

Though He Were Dead

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true comfort and hope in the face of death come from recognizing Jesus Christ as the resurrection and the life, who offers present and eternal life to all who believe.

Scripture: John 11:24-26

Topics: "Resurrection", "Faith", "Comfort in Grief"

Description

In this profound sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the encounter between Jesus and Martha, focusing on the comforting truth that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Spurgeon challenges believers to move beyond a distant or theoretical faith to a confident, personal trust in Christ's power over death. He offers tender pastoral insight for those grieving, encouraging them to find hope and peace in the present and eternal promises of Jesus. This message remains a timeless source of encouragement for all who face loss and seek assurance in the gospel.

Transcript

'Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?' John 11:24-26.

MARTHA is a very accurate type of a class of anxious believers. They do believe truly, but not with such confidence as to lay aside their care. They do not distrust the Lord, or question the truth of what He says, yet they puzzle their brain about 'How shall this thing be?' and so they miss the major part of the present comfort which the word of the Lord would minister to their hearts if they received it more simply. How? and why? belong unto the Lord. It is His business to arrange matters so as to fulfil His own promises. If we would sit at our Lord's feet with Mary, and consider what He has promised, we should choose a better part than if we ran about with Martha, crying, 'How can these things be?'

Martha, you see, in this case, when the Lord Jesus Christ told her that her brother would rise again, replied, 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' She was a type, I say, of certain anxious believers, for she set a practical bound to the Saviour's words. 'Of course there will be a resurrection, and then my brother will rise with the rest.' She concluded that the Saviour could not mean anything beyond that. The first meaning and the commonest meaning that suggests itself to her must be what Jesus means. Is not that the way with many of us? We had a statesman once, and a good man too, who loved reform; but whenever he had accomplished a little progress, he considered that all was done.

We called him at last 'Finality John,' for he was always coming to an ultimatum, and taking for his motto 'Rest, and be thankful.' Into that style Christian people too frequently drop with regard to the promises of God. We limit the Holy one of Israel as to the meaning of His words. Of course they mean so much, but we cannot allow that they intend more. It were well if the spirit of progress would enter into our faith, so that we felt within our souls that we had never beheld the innermost glory of the Lord's words of grace. We often wonder that the disciples put such poor meanings upon our Lord's words, but I fear we are almost as far off as they were from fully comprehending all His gracious teachings. Are we not still as little children, making little out of great words? Have we grasped as yet a tithe of our Lord's full meaning, in many of His sayings of love? When He is talking of bright and sparkling gems of benediction, we are thinking of common pebble-stones in the brook of mercy; when He speaketh of stars and heavenly crowns, we think of sparks and childish coronals of fading flowers. Oh that we could but have our intellect cleared; better still, could have our understanding expanded, or, best of all, our faith increased, so as to reach to the height of our Lord's great arguments of love!

Martha also had another fault in which she was very like ourselves: she laid the words of Jesus on the shelf, as things so trite and sure that they were of small practical importance. 'Thy brother shall rise again.' Now, if she had possessed faith enough, she might truthfully have said, 'Lord, I thank Thee for that word! I expect within a short space to see him sitting at the table with Thee. I put the best meaning possible upon Thy words, for I know that Thou art always better than I can think Thee to be; and therefore I expect to see my beloved Lazarus walk home from the sepulchre before the sun sets again.' But no, she lays the truth aside as a matter past all dispute, and says, 'I know that my brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' A great many precious truths are laid up by us like the old hulks in the Medway, never to see service any more, or like aged pensioners at Chelsea, as relics of the past. We say 'Yes, quite true, we fully believe that doctrine.' Somehow it is almost as bad to lay up a doctrine in lavender as it is to throw it out of the window. When you so believe a truth as to put it to bed and smother it with the bolster of neglect, it is much the same as if you did not believe it at all. An official belief is very much akin to infidelity. Some persons never question a doctrine: that is not their line of temptation; they accept the gospel as true, but then they never expect to see its promises practically carried out; it is a proper thing to believe, but by no means a prominent, practical factor in actual life. It is true but it is mysterious, misty, mythical, far removed from the realm of practical common sense. We do with the promises often as a poor old couple did with a precious document, which might have cheered their old age had they used it according to its real value. A gentleman stepping into a poor woman's house saw framed and glazed upon the wall a French note for a thousand francs. He said to the old folks, 'How came you by this?' They informed him that a poor French soldier had been taken in by them and nursed until he died, and he had given them that little picture when he was dying as a memorial of him. They thought it such a pretty souvenir that they had framed it, and there it was adorning the cottage wall. They were greatly surprised when they were told that it was worth a sum which would be quite a little fortune for them if they would but turn it into money. Are we not equally unpractical with far more precious things? Have you not certain of the words of your great Lord framed and glazed in your hearts, and do you not say to yourselves, 'They are so sweet and precious'? and yet you have never turned them into actual blessing'never used them in the hour of need. You have done as Martha did when she took the words, 'Thy brother shall rise again,' and put round about them this handsome frame, 'in the resurrection at the last day.' Oh that we had grace to turn God's bullion of gospel into current coin, and use them as our present spending money.

