

RESURGAM*

*I shall rise again

NO. 306

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 1, 1860
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?
 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest,
 thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:
 but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.”*
1 Corinthians 15:35-38

WE preach with words, God preaches to us in acts and deeds. If we would but perceive it, creation and providence are two continual sermons, streaming from the mouth of God. The seasons are four evangelists, each of them having his testimony to utter to us. Does not *summer* preach to us of God's bounty, of the richness of His goodness, of that lavish munificence with which He has been pleased to supply the earth, not simply with food for man, but with delights for both ear and eye in the beautiful landscape, the melodious birds, and the flowers of various hue?

Have you never heard the still small voice of *autumn*, who bears the wheat sheaf, and whispers to us in the rustling of the sear leaf? He bids us prepare to die. “All we,” saith he, “do fade as a leaf, and all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags.”

Then comes *winter*, crowned with snow, and he thunders out a most mighty sermon, which, if we would but listen to it, might well impress us with the terrors of God's vengeance, and let us see how soon He can strip the earth of all its pleasantries, and enrobe it in storm, when He shall come Himself to judge the earth with righteousness, and the people with equity.

But it seems to me that *spring* reads us a most excellent discourse upon the grand doctrine of revelation. This very month of April, which, if it be not the very entrance of spring, yet certainly introduces us to the fullness of it, this very month, bearing by its name the title of the opening month, speaks to us of the resurrection.

As we have walked through our gardens, fields, and woods, we have seen the flower buds ready to burst upon the trees, and the fruit blossoms hastening to unfold themselves, we have seen the buried flowers upstarting from the sod, and they have spoken to us with sweet, sweet voice, the words, “Thou too shall rise again, thou too shall be buried in the earth like seeds that are lost in winter, but thou shalt rise again, and thou shalt live and blossom in eternal spring.”

I propose this morning, as God shall enable, to listen to that voice of spring, proclaiming the doctrine of the resurrection, a meditation all the more appropriate from the fact, that the Sabbath before last we considered the subject of death, and I hope that then very solemn impressions were made upon our minds. May the like impressions now return, accompanied with more joyous ones, when we shall look beyond the grave, through the valley of the shadow of death, to that bright light in the distance—the splendors and glory of life and immortality.

In speaking to you upon this text, I would remark in the outset, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is a doctrine peculiar to Christianity. The heathen, by the feeble light of nature, were able to spell out the truth of the immortality of the soul. Those professors of religion who deny that immortality, are not so far advanced in learning as the heathen themselves.

When you meet with any who think that the soul of man may possibly become annihilated, make them a present of that little catechism brought out by the Westminster Assembly, which bears the title,

“A Catechism for the Young and Ignorant.” Let them read that through, and begin to understand that God has not made man in vain.

The resurrection of the *body* was that which was new in the apostolic times. When Paul stood up on Mars Hill, in the midst of the learned assembly of the Areopagites, had he spoken to them about the immortality of the soul, they would not have laughed, they would have respected him, for this was one of the sublime truths which their own wise men had taught.

But when he went on to assert that the flesh and blood which was laid in the tomb should yet arise again, that bones which had become the dwelling place of worms, that flesh which had corrupted and decayed, should actually start afresh into life, that the body as well as the soul should live, some mocked, and others said, “We will hear thee again of this matter.”

The fact is, reason teaches the immortality of the spirit, it is revelation alone which teaches the immortality of the body. It is Christ alone who has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel. He was the clearest proclaimer of that grand truth. Albeit that it had lain in the secret faith of many of the ancient people of God before, yet He it was who first set forth in clear terms the grand truth that there should be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust.

As far as I know, the doctrine has not been disputed in the Christian church. There have been some few heretics who have denied it at divers times, but they have been so few, so utterly insignificant, that it is not worth while to take any notice of their scruples, or of the objections which they have urged. Instead thereof, we will turn to our text, we will assume that the doctrine is true, and so proceed to utter some words of explanation upon it.

First then, our text suggests *the real identity* of the resurrection body. The apostle uses the figure of a seed, a shriveled grain of wheat. It is put into the ground, there it dies, all the farinaceous part of it decays and forms a peculiarly fine soil, into which the life-germ strikes itself, and upon which the life-germ feeds. The seed itself dies, with the exception of a particle almost too small to be perceived, which is the real life contained within the wheat. By and by we see a green blade upstarting, that grows, swells, and increases, until it comes to be corn in the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear.

