

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 235

RESURRECTION

*He rose again the third day
according to the scriptures.*

1 Corinthians 15:4

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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RESURRECTION

235

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THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.—2 Timothy 2:8

UPON the incarnation,¹ life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, our salvation hinges. He who believes these truths aright hath believed the gospel;² and, believing the gospel, he shall without doubt find eternal salvation therein.

But men want novelties. They cannot endure that the trumpet should give forth the same certain sound. They crave some fresh fantasia³ every day. “The gospel with variations” is the music for them. “Intellect is progressive,” they say. They must, therefore, march ahead of their forefathers. Incarnate deity, a holy life, an atoning death,⁴ and a literal resurrection—having heard these things now for nearly nineteen centuries, they are just a little stale; and the cultivated mind hungers for a change from the old-fashioned manna.

Even in Paul’s day, this tendency was manifest. So they sought to regard facts as mysteries or parables, and they labored to find a spiritual meaning in them until they went so far as to deny them as actual facts. Seeking a recondite⁵ meaning, they overlooked the fact itself, losing the substance in a foolish preference for the shadow. While God set before them glorious events that fill heaven with amazement, they showed their foolish wisdom by accepting the plain historical facts as myths to be interpreted or riddles to be solved. He who believed as a little child was pushed aside as a fool that the disputer and the scribe might come in to mystify simplicity and hide the light of truth. Hence, there had arisen a certain Hymenaeus and Philetus, “who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2Ti 2:18). Turn to verse seventeen and read for yourselves. They spirited away⁶ the resurrection! They made it to mean something very deep and mystical; and in

¹ See FGB 234, *Incarnation*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

² See FGB 198, *The Gospel*.

³ *fantasia* – instrumental composition with a free form, improvised style.

⁴ See FGB 227, *Atonement*.

⁵ *recondite* – not known about or understood by many people.

⁶ *spirited away* – carried away secretly.

the process, they took away the actual resurrection altogether.

Among men, there is still a craving after new meanings, refinements upon old doctrines, and spiritualizations⁷ of literal facts. They tear out the [heart] of the truth and give us the carcass, stuffed with hypotheses, speculations,⁸ and larger hopes...The apostle Paul was very anxious that Timothy, at least, should stand firm to the old witness and should understand in their plain meaning his testimonies to the fact that Jesus Christ of the seed of David rose again from the dead.

Within the compass of this verse, several facts are recorded: first, there is here the great truth that Jesus, the Son of the Highest, was anointed of God. The apostle calls Him “Jesus Christ,” that is, the anointed one, the Messiah, the sent of God. He calls Him also “Jesus,” which signifies a Savior; and it is a grand truth that He Who was born of Mary, He Who was laid in the manger at Bethlehem, He Who loved and lived and died for us, is the ordained and anointed Savior of men. We have not a moment’s doubt about the mission, office, and design of our Lord Jesus; in fact, we hang our soul’s salvation upon His being anointed of the Lord to be the Savior of men.

This Jesus Christ was really and truly man.⁹ Paul says He was “of the seed of David” (Rom 1:3). True, He was [deity], and His birth was not after the ordinary manner of men; but still He was in all respects partaker of our human nature and came of the stock of David. This also we do believe. We are not among those who spiritualize the incarnation and suppose that God was here as a phantom¹⁰ or that the whole story is but an instructive legend. Nay, in very flesh and blood did the Son of God abide among men: bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh was He in the days of His sojourn here below. We know and believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. We love the incarnate God, and in Him we fix our trust.

It is implied, too, in the text that Jesus died; for He could not be raised from the dead if He had not first gone down among the dead and been one of them. Yes, Jesus died. The crucifixion¹¹ was no delusion. The piercing of His side with a spear was clear and evident proof that He was dead: His heart was pierced, and the blood and water flowed therefrom. As a dead man, He was taken down from the cross, carried by gentle hands, and laid in Joseph’s virgin tomb. I

⁷ **spiritualizations** – acts of interpreting in a spiritual sense, rather than literal.

⁸ **hypotheses, speculations** – theories and opinions based on incomplete evidence.

⁹ See FGB 219, *The Person of Christ*.

¹⁰ **phantom** – something that appears to the sight, but has no substance; ghost.

¹¹ See FGB 225, *The Work of Christ*, and FGB 226, *Christ upon the Cross*.

think I see that pale corpse, white as a lily. Mark how it is distained¹² with the blood of His five wounds, which make Him red as the rose. See how [He is wrapped] fine linen with sweet spices and [left] to spend His Sabbath all alone in the rock-hewn sepulcher. No man in this world was ever more surely dead than He. “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death” (Isa 53:9). As dead, they laid Him in the place of the dead with napkin, grave clothes, and habiliments¹³ fit for a grave. Then they rolled the great stone at the grave’s mouth and left Him, knowing that He was dead.

Then comes the grand truth: as soon as ever the third sun commenced his shining circuit, Jesus rose again! His body had not decayed, for it was not possible for that holy thing to see corruption; but still it had been dead. And by the power of God—by His own power, by the Father’s power, by the power of the Spirit, for it is attributed to each of these in turn—before the sun had risen, His dead body was quickened.¹⁴ The silent heart began again to beat; and through the stagnant canals of the veins, the life-flood began to circulate. The soul of the Redeemer again took possession of the body, and it lived once more. There He was within the sepulcher, as truly living as to all parts of Him as He had ever been. He literally and truly, in a material body, came forth from the tomb to live among men until the hour of His ascension into heaven. This is the truth that is still to be taught, refine it who may, spiritualize it who dare. This is the historical fact that the apostles witnessed. This is the truth for which the confessors bled and died. This is the doctrine that is the keystone of the arch of Christianity, and they that hold it not have cast aside the essential truth of God. How can they hope for salvation for their souls if they do not believe that “the Lord is risen indeed”?

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, April 9, 1882,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.



Surely, there is free admittance for all sinners into God’s favor through this risen Savior. There is enough done, and God is satisfied. He has declared and sealed it by the resurrection of Christ.—*Jonathan Edwards*

¹² **distained** – stained with a color different from the natural one.

¹³ **habiliments** – items of clothing appropriate for an occasion.

¹⁴ **quickened** – made alive.

THE FACT OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

He is not here, but is risen.—Luke 24:6

THE resurrection of Christ is one of the great foundation stones of the Christian religion...[Luke 24:1-12] directs our mind to the evidence of the resurrection. It contains unanswerable proof that Jesus not only died, but rose again.

We see, in the verses before us, *the reality of Christ's resurrection*. We read that upon "the first day of the week" (24:1), certain women came to the sepulcher in which the body of Jesus had been laid in order to anoint Him. But when they came to the place, "They found the stone rolled away...And they entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus" (24:2-3).

This simple fact is the starting point in the history of the resurrection of Christ. On Friday morning,¹ His body was safe in the tomb. On [Sunday] morning His body was gone. By whose hands had it been taken away? Who had removed it? Surely not the priests and scribes and other enemies of Christ! If they had had Christ's body to show in disproof of His resurrection, they would gladly have shown it. Not the apostles and other disciples of our Lord! They were far too much frightened and dispirited to attempt such an action, and the more so when they had nothing to gain by it. One explanation—and one only—can meet the circumstance of the case. That explanation is the one supplied by the angels in the verse before us (24:6): Christ had risen from the grave. To seek Him in the sepulcher was seeking "the living among the dead" (24:5). He had risen again and was soon seen alive and conversing in the body by many credible witnesses.

The fact of our Lord's resurrection rests on evidence that no infidel can ever explain away. It is confirmed by testimony of every kind, sort, and description. The plain, unvarnished story that the Gospel writers tell is one that cannot be overthrown. The more the account they give is examined, the more inexplicable will the event appear,

¹ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** We are aware that evangelicals do not agree on the chronology of the crucifixion week and when Christ was laid in the tomb.

unless we accept it as true. If we choose to deny the truth of their account, we may deny everything in the world. It is not so certain that Julius Caesar once lived, as it is that Christ rose again.

Let us cling firmly to the resurrection of Christ as one of the pillars of the gospel. It ought to produce in our minds a settled conviction of the truth of Christianity. Our faith does not depend merely on a set of texts and doctrines: it is founded on a mighty fact that the skeptic has never been able to overturn. It ought to assure us of the certainty of the resurrection of our own bodies after death. If our Master has risen from the grave, we need not doubt that His disciples shall rise again at the last day. Above all, it ought to fill our hearts with a joyful sense of the fullness of gospel salvation: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again” (Rom 8:34). He has gone to prison for us and come forth triumphantly after atoning for our sins. The payment He made for us has been accepted. The work of satisfaction has been perfectly accomplished. No wonder that St. Peter exclaims, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1Pe 1:3).

We see, secondly, in the verses before us, how dull the memory of the disciples was about some of our Lord’s sayings. We are told that the angels who appeared to the women reminded them of their Master’s words in Galilee, foretelling His own crucifixion and resurrection. And then we read, “They remembered his words.” They had heard them, but made no use of them. Now after many days, they call them to mind. This dullness of memory is a common spiritual disease among believers. It prevails as widely now as it did in the days of the first disciples. It is one among many proofs of our fallen and corrupt condition. Even after men have been renewed by the Holy Ghost, their readiness to forget the promises and precepts of the gospel is continually bringing them into trouble. They hear many things that they ought to store up in their hearts, but seem to forget as fast as they hear. And then, perhaps after many days, affliction brings them up before their recollection, and at once it flashes across their minds that they heard them long ago!...

The true cure for a dull memory in religion is to get deeper love toward Christ and affections more thoroughly set on things above. We do not readily forget the things we love, and the objects that we keep continually under our eyes...The more our affections are engaged in Christ’s service, the easier shall we find it to remember Christ’s

words. The words of the apostle ought to be carefully pondered: "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb 2:1).

We see, lastly, how slow of belief the first disciples were on the subject of Christ's resurrection. We read that when the women returned from the sepulcher and told the things they had heard from the angels to the eleven apostles, "Their words seemed to them idle tales, and they believed them not" (24:11). In spite of the plainest declarations from their Master's own lips that He would rise again the third day, in spite of the distinct testimony of five or six credible witnesses that the sepulcher was empty and that angels had told them. He was risen, in spite of the manifest impossibility of accounting for the empty tomb on any other supposition than that of a miraculous resurrection—in spite of all this, these eleven faithless ones would not believe! Perhaps we marvel at their unbelief. No doubt it seems at first sight most senseless, most unreasonable, most provoking, most unaccountable. But shall we not do well to look at home? Do we not see around us in Christian churches a mass of unbelief far more unreasonable and far more blameworthy than that of the apostles? Do we not see, after eighteen centuries of additional proofs that Christ has risen from the dead, a general [lack] of faith that is truly deplorable? Do we not see myriads of professing Christians who seem not to believe that Jesus died, rose again, and is coming to judge the world? These are painful questions. Strong faith is indeed a rare thing. No wonder our Lord said, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luk 18:8).

