

THE RESURRECTION CREDIBLE

NO. 1067

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1872
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”
Acts 26:8

CONCERNING the souls of our believing friends who have departed this life we suffer no distress, we feel sure that they are where Jesus is, and behold His glory, according to our Lord's own memorable prayer. We know but very little of the disembodied state, but we know quite enough to rest certain beyond all doubt that—

*“They are supremely blest,
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,
And with their Savior rest.”*

Our main trouble is about their bodies, which we have committed to the dark and lonesome grave. We cannot reconcile ourselves to the fact that their dear faces are being stripped of all their beauty by the fingers of decay, and that all the insignia of their manhood should be fading into corruption. It seems hard that the hands and feet, and all the goodly fabric of their noble forms, should be dissolved into dust, and broken into an utter ruin. We cannot stand at the grave without tears, even the perfect Man could not restrain His weeping at Lazarus' tomb.

It is a sorrowful thought that our friends are dead, nor can we ever regard the grave with love. We cannot say that we take pleasure in the catacomb and the vault. We still regret, and feel it natural to do so, that so dreadful a ban has fallen upon our race as that it should be “appointed unto all men once to die.” God sent it as a penalty, and we cannot rejoice in it.

The glorious doctrine of the resurrection is intended to take away this cause of sorrow. We need have no trouble about the body, any more than we have concerning the soul. Faith being exercised upon immortality relieves us of all trembling as to the spirits of the just, and the same faith, if exercised upon resurrection, will with equal certainty efface all hopeless grief with regard to the body. For though apparently destroyed, the body will live again—it has not gone to annihilation. That very frame which we lay in the dust shall but sleep there for a while, and at the trump of the archangel, it shall awaken in superior beauty, clothed with attributes unknown to it while here.

The Lord's love to His people is a love towards their entire manhood, He chose them not as disembodied spirits, but as men and women arrayed in flesh and blood. The love of Jesus Christ towards His chosen is not affection for their better nature merely, but towards that also which we are wont to think their inferior part.

For in His Book all their members were written, He keepeth all their bones, and the very hairs of their head are all numbered. Did He not assume our perfect manhood? He took into union with His deity a human soul, but He also assumed a human body, and in that fact He gave us evidence of His affinity to our perfect manhood, to our flesh, and to our blood, as well as to our mind and to our spirit.

Moreover, our Redeemer has perfectly ransomed both soul and body. It was not partial redemption which our Kinsman effected for us. We know that our Redeemer liveth, not only with respect to our spirit, but with regard to our body, so that though the worm shall devour its skin and flesh, yet shall it

rise again because He has redeemed it from the power of death, and ransomed it from the prison of the grave.

The whole manhood of the Christian has already been sanctified. It is not merely that with his spirit he serves his God, but he yields his members to be instruments unto righteousness to the glory of his heavenly Father. “Know ye not,” says the apostle, “that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost,” surely that which has been a temple of the Holy Ghost shall not be ultimately destroyed.

It may be taken down, as the tabernacle was in the wilderness, but taken down to be put up again. Or to use another form of the same figure, the tabernacle may go, but only that the temple may follow. “We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

My brethren, it would not be a complete victory over sin and Satan, if the Savior left a part of His people in the grave. It would not look as if He had destroyed all the works of the devil if He only emancipated their spirits. There shall not be a bone, nor a piece of a bone, of any one of Christ’s people left in the charnel house at the last. Death shall not have a solitary trophy to show. His prison house shall be utterly rifled of all the spoil which he has gathered from our humanity. The Lord Jesus in all things shall have the pre-eminence, and even as to our materialism He shall vanquish death and the grave, leading our captivity captive.

It is a joy to think that as Christ has redeemed the entire man, and sanctified the entire man, and will be honored in the salvation of the entire man, so our complete manhood shall have it in its power to glorify Him. The hands with which we sinned shall be lifted in eternal adoration, the eyes which have gazed on evil shall behold the King in His beauty.

