

The Resurrection of the Dead

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately affirms the apostolic doctrine that the resurrection of the dead, both just and unjust, is a foundational truth that guarantees the eternal union of body and soul with Christ.

Scripture: Acts 24:15, Hebrews 11:19, Job 19:25-26, Psalm 16:10, Daniel 12:2, Isaiah 26:19, Hosea 6:1-2, 1 Corinthians 6:13

Topics: "Resurrection", "Eternal Life", "Christ's Resurrection"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the foundational Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, emphasizing its centrality in apostolic preaching and its distinction from the immortality of the soul. He draws on Scripture and historical examples to affirm the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust. Spurgeon challenges believers to embrace this truth fully, recognizing the eternal destiny of their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit united with Christ. This sermon calls for renewed faith and hope anchored in the resurrection.

Transcript

"There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both the of the just and unjust."—Acts 24:15.

Reflecting the other day upon the sad state of the churches at the present moment, I was led to look back to apostolic times, and to consider wherein the preaching of the present day differed from the preaching of the apostles. I remarked the vast difference in their style from the set and formal oratory of the present age. I remarked that the apostles did not take a text when they preached, nor did they confine themselves to one subject, much less to any place of worship, but I find that they stood up in any place and declared from the fulness of their heart what they knew of Jesus Christ. But the main difference I observed was in the subjects of their preaching. Surprised I was when I discovered that the very staple of the preaching of the apostles was the resurrection of the dead. I found myself to have been preaching the doctrine of the grace of God, to have been upholding free election, to have been leading the people of God as well as I was enabled into the deep things of his word; but I was surprised to find that I had not been copying the apostolic fashion half as nearly as I might have done. The apostles when they preached always testified concerning the resurrection of Jesus, and the consequent resurrection of the dead. It appears that the Alpha and the Omega of their gospel was the testimony that Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures. When they chose another apostle in the room of Judas, who had become apostate, Acts 1:22, they said, "One must be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection;"

so that the very office of an apostle was to be a witness of the resurrection. And well did they fulfil their office. When Peter stood up before the multitude, he declared unto them that “David spoke of the resurrection of Christ.” When Peter and John were taken before the council, the great cause of their arrest was that the rulers were grieved :because they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” Acts iv. 2. When they were set free, after having been examined, it is said, “With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” Acts iv. 33. It was this which stirred the curiosity of the Athenians when Paul preached among them, “They said, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection of the dead.” And this moved the laughter of the Areopagites, for when he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, “Some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter.” Truly did Paul say, when he stood before the council of the Pharisees and Sadducees, “Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am called in question.” And equally truly did he constantly assert, “IF Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins.” The resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the righteous is a doctrine which we believe, but which we too seldom preach or care to read about. Though I have inquired of several booksellers for a book specially upon the subject of the resurrection, I have not yet been able to purchase one of any sort whatever; and when I turned to Dr. Owen’s works, which are a most invaluable storehouse of divine knowledge, containing much that is valuable on almost every subject; I could find, even there, scarcely more than the slightest mention of the resurrection. It has been set down as a well known truth, and therefore has never been discussed. Heresies have not risen up respecting it; it would almost have been a mercy if there had been, for whenever a truth is contested by heretics, the orthodox fight strongly for it, and the pulpit resounds with it every day. I am persuaded, however, that there is much power in this doctrine; and if I preach it this morning you will see that God will own the apostolic preaching, and there will be conversions. I intend putting it to the test now, to see whether there be not something which we cannot perceive at present in the resurrection of the dead, which is capable of moving the hearts of men and bringing them into subjection to the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are very few Christians who believe the resurrection of the dead. You may be surprised to hear that, but I should not wonder if I discovered that you yourself have doubts on the subject. By the resurrection of the dead is meant something very different from the immortality of the soul: that, every Christian believes, and therein is only on a level with the heathen, who believes it too. The light of nature is sufficient to tell us that the soul is immortal, so that the infidel who doubts it is a worse fool even than a heathen, for he, before Revelation was given, had discovered it—there are some faint glimmerings in men of reason which teach that the soul is something so wonderful that it must endure forever. But the resurrection of the dead is quite another doctrine, dealing not with the soul, but with the body. The doctrine is that this actual body in which I now exist is to live with my soul; that not only is the “vital spark of heavenly flame” to burn in heaven, but the very censer in which the incense of my life doth smoke is holy unto the Lord, and is to be preserved for ever. The spirit, every one confesses, is eternal; but how many there are who deny that the bodies of men will actually start up from their graves at the great day? Many of you believe you will have a body in heaven, but you think it will be an airy fantastic body, instead of believing that it will be a body like to this—flesh and blood (although not the same kind of flesh, for all flesh is not the same flesh), a solid, substantial body, even such as we have here. And there are yet fewer of you who believe that the wicked will have bodies in hell; for it is gaining ground everywhere that there are to be no positive torments for the damned in hell to affect their bodies, but that it is to be metaphorical fire, metaphorical brimstone, metaphorical chains, metaphorical torture. But if ye were Christians as ye profess to be, ye would believe that every mortal man who ever existed shall not only live by the immortality of his soul, but his body shall

