DEPARTED SAINTS YET LIVING

NO. 1863

A SERMON
SUGGESTED BY THE DECEASE OF THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 4, 1885
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush,
when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.
For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."
Luke 20:37-38

DURING the past week the church of God, and the world at large, have sustained a very serious loss. In the taking home to Himself by our gracious Lord the Earl of Shaftesbury, we have, in my judgment, lost the best man of the age. I do not know whom I should place second, but I certainly should put him first—far beyond all other servants of God within my knowledge—for usefulness and influence.

He was a man most true in his personal piety, as I know from having enjoyed his private friendship—a man most firm in his faith in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—a man intensely active in the cause of God and truth. Take him whichever way you please, he was admirable. He was faithful to God in all His house, fulfilling both the first and second commands of the law in fervent love to God, and hearty love to man. He occupied his high position with singleness of purpose and immovable steadfastness—where shall we find his equal?

If it is not possible that he was absolutely perfect, it is equally impossible for me to mention a single fault, for I saw none. He exhibited scriptural perfection, inasmuch as he was sincere, true, and consecrated. Those things which have been regarded as faults in him by the loose thinkers of this age are prime virtues in my esteem.

They called him *narrow*, and in this they bear unconscious testimony to his loyalty to truth. I rejoiced greatly in his integrity, his fearlessness, his adherence to principle, in a day when revelation is questioned, the Gospel explained away, and human thought set up as the idol of the hour. He felt that there was a vital and eternal difference between truth and error. Consequently, he did not act or talk as if there was much to be said on either side, and therefore, no one could be quite sure.

We shall not know for many a year how much we miss in missing him. How great an anchor he was to this drifting generation, and how great a stimulus he was to every movement for the benefit of the poor. Both man and beast may unite in mourning him. He was the friend of every living thing.

He lived for the oppressed. He lived for London. He lived for the nation. He lived still more for God. He has finished his course, and though we do not lay him to sleep in the grave with the sorrow of those that have no hope, yet we cannot but mourn that a great man and a prince has fallen this day in Israel. Surely, the righteous are taken away from the evil to come, and we are left to struggle on under increasing difficulties.

It must always be so. The godly must die, even as others. Though our life be perfectly consecrated, yet it cannot forever be continued in this world. It is appointed unto men once to die, and that appointment stands. We expect the present rule to last till He shall come who shall destroy the last enemy.

We are not troubled with Sadducean doubts. To us, seeing that Christ rose from the dead, it is a matter of certainty that all His followers must rise also. And seeing that Jesus ever lives, it is equally a matter of certainty to us that all the saints are still living, for He has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Yet, if no infidelity is permitted to creep into our brain and disturb our belief, it may penetrate into our heart, and cause us great sadness. We who believe in Jesus should rise into an atmosphere more clear and warm than that of the sepulchre, for the Lord Jesus has "abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel."

We are not now sitting in the shadow of death, for eternal light has sprung up. Children of God, it is in the highest degree proper that you should think of things as your Father thinks of them, and He says that "all live unto God." Let us correct our phraseology by that of Scripture, and speak of departed saints as inspiration speaks of them.

Then shall we come back to the simple child's talk which Wordsworth so sweetly turned into rhyme—"Master, we are seven," and in our family we shall number brothers, and sisters, and friends, whose bodies lie in the churchyard, and shall speak of those who have crossed the border, and passed within the veil, as still our own.

Like Jesus, we shall say, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." Like Paul, we shall speak of them as absent from the body but present with the Lord, and regard them as part and parcel of the one family in heaven and earth.

Our text was fashioned in a place which has the air of death, burial, and resurrection about it. The voice came to Moses in the desert. This was a strange place for Moses—the living, active, well-instructed mind of Moses, mighty in all the wisdom of Egypt, and full of noble thoughts concerning the living God, was buried in a desert. It is singular to see the foremost mind of the age in the remotest part of the desert, hidden away among sheep.

He who was a born king is here feeding a flock. It is death to Moses. Rest assured that Moses cannot be kept in this living tomb. He must rise to life and leadership. While there is a God and providence, Moses cannot continue in obscurity. There are certainties wrapped up in him which cannot fail. A man need not be a prophet to stand at Horeb, and prognosticate that Moses will emerge from the desert, and shake Egypt by his resurrection.