Finally, let us admire the wisdom of God, which can bring great good out of seeming evil. The unbelief of the apostles is one of the strongest indirect evidences that Jesus rose from the dead. If the disciples were at first so backward to believe our Lord's resurrection, and were at last so thoroughly persuaded of its truth that they preached it everywhere, Christ must have risen indeed. The first preachers were men who were convinced in spite of themselves and in spite of determined, obstinate unwillingness to believe. If the apostles at last believed, the resurrection must be true.

From *Expository Thoughts on Luke, Vol. 2*, in the public domain.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): English Anglican Bishop and author; born in Macclesfield, Cheshire County, UK.



THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Albert N. Martin

AS we take up some of the biblical teaching concerning the significance and implications of our Lord's resurrection, we must do so conscious that the Scriptures constantly assume that the significance and implications of the resurrection rest upon a real, empty tomb and a real, living Jesus...

First of all, Christ's resurrection is glorious as the confirmation of the veracity¹ of His personal claims. Prior to His death upon the cross, our Lord made some utterly stupendous and unique claims relative to His person and mission. He claimed to be God's unique Son. That is, He claimed to be one who shared in the very divine essence (Joh 5:17-18; 10:30-33). Our Lord also makes such a claim when He says that "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son" (Mat 11:27). Simply stated, our Lord here claims that only deity can comprehend deity.

Our Lord's resurrection from the dead confirms the veracity of this claim to deity. Only one who is essentially God can lay down His life and take it up again of His own volition² (Joh 10:16-17). For this reason, it is His resurrection from the dead that constitutes the crowning "sign" that validates Christ's claims to His unique person as the God-man (*see* Mat 12:38-40). John Gill perceptively remarks, "Hereby, [that is, in the resurrection of Christ], is given further proof of His proper deity and divine Sonship; and by this it appears that He is the Lord God Almighty, Who could and did raise Himself from the dead! This declares Him to be the Son of God with power; shows that He is the Lord of all, both of the dead and the living; that He has the keys of hell and death, and can and will unlock the graves of His people and set them free as He has Himself."³

The incident recorded in John 20:26-29 is a clear example of how the resurrection validates our Lord's claim to deity. When doubting

¹ **veracity** – truthfulness.

² **volition** – ability to make conscious choices or decisions; exercise of the will.

³ John Gill (1697-1771), *A Body of Divinity* (Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1971), 414.

Thomas confronted the tangible risen Lord, he exclaimed, "My Lord, and my God." These were not words of nervous or careless profanity precipitated by a surprising event. Rather, they were the words of a man who came to see Jesus' true identity when Thomas beheld his Lord in His resurrection life and power.

Furthermore, while living and ministering among men prior to His crucifixion, our Lord claimed to be the appointed Judge of the world (Joh 5:22, 27-29; Mat 7:21; 25:31). When Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus wrapped Jesus' body in grave cloths and placed Him in Joseph's tomb, He did not have much to persuade anyone that He was indeed the appointed Judge of the world Who would one day sit upon the throne of glory, gathering the nations before Him to determine their eternal destinies. However, the apostle Paul tells us that God now commands "all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in 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" (Act 17:30-31). Our Lord Jesus' resurrection from the dead does indeed validate His claim that He is the appointed Judge of the world...

In the second place, Christ's resurrection is glorious as the termination of His state of humiliation. As the eternal Son, the uncreated Word of God Who was Himself God, all of God's glory surrounded and attended Him in His pre-incarnate state. Subsequent to His incarnation, our Lord was not unmindful of that previous pre-incarnate glory that had been His. In the prayer recorded in John 17, He prayed, "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." However, from the moment of His conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary, He entered upon His state of humiliation. That humiliation involved successively downward steps until it culminated in His death on the cross and burial in Joseph's borrowed tomb. Philippians 2:6-8 contains the record of those downward steps of humiliation; they reached their lowest point when His lifeless body, bound with linen and spices, lay upon a stone slab in that tomb. Death had conquered. Jesus was dead. This, surely, was the nadir⁴ of His poverty and humiliation. The apostle Paul tells us that "he was crucified through weakness" (2Co 13:4a). Yes, the weakness was patent. He was [crucified] upon that cruel instrument of execution, a cross, until He bowed His head and yielded up His spirit to His Father. However, the weakness was intensified when

⁴ **nadir** – lowest point.

it issued in His lifeless body being placed in that borrowed tomb.

Mary's womb was the beginning of His humiliation. His exodus from Joseph's tomb marked the beginning of His exaltation. Question 46 of the Westminster Larger Catechism asks, "What was the estate of Christ's humiliation?" The answer, given with beautiful, biblical precision, is this: "The estate of Christ's humiliation was His low condition, wherein He for our sakes, emptying Himself of His glory, took upon Him the form of a servant, in His conception and birth, life, death, and after His death, till His resurrection." The resurrection constituted nothing less than a radical about-face in the events that constituted our Lord Jesus' redemptive activities. Mary's womb and Joseph's tomb bracket His humiliation. His resurrection was nothing less than the first installment of the Father's answer to our Lord's prayer in John 17:5.

Then, in the third place, Christ's resurrection is glorious as the first step to His formal installation as the messianic King and Lord. As certainly as the resurrection marked the end of His humiliation, that very same event can be viewed in a wholly positive way—it was the beginning of His exaltation. The resurrection was indeed humiliation ended, but exaltation begun. As Philippians 2:5-8 traces the downward steps of our Lord's humiliation, a passage such as Ephesians 1:19-23 traces the upward steps of His exaltation, from the empty tomb to the enthronement and the conferral upon Him of the highest place of power and honor. Breaking into the middle of Paul's prayer on behalf of the Ephesian Christians, we read, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church."

Our Lord Jesus' resurrection as the first step to His ultimate and formal installation as the messianic King and Lord was a dominant note in the chord of truth sounded by Peter in his Pentecostal sermon. Luke records some of the details of that sermon with these words: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which you now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord,

Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:32-36). He was not made “Lord and Christ” in terms of the constitution of His person and offices. When He was born, the heavenly visitors announced to the shepherds, “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luk 2:11). Rather, Peter announced the fact that the resurrection had led to the formal installation of Jesus as the messianic King and Lord at the right hand of the Father.

It was in the anticipation of this formal installation that our Lord could say what He did concerning the fact that “all power [that is, all authority and the right to rule] is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18)...The writer to the Hebrews is an additional confirming voice when, speaking of Jesus, he says that He “sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool” (Heb 10:12-13).

These three things—the confirmation, the termination, and the installation—have primary reference to what the resurrection meant to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. However, that same mighty triumph over death has many and wonderful implications for us as the people of God, and to those who are outside the pale of God’s saving grace. Consider with me then,

In the fourth place, that Christ’s resurrection is glorious as the divine affirmation of an accomplished redemption. One of the seven words that our Lord uttered during the agonizing hours upon the cross was the penultimate⁵ cry, “It is finished.” Most likely, this is the cry that Matthew describes as “when he had cried again with a loud voice...” (Mat 27:50). This was not a muted cry of despair—“I am finished.” Rather, it was the shout of a successful and conquering Savior. The word John uses to capture this cry is a perfect passive tense of the verb *teleo*, which means to bring to an end by completion. When our Lord uttered these words, He was loudly declaring that all He went to the cross to accomplish was indeed accomplished and would remain accomplished.

But shortly after uttering this cry of triumph, He bowed His head and dismissed His spirit into His Father’s hands. Within a short time, that dead and utterly lifeless body would be taken down from the cross, lovingly prepared for burial by Joseph of Arimathea and

⁵ **penultimate** – next to last; second to last.

Nicodemus, and then laid in Joseph's tomb in a garden near the place of a skull where Jesus had been crucified. As they lay the body in that tomb, questions arise in our minds. Was the cry "It is finished" a valid cry? How can it be? The wages of sin is death, and death seemed to have had the last word and held the upper hand over our Lord. As He was entombed, it appeared that the last enemy had his foot firmly planted on the neck of our Lord's now lifeless body.

Granted, there did seem to be some divine affirmations of the great cosmic implications of the success of His sufferings on the occasion of His death. Scripture informs us that the temple veil was rent from top to bottom, that the earth quaked, that rocks split open, and that local graves yielded up some of their dead. Could these supernatural events constitute the eloquent amen of God to the cry "It is finished"? Yes, they could, but Jesus was still dead; and the question clings to our minds, had the work really been accomplished? Was it really finished?

For several reasons, the Father had decreed that our Lord would lie under the power of death for part of three days. One of those reasons, no doubt, was to underscore the fact that Jesus truly did die. It was to make it evident that He did not swoon on the cross or experience a comatose⁶ state to be followed by resuscitation a few hours later.

Yes, death seemed to have spoken the last word. No doubt the fiendish powers of hell clapped their hands with demonic delight. Jesus of Nazareth was dead. Really dead. But...the first day of the week arrived, and with it a vacated tomb. And what does that vacated tomb say to us? The answer comes from a text such as Romans 4:25. Paul writes concerning our Lord Jesus that He "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."⁷ The words can legitimately be rendered, "and was raised again on account of our justification." In other words, our Lord's resurrection by the Father was the necessary affirmation of an accomplished redemption. All that was necessary to render full preceptual obedience to the Law's demands, and to render complete satisfaction of the Law's penal sanctions was accomplished in the life and death of Jesus, our representative, surety, and substitute.⁸ In other words, the resurrection was God's thundering "Amen!" to Jesus' loud cry, "It is finished." Calvin

⁶ **comatose** – state of deep unconsciousness for a prolonged period.

⁷ **justification** – Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone. (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 32) See FGB 187, *Justification*, and FGB 191, *Imputed Righteousness*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁸ See FGB 207, *Substitution*.

captured and expressed this truth beautifully: “He was put to death for our sins, and raised for our justification (Rom 4:25). This is as if He had said, ‘Sin was taken away by His death, righteousness was revived and restored by His resurrection.’ For how could He by dying have freed us from death if He Himself succumbed to death? How could He have acquired victory for us if He had failed in the struggle? Therefore, we divide the substance of our salvation between Christ’s death and resurrection as follows: through His death, sin was wiped out and death extinguished; through His resurrection, righteousness was restored and life raised up, so that—thanks to His resurrection—His death manifested its power and efficacy in us...So then, let us remember that whenever mention is made of His death alone, we are to understand at the same time what belongs to His resurrection.”⁹

Dear child of God, when your conscience seems to be unable to shake off the haunting sense of guilt and condemnation for your sin, go by faith and stand by Joseph’s empty tomb and hear your loving heavenly Father say to you, “He was raised again for your justification.” Then say to yourself, “I will no longer dishonor the Savior by doubting that His resurrection is God’s affirmation of my completed redemption.” Has God not said, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9)?

My unconverted reader, do not complicate what God has made so clear and simple. Stop looking within for signs of grace, hoping that if you find them you will have a warrant to embrace the Savior. No, a living and resurrected Jesus stands before you in the gospel...Joseph’s empty tomb loudly declares that there is a completed and fully sufficient salvation in Christ. Do not look for anything in yourself as the warrant to embrace the Savior and the salvation that is in Him.