live again, that the very flesh in which he now walks the earth is as eternal as the soul, and shall exist for ever. That is the peculiar doctrine of Christianity. The heathens never guessed or imagined such a thing; and consequently when Paul spoke of the resurrection of the dead, "Some mocked," which proves that they understood him to speak of the resurrection of the body, for they would not have mocked had he only spoken of the immortality of the soul, that having been already proclaimed by Plato and Socrates, and received with reverence.

We are now about to preach that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. We shall consider first the resurrection of the just; and secondly, the resurrection of the unjust.

I. There shall be A RESURRECTION OF THE JUST.

The first proof I will offer of this, is, that it has been the constant and unvarying faith of the saints from the earliest periods of time. Abraham believed the resurrection of the dead, for it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11 verse 19, that he "accounted that God was able to raise up Isaac even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." I have no doubt that Joseph believed in the resurrection, for he gave commandment concerning his bones; and surely he would not have been so careful of his body if he had not believed that it should be raised from the dead. The Patriarch Job was a firm believer in it, for he said in that oft repeated text, Job. xix. 25, 26: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the latter-day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." David believed it beyond the shadow of a doubt, for he sang of Christ, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." Daniel believed it, for he said, that "Many who sleep in the dust shall rise, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt." Souls do not sleep in the dust; bodies do. It will do you good to turn to one or two passages and see what these holy men thought. For instance, in Isaiah, ch. xxvi. 19, you read: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." We will offer no explanation. The text is positive and sure. Let another prophet speak—Hosea, ch. vi. verses 1 and 2: "Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Although this does not declare the resurrection, yet it uses it as a figure which it would not do were it not regarded as a settled truth. It is declared by Paul, also, in Hebrews xi. 35, that such was the constant faith of the martyrs; for he says, "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." All those holy men and women, who, during the time of the Maccabees, stood fast by their faith, and endured the fire and sword, and tortures unutterable, believed in the resurrection, and that resurrection stimulated them to give their bodies to the flames, not caring even for death, but believing that thereby they should attain to a blessed resurrection. But our Saviour brought the resurrection to light in the most excellent manner, for he explicitly and frequently declared it. "Marvel not," said he, "at what I have said unto you. Behold the hour cometh when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of God." "The hour is coming when he will call the dead to judgment, and they shall stand before his throne." Indeed, throughout his preaching, there was one continued flow of firm belief, and a public and positive declaration of the resurrection of the dead. I will not trouble you with any passages from the writings of the Apostles; they abound therewith. In fact, Holy Scripture is so full of this doctrine that I marvel, brethren, that we should so soon have departed from the steadfastness of our faith, and that it should be believed in many churches that the actual bodies of the saints will not live again, and especially that the bodies of the wicked will not have a future existence. We maintain as our text doth, that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both

of the just and unjust.”

A second proof, we think, we find in the translation of Enoch and Elijah to heaven. We read of two men who went to heaven in their bodies. Enoch “was not; for God took him;” and Elijah was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire. Neither of these men left his ashes in the grave: neither left his body to be consumed by the worm, but both of them in their mortal frames (changed and glorified doubtless) ascended up on high. Now, those two were the pledge to us that all of us shall rise in the same manner. Would it be likely that two bright spirits would sit in heaven clothed in flesh, while the rest of us were unclothed? Would it be at all reasonable that Enoch and Elijah should be the only saints who should have their bodies in heaven, and that we should be there only in our souls—poor souls! longing to have our bodies again. No; our faith tells us that these two men having safely gone to heaven, as John Bunyan hath it, by a bridge that no one else trod, by which they were not under the necessity to wade the river, we shall also rise from the flood, and our flesh shall not for ever dwell with corruption.

There is a remarkable passage in Jude, where it speaks of Michael the Archangel contending with the devil about the body of Moses, and using no “railing accusation.” Now, this refers to the great doctrine of angels watching over the bones of the saints. Certainly, it tells us that the body of Moses was watched over by a great archangel; the devil thought to disturb that body, but Michael contended with him about it. Now would there be a contention about that body if it had been of no value? Would Michael contend for that which was only to be the food of worms? Would he wrestle with the enemy for that which was to be scattered to the four winds of heaven, never to be united again into a new and goodlier fabric? No; assuredly not. From this we learn that an angel watches over every tomb. It is no fiction, when on the marble we carve the cherubs with their wings. There are cherubs with outstretched wings over the head of the grave-stones of all the righteous; ay, and where “the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep,” in some nook o’ergrown by nettles, there an angel standeth night and day to watch each bone and guard each atom, that at the resurrection those bodies, with more glory than they had on earth, may start up to dwell for ever with the Lord. The guardianship of the bodies of the saints by angels proves that they shall rise again from the dead.

