

THE COMING RESURRECTION

NO. 896

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1869

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“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.”

John 5:28-29

THE doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is peculiarly a Christian belief. With natural reason, assisted by some little light lingering in tradition or borrowed from the Jews, a few philosophers spelled out the immortality of the soul. But that the body should rise again, that there should be another life for this corporeal frame, was a hope which is brought to light by the revelation of Christ Jesus.

Men could not have imagined so great a wonder, and they prove their powerlessness to have invented it by the fact that still, as at Athens, when they hear of it for the first time, they fall to mocking. “Can these dry bones live?” is still the unbeliever’s sneer. The doctrine of the resurrection is a lamp kindled by the hand which once was pierced.

It is indeed, in some respects, the keystone of the Christian arch. It is linked in our holy faith with the person of Jesus Christ and is one of the brightest gems in His crown. What if I call it the signet on His finger, the seal by which He has proven to a demonstration that He has the King’s authority and has come forth from God?

The doctrine of resurrection ought to be preached much more commonly than it is as vital to the Gospel. Listen to the apostle Paul as he describes the Gospel which he preached and by which true believers were saved, “I delivered unto you,” says he, “first of all that which I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” From the resurrection of Christ, he argues that of all the dead, and insists upon it, that if Christ be not risen, both their faith and his preaching were vain.

The doctrine of the resurrection in the early church was the main battle-axe and weapon of war of the preacher. Wherever the first missionaries went they made this prominent, that there would be a judgment and that the dead should rise again to be judged by the Man Christ Jesus, according to their Gospel. If we would honor Christ Jesus the risen one, we must give prominence to this truth.

Moreover, the doctrine is continually blessed of God to arouse the minds of men. When we fancy that our actions are confined to this present life, we are careless of them, but when we discover that they are far-reaching, and that they cast influences for good or evil athwart an eternal destiny, then we regard them more seriously.

What trumpet call can be more startling, what arousing voice can be more awakening than this news to the careless sinner that there is a life hereafter, that men must stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive for the things done in their bodies whether they be good or evil?

Such doctrine I shall try to preach this morning for just such ends, for the honoring of Christ, for the awakening of the careless. God send us good speed and abundance of the desired results.

We shall first *expound the text*, and then, secondly, *endeavor to learn its lessons*.

I. First we shall EXPOUND THE TEXT.

No exposition will be more instructive than a verbal one. We will take each word and weigh its meaning.

Observe then, first, in the text there is a forbidding to marvel. “*Marvel not at this.*” Our Savior had been speaking of two forms of life-giving which belonged to Himself as the Son of man. The first was the power to raise the dead from their graves to a renewed natural life. He proved this on one or two occasions in His lifetime, at the gates of Nain, in the chamber of the daughter of Jairus, and again at the tomb of the almost rotting Lazarus.

Jesus had power when He was on earth and has power still, if so He should will it, to speak to those who have departed, and bid them return again to this mortal state, and reassume the joys and sorrows and duties of life. “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.”

After our Lord had dwelt upon that form of His life-giving prerogative, He passed on to a second display of it and testified that the time was then present when His voice was heard to the quickening of the spiritually dead. The spiritually dead—the men who are dead to holiness and dead to faith, dead to God and dead to grace.

The men that lie enshrouded in the grave clothes of evil habits, rotting in the coffins of their depravity, deep down in the graves of their transgressions—these men, when Jesus speaks in the Gospel, are made to live. A spiritual life is given to them, their dead souls are raised out of their long and horrible sleep, and they are enlivened with the life of God.

Now, both of these forms of quickening are worthy to be marveled at. The resurrection of the natural man to natural life is a great wonder. Who would not go a thousand miles to see such a thing performed? The raising up of the dead spirit to spiritual life, this is a greater wonder by far. But albeit that these are wonders, and things which it is legitimate to wonder at by way of admiration, yet there is a marveling of mistrustful unbelief which is insulting to the Lord and is, therefore, forbidden.

Our gentle Master, as if to overwhelm the gainsayers who were astonished at His claims, addressed them to this effect, “You need not marvel at these two claims of Mine. I claim another power of quickening which will much more amaze you. There will happen before long an event which to you, at any rate, will be more marvelous still than anything which you have seen Me do or which I claim to perform. There will come a time when all the dead that are in their graves, multitudes upon multitudes in the valleys of death, shall all at once, at My voice, start up to life, and stand before My judgment throne.”

