

The Resurrection of the Dead

by H.J. Vine

H.J. Vine's sermon emphasizes the centrality of resurrection in Christian faith, highlighting its implications for believers' hope and eternal life.

Scripture: John 11:4, John 11:25, Romans 1:1, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 15:12, 1 Corinthians 15:54, 2 Corinthians 5:1, Philippians 3:21, Revelation 1:18

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

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the significance of Jesus Christ being declared as the Son of God with power through His resurrection from the dead, emphasizing the importance of this truth for believers' faith and assurance. The sermon delves into the profound implications of Christ's resurrection, highlighting how it confirms His identity as the Son of God and the Resurrection and the Life. It challenges believers to firmly hold onto the truth of resurrection, which is foundational to the Christian faith and essential for understanding God's power and glory.

Transcript

"This Gospel of God, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:1-4).

The Son of God Marked Out

At the very commencement of this gospel letter to the believers at Rome, the Holy Spirit calls our attention to the important fact that our Lord Jesus Christ was marked out as Son of God by resurrection.

The genealogy of Matthew 1 shows clearly that He was David's Seed according to the flesh. He must of necessity be so if He were to bring in the sure mercies of David. He must, however, be the Son of God also, if the fullness of the blessing of the gospel were to be brought to us. The Holy, Spirit puts the fact that He was so beyond all question, with these words: "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

This determines the matter fully and finally for us. It must be noticed, however, that it is not His own resurrection simply; for He raised others; "the dead" is not in the singular, but in the plural. It is stated abstractly.

The gospel, then, is concerning God's Son, who is marked out to be such by resurrection of the dead; by His own resurrection, and that of others also. What a firm foundation we have here! What divine rest and assurance it imparts to the believer's heart! With what watchfulness, therefore, should the true servant of the Lord guard this truth, which involves the glory of our Lord and the peace of His saints who are so precious to Him.

The Resurrection and the Life

When the body of our Lord Jesus Christ lay in the grave, His spirit was with the Father, into whose hands He commended it ere He died. The body in which He bore our sins upon the tree, and which was laid in the grave, was the same precious body which was raised again, but quickened now by the Spirit; the blood having been poured out for our redemption. The marks which Thomas saw, and which convinced him, declare plainly that it was the very same body: the temple raised from death to the no more.

But the Lord raised the widow's son also, and the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus; He raised the last after corruption consequent upon death had set in. Who but the Son of God could so work?

Before He raised Lazarus He declared, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Everything was there in Him for both raising and giving life, essentially and potentially. Neither death nor corruption could stay His power. The glory of His person is involved in the whole question of resurrection, and since this is so we must hold to the truth of it with great tenacity.

Before we could be raised to eternal blessedness, He Himself must first die for us and be raised again, so as to take away death's sting and victory. The resurrection of Lazarus, nevertheless, declared His glory. Indeed, his sickness was, as we are told, "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified by it" (John 11:4). He might have healed him; but He waited; and His glory shone out at a grave-side of death and corruption. It is not ascension and glory which mark out the Son of God; but resurrection. So when He told Martha that He was the Resurrection and the Life, He also told her that the believer on Him who died, should live; also that everyone who lived and believed on Him should never die. He then asked her a very important and pointed question: "Believest thou this?"

At a time when all the foundations of faith are being questioned, it may not be out of place to put the Lord's question to the reader, "Believest THOU this?" Do you believe in the power and glory of the Son of God? To question resurrection is to question the power and glory of Him who is in Himself the Resurrection and the Life also. No true believer would wish to fall into such a snare. There may be lurking suspicions of the mind of the flesh, which is fallen and corrupt, as to the possibility of these things; suspicions which are hateful to the renewed mind. Many sincere souls are troubled by these questions, and the suggestions of science (so called), and the rationalistic reasonings of today, feed such wretched suspicions; but only let the glory of the marked out Son of God have its proper place in the heart by faith, then these hateful birds of the night will take wing and swiftly fly away, like bats before the brightness of the sunrise.

The Body Raised

It was to the assembly of God at Corinth that the question was addressed: "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Cor. 15:12). And it is first shown in this chapter that it is part of the gospel, for Christ is preached that He is raised. It then shows that it is a necessity for the rich and far-reaching results in glory which are to follow. The whole chapter is a treatise as to the resurrection of the body. It is no question of the spirit: for elsewhere we are taught that, leaving the body, the believer is

as to his spirit present with the Lord. Absent from the body; present with the Lord. The chapter deals with the body, with its resurrection specially; with that which is buried; not with that which has departed to be with Christ, but with that which is laid in the grave as Christ was, and which is to be raised again as Christ was. This must be held firmly in faith. The Apostle shows that the one involves the other, saying: "If there is not a resurrection of [those that are] dead, neither is Christ raised" (v. 13, N.Tr.). And if Christ is not raised, then there is no gospel; we are still in our sins; and those that have passed away have perished. But, thank God, Christ is raised; and He is raised as the Firstfruits; a sure and certain pledge that we who are His shall be raised like Him for God's glory--the great harvest.

The man who questions: "How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" is called a "fool" by the Apostle. Nevertheless, he proceeds to point to what GOD does in nature in the case of seed buried in the earth. That is enough to teach an ordinary mind. In its rising, after death, He gives it a body as it pleaseth Him; but mark, "to each of the seeds its own body" (v. 38); not a body of a different kind altogether. Identity is retained. "GOD" is the sufficient answer for a simple and sincere soul, though this may not be sufficient for a "fool." As in the case of Lazarus, the thoughtful believer sees that the work of resurrection is "for the glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified in it." The greater the difficulty appears to be, the greater the triumph and the glory.