Yet, further, the resurrections that have already taken place give us hope and confidence that there shall be a resurrection of all saints. Do you not remember that it is written, when Jesus rose from the dead many of the saints that were in their graves arose, and came into the city, and appeared unto many? Have ye not heard that Lazarus, though he had been dead three days, came from the grave at the word of Jesus? Have you never read how the daughter of Jarius awoke from the sleep of death when he said, “Talitha cumi?” Have you never seen him at the gates of Nain, bidding that widow’s son rise from the bier? Have you forgotten that Dorcas who made garments for the poor, sat up and saw Peter after she had been dead? And do you not remember Eutychus who fell from the third loft and was taken up dead, but who, at the prayer of Paul, was raised again? Or, does not your memory roll back to the time when hoary Elijah stretched himself upon the dead child, and the child breathed, and sneezed seven times, and his soul came to him? Or have you not read that when they buried a man, as soon as he touched the prophet’s bones he rose again to life? These are pledges of the resurrection; a few specimens, a few chance gems flung into the world to tell us how full God’s hand is of resurrection jewels. He hath given us proof that he is able to raise the dead by the resurrection of a few, who afterwards were seen on earth by infallible witnesses.

We must now, however, leave these things, and refer you once more to the Holy Spirit by way of confirming the doctrine that the saints’ bodies shall rise again. The chapter in which you will find one great

proof is in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, vi. 13: "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." The body, then, is the Lord's. Christ died not only to save my soul, but to save my body. It is said he "came to seek and to save that which was lost." When Adam sinned he lost his body, and he lost his soul too; he was a lost man, lost altogether. And when Christ came to save his people, he came to save their bodies and their souls. "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord." Is this body for the Lord, and shall death devour it? Is this body for the Lord, and shall winds scatter its particles far away where they never shall discover their fellows? No! the body is for the Lord, and the Lord shall have it. "And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us by his own power." Now look at the next verse: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ." Not merely is the soul a part of Christ—united to Christ, but the body is also. These hands, these feet, these eyes, are members of Christ, if I be a child of God. I am one with him, not merely as to my mind, but one with him as to this outward frame. The very body is taken into union. The golden chain which binds Christ to his people goes round the body and soul too. Did not the apostle say "they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church?"—Ephesians v. 31, 32. "They are one flesh;" and Christ's people are not only one with him in spirit, but they are "one flesh" too. The flesh of man is united with the flesh of the God-man; and our bodies are members of Jesus Christ. Well, while the head lives the body cannot die; and while Jesus lives the members cannot perish. Further the Apostle says, in the 19th verse, "Know yet not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price." This body he says, is the temple of the Holy Ghost; and where the Holy Ghost dwells in a body, he not only sanctifies it, but renders it eternal. The temple of the Holy Ghost is as eternal as the Holy Ghost. You may demolish other temples and their gods too, but the Holy Ghost cannot die, nor "can his temple perish." Shall this body which has once had the Holy Ghost in it be always food for worms? Shall it never be seen more, but be like the dry bones of the valley? No; the dry bones shall live, and the temple of the Holy Ghost shall be built up again. Though the legs, the pillars, of that temple fall—though the eyes, the windows of it be darkened, and those that look out of them see no more, yet God shall re-build this fabric, re-light the eyes, and restore its pillars and regild it with beauty, yea, "this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible put on incorruption.

But the master argument with which we close our proof is that Christ rose from the dead, and verily his people shall. The chapter which we read at the commencement of the service is proof to a demonstration that if Christ rose from the dead all his people must; that if there be no resurrection, then is Christ not risen. But I will not long dwell on this proof, because I know you all feel its power, and there is no need for me to bring it out clearly. As Christ actually rose from the dead—flesh and blood, so shall we. Christ was not a spirit when he rose from the dead; his body could be touched. Did not Thomas put his hand into his side? and did not Christ say, "Handle me, and see. A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." And if we are to rise as Christ did—and we are taught so—then we shall rise in our bodies—not spirits, not fine aerial things, made of I know not what—some very refined and elastic substance; but "as the Lord our Saviour rose, so all his followers must." We shall rise in our flesh, "though all flesh is not the same flesh;" we shall rise in our bodies, though all bodies are not the same bodies; and we shall rise in glory, though all glories are not the same glories. "There is one flesh of man and another of beasts;" and there is one flesh of this body, and another flesh of the heavenly body. There is one body for the soul here, and another body for the spirit up there; and yet it shall be the same body that will rise again from the grave—the same I say in identity, though not in glory or in adaptation.