To you, dear brethren in the faith, the quickening of the dead is not so great a marvel as the saving of dead souls. And indeed, the raising of a corpse from the grave is by no means so great a marvel as the raising up of a dead soul from the sleep of sin. For in the raising up of a dead body there is no opposition to the fiat of Omnipotence. God speaks, and it is done.

But in the saving of a dead soul, the elements of death within are potent, and these resist the life-giving power of grace, so that regeneration is a victory as well as a creation, a complicated miracle, a glorious display both of grace and power.

Nevertheless, to the few, and to all who are still ruled by the carnal mind, to the mere outward eye, the resurrection of the body seems a greater marvel for several reasons. Comparatively few in our Savior’s day were quickened spiritually, but the resurrection shall consist of the quickening of all the dead bodies of men that have ever existed.

Great marvel, this, if you consider the hosts of the sons of Adam who have fattened the soil and glutted the worms, and yet shall every one of them rise again. Souls were quickened in our Savior’s day as in ours, one by one—here one and there one. Long years roll on, the whole history of manhood interposes before the regeneration of all the elect is accomplished.

But the resurrection of the dead will take place at once. At the sound of the archangel’s trump, the righteous will rise to their glory and after them the ungodly will rise to their shame. But the resurrection will not be a gradual uprising, a slow development, for all at once the myriads shall swarm on land and sea.

Conceive then what a marvel this must be to a mere natural mind! A graveyard suddenly enlivened into an assembly. A battlefield, whereon tens of thousands had fallen, suddenly disgorging all its slain. The suddenness of it would amaze and startle the most carnal mind and make the miracle appear great beyond comparison.

Moreover, my brethren, the resurrection of the dead is a thing that such men as the Jews could appreciate, because it had to do with materialism, had to do with bodies. There was something to be seen, to be touched, to be handled, something which the unspiritual call a matter of fact. To you and to me the spiritual resurrection, if we be spiritual men, is the greater marvel, but to them the resurrection seemed to be the more wonderful because they could comprehend it and form some notion of it in their unspiritual minds.

So, the Savior tells them that if the two former things made them wonder and made them doubt, what would this doctrine do, that all the dead should be raised again in a moment by the voice of Christ? Beloved, let us humbly learn one lesson from this. We are ourselves by nature very like the Jews. We wonder mistrustfully, we unbelievably wonder when we see or hear of fresh displays of the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So narrow are our hearts that we cannot receive His glory in its fullness. Ah, we love Him, and we trust Him, and we believe Him to be the fairest, and the greatest, and the best, and the mightiest, but if we had a fuller view of what He can do, the probabilities are that our amazement would be mingled with no small portion of doubt.

As yet we have but slender ideas of our Lord's glory and power. We hold the doctrine of His deity, we are orthodox enough, but we have not thoroughly realized the fact that He is Lord God Almighty. Does it not sometimes seem to you to be impossible that such and such a grievously ungodly man could be converted. But why impossible with Him who can raise the dead? Does it not seem impossible that you could ever be supported through your present trouble. But how impossible with Him who shall make the dry bones live and cause the sepulchre to disgorge?

It appears improbable at times that your corruptions should ever be cleansed away, and that you should be perfect and without spot. But why so? He who is able to present tens of thousands of bodies before His throne, who have long slept in the sepulchre and molded into dust, what can He not accomplish within His people?

O doubt no more and let not even the greatest wonders of His love, His grace, His power, or His glory, cause you to marvel unbelievably, but rather say as each new prodigy of His divine power rises before you, "I expected this of such a one as He is. I gathered that He could achieve this, for I understood that He was able to subdue all things to Himself. I knew that He fashioned the worlds, and built the heavens, and guided the stars, and that by Him all things consist, I am not therefore astounded though I behold the greatest marvels of His power." The first words of the text, then, urge us to faith and rebuke all unbelieving amazement.