Not merely shall the *mind* which now loves the Lord be perpetually knit to Him, and the spirit which contemplates Him will delight forever in Him, and be in communion with Him, but this very body which has been a clog and hindrance to the spirit, and been an arch rebel against the sovereignty of Christ, shall yield Him homage with voice, and hand, and brain, and ear, and eye. We look to the time of resurrection for the accomplishment of our adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.

Now, this being our hope, though we believe and rejoice in it in a measure, we have, nevertheless, to confess that sometimes questions suggest themselves, and the evil heart of unbelief cries, “Can it be true? Is it possible?” At such times the question of our text is exceedingly needful, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?”

This morning I shall *first* ask you, dear brethren, to *look the difficulty in the face*. And then, *secondly*, we will endeavor to remove the difficulty—there is but one way of doing so, and that a very simple one. And then, *thirdly*, we shall have a word or two to say about *our relation to this truth*.

I. First, then, LET US LOOK THIS DIFFICULTY IN THE FACE.

We shall not, for a moment, flinch from the boldest and most plain assertion of our belief in the resurrection, but will let its difficulties appear upon the surface. Attempts have been made at different times by misguided Christians to tone down or explain away the doctrine of the resurrection and kindred truths, in order to make them more acceptable to skeptical or philosophical minds, but this has never succeeded. No man has ever been convinced of a truth by discovering that those who profess to believe it are half ashamed of it, and adopt a tone of apology. How can a man be convinced by one who does not himself believe, for that, in plain English, is what it comes to.

When we modify, qualify, and attenuate our doctrinal statements, we make concessions which will never be reciprocated, and are only received as admissions that we do not believe ourselves what we assert. By this cutting and trimming policy we shear away the locks of our strength, and break our own arm. Nothing of that kind affects me, either now or any time.

We do then really in very truth believe that the very body which is put into the grave will rise again, and we mean this literally, and as we utter it. We are not using the language of metaphor, or talking of a myth.

We believe that, in actual fact, that the bodies of the dead will rise again from the tomb. We admit, and rejoice in the fact, that there will be a great change in the body of the righteous man, that its materialism will have lost all the grossness and tendency to corruption which now surrounds it, that it will be adapted for higher purposes. For, whereas now it is only a tenement fit for the soul or the lower intellectual faculties, it will then be adapted for the spirit or the higher part of our nature.

We rejoice that though sown in weakness it will be raised in power. Though sown in dishonor it will be raised in glory. But we nevertheless know that it will be the same body. The selfsame body which is put into the grave shall rise again. There shall be an absolute identity between the body in which we die and the body in which we rise again from the dust.

But let it be remembered that identity is not the same thing as absolute sameness of substance and continuance of atoms. We do not mention this qualification at all by way of taking off the edge from our statement, but simply because it is true. We are conscious, as a matter of fact, that we are living in the same bodies which we possessed twenty years ago. We are told, and we have no reason to doubt it, that perhaps not one single particle of the matter which constitutes our body now was in it twenty years ago.

The changes our physical forms have undergone from infancy to manhood are very great, yet we have the same bodies. Admit the like identity in the resurrection, and it is all we ask. The body in which we die will be the same body in which we were born—everybody admits that, though it is certainly not the same as in all its particles, nay, every particle may have been exchanged, and yet it will remain the same. So the body in which we rise will be the same body in which we die, it will be greatly changed. But those changes will not be such as to affect its identity.

Now, instead of mentioning this statement in order to make the doctrine appear more easy to believe, I assure you that if I saw it taught in Scripture that every single fragment of bone, flesh, muscle, and sinew which we put into the ground would rise again, I should believe it with the same ease as I now accept the doctrine of the identity of the body in the manner just stated. We are not at all wishful to make our beliefs appear philosophical or probable: far from it! We do not ask that men should say, “That can be supported by science.” Let the scientific men keep to their own sphere, and we will keep to ours.

The doctrine we teach neither assails human science, nor fears it, nor flatters it, nor asks its aid. We go on quite another ground when we use the words of the passage and say, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?” We look for a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. The literal rising again of the human body is our firm belief.

Now this hope is naturally surrounded with many difficulties, because first of all, in the great mass of the dead decay has taken place. The large majority of dead bodies have rotted and been utterly dissolved, and the larger proportion of all other bodies will probably follow them.