While Moses is in the desert, he is thinking about another case of death, burial, and resurrection, namely, Israel in Egypt. The people of God, the favored nation of JEHOVAH, with whom He had entered into covenant, saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people"—these were in Egypt, ground down by relentless oppression, begrimed with brick-earth, and black and blue with the blows of taskmasters.

It has come to this, that they are compelled to cast their male children into the river, and so to be the destroyers of their own race. The children of Israel have become a herd of slaves, yet they are God's elect people, God's favored family. It does not require a prophet to declare that this death in Egypt cannot last.

The elect nation must live, and rise, and go forth free to serve the Lord. No, Israel, thou shalt never perish! The voice must yet be heard, "Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me."

And so, while Moses in the desert is thinking of Israel in Egypt, he sees a bush, and that bush is all ablaze. An ordinary bush upon the heath needs only to be touched with a match—in one moment there is a puff of flame, and then all is over—nothing is left but a trace of ashes.

Yet here was an extraordinary thing—a bush that continued to burn, and was not consumed. Here was life in the midst of death, continuance in the midst of destruction. This was an emblem of God abiding with a people, and yet suffering them to live—or of the fires of affliction being rendered harmless to the chosen of God.

He who then spoke to Moses was the God of life, the God who could sustain in the midst of destruction, the God who could preserve even a bush from being devoured by the intense fury of flame.

Said I not truly that the surroundings of Moses and the bush all favor a display of life in death, and resurrection out of death?

Now we come to the central matter. Out of the midst of the bush there came a voice, a mysterious and divine voice, which said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." From this voice our divine Lord teaches us to gather this fact—that God's people live when they appear to have been long dead.

For He who cannot be the God of the dead, or non-existent, still avows Himself to be the God of the long-buried patriarchs. Our Lord proved from that utterance at the bush the continued life of the Lord's chosen, and also their resurrection—how did He do this?

I. We will not go straight to the answer, but we will beat about the bush a little, that the reasoning may the more gently enter our minds. I would say, first, that in these words we have A GLORIOUS RELATIONSHIP DECLARED. Moses called the Lord, "The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

The glorious Lord did at the bush as good as say, "*These three men have chosen Me to be their God.*" So they had—through the grace of God, they had deliberately chosen to part with their natural kindred in the country of the Chaldees, and to journey to a land of which they knew nothing except that God had promised that they should afterwards receive it for an inheritance.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were three very different characters, yet this was common to the three—that they believed God, and took Him to be their God alone. They nestled in the bosom of JEHOVAH while the rest of the world went after their idols. In all their troubles, they flew to JEHOVAH—for the supply of all their needs, they resorted alone to Him. They were men who had through divine grace deliberately attached themselves unto JEHOVAH the Most High throughout the whole of their lives.

It is a sublime sight to see a man trust in God as Abraham did, and obey the Lord fully as he did in the matter of Isaac, when he accounted God to be able to raise him up even from the dead. Surely there must be everlasting life in a being who could thus confide in JEHOVAH.

I call you to admire the fact that God called the patriarchs into the noble position of following the Lord fully, of fixed and settled choice. Being men of like passions with ourselves, they nevertheless cast in their lot with the Lord, and for His sake preferred the life of strangers and pilgrims on the earth to the comforts of settled residence in Ur of the Chaldees, and to the sinful pleasures of Canaan.

We also take this God to be our God, even the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. There is nobility about the choosers of the true God which will surely secure them from annihilation.

Next, these three men had learned to *commune with God*. How wondrously had Abraham spoken with God! Full many a spot was consecrated as "the place where he stood before the LORD." Isaac also walked in the fields at eventide, and doubtless, there entered into secret fellowship with God. The Lord also appeared unto him at night, and led him to build an altar and call upon the name of JEHOVAH. The good old man even in his blindness found solace in communion with the Lord God Almighty.

Jacob also was favored with heavenly visitations. We can never forget that mystic dream at Bethel, nor the wrestling at Jabbok, nor the many times when he turned to the God of his father Abraham, and his father Isaac, and God spake with him as a man speaks with his friend.