Moreover, Martha made another blunder, and that was setting the promise in the remote distance. This is a common folly, this distancing the promises of the Most High. 'In the resurrection at the last day'no doubt

she thought it a very long way off, and therefore she did not get much comfort out of it. Telescopes are meant to bring objects near to the eye, but I have known people use the mental telescope in the wrong way: they always put the big end of it to their eye, and then the glass sends the object further away. Her brother was to be raised that very day: she might so have understood the Saviour, but instead of it she looked at His words through the wrong end of the glass, and said, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Brethren, do not refuse the present blessing. Death and heaven, or the advent and the glory, are at your doors. A little while and He that will come shall come, and will not tarry. Think not that the Lord is slack concerning His promise. Do not say in your heart, 'My Lord delayeth His coming'; or dream that His words of love are only for the dim future. In the ages to come marvels shall be revealed, but even the present hour is bejewelled with loving-kindness. To-day the Lord has rest, and peace, and joy to give to you. Lose not these treasures by unbelief.

Martha also appears to me to have made the promise unreal and impersonal. 'Thy brother shall rise again'; to have realized that would have been a great comfort to her, but she mixes Lazarus up with all the rest of the dead. 'Yes, he will rise in the resurrection at the last day; when thousands of millions shall be rising from their graves, no doubt Lazarus will rise with the rest.' That is the way with us; we take the promise and say, 'This is true to all the children of God.' If so it is true to us; but we miss that point. What a blessing God has bestowed upon the covenanted people! Yes, and you are one of them; but you shake your head, as if the word was not for you. It is a fine feast, and yet you are hungry; it is a full and flowing stream, but you remain thirsty. Why is this? Somehow the generality of your apprehension misses the sweetness which comes of personal appropriation. There is such a thing as speaking of the promises in a magnificent style, and yet being in deep spiritual poverty; as if a man should boast of the wealth of old England, and the vast amount of treasure in the Bank, while he does not possess a penny wherewith to bless himself. In your case you know it is your own fault that you are poor and miserable, for if you would but exercise an appropriating faith you might possess a boundless heritage. If you are a child of God all things are yours, and you may help yourself. If you are hungry at this banquet it is for want of faith: if you are thirsty by the brink of this river it is because you do not stoop down and drink. Behold, God is your portion: the Father is your shepherd, the Son of God is your food, and the Spirit of God is your comforter. Rejoice and be glad, and grasp with the firm hand of a personal faith that royal boon which Jesus sets before you in His promises.

I beg you to observe how the Lord Jesus Christ in great wisdom dealt with Martha. In the first place, He did not grow angry with her. There is not a trace of petulance in His speech. He did not say to her, 'Martha, I am ashamed of you that you should have such low thoughts of me.' She thought that she was honouring Jesus when she said, 'I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.' Her idea of Jesus was that He was a great prophet Who would ask of God and obtain answers to His prayers; she has not grasped the truth of His own personal power to give and sustain life. But the Saviour did not say, 'Martha, these are low and grovelling ideas of your Lord and Saviour.' He did not chide her, though she lacked wisdom, wisdom which she ought to have possessed. I do not think God's people learn much by being scolded; it is not the habit of the great Lord to scold His disciples, and therefore they do not take it well when His servants take upon themselves to rate them. If ever you meet with one of the Lord's own who falls far short of the true ideal of the gospel, do not bluster and upbraid. Who taught you what you know? He that has taught you did it of His infinite love and grace and pity, and He was very tender with you, for you were doltish enough; therefore be tender with others, and give them line upon line, even as your Lord was gentle towards you. It ill becomes a servant to lose patience where his Master shows so much.