Now no one has any suspicion but that the same wheat arises from the soil into which it was cast. Put into the earth, we believe it springs up, and we are accustomed to talk of it in our ordinary language as being the very same seed which we sowed, although the difference is striking and marvelous. Here you have a plant some three feet high, bearing many grains of wheat, and there you had the other day a little shriveled grain, yet no one doubts but that the two are the same.

So shall it be in the resurrection of the dead. The body is here but as a shriveled seed, there is no beauty in it that we should desire it. It is put into a grave, like wheat that is sown in the earth, there it rots and it decays, but God preserves within it a sort of life germ which is immortal, and when the trump of the archangel shall shake the heavens and the earth it shall expand to the full flower of manhood, which shall blossom from the earth, a far more glorious form than the manhood which was buried.

You are, my brethren, today but as a heap of wheat, a heap of poor shriveled corn. Despite that earthly beauty which makes glad our countenances, we are after all shriveled and worthless, compared with what our bodies shall be when they shall awake from their beds of silent dust and cold damp clay. Yet while they shall be different, they shall be precisely the same, it shall be the same body, the identity shall be preserved. Though there shall seem to be but little similarity, yet shall no man doubt but that the very body which was sown in the earth has sprung up to eternal life.

I suppose that if I should bring here a certain grain of seed, and you had never seen the image of the plant into which it would ripen, and I should submit it to a thousand persons here present, and ask them this question—“What form will this seed assume when it shall grow into a plant and bear a flower?” none of you could possibly tell what it would be like, yet when you saw it spring up you would say, “Well, I have no doubt that the heart’s-ease sprang from its own seed. I am sure that a violet springs from a violet seed. I cannot doubt that the lily has its own appropriate root.”

And another time, when you come to see the seed, you perhaps imagine you see some little likeness, at least you never mistrust the identity. Though there are wide extremes of difference between the tiny mustard seed and the great tree beneath the branches of which the birds of the air build their nests, yet you never for a moment question but what they are precisely the same. The identity is preserved. So shall it be in the resurrection of the dead. The difference shall be extraordinary, yet shall the body still be the same.

In order to affirm this, the ancient Christian church was in the habit in their creed of adding a sentence to the article which runs thus—"I believe in the resurrection of the dead." They added, in Latin words to this effect—"I believe in the resurrection of the dead, *of this very flesh and blood.*" I do not know that the addition was ever authorized by the church, but it was continually used, especially at the time when there was a discussion as to the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

The very flesh and blood that is buried, the very eyes that are closed in death, the very hand which stiffens by my corpse, these very members shall live again—not the identical particles of the same matter any more than the self-same particles of the wheat spring up to make a blade, and to make full corn in the ear. Yet shall they be identical, in the true sense of the term, they shall spring up from this body—shall be the true result and development of this poor flesh and blood, which we now drag about with us here below.

Ten thousand objections have been raised against this, but they are all readily answerable. Some have said, "But when men's bodies are dead, and are committed to the grave, they are often dug up, and the careless sexton mixes them up with common mold, nay, it sometimes happens that they are carted away from the churchyard, and strewn over the fields, to become a rich manure for wheat, so that the particles of the body are absorbed into the corn that is growing, and they travel round in a circle until they become the food of man. So that the particle which may have been in the body of one man enters into the body of another.

"Now," say they, "how can all these particles be tracked?" Our answer is, if it were necessary, every atom could be traced. Omnipotence and omniscience could do it. If it were needful that God should search and find out every individual atom that ever existed, He would be able to detect the present abode of every single particle.

The astronomer is able to tell the position of one star by the aberration of the motion of another, by his calculation, apart from observation, he can discover an unknown orb, its hugeness puts it within his reach. But to God there is nothing little or great, He can find out the orbit of one atom by the aberration in the orbit of another atom—He can pursue and overtake each separate particle.

But recollect, this is not necessary at all, for as I said before, the identity may be preserved without there being the same atoms. Just go back to the excellent illustration of our text. The wheat is just the same, but in the new wheat that has grown up there may not be one solitary particle of that matter which was in the seed cast into the ground.

