

“HE MUST REIGN”
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A SERMON
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“For He must reign, till He has put all enemies under His feet.”
1 Corinthians 15:25.

“HE must reign.” There was another “must” which His disciples were very slow to learn. Very much of our Lord’s teaching to His apostles was concerning the necessity that He must suffer. That doctrine seemed so strange to them that, at first, they could scarcely catch the idea. When they perceived that Christ really meant it; they could not bear the thought of it. One of them even began to rebuke his Lord, but He sharply stopped him. The notion that Christ must suffer could not be drilled into the apostles; their very spirits seemed to revolt against it. And do you wonder? If you had lived with that dear and blessed Lord, and had seen the perfection of His character, the liberality of His gifts, and the tenderness of His heart, and if you had known, as they did, in a measure, the glory of His nature and the marvel of His person, could you have endured the thought that He must be spitefully used, and spit upon, and nailed like a felon to a gallows? No, even Christ Himself might have found it difficult to get that thought into your mind. It was such a cruel “must”—that He must die. Why, even after He had died, and all the prophecies concerning His death had been fulfilled, it was still a bewilderment to His disciples. The two, who walked to Emmaus with Christ, were in a maze concerning it, and He had to say to them, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?”

That first, “must” cost the people of God much before they learned it, but we know right well that the price of pardon for us was Christ’s suffering and death. We understand that there was no other way of access for us but by the atonement—no other method by which the lost inheritance could come back except by that ransom price which was found in the pierced heart of Christ. And now there is another “must” which, I think, is almost as difficult for us to learn. The shadow of the cross has fallen upon us, and we live so much in its shade that it is not easy for us to catch the gleam of that necessity which comes from His throne: “He must reign.” The cross, too, is on our shoulder. It is not merely that we live under the shadow of the cross, but the burden of the cross has to be cheerfully endured from day to day; as we bear it, it is not easy for us to feel that “He must reign.” O brethren, when you preach and no man gives heed to your message—when you teach, but the children yield not their hearts to your Lord—when you sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar, and meet with hard and cold hearts in every place, that thaw not even beneath the sunbeams of the love of Jesus, you are very apt to say that it does not appear that “He must reign.” The long rebellion against Jehovah still continues; the dread revolt against the majesty of heaven seems as if it will never end, and we sometimes fear that the treason will last on to all eternity. It appears impossible that the Crucified Christ shall yet be the universal Conqueror, that the man of Nazareth will yet mount His white horse, and lead His conquering armies to the last charge and to the final victory; and yet, as surely as it was true that He must suffer, so surely “He must reign;” and it becomes us to open our hearts to this predestinated necessity ordained of the Most High. Jesus must reign; His defeat is not to be thought of for a moment. Delay there may be, but the victory must come: “He must reign.” Let heaven ring with the anticipation of it: “He must reign.” Let earth resound with the prophecy of it: “He must reign.” Let hell’s darkest cavern hear the tidings of that imperative necessity: “He must reign.” And let each Christian feel revived and quickened by the joyful sound, He who had to die, must surely reign. The second necessity shall be as certainly fulfilled as was the first: “He must reign.” Let me try to ring that bell, or to sound that trumpet.

I. There is, first, A FACT WHICH IS A SORT OF PRELUDE OR ACCOMPANIMENT TO THE NECESSITY IN ITS GREATER FULFILLMENT.

The fact is that He does now reign; that is in our text. It says, “He must reign, *till* He has put all enemies under His feet.” *Jesus is reigning even now in heaven.* There, no shame can approach Him, and no scorn can even be whispered at His feet. He reigns there with undisputed sway; it would not be possible for me