The Lord Jesus, with gentle spirit, proceeded to teach her more of the things concerning Himself. More of Jesus! More of Jesus! That is the sovereign cure for our faults. He revealed Himself to her, that in Him she might behold reasons for a clearer hope and a more substantial faith. How sweetly fell those words upon her ear: 'I am the resurrection and the life!' Not 'I can get resurrection by my prayers,' but 'I am, myself, the resurrection.' God's people need to know more of what Jesus is, more of the fullness which it has pleased the Father to place in Him. Some of them know quite enough of what they are themselves, and they will break their hearts if they go on reading much longer in that black-letter book: they need, I say, to rest their eyes upon the person of their Lord, and to spy out all the riches of grace which lie hidden in Him; then they will pluck up courage, and look forward with surer expectancy. When our Lord said, 'I am the resurrection and the life,' He indicated to Martha that resurrection and life were not gifts which He must seek, nor even boons which He must create; but that He Himself was the resurrection and the life: these things were wherever He was. He was the author, and giver, and maintainer of life, and that life was Himself. He would have her to know that He was Himself precisely what she wanted for her brother. She did know a little of the Lord's power, for she said, 'If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,' which being very kindly interpreted might mean, 'Lord, Thou art the life.' 'Ah, but,' saith Jesus, 'you must also learn that I am the resurrection! You already admit that if I had been here Lazarus would not have died; I would have you further learn that I being here your brother shall live though he has died; and that when I am with my people none of them shall die for ever, for I am to them the resurrection and the life.' Poor Martha was looking up into the sky for life, or gazing down into the deeps for resurrection, when the Resurrection and the Life stood before her, smiling upon her, and cheering her heavy heart. She had thought of what Jesus might have done if He had been there before; now let her know what He is at the present moment.

Thus I have introduced the text to you, and I pray God the Holy Spirit to bless these prefatory observations; for if we learn only these first lessons we shall not have been here in vain. Let us construe promises in their largest sense, let us regard them as real, and set them down as facts. Let us look to the Promisor, even to Jesus the Lord, and not so much to the difficulties which surround the accomplishment of the promise. In beginning the divine life let us look to Jesus, and in afterwards running the heavenly race let us still be looking unto Jesus, till we see in Him our all in all. When both eyes look on Jesus we are in the light; but when we have one eye for Him, and one eye for self, all is darkness. Oh, to see Him with all our soul's eyes!

Now, I am going to speak as I am helped of the Spirit; and I shall proceed thus'first, by asking you to view the text as a stream of comfort to Martha and other bereaved persons; and, secondly, to view it as a great deep of comfort to all believers.

I. First, I long for you to VIEW THE TEXT AS A STREAM OF COMFORT TO MARTHA AND OTHER BEREAVED PERSONS.

Observe, in the beginning, that the presence of Jesus Christ means life and resurrection. It meant that to Lazarus. If Jesus comes to Lazarus, Lazarus must live. Had Martha taken the Saviour's words literally, as she should have done, as I have already told you, she would have had immediate comfort from them; and the Saviour intended her to understand them in that sense. He virtually says, 'I am to Lazarus the Power that can make him live again; and I am the Power that can keep him in life. Yea, I am the resurrection and the life.' A statement so understood would have been very comfortable to her. Nothing could have been more so. It would there and then have abolished death so far as her brother was concerned. Somebody says, 'But I do not see that this is any comfort to us, for if Jesus be here, yet it is only a spiritual presence, and we cannot expect to see our dear mother, or child, or husband raised from the dead thereby.' I answer