A little seed that shall not weigh the hundredth part of an ounce falls into the earth, and springs up and produces a forest tree that shall weigh two tons. Now, if there be any part of the original seed in the tree, it must be but in the proportion of a millionth part, or something less than that. And yet is the tree is positively identical with the seed—it is the same thing. And so there may only be a millionth part of the particles of my body in the new body which I shall wear but yet it may still be the same. It is not the identity of the matter that will make positive identity.

And I shall show you that again. Are you not aware that our bodies are changing—that in about every ten years we have different bodies from what we had ten years ago? That is to say, by decay, and the continual wearing away of our flesh, there is not in this body I have here, a single particle that was in my body ten years ago, and yet I am the same man. I know I am precisely the same. So you.

You shall have been born in America, and lived there twenty years, you shall suddenly be transferred to India, and live there another twenty years, you come back to America to see your friends—you are the same man, they know you, recognize you, you are precisely the same individual.

But yet philosophy teaches us a fact which cannot be denied—that your body would have changed twice in the time you have been absent from your friends, that every particle is gone, and has had its place supplied by another, and yet the body is the same. So that it is not necessary there should be the same particles, it is not needful that you should track every atom and bring it back in order that the body should preserve its identity.

Have you never heard the story of the wife of Peter Martyr, a celebrated reformer, who died some years before the time of Queen Mary? Since his enemies could not reach his body, they took up the body of his wife after she was dead, and buried it in a dunghill. During the reign of Elizabeth, the body was removed from its contemptuous hiding place, it was then reduced to ashes.

In order that the Romanists, if they should ever prevail again, might never do dishonor to that body, they took the ashes of Peter Martyr's wife, and mixed them with the reputed ashes of a Romish saint. Mixing the two together, they said, "Now these Romanists will never defile this body, because they will be afraid of desecrating the relics of their own saint."

Perhaps some wiseacres may say, "How can these two be separated?" Why, they could be divided readily enough if God willed to do it, for granted that God is omniscient and omnipotent, and you have never to ask *how*, for omniscience and omnipresence put the question out of court, and decide the thing at once.

Besides, it is not necessary that it should be so. The life-germs of the two bodies may not have mixed together. God has set His angels to watch over them, as He set Michael to watch over the body of Moses, and He will bring out the two life-germs, and they shall be developed and the two bodies shall start up separately at the sound of the archangel's trump.

Remember then, and doubt not that the very body in which you sinned shall be the very body in which you shall suffer in hell, and the body in which you believe in Christ, and in which you yield yourselves to God, shall be the very body in which you shall walk the golden streets, and in which you shall praise the name of God forever and ever.

So much upon this first point. But observe, while the identity is real, *the transformation* is glorious. The body here is mortal, always subject to decay. We dwell in a poor uncomfortable tent, continually is the canvas being rent, the cords are being loosed, and the tent pins are being pulled up. We are full of sufferings, and aches, and pains, which are but the premonitions of coming death.

We all know, some by our decayed teeth, which are, as I said the other day, but the emblems of a decayed man, others by those grey hairs which are scattered here and there, we all know that our bodies are so constituted that they cannot remain here except for a limited period, and they must—as God has willed it—return to their native dust.

Not so however, the new body, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." It will be a body upon which the tooth of time can have no power, and into which the dart of death can never be thrust. Age shall roll after age, but that body shall exist in everlasting youth. It shall sing, but never shall its song be stayed by weakness, it shall fly, but never shall its flight flag with weariness. There shall be no signs of mortality, the shroud, the mattock, and the spade are never seen in heaven. Such a thing as an open grave shall never appear in the celestial kingdom, there they live, live, live, but never, never, never shall they die.

See then, how different the body must be, for as this body is constituted, every nerve and every blood vessel tells me I must die. It cannot be otherwise. I must endure this stern decree, "Dust to dust, earth to earth, ashes to ashes," but in heaven every nerve of the new body shall cry, "Immortality." Every part of that new frame shall speak for itself, and tell to the immortal spirit that they are everlasting companions, married in eternal wedlock.

There shall be moreover, a great change in the new body as to its beauty. "It is sown in dishonor; it shall be raised in glory." The old metaphor employed by all preachers upon this doctrine must be used again. You see here a crawling caterpillar, a picture of yourself, a creature that eats and drinks, and may

readily be trod on. Wait a few weeks, that caterpillar shall spin itself a shroud, lie down, become inactive, and sleep. A picture of what you shall do.