I come now to some practical thoughts from this doctrine before I go to the other. My brethren, what thoughts of comfort there are in this doctrine, that the dead shall rise again. Some of us have this week

been standing by the grave; and one of our brethren, who long served his Master in our midst, was placed in the tomb. He was a man valiant for truth, indefatigable in labour, self-denying in duty, and always prepared to follow his Lord (Mr. Turner, of Lamb and Flag School), and to the utmost of his ability, serviceable to the church. Now, there were tears shed there: do you know what they were about? There was not a solitary tear shed about his soul. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul was not required to give us comfort, for we knew it well, we were perfectly assured that he had ascended to heaven. The burial service used in the Church of England most wisely offers us no comfort concerning the soul of the departed believer, since that is in bliss, but it cheers us by reminding us of the promised resurrection for the body; and when I speak concerning the dead, it is not to give comfort as to the soul, but as to the body. And this doctrine of the resurrection has comfort for the mourners in regard to the buried mortality. You do not weep because your father, brother, wife, husband, has ascended to heaven—you would be cruel to weep about that. None of you weep because your dear mother is before the throne; but you weep because her body is in the grave, because those eyes can no more smile on you, because those hands cannot caress you, because those sweet lips cannot speak melodious notes of affection. You weep because the body is cold, and dead, and clay-like; for the soul you do not weep. But I have comfort for you. That very body will rise again; that eye will flash with genius again; that hand will be held out in affection once more. Believe me, I am speaking no fiction. That very hand, that positive hand, those cold, clay-like arms that hung down by the side and fell when you uplifted them, shall hold a harp one day; and those poor fingers, now icy and hard, shall be swept along the living strings of golden harps in heaven. Yea, you shall see that body once more.

“Their inbred sins require

Their flesh to see the dust,

But as the Lord their Saviour rose,

So all his followers must.”

Will not that remove your tears. “He is not dead, but sleepeth.” He is not lost, he is “seed sown against harvest time to ripen.” His body is resting a little while, bathing itself in spices, that it may be fit for the embraces of its Lord.

And here is comfort for you too, you poor sufferers, who suffer in your bodies. Some of you are almost martyrs with aches of one kind and another—lumbagoes, gout, rheumatisms, and all sorts of sad afflictions that flesh is heir to. Scarcely a day passes but you are tormented with some suffering or other; and if you were silly enough to be always doctoring yourselves, you might always be having the doctor in your home. Here is comfort for you. That poor old rickety body of yours will live again without its pains, without its agonies; that poor shaky frame will be repaid all it has suffered. Ah! poor negro slave, every scar upon your back shall have a stripe of honor in heaven. Ah! poor martyr, the crackling of thy bones in the fire shall earn thee sonnets in glory; all thy sufferings shall be well repaid by the happiness thou shalt experience there. Don't fear to suffer in your frame, because your frame will one day share in your delights. Every nerve will thrill with delight, every muscle move with bliss; your eyes will flash with the fire of eternity; your heart will beat and pulsate with immortal blessedness; your frame shall be the channel of beatitude; the body which is now often a cup of wormwood will be a vessel of honey; this body which is often a comb out of which gall distilleth, shall be a honeycomb of blessedness to you. Comfort yourselves then, ye sufferers, weary languishers upon the bed: fear not, your bodies shall live.

But I want to draw a word of instruction from the text, concerning the doctrine of recognition. Many have puzzled themselves as to whether they will know their friends in heaven. Well now, if the bodies are to rise from the dead, I see no reason why we should not know them. I think I should know some of my brethren, even by their spirits, for I know their character so well, having talked with them of the things of Jesus, and being well acquainted with the most prominent parts of their character. But I shall see their bodies too. I always thought that a quietus to the question, which the wife of old John Ryland asked. "Do you think," she said, "you will know me in heaven?" "Why," said he, "I know you here; and do you think I shall be a bigger fool in heaven than I am on earth?" The question is beyond dispute. We shall live in heaven with bodies, and that decides the matter. We shall know each other in heaven; you may take that as a positive fact, and not mere fancy.