that our Lord Jesus is able at this moment to give us back our departed ones, for He is still the resurrection and the life. But let me ask you whether you really wish that Jesus would raise your departed ones from the dead. You say at first, 'Of course I do wish it'; but I would ask you to reconsider that decision; for I believe that upon further thought you will say, 'No, I could not wish it.' Do you really desire to see your glorified husband sent back again to this world of care and pain? Would you have your father or mother deprived of the glories which they are now enjoying in order that they might help you in the struggles of this mortal life? Would you discrown the saints? You are not so cruel. That dear child, would you have it back from among the angels, and from the inner glory, to come here and suffer again? You would not have it so. And to my mind it is a comfort to you, or should be, that it is not within your power to have it so; because you might be tempted in some selfish moment to accept the doubtful boon. Lazarus could return, and fit into his place again, but scarcely one in ten thousand could do so. There would be serious drawbacks in the return of those whom we have loved best. Do you cry, 'Give back my father! Give me back my friend'? You know not what you ask. It might be a cause of regret to you as long as they lingered here, for you would each morning think to yourself, 'Beloved one, I have brought you out of heaven by my wish. I have robbed you of infinite felicity to gratify myself.' For my own part, I had rather that the Lord Jesus should keep the keys of death than that He should lend them to me. It would be too dreadful a privilege to be empowered to rob heaven of the perfected merely to give pleasure to imperfect ones below. Jesus would raise them now if He knew it to be right; I do not wish to take the government from His shoulder. It is more comfortable to me to think that Jesus Christ could give them back to me, and would if it were for His glory and my good. My dear ones that lie asleep could be awakened in an instant if the Master thought it best; but it would not be best, and therefore even I would hold His skirt, and say, 'Tread softly, Master! Do not arouse them! I shall go to them, but they shall not return to me. It is not my wish they should return: it is better that they should be with Thee where Thou art, to behold Thy glory.' It does not seem to me, then, dear friend, that you are one whit behind Martha: and you ought to be comforted while Jesus says to you, 'I am even now the resurrection and the life.'

Furthermore, here is comfort which we may each one safely take, namely, that when Jesus comes the dead shall live. The Revised Version has it, 'He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live.' We do not know when our Lord will descend from heaven, but we do know the message of the angel, 'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.' The Lord will come; we may not question the certainty of His appearing. When He cometh, all His redeemed shall live with Him. The trump of the archangel shall startle the happy sleepers, and they shall wake to put on their beauteous array; the body transformed and made like unto Christ's glorious body shall be once more wrapt about them as the vesture of their perfected and emancipated spirits. Then our brother shall rise again, and all our dear ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus the Lord will bring with Him. This is the glorious hope of the church, wherein we see the death of death, and the destruction of the grave. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Then we are also told that when Jesus comes, living believers shall not die. After the coming of Christ there shall be no more death for His people. What does Paul say? 'Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed.' Did I see a little school-girl put up her finger? Did I hear her say, 'Please, sir, you made a mistake.' So I did; I made it on purpose. Paul did not say, 'We shall not all die,' for the Lord had already said, 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die'; Paul would not say that any of us should die, but he used his Master's own term, and said, 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.' When the Lord comes there will be no more death; we who are alive and remain (as some of us may be we cannot tell) will undergo a sudden transformation for flesh and blood, as they are, cannot

inherit the kingdom of God'and by that transformation our bodies shall be made meet to be 'partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' There shall be no more death then. Here, then, we have two sacred handkerchiefs with which to wipe the eyes of mourners: when Christ cometh the dead shall live; when Christ cometh those that live shall never die. Like Enoch, or Elias, we shall pass into the glory state without wading through the black stream, while those who have already forded it shall prove to have been no losers thereby. All this is in connection with Jesus. Resurrection with Jesus is resurrection indeed. Life in Jesus is life indeed. It endears to us resurrection, glory, eternal life, and ultimate perfection, when we see them all coming to us in Jesus. He is the golden pot which hath this manna, the rod which beareth these almonds, the life whereby we live.

But further, I have not made you drink deep enough of this stream yet,'I think our Saviour meant that even now His dead are alive. 'He that believeth on me, though he die, but yet they live. They are not in the grave, they are for ever with the Lord. They are not unconscious, they are with their Lord in Paradise. Death cannot kill a believer, it can only usher him into a freer form of life. Because Jesus lives, His people live. God is not the God of the dead but of the living: those who have departed have not perished. We laid the precious body in the cemetery, and we set up stones at the head and foot; but we might engrave on them the Lord's words, 'She is not dead, but sleepeth.' True, and unbelieving generation may laugh us to scorn, but we scorn their laughing.