You must spin your winding-sheet and then be laid in the tomb. But wait awhile, when the warmth of the sun shall come that apparently lifeless thing shall burst its sheath. The chrysalis shall fall off, and the insect fly forth equipped with glittering wings. Having arrived at its full state of perfection, the *imago* the very image of the creature shall be seen by us all dancing in the sunbeam.

So shall we after passing through our wormhood here to our chrysalis state in the grave, burst our coffins and mount aloft glorious winged creatures made like the angels—the same creatures, but oh! so changed, so different, that we should scarce know our former selves if we could be able to meet them again after we have been glorified in heaven.

There shall be a change then, in our form and nature. Old master Spenser, who was a rare hand at making metaphors, says, “The body here is like an old rusty piece of iron, but death shall be the blacksmith, he shall take it and he shall make it hot in his fire, until it shall sparkle and send forth burning heat, and look bright and shining.”

And so surely it is. We are thrust into the earth as into the fire, and there shall we be made to sparkle and to shine and to be full of radiance, no more the rusty things that we once were, but fiery spirits, like the cherubim and the seraphim, we shall wear a power and a glory the like of which we have not even yet conceived.

Again, another transformation shall take place, namely, *in power*. “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.” The same body that is weak, shall be raised in power. We are puny things here, there is a limit to our labors, and our usefulness is straitened by reason of our inability to perform what we would.

And oh, how weak we become when we die! A man must be carried by his own friends to his own grave, he cannot even lay himself down in his last resting place. Passively he submits to be laid out, to be wrapped up in his winding sheet, and to be shut up in the darkness of the grave. Silently, passively he submits to be carried away with the pall covered over him, and to be put into the earth. The clods are shoveled over him, but he knows it not, neither could he resist his burial if he were conscious of it. But that powerless body shall be raised in power.

That was a fine idea of Martin Luther, which he borrowed from St. Anselm, that the saints shall be so strong when they are risen from the dead, that if they chose they could shake the world, they could pull up islands by their roots, or hurl mountains into the air.

Some modern writers, borrowing their ideas from Milton, where he speaks of the battles of the angels, where they plucked up the hills with all their shaggy loads, rivers and trees at once, and hurled them at the fallen spirits, have taught that we shall be clothed with gigantic force. I think if we do not go the length of the poets, we have every reason to believe that the power of the risen body will be utterly inconceivable.

These however, are but guesses at the truth, this great mystery is yet beyond us. I believe that when I shall enter upon my new body, I shall be able to fly from one spot to another, like a thought, as swiftly as I will, I shall be here and there, swift as the rays of light. From strength to strength, my spirit shall be able to leap onward to obey the behests of God, up-borne with wings of ether, it shall flash its way across that shoreless sea, and see the glory of God in all His works, and yet ever behold His face.

For the eye shall then be strong enough to pierce through leagues of distance, and the memory shall never fail. The heart shall be able to love to a fiery degree, and the head to comprehend right thoroughly. It does not yet appear what we shall be.

But brethren and sisters, to come back to reality, and leave fiction for a moment, though it does not appear what we shall be, yet we know that when *He* shall appear, we shall be like *Him*, for we shall see *Him* as He is. And do you know what we shall be like, if we shall be like *Him*?

Behold the picture of what Jesus Christ is like, and we shall be like Him. “I saw,” says John, “one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden

girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at His feet as dead.”

Such shall we be when we are like Christ, what tongue can tell, what soul can guess the glories that surround the saints when they start from their beds of dust, and rise to immortality.

But now to turn away from these, which I fear to very many of you are rather uninteresting particulars, let me give you one or two figures which may show to you the change which shall take place in us on the day of resurrection.

Do you see yonder a beggar? he is picking rags from a dunghill, he pulls out piece after piece from the heap of dust as he uses his rake, you may see the like any day, if you will go to those great dust-yards in Agar Town. There he pulls out piece after piece, and puts it in his basket. What can be the value of those miserable old rags? He takes them away, they are carried off, picked, sorted, rag to its own rag, like to like.