But now a word of warning, and then I have done with this part of the subject. If your bodies are to dwell in heaven, I beseech you take care of them. I do not mean, take care of what you eat and drink, and wherewithal you shall be clothed; but I mean, take care that you do not let your bodies be polluted by sin. If this throat is to warble for ever with songs of glory, let not words of lust defile it. If these eyes are to see the king in his beauty, even let this be your prayer, "Turn off my eyes from beholding vanities." If these hands are to hold a palm branch, oh, let them never take a bribe, let them never seek after evil. If these feet are to walk the golden streets, let them not be swift after mischief. If this tongue is for ever to talk of all he said and did, ah! let it not utter light and frothy things. And if this heart is to pulsate for ever with bliss, I beseech you give it not unto strangers; neither let it wander after evil. If this body is to live for ever, what care we ought to take of it; for our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, and they are members of the Lord Jesus.

Now, will you believe this doctrine or not? If you will not, you are excommunicate from the faith. This is the faith of the Gospel; and if you do not believe it you have not yet received the Gospel. "For if the dead rise not, then your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins." The dead in Christ shall rise, and they shall rise first.

II. But now we come to the RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED. Will the wicked rise too? Here is a point of controversy. I shall have some hard things to say now: I may detain you long, but I beg you, nevertheless, hearken to me. Yea, the wicked shall rise.

The first proof is given in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. v. 10. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Now, since we are all to appear, the wicked must appear, and they will receive the deeds done in the body. Since the body sins, it is only natural that the body should be punished. It would be unjust to punish the soul and not the body, for the body has had as much to do with sin as ever the soul has had. But wherever I go now, I hear it said, "The ministers in old times were wont to say there was fire in hell for our bodies, but it is not so; it is metaphorical fire, fancied fire." Ah! it is not so. Ye shall receive the things done in your body. Though your souls shall be punished, your bodies will be punished as well. Ye who are sensual and devilish, do not care about your souls being punished, because you never think about your souls; but if I tell you of bodily punishment you will think of it far more. Christ may have said that the soul should be punished; but he far more frequently described the body in misery in order to impress his hearers, for he knew that they were sensual and devilish, and that nothing that did not affect the body would touch them in the least. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil."

But this is not the only text to prove the doctrine, I will give you a better one—Matt. v. 29. “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”—not “thy whole soul,” but “thy whole body.” Man, this does not say that thy soul shall be in hell—that is affirmed many times—but it positively declares that thy body shall. That same body which is now standing in the aisle, or sitting in the pew, if thou diest without Christ, shall burn for ever in the flames of hell. It is not a fancy of man, but a truth that thy actual flesh and blood, and those very bones shall suffer: “thy whole body shall be cast into hell.”

But lest that one proof should not suffice thee, hear another out of the same gospel—chapter 10:28. “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Hell will be the place for bodies as well as for souls. As I have remarked, wherever Christ speaks of hell and of the lost state of the wicked, he always speaks of their bodies; you scarcely find him saying anything about their souls. He says, “Where their worm dieth not,” which is a figure of physical suffering—the worm torturing for ever the inmost heart, like a cancer within the very soul. He speaks of the “fire that never shall be quenched.” Now, do not begin telling me that this is metaphorical fire: who cares for that? If a man were to threaten to give me a metaphorical blow on the head, I should care very little about it; he would be welcome to give me as many as he pleased. And what say the wicked? “We do not care about metaphorical fires.” But they are real, sir—yes, as real as yourself. There is a real fire in hell, as truly as you have now a real body—a fire exactly like that which we have on earth in everything except this—that it will not consume, though it will torture you. You have seen the asbestos lying in the fire red hot, but when you take it out it is unconsumed. So your body will be prepared by God in such a way that it will burn for ever without being consumed; it will lie, not as you consider, in a metaphorical fire, but in actual flame. Did our Saviour mean fictions when he said he would cast body and soul into hell? What should there be a pit for if there were no bodies? Why fire, why chains, if there were to be no bodies? Can fire touch the soul? Can pits shut in spirits? Can chains fetter souls? No; pits and fire and chains are for bodies, and bodies shall be there. Thou wilt sleep in the dust a little while. When thou diest thy soul will be tormented alone—that will be a hell for it—but at the day of judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin hells, body and soul shall be together, each brimfull of pain, thy soul sweating in its inmost pore drops of blood, and thy body from head to foot suffused with agony; conscience, judgment, memory, all tortured, but more—thy head tormented with racking pains, thine eyes starting from their sockets with sights of blood and woe; thine ears tormented with

“Sullen moans and hollow groans.

And shrieks of tortured ghosts.”

Thine heart beating high with fever; thy pulse rattling at an enormous rate in agony; thy limbs crackling like the martyrs in the fire, and yet unburnt; thyself, put in a vessel of hot oil, pained, yet coming out undestroyed; all thy veins becoming a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on; every nerve a string on which the devil shall ever play his diabolical tune of Hell’s Unutterable Lament; thy soul for ever and ever aching, and thy body palpitating in unison with thy soul. Fictions, sir! Again, I say, they are no fictions, and as God liveth, but solid, stern truth. If God be true, and this Bible be true, what I have said is the truth, and you will find it one day to be so.