to fully depict the royal state in which Emmanuel sits enthroned above, but I would like your faith to endeavor to realize it. You may even venture to call in your sanctified imagination to aid you to sketch the scene where He reigns in glory. There is no province of the celestial domain which does not own His sway, and not one individual of all the happy tribes that dwell in glory but is glad to call Him, King. The holy angels, whom He has made to be as flames of fire, delight to do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word. All the various orders of cherubim and seraphim yield Him their loyal homage, and all the angels and principalities and powers in the heavenly places own Him as their Lord forever. His redeemed occupy the most honorable place in heaven; nearest to the throne you will find the twenty-four elders, the representatives of the Church; and then, in an outer ring, stand the angels worshipping and adoring; and all the redeemed spirits—as well they may since they owe their glory to His blood—call Jesus their Lord and King. He is no servant there; He washes no disciples’ feet there; He goes not from there to Pilate’s Hall to be judged. Absolute and supreme is He—King of kings, for they are all kings whom He has redeemed—and Lord of lords, for they are all lordly ones over whom He reigns, and He occupies the highest seat amidst the splendors of the celestial realm.

But do not imagine that Christ’s reign is limited to those gates of pearl and streets of shining gold. Far from it, for *Jesus reigns today on earth*. It did my ears and heart good, just now, to hear you sing “Crown Him Lord of all.” I dared not hope that every heart here was really crowning Him, but I did believe that there were thousands who, in their inmost souls, were wishing Him all honor and glory, and delightedly confessing their allegiance to Him. O Jesus, You have still on earth myriads whose highest joy is found in Your name, and who find their heaven on earth as they think of You. In Your Church, You are still Lord and Master; and if there be churches that revolt against You, and play the harlot, You have Your chaste spouse still, and You reign over her in undisputed sovereignty.

Nor is Christ’s kingdom limited to the Church in heaven and the Church on earth, for *He reigns today over all things*. “All power,” said He, “is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.” Providence is at the disposal of the Nazarene. Let those doubt it who will, we believe that every event which transpires—political, national, social, domestic—is overruled by Him for the accomplishment of the grand designs of mercy which He has for His own elect. Just as Joseph reigned in Egypt, and all had to come to him for food in the time of famine, so does Jesus reign in the courts of earth for the good of His people. His cause must prosper, for He is always at the helm; yes, even where confusion seems to rule, He is everywhere King, putting a bit into the mouth of the tempest, and riding upon the wings of the wind. Just as the seas owned His presence when He was here incarnate, so do they own His presence now; and just as the earth then felt His tread, so does she feel it now; but it is no more the weary tramp of the Son of man, but the majestic footsteps of the Son of God. He rules everywhere. “The sea is His, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land. In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also.”

He reigns, too, even in hell itself. The devils bite their iron bands in grim despair because He reigns. They tried to make this earth their own, but now they know the prowess, the strong arm, and the valiant heart of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Highest; and they must do His bidding. “Hitherto shall you come, but no further,” is His command to the spirits grim and fierce, and they are compelled to submit to Him, however anxious they are to do still more mischief to the sons of men. Yes, Jesus reigns from the bottomless gulf to the heights of heaven. Far off, where the sun now gilds the Western hills and yonder in the East, where we shall watch for its return tomorrow morning, over all those regions Jesus reigns—

*“Far as the eagle’s pinion
Or dove’s light wing can soar.”*

He reigns today, and let His people proclaim it without fear, “The Lord is King.” The fact that He is now reigning cheers our hearts—

*“Rejoice, the Lord is King,
Your Lord and King adore;
Mortals, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore:
Lift up the heart, lift up the voice,
Rejoice aloud, you saints, rejoice.”*

II. But, to come still more closely to our text, we ring this bell again, and call your attention to THE NECESSITY FOR CHRIST’S REIGN: “He *must* reign.” It is not merely that He shall, He can, or He may; but He *must*—“He must reign.” Let us see why He must.

Well, first and weakest argument of all, yet one that has much force in it, *all His servants say that He shall reign*. Weak as the twelve apostles were, and the immediate followers of Christ, they said that “He must reign,” and they meant it, and they lived to make it true, and almost all the nations on the earth heard

of Jesus within a century after He had been taken up to heaven. Then came the kings of the earth, and set themselves against Him, and they said that He should not reign; but the martyrs came, and yielded up their lives with joy, each one singing “He must reign.” While the amphitheaters ran with blood, other champions came into the ring, each one uttering the watchword, “He must reign.” The kings of the earth mocked at the saints of God. “What are these feeble Jews doing?” they said, just as Pharaoh might have said, “The locusts, what can they do?” But the locusts might have answered, “We are, each one of us, weak, but there are myriads of us, and we will come up, and cover your land, and we will eat every green thing that is left in the land;” and they did so. It was very much the same with the persecuted saints of God; each individual believer was weak, but they came by tens, by hundreds, by thousands, they came in countless shoals till the kings threw away their swords and quenched their fires in sheer despair; and they agreed that, nominally at least, Christ should reign, for His disciples would have it so.