From “The Glory of Christ’s Victorious Resurrection” in *The Beauty and Glory of Christ*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, Reformation Heritage Books, used by permission, www.heritagebooks.org.

Albert N. Martin: American Baptist pastor, evangelist, and author; served as one of the pastors of Trinity Baptist Church, Montville, NJ, for 46 years.



Above all truths, we must clearly preach [Christ’s resurrection] and press that as if it were the life of all religion.—*Thomas Manton*

⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.16.13.

THE EVIDENCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

THE humiliation of Christ being completed in His death and burial, His exaltation began in His resurrection from the dead. This is a great cardinal truth in the Christian system. It has often been shown to be so. It is so by the confession of all Christians and of the apostles themselves. Paul says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain...If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye 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" (1Co 15:14, 17-19). Clearly this doctrine is fundamental. It should be often preached and never yielded. It is "the cardinal fact of Christianity, without which all her other facts lose their importance."¹

It is agreed by Jews, Christians, and infidels² that Christ was dead and buried. For a time, His body was lifeless. Any decent regard to truth must admit this. Of His death, there is no doubt. He admitted it more than fifty years afterwards: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:18).

It is also clear that prophecy required that Christ should rise from the dead. "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa 16:9-10). That this does not apply to angels is certain, for angels are pure spirits and have no flesh. They never die. That it does not refer to any mere man is certain, for the person here spoken of is called God's *Holy One*, and all mere men are sinful. That it does not apply to David, who wrote the Psalm where it is found, Peter proved on the Day of Pentecost: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day" (Act 2:29). We know that he has seen corruption, for he has been lying in the grave for centuries. But, continues Peter, David "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to

¹ John M. Mason (1770-1829), *Christian Mourning* (NY: Whiting and Watson, 1814), 6.

² **infidels** – atheists and others that deny the authority of Christ and His Word.

the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Act 2:30-31). Jesus foretold His own resurrection: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up...He spake of the temple of his body” (Joh 2:19).

In the resurrection of Christ, there was a concurrence³ of...divine persons. Peter says, “Him God raised up the third day” (Act 10:40). Paul also says, “God the Father, who raised him from the dead...” (Gal 1:1). But this work is not ascribed to the Father alone. The divine nature of Christ was employed in quickening His own dead body. He said of His own body, “I will raise it up” (Joh 2:19). “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Joh 10:18). The Son of God participated in the resurrection of His own body...

Peter says that Christ was raised up *the third day* (Act 10:40). In reckoning time, both Hebrews and Greeks frequently counted the part of a day on which a thing began as one day, and the part of a day on which it ceased as another day, and, putting these to the intermediate day or days, gave the total. Thus, among the Hebrews, the day on which a child was born was set down as one day, and the day on which he was brought to be circumcised was put down as another day, and only six entire days intervened between his birth and circumcision, and so it frequently happened that a child was not seven times twenty-four hours old when he was circumcised, and yet the Law required that sign and seal to be put on the child on the eighth day. Greek antiquities show that the same mode of reckoning was often used in Eastern Europe. At other times, the Hebrews counted only the entire days (*cf.* Luke 9:28; Mark 9:2). So either mode might be used. The Gospels state that Christ was buried the afternoon of the day before the Jewish Sabbath, and that He rose very early on the day after the Jewish Sabbath...Jesus arose the third day; this was the time fixed by His own prophecies...

Christ's raised body was a real body, and not merely the appearance of a body. There were doubts in the minds of His followers, on this point. Once, when He stood in the midst of them, they were “affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit” (Luk 24:37). To settle this point, He said, “Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luk 24:39). Their sight and their touch alike informed them that there was no illusion.

Jesus Christ had the same body after His resurrection that He had

³ **concurrence** – cooperation in purpose or work.

before. The sepulcher was opened, and the sacred body it contained arose. After His resurrection our Lord said to His disciples, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.” To unbelieving Thomas, He said, “Reach hither⁴ thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing” (Joh 20:27). Christ’s risen body was the same as His dead and buried body.

Do any ask, “Why did not Christ’s followers recognize Him immediately?” In at least one instance, “Their eyes were holden⁵ that they should not know him” (Luk 24:16), until by reasoning with them out of the Scriptures, He had satisfied them that He “ought” to have suffered these things and then enter into His glory. And although Christ had plainly foretold His own death, burial, and resurrection, yet through the strange power of unbelief, His disciples did not understand or receive those truths. This error was not wholly removed from their minds until near the time of His ascension. When He was dead, the best thing they could bring their feelings to say was, “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel” (Luk 24:21). Moreover, in a mind greatly afflicted, there is a strange unwillingness, amounting almost to incapacity, to believe good tidings. It looks upon any very good news as too good to be credited. Luke tells us that this was the state of mind in the followers of Christ: “They believed not for joy, and wondered” (Luk 24:41). Such a state of mind is not unusual, as might easily be shown.

Let us now examine the evidence by which the fact of Christ’s resurrection is established. Peter says, “God...shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead” (Act 10:40-41). It is worthy of notice that to the disciples there were two heavenly witnesses of Christ’s resurrection. Luke indeed speaks of them as “two men...in shining garments” (Luk 24:4); but John expressly says they were “two angels in white” (Joh 20:12-13). These elder sons of God were the first, and they were fit witnesses of the wonderful event.

Respecting the witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, several things may be stated: 1. Their number was large—between five and six hundred. From the days of Moses to this time, the most enlightened nations have admitted the testimony of two or three men. Here we have

⁴ **hither** – here.

⁵ **holden** – held; restrained.

two or three hundred times the number of witnesses required to prove even that a mother killed her own child. Five or six hundred witnesses are as good as five or six thousand. The number is sufficient.

2. The witnesses were competent. They had the use of all their senses, and they had the best opportunities of obtaining correct information. Peter says the witnesses “did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead” (Act 10:41). In Acts 1:3, Luke says that “he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them [the apostles] forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” So that the witnesses fearlessly say, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...declare we unto you” (1Jo 1:1, 3).

In Scripture are mentioned eleven particular instances in which our Lord was seen by some or all of these witnesses. His first appearance was to Mary Magdalene, who at first mistook Him for the gardener, and to whom He announced His early ascension into heaven (Mar 16:9; Joh 20:14-17). Christ's second appearance was to Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women, who had prepared spices to embalm His sacred body (Mat 28:1-10; Luk 24:1-12). His third appearance was to the two disciples as they went into the country on their way to Emmaus (Mar 16:12-13; Luk 24:13-35). He was afterwards seen by Peter (1Co 15:5). He was afterwards seen by James (1Co 15:7). He was then seen by the ten apostles, Thomas being absent (Joh 20:19-24). Eight days afterwards, He was seen by all the eleven apostles (Joh 20:26-29). He was next seen by His disciples at the sea of Tiberias. There were seven apostles present on that occasion (Joh 21:1-14). He was also seen at one time by more than five hundred brethren (1Co 15:6). Perhaps it was on this occasion that He ascended to heaven in the sight of the men of Galilee. Paul also, on his way to Damascus, perhaps about two years later, saw Him in His resurrection body and conversed with Him. In these interviews with His disciples, they had every opportunity to be certified of His being truly the risen Savior. There is no reason to believe that the evangelists have told us all the instances in which Christ was with His friends. Both John and Luke would lead us to this conclusion (Joh 20:30; Act 1:3). Christ conversed with them. The pious⁶ women held His feet and worshipped Him. These witnesses saw Him walk; they heard His

⁶ pious – godly.

arguments and His reproofs; they saw His wounds; they received both His command to spread His gospel, and His blessing. Infidelity itself has never impugned⁷ the competency of the witnesses. Their testimony was not built on rumor, on the report of others, but on what was submitted to their own senses and observation.

3. The testimony of these witnesses agrees. Some mention things that others did not see or hear; but all agree that He rose from the dead, and that they saw Him in His resurrection body. There is no contradiction between the witnesses. They agree in all things of which they speak. The early infidels labored to find out some contrariety⁸ in their testimony, but their labors were a singular compound of ignorance and malice.

4. The witnesses, by lives of humility, benevolence, uprightness, and self-denial, proved that they were good men and their word [could] be relied on. There is an almost universal belief that the apostles were pious men and afraid of offending God, which they would have done by fabricating falsehood. It is not even pretended that any of them ever amassed fortunes by maintaining that Jesus had risen. They lived and died poor men. The most sublime⁹ of the apostles was willingly a tent-maker. Jesus forewarned all His followers that adherence to Him was the highway to poverty. These witnesses too were banished, stoned, slain with the sword, and crucified. They were hated of all men; ignominy¹⁰ was heaped upon them. They foresaw it would be so, and they were not disappointed. They were not in quest of fame, ease, or pleasure. They counted it joy to suffer reproach for Christ. They hailed with composure the fire and sword of persecution. “There were no motives to corrupt them...It is evident that nothing desirable in this world had the least influence on the apostles. Nay, on the contrary, whatever was terrible to nature discouraged them. They suffered all temporal evils, even death itself, for this testimony.”¹¹ The enemies of the Christian religion do commonly admit all this. The way of weakening this testimony is by such insinuations as these:

1. The witnesses were unlettered and unphilosophical men. Suppose this were true, it would not prove that they were not good wit-

⁷ **impugned** – disputed the truth, validity, or correctness of; called into question.

⁸ **contrariety** – opposition or inconsistency between two or more things.

⁹ **sublime** – standing high above others by reason of noble character.

¹⁰ **ignominy** – public shame; dishonor.

¹¹ William Bates (1625-1699), “The Christian Faith Proved by Reason” in *The Whole Works of the Rev. William Bates*, Vol. 1 (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, rpt., 1990), 138-139.

nesses. Science and literature do not qualify men to tell the truth respecting a matter of fact occurring before their faces. But men who could speak all the languages of their times ought not to be held up to the world as liable to contempt for their ignorance. And men who have revolutionized the moral sentiments of mankind must have had something better than mere science. Such men were capable of being witnesses.

2. Some have said the apostles were credulous,¹² and so are not worthy of confidence. But the whole history shows that they were not credulous. Mark says they “believed not” (Mar 16:11). Again, on the next declaration of the fact, he says: “Neither believed they them” (Mar 16:13). Again: “He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.” Indeed, Christ often reprov'd their slowness to believe on this point. The whole history shows that they were not credulous. Notice here the unfairness of these infidels. When we state how slow Christ's followers were to believe His resurrection, some say, “Why did they doubt, if the evidence was good and sufficient?” Then when we give the reasons of their hesitancy, and show that finally the evidence was complete and satisfactory to everyone, we are told that they believed only because they were easy of belief. One of these statements destroys the other. Neither is true.