When we see bodies that have been petrified, or mummies which have been embalmed, we think that if all bodies were preserved in that way it might be easier to believe in their restoration to life. But when we break open some ancient sarcophagus, and find nothing there but a little impalpable brown powder, when we open a grave in the churchyard and find only a few crumbled pieces of bone, and when we think of ancient battlefields where thousands have fallen, where, notwithstanding, through the lapse of years there remains not a trace of man, since the bones have so completely melted back into earth, and in some cases have been sucked up by the roots and plants, and have passed into other organizations, it certainly does seem a thing incredible that the dead should be raised.

Moreover, corpses have been destroyed by quicklime, burned, devoured of beasts, and even eaten by men—how shall these arise? Think how widely diffused are the atoms which once built up living forms. Who knows where the atoms may now be which once composed Cyrus, Hannibal, Scipio, or Caesar? Particles once wedded through a man’s life may now be scattered wide as the poles asunder, one atom may be blowing across the Sahara and another may be floating in the Pacific.

Who knows amidst the revolutions of the elements of this globe where the essential constituents of any one body may be at this time? Where is the body of Paul, of Festus, who sent Paul to Rome, or of

the emperor who condemned him to die? Who can even guess an answer? What wonder, then, if it seems an incredible thing that all men should rise again.

The difficulty increases when we come to reflect that the doctrine of the resurrection teaches that *all* men will rise again, not a certain portion of the race, not a few thousand persons, but *all* men. It might be easier to believe in an Elijah, who should raise a dead man occasionally, or in a Christ who should call back to life a young man at the gates of Nain, or raise a Lazarus, or say, "*Talitha cumi*," to a little deceased girl.

But hard for reason is the doctrine that *all* shall rise, the myriads before the flood, the multitudes of Nineveh and Babylon, the hosts of Persia and of Media, the millions that followed at the feet of Xerxes, the hosts which marched with Alexander, and all the innumerable millions that fell beneath the Roman sword.

Think of the myriads who have passed away in countries like China, swarming with men, and conceive of these throughout six thousand years fattening the soil. Remember those who have perished by shipwreck, plague, earthquake, and worst of all by bloodshed and war, and remember that all these will rise without exception. Not one of woman born shall sleep on forever, but all the bodies that ever breathed and walked this earth shall live again. "O monstrous miracle," saith one, "it wears the aspect of a thing incredible." Well, we shall not dispute the statement, but give even yet more reason for it.

The wonder increases when we remember in what strange places many of these bodies now may be. For the bodies of some have been left in deep mines where they will never be reached again. They have been carried by the wash and swell of tides into deep caverns of the ancient main. There they lie, far away on the pathless desert where only the vulture's eyes can see them, or buried beneath mountains of fallen rock.

In fact, where are not man's remains? Who shall point out a spot of earth where the crumbling dust of Adam's sons is not? Blows there a single summer wind down our streets without whirling along particles of what once was man? Is there a single wave that breaks upon any shore which holds not in solution some relic of what was once human? They lie beneath each tree, they enrich the fields, they pollute the brooks, they hide beneath the meadow grass, yet surely from anywhere, from everywhere, the scattered bodies shall return, like Israel from captivity. As certainly as God is God, our dead men shall live, and stand upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

And moreover, to make the wonder extraordinary beyond conception, they will rise at once, or perhaps in two great divisions. There is a passage (Rev 20:5-6), which apparently teaches us that between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked there will be an interval of a thousand years.

Many think that the passage intends a spiritual resurrection, but I am unable to think so, assuredly the words must have a literal meaning. Hear them and judge for yourselves. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Yet, granted that there may be this great interval, yet what a mass will be seen when the righteous rise, a "multitude that no man can number," an inconceivable company only known to God's enumeration shall suddenly start up from "beds of dust and silent clay." The break of a thousand years shall be as nothing in the sight of God, and shall soon be over, and then shall rise the unjust also.

What teeming multitudes! where shall they stand? What plains of earth shall hold them? Shall they not cover all the solid earth even to the mountaintops? Shall they not need to use the sea itself as a level floor for God's great assize? Before God in a moment shall they stand when the trumpet of the archangel shall ring out clear and shrill the summons for the last assize!