And now, today, it becomes us not to speak proudly; but, if persecuting times should ever come again, many of those who say the least about it would be among the first to go boldly to be burned at the stake, or to submit their bodies to the torture of the rack, for love of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Mutius Scaevola put his right hand into the fire to burn, he told the king that there were a thousand youths who had sworn that they would put him to death rather than that their country should fall into his hands, and the tyrant trembled; and there are thousands of Christians now, who only need the dire necessity again to rise, and they would come forward with cheerfulness to yield their lives for their Lord, declaring that “He must reign” whatever might become of them. We must never let His standard fall, or even tremble in the day of battle. Forward, you sons of heroes, in the name of Him who bled and died for you! Never let there be any question in your mind whether “He must reign” or no. The sun may cease to shine, and the moon forget her nightly marches, but Jesus must reign. It must be so, for His people declare it.

I said, however, that this was the weakest of reasons, and there are many far stronger ones. “He must reign,” for *He is Jehovah’s Heir*—the “Heir of all things.” Kings cannot always ensure the putting of their crowns upon the heads of their sons. When they die, perhaps a rebellion breaks out, and overthrows the dynasty; but what power can overturn the Divine dynasty, and rob the Heir of God of His dominions?

“He must reign,” for *by nature He is a King*. He was born a King; you might have seen something of sovereignty in His eyes when He first opened them upon earth’s light. The wise men from the East brought gifts which showed that they recognized the royalty of the newborn babe of Bethlehem. Every characteristic of the life of Christ is royal. He is no tyrant king. He is the people’s King, but a true King in every part of His being. There is nothing mean, or low, or selfish, about Him. Every motion of His hand is princely, as He feeds the multitudes, or heals their sicknesses; and every glance of His eye is kingly, as He weeps over man’s sin and fall, or as He rebukes man’s transgression.

“He must reign,” for *He deserves that honor*. You cannot see Him voluntarily yielding up His soul unto death in order that He might redeem His people by His blood—you cannot hear His cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”—without feeling that, if there is justice in the courts of heaven, the death of Christ upon the cross cannot be the end of Him. That terrible shame must be rewarded; and how can it be rewarded except by the brightest crown that can possibly be conceived, or by something brighter even than that? Reign He must, for He was so good, so generous, so self-sacrificing, so oblivious of Himself in death. We would lose our faith in the Deity if we could lose faith in the reign of Christ as the reward of all that He suffered upon the cross.

Besides, “He must reign,” for *who is to stop Him?* In the olden days, many tried to do so, but He defeated them all. The prince of darkness came to Him in the wilderness, and offered Him a paltry bauble in the place of His true crown, but the tempter was repulsed by the sentence, “It is written.” The prince of darkness came again and again, but he found nothing in Christ upon which he could lay his hand; and, before long, Christ will have the great adversary beneath His foot, and finally bruise his head. All the evil forces upon the face of the earth cannot stand against Christ; for if, upon the accursed tree, He defeated them in His weakness, He will surely conquer them in the time of His strength. He trod them under His foot when He died; how much more completely shall He vanquish them now that He is risen again! He scattered them like chaff before the wind, with His dying breath; how much more shall He do it now in the fullness of His resurrection Life! Rejoice, O Christians, in the fact that there is nothing that can stand against Jesus!

“He must reign,” for the best of all reasons—*the Father has decreed it*. “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.” God wills it, and that stands for us as a sufficient reason; and God is working it. Omnipotence is on the side of Christ. We see Him not yet at the head of His heavenly armies; but He is

there, and He is even now going forth conquering and to conquer, and everything that happens is working out the decree that Christ must be King of kings, and Lord of lords.