It is a wonderful thing that the Lord should thus commune with men. He does not thus show Himself to the beasts which perish. He does not thus reveal Himself to the lifeless stones of the field. Those are strangely honored beings with whom God enters into close communion as He did with these three men.

I argue from it that these beings cannot dissolve into a handful of dust and cease to be. Can those eyes cease to be which have seen the Lord? Can those souls perish which have conversed with the Eternal? We think not so. But just now I ask you only to meditate upon the glories to which the patriarchs were lifted up, when they were permitted to be the friends of God.

What was still more notable, the Lord *entered into covenant with them*. He made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which He remembered, saying, "Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and in

multiplying I will multiply thee." You know how the Lord swore to give unto the seed of Abraham a goodly heritage, a land that flowed with milk and honey.

Now, it is a wonderful thing that God should enter into compact with man. Does He make an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, with mere insects of an hour? Especially, would He give His Son Jesus to die to seal the everlasting covenant by His heart's blood with mere shadows who are but for a little time, and then cease to be? I am sure it is not so.

If God makes men capable of entering into everlasting covenant with Himself, there lies within that fact the clear suggestion that He imparts to them an existence which is not for today and tomorrow, but for eternity. Still, I wish you mainly to regard the glory into which manhood is lifted up when God enters into gracious covenant with it.

Moreover, to go further, these men were not only in covenant with God, but *they had lived in accordance with that covenant*. I do not mean that they had lived perfectly in accord with it, but that the main strain of their lives was in conformity with their covenant relationship to God. For the sake of that covenant, Abraham quitted Ur of the Chaldees, and dwelt no longer in the land of Haran, but became a sojourner with God in the land of Canaan.

For the sake of this he sent away his firstborn after the flesh, seeing it was said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." These faithful men had respect to the recompense of the reward, and therefore, they were not mindful of the country from whence they came out, neither sought opportunity to return.

Jacob, the more faulty of the three, greatly as he erred in his conduct to his brother Esau, was evidently actuated by an intense faith in the covenant birthright, so that he ventured all things to obtain it. In his old age and death he was anxious not to be confounded with the Egyptians, or separated from the chosen household, and therefore, he said unto Joseph, "But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace." This he made Joseph swear, for he must make sure of it. He was aiming at the promise, despite the errors that he committed in so doing.

Now, does God enter into covenant with men, and help men to live in accordance with that covenant, and after all shall they miss the blessing? Shall it end in nothing? Hiding beneath the shadow of God's wing, shall they, after all, perish? It cannot be—they must live to whom God is God.

For this was the covenant, that *they should have God to be their God*, and that they should be God's people. O brothers, I do not know how to speak on such a blessing as this, though I live in the daily enjoyment of it. This God is our God. All that the Lord is, and all that He can do, He has given over to us, to be used on our behalf—the fullness of His grace and truth, the infinity of His love, the omnipotence of His power, the infallibility of His wisdom—all, all shall be used on our behalf.

The Lord has given Himself over to His people to be their inheritance, and on the other hand we, poor weak feeble creatures as we are, are taken to be the peculiar treasure of the living God. "They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." "The LORD's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." We are God's heritage, we are God's jewels, we are God's children, we are dear to Him as the apple of His eye.

We are to Him as the signet upon His hand, and the crown upon His head. He cannot have chosen for His portion a mass of corruption, or a handful of brown dust—yet that is what the body comes to in death. He cannot have chosen for His heritage that which will melt back into mother earth, and be no more found—this cannot be.

The covenant has within it the sure guarantee of eternal life. Oh what an honor it is that God should even say to you and to me—"I will be your God, and you shall be My people. Beyond the angels, beyond heaven, beyond all My other creatures, I reserve you unto Myself. I have loved you with an everlasting love. I will rest in My love to you. I will rejoice over you with singing."

In this the Lord has highly exalted His covenanted ones, and raised them to great nearness to Himself, and thus to glory and honor. What has God wrought! What is man that God is thus mindful of him, or the son of man that He thus visits him!