No years shall be needed in order that in God's great workshop bone shall be fitted to its bone, and the wondrous mechanism be refitted. A moment shall suffice to rebuild the ruins of centuries. Curiously wrought as our bodies were at first in the lowest parts of the earth, their restoration from the dead shall

be effected in the twinkling of an eye. Man needs time, but God is the creator of time and needs it not. Ages of ages are no more to Him than moments, in an instant His greatest marvels are accomplished. Matchless marvel! We marvel not that to many it seems a thing incredible that God should raise the dead.

And then, think you, that this resurrection will not be a mere restoration of what was there, but the resurrection in the case of the saints will involve a remarkable advance upon anything we now observe. We put into the ground a bulb, and it rises as a golden lily. We drop into the mold a seed, and it comes forth an exquisite flower, resplendent with brilliant colors—these are the same which we put into the earth, the same identically, but oh, how different. Even thus, the bodies, which are sown in burial, are so many seeds, and they shall spring up by divine power into outgrowths surpassing all imagination in beauty.

This increases the wonder, for the Lord Jesus not only snatches the prey from between the teeth of the destroyer, but that which had become worm's meat, ashes, dust, He raises in His own sacred image. It is as though a tattered and moth-eaten garment were rent to shreds, and then by a divine word restored to its perfection, and in addition made whiter than any fuller on earth could make it, and adorned with costly fringes and embroideries unknown to it before, and all this in a moment of time. Let it stand as a world of wonders, marvelous beyond all things. We will not, for a moment, attempt to explain it away, or pare down the angles of the truth.

One of the difficulties of believing it is this, that there are positively no full analogies in nature by which to support it. There are phenomena around us somewhat like it so that we can compare, but I believe that there is no analogy in nature upon which it would be at all fair to found an argument. For instance, some have said that sleep is the analogy of death, and that our awaking is a sort of resurrection.

The figure is admirable, but the analogy is very far from perfect, since in sleep there is still life. A continuance of life is manifest to the man himself in his dreams, and to all onlookers who choose to watch the sleeper, to hear him breathe, or to watch his heart beat. But in death the body has no pulses or other signs of life left in it, it does not even remain entire as the body of the sleeper does.

Imagine that the slumberer should be torn limb from limb, pounded in a mortar, and reduced to powder, and that powder mixed up with clay and mold, and then see him awoken at your call, and you would have something worth calling an analogy. But a mere sleep from which a man is startled, while it is an excellent comparison, is far enough from being the counterpart or prophecy of resurrection.

More frequently we hear mentioned the development of insects as a striking analogy. The larva is man in his present condition, the chrysalis is a type of man in his death, and the imago or perfect insect is the representation of man in his resurrection. An admirable simile, certainly, but no more, for there is life in the chrysalis, there is organization, there is, in fact, the entire fly.

No observer can mistake the chrysalis for a dead thing. Take it up and you shall find everything in it that will come out of it, the perfect creature is evidently dormant there. If you could crush the chrysalis, dry up all its life juices, bruise it into dust, pass it through chemical processes, utterly dissolve it, and then afterwards call it back into a butterfly, you would have seen an analogy of the resurrection. But this is unknown to nature as yet. I find no fault with the picture, it is most instructive and interesting, but to argue from it would be childish to the last degree.

Nor is the analogy of the seed much more conclusive. The seed, when put into the ground dies, and yet rises again in due season, hence the apostle uses it as the apt type and emblem of death. He tells us that the seed is not quickened unless it die. What is death? Death is the resolution of an organization into its original particles, and so the seed begins to separate into its elements, to fall back from the organization of life into the inorganic state, but still, a life germ always remains, and the crumbling organization becomes its food from which it builds itself up again.

Is it so with dead bodies of which not even a trace remains? Who shall discover a life germ in the putrid corpse? I shall not say there may not be some essential nucleus which better instructed beings might perceive, but I would demand where in the corrupted body it can be supposed to dwell. Is it in the

brain? The brain is among the first things to disappear. The skull is empty and void. Is it in the heart? That also has a very brief duration, far briefer than the bones. Nowhere could a microscope discover any vital principle in bodies disinterred from the sod.