III. Not only does Christ reign, and must Christ reign, but THERE IS A PROGRESS ABOUT HIS KINGDOM. It is growing; it becomes more and more visible among the sons of men. I am not going into prophecies; I leave them for wiser persons than I am. I am more at home in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John than in the deeps of Revelation; but this one thing I do know from the Word of the Lord, that, first of all, “*He must reign lovingly over all His elect.*” Some of them are hard to bring in, but they must come sooner or later. Christ Himself said, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.” Some of them are with us now; they have long resisted mercy’s call, but they will have to yield. Sovereign grace has determined it, so yield they must. The Lord says, “Compel them to come in,” and come in they must, for “He must reign.” He will not suffer one of the sheep He bought with His blood to be lost in the mountains, or one single soul that He ransomed from the enemy to abide forever in captivity. “He must reign” over them, and He will; and the day shall come when He shall pass all His sheep, one by one, under the hand of Him that counts them, and they will all be there, all with the blood mark upon them as they come through the gate, and the count of the flock shall be complete, not one shall be devoured by the wolf. The Shepherd shall say to His Father, in that day, “Those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost.”

It also seems to me to be clear, from the Scriptures, that, *in future ages, Jesus Christ will reign over all nations.* I do not believe that the great drama of the world’s history will end till truth is triumphant. I read, concerning the Messiah, “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust.” The North shall give up, and the South shall no longer keep back, but they shall bring His sons from afar and His daughters from the ends of the earth. I cannot help expecting a period when “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” Happy day! Oh, that it might soon arrive! Push on with mercy’s work, O missionaries and evangelists! Toil on, preachers and teachers, for “He must reign.” Ours is not a losing cause; Jesus must yet subdue the nations, and be acknowledged by them as Lord and God.

I know also that He must *one day reign over all mankind*, whether by their willing consent, or in spite of their opposition, “for to Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”—

*“He shall reign from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway.”*

And over and above that, I look for a time when *Jesus Christ will reign upon this earth over all nature;* when all His enemies being subdued, the New Jerusalem shall come down out of heaven upon the earth, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Read the Revelation, and you will find that much which we generally apply to heaven is really a description of what is to take place upon this earth. I hope it is not mere poetic fancy that leads me to believe that the mists, which now swathe this planet, and make her dim in comparison with her sister stars, will one day all be swept away, and she shall shine out as bright as in that pristine morning when the sons of God shouted for joy at the sight of the new creation. I think it is no fiction to believe that the day shall come when restored manhood, in connection with the personal reign of Christ, shall have dominion over all the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, whatsoever passes through the paths of the sea, and when it shall not be a metaphor, but a realized fact that “the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them;”—when whispers of blasphemy shall not merely be drowned in thunders of adoration, but shall not even be known—when the last taint and trace of sin shall have disappeared, and the earth shall shine as if she had never been defiled, and the days of her mourning shall be forever ended; and, “Glory, glory, glory,” shall be the song from sunrise to sunset, and the night watches shall be kept with music of praise, and angels shall go to and fro, between the throne above and the throne below, and the new heavens and the new earth shall be seen, wherein dwells righteousness—

*“Hallelujah!—Hark! The sound,
From the center to the skies,
Wakes above, beneath, around,
All creation’s harmonies:
See Jehovah’s banner furled,
Sheathed His sword! He speaks—’tis done,
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son.”*

Then comes the grand climax, when He shall “put all enemies under His feet”—not annihilate them, not exterminate them, not convert them, but put them under His feet. There shall still be a devil, but He shall be a devil under Christ’s feet. Lost spirits there shall still be, but the great Conqueror shall hold them down beneath His almighty heel. Death shall be destroyed: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” We shall remember that men died; we shall ourselves remember that we passed beneath the power of death; but all the bitterness of death will be past as far as we are concerned. Through Christ’s death, eternal life has become ours. Oh, what a prospect opens up before me! My time flies so nimbly, as it always does when I have such a subject as this, so I must forbear to speak of it as I gladly would; but let your faith project itself into the glorious future of which I have been reminding you. It may be much nearer than you have imagined. If you listen intently, you may hear the chariot wheels of the coming King. Be ready to greet Him whenever He comes; it may be that, tonight, before the clock has sounded out the midnight hour, the cry may be heard in heaven and earth, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes;” and starting from your beds, you will have to meet Him. Will you be ready to hail Him joyfully, as your long-expected King, or will you have to meet Him dolefully, and to be trodden beneath His feet? “For He must reign, till He has put all enemies under His feet.”