3. But some have said that the witnesses in this case, and especially the apostles, were fanatics,¹³ and therefore not to be believed. It is freely admitted that a well-established charge of fanaticism must impair confidence in any testimony; but who has adduced the slightest evidence of the truth of such a charge in this case? It is no evidence of wild enthusiasm to believe an extraordinary yet possible thing when it is proven to us. It is no evidence of fanaticism to say that we are witnesses of what we thus believe. Fanaticism relies on impulses and unaccountable impressions. It pays no just regard to evidence. But the apostles appealed to well-known facts. They said, “Ye know” so and so. “These things were not done in a corner” (*see* Act 26:26). “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen” (Joh 3:11). This is not the language of madmen. Fanatics are proud, boastful, and arrogant. All history shows that the apostles were humble, meek, and modest men. They avoid all needless allusion¹⁴ to themselves. They

¹² **credulous** – too ready to believe things and therefore easy to trick; gullible.

¹³ **fanatics** – people with extreme views or wild, extravagant notions of religion or politics.

¹⁴ **allusion** – indirect reference.

record their own imperfections. They praise not themselves. The chiefest of them says he was “not meet¹⁵ to be called an apostle” (1Co 15:9); that he was “the least of all saints;” yea, that he was “the chief of sinners.” Fanatics could never have sent forth a system claiming to be divine, and accompanied with such evidences as to deceive such men as Milton, Locke, Boyle, Bacon, and Newton, [as well as] a large portion of the most enlightened nations of the earth for the last eighteen hundred years.

But it is worthy of notice that the Jews at first generally denied Christ’s resurrection. They said that while the soldiers were asleep, His disciples stole away His body. This story cannot be believed for the following reasons:

1. The guard at the sepulcher was unusually large—as large as Christ’s enemies desired it should be (Mat 27:65-66).

2. It is wholly incredible that a guard, a large guard of Roman soldiers, should be asleep on their posts. The season of the year, at least during the night, was cool. The penalty for falling asleep on guard was death.

3. The dead body of our Savior could have done nothing in producing the belief that He was alive.

4. During the hours that Christ lay in the sepulcher, His disciples spent their time very much in mourning and weeping (Mar 16:10). It is incredible that this company of unarmed, dispirited, heartbroken followers of Jesus Christ should have laid and executed a plan to rescue the precious body of their Lord from a trained and armed [military].

5. The testimony of these soldiers, as eventually given, was wholly incompetent; for it related to a fact that they said occurred when they were asleep.

6. Their testimony, as first given, was full and satisfactory in favor of our Lord’s resurrection. Of the two stories they gave out, we are at full liberty, yea, we are bound, to believe the one that they told without “large money.”

If Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, and did not rise from the dead, then He was a gross deceiver. Nevertheless, His followers, in that case so cruelly misled, were willing to lay down their lives for Him. Is not that very strange?

If Jesus Christ did not rise, then a few men who never had nor claimed any political power, any fortune, any favor with civil rulers

¹⁵ meet – fit; worthy.

were able to convince hundreds of thousands of Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews that one who suffered as a malefactor¹⁶ was the Savior of men—yet all in the teeth of evidence to the contrary.

If Jesus Christ did not rise, then we must believe that millions have “madly suffered imprisonments, tortures, and crucifixions, to spread an illusion.”¹⁷

If Jesus Christ did not rise, then it is true that “ten thousand miracles were wrought in favor of falsehood.”¹⁸

All admit that Christ died. Yet, “His death is incomparably a greater wonder than His resurrection.”¹⁹ Surely it is less to be expected that “the Son of God Who originally possessed immortality should die, than that the human body united to Him should be raised to a glorious life.”²⁰ “It was not possible” that He should have been held by death (Act 2:24). His eternal power and godhead forbade it. Divine justice required His resurrection that His innocence might be vindicated.

Many important truths, essential to the comfort of a Christian life, are suggested and confirmed by this discussion:

1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ incontestably²¹ proves that in nothing was Jesus an impostor.

2. Christ's resurrection clearly manifests His [deity] and His Sonship with God. If He raised Himself from the dead, He must have been divine. If He claimed to be equal with God, and the Father and the Spirit cooperated in His resurrection, then He was equal with God; for God would not work a miracle to establish a lie. Paul says expressly that He was “declared to be the Son of God with power,” i.e., in a powerful manner, “by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4).

3. Christ's resurrection gave ample proof of the completeness of His satisfaction to the Law and justice of God. So Paul argues, “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25). “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:34). Paul says “the God of peace...brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus” (Heb 13:20).

¹⁶ **malefactor** – criminal.

¹⁷ James Saurin (1677-1730), “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ,” in *The Sermons of the Rev. James Saurin* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1846), 191.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ William Bates, “On Death” in *The Whole Works of the Rev. William Bates*, Vol. 3 (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, rpt., 1990), 268.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ **incontestably** – not open to dispute or argument; unquestionably.

He was the God of peace because His justice had been fully satisfied. “His death appeased God, His resurrection assures men...Justice incensed, exposed Him to death; and justice appeased, freed Him from the dead.”²²

4. If Christ rose from the dead, so shall His people. “Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept” (1Co 15:20). He is “the first-born from the dead.” “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1Th 4:14). “Our Savior’s victory over death was obtained by dying, His triumph by rising again. He foiled our common enemy in his own territories, the grave.”²³ We shall be raised “in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom 6:5). Our vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phi 3:21).

5. If we would know the fullness of the blessings of eternal life hereafter, we must know the power of Christ’s resurrection here (Phi 3:10). One of Whitefield’s best sermons is on this subject.

6. On the fact and doctrine of Christ’s resurrection depend all our hopes for eternity. So the apostles taught (1Pe 1:3-4). There is no room for doubt here. We cannot yield this point without surrendering all that is worth contending for.

7. How wonderful is that providence of God, which permitted death to come by man, and which arranged that by man also should come the resurrection of the dead (1Co 15:21).

8. The Bible is true. Christianity is divine.²⁴ Its author was the Son of God. Obedience to Him is required and is most reasonable. Will you believe and obey the Son of God?

From “Christ’s Resurrection” in *Rock of Ages*, Sprinkle Publications,
www.sprinklepublications.net.

William S. Plumer (1802-1880): American Presbyterian minister and author; born in Greensburg, PA, USA.



The resurrection of Christ, when considered in reference to the death that preceded and the glory that followed it, is the grand means of producing and strengthening the hope of eternal life.—*A. W. Pink*

²² Bates, 374.

²³ Bates, 268.

²⁴ **divine** – given or proceeding from God.

THE BENEFITS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.—Isaiah 53:8

THE Lord Jesus was taken from prison and from judgment and rose out of the pit of distress, to which He was condemned for our sakes. He was taken from prison and from judgment; He did rise as Mediator¹ and could not choose but rise; He was not suffered to miscarry² in it. The Scriptures testify abundantly that He rose again: “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And...he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1Co 15:3-4). And in other places that He ought to rise again: “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved³ Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day” (Luk 24:46). This, Christ proveth out of the Scriptures...

Therefore, I shall show you...for what end Christ was raised. And here, that I may show believers the fountain of their comfort—why it ought to be that Christ should be raised from the dead. Since all the comfort of the soul dependeth upon His getting above the grave and shaking the powers of death, I will here refresh your spirits a little with the water of this wellspring of salvation. I will draw it up and pour it forth in three considerations...

1. Generally, the resurrection is made to be the chiefest ground of comfort to Christians in the Scripture. Therefore, you shall find in Scripture that this is made the great article: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9).

¹ **Mediator** – a go-between; “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between Them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest, and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto Whom He did from all Eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (1689 London Baptist Confession 8.1, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY) See FGB 183, *Christ the Mediator*.

² **miscarry** – fail in one’s purpose; be unsuccessful.

³ **behoved** – was necessary for.

Mark, that is put as the main thing of Christianity: God hath raised Him from the dead. “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel” (2Ti 2:8). Above all truths, we must clearly preach that and press that as if it were the life of all religion. Remember: Christ is raised from the dead. Therefore, it was a usual salutation among the Christians, “The Lord is risen” (Luk 24:34). The apostle maketh the triumph of faith chiefly to arise from Christ’s resurrection: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again” (Rom 8:34). If Christ had not risen, there would be but poor comfort to believers: “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1Co 15:14). All would be to no purpose without this great seal and confirmation. It is a point of so great importance that it is generally made the cornerstone in religion, the main hinge upon which gospel comfort hangs.

2. More particularly, [I will] show you the benefits of it.

All your spiritual enemies are subdued. “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive” (Eph 4:8), that is, those things that usually captivate the spirits of Christians were forced to set off the triumph of Christ’s ascension! He seized upon the spoils at His resurrection and rode in triumph at His ascension to glory. Death is “unstinged.”⁴ Death shall be served as Haman: when it thinketh to hurt believers, [death] shall honor them as he did Mordecai. You may die, but you are saved from death: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1Co 15:55). It followeth, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 15:57). You can no more be held of the grave than Christ could be held thereby. Hell is unarmed and subdued, and the powers of darkness triumphed over. Though the devil mustereth⁵ temptations against you, you can see all conquered by faith in Christ’s resurrection: “Your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). Then for sin, that is subdued: Christ gave it its death-wound upon the cross, and at His resurrection got above it. Then for the world, remember what Christ says, “Fear not, little flock” (Luk 12:32); “I have overcome the world” (Joh 16:33), that is, “[I have] so conquered and triumphed over the world that it shall not hurt them.” As for the devil, [Jesus] trode⁶ him underfoot, and so shall Christians shortly: “The God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly” (Rom 16:20).

⁴ **un-stinged** – in other words, Christ’s resurrection has removed the sting of death.

⁵ **mustereth** – assembles, as in gathering troops in preparation for battle.

⁶ **trode** – trampled.

All spiritual blessings are procured for us. The blessedness of a Christian lieth in these three things: pardon, grace, and glory in justification, sanctification,⁷ and glorification.⁸ And all these are confirmed by Christ's being risen—taken from prison and from judgment.

For pardon or justification: If any one sin had remained unsatisfied for, Christ could not have risen; every sin must be expiated⁹ with death: “The wages of [every] sin is death” (Rom 6:23); and Christ would fulfil every tittle of the Law (Mat 5:18). But seeing He has gotten free [from the grave], you may be sure He hath paid the wages of every sin: “If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins” (1Co 15:17). While the surety¹⁰ is in prison, it is a sign the debt is not satisfied; but your surety is taken from prison and from judgment. Be of good comfort; all is paid: “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25). God had Him *to* prison for the debt of the creatures and took Him *from* prison and judgment for their comfort that they might be persuaded of His satisfaction.

For the grace of sanctification: He rose that He might [send] the Spirit to raise us from the death of sin to the life of grace: “That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). By the same glory of the Father both are done, that is, by the same glorious power that raised Jesus from the dead: the apostle speaketh of the power of Christ's resurrection, that is, the virtue that goeth out from it unto believers (Phi 3:10).¹¹

For glorification: Christ rose before us to open the way, and, therefore, He is called “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1Co 15:20). Others rise as a single ear of corn, but Christ as the firstfruits. The firstfruits were consecrated in lieu of¹² all the rest; so is Christ in your stead. Christ is called “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18), that is, the chiefest, the one that rose for us all, the first that entered into heaven

⁷ **sanctification** – Sanctification is the work of God's Spirit whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin, and live to righteousness. (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 34) See FGB 215, *Sanctification*.