Turn up the soil wherein the seed is buried, at any time you will, and you will find it where you placed it, if indeed it will ever rise from the ground. But such is not the case with the man who has been buried a few hundred years, of him the last relic has probably passed beyond all recognition.

The generations to come are not more undiscoverable than those which have gone. Think of those who were buried before the flood, or drowned in that general deluge, where, I ask, have we the smallest remnant of them? Grind your corn of wheat to fine flour, and throw it to the winds, and behold corn fields rising from it, and then you will have a perfect analogy, but as yet I do not think that nature contains a parallel case.

The resurrection stands alone, and concerning it the Lord might well say, “Behold, I do a new thing in the earth.” With the exception of the resurrection of our Lord, and those granted to a few persons by miracle, we have nothing in history that can be brought to bear upon the point. Nor need we look there for evidence, we have a far surer ground to go upon. Here, then, is the difficulty, and a notable one it is. Can these dry bones live? Is it a credible thing that the dead should be raised?

II. How are we to meet the demands of the case? We said that in the second place we would REMOVE THE DIFFICULTY.

We made no empty boast, the matter is simple. Read the text again with due emphasis, and it is done. “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you *that* GOD *should* raise the dead?” It might seem incredible that the dead should be raised, but why should it seem incredible that GOD, the Almighty, the Infinite, should raise the dead? Grant a God, and no difficulties remain. Grant that God is, and that He is omnipotent, grant that He has said the dead shall be raised, and belief is no longer hard but inevitable. Impossibility and incredulity—both vanish in the presence of God.

I believe this is the only way in which the difficulties of faith should be met. It is of no use to run to reason for weapons against unbelief, the Word of God is the true defense of faith. It is foolish to build with wood and hay when solid stones may be had. If my heavenly Father makes a promise, or reveals a truth, am I not to believe Him till I have asked the philosophers about it? Is God’s word only true when finite reason approves of it? After all, is man’s judgment the ultimatum, and is God’s word only to be taken when we can see for ourselves, and therefore have no need of revelation at all? Far from us be this spirit. Let God be true, and every man a liar.

We are not staggered when the wise men mock at us, but we fall back upon “Thus saith the LORD.” One word from God outweighs for us a library of human lore. To the Christian, God’s *ipse dixit* stands in the stead of all reason. Our logic is, “God has said it,” and this is our rhetoric too. If God declares that the dead shall be raised, it is not a thing incredible to us. Difficulty is not in the dictionary of the Godhead. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Heap up the difficulties, if you like, make the doctrine more and more hard for reason to compass, so long as it contains no self-evident contradiction and inconsistency, we rejoice in the opportunity to believe great things concerning a Great God.

When Paul uttered our text he was speaking to a Jew. He was addressing Agrippa, one to whom he could say, “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest!” It was, therefore, good reasoning to use with Agrippa, to say, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” For first, as a Jew, Agrippa had the testimony of Job—“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: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

He had, also, the testimony of David, who, in the sixteenth psalm, says, “My flesh also shall rest in hope.” He had the testimony of Isaiah in the twenty-sixth chapter and the nineteenth verse, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

He had the testimony of Daniel in his twelfth chapter, second and third verses, where the prophet says, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

And then again, in Hosea 13:14, Agrippa had another testimony where the Lord declares "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." Thus God had plainly promised resurrection in the Old Testament Scriptures, and that fact should have been quite enough for Agrippa. If the Lord has said it, it is no longer doubtful.

To us as Christians there has been granted yet fuller evidence. Remember how our Lord has spoken concerning resurrection, with no bated breath has He declared His intention to raise the dead. Remarkable is that passage in John 5:28, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." And so in chapter 6:40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

The Holy Ghost has spoken the same truth by the apostles. In that precious and most blessed eighth chapter of Romans, we have a testimony in the eleventh verse, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

I read you just now the passage from first Thessalonians, which is very full indeed, where we are bidden not to sorrow as those that are without hope. And you have in Philippians the third chapter and twenty-first verse, another proof, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

I scarcely need remind you of that grand chapter of massive argument, Corinthians the fifteenth. Beyond all doubt the testimony of the Holy Ghost is that the dead shall rise, and granted that there is an Almighty God, we find no difficulty in accepting the doctrine and entertaining the blessed hope.

