to do so. But it is when all idea of forcing slumber has gone from us that gradually we pass into a state of unconsciousness. Such, perhaps, is death—the sinking away and becoming unconscious of this world, and asleep to it—though happily conscious of another world and sweetly awake to it. That is the act of falling asleep.

Then, after the act of falling asleep, which is death, comes the state of sleep in which rest is the main ingredient. Are Believers, then, asleep? Yes, and no. Never make a figure run on four legs when it was only meant to go on two. Some people, when they get hold of a metaphor, want to make it have as many feet as a centipede—and they seek to draw all sorts of parallels which were never intended to be drawn. The fact is that the saints sleep, first, as to their bodies. There they are in the cemetery—which means the sleeping-place—till dawns the bright illustrious day when these bodies shall

wake again. As for their souls, they are asleep as to this world—their memory and their love are things of the past—they are, alike, unknowing and unknown as far as this earth is concerned. As to that other world, we read that they shall be "forever with the Lord." Our Savior said to the penitent thief—"Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." And the prayer of Christ for His people was that we might be with Him where He is—not to be asleep—but to behold His glory, the glory which the Father had given Him.

Hence, the word, "sleep," is not to be regarded as implying that the souls of the departed lie in a state of unconsciousness. It is nothing of the kind! It is unconsciousness as to the things of time and sense, but a blessed consciousness as to another and a fairer and brighter and better world than this! Even while I am in this mortal state, when I am asleep, though I may be unaware of anything that is happening in my

bedroom, yet, full often, in my sleep, my mind is soaring on the wings of eagles, mounting up to Heaven, or diving into the depths, conscious of dreamland, and of the spirit land, though unconscious of the present world for the time being!

The meaning of the term is evidently this—as sleep brings to us rest, the blessed ones, who have fallen asleep in Christ, are perfectly at rest. It is delightful for a man, who has worked very hard all day, to forget his toils and fall asleep. Well did Young write, in his Night Thoughts, concerning—

"Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." In his sleep, the prisoner in the dungeon forgets his manacles. The slave in the galley forgets his bondage. The poor man forgets his poverty and he who dreads the approach of danger drinks a draught of the waters of Lethe and remembers his fears no more. What a blessing sleep is to this poor, weary frame and to the throbbing brain! The saints in Heaven have a better rest than sleep can give, but sleep is the nearest word we can find to describe the state of the blessed. They have no poverty, no toil, no anguish of spirit, no remorse, no struggling with indwelling sin, no battling with foes without and fears within. "They rest from their labors and their works do follow them." Oh, what a sweet thing to fall asleep, if this is what it means—to enjoy perfect repose and to be beyond the reach of all influences which make life here to be so sorrowful! "Some are fallen asleep," that is, they have entered into their rest.

By falling asleep, again, is meant a state of security. The man who is in the battle may be wounded and may die, but he who has gone up to his chamber to sleep is supposedly there to be at peace and out of the reach of danger, though that is not always the case. But, in those heavenly chambers where the Lord shall hide away His people, they shall be perfectly secure. They will never have to keep watch against "the arrow that flies by day," or, "the pestilence that walks in darkness." They are out of gunshot of the enemy! As Dr. Payson said, when he was dying, "The battle is fought," so is it with them—the battle is fought and the victory is won forever! Therefore have they ascended to the hilltops of Glory and to the chambers of eternal rest! And there they sleep while we still struggle hand to hand with the enemy, with many a deadly thrust and many an ugly wound. God be praised that there is a place of safety for all the soldiers of the Cross! "Some are fallen asleep," and so shall we, in due time, if we are fighting under the banner of Emmanuel, God with us!