Again, even now His living do not die. There is an essential difference between the decease of the godly and the death of the ungodly. Death comes to the ungodly man as a penal infliction, but to the righteous as a summons to his Father's palace: to the sinner it is an execution, to the saint an undressing. Death to the wicked is the King of terrors: death to the saint is the end of terrors, the commencement of glory. To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing. Death is ours; it is set down in the list of our possessions among the 'all things', and it follows life in the list as if it were an equal favour. No longer is it death to die. The name remains, but the thing itself is changed. Wherefore, then, are we in bondage through fear of death? Why do we dread the process which gives us liberty? I am told that persons who in the cruel ages had lain in prison for years suffered much more in the moment of the knocking off of their fetters than they had endured for months in wearing the hard iron; and yet I suppose that no man languishing in a dungeon would have been unwilling to stretch out his arm or leg, that the heavy chains might be beaten off by the smith. We should all be content to endure that little inconvenience to obtain lasting liberty. Now, such is death'the knocking off of the fetters; yet the iron may never seem to be so truly iron as when that last liberating blow of grace is about to fall. Let us not mind the harsh grating of the key as it turns in the lock; if we understand it aright it will be as music to our ears. Imagine that your last hour is come! The key turns with pain for a moment; but, lo, the bolt is shot! The iron gate is open! The spirit is free! Glory be unto the Lord for ever and ever!

II. I leave the text now as a stream of comfort for the bereaved, for I wish you to VIEW IT AS A GREAT DEEP OF COMFORT FOR ALL BELIEVERS. I cannot fathom it, any more than I could measure the abyss, but I can invite you to survey it by the help of the Holy Ghost.

Methinks, first, this text plainly teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is the life of His people. We are dead by nature, and you can never produce life out of death: the essential elements are wanting. Should a spark be lingering among the ashes, you may yet fan it to a flame; but from human nature the last spark of heavenly life is gone, and it is vain to seek for life among the dead. The life of every Christian is Christ. He is the beginning of life, being the Resurrection: when He comes to us we live. Regeneration is the result of contact with Christ: we are begotten again unto living hope by His resurrection from the dead. The life of

the Christian in its commencement is in Christ alone; not a fragment of it is from himself, and the continuance of that life is equally the same; Jesus is not only the resurrection to begin with, but the life to go on with. 'I have life in myself,' saith one. I answer not otherwise than as you are one with Christ: your spiritual life in every breath it draws is in Christ. If you are regarded for a moment as separated from Christ, you are cast forth as a branch and are withered. A member severed from the head is dead flesh and no more. In union to Christ is your life. Oh that our hearers would understand this! I see a poor sinner look into himself, and look again, and then cry, 'I cannot see any life within!' Of course you cannot; you have no life of your own. 'Alas,' cries a Christian, 'I cannot find anything within to feed my soul with!' Do you expect to feed upon yourself? Must not Israel look up for the manna? Did one of all the tribes find it in his own bosom? To look to self is to turn to a broken cistern which can hold no water. I tell you you must learn that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Harken to that great 'I' that infinite EGO! This must cover over and swallow up your little ego. 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' What are you? Less than nothing, and vanity; but over all springs up that divine, all-sufficient personality, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' Take the two first words together, and they seem to me to have a wondrous majesty about them 'I AM!' Here is Self-Existence. Life in Himself! Even as the Mediator, the Lord Jesus tells us that it is given Him to have life in Himself, even as the Father hath life in Himself (John 5:26). I am fills the yawning mouth of the sepulchre. He that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, declares, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' If, then, I want to live unto God, I must have Christ; and if I desire to continue to live unto God I must continue to have Christ; and if I aspire to have that life developed to the utmost fullness of which it is capable, I must find it all in Christ. He has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly. Anything that is beyond the circle of Christ is death. If I conjure up an experience over which I foolishly dote, which puffs me up as so perfect that I need not come to Christ now as a poor empty-handed sinner, I have entered into the realm of death, I have introduced into my soul a damning leaven. Away with it! Away with it! Everything of life is put into this golden casket of Christ Jesus: all else is death. We have not a breath of life anywhere but in Jesus, Who ever liveth to give life. He saith, 'Because I live, ye shall live also,' and this is true. We live not for any other reason not because of anything in us or connected with us, but only because of Jesus. 'For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.'