At the same time it may be well to look around us, and note what helps the Lord has appointed for our faith. I am quite certain dear friends, that there are many wonders in the world which we should not have believed by mere report, if we had not come across them by experience and observation.

The electric telegraph, though it be but an invention of man, would have been as hard to believe in a thousand years ago as the resurrection of the dead is now. Who in the days of packhorses would have believed in flashing a message from England to America? When our missionaries in tropical countries have told the natives of the formation of ice, and that people could walk across frozen water, and of ships that have been surrounded by mountains of ice in the open sea, the water becoming solid and hard as a rock all around them, the natives have refused to believe such absurd reports.

Everything is full of wonder till we are used to it, and resurrection owes the incredible portion of its marvel to the fact of our never having come across it in our observation—that is all. After the resurrection we shall regard it as a divine display of power as familiar to us as creation and providence now are. I have no doubt we shall adore and bless God, and wonder at resurrection forever, but it will be in the same sense in which every devout mind wonders at creation now.

We shall grow accustomed to this new work of God when we have entered upon our longer life. We were only born but yesterday, and have seen little as yet. God's works require far more than our few earthy years of observation, and when we have entered into eternity, are out of our minority, and have come of age, that which astounds us now will have become a familiar theme for praise.

Will resurrection be a greater wonder than creation? You believe that God spoke the world out of nothing. He said, "Let it be," and the world was. To create out of nothing is quite as marvelous as to call together scattered particles and refashion them into what they were before. Either work requires omnipotence, but if there be any choice between them, resurrection is the easier work of the two.

If it did not happen so often, the birth of every child into the world would astound us, we should consider a birth to be, as indeed it is, a most transcendent manifestation of divine power. It is only because we know it and see it so commonly, that we do not behold the wonder-working hand of God in human births and in our continued existence. The thing, I say, only staggers us because we have not become familiar with it as yet, there are other deeds of God which are quite as marvelous.

Remember too, that there is one thing which, though you have not seen, you have received on credible evidence, which is a part of historic truth, namely, that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. He is to you the cause of your resurrection, the type of it, the foretaste of it, the guarantee of it. As surely as He rose you shall rise. He proved the resurrection possible by rising, nay, He proved it certain because He is the representative man, and in rising, He rose for all who are represented by Him. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

The rising of our Lord from the tomb should forever sweep away every doubt as to the rising of His people. "For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised," but because He lives, we shall live also.

Remember also, my brethren and sisters, that you who are Christians have already experienced within yourselves as great a work as the resurrection, for you have risen from the dead as to your innermost nature. You were dead in trespasses and sins, and you have been quickened into newness of life.

Of course the unconverted here will see nothing in this. The unregenerate man will even ask me what this means, and to him it can be no argument, for it is a matter of experience which one man cannot explain to his fellow. To know it ye must yourselves be born again.

But believers, ye have already passed through a resurrection from the grave of sin, and from the rottenness and corruption of evil passions and impure desires, and this resurrection God has wrought in you by a power equal to that which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. To you the quickening of your spiritual nature is an assured proof that the Lord will also quicken your mortal bodies.

The whole matter is this, that our persuasion of the certainty of the general resurrection rests upon faith in God and His Word. It is both idle and needless to look elsewhere. If men will not believe the declaration of God, they must be left to give an account to Him of their unbelief.

My hearer, if you are one of God's elect, you will believe your God, for God gives faith to all His Chosen. If you do reject the divine testimony, you give evidence that you are in the gall of bitterness, and you will perish in it unless grace prevents.