⁸ **glorification** – the last stage of salvation, namely, the resurrection of the body at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the believer's entrance into the consummated Kingdom of God. In glorification, believers attain complete conformity to the image and likeness of the glorified Christ and are freed from both physical and spiritual defect.

⁹ **expiated** – paid for.

¹⁰ **surety** – one who takes the responsibility for the debt of another.

¹¹ **the virtue...believers** – God's regenerating power through the Holy Spirit.

¹² **in lieu of** – in place of; instead of.

as a [human] person. There was a resurrection of some before the glorification of Christ's body, but He was the firstborn that stood for all: "Whither the forerunner is for us entered" (Heb 6:20). Jesus Christ is our forerunner; His resurrection doth make way for us to rise after Him...

Consider what special thing there is in the resurrection of Christ above the other acts of the mediatorship, since the Scripture layeth so much weight upon it. What is it that it contributes to the comfort of Christians above His death? It will be necessary to inquire after that because the Scripture speaketh so much of this circumstance—the resurrection of Christ from the dead. I answer—

First, by way of *confirmation*: It confirmeth the heart in the expectation of salvation by Christ. By this, it appeareth that the whole contrivance¹³ of salvation was a true thing: you have God's seal for it. It therefore confirmeth the heart in two things: (1) the person of Christ and (2) the office of Christ, upon which all hangeth.

The person of Christ: There can be no greater proof of His [deity]¹⁴ than the resurrection: "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1Pe 1:21). And, indeed, there our faith beginneth upon Christ's being God; as Peter saith, "Your faith is built on God." Well, then, here is God's seal to the heart about the person of the Messiah: "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4). There, the case was plainly and mightily decided that He was so, so [that] no man could contradict it: "Truly this was the Son of God" (Mat 27:54), as the centurion cried. All were forced to say so by this instance. [In] Acts 13:33, He is said to be begotten of the Father. He proveth it there to be at His resurrection...It was evidently shown that He was begotten of the Father. Well, then, though the mercies of pardon, grace, and glory were merited by other acts of the mediatorship, yet they are confirmed and sealed by this because this establisheth the soul in...the truth of the person of Christ.

It sealeth to us the truth of His office: This was He that was sealed to be Mediator. When the Jews taxed Christ for usurpation,¹⁵ He would

¹³ **contrivance** – plan.

¹⁴ See FGB 230, *The Deity of Christ*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁵ **taxed...usurpation** – Jesus cast a demon out of a man, and the Jewish people concluded that He was Messiah; but the Pharisees accused Jesus of wrongly accepting this title because they said that He cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub. Therefore, they were accusing Him of falsely assuming the office or position of Messiah.

confirm His office to them by no other sign but the resurrection: “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas” (Mat 12:39), that is, that which answereth to the type of Jonah; and what was that but His lying three days and three nights¹⁶ in the grave and rising again? As if Christ had said, “If you will have a miracle and a seal from heaven, that is all that I will give you.” So you shall see upon another occasion, in John 2, when the Jews saw Him authoritatively purging the temple and acting as an extraordinary person, “What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?” (2:18). What confirmation hast thou from heaven to be the Messiah that thou takest upon thee to reform the temple? “Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (2:19), meaning “the temple of his body” (2:21). That was all the sign He would give them, viz., His resurrection; this was the most proper confirmation of His office.

Secondly, by way of *evidence*: It is a clearing and justifying¹⁷ of the merits of Christ. The benefits purchased by His death are evidenced to us in His resurrection. Not only must God be satisfied, but it must be [revealed] to the world that God was fully satisfied, or else we would remain under doubts and perplexities still. Now, the resurrection of Christ is the full discovery of that satisfaction that was made by His death. This is [what] the fallen creature hath to show that God was satisfied—Christ’s resurrection...What have you to show Satan when he impleadeth¹⁸ you before God? Why, by Christ’s resurrection, you may even challenge the challenger: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again” (Rom 8:34). Why should God let Him out of prison if He had not paid the uttermost farthing?¹⁹ He was taken from prison and from judgment. If Christ had been still in the prison of the grave, you [would have had to look] for another surety²⁰ that must make up His defects and satisfy where He could not: “If Christ be not raised...ye are yet in your sins” (1Co 15:17); ye have nothing to show for your discharge. How could ye

¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, evangelicals differ in their views of the chronology of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. For a view that attempts to give full weight to three full days and nights, see Wayne Carver, *The Chronology of Crucifixion Week*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁷ **clearing and justifying** – making clear and proving to be just.

¹⁸ **impleadeth** – accuse, as in a court of law.

¹⁹ **uttermost farthing** – last penny.

²⁰ **surety** – one who takes the responsibility for the debt of another.

have answered Satan then, if your surety had miscarried? Thus, by way of evidence.

Thirdly, by way of *pledge to us*. By Christ's resurrection, God giveth us a pawn and earnest,²¹ as it were, that we may expect the raising of our own bodies. You may plead it to God, and you may argue it for yourselves to God: Christ is raised, therefore raise me! And to yourselves, "Therefore shall I be raised because Christ was raised. Christ [paid the penalty for sin] and was received into glory: therefore, Lord, for His sake acquit me from my sins." Or shall I say, this is a pledge to us that our persons shall be raised, justified, sanctified, glorified because our Head is raised? The apostle thinketh it is a good argument to prove the resurrection of our bodies by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1Co 15). "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1Th 4:14). The meaning is that Christ's resurrection doth not only manifest a possibility, but a *necessity* of our rising with Him. God hath in Him given you an earnest of the resurrection, so that through Christ you may humbly challenge it at His hands: "Lord, I believe thou wilt raise me to life everlasting." The wicked rise by the general power of God, but Christians rise with reference to Christ's resurrection that was a pledge to them of theirs. And, therefore, it is observable that presently upon the resurrection of Christ's body, there followed the resurrection of the bodies of some of the saints that it might not only be a pledge, but that we might look upon it as a pledge to us. "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Mat 27:52-53). There the virtue wrought immediately that others of God's people might look for it, and the rest of Christ's mystical body expect their turn; not only the Head, but some of the members rose too. Therefore, here is our comfort because it is the great pledge and earnest that God hath given to the saints, namely, that as it was done to Christ, so they may expect it shall be done to them.

Fourthly, by way of *influence*: Every well of salvation hath its proper stream, and everything in a believer's heart hangs and depends upon some proportional²² thing in Christ Jesus—our death to sin upon His death, our life upon His life, our holiness upon His holiness: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sancti-

²¹ **earnest** – portion of something, given in advance as a pledge of the remainder.

²² **proportional** – corresponding.

fied through the truth” (Joh 17:19). For whatever Christ had in Himself as Mediator, He had it and did it for us. So that from these special things, there is special causal influence on the hearts of believers: from the resurrection of Christ, our resurrection; from His death, the death of sin to the life of grace or to the life of glory. There is causal influence from Christ's resurrection upon our hearts, which is the donation of the Spirit of God...to raise us to grace and glory. And, therefore, we are said to be begotten “unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1Pe 1:3). Regeneration cometh from the virtue and influence of it that passeth into our hearts for the conquering of sin, begetting the new nature, and raising us to glory. But there is another benefit you are to expect by way of influence from the resurrection of Christ: even the gift of the Spirit, to conform you to your Head. Christ by His resurrection, being made a fountain of supernatural life, will send out vital influence. Wait for it, then; He will renew and heal you, and He will carry on the work to the perfection of glory. Head and members must be conformable as far as the model of the creatures will permit. Therefore, as sure as Christ is risen, you shall be raised with Him to holiness *here* and to *heaven* hereafter...Christ died for sin that you might die to sin; and Christ rose to glory that you might rise to grace and glory. The dependence and looking up of the creature must be to the most suitable act and work of the Messiah. The whole Christ carrieth in Himself the complete work of our salvation, and the several acts and conditions of Christ are proportioned to the several acts and conditions of salvation...

Here is comfort for those that have an interest in Christ. Believers, know the ground of your privileges! Christ is risen, and thereby declared mightily to be the Son of God. So shall you be declared mightily to be the sons of God at your resurrection: “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (Psa 37:5). Oh, what comfort is there for their spirits in that word, “Christ is risen”!

From *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, Vol. 3, 347-362,
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Thomas Manton (1620-1677): English Presbyterian Puritan preacher; born in Lawrence-Lydiat, Somerset, England, UK.



THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

George Whitefield (1714-1770)

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.—Philippians 3:10

WHAT concerns us most to be assured of...is whether we have experimentally known the power of His resurrection, that is, whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost and by His powerful operations on our hearts have been raised from the death of sin to a life of righteousness and true holiness.

It was this the great apostle was chiefly desirous to know. He was satisfied [that] the resurrection of Christ's body would avail him nothing *unless he experienced the power of it in raising his dead soul.*

Another, and that a chief end of our blessed Lord's rising from the dead, was to enter heaven as our representative and to send down the Holy Ghost to apply to our hearts that redemption He had finished on the cross, by working an entire change in them. Without this, Christ would have died in vain. For it would have done us no service to have had His outward righteousness imputed to us, unless we had an inward inherent righteousness wrought in us. Because—being altogether conceived and born in sin and consequently unfit to hold communion with an infinitely pure and holy God—we cannot possibly be made [fit] to see or enjoy Him until a thorough renovation¹ has passed upon our hearts.

Without this, we leave out the Holy Ghost in the great work of our redemption. But as we were made by the joint concurrence and consultation of the blessed Trinity, and as we were baptized in Their name, so must all of Them concur in our salvation: as the Father made and the Son redeemed, so must the Holy Ghost sanctify and seal us, or otherwise we have believed in vain.

This, then, is what the apostle means by “the power of Christ's resurrection,” and this is what we are as much concerned experimentally to know, as that He rose at all.

¹ **renovation** – renewal wrought by the Holy Spirit.

Without this, though we may be moralists, though we may be civilized, good-natured people, yet we are not Christians. For he is not a true Christian who is only one outwardly; nor have we therefore a right because we daily profess to believe that Christ rose again the third day from the dead. But he is a true Christian who is one *inwardly*. We can only be styled true believers when we not only profess to believe, but have felt the power of our blessed Lord's rising from the dead by being quickened and raised by His Spirit—when dead in trespasses and sins—to a thorough newness both of heart and life.

The devils themselves cannot but believe the doctrine of the resurrection and tremble; yet they continue devils because the benefits of this resurrection have not been applied to them, nor have they received a renovating power from it to change and put off their diabolical² nature. So, unless we not only profess to know, but also feel that Christ is risen indeed by being born again from above, we shall be as far from the kingdom of God as they: our faith will be as ineffectual³ as the faith of devils.

Nothing has done more harm to the Christian world, nothing has rendered the cross of Christ of less effect, than a vain supposition⁴ that religion is something [external to] us...As Christ was born of the Virgin's womb, so He must be formed *spiritually* in our hearts. As He died for sin, so must we die to sin. And as He rose again from the dead, so must we also rise to a divine life...