So I close with this question—let each one take it to heart as best he may; and may the Spirit of God send it home!—*How do I stand in relation to the great event thus predestinated?* What is my connection with the triumph of Christ? Am I one of His enemies? Suppose a gnat should be able to plunge itself into the inconceivably fierce heat that burns from the orb of day, its instant destruction must follow; and it must be so with you also if you are opposed to Christ. You potsherd of earth, strive with other potsherds like yourself. For you to strive with Jesus is for a potsherd to strive against a rod of iron which will break it in pieces. There is no hope of success for you; so give up the hopeless enterprise. Your utter insignificance will make your opposition to be contemptible in that day when the intelligences of the universe shall judge things aright.

What then? Had we not better yield—I will not say because we must, but because we ought. For, in this case, Christ’s might is on the side of right, and it is no disgrace to a man to yield to might when it is allied with right. “I yield to Christ” says one. How far do you yield? Do you yield so far as to be saved by Him? “Yes,” you say. Do you yield so far as to be forgiven by Him? “Yes,” you say. Do you yield so far as to become His disciple? “Yes,” you say. But do you yield that He should reign over you—that you should do as He bids you, and not do what He forbids? Shall He be King over you? If you want to have Him on any other terms than these, you cannot have Him at all, for “He must reign”—

*“Yet know (nor of the terms complain),
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign;
To reign, and with no partial sway:
Thoughts must be slain that disobey.”*

Will you have Him to reign thus over you? This is the all-important point. Alas, many say, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Be not you as senseless as this, but yield to Jesus Christ, and let Him be your Lord and King. If you will not do so, I must again remind you of the dread alternative. You must either let Him reign over you, or else you will have to lie beneath His feet. Have you ever reckoned what will be the weight of the rejected love of God incarnate, which died for sinners, and yet is rejected by myriads despite His unspeakable love? Take your pens, and calculate that weight if you can—omnipotence indignant that eternal love was slighted—omniscience aroused to anger by the fact that divine compassion, such as could never have been dreamt of, was trampled underfoot by impudent sons of men. In the name of the God who made the heavens and the earth, and who made each one of you, I entreat you to yield to that Christ who is your rightful King. As sinners, yield yourselves by trusting in Him; as men, yield yourselves to obey His commands. In the name of Him who will come with sound of trumpet, and with angel guards attending Him, swift to judge, and stern to punish, I implore you to bow before Him now. As though I felt death’s cold hand upon me, and heard a voice saying to me, “Speak out now, man, for the last time, and obey your King’s command,” so speak I in the name of Him who will make earth and heaven reel beneath His awful presence when He comes to judge the quick and the dead. In the name of Him who will shut the gates of mercy on all those who reject His gospel, I do not merely ask you, or beseech you, but I command you, in His name, to repent and be converted. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but He that believes not shall be damned.” O God, own this message, for it is Your own truth! Prove it to be so, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 15.

Verses 1, 2. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.*

What was this gospel, of which Paul thought so highly, and which he says is the means of our salvation? Did it consist in sundry doctrinal statements? No, it contained doctrinal statements, but it did not consist entirely of them. Here is Paul’s declaration concerning the gospel:—

3. *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

This is the solid basis of the gospel.

4. *And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

This is the very keystone of the gospel arch—the Christ who died on the cross, and was buried in Joseph’s tomb, “rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” This great truth of Christ’s resurrection is so important that Paul dwells upon it at length.

5. *And that He was seen of Cephas, Peter saw Him.*

5, 6. *Then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present,*

When the epistle was written.

6-8. *But some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

There is no fact, in all history that is so well attested as the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Whether there ever was such a person as Julius Caesar might be contested, though there were, doubtless, thousands of witnesses who saw him, and many who wrote about him; but as to whether Christ rose from the dead, no candid mind can entertain a doubt. He was seen by great companies of believers, and by various individuals who had long known Him most intimately, and who had many opportunities of judging whether they were deceived or not.