The Apostle points out that the hope of resurrection sustained him in all his labours and sufferings. If the dead rise not, "why," he asks, "do we endanger ourselves every hour?" (v. 30, N.Tr.). It seems that it was different with others, for he writes: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some are IGNORANT OF GOD" (v. 34, N.Tr.). There lies the root of all the trouble and questioning--ignorance as to the true character of God. Surely He can and will raise the dead? Do you not believe this? It was King Agrippa who was asked by the prisoner of the Lord: "Why should it be thought it thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" It was the unbelieving Sadducees who said, "There is no resurrection," whom the Lord Himself rebuked, saying, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor THE POWER OF GOD." All is plain and clear to the one who believes in the God of resurrection, in His power and wisdom. Such an one delights to speak and sing of the glorious day

"When Christ our precious dust will take

And freshly mould:

And give these bodies vile

A fashion like His own;

And bid the whole creation smile,

And hush its groan."

The House from Heaven

The Apostle not only speaks of the stimulus which the knowledge of resurrection gave to him in his labours for the Lord, but he concludes by exhorting others to let it also affect them in a similar way. "Therefore," he writes, "my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." No toil, no testing, no suffering gone through in faith for the Lord will be lost. All is treasured up, and in the resurrection, in the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will be found to praise, and glory, and honour.

What glory and beauty will then characterize the bodies of believers in that day of brightness and blessedness! The weakness, weariness, and humiliation which now mark them will then have disappeared for ever. And this should cheer us on now to serve and suffer for the One who loves us; for the One who freed us from our sins by His own precious blood; for the One who is coming for us to give us bodies like His own body of glory. To bring this to pass, we are told, He will use transforming energy--"according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself" (Phil. 3:21).

Then indeed we shall possess bodies which are according to God's eternal purpose. He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). That is not simply morally, as is sometimes suggested. The body of the believer will be then characterized by that which is from heaven. It will indeed be "a building from God." Nor will its fashioning be of man. It will be truly "a house not made with hands" (2 Cor. 5:1). Already in the purpose of God its design and beauty, are before Him; yea, it is "eternal in the heavens." It is not something which God had not predestinated; something which He has not revealed also; for the Apostle so longed for it that he wrote: "For indeed in this we groan, ardently desiring to put on our house which is from heaven" (2 Cor. 5:2). Then that which is mortal shall be swallowed up of life.

All this is so encouraging to the true believer that we will add a final word as to how this will come to pass: how that which is raised up from the dead shall put on that which is from heaven: how the raised bodies of believers shall become characterized by that which is from heaven when "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:54).

From Earth and From Heaven

To make this clear we must notice that the Scriptures quoted speak of two distinct things in regard to our bodies of glory. FIRST, of that which is raised "from the dead": SECOND, of that which comes "from heaven." FIRST, of that which comes up from the earth SECOND, of that which comes down from heaven, so to speak. That which is raised up shows the divine power of God in resurrection, and maintains the connection with that which is buried: that which comes down shows the eternal design of God in the heavens, and is brought out to characterize the believer's body for ever. The body which was before characterized by mortality and corruption also, if buried, puts on, when raised, immortality and incorruption. These things are eternal in the heavens; and are therefore from heaven when they are "put on." Then life shall swallow up mortality.

According to the illustration given in 1 Corinthians 15, a seed is sown. It dies; then it rises up again from the earth. What shall characterize this which comes up from death? A bud, or blossom, or fruit may come. It may be characterized by beauty of design, by brilliance of colour, by remarkable richness of bloom. Does all this wealth and variety then come up from the earth? Nay; the beauty displayed is from above. God has so constituted the surroundings with atmosphere, cloud, light, sunshine, and other things, that that which rises may be able to put on the treasures which God has therein placed for this purpose. Just so, when raised, shall we put on the glory which shall characterize us for ever. We cannot count up this wealth; we cannot measure our vast treasure; but we can meditate upon its loveliness with thankful hearts; for God has revealed these things. Let us list some of these riches of resurrection.

1. Heavenly bodies then instead of earthly (1 Cor. 15:49).
2. Glory shall mark them instead of dishonour (v. 43).
3. Power then, and no longer weakness (v. 43).

4. Spiritual bodies then instead of natural (v. 44).
5. Immortality shall mark them, not mortality (v. 54).
6. Incorruptibility, and no longer corruption (v. 54).
7. Life instead of death for our bodies (2 Cor. 5:4).

Already by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, life and incorruptibility have been brought to light. It was in God's purpose; but by His death and resurrection He has secured it for us, blessed be His holy Name! "Fear not," He says, "I am the Living One." He has the keys of death and of hades. Satan had "the might of death," but He has been into death's dark domain and annulled him; and moreover, He has risen victorious. He is the glorious First-fruits from the dead; and just as surely as He is this, the after-fruits shall be raised like Him, when He comes again. He is marked out as Son of God by resurrection. His triumph is also seen in this. When His assembling shout is heard; when the Lord Himself shall come, then the mighty operations of resurrection power shall be set in motion; then the dead in Christ shall rise; and then the living, changed, shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord--the marked out Son of God, the Resurrection and the Life.

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