Now let us learn, from this figure of falling asleep, a little about death and, especially, about a Christian's death. I learn from it, first, that the act is not a painful one, nor even a disagreeable one. As I have said before, I cannot really tell what falling asleep is, for in the very act we, ourselves, pass out of the consciousness of it. But, as far as one has watched children falling asleep, there certainly is no appearance of any pain, for usually they drop off into slumber very happily—and that is how God's people shall do when they fall asleep in Jesus. Do not regard your departure out of the world as a thing to be surrounded with horror! Do not conjure up hobgoblins, evil spirits, darkness and terror! "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," of which David spoke, I do not think was ever meant to be applied to dying, for it is a valley that he walks through and he comes out the other side of it! And it is not the Valley of Death, but only of "the Shadow of Death." I have walked through that valley many a time—right through from one end of it to the other—and yet I have not died! The grim shadow of something worse than death has fallen over my spirit, but God has been with me, as He was with David, and His rod and His staff have comforted me. And many here can say the same! And I believe that often those who feel great gloom in going through "the Valley of the Shadow of Death," feel no gloom at all when they come to the Valley of Death itself! There has generally been brightness there for the most sorrowful spirits and those who, before going there, have groveled in the dust, have been enabled to mount as on eagles' wings when they have

actually come to the place of their departure into the future state.

The more you think this matter over, the more clearly will it appear to you that there cannot be any pain in death— all pain must be connected with life—it is the living who suffer. In death, we forget all pain. That gentle touch, that Divine love-pat that shall end all pain and sorrow is the thing which men usually call death, but which the Apostle rightly calls sleep. There is nothing to be dreaded in it! It may be altogether unattended with pain. I believe that full often it is so. To fall asleep is a very natural act and so it is for us to die. A little child has been playing in the field gathering buttercups and daisies all day long, but, at last, tired right out, he drops asleep upon his mother's lap. What could he do better? So, though we may be unwilling to die, the time will come when we shall have finished our life-work or play, whichever you may please to call it—and we shall fall asleep upon the bosom of our God. What better thing could we do? There is a dear old friend of mine, now in Heaven and, when he came to this house, one Sunday, I said to him, "Our old friend, So-and-So, has gone Home." The one to whom I spoke was an old man himself, one of our most gracious elders, and he looked at me in a most significant way and his eyes twinkled as he said, "He could not do better, dear Pastor! He could not do better and you and I will do the same thing one of these days. We, also, shall go Home!" Our aged friend, as I told you, has gone Home since that time, and now I may say of him, "He could not have done better." Why, that is where good children always go at night—home! If they ran away, where would they go? When our night comes, beloved children of God, you and I also must go Home—do we feel at all afraid of such a prospect? If so, surely our love to our Heavenly Father, and to our Elder Brother, and to our Home above must be growing somewhat cold.

And then, again, if we did not die, we would wish to do so. Certainly, when people cannot sleep, that is the very thing they crave for! There have, perhaps, been times when you have been ready to take something which would help to keep you awake when you have needed to do some special work, or to watch over some precious sick one. But when night follows night and there has been no sleep for you, you do not want anything to keep you awake, then, but you long for sleep. "Oh, that I could sleep!" you cry. We regard it, always, as a bad symptom when the sufferer says, "I cannot sleep." The disciples said, concerning Lazarus, "If he sleeps, he shall do well," and they spoke wisely, although they misunderstood the meaning of the word, sleep, in that connection. And, surely, we shall do well when we fall asleep in Jesus! It shall become to us the most blessed thing that God Himself can send us. Oh, if we could not die, it would be indeed horrible! Who wants to be chained to this poor life for a century or longer?

There came to me one of whom I may tell the story, for he is now dead and he said that if I would do his bidding, I would live forever here, for he had discovered a great secret by which men need never die. I said to him, "Sir, you seem to me like a man of seventy, and I should say that you are getting on towards death, yourself." He replied, "Oh, no! I expect some little rash will come out all over me, in a few years, and then I shall be quite young again, and start living for another hundred years." He told me that the people would believe his teaching when he had been here six or seven hundred years. And I answered that I thought it was very likely that they would! He offered to share his great secret with me, dear good man that he was, but I replied, "I would not give a button to know it—why should I want to live in this wretched penal colony forever?" He talked to me for some little time and when he found that he could make no impression on me, to consummate his madness, he asked me to go outside my door with him. He lifted up the knocker and rapped two or three times, saying very solemnly, "Too late! Too late! You cannot enter now!" He said that he had shut me out of the blessing of living here forever and so I said to him, "I am very much obliged to you for doing me such a kindness!"