But now I must have a little reasoning with the ungodly on one or two points. First, I will reason with such of you as are very proud of your comely bodies, and array yourselves in goodly ornaments, and make yourselves glorious in your apparel. There are some of you who have no time for prayer, but you have

time enough for your toilet; you have no time for the prayer-meeting, but you have time enough to be brushing your hair to all eternity; you have no time to bend your knee, but plenty of time to make yourselves look smart and grand. Ah! fine lady, thou who takest care of thy goodly fashioned face, remember what was said by one of old when he held up the skull:

“Tell her, though she paint herself an inch thick,

To this complexion she must come at last.”

And something more than that: that fair face shall be scarred with the claws of fiends, and that fine body shall be only the medium for torment. Ah! dress thyself proud gentleman for the worm; anoint thyself for the crawling creatures of the grave; and worse, come thou to hell with powdered hair—a gentleman in hell; come thou down to the pit in goodly apparel; my lord, come there, to find yourself no higher than others, except it be higher in torture, and plunged deeper in flames. Ay, it ill becomes us to waste so much time upon the trifling things here, when there is so much to be done, and so little time for doing it, in the saving of men’s souls. O God, our God, deliver men from feasting and pampering their bodies when they are only fattening them for the slaughter, and feeding them to be devoured in the flame.

Again, hear me when I say to you who are gratifying your lusts—do you know that those bodies, the lusts of which you gratify here, will be in hell, and that you will have the same lusts in hell that you have here? The debauchee hastes to indulge his body in what he desires—can he do that in hell? Can he find a place there where he shall gratify his lust and find indulgence for his foul desire? The drunkard here can pour down his throat the intoxicating and deadly draught; but where will he find the liquor to drink in hell, when his drunkenness will be as hot upon him as it is here! Ay, where will he find so much as a drop of water to cool his parched tongue? The man who loves gluttony here will be a glutton there; but where will be the food to satisfy him, when he may hold his finger up and see the loaves go away from him, and the fruits refuse his grasp. Oh! to have your passions and yet not to satisfy them! To shut a drunkard up in his cell, and give him nothing to drink! He would dash himself against the wall to get the liquor, but there is none for him. What wilt thou do in hell, O drunkard, with that thirst in thy throat, and having nought but flames to swallow, which increase thy woe? And what wilt thou do, O rake, when still thou wouldst be seducing others, but there are none with whom thou canst sin? Do I speak plainly? Did not Christ do so? If men will sin, they shall find men who are not ashamed to reprove them. Ah! to have a body in hell, with all its lusts, but not the power to satisfy them! How horrible that hell will be!

But hear me yet again. Oh! poor sinner, if I saw thee going into the inquisitor’s den to be tormented, would I not beg of thee to stop ere thou shouldst put thy foot upon the threshold? And now I am talking to you of things that are real. If I were standing on a stage this morning, and were acting these things as fancies, I would make you weep: I would make the godly weep to think that so many should be damned, and I would make the ungodly weep to think that they should be damned. But when I speak of realities, they do not move you half as much as fictions would, and ye sit just as ye did ere the service had commenced. But hear me while I again affirm God’s truth. I tell thee sinner, that those eyes that now look on lust shall look on miseries that shall vex and torment thee. Those ears which now thou lendest to hear the song of blasphemy, shall hear moans, and groans, and horrid sounds, such as only the damned know. That very throat down which thou pourest drink shall be filled with fire. Those very lips and arms of thine will be tortured all at once. Why, if thou hast a headache thou wilt run to thy physician; but what wilt thou do when thy head, and heart, and hands, and feet ache all at once? If thou hast but a pain in thy reins, thou wilt search out medicines to heal thee; but what wilt thou do when gout, and rheum, and vertigo, and all else