Now, further, in this great deep to which we would conduct you, faith is the only channel by which we can draw from Jesus our life. 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me': that is it. He does not say, 'He that loves me,' though love is a bright grace, and very sweet to God: He does not say, 'He that serves me,' though every one that believes in Christ will endeavour to serve Him: but it is not put so: He does not even say, 'He that imitates me,' though every one that believes in Christ must and will imitate Him; but it is put, 'He that believeth in me.' Why is that? Why doth the Lord so continually make faith to be the only link between Himself and the soul? I take it, because faith is a grace which arrogates nothing to itself, and has not operation apart from Jesus, to Whom it unites us. You want to conduct the electric fluid, and, in order to this, you find a metal which will not create any action of its own; if it did so, it would disturb the current which you wish to send along it. If it set up an action of its own, how would you know the difference between what came of the metal and what came of the battery? Now, faith is an empty-handed receiver and communicator; it is nothing apart from that upon which it relies, and therefore it is suitable to be a conductor for grace. When an auditorium has to be erected for a speaker in which he may be plainly heard, the essential thing is to get rid of all echo. When you have no echo, then you have a perfect building: faith makes no noise of its own, it allows the Word to speak. Faith cries, 'Non nobis Domine! Not unto us! Not unto us! Christ puts His crown on faith's head, exclaiming, 'Thy faith hath saved thee;' but faith hastens to ascribe all the glory of salvation to Jesus only. So you see why the Lord selects faith rather

than any other grace, because it is a self-forgetting thing. It is best adapted to be the tubing through which the water of life runs, because it will not communicate a flavour of its own, but will just convey the stream purely and simply from Christ to the soul. 'He that believeth in me.'

Now notice, to the reception of Christ by faith there is no limit. 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever' I am deeply in love with that word 'whosoever.' It is a splendid word. A person who kept many animals had some great dogs and some little ones, and in his eagerness to let them enter his house freely he had two holes cut in the door, one for the big dogs and another for the little dogs. You may well laugh, for the little dogs could surely have come in wherever there was room for the larger ones. This 'whosoever' is the great opening, suitable for sinners of every size. 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' Has any man a right to believe in Christ? The gospel gives every creature the right to believe in Christ, for we are bidden to preach it to every creature, with this command, 'Hear, and your soul shall live.' Every man has a right to believe in Christ, because he will be damned if he does not, and he must have a right to do that which will bring him into condemnation if he does it not. It is written, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned,' and that makes it clear that I, whoever I may be, as I have a right to endeavour to escape from damnation, have a right to avail myself of the blessed command, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and live.' Oh that 'whosoever,' that hole in the door for the big dog! Do not forget it! Come along with you, and put your trust in Christ. If you can only get linked with Christ you are a living man; if but a finger touches His garment's hem you are made whole. Only the touch of faith, and the virtue flows from Him to you, and He is to you the resurrection and the life.

I desire you to notice that there is no limit to this power. Before I was ill this time, and even since, I have had to deal with such a swarm of despairing sinners, that if I have not pulled them up they have pulled me down. I have been trying to speak very large words for Christ when I have met with those disconsolate ones. I hear one say, 'How far can Christ be life to a sinner? I feel myself to be utterly wrong, I am altogether wrong; there is nothing right about me: though I have eyes I cannot see, though I have ears I do not hear; if I have a hand I cannot use it, if I have a foot I cannot run with it I seem altogether wrong.' Yes, but if you believe in Christ, though you were still more wrong that is to say, though you were dead, which is the wrongest state in which a man's body can be, though you were dead yet shall you live. You look at the spiritual thermometer, and you say, 'How low will the grace of God go? will it descend to summer heat? will it touch the freezing point? will it go to zero?' Yes, it will go below the lowest conceivable point, lower than any instrument can indicate: it will go below the zero of death. If you believe in Jesus, though you are not only wrong, but dead, yet shall you live.

But, says another, 'I feel so weak. I cannot understand, I cannot lay hold of things; I cannot pray. I cannot do anything. All I can do is feebly to trust in Jesus.' All right! Though you had gone further than that, and were so weak as to be dead, yet should you live. Though the weakness had turned to a dire paralysis, that left you altogether without strength, yet it is written, 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' 'Oh, Sir,' says one, 'I am so unfeeling.' Mark you, these generally are the most feeling people in the world. 'I am sorry every day because I cannot be sorry for my sin' that is the way they talk; it is very absurd, but still very real to them. 'Oh,' cries one, 'the earth shook, the sun was darkened, the rocks rent, the very dead came out of their graves at the death of Christ.'