He printed books and gave lectures on the subject, being fully persuaded in his own mind that he would never die. But he has died—I knew he would and I told him so. He said it was my lack of faith which made me talk like that, but he himself was confident that he would never die. Oh, what an awful thing it would be if that man's fad could be a fact! Superstition declares it to be the curse upon "the wandering Jew" that he should never die. God be thanked that such a curse has never fallen upon us! No, unless the Lord should come first, we shall fall asleep in Him—and what a blessed thing it must be to fall asleep on the bosom of Christ! The child may be afraid to be put to bed in the dark, but it never fears to fall asleep upon its mother's breast. And we might dread to be laid to rest, out there in the cold cemetery, all alone, but we do not fear to sleep in Jesus! Such a state as that is a thing to be desired, not to be dreaded!

II. Now let us come to our second point, THE THOUGHTS AWAKENED BY THIS FIGURE—"Some are fallen asleep."

First, thinking about the many who have fallen asleep, let me ask—How did you treat them? If your conscience pricks you concerning that matter, I want you to act towards the livingsaints in such a way as you would like to have

done supposing you never see them again. When there has been an angry meeting or parting—when there have been hard words spoken, or when there have been unkind thoughts—when you could not enjoy true fellowship with some Christian friend, suppose that, the next morning, somebody came to your house and said, "Brother So-and-So is dead?" You would feel deeply pained to think that he had fallen asleep after you had so treated him. People have killed their minister by their unkindness—and there have been, alas, many who have done so! Those who have killed other persons—and there have been many of that sort, who have vexed and worried other people into their graves—may well think, with great sorrow, "Some are fallen asleep, but we did not treat them with the love and kindness we ought to have shown them." Think over that matter, dear Friends, and see to it that no such regrets shall be possible to you.

"Some are fallen asleep." Then, who is to fill their place? Many have already gone from us this year and others keep on going. Sunday school teachers go—who will be "baptized for the dead"—by taking their places in the ranks and filling the gap? Hear this, you Church members who are doing nothing for Christ! "Some are fallen asleep." Let that little sentence be a clarion call to you to wake up and go and occupy the vacant positions, that the work of Christ may know no lack in any part of His vineyard! Wake up! Wake up! You who are asleep in another sense—now that so many are being taken away from us—dig up the talent that has been wrapped in a napkin and buried in the earth—and put it out to blessed usury by employing it in the Master's service!

"Some have fallen asleep." Then you and I will also fall asleep before long. It cannot be a long while for some of you who are getting gray or white. It may be a very short time for some of us who have scarcely reached the middle of life. And even you young folk may soon fall asleep, too, for I have seen a child asleep in the morning as well as at night, and so have you. Oh, let us not live in this world as if we thought of staying here forever, but let us try to be like a pious Scotch minister who was very ill and, being asked by a friend whether he thought himself dying, answered, "Really, Friend, I care not whether I am or not for, if I die, I shall be with God. And if I live, He will be with me." There is not much to choose between those two blessed states! But let us remember, by the memory of everyone who has fallen asleep, that the time of our own departure is coming, by-and-by, and it may be very soon!

But, as for those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, we need not fret or trouble ourselves about them. To cut their faces, in token of their mourning for the dead, was natural to the heathen—well might they torture themselves in their hopeless grief, for they believed the separation to be eternal! But as for us, when children go upstairs to bed, do their elder brothers and sisters, who sit up later, gather together and cry because the other children have fallen asleep? Ah, no! They feel that they have not lost them, and they expect to meet again in the morning—and so do we! Therefore, let us not weep and lament to excess concerning the dear ones who are fallen asleep in Christ, for all is well with them! They are at rest—shall we weep about that? They are enjoying their eternal triumph—shall we weep about that? They are as full of bliss as they can possibly be—shall we weep about that? If any of your sons and daughters were taken away from you to be made into kings and queens in a foreign land, you might shed a tear or two at parting, but you would say, "It is for their good, let them go." And do you grudge your well-beloved their crown of glory and all the bliss which God has bestowed upon them? If the departed could speak to us, they would say, "Bless God for us! Do not sit down and mourn because we have entered into His Glory, but rather rejoice because we are with Him where He is." Therefore let us comfort one another with these words.