that is vile attack thy body at once? How wilt thou bear thyself when thou shalt be loathsome with every kind of disease, leprous, palsied, black, rotten, thy bones aching, thy marrow quivering, every limb thou hast filled with pain; thy body a temple of demons, and a channel of miseries. And will ye march blindly on? As the ox goeth to the slaughter, and the sheep licketh the butcher's knife, so is it with many of you. Sirs, you are living without Christ, many of you; you are self-righteous and ungodly. One of you is going out this afternoon to take his day's pleasure; another is a fornicator in secret; another can cheat his neighbour; another can now and then curse God; another comes to this chapel, but in secret he is a drunkard; another prates about godliness, and God wots he is a wretched hypocrite. What will ye do in that day when ye stand before your Maker? It is a little thing to have your minister upbraid you know; it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment; what will ye do when God shall thunder out not your accusation, but your condemnation, "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" Ah! sensual ones, I knew I should never move you will I spoke about torments for your souls. Do I move you now? Ah no! Many of you will go away and laugh, and call me, as I remember once being called before, "a hell-fire parson." Well, go; but you will see the hell-fire preacher one day in heaven, perhaps, and you yourselves will be cast out; and looking down thence with reproving glance, it may be, I shall remind you that you heard the word, and listened not to it. Ah! men, it is a light thing to hear it; it will be hard enough to bear it. You listen to me now unmoved; it will be harder work when death gets hold of you and you lie roasting in the fire. Now you despise Christ; you will not despise him then. Now ye can waste your Sabbaths; then ye would give a thousand worlds for a Sabbath if ye could but have it in hell. Now ye can scoff and jeer; there will be no scoffing or jeering then: you will be shrieking, howling, wailing for mercy; but—

"There are no acts of pardon passed

In the cold grave to which we haste;

But darkness, death, and long despair,

Reign in eternal silence there."

O my hearers! the wrath to come! the wrath to come! the wrath to come. Who among you can dwell with devouring fire? Who among you can dwell with everlasting burnings? Can you, sir? can you? Can you abide the flame for ever? "Oh, no," sayest thou, "what can I do to be saved?" Hear thou what Christ hath to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "Come, now let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

1 Corinthians 15

There were people in the Apostles' days who had an idea that there was no resurrection. Paul endeavours to refute the idea, and teaches the Corinthians that there was a resurrection from the dead. From the 1st to the 11th verse he proves the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and upon that grounds the doctrine of the resurrection of the just.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, and wherein ye stand:

“By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

Now, we expect to hear a whole list of doctrines when the apostle says “I declare unto you the gospel;” but instead of that, he simply tells us of the resurrection of Jesus, for that is the very marrow of the gospel, the foundation of it—that Jesus Christ died and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”

“And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

That is the whole of the gospel. He who perfectly understands that, understands the first principles; he has commenced aright. This is the starting point if we wish to learn the truth, “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

“And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.

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.

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.”

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is one of the best attested facts on record. There were so many witnesses to behold it, that if we do in the least degree receive the credibility of men's testimonies, we cannot and we dare not doubt that Jesus rose from the dead. It is all very easy for infidels to say that these persons were deceived, but it is equally foolish, for these persons could not every one of them have been so positively deceived as to say that they had seen this man, whom they knew to have been dead, afterwards alive; they could not all, surely, have agreed together to help on this imposture: if they did, it is the most marvellous thing we have on record, that not one of them ever broke faith with the others, but that the whole mass of them remained firm. We believe it to be quite impossible that so many rogues should have agreed for ever. They were men who had nothing to gain by it; they subjected themselves to persecution by affirming the very fact; they were ready to die for it, and did die for it. Five hundred or a thousand persons who had seen him at different times, declared that they did see him, and that he rose from the dead; the fact of his death having been attested beforehand. How, then, dare any man say that the Christian religion is not true, when we know for a certainty that Christ died and rose again from the dead? And knowing that, who shall deny the divinity of the Saviour? Who shall say that he is not mighty to save? Our faith hath a solid basis, for it hath all these witnesses on which to rest, and the more sure witness of the Holy Spirit witnessing in our hearts. “And last of all,” says the apostle, “he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time: for I am the least of the apostles.” We should not have thought Paul proud if he had said, “I am the greatest of the apostles,” for he occupies the largest portion of the sacred Scriptures with his writings; and he preached more abundantly than they all. There was not one who could exceed Paul, or even come near him in his arduous labours; yet he says,

“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.”

When he looked upon the mercies that God gave to him he always recollected how little he deserved; and when he found himself preaching, oh! with what pathos did he preach to the ungodly, for he could always close up:—"But I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ might show forth all long-suffering as a pattern to them that believe." Have I a persecutor here? Let him know that his sin is a most damnable sin that will sink him lower into hell than any other; but even for him there is mercy, and abundant pardon; for Paul says he obtained mercy even though he 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 laboured 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 ye believed."

"But by the grace of God I am what I am." That is about as far as most of us can get; we shall never get any further. "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all." Then he stops himself: "Yet, not I, but the grace of God which was with me." We should always take care that we do not take any of our good works to ourselves: they are the effects of grace within us. If we once get putting the crown on our own heads we shall soon have heavy heads for our trouble; but if we put them all on the head of Jesus, he will honour us if we honour him.

Having thus proved the resurrection of Christ, he goes on:

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

"But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen!"