Christ’s resurrection is not only well attested, but it is also the most important fact that ever happened in the history of the world, as Paul goes on to show.

9-14. *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

“We are deceivers, and you are deceived, and the whole Christian system crumbles into dust unless Christ did really rise from the dead.”

15. *Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.*

Between Christ and His people, there is a union which can never be broken; so that, if He rose from the dead, they also must rise. If we are one with Him, who shall separate us? And if we cannot be separated, then we must share and share alike with Him.

16-19. *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

To have been quickened into a life which gives great pain and sorrow would be a miserable thing if this were not compensated by the hope of glory which that life has brought to us. A man who has been always poor can bear his poverty; but let him taste of wealth and luxury for a while, and then go back to poverty, and how keen is the pang he feels! And let a man be quickened to know God, and to rejoice in the new life, and then be told that there is no hereafter, and he is, indeed, “of all men most miserable.”

20-22. *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

All that were in Adam died in Adam, and all that are in Christ live in Christ, and shall rise in Christ.

23-26. *But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

Death is an enemy, but it is the last one; and it is an enemy that shall be destroyed; but it shall be destroyed last.

27, 28. *For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*

There will, one day, be an end of the Mediatorial system. Christ shall have restored us to the Father, and then He, as our Head, and we, as making up the family of the redeemed, shall rejoice in the God who is "all in all."

29-32. *Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I affirm by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantages it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.*

If there is no resurrection, the philosophy of the Epicureans is a true one. If we are to come an end when we die, let us enjoy life while we can; if it is to be a short life, let it be a merry one. You see to what a conclusion this theory would lead us, so let us start back from it with horror. The logical consequence convicts the statement of falsehood. There is a future state, and there is to be a resurrection of the body.

33-35. *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?*

You know the almost endless questions that may be asked about this matter, and you know the snares into which a man may fall if he begins curiously to pry into this mystery. Paul will have no prying into the mystery, and somewhat tartly he answers:—

36. *You fool, that which you sow is not quickened, except it die.*

Would you take a seed into your hand, and begin to argue, "How can that little seed ever become a flower?" Could you guess, apart from observation, what kind of flower would come out of such a seed as that? You would make a hundred foolish guesses if you tried it. So is it concerning the resurrection of the body; in due time we shall know, and we shall see; but until then, we must wait and trust.

37, 38. *And that which you sow, you sow not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, and to every seed its own body.*

Every man shall have his own body. There will be differences and peculiarities, even as there are here; and we shall therefore know each other.

39-42. *All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption;*

You know all about that.

42. *It is raised in incorruption:*

What an anticipation for us!

43. *It is sown in dishonor;*

For, with all the honor that we can pay to our departed dear ones, it is a dishonor to them to have to lie encased in a coffin, in the cold clay of the cemetery.

43. *It is raised in glory:*

Oh, the splendor of that resurrection!

43. *It is sown in weakness;*

It is so weak that it cannot get into its own last resting place, but must be tenderly laid there by others.

43, 44. *It is raised in power: it is sown a natural body;*

A soulish body, a body fitted for the human soul.

44. *It is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

A body fitted for the newborn spirit which is given in regeneration.

45-48. *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy:*

You and I have every evidence about us that we are earthy.

48. *And as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.*

Glory be to the name of Christ, we belong to Him, and already the heavenly light begins to shine upon us, and we are getting ready to soon put on the garments of immortality.

49-51. *And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep,*

For some will be here when Christ comes again to this earth.

51-58. *But we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren,*

“Let us weep and lament”? Oh, no! That is not the apostle’s inference. Therefore, let us throw down our weapons, and say, “It is no good to continue the fight, for we must all die”? Far from it.

58. *Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

“You know,” because Christ has risen, and because you also shall rise, and because there is a reward of grace laid up in store for you. The Lord’s people may die, but the Lord’s church never dies, and the Lord Himself, the ever-living One, it always with us, blessed be His holy name!

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