It is true, as for the outward work of our redemption, it was a transient⁵ act and was certainly finished on the cross. But the application of that redemption to our hearts is a work that will continue always, even unto the end of the world. So long as there is an elect man breathing on the earth, who is naturally engendered⁶ of the offspring of the first Adam, so long must the quickening spirit—purchased by the resurrection of the second Adam, that Lord from heaven—be breathing upon his soul. For though we may exist *by* Christ, yet we cannot be said to exist *in* Him until we are united to Him by one Spirit and enter into a new state of things, as certainly as He entered into a new state of things after that He rose from the dead.

We may throng and crowd about Christ and call Him, "Lord, Lord," when we come to worship before His footstool; but we have

² **diabolical** – devilishly wicked.

³ **ineffectual** – lacking the ability to produce the desired effect.

⁴ **supposition** – idea held to be true without proof or certain knowledge.

⁵ **transient** – lasting a very short time; short-lived.

⁶ **engendered** – produced; begotten.

not effectually touched Him until, by a living faith in His resurrection, we perceive a divine virtue coming out of Him to renew and purify our souls.

How greatly, then, do they err who rest in a bare historical faith of our Savior's resurrection and look only for external proofs to evidence it? [Even if] we, the most learned disputers of this world, could speak of the certainty of this fact with the tongue of men and angels, without this inward testimony of it in our hearts—though we might convince others—we should never be saved by it ourselves. For we are but dead men; we are like so many carcasses wrapped up in grave clothes until that same Jesus Who called Lazarus from his tomb—and at Whose own resurrection many that slept arose (Mat 27:51-52)—doth raise us also by His [life-giving] Spirit from our natural death, in which we have so long lain, to a holy and heavenly life.

We might think ourselves happy if we had seen the holy Jesus after He was risen from the dead and our hands had handled that Lord of life. But happier are they who have not seen Him, yet having felt the power of His resurrection, believe in Him. For many saw our divine Master who were not saved by Him. But whosoever has thus felt the power of His resurrection has the earnest of his inheritance in his heart; he has passed from death to life and shall never fall into final condemnation.

I am very sensible that this is foolishness to the natural man, as were many such like truths to our Lord's own disciples (when only weak in faith) before He rose again. But when these natural men, like [the disciples], have fully felt the power of His resurrection, they will then own that this doctrine is from God and say with the Samaritans, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying" (Joh 4:42), for we ourselves have experienced it in our hearts.

And, O that all unbelievers, all letter-learned masters of Israel—who now look upon the doctrine of the power of Christ's resurrection (our new birth) as an idle tale and condemn the preachers of it as enthusiasts⁷ and madmen—did but *feel the power of it in their souls*, they would no longer ask how this thing could be. But they would be convinced of it, as much as Thomas was, when he saw the Lord's Christ; and like him, when Jesus bid him reach out his hands and thrust them into His side, in a holy confession they would cry out, "My Lord and my God" (Joh 20:28)!

⁷ **enthusiasts** – those who believe they receive direct, personal revelation from God.

But how shall an unbeliever, how shall the formal Christian come thus to “know Christ, and the power of his resurrection”? God, Who cannot lie, has told us, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (Joh 11:25). Again, says the apostle, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).

This, this is the way—walk in it! Believe, and you shall live in Christ, and Christ in you. You shall be one with Christ, and Christ one with you. But without this, your outward goodness and professions will avail you nothing.

But then, by this faith we are not to understand a dead, speculative⁸ faith...but a living principle wrought in the heart by the powerful operations of the Holy Ghost, a faith that will enable us to overcome the world and forsake all the [world's] affection for Jesus Christ. For thus speaks our blessed Master: “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luk 14:33).

And so the apostle...says, “Being made conformable to his death,” thereby implying that we cannot know the power of Christ's resurrection unless we are made conformable to Him in His death.

If we can reconcile light and darkness, heaven and hell, then we may hope to know the power of Christ's resurrection without dying to ourselves and the world. But until we can do this, we might as well expect that Christ will have concord with Belial (2Co 6:15). For there is such a contrariety⁹ between the spirit of this world and the Spirit of Jesus Christ that he who will be at friendship with the one must be at enmity with the other: “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat 6:24).

This may, indeed, seem a hard saying; and many, with the young man in the gospel, may be tempted to go away sorrowful. But wherefore should this offend them? For what is “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1Jo 2:16), but vanity and vexation¹⁰ of spirit?

God is love; therefore, could our own wills or the world have made us happy, He never would have sent His own dear Son Jesus Christ to die and rise again to deliver us from the power of them. But because they only torment and cannot satisfy, God bids us to renounce them...O the depth of the riches and excellency of Christianity! Well might the great St. Paul count all things but dung and dross for the

⁸ **speculative** – not based on fact or investigation.

⁹ **contrariety** – opposition in nature; disagreement.

¹⁰ **vexation** – state of being mentally troubled or distressed by some annoyance.

excellency of the knowledge of it. Well might he desire so ardently to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection! For even on this side of eternity, it raises us above the world and makes us to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Well might that glorious company of worthies, recorded in the Holy Scriptures, supported with a deep sense of their heavenly calling, despise the pleasures and profits of this life and wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, in dens and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (*see* Heb 11).

And O that we were all likeminded! That we felt the power of Christ's resurrection as they did! [We would] then count all things as dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord (Phi 3:8)! [We would] then recover our primitive dignity, trample the earth under our feet, and with our souls be continually gasping after God.

And what hinders but we may be thus minded? Is Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, altered from what He was? No, He is "the same yesterday, to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8). And though He is exalted to the right hand of God, yet He is not ashamed to call us brethren. The power of His resurrection is as great now as formerly, and the Holy Spirit—assured to us by His resurrection—as ready and able to quicken us who are dead in trespasses and sins as any saint that ever lived. Let us but cry, and that instantly, to Him that is mighty and able to save! Let us, in sincerity and truth, without secretly keeping back the least part, renounce ourselves and the world! *Then* we shall be Christians indeed. And though the world may cast us out and separate from our company, yet Jesus Christ will walk with and abide in us. And at the general resurrection of the last day, when the voice of the archangel and trump of God shall bid the sea and the graves to give up their dead and all nations shall appear before Him, then will He confess us before His Father and the holy angels; and we shall receive that invitation that He shall then pronounce to all who love and fear Him: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mat 25:34).

From *The Selected Sermons of George Whitefield*, in the public domain.

George Whitefield (1714-1770): Anglican minister, evangelist in the Great Awakening, and a founder of Methodism; born in Gloucester, England, UK.



RESURRECTION AND SANCTIFICATION

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

PAUL had become very concerned about the life of the members of the church at Corinth, and, in particular, he was concerned about their behavior. In other words, he was concerned about their sanctification. Things were happening there that were quite wrong. For instance, there was the abuse of the Communion Service, with some people eating too much and drinking too much. There was also trouble about the weaker brother, about meats offered to idols, and about the whole question of sects and divisions and schism. Now the apostle was concerned about these matters, not only from a primary theological standpoint, but particularly because of their effect upon the daily life of the church and the life of its members.

And in exactly the same way, he was concerned for them over this question of resurrection because certain people had been teaching them a false doctrine about it...They were evacuating the whole idea of the resurrection of our Lord of its true meaning and significance, and the apostle was very concerned about this...

The gospel of the New Testament, the message of the Christian church from the beginning, is one that is based on the literal physical resurrection of the Son of God from the grave. It is based on the empty tomb, on the literal historical fact of Christ risen in the body from the dead.

And this is vital, as the apostle here emphasizes, from the practical standpoint. Its importance emerges as we see the effect of wrong doctrine upon our daily life and living. Do you notice his argument? He says, "Why baptize for the dead, 'if the dead rise not at all?...And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?'" (1Co 15:29-30). "If I am risking my life and my reputation on this matter, as I am," says Paul, "I am a fool if this fact of the resurrection is *not* a fact." "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (15:31). He was dying daily for the gospel, but he says, "This is all wrong if that other doctrine is right." "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die" (15:32). "So

let there be no mistake about all this,” says the apostle. “What a man believes does matter; what a man believes in detail does count.”

And it is as true in the church today as it was when Paul penned those words. What a man believes is ultimately going to determine his life. A man who is loose in doctrine eventually becomes loose also in his life and in his behavior... You cannot separate these things; doctrine and conduct are indissolubly¹ linked. That is why the apostle writes the chapter and fights as he does for the truth of this particular doctrine.

Let us, therefore, see why all this is true and how it works out. Why must we believe in the New Testament doctrine of the literal physical resurrection? I will give you a number of answers to that question. The first is that it is the one thing, above everything else, which really proves that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God. I do not want to concentrate on this now, as we are more concerned with the practical aspects of the letter. But let us be clear about this: He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4). It was the resurrection that finally convinced the disciples, who hitherto had been uncertain and doubtful and skeptical. They were crestfallen and dejected² because of the death on the cross. It was when they knew that He had risen that they knew He was the Son of God. The resurrection is the final ultimate truth of the unique deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.³ It is the ultimate certainty of the fact that He is indeed the only begotten Son of God.

And that, of course, leads to this: it substantiates⁴ His claim that He had been sent into the world by the Father to do a particular work. He kept on saying that; it is the great theme of John 17. He had been sent into the world by the Father to do a given work; and here, by the resurrection, He proves that He has done the work and completed it. Paul says in Romans: “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25). If the Lord Jesus Christ had not literally risen physically from the grave, we could never be certain that He had ever really finished the work. And what was the work? It was to satisfy the demands of the Law. The Law of God demands that the punishment for sin shall be death, and if He has died for our sins, we must not only be certain that He has died, but that He has finished dying, and that there is no longer death. He has

¹ **indissolubly** – not able to be dissolved or destroyed; permanently.

² **crestfallen and dejected** – sad and depressed.

³ See FGB 230, *The Deity of Christ*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴ **substantiates** – provides evidence to support and prove the truth of.

answered the ultimate demands of the Law; and in the same way, He has answered all the ultimate demands of God. The argument of the New Testament is that when God raised His Son from the dead, He was proclaiming to the whole world, “I am satisfied in Him: I am satisfied in the work He has done. He has done everything. He has fulfilled every demand. Here He is risen—therefore I am satisfied with Him.”

Not only that. The resurrection proved that He has conquered every enemy that was opposed to Him, to God, and to us. He has not only satisfied the Law and conquered death and the grave, He has vanquished the devil and all his forces, and hell and all the principalities and powers of evil. He has triumphed over them all, and He proves it in the resurrection. The devil cannot hold Him; death and hell cannot hold Him. He has mastered them all; He has emerged on the other side. He is the Son of God, and He has completed the work that the Father had sent Him to do.

And all this, of course, is of vital importance to us. It is only in the light of the resurrection that I finally have an assurance of my sins forgiven. It is only in the light of the resurrection that I ultimately know that I stand in the presence of God absolved from guilt and shame and every condemnation. I can now say with Paul, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1) because I look at the fact of the resurrection. It is there that I know it.