III. Lastly, Brothers and Sisters, let us think, for just a minute or two, of THE HOPES CONFIRMED BY THIS FIGURE—"Some are fallen asleep."

First, then, they are still ours. If they were really dead, we might say that we had lost them, but as they have only fallen asleep, they are still ours! Wordsworth proclaimed a great Truth of God in that simple little poem of his, "We are seven." There were some of the family buried in the churchyard, but the girl still declared that they were seven—and so they were! Did you ever notice, concerning Job's children, that when God gave him twice as much substance as he had before, he gave him only the same number of children as he formerly had? The Lord gave him twice as much gold and twice as much of all sorts of property, but He only gave him the exact number of children that he had before. Why did He not give the Patriarch double the number of children as well as twice the number of cattle? Why, because God reckoned the first ones as being still his! They were dead to Job's eyes, but they were visible to Job's faith! God still numbered them as part of Job's family—and if you carefully count up how many children Job had, you will find that he had twice as

many in the end as he had in the beginning! In the same way, consider your friends who are asleep in Christ as still yours—not lost, any one of them—and say of them, "Some are fallen asleep."

"Our membership has been diminished," somebody says. Yes, it has been, according to the Church Book and the figures as we reckon them here, but it has not really been diminished. I have, by faith, seen our Brothers and Sisters flying, like doves to their windows, and ascending to Heaven from this place! Every week some of them are going to the land beyond the skies. My soul has often rejoiced as I have thought of the spiritual children whom God has given me. I might almost claim that great promise which was made to Abraham, "Look now toward Heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your seed be." For, if they have not reached the number of the stars yet, they are no more to be reckoned than are the stars! As I remember how many of them have already reached the better land, I do not think of them as lost, for they only fell asleep, here, to wake in the Presence of Jesus. Their sleeping bodies shall also wake again when the Resurrection trumpet sounds. No matter what has become of the particular particles of dust of which those bodies were composed, the essence of each individual shall be preserved by Omnipotent power, and out of it shall spring an undying body, remodeled and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body! And the soul shall enter it and that soul shall be here, again, at the coming of Christ, for when He shall come in His Glory, they, also, who sleep in Jesus will He

bring with Him! "Therefore," again I say unto you, "comfort one another with these words."

This is our last thought—we shall again meet those who have fallen asleep. We said, "Adieu," to them, and so committed them to God's keeping. We said, "Good-bye," that is, "God be with you," and God has been with them. We said, "Farewell," and they have fared well. And we shall see how well they have fared to be with Christ, for we shall see them again! I believe that we shall know them, have communion with them and shall admire Christ's Grace in them, and that it shall be part of our Heaven to come not only "to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant," but also, "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in Heaven."

Now I have finished my discourse, but, how far is there any comfort to some of you in all that I have said? Some of you work very hard—have you any hope of rest in Heaven? If not, I pity you from the very depths of my heart! Some of you fare very hard—have you any hope of better fare with Christ forever? If not, I do indeed pity you, more than I can say! To go from poverty and misery, here, to a place where there shall be no hope for you forever, will be dreadful, indeed! If there were no Hell, I could not endure the thought of being shut out of Heaven, for, to be with Christ, to be with the Father, to be with the Holy Spirit, to miss the company of gracious and just men forever, would be a Hell that might well make men gnash their teeth in torment! Oh, may God save us all through faith which is in Christ Jesus! May we be saved tonight and then it will not matter how soon anyone may say of us, also, "They have fallen asleep," for all will be well with us forever! God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: REVELATION 7:9-17; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-28; 50-58.

We will read two passages from the New Testament tonight. The first will show us where the glorified saints are and the second will tell us what is to become of their bodies.

Revelation 7:9-13. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb! And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God forever and ever Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me. In reply, as it were, to John's question put by the very look of his countenance! Sometimes the Lord Jesus Christ gave an answer to men who had not spoken to Him—and the angelic elder here followed His example and also, in another respect, imitated his Lord by replying to the inquisitive glance of John by asking him a question.

13-17. Who are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple:

and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. This is to be the future state of all those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus and to whom the saving Grace of God has come! So that, concerning all who have thus fallen asleep, we sorrow not as those without hope, for we know that all is well with them forever!