By and by they are washed, they are put into the mill, they are beaten hard, they are smashed, they are ground to pulp, and what is that I see just coming out of yonder mill? A clear white sheet, without a stain, and whence came this? “I am the son of the old rag,” says he, “nay, I am the identical rag that was but a few hours ago picked from the dung heap.”

Oh! strange! Does purity come out of impurity, and does this beauty, this utility come out of that which was neither comely nor useful, but which men loathed and cast away as a worthless thing? See here, brethren, the picture of yourselves. Your bodies are like rags, put away into this vast dunghill earth, and there buried, but the angel shall come and sort you, body to its body, the righteous to the righteous, the wicked to the wicked, they shall come together, bone to his bone and flesh to his flesh, and what do I see?—I behold a body like unto an angel, with eyes of fire, and a face like the brightness of the sun, and wings like lightnings for swiftness.

Whence are you, you bright spirit? I am he that was buried, I am that thing that once was worms’ meat, but now I am glorious through the name of Jesus, and through the power of God. You have there before you a picture of the resurrection, a homely picture, it is true, but one which may vividly convey the idea to homely minds.

Take another—one used of old by that mighty preacher, Chrysostom—there is an old house, a straight and narrow cottage, and the inhabitant of it often shivers with the cold in winter, and is greatly oppressed by the heat of summer, it is ill adapted to his wants, the windows are too small and very dark, he cannot keep his treasure safely therein, he is often a prisoner, and when I have passed by his house I have heard him sighing at the window, “Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

The good master comes, the landlord of the house, he speaks to the tenant, and he bids him come away, “I am about to pull down your old house,” says he, “and I would not have you here while I am pulling it stone from stone, lest you be hurt and injured. Come away with me and live in my palace, while I am pulling your old house to pieces.”

He does so, and every stone of the old house is thrown down, it is leveled with the ground, and even the foundations are dug up. Another is built, it is of costly slabs of marble, the windows thereof are pure and clear, all its gates are of agate, and all its borders of precious stones, while all the foundations thereof are of chrysolite, and the roof thereof is of jasper.

And now the master of the house speaks to the old inhabitant, “Come back, and I will show you the house which I have built for you.” O what joy, when that inhabitant shall enter and find it so well adapted to his wants, where every power shall have full range, where he shall see God out of its windows, not as through a glass, darkly, but face to face, where he could invite even Christ Himself to come and sup with him, and not feel that the house is beneath the dignity of the Son of Man.

You know the parable, you know how your old house, this clay body, is to be pulled down, how your spirit is to dwell in heaven for a little while without a body, and how afterwards you are to enter into a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, a mansion which is holy, incorruptible, and undefiled, and which shall never decay.

To use yet a fresh figure, I see a beggar passing by a rich man's door, that poor wretch is covered with filth, his garments are hanging about him in pieces as if the wind would blow all away, and drive both man and garments amongst the rags upon the dunghill. How he shivers, how he seeks to pull about him that scant cloak which will not meet around his loins, and will not shield him from the blast.

As for his shoes, they are indeed old and clouted, and all his garments are of such a sort that one never could know the original, for they have been mended and patched a thousand times, and now they need to be mended and patched again.

He is freely invited to come into the rich man's hall, we will not tell you what is done in the meantime, but we will see him come out of that door again, and would you know him? Would you believe that he is the same man? He has been washed and cleansed, on his back there hangs the imperial purple, while on his head glitters a brilliant crown, his feet are shod with silver, and on his hands there are rings of gold. About the paps he wears a golden girdle, and as he comes abroad, bright spirits wait on him and do him honor, angels wait to be his servants, and think it to be their highest pleasure to fly to do his will.

Is this the same man and is this the same dress? It is the same. By some marvelous might, rather by a divine energy, God has received this beggar, taken him into the inner chamber of the grave, has washed him from all imperfections, and now he comes out as one of the princes of the blood royal of heaven. And as is his nature, such is his apparel, as is his dignity, such is his estate, and such the company of servants who wait upon him.

Not to multiply illustrations, we will use but one more. I see before me an old and battered cup, which many a black lip has touched, out of which many a villain's throat has received moisture. It is battered and covered over with filth. Who could tell what metal it is? It is brought in and given to the silversmith, he no sooner receives it, than he begins to break it into pieces, he dashes it into shivers again and again, he pounds it until he has broken it, and then puts it into his fining pot and melts it.