Angels are nowhere as compared with men, yea, cherubim with all their burning bliss, and consecrated ardor cannot match with men who are in covenant with God. Blessed above all other beings are those who have JEHOVAH to be their God, and who are themselves the Lord's choice, and care, and delight.

Each one of these points, if well thought out, will go to strengthen our belief that the saints must live, must live forever, and are at this moment living unto God.

II. We now come to that matter more distinctly under our second head. Here is ETERNAL LIFE IMPLIED, for "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

It is implied first in *the very fact of the covenant of grace*. As I have asked before—does the eternal God covenant with creatures that shall live only to threescore years and ten, and then shall go out like a candle-snuff? How can He be a God to them? I understand how He can be a helper and a friend to men of brief existence, but I see not how He can be a God.

Must they not partake in His eternity if it be truly said, "I will be your God"? How can the Lord be an eternal blessing to an ending being? He has power, and He will give me sufficient strength. He has wisdom, and He will give me as much of His wisdom as I am capable of receiving. Must He not also cause me to partake of His immortality? How is He a God to me if He suffers me to be blotted out of existence?

When David said in dying, "Yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant," his comfort lay in his belief that he should live in the everlasting age to enjoy the fruit of that covenant. How could there be an everlasting covenant with a creature that would cease to exist?

But next, *this covenant was made up of promises of a very peculiar order*, for in very deed the covenant that God made with Abraham was not altogether, or even mainly, concerning things temporal. It was not the land of Canaan alone of which the Lord spake to Abraham, but the patriarchs declared plainly that they desired "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb 11:16).

Even when they were in Canaan, they were still looking for a country—and the city promised to them was not Jerusalem. For according to Paul in the eleventh of the Hebrews, they still were looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

They did not find in their earthly lives the complete fulfillment of the covenant, for they received not the promises, but saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them. The temporal blessings which God gave to them were not their expected portion, but they took hold upon invisible realities, and lived in expectation of them. They were evidently actuated by faith in something spiritual, something everlasting, and they believed that the covenant which God had made with them concerned such things.

I have not the time to go into this subject. You get it more fully explained to you in the epistle to the Hebrews. But so it was, that the covenant blessings were of an order and a class that could not be compassed within the space of this present mortal life—the outlook of covenant promises was towards the boundless sea of eternity. Now, if the Lord made with them a covenant concerning eternal blessings, these saints must live to enjoy those blessings. God did not promise endless blessings to the creatures of a day.

More especially, beloved, it is to be remembered that *for the sake of these eternal things the patriarchs had given up transient enjoyments*. Abraham might have been a quiet prince in his own country, living in comfort, but for the sake of the spiritual blessing he left Chaldea, and came to wander in the pastures of Canaan, in the midst of enemies, and to dwell in tents in the midst of discomforts.

Isaac and Jacob were "heirs with him also of the same promises," but they entered not into the pursuits of the people. They dwelt alone, and were not numbered among the nations. Like Moses himself, to whom God spake, they "counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of

Egypt." They quitted kith and kin, and all the advantages of settled civilized life, to be rangers of the desert, exiles from their fatherland.

They were the very types and models of those who have no abiding city here. Therefore, for certain, though they died in hope, not having received the promise, we cannot believe that God deceived them. Their God was no mocker of them, and therefore they must live after death. They had lived in this poor life for something not seen as yet. And if there be no such thing, and no future life, they had been duped and cozened into a mistaken self-denial.

If there be no life to come, the best philosophy is that which says, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." Since these men put this life in pawn for the next, they were sadly mistaken if there be no such life. Do you not see the force of our Savior's reasoning?—God, who has led His people to abandon the present for the future, must justify their choice.

Besides, *the Lord had staked His honor and His repute upon these men's live*s. "Do you want to know," says He, "who I am? I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. If you want to know how I deal with My servants, go and look at the lives of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob."

My brethren, as far as the earthly lives of the patriarchs can be written in human records, they are certainly full of God's loving-kindness, but still there is nothing as remarkably joyous and majestic about them from a natural point of view as to make the Lord's dealings with them appear to be specially wonderful. Others who feared not God have been as rich, and powerful, and honorable as they.