To the second sentence I now call your attention. The coming hour. "*The hour cometh,*" says Christ. I suppose He calls it an hour to intimate how very near it is in His esteem, since we do not begin to look at the exact hour of an event when it is extremely remote. An event which will not occur for hundreds of years is at first looked for and noted by the year, and only when we are reasonably near it do men talk of the day of the month, and we are coming very near it when we look for the precise hour.

Christ intimates to us that whether we think so or not, in God's thought the day of resurrection is very near. And though it may be a thousand years off even now, yet still to God it is but one day, and He would have us endeavor to think God's thought about it, not reckon any time to be long, since if it be time at all it must be short, and will be so regarded by us when it is past and the day has arrived. This is practical wisdom, to bring close up to us that which is inevitable, and to act towards it as though it were but tomorrow morning when the trump should sound, and we should be judged.

"The hour is coming," says the Savior. He here teaches us the certainty of that judgment. There are some events which may or may not be. Emperors may live or die, their sons may ascend their throne, or

their throne may be broken into dust and scattered to the winds of heaven. Dynasties may stand, or they may wither like autumn leaves.

The greatest events which we suppose to be inevitable may never occur. Another wheel, which has not yet been seen by us in the great machinery of Providence, may make events revolve in quite another fashion from what our puny wisdom would foretell, but the hour of resurrection is certain, whatever else may be contingent or doubtful.

The hour comes. It assuredly comes. In the divine decree this is the day for which all other days were made. And if it were possible that any determination of the Almighty could be changed, yet this shall never be, for "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." "The hour cometh." Reflect, my brethren, that most solemn hour comes every moment. Every second brings it nearer.

While you have been sitting still in this house, you have been borne onwards towards that great event. As the pendulum of yonder clock continues unceasingly to beat like the heart of time, as morning dawn gives place to evening shade, and the seasons follow in constant cycle, we are drifted along the river of time nearer to the ocean of eternity.

Borne as on the wings of some mighty angel who never pauses in his matchless flight, I onward journey towards the judgment bar of God. My brethren, by that selfsame flight are you also hurried on. Look to the resurrection, then, as a thing that ever comes, silently drawing nearer and nearer hour by hour. Such contemplations will be of the utmost service to you.

Our Lord's words read as if the one hour of which He spake completely drove into the shade all other events. As if the hour, the one hour, the last hour, THE hour *par excellence*, the master hour, the royal hour, was of all hours the only hour that was coming that was worth mentioning as being inevitable and important.

Like Aaron's rod, the judgment hour swallows up every other hour. We hear of hours that have been big with the fate of nations, hours in which the welfare of millions trembled in the balances, hours in which for peace or war the die must be cast, hours that have been called crises of history.

And we are apt to think that frequently periods such as this occur in the world's history. But here is the culminating crisis of all, here is the iron hour of severity, the golden hour of truth, the clear sapphire hour of manifestations. In that august hour there shall be proclamation made of the impartial decisions of the Lord Christ with regard to all the souls and bodies of men. Oh, what an hour is this which comes on apace!

My dear brethren, now and then I covet the tongue of the eloquent, and now I do so that I might on such a theme as this fire your imaginations and inflame your hearts. But let me pray you assist me now for a moment, and since this hour comes, try to think it very very near. Suppose it should come *now* while we are here assembled.

Suppose that even now the dead should rise, that in an instant this assembly should be melted into the infinitely greater one, and that no eye should be fixed upon the forgotten preacher, but all fixed upon the great descending Judge, sitting in majesty upon His great white throne. I pray you bethink yourselves as though the curtain were uplifted at this moment. Anticipate the sentence which will come forth to you from the throne of righteousness. consider as though at this precise moment it were pronounced upon you!

Oh now, I pray you examine yourselves as though the testing days were come, for such an examination will be to your souls' benefit if you be saved and they may be to your souls' arousing if you are unconverted.

But we must pass on. "Marvel not at this: the hour is coming when all that are in the graves." Notice this very carefully, "*all that are in the graves*," by which term is meant, not only all whose bodies are actually in the grave at this time, but all who were ever buried even though they may have been

disinterred, and their bones may have mingled with the elements, been scattered by the winds, dissolved in the waves, or merged into vegetable forms. All who have lived and died shall certainly rise again. All!