'Of feeling all things show some sign

But this unfeeling heart of mine.'

Yet if thou believest, unfeeling as thou art, thou livest; for if thou wert gone further than numb-ness to deadness, yet if thou believest in Him thou shalt live.

But the poor creature fetches a sigh, and cries, 'Sir, it is not only that I have no feeling, but I am become objectionable and obnoxious to everybody. I am a weariness to myself and to others. I am sure when I come to tell you my troubles you must wish me at Jericho, or somewhere else far away.' Now, I admit that such a thought has occurred to us sometimes when we have been very busy, and some poor soul has grown prosy with rehearsing his seven-times-repeated miseries; but if you were to get more wearisome still, if you were to become so bad that people would as soon see a corpse as see you, yet remember Jesus says, 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.'

'Oh, sir, I have no hope; my case is quite hopeless!' Very well; but if you had got beyond that, so that you were dead, and could not even know you had no hope, yet if you believed in Him you should live. 'Oh, but I have tried everything, and there is nothing more for me to attempt. I have read books, I have spoken to Christians, and I am nothing bettered.' No doubt it is quite so; but if you had even passed beyond that stage, so that you could not try anything more, yet if you did believe in Jesus you should live. Oh, the blessed power of faith! Nay, rather say the matchless power of Him Who is the resurrection and the life; for though the poor believer were dead, yet shall he live! Glory be to the Lord Who works so wonderfully.

To conclude, if you once do believe in Christ, and come to live, there is this sweet reflection for you, 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' Our Arminian friends say that you may be a child of God to-day and a child of the devil to-morrow. Write out that statement, and place at the bottom of it the name 'Arminius,' and then put the scrap of paper into the fire: it is the best thing you can do with it, for there is no truth in it. Jesus says, 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' Here is a very literal translation 'And every one who lives and believes on me, in no wise shall die forever.' This is from 'The Englishman's Greek New Testament,' and nothing can be better. The believer may pass through the natural change called death, as far as his body is concerned; but as for his soul it cannot die, for it is written, 'I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' 'He that believeth in me hath everlasting life.' 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' These are not 'ifs' and 'buts,' and faint hopes; but they are dead certainties, nay, living certainties, out of the mouth of the living Lord Himself. You get the life of God in your soul, and you shall never die. 'Do you mean that I may do as I like, and live in sin?' No, man, I mean nothing of the sort; what right have you to impute such teaching as that to me? I mean that you shall not love sin and live in it, for that is death; but you shall live unto God. Your likes shall be so radically changed that you shall abhor evil all your days, and long to be holy as God is holy; and you shall be kept from transgression, and shall not go back to wallow in sin. If in some evil hour you back-slide, yet shall you be restored; and the main current of your life shall be from the hour of your regeneration towards God, and holiness, and heaven. The angels that rejoiced over you when you repented made no mistake; they shall go on to rejoice till they welcome you amidst the everlasting songs and Hallelujahs of the blessed at the right hand of God. Believest thou this? Come, poor soul, believest thou this? Who are you? That does not matter, you can get into the 'whosoever.' That ark will hold all God's Noahs. What is any man that he should have the filth of another man's drains poured into his ear? No, no: confess to God, but not to man unless you have wronged him, and confession of the wrong is due to him.

'Ah,' saith one, 'you don't know what I am.' No, and I don't want to know what you are; but if you are so far gone that there seems to be not even a ghost of a shade of a shadow of a hope anywhere about you, yet if

you believe in Jesus you shall live. Trust the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is worthy to be trusted. Throw yourself upon Him, and He will carry you in His bosom. Cast your whole weight upon His atonement; it will bear the strain. Hang on Him as the vessel hangs on the nail, and seek no other support. Depend upon Christ with all your might just as you now are, and as the Lord liveth you shall live, and as Christ reigneth you shall reign over sin, and as Christ cometh to glory you shall partake of that glory for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON'John 11:1-27.

HYMNS FROM 'OUR OWN HYMN BOOK'414, 839, 327.

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