Especially is the life of Jacob ploughed and cross-plowed with affliction and trial. He spake the truth when he summed up his life in the words, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." Does the Lord intend us to judge of His goodness to His servants from the written life of Jacob? or from the career of any one of His servants?

The judgment must include the ages of an endless blessedness. This life is but the brief preface to the volume of our history. It is but the rough border, the selvage of the rich cloth of our being. These rippling streams of life come not to an end, but flow into the endless, shoreless ocean of bliss. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have long been enjoying felicity, and shall enjoy it throughout eternity. God is not ashamed to be called their God if you judge of the whole of their being.

He would not have spoken thus if the visible were all, and there were no future to counterbalance the tribulations of this mortal life. God is not the God of the short-lived, who are so speedily dead. But He is the living God of an immortal race, whose present is but a dark passage into a bright future which can never end.

Yet further, to bring out the meaning here, *God cannot be the God of the non-existent*. The supposition is too absurd. Our Savior does not argue about it, but He says so most peremptorily! God is not the God of the dead—that cannot be! If Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob are reduced to a handful of ashes, God cannot be at this moment their God.

We cannot take a dead object to be our God, neither can JEHOVAH be a God to lifeless clay. God is not the God of putrefaction and annihilation. God is not the God of that which has ceased to be. We have but to put the idea into words to make it dissolve before the glance of reason. A living God is the God of living men—and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive.

This even goes far to show that the bodies of these saints shall yet live. God reckons His covenanted ones to be alive. He says, "The dead are raised." He reckons them to be raised, and as He reckons nothing falsely, it is said by way of anticipation. "Thy dead men shall live." Inasmuch as a portion of these chosen ones is still in the earth, God, who reckons things that are not as though they were, looks upon their bodies as possessing life, because they are to possess life so soon. God is not only the God of Abraham's soul, but of Abraham as a whole, his body, soul, and spirit.

God is the God of Abraham's body, we are sure of that, because the covenant seal was set upon the flesh of Abraham. Where the doubt might be, there is the confirming seal, namely, in his mortal body. There was no seal set upon his soul, for the soul had life, and could not see death, but it was set upon his body, which would die, to make sure that even *it* would live.

At this day we have baptism and the holy supper to be seals as to the body. I have sometimes thought to myself that it were better if there were no water baptism, seeing it has become the nest of so much superstition. And the Lord's Supper, with all its blessed uses, has been so abused that one is apt to think that without outward ordinances there might be more spiritual religion. But the Lord intends that the materialism of man, and of creation, shall be uplifted, and that the body shall be raised incorruptible. And therefore has He given seals which touch the outward and material.

The water wherein the body is washed, and the bread and wine whereby the body is nourished, are tokens that there comes to us, not only spiritual and invisible blessings, but even such as shall redeem and purify our mortal body. The grave cannot hold any portion of the covenanted ones—eternal life is the portion of the whole man. God is the God of our entire manhood, spirit, soul, and body—and all live unto Him in their entirety. The whole of the covenant shall be fulfilled to the whole of those with whom that covenant was made.

This is good reasoning to those who have gone beyond mere reason, and have ascended into the realm of faith. May the Holy Spirit grant unto us to be among them!

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, beloved friends, my text not only declares glorious relationship, and implies eternal life, but it also unveils somewhat scantily, but still sufficiently, what the glorious life must be. Look then and see the GLORIOUS LIFE UNVEILED!

It is clear that they live *personally*. It is not said, "I am the God of the whole body of the saints in one mass." But "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob." God will make His people to live individually. My mother, my father, my child, each will personally exist. God is the God of saints, as living distinct lives—Abraham is Abraham, Isaac is Isaac, and Jacob is Jacob. The three patriarchs were not all melted into one common Abraham, nor Isaac into one imaginary Isaac. Neither was anyone so altered as to cease to be himself.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are all literally living as actual men, and the same men as they used to be. Jacob is Jacob, and not an echo of Abraham. Isaac is Isaac, and not a rehearsal of Jacob. All the saints are existent in their personality, identity, distinction, and idiosyncrasy.