Compute then the numberless number! Count you now the countless! How many lived before the deluge? It has been believed, and I think accurately, that the inhabitants of this world were more numerous at the time of the deluge than they probably are now, owing to the enormous length of human life. Men's numbers were not so terribly thinned by death as they are now.

Think if you will, from the times of the deluge onward, of all Adam's progeny. From Tarshish to Sinim men covered the lands. Nineveh, Babylon, Chaldea, Persia, Greece, Rome, these were vast empires of men. The Parthians, Scythians, and Tartar hordes, who shall reckon up?

As for those northern swarms of Goths and Huns and Vandals, these were continually streaming as from a teeming hive in the middle ages, and Frank and Saxon and Celt multiplied in their measure. Yet these nations were but types of a numerous band of nations even more multitudinous.

Think of Ethiopia and the whole continent of Africa. Remember India, and Japan, and the land of the setting sun. In all lands great tribes of men have come and have gone to rest in their sepulchres. What millions upon millions must lie buried in China and Burma! What innumerable hosts are slumbering in the land of the pyramids and the mummy pits! Every one, both great and small, embalmed of old in Egypt, who shall compute the number?

Hear you then and believe—out of all who have ever lived of woman born, not one shall be left in the tomb. All, all shall rise. I may well say as the psalmist did of another matter, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” How has God marked all these bodies? How has He tracked the form of each corporeal frame? How shall Jesus Christ be able to raise all these? I know not, but He shall do it, for so He declares and so has God purposed.

“All that are in the graves shall hear his voice.” All the righteous, all the wicked, all that were engulfed in the sea, all who slumber on the lap of earth. All the great ones, all the multitudes of the sons of toil, all the wise and all the foolish, all the beloved and all the despised. There shall not be one single individual omitted.

My dear friend, it may be best for you to look at the question in a more personal light, *you* will not be forgotten. Your separated spirit shall have its appointed place, and that body which once contained it shall have its watcher to guard it, till by the power of God it shall be restored to your spirit again, at the sounding of the last trump.

You, my hearer, shall rise again. As surely as you sit here this morning, you shall stand before the once crucified Son of Man. It is not possible that you should be forgotten. You shall not be permitted to rot away into annihilation, to be left in the darkness of obscurity. You must, you shall rise, each and every one without a solitary exception. It is a wondrous truth, and yet we may not marvel at it so as to doubt it, though we may marvel at it and admire the Lord who shall bring it to pass.

Pass on. “All that are in the graves *shall hear his voice.*” Hear! Why, the ear has gone! A thousand years ago a man was buried and his ear—there is not the slightest relic of it left—all has vanished. Shall that ear ever hear? Yes, for He who made it hear at the first, wrought as great a wonder then as when He shall make it hear a second time. It needed a God to make the hearing ear of the newborn babe. It shall need no more to renew the hearing ear the second time. Yes, the ear so long lost in silence shall hear!

And what shall be the sound that shall startle that newly awakened and fresh fashioned ear? It shall be the voice of the Son of God. The voice of Jesus Christ Himself. Is it not wonderful that that same voice of Jesus is now sounding in this very place, and has been thousands of times, and there are men who have ears, who have yet never heard that voice.

Yet when that voice shall speak to men who have no ears, they shall hear it and rise to life. How deaf must those be who are more deaf than the dead! What is their guilt who have ears to hear yet hear not! And when the voice of Christ sounds through the building again and again in the preaching of the Gospel, they are no more moved by it than the slates which cover them from the rain.

How dead, I say, must they be who are not moved by the Word, which arouses even the dead in their graves who have lain therein these thousand years! Ah, my brethren, while this teaches us the stolidity of human nature and how depraved the heart is, it also reminds you who are careless that there is no escape for you. If you will not hear the voice of Jesus now, you *must* hear it then. You may thrust your fingers into your ears today, but there will be no doing that in the day of the last trump, you must hear then.

O that you would hear now! You must hear the summons to judgment. God grant that you may hear the summons to mercy, and become obedient to it and live. "All that are in their graves *shall* hear his voice." Whoever they may have been, they shall become subject to the power of His omnipotent command and appear before His sovereign judgment seat.

Note the next words, "*and shall come forth.*" That is to say, of course, that their bodies shall come out of the grave, out of the earth, or the water, or the air, or wherever else those bodies may be. But I think there is more than that intended by the words, "shall come forth."