Now you begin to see it sparkle again, and by and by he beats it out and fashions it into a goodly chalice, out of which a king may drink. Is this the same? the very same thing. This glorious cup, is this the old battered silver we saw just now, silver did I say, it looked like battered filth.

Yes, it is the same, and we who are here below like vessels, alas! too unfit for the Master's use, vessels which have even given comfort to the evil ones, and helped to do the work of Satan, we shall be put into the furnace of the grave, and be there melted down and fused and fashioned into a glorious wine cup that shall stand upon the banqueting table of the Son of God.

I have thus sought to illustrate the change, and now I will occupy your attention but one or two minutes on another thought which seems to lie within the range of my text. We have had the real identity under the glorious transformation. I bring you back to a thought kindred to the first. There will be in the bodies of the righteous *an undoubted personality* of character. If you sow barley, it will not produce wheat, if you sow tares, they will not spring up in the form of rye. Every grain has its own peculiar form, God has given to every seed his own body.

So, my brothers and sisters, there are differences among us here, no two bodies are precisely alike, there are marks on our countenances, and in our bodily conformation that shows that we are different. We are of one blood, but not of one fashion. Well, when we are put into the grave we shall crumble back, and come to the same elements, but when we rise we shall every one of us rise diverse from the other. The body of Paul shall not produce a body precisely like that of Peter. Nor shall the flesh of Andrew bring forth a new body like that of the sons of Zebedee, but to every seed his own body.

In the case of our blessed Lord and Master, you will remember that when He rose Himself from the dead He preserved His personality, there were still the wounds in His hands, and still there was the spear

mark in His side. I do not doubt that when He underwent His transfiguration, and at the time of His ascension up to heaven, He still retained the marks of His wounds. For do we not sing, and is not our song based upon Scripture?—

*“He looks like a Lamb that has been slain,
And wears His priesthood still.”*

So, brethren, though of course we shall retain no weaknesses, nothing which will cause us sorrow, yet every Christian will retain his individuality, he will be like and yet unlike all his fellows. As we know Isaiah from Jeremy here, so shall we know them above. As I differ from you here, if we two shall together praise God, there shall be some difference between us above. Not the difference in failings, but the difference in the perfections of the form of the new body.

I sometimes think martyrs will wear their scars. And why should they not? It would be a loss to them if they should lose their honors. Perhaps they shall wear their ruby crowns in paradise, and we shall know them—

*“Foremost ’mongst the sons of light,
’Midst the bright ones doubly bright.”*

Perhaps the men who come from the catacombs of Rome will wear some sort of pallor on their brow that will show that they came from darkness, where they saw not the light of the sun. Perhaps the minister of Christ, though he shall not need to say to his fellows, “know the Lord,” shall still be chief among the tellers out of the ways of God. Perhaps the sweet singer of Israel shall still be foremost in the choir of the golden harps, and loudest among them who shall lead the strain.

And if these be fancies, yet am I sure that one star differs from another star in glory. Orion shall not be confounded with Arcturus, nor shall Mazaroth for a moment be confounded with Orion. We shall all be separate and distinct. Perhaps we shall each one have our constellation there, as we shall cluster into our own societies, and gather around those whom we best have known on earth. Personality will be maintained.

I do not doubt but what you will know Isaiah in heaven, and you will recognize the great preachers of the ancient Christian church, you will be able to speak with Chrysostom, and will talk with Whitefield. It may be you shall have for your companions those who were your companions here, those with whom you took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God, shall be with you there, and you shall know them, and with transporting joy you shall there together tell your former trials and ancient triumphs, and the glories you are alike made to share.

Treasure up then these things, the identity of your body after its glorious transformation, and at the same time, the personality which will prevail.

I want now, your solemn attention for some five minutes, while I sketch a most fearful contrast here. The things I have already spoken should make the children of God happy. At Stratford-on-Bow, in the days of Queen Mary, there was once a stake erected for the burning of two martyrs, one of them a lame man, the other a blind man. Just when the fire was lit, the lame man hurled away his staff, and turning round said to the blind man, “Courage, brother, this fire will cure us both.” So can the righteous say of the grave, “Courage, the grave will cure us all, we shall leave our infirmities behind us.”