Now let us read a little of what the Apostle Paul was inspired to write with regard to the resurrection of the body.

1 Corinthians 15:1, 2. Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. What, then, was this Gospel which Paul had preached, and which the Christians in Corinth had received—the Gospel which Paul declared would save them if they truly believed it? Was it a Gospel made up merely of doctrines? No! It was a Gospel formed of facts.

3. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. That is the first fundamental fact in the Gospel system. Blessed is the man who believes it and rests his soul upon it!

4. And that He was buried: and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. That grand fact of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead is rightly put next to His substitutionary Sacrifice, for it is the very cornerstone of our holy faith! It is one of the essential doctrines which must be received by us, for we cannot truly believe the Gospel unless we accept the great Truth of Christ's Resurrection!

5-8. And that He was seen of Cephas—that is, Peter—then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this time, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James, then of all the Apostles. And last of all He was seen of me, also, as of one born out of due time. I suppose, Brothers and Sisters, that we may have persons arise who will doubt whether there was ever such a man as Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte. And when they do—when all reliable history is flung to the winds—then, but not till then, may they begin to question whether Jesus Christ rose from the dead, for this historical fact is attested by more witnesses than almost any other fact that stands on record in history, whether sacred or profane! The risen Christ was seen by many persons who knew Him intimately before He died—by those who saw Him put to death and who saw Him when He was dead. He was seen, on various occasions, privately, by one, by two, by 12 of those who had been His companions for years. At other times, He was seen in public by large numbers who could not all have been deceived. These men were so certain that this was, indeed, the same Christ who had lived, and died, that, although it was at first difficult to make them believe that He had risen from the dead, it was impossible to make them doubt it afterwards! And the major part of them died to bear witness to the fact! They were martyred because they confessed that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. There is no fact in history, from the days of Adam until now, that is better attested than this great central Truth of God of the Resurrection of Christ! So we accept it and receive it gladly. Paul finishes up his list of witnesses by putting himself down as one of them, although his conversion was, to himself, such a marvelous display of Divine Grace that he was like "one born out of due time."

9-14. For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the Grace of God I am what I am: and His Grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I; but the Grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Now if Christ is preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain and then your faith is also vain. It is all emptiness! Our preaching evaporates—there is nothing left in it—unless Christ did really rise from the dead! And your faith has nothing in it, either—you are believing in

that which is only vanity and nothingness—unless His Resurrection was a fact.

15-17. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom, He raised not up, if it is so that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ is not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. So that you cannot be a Christian if you deny the Resurrection of Christ! You must give up Christianity altogether and confess that your faith in it was a delusion unless you believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and that, therefore, there is a resurrection from the dead for the sons of men! Let it always

be most clearly understood that what Christ is, that His people are! There is an unbroken union between the Head and the members, so that, if He lives, they live. And if He lives not, then they live not. And if they live not, then He lives not. Jesus and those for whom He died are so intimately joined together that they are really and truly one—and nothing can ever separate them!

18, 19. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are, of all men, most miserable. That is to say, if our hope for the future is all a lie, we have been dreadfully deceived and, moreover, if we could lose a hope so brilliant as that has been to us, there would fall upon us a sense of loss so great that no one in the world could be so wretched as we should be! Besides, the Apostles were always in jeopardy of their lives—if they were suffering poverty, persecution and the fear of death by martyrdom, all for a lie—they were, indeed, of all men the most deluded, and the most miserable! But the Corinthians would not admit that and neither will we.

20. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits. He must always come first, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

20-28. Of them that slept. For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He has put all things under His feet But when He says all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. The mediatorial Person of Christ, as God-Man, shall bow before the eternal majesty of the Godhead, "that God may be all in all." Now we will finish our reading with just a few verses at the close of the chapter.

50, 51. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. We shall not all die, some will be alive when Christ comes to this earth, again, "but we shall all be changed," if not by the process of death and resurrection, yet by some other means.

52. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Somehow or other, such a change as this must take place before we can enter Heaven, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

53-58. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be

brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. That should be the practical outcome of receiving the great Truths of which we have been reading. God grant that it may be! Amen.

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