The Gospel and the doctrine of the resurrection were opened up to men in all their glory to put a division between the precious and the vile. "He that is of God," saith the apostle, "heareth God's words." True faith is the visible mark of secret election. He that believeth in Christ gives evidence of God's grace towards him, but he that believeth not gives sure proof that he has not received the grace of God. "But ye believe not," said Christ, "because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

Therefore this truth and other Christian truths are to be held up, maintained, and delivered fully to the whole of mankind to put a division between them, to separate the Israelites from the Egyptians, the seed of the woman from the seed of the serpent. Those whom God has chosen are known by their believing in what God has said, while those who remain unbelieving perish in their sin, condemned by the truth which they willfully reject.

III. Thus much upon these points. Now let us consider, lastly, OUR RELATION TO THIS TRUTH.

Our first relation to this truth is this: Children of God, comfort one another with these words. You have lost those dear to you—amend the statement—they have passed into a better land, and the body which remains behind is not lost, but put out to blessed interest. Sorrow ye must, but sorrow not as those that are without hope.

I do not know why we always sing dirges at the funerals of the saints, and drape ourselves in black. I would desire, if I might have my way, to be drawn to my grave by white horses, or to be carried on the

shoulders of men who would express joy as well as sorrow in their habiliments, for why should we sorrow over those who have gone to glory, and inherited immortality? I like the old Puritan plan of carrying the coffin on the shoulders of the saints, and singing a psalm as they walked to the grave. Why not? What is there, after all, to weep about concerning the glorified?

Sound the gladsome trumpet! Let the shrill clarion peal out the joyous note of victory! The conqueror has won the battle. The King has climbed to His throne. “Rejoice,” say our brethren from above, “rejoice with us, for we have entered into our rest.” “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them.” If we must keep up the signs of woe, for this is natural, yet let not your hearts be troubled, for that were unspiritual. Bless God evermore that over the pious dead we sing His living promises.

Let us, in the next place, cheer our hearts in prospect of our own departure. We shall soon pass away. My brethren, we too must die, there is no discharge in this war. There is an arrow and there is an archer, the arrow is meant for my heart, and the archer will take deadly aim. There is a place where you shall sleep, perhaps in a lone grave in a foreign land, or perhaps, in a niche where your bones shall lie side by side with those of your ancestors, but to the dust return you must.

Well, let us not repine, it is but for a little, it is but a rest on the way to immortality. Death is a passing incident between this life and the next—let us meet it not only with equanimity, but with expectation, since it is not death now but resurrection to which we aspire.

Then again, are we expecting a blessed resurrection, let us respect our bodies. Let not our members become instruments of evil, let them not be defiled with sin. The Christian must neither by gluttony nor drunkenness, nor by acts of uncleanness, in any way whatever defile his body, for our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. “If any man defile that temple of God, him will God destroy.” Be ye pure. In your baptism, your bodies were washed with pure water to teach you that henceforth ye must be clean from all defilement. Put away from you every evil thing. Bodies that are to dwell forever in heaven should not be subjected to pollution here below.

Lastly, and this is a very solemn thought, the ungodly are to rise again, but it will be to a resurrection of woe. Their bodies sinned, and their bodies will be punished. “Fear him,” says Christ, “who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” He will cast both of them into a suffering which shall cause perpetually enduring destruction to them, this is terrible indeed.

To slumber in the grave would be infinitely preferable to such a resurrection—“The resurrection of damnation,” so the Scripture calls it. A rising “to shame and everlasting contempt,” so Daniel styles it. That is a dreadful resurrection, indeed, you might be glad to escape from it. Surely it were dreadful enough for your soul to suffer the wrath of God eternally without the body having to be its companion, but so it must be, if body and soul sin, body and soul must suffer, and that forever.

Jeremy Taylor tells us of a certain Acilius Aviola who was seized with an apoplexy, and his friends conceiving him to be dead carried him to his funeral pile, but when the heat had warmed his body, he awoke to find himself hopelessly encircled with funeral flames. In vain he called for deliverance, he could not be rescued, but passed from torpor into intolerable torment.

Such will be the dreadful awakening of every sinful body when it shall be awakened from its slumber in the grave. The body will start up to be judged, condemned, and driven from God’s presence into everlasting punishment. May God grant that it may never be your case or mine, but may we believe in Christ Jesus now, and so obtain a resurrection to life eternal. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
JOB 19:23-27; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-26; 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18**

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.