You notice how Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 15:17 when he says, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” If it is not a fact that Christ literally rose from the grave, then you are still guilty before God. Your punishment has not been borne, your sins have not been dealt with, you are yet in your sins. It matters that much: without the resurrection you have no standing at all. You are still uncertain as to whether you are forgiven and whether you are a child of God. And when one day you come to your deathbed, you will not know, you will be uncertain as to where you are going and what is going to happen to you. “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25). It is there in the resurrection that I stand before God free and absolved⁵ and without a fear and know that I am indeed a child of God. So you see the importance of holding on to this doctrine, and why we must insist upon the de-

⁵ **absolved** – pronounced clear of guilt or blame.

tails of doctrine, and not be content with some vague, general belief in the Lord Jesus Christ?

“But wait a minute,” I can imagine someone saying. “Yes, I believe all that, but my problem is, how am I to live in this world? You announce that great doctrine to me, but I am still confronted by the world, the flesh, and the devil; how am I going to meet that? My problem is how to be sanctified, how to become holy; how to advance in grace and in the knowledge of God, and to follow Christ as I want to do?” Well, the answer to it all is given here in 1Corinthians 15:19: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,” together with the other verses I have already quoted to you—verses 13, 32, 33. All these have a very practical effect upon our lives in this world.

Let me summarize all this. “If we are concerned about our life in this world, and the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, the first thing we must do,” says the apostle, “is to take an overall look at this great doctrine of the resurrection of our Lord”...The Lord Jesus Christ, according to this teaching, came into the world because of this problem of sin and evil: that is the whole meaning of the Incarnation. He came in order to fight the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of sin, and of Satan. That was the whole purpose of His coming. Not only did He come to do that, He has succeeded in doing it. He was tempted of the devil, and He repulsed him every time: He mastered him. He defeated and conquered the devil and all his powers and all the forces of Hades. And He has finally done so in His death and in His glorious resurrection.

“Yes, that is all very well,” says our questioner, “but after all, when I look around me I do not seem to see that. I see sin and temptation flagrant, rampant. I see men intent upon evil. I see wars and hear of rumors of wars. It is all very well for you to say that Christ has conquered all these powers, but I do not see that in this world. How is all you are saying really going to help me?”

The answer is here in verses 23-25. “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh 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 hath put all enemies under his feet.”

Now this means that the Lord Jesus Christ is still continuing the fight. When He was on earth in His own person, He defeated the en-

emy at every point; and He finally routed and defeated him on the cross and in the resurrection. Yes, but now having ascended up into heaven, He has led captivity captive and is seated on the right hand of God's throne and authority and power. And what is He doing there? Well, according to this teaching, He is reigning there. This world has not got out of hand. It is still God's world, and Christ is still ruling and reigning over it. All authority is in His hands. He has been able to open the Book of history and the Book of destiny. He alone was strong enough to break the seals and to open the Book. So what we are taught by the resurrection is that Christ is still there bringing His own purpose to pass.

We do not understand it all. We do not understand why He did not immediately bring it all to an end, but He has chosen not to do so. He has chosen to save a certain number of people; the fullness of the Gentiles and the fullness of Israel have got to come in. But this is the thing that is certain: as certainly as Christ rose triumphant over the grave, He is reigning at this moment, and He will reign until the time comes for Him to return. The Lord Jesus Christ is going to come back into this world and finally take the devil and all his forces and cast them into a lake burning with fire. Evil and sin and wrong, and everything that is opposed to God, are going to be destroyed completely, and Christ will hand back a perfect kingdom to His Father. It is absolutely certain: He must reign, He will reign, until all His enemies have been put beneath His feet.

Now, we must start with that. Our tendency is to be frightened by the devil and by temptation and the power and the forces of evil. "Ah," we say, "how can a man, a weak man, fight against all that?" I say, look away from yourself for a moment; look at what is coming. He is reigning; He rules, and He is finally going to rout His enemies and end it all. That is the general picture.

But let me show you the argument in a slightly more personal manner. How do I apply all that to my own case? I do so in this way. In a spiritual sense I am already risen with Christ: we have seen that in our previous studies. I am in Christ and Christ is in me. I am to reckon myself to be dead indeed to sin, and alive unto God. I have died with Christ; I have been buried with Him; and I have risen with Him. As a new man, I am in Christ; and as a new man in Christ, I have risen. I have finished with death. I have got to die physically, but I have finished with the condemnation of death, and the terror and the sting of death have been taken out, as far as I am concerned. I am risen with Him already spiritually.

But here I want to emphasize this other aspect. I am already risen with Him spiritually, but I am yet going to rise with Him in a physical and in a literal sense. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming ...” (vv. 22-23), and then all the others. The resurrection of Christ, and the fact of the resurrection of Christ, is a certain, absolute announcement and proclamation that you and I and all people likewise rise from the grave in the body. The apostle explains how it all happens in the later portion of this great chapter—read it for yourselves, it is all there. “We shall all be changed” (v. 51). It will not be flesh and blood. There will be a change in “the twinkling of an eye.” But we are all going to rise as the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the grave on that third morning. There will be some people left on earth when the Lord comes and they will be changed; it comes to the same thing.

But what does all this mean? Let me tell you what the Scripture says, and you will see its significance in the matter of our sanctification, and in the matter of our daily living. What I do know is that we shall all appear before the judgment throne of Christ, and give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad. And let me remind you, Christian people, that that is true of you and of me. Every one of us who is a Christian will have to appear before that throne and give an account. But you see now the significance of the doctrine of the resurrection...A man who realizes every day of his life that he has got to stand before Christ and give an account, is a man who is very soon going to pay attention to the way he is living.

We shall all appear before Him, and not only that, we read in 1 John 3:2 that, “We shall see him as he is.” What a tremendous thought that is! Here on earth we have spent our time reading about Him, thinking and meditating concerning Him, but then we shall see Him as He is. “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face” (1Co 13:12). Do you realize that? It is the resurrection that tells you that—His resurrection, your resurrection. Furthermore, the next phrase in 1 John 3:2 tells us that we shall be like Him. Paul says here in 1 Corinthians 15:53 that we shall be incorruptible: “This corruptible must put on incorruption,” and, in Philippians 3:21, he tells us that the Lord will return and that He “shall change our vile body [the body of our humiliation] that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” My very body shall be changed; I shall be incor-

ruptible; I shall be glorified; I shall be like Him even in my body. What a staggering thought!

And then beyond all that, these Scriptures tell us that we shall spend our eternity in His glorious presence. We shall be with Him—with God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, with the spirits of just men made perfect, with holy angels. Because we shall rise, we shall go on and spend our eternity in that indescribable glory. That is what the Scripture tells us is the significance and the meaning of this doctrine of the resurrection.

What, then, do I conclude from all this? What are the deductions that we must inevitably draw from all this if we really believe it? Well the first, surely, is that if that is true, then we must have nothing to do with this condemned world. If I really believe that this world is evil and that it belongs to Satan, I must believe the apostle when he says that Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power” (1Co 15:24). The New Testament message is that the world is controlled by the devil and by hell. Worldliness is evil—the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life. It is all evil; it is all under condemnation. It is going to be destroyed, utterly and completely. If we believe all this, can we still desire that? Do we still want it? Do we regard as narrow the gospel that tells us to turn our backs upon it all? What interest can we possibly have in it?...

My [next] deduction is that...we must never be discouraged. Oh, I am going further still—we have no right to be discouraged. It is a sin to be discouraged. A discouraged Christian is a contradiction in terms; he is denying his Lord. We must not be discouraged because we are not left to ourselves. He is there, seated at God’s right hand. He is reigning, and He has said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18). Do you not know, says Paul, writing to the Ephesians, the power that works in you? It is “his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Eph 1:19-20). You have no right to be discouraged. He, unseen, is still with us, bringing His purposes to pass, forming His kingdom, gathering out His elect, working it all to that ultimate end. We are not left to ourselves.

Then there is this great word with which Paul ends 1Cointhians 15: “Therefore my beloved, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not

in vain in the Lord.” It cannot be in the light of this ultimate fact. It does not matter very much what men may say of you; it is what the Lord thinks that matters. Men may laugh at you, they may deride you; they may dismiss you, they may forget all about you, and of course, if you are thinking in terms of time, that is very serious. If you are only thinking of this world, then the greater the praise you get from men the better for you. Our Lord said about people like that: “Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Mat 6:2). It is the only reward they are going to get—the praise of men in this passing, temporary world. But if you know that you are a child of God and that you are going to stand before Him and see Him face to face, the only thing that is going to count with you is what He thinks, not what anybody else thinks. Do not be discouraged.

Then I draw this fourth deduction: that the world cannot separate me from Him and from His love. “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:39). I have despaired of myself a thousand times, and my only hope at such times is that though I cannot see anything in myself, He has loved me, died for me, and will never let me go. I am certain of it.

But I also draw this deduction: if all this is true—and it is—then I have no time to lose or to spare. I shall see Him as He is. I shall be like Him. I shall stand before that judgement throne of His. Have I got time to waste in these days and in this world? The days and the weeks, the months and the years are slipping through my fingers. I will be dead before I know where I am. I have not a moment to waste. If I believe I am going there, it is about time that I began to prepare ...If, therefore, you are going to face the King of kings and the Lord of lords and have an audience with Him, have you a second to spare? “Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:3). If you do not want to feel ashamed of yourself and feel that you are a cad when you stand and look into His blessed, holy face, and see the marks of the nails and the wound in His side, which He suffered for you, then prepare for the sight of Him, prepare yourself to meet Him.

Then, above and beyond everything else, let us dwell upon the glory of it all. Here, we are still in this sinful world, and there are so many discouragements, and people may misunderstand us, and things seem to go against us. My friends, do not look at them. “While

we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Co 4:18). Oh, that the Holy Spirit might open our eyes! If we could but see something of them: “The things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1Co 2:9). The vision of God! To be with Christ! The ineffable⁶ purity and holiness of it all: the joy and the singing and the glory! No sighing, no sorrow, no tears, all that left behind. Perfect, unmixed, unalloyed⁷ glory and happiness and joy and peace—the resurrection tells us that if we belong to Christ, we are going on to that...

But then to crown it all, in the last verse of this fifteenth chapter, Paul uses the word *Therefore*. That is the argument; you see the logic—you cannot get away from it. It is not just beautiful language. You have heard people reveling in a beautiful service, and saying, “How marvelous, how beautiful, how perfect—the balance and the cadence and the lilt of the words!” But that is not what the apostle wants you to feel. He wants you to say this, “Therefore”—“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable.” Let them say what they like about you: stand on your doctrine like a man, unmovable. It is the doctrine of God; it is eternal. Stand steadfast, unmovable, “always abounding in the work of the Lord.” In your personal life and living, in your life in the church and for Him, in your personal witness and testimony, in the whole of your life—“abounding!” “Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” The doctrine of the resurrection—what a stimulus⁸ to our sanctification!

Let nothing come between us and all this mighty truth that we have been considering together. This is vital. This is life. This is everything.