What patience this should give us to endure all our trials, for they are not of long duration. They are but as the carvings of the graver’s tool, shaping these rough blocks of clay, to bring them into the right form and shape, that they may bear the image of the heavenly.

But the contrast is awful. Brethren, *the wicked* must rise again from the dead. The lip with which you have drunk the intoxicating drink till you have reeled again, that lip shall be used in drinking down the fiery wrath of God. Remember too, ungodly woman, the eyes that are full of lust will one day be full of

horror, the ear with which you listen to lascivious conversation must listen to the sullen moans, the hollow groans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts.

Be not deceived, you sinned in your body, you will be damned in your body. When you die your spirit must suffer alone, that will be the beginning of hell, but your body must rise again, then this very flesh in which you have transgressed the laws of God, this very body must smart for it. It must lie in the fire and burn, and crack, and writhe throughout eternity. Your body will be raised incorruptible, otherwise the fire would consume it. It will become like the asbestos stone, which lies in the flame and yet is never consumed. If it were this flesh and blood it would soon die under the pangs we must endure, but it will be a body all but omnipotent.

As I spoke of the righteous having such great power, so shall you have, but it will be power to agonize, power to suffer, power to die and yet to live, uncrushed by the stern foot of death. Think of this, you sensualists, who care not for your souls, but who pamper your bodies, you shall have that fair complexion scorched away, those members that have become instruments of lust, shall become instruments of hell. Rotting as they will do in the grave, they shall nevertheless rise with a fiery immortality about them, and endure an eternity of agony and unutterable woe and punishment. Is not that enough to make a man tremble and cry, "God be merciful unto me a sinner"?

But further, remember that while your body shall be identically the same, yet it too will be transformed, and as the wheat brings forth the wheat, so the nettle seed brings forth the nettle. What your body will be like I cannot tell, but perhaps as the body of the righteous will come to be like Christ, yours may become like the body of the devil, whatever that may be—the same hideous conformation, the same demon gaze and hellish stare which characterize that proud archangel shall characterize you, you shall have the image and the lineaments of the first traitor stamped upon your fire-enduring face.

Seeds of sin, are you prepared to ripen into the full blown flower of destruction? You seeds of evil, are you ready to be scattered now from Death's hand, and then to spring up an awful harvest of tormented ones? Yet so it must be unless you turn to God. Except you repent, He has said, and He will do it, He is able to cast both body and soul into hell.

And let me remind you yet once again, that there will be in you an undoubted personality, you will be known in hell. The drunkard shall have the drunkard's punishment. The swearer shall have the swearer's corner to himself. "Bind them up in bundles to burn, and cast them into the fire." Thus saith the voice of inflexible justice. You shall not suffer in another man's body but in your own, and you shall be known to be the very man that sinned against God. You shall be looked at by one who sees you today, if you die impenitent, who will say to you, "We went up to that hall together, we heard a sermon on the resurrection which had a frightful ending, we laughed at it, but we have found out that it is true."

And one will say to the other, "I should have known you though we have not met these many years till we met in hell. I should have known you, there is something about your new body which lets me know that it is the same body that you had on earth."

And then you will mutually say to one another, "These pangs that we are now enduring, this horror of great darkness, these chains of fire that are reserved for us, are they not well deserved?" And you will curse God together again, and suffer together, and will be made to feel that you have only received the due reward of your deeds. "Did not the man warn us," you will say, "did he not warn us, did he not bid us fly to Christ for refuge?—did we not despise it, and make a jeer of what he said? We are rightly punished, we damned ourselves, we cut our own throats, we kindled hell for ourselves, and found the fuel of our own burning forever and ever."

Oh! my dear hearers, I cannot bear to stay on this subject, let me finish with just this word. "Whoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." That means *you* poor man, though perhaps you were drunk last night, and scarcely got up time enough to come here this morning. If you believe, William, you shall be saved. This means *you*, poor woman, harlot though you be—if you cast yourself on Christ you are saved. This means *you*, respectable man, you who trust in your own works—if you rely on Christ you shall be saved, but not if you trust in yourself.

Oh! be wise, be wise. May God give us grace now to learn that highest wisdom, and may we now look to the cross and to the quivering Lamb that bleeds upon it, and see Him as He rises from the dead and ascends up on high, and believing in Him, may we receive the hope and the assurance of a blissful resurrection in Him to everlasting life.

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.