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

"Yea, 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 so be that the dead rise not."

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:"

"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins:"

Perhaps it does not strike you at first sight that there is an indissoluble connection between the resurrection of Christ and that of all his people; perhaps you do not see the marrow of the argument. The apostle says, "If the dead do not rise, then Christ did not rise; and if Christ did rise, then all the dead will rise." Do you see how it is? Why, because Christ and human nature are now so linked together that what Christ did, he did as the representative of all his people. When Adam sinned, the world sinned, and the world died. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." Christ could not rise except as the representative of his people; and "if Christ rose," says Paul, "then his people will rise; and if he did not rise then we shall not rise, because we are one with him; and if we do not rise Christ did not rise, because we are one with him." See here a connection which cannot be broken,—that if Christ rose, then must the dead rise also. This brings another argument

"Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

How do you like that thought?

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

For they were then persecuted, cast to the wild beasts, shut up in prison; and if this life were all, what would be the value of the Christian religion? It would only make men miserable.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits 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.”

It is no use for the Arminian to strain this, and say that it proves that every one receives grace through Christ. It says no such thing; it simply says, “die” and “live.” Everybody shall live at the resurrection.

“But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits: afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.

“Then cometh 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, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

Here the great proof flashes out—if death is to be destroyed, then there must be a resurrection, for death cannot be destroyed until the very bones of the saints are delivered from the strongholds of the enemy.

“For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, 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.”

We are not to suppose, when we read that Jesus Christ will deliver up his kingdom to God, even to his Father, that he will therefore cease to be God or cease to be a King. Understand this; God the Father gave to the Son a Mediatorial Kingdom as Man-God; but the Father was just as much God when he had given him that kingdom; it was his own special kingdom which he, as the Man-God Mediator was to take, and God the Father lost no glory by giving it to him. When Christ shall have worked out all his Mediatorial purposes, when he shall have finished the salvation of all his elect, he will lay the crown of his Mediatorial Kingdom at the feet of God, and, as the Man-Mediator, he too will be subject unto the great Jehovah, the Three-one; then there will be no Mediator any longer, since there will be no necessity for any mediation, but we shall all be gathered in one, even the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven—one in Christ Jesus. Then Christ will have his kingdom as God, but as Mediator he will have no kingdom. It is a destruction of office, not of person, nor yet of honor; it is a laying aside of his official capacity, not in any degree a diminution of his glory and honor.

“Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”

This text has had thirty or forty explanations. Doddridge and a great many more think it refers to the practice, when a martyr died, for another person to come forward and fill the offices which he held, and so

to be “baptized for the dead;” but the meaning I like best is: What shall they do who are baptized with the certainty that they are not baptized to live a long while, but that immediately after baptism they will be dragged away to die—baptized in the very teeth of death? For as soon as any one was baptised, the Romans would be looking after him, to drag him away to death. Thus they were many of them baptised as if they were being washed for their burial, and dedicating themselves to the grave. They came forward and said, “O Lord, I give myself unto thy service—not to serve thee here below, for that the enemy will not let me do, but since I must die, I will be baptized and brave it all; I will be baptized even for death itself.” Well, what shall these do who are baptized in the certain prospect of death if the dead rise not? “Why are they then baptized for the dead?”

“And why stand in jeopardy every hour?”

“I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

“If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.”

It does not say that Paul did fight with beasts at Ephesus; but a great many others did. It was a common practice to put Christians to the lions, giving them a short sword, and bidding them fight for their lives; and sometimes, strengthened by God, they fought manfully, and come off alive. But “if,” says Paul, “I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?” I might as well give up my religion; then I could lie down and be at peace. “Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.” Oh! wicked Paul! to quote from a heathen poet! How disgraceful. If I were to repeat a verse, and it looked as if Shakespere or any profane author ever wrote such a thing, how criminal! say you. But I like good things wherever I find them. I have often quoted from the devil, and I dare say I shall often quote from his people. Paul quoted this from Meander, and another heathen poet, who wrote far worse things than have been written by modern poets, and if any of us who may have stored our minds with the contents of books we wish we had never read, and if there be some choice gems in them which may be used for the service of God, by his help we will so use them.

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

“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.”

Christ is coming, and he will find some alive on the earth, and those who are alive will not die. Paul was so full of the Second Coming, that he says: “We shall not all sleep.” He did not know but what Christ might come while he was writing the letter. And we are so earnestly looking for Christ, that we too are constrained to say, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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.”

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

“But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What a shame it is, when we sometimes attend a funeral and hear that magnificent portion of Scripture read over by a chaplain without heart, or soul, or life—the quicker he can get through the service the better. Oh that such noble words should be so awfully spoiled by men who know nothing about them!

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

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