It seems to imply manifestation, as though all the while men were here, and when in their graves they were hidden and concealed, but as the voice of God in the thunder discovers the forests and makes the hinds to calve, so the voice of God in resurrection shall discover the secrets of men, and make them bring forth their truest self into the light, to be revealed to all.

The hypocrite, masked villain as he is, is not discovered now, but when the voice of Christ sounds, he shall come forth in a sense that will be horrible to him, deprived of all the ornaments of his masquerade, the vizard of his profession torn away, he shall stand before men and angels with the leprosy upon his brow, an object of universal derision, abhorred of God and despised of men.

Ah! dear hearers, are you ready to come forth even now? Would you be willing to have your hearts read out? Would you wear them on your sleeve for all to see? Is not there much about you that would not bear the light of the sun? How much more will it not bear the light of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, seeing all and testing all by trial which cannot err! Your coming forth on that day will be not only a reappearance from amidst the shade of the sepulchre, but a coming forth into the light of heaven's truth which shall reveal you in meridian clearness.

And then the text goes on to say that they shall come forth as *those who have done good* and those who have done evil. From which we must gather the next truth, that death makes no change in man's character and that after death we must not expect improvements to occur. He that is holy is holy still and he that is filthy is filthy still.

They were, when they were put into the grave, men who had done good. They will rise as men who have done good. Or they were, when they were interred, men who had done evil. They rise as those that have done evil. Expect, therefore, no place for repentance after this life, no opportunities for reformation, no further proclamations of mercy, or doors of hope. It is now or never with you, remember that.

Note again, that *only two characters rise*, for indeed there are only two characters who ever lived, and therefore, two to bury and two to rise again—those who had done good and those who had done evil. Where were those of mingled character, whose conduct was neither good nor evil, or both? There were none such.

You say, do not the good do evil? May not some who are evil still do good? I answer, he that does good is a man who, having believed in Jesus Christ and received the new life, does good in his new nature, and with his newborn spirit, with all the intensity of his heart. As for his sins and infirmities, into which by reason of his old nature he falls, these being washed away by the precious blood of Jesus, are not mentioned in the day of account, and he rises up as a man who has done good, his good remembered, but the evil washed away.

As for the evil, of whom it is asserted that they may do good, we answer, so they may do good in the judgment of their fellow men and as towards their fellow mortals, but good towards God from an evil heart cannot proceed. If the fountain be defiled, every stream must be polluted also.

Good is a word that may be measured according to those who use it. The evil man's good is good to you, his child, his wife, his friend, but he has no care for God, no reverence, no esteem for the great Lawgiver. Therefore, that which may be good to you may be ill to God, because done for no right motive, even perhaps done with a wrong motive, so that the man is dishonoring God while he was helping his friend.

God shall judge men by their works, but there shall be but two characters, the good and the evil. And this makes it solemn work for each man to know where he will be, and what has been the general tenor of his life, and what is a true verdict upon the whole of it.

O sirs, there are some of you, who with all your excellences and moralities, have never done good as God measures good, for you have never thought of God to honor Him, you have never even confessed that you had dishonored Him. In fact, you have remained proudly indifferent to God's judgment of you as a sinner and you have set yourself up as being all you should be. How shall it be possible, while you disbelieve your God, that you could do anything that can please Him? Your whole life is evil in God's sight—only evil.

And as for you who fear His name or trust you do, take heed unto your actions, I pray you, seeing that there are only those that have done good and those that have done evil. Make it clear to your conscience, make it clear to the judgment of those who watch you. (though this is of less importance), and make it clear before God, that your works are good, that your heart is right, because your outward conduct is conformed unto the law of God.

I shall not keep you much longer in the exposition, except to notice that the mode of judging is remarkable. Those who search the Scriptures know that the mode of judging at the last day will be entirely according to works. Will men be saved then for their works? No, by no means. Salvation is in every case the work and gift of grace.

But the judgment will be guided by our works. It is correct for those to be judged, that they should all be tried by the same rule. Now, no rule can be common to saints and sinners, except the rule of their moral conduct, and by this rule shall all men be judged. If God finds not in you, my friend, any holiness of life whatever, neither will He accept you.