What is more, the patriarchs are *mentioned by their names*, and so it is clear they are known. They are not three anonymous bodies, but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Many inquire, "Shall we know our friends in heaven?" Why should we not? The saints in heaven are never spoken of in Scripture as moving about anonymously—but their names are spoken of as written in the book of life. Why is this? The apostles knew Moses and Elias on the Mount, though they had never seen them before.

I cannot forget old John Ryland's answer to his wife, "John," she said, "will you know me in heaven?" "Betty," he replied, "I have known you well here, and I shall not be a bigger fool in heaven than I am now. Therefore I shall certainly know you there."

That seems to be clear enough. We read in the New Testament, "They shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Not sit down with three unknown individuals in iron masks, or three impersonalities who make a part of the great *pan*, nor three spirits who are as exactly alike as pins made in a factory—but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That is clear enough in the text.

That glorious life, while it is a personal and a known life, is also *free from all sorrow*, and misery, and earthly grossness. They are neither married nor given in marriage—neither shall they die any more, but they are as the angels of God. It is a life of perfect blessedness, a life of hallowed worship, a life of undivided glory. Oh, that we were in it! Oh that we may soon reach it!

Let us think of the many who are enjoying it now, and of those who have attained to it during the last few days. I am sure they are at home in every golden street, and fully engaged in the adoration and worship of their Lord. Those saints who have been in glory now these thousands of years cannot be more blest than the latest arrivals.

Within a very short space you and I shall be among the shining ones. Some of us may spend our next Sabbath with the angels. Let us rejoice and be glad at the bare thought of it. Some of as are not doomed to live here through another winter. We shall pass beyond these autumn fogs into the golden light of the

eternal summer before another Christmas day has come. Oh the joy which ought to thrill our souls at the thought of such amazing bliss!

And now, taking the whole subject together, I want to say a few familiar things about the influence which all this ought to have upon us.

Concerning those that have gone before us, we gather from this whole text that *they are not lost*. We know where they are. Neither have they lost anything, for they are what they were, and more. Abraham has about him still everything that is Abrahamic. He is Abraham still. And Isaac has everything about him that properly belongs to Isaac. And Jacob has all about him that makes him God's Israel.

These good men have lost nothing that really appertained to their individuality, nothing that made them precious in the sight of the Lord. They have gained infinitely, they have developed gloriously. They are Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob now at their best—or rather they are waiting till the trumpet of the resurrection shall sound, when their bodies also shall be united to their spirits, and then Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob will be completely Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, world without end.

We are by no means deprived of our dear ones by their death—they *are*—they are themselves, and they are ours still. As Abraham is not lost to Isaac, nor to Jacob, nor to God, nor to himself, so are our beloved ones by no means lost to us. Do not let us think of them then as if they were lost.

I know your sorrows make an excursion to the grave, to look for the deceased ones. You want to lift that coffin lid, and to unwrap the shroud. Oh, do not so, do not so! He is not here. The real man has gone. He may be dead to you for a while, but he lives unto God. Yes, the dead one lives, he lives unto God.

Do but anticipate the passage of that little time, which is almost gone while I am speaking of it, and then your Savior's angels shall sound their golden trumpets, and at the welcome noise the grave shall open its portals, and resign its captives. "Thy brother shall rise again." Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

Shaftesbury is as much Shaftesbury as ever, and even more so. We have parted with the earl, but the saint lives. He has gone past yonder veil into the next room, and there he is before the Lord of Hosts. He has gone out of this dim, dusky, cloudy chamber, into the bright, pearly light that streams from the throne of God and of the Lamb. We have nothing to sorrow about in reference to what he is or where he is.

So, too, your valued parents, and beloved children, and choice friends—they are yours still. Herein is great cause for thankfulness. Put aside your sackcloth, and wear the garments of hope—lay down the sackbut, and take up the trumpet. Draw not the beloved bodies to the cemetery with dreary pomp, and with black horses, but cover the coffin with sweet flowers, and drape the horses with emblems of hope.

It is the better birthday of the saint, yea, his truer wedding day. Is it sad to have done with sadness? Is it sorrowful to part with sorrow? Nay, rather, when joy begins to our friends, where glory dwells in Immanuel's land, we may in sympathy sing, as it were, a new song, and tune our harps to the melodies of the glorified.