"What," says one, "of the dying thief then?" There was the righteousness of faith in him and it produced all the holy acts which circumstances allowed. The very moment he believed in Christ, he avowed Christ, and spoke for Christ, and that one act stood as evidence of his being a friend of God, while all his sins were washed away. May God grant you grace so to confess your sins and believe in Jesus, that all your transgression may be forgiven you.

There must be some evidence of your faith. Before the assembled host of men there shall be no evidence given of your faith fetched from your inward feelings, but the evidence shall be found in your outward actions. It will still be, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Take heed, then, as to practical godliness and abhor all preaching which would make sanctity of life to be a secondary thing. We are justified by faith, but not by a dead faith. The faith which justifies is that which produces holiness and, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." See you then the two classes into which men are divided, and the stern rule by which God shall judge them, and so judge yourselves that you be not condemned with the wicked.

The different dooms of the two classes are mentioned in the text. One shall rise *to the resurrection of life*. This does not mean mere existence, they shall both exist, both exist forever, but "life" means, when properly understood, happiness, power, activity, privilege, capacity. In fact, it is a term so comprehensive that I should need no small time to expound all it means.

There is a death in life which the ungodly shall have, but ours shall be a life in life—a true life. Not existence merely, but existence in energy, existence in honor, existence in peace, existence in blessedness, existence in perfection. This is the resurrection unto life.

As for the ungodly, there is a resurrection to damnation, by which their bodies and souls shall come manifestly under the condemnation of God. To use our Savior's word, shall be *damned*. Oh, what a resurrection! and yet we cannot escape from it if we neglect the great salvation.

If we could lay us down and sleep, and never wake again, oh, what a blessing it were for an ungodly man! If that grave could be the last of him, and like a dog he should never start again from slumber, what a blessing! But it is a blessing that is not yours and never can be. Your souls must live and your body must live.

O fear Him, I pray you, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear Him.

II. Our time is almost spent, but I must occupy the remaining minutes in DRAWING LESSONS FROM THE TEXT.

The first is the lesson of *adoring reverence*. If it be so, that all the dead shall rise at the voice of Christ, let us worship Him. What a Savior was He who bled upon the tree! How gloriously is He who was despised and rejected, now exalted! O brethren, if we could even get but to see the skirts of this truth, that He shall raise all the dead out of their graves, if we did but begin to perceive its grandeur of meaning, methinks we should fall at the Savior's feet as John did when he said, "I fell at his feet as dead."

Oh, what amazing power is Yours, my Lord and Master! What homage must be due to You! All hail, Immanuel! You have the keys of death and of hell. My soul loves and adores You, You ever great enthroned Prince, the Wonderful, the Counselor, King of kings and Lord of lords.

The next lesson is *consolation* for our wounded spirits concerning our departed friends. We never mourn with regard to the souls of the righteous, they are forever with the Lord. The only mourning that we permit among Christians concerns the body, which is blighted like a withered flower. When we read at funerals that famous chapter in the epistle to the Corinthians, we find in it no comfort concerning the immortal spirit, for it is not required, but we find much consolation with regard to that which is "sown in dishonor," but shall be "raised in glory."

Your dead men shall live. That decaying dust shall live again. Weep not as though you had cast your treasure into the sea, where you could never find it. You have only laid it by in a casket, whence you shall receive it again brighter than before. You shall look again with your own eyes into those eyes which have spoken love to you so often, but which are now closed in sepulchral darkness.

Your child shall see you yet again. You shall know your child. The selfsame form shall rise. Your departed friend shall come back to you, and having loved his Lord as you do, you shall rejoice with him in the land where they die no more. It is but a short parting. It will be an eternal meeting. Forever with the Lord, we shall also be forever with each other. Let us comfort one another, then, with these words.

The last lesson is that of *self-examination*. If we are to rise, some to rewards and some to punishments, what shall be my position? "What shall be my position?" let each conscience ask. How do you feel, my hearers, in the prospect of rising again? Does the thought give you any gleam of joy? Does it not create a measure of alarm? If your heart trembles at the tidings, how will you bear it when the real fact is before you and not the thought merely?