I want you also to recollect that *the departed have not become members of another race.* They have not been transferred into another family. They are still men, still women, still of our kindred dear. Their names are in the same family register on earth, and in heaven. Oh, no, no! Do not dream that they are separated, and exiled. They have gone to the home country—we are the exiles, they it is who are at home.

We are *en route* for the fatherland. They are not so far from us as we think. Sin worked to divide them from us, and us from them, while we were here together. But since sin is now taken away from them, one dividing element is gone. When it is also removed from us, we shall be nearer to each other than we could have been while we were both sinful. Do not let us think of them as sundered far, for we are one in Christ.

And *they are not gone over to the other side in the battle*. Oh, do not speak of them as dead and lying on the battle-field. They live, they live in sympathy with our divine conflict. They have marched

through the enemy's country. They have fought their fight, and taken possession of their inheritance. They are still on our side, though we miss them from the daily service.

When you number up the hosts of God, you must not forget the godlike bands that have fought the good fight, and kept the faith, and finished their course. They are in the armies of the Lord, though not at this moment resisting unto blood. The hundred and forty four thousand sealed unto the Lord include in their ranks all who are with God, whether here or in heaven.

"One family we dwell in Him,
One church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

Our sacramental host marches onward to the New Jerusalem. Certain of the legionaries have forded the dividing flood. I see them ascending the other side! The hither bank of the river is white with their rising companies. Lo! I hear the splash of the ranks before us as they steadily pass down into the chill stream. In deep silence we see them solemnly wading through the billows.

The host is ever marching on, marching on. The much dreaded stream lies a little before us—it is but a silver streak. We are to the margin come. We shudder not at the prospect. We follow the blessed footsteps of our Lord and His redeemed. We are all one army still. We are not losing our men. They are simply ascending from the long campaign to take their endless rewards at the Lord's right hand.

What then? Why, then, *we will take up their work*. If they have gone into the upper chamber to rest, we will make up their lack of service in this lower room. The work they did was so human that we will not allow a stitch to drop, but take it up where they left it, and persevere in earnest. They are in glory, but they were not glorified when they were here. The work they did was done by men of such infirmities as ours, so let us not fear to go on where they left off, and perpetuate the work which they rejoiced in.

There lies the plough in the furrow, and the oxen are still standing, for Shamgar, the champion, is gone. Will no one lay hold of the plough handles? Will nobody urge the oxen with the goad? Young men, are you idling? Here is work for you. Are you hiding yourselves? Come forward, I pray you in the name of the great Husbandman, and let the fields be tilled, and sown with the good seed.

Who will fill the gap made by death? Who will be baptized for the dead? Who will bear the banner now that a standard bearer has fallen? I hope some consecrated voice will answer, "Here am I; send me."

For, last of all, brethren, *we may expect the same succors as they received who have gone before*. JEHOVAH says that He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, but He also says, "I am the God of your father." The father of Moses had the Lord to be his God.

That God is the God of my father, blessed be His name. As I took the old man by his hand yesterday, at the age of seventy-six, I could not but rejoice in all the faithfulness of the Lord to him and to his house. He was the God of my father's father also. I cannot forget how the venerable man laid his hands upon his grandchild, and blessed him—and the blessing is with him still.

Yes, and He is the God of my children, and He shall be the God of my children's children, for He keeps covenant to thousands of them that love Him.

Wherefore take courage, men and brethren! This God is your God. He is a God to you, and you are a people to Him. Act as His true servants. Live as those who are elect. If you are His choice, be choice characters. The chosen should be the best, should they not? The elect should be especially distinguished above all others by their conversation and their fervent zeal for Him that chose them.

As you shall rise from among the dead, because the Lord Jesus has redeemed you from among men, so stand up from among the dead and corrupt mass of this world, and be alive unto God, through Jesus Christ your Lord. What manner of people ought you to be who serve the living God? Since the living God has manifested Himself so wonderfully to you, ought you not to live unto Him to the utmost?

God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EXODUS 3:1-10 AND LUKE 20:27-30**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—855, 852, 844

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.