What has your life been? If by that life you shall be judged, what has it been? What has been its prevailing principle up till now? Have you believed God? Do you live by faith upon the Son of God? I know you are imperfect, but are you struggling after holiness? Do you desire to honor God?

This shall rule the judgment of your life, what was its end, and aim, and bent, and object? Imperfection there has been, but has there been sincerity? Has grace, divine grace that washes sinners in the blood of Christ, proved itself to be in you by alienating you from the sins you loved and leading you to the duties that you once neglected? Need I press these questions?

I know they are irksome to those who cannot answer them with comfort. Yes, I must even again press them upon you. I beseech you, this morning, put yourselves into the crucible of self-examination, for from the refiner's fire you shall not at the last be able to escape. Ah, if I can say, "Yes, my God, with

ten thousand sins, yet since the day in which Your grace found me, I have sought to honor You,” oh, happy, happy thought to know in that dread hour that the blood has cleansed me, and the righteousness of Christ has enwrapped me, and that I am safe!

But if you are compelled to say, “No, up to this moment I have not regarded God, my actions have had no respect to Him, a sense of His majesty has never constrained me to perform a single act, and never withheld me from one solitary sin,” oh, then you are judged already! I pray you, tremble and flee to Him who can purge you from all iniquity, and yet present you faultless before His Father’s presence with exceeding great joy.

I will ask you another question—if you do not feel happy at the thought of yourself, are you quite peaceful concerning the raising of all others? Are you prepared to meet before God those whom you have sinned with among men? It is a question worthy of the sinner’s thought, of what must be the terrors of men and women who will have to meet the companions of their sins!

Was not this at the bottom of dives wishing Lazarus to be sent back to the world to warn his five brethren lest they should come into the place of torment? Was not he afraid to see them there, because their recriminations would increase his misery?

It will be a horrible thing for a man who has been a debauched villain to rise again and confront his victims whom his lusts dragged down to hell! How will he wail as he hears them lay their damnation at his door and curse him for his lasciviousness! “Oh, she is buried long ago,” say you, and you go gaily on in your mirth. But she will see you, and like a basilisk’s eyes shall be her eyes as they shall flash vengeance on you in the light of eternity, counting you to have been the devil that destroyed her.

Let any man here who has sinned against his fellow, tremble. Let any one here who has sent another down to hell, repent lest he perish now. O man, your sin is not dead and buried, and the sinner whom you joined hands with in iniquity shall rise to witness against you. The crime, the guilt, the punishment, and the guilty one shall alike live again, and you shall live forever in remorse to rue the day in which you thus transgressed.

Another question, if it will be terrible to many to see the dead rise again, how will they endure to see Him, the Judge Himself, the Savior? Of all men that ever lived, He is the one that you have need to be the most afraid of, because it is He whom this day you ought most to love, but whom you forget.

How many times from this pulpit have I pleaded with you to yield yourselves to Jesus Christ and how frequently have you given Him a flat denial! It may be some of you have not quite done that, but you have postponed your decision, and said, “When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee.”

When He comes, how will you answer Him? Man, how will you answer Him? How will you excuse yourselves? You would not have Him as a Savior, but you must have Him as your Judge to pronounce your sentence. You despised His grace, but you cannot escape His wrath. If you will but look to Jesus now, you shall find salvation in that glance, but in refusing so to do, you heap up for yourself wrath when that terrible but inevitable glance shall be yours, of which the prophet says, “All the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”

O spurn Him not, then! Despise not the Crucified! I pray you trample not upon His blood, but come to Him, that so, when you see Him on His throne you may not be afraid.

Beloved, I might have continued to ask more questions, but I shall close with these two. One of the best ways by which to learn what will be our portion in the future is to inquire what is our portion in the present. Have you life now, I mean spiritual life—the life that grieves for sin, the life that trusts a Savior? If so, you shall certainly have the resurrection to life.

On the other hand, have you condemnation now? For he that believes not is condemned already. Are you an unbeliever? Then you are condemned now, you shall suffer the resurrection to damnation. How can it be otherwise? Seek, then, that you may possess the life of God now by faith and you shall have it forever in fruition. Escape from condemnation now and you shall escape from damnation hereafter.

God bless you all with the abundance of His salvation, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 5:1-29

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.