From “The Doctrine of the Resurrection” in *The Assurance of Our Salvation: Exploring the Depth of Jesus’ Prayer for His Own: Studies in John 17* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 486-502.

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David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): Welsh expository preacher and author; born in Cardiff, Wales, UK.



⁶ **ineffable** – too great to be described in words.

⁷ **unalloyed** – complete and unreserved; pure.

⁸ **stimulus** – something that encourages an activity or process to being, increase, or develop.

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.—1 Corinthians 15:20

THE text tells us that Christ is “the firstfruits of them that slept.” Some professors take very great delight in the hope that they may be “alive and remain” (1Th 4:15, 17) at the coming of Christ, and so may never die. I confess I greatly rejoice in the hope that Christ will come; but the prospect of never dying has no sort of charms for me, for I think those who never die lose a great privilege. At least, to our comprehension it seems so, for Christ is “the firstfruits of them *that slept*.” Oh, then, it is a blessed thing to sleep that Christ may be to us in the relationship of firstfruits. They who never die can hardly know so much of fellowship with Christ in His death as those who fall asleep in Jesus. Whereas you and I, who feel the pin’s prick of the dart of death, will be able to say in eternity, “I too passed through the grave. He was with me passing through the valley of the shadow of death. I, in my own proper person, knew a death and a resurrection too, even as my Lord did, which you who never died can only understand by hearsay and report.” Oh, happy they who die! They that are alive and remain shall not precede them in any privilege or honor.

But what is meant by Christ being “the firstfruits?” You will recollect that there was a feast of the Jews called the feast of firstfruits, when the first sheaf was brought out from the harvest as a token of the whole. First of all, [it was] heaved upward as a heave offering, and then waved to and fro as a wave offering, being thus dedicated to God in testimony of the gratitude of the holders of the soil for the harvest that the Lord had given. Now, this happened on the first day of the week. You will remember that the Passover was celebrated first; then came a Sabbath day; then after that came the feast of firstfruits. So Christ died on the Passover day; He, as the slaughtered Lamb of God of God’s Passover, died exactly at the Passover season. The next day was the Sabbath rest: Christ’s body therefore tarried in the grave. Then, early in the morning of the first day, ere it was yet light, while yet the sun was rising upon the earth, Christ rose on the morning of the feast of the firstfruits. So He is revealed as the blessed wave sheaf,

preceding and consecrating the whole harvest. But the uninstructed believer asks me to explain at greater length.

Beloved, remember then, that Christ was the first that rose from the dead in order of time. You will mention to me Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2Ki 2:11-12). We answer that they never died, but were translated that they should not see death. You will remind me of the widow's son who was raised by Elijah (1Ki 17:17-24), and the young man restored by Elisha (2Ki 4:12-37). Yes, but these are not cases in point. They were raised, but *they died again*. All the instances in the Old Testament are only temporary restorations, and so also those in the New. In no instance, save in that of Lazarus (Joh 11:1-44), were any of them buried at all, so that none of them came out of their graves. Even in the case of Lazarus, he lived but to die. He had a furlough¹ from the tomb; but at the expiration of the due time, his body was yielded to the appointed keeper. Christ was the first Who *really* rose no more to die. He leads the vanguard through the dark defile,² and His brow first salutes the light of the plains of heaven beyond the gloom...Oh, then, sing it in songs, sound it with voice of trumpet to the ends of the earth: Christ is the first Who returned from the jaws of death to tell of immortality and light!

He is also first in point of cause. For as He comes back from the grave, He brings all His followers behind Him in one glorious train... Like a sun, He suddenly flashed upon the night of death and scattered its darkness. Like Samson in Gaza, He tore up the gates of death and carried away the bars of the grave. Like David, He delivered His flock out of the jaw of the lion and took the monster by the beard and slew him. Like Abraham, He returned triumphantly from the slaughter of the kings. Like Moses, He led His Israel out of the house of bondage...Who is this that cometh up from the land of darkness from the gates of the grave? Who is this that draggeth captive behind Him the grim prince of the realms of death-shade³? Who is this, so strong, so mighty that adamant⁴ walls give way before Him and gates of brass are broken in two? 'Tis He! 'Tis He!...The victory on the cross is succeeded by a victory in the tomb! He Who won heaven for earth when He died, wins heaven for the dead when He descends into the grave. Sound ye His praises! Tell ye His victories! Let heaven itself take up the strain, "He hath 'led captivity captive' (Eph 4:8), [plundered] the

¹ **furlough** – temporary leave of absence.

² **defile** – steep-sided narrow passage (originally, requiring troops to march in single file).

³ **death-shade** – the shadow of death.

⁴ **adamantine** – like a stone of surpassing hardness, therefore, incapable of being penetrated.

grave, and robbed death of his sting. He is the death of death and hell's destruction!"

But then again, He is first *in point of pledge*. The firstfruits were a pledge of the harvest...Whence, O power divine, didst Thou bring this glorious sheaf, this body of our Lord, so bright and glorious? Whence didst Thou bring it, O Spirit of the Lord? Is there a harvest of many shocks⁵ of corn such as this? "Ay, verily," saith the teacher; "this is but one among many, the firstborn among many brethren." We know right well that there must be a glorious harvest of resurrection-forms and immortal bodies, since Jesus Christ, clothed in immortality and light, walks among the sons of men [as] the pledge of all the rest.

He was, again, the firstfruits, not only as a pledge, but as the *representative of the whole*. When the firstfruit sheaf had been waved before God, it was considered that all the harvest had been brought into the sanctuary; it was all dedicated, all consecrated, from that very hour. So when Christ rose as a heave-offering from the sepulcher, and when He went about among the people as a wave-offering, moving among His disciples, He consecrated the whole harvest. All the righteous dead were virtually risen in Him. All the chosen members of His body had a resurrection when their head appeared as "risen indeed"; and, moreover, they were all dedicated and consecrated to God by His dedication as the firstfruits to the Most High. Triumph, ye children of God, triumph in this! You are risen in Christ today! We see not the saints as yet ascended; rather, we see their bones dried in the valley; and we ask, "Can these dry bones live?" "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" (Heb 2:9), and we know that He is risen and sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And by faith we perceive that as our covenant head, He hath "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places" (Eph 2:6), even in Him; for He is "the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph 1:22-23). Never doubt, believer, of your resurrection, since the second Adam was loosed from the bands of the tomb.

And now, lastly, we will close by noticing the influence of the whole doctrine of the resurrection and Christ's connection with it upon our own spirits. First, let us look well to the *holiness of our bodies*. Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost? If

⁵ **shocks** – groups of twelve sheaves of grain placed upright and supporting each other to allow the grain to dry and ripen.

any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy” (1Co 6:19, 3:17). We do not believe in consecrated churches; we think it altogether absurd to talk of holy bricks and mortar; but we do know by Scriptural authority that the body is holy—that the body of the saint is as really holy as men pretend that churches and temples may be. Now, brethren, if our eyes look upon vanity, we have defiled the windows of God’s house; if our tongues speak that which is evil, have we not desecrated the gates of the temple of the Lord? Let us see to it that our feet carry us nowhere but where our Master can go with us, lest the pillars of our house become our destruction, like the pillars of the Philistine temple of old (Jdg 16:30). Let us mind that our hands be outstretched for naught but that which is pure and lovely, lest like Belshazzar, we profane the vessels of the Lord’s temple (Dan 5:2-4). They who pamper the body, they who look to its adornment, they who regard its physical health more than its moral purity, forget the higher end of their being! What *is* beauty after all? What [is] the comeliness that human skill can give? See you that skull? “Go, take that to my lady’s chamber, and tell her, though she paint herself an inch thick, to that complexion must she come at last.” And say to all who think so much of comeliness and goodness, “That deadly brown that worms and earth shall bring upon that is the natural complexion of man, and to that the fairest must be bronzed at last.” But there is another way of minding your complexion: by seeing that your cheek never need be reddened with shame, that your hands are never black with evil deeds, and that your flesh is not soiled by lasciviousness or contact with that which is evil. Will ye take the members of Christ and “make them the members of an harlot? (1Co 6:15),” saith the apostle Paul, when he biddeth men see to it that their bodies be chaste and pure. Know ye not that your very flesh, if ye be Christians, has been bought with Christ’s blood and that precious is your very dust in His sight? Mind ye, O mind ye, that the slime of the serpent come not here and that ye defile not the members of your body, lest the Lord abhor you and cast you out from His presence, as things He careth not for, being none of His.

Let us look at things in this light, and so by the Holy Spirit escape from sin. What! Shall these eyes that are one day to “see the king in his beauty” (Isa 33:17) be delighted with vanity? Shall these lips that are to be tuned to melodious sonnets “sung by flaming tongues above,” talk that which is light, frivolous, and ministreth not unto edification? What! Shall these fingers that are to strike the golden harps be given up to work unrighteousness with greediness? Nay, as

we are to be fellows with the angels—and more glorious than they—and as these bodies are to be made like unto Christ’s body, let us keep them pure, washed with clean water by His Spirit, renewed and preserved, that we go not astray unto sin.

But, secondly, another thought arises here. *Are we among those for whom Christ thus stood as firstfruits?* For Christ is to rise first, as the firstfruits, “Afterwards they that are Christ’s, at his coming” (1Co 15:23). Then when do the wicked rise?

There are two resurrections, and “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power” (Rev 20:6). When the Lord shall come from heaven with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, then the dead in Christ shall suddenly start from their sleep and shall be offered to God as the great harvest, the great Pentecost, of which Christ’s resurrection was the firstfruits.

What then shall become of the wicked? They shall continue rotting in their graves. The worm shall feed upon them; they shall be ashes beneath the feet of the saints. And while the righteous tread this earth and, on the scene of their conflict, enjoy a thousand years of triumph; while Christ’s feet shall stand in the latter day upon Mount Olivet; while His people shall bow around Him and shall reign with Him, triumphant over the creature that was once subject to vanity, beneath their feet shall be the dead bodies of their ungodly persecutors.⁶ Deep down in their graves, those infamous kings and princes shall rot, and those careless crowds and nations who knew not Jehovah and would not be obedient unto His Son. They said, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psa 2:3). And now, where are they? “Death hath dominion over them in the morning, and the righteous triumph over them, while they lie ignominiously⁷ like those who fall in battle, a portion for foxes” (*see* Psa 49:14; 2Sa 1:25; Psa 63:10).

But what then? When the splendors of the millennial age are over, then cometh the end. The King shall ascend the judgment seat; He Who came to reign with His people shall suddenly, sitting upon His throne, bid His angel proclaim the last [judgment]. Then, unwillingly shall souls tormented in hell come back from Tophet to be reunited with their equally guilty bodies; and He Who is able to destroy both

⁶ **EDITOR’S NOTE:** We understand that not all agree with Spurgeon’s view of the end times and the millennium as expressed here.

⁷ **ignominiously** – shamefully; disgracefully.

body and soul in hell shall say, “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them” (Mat 13:30). He shall pronounce their sentence: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41).⁸ Oh! That you and I may be among the harvest, and not the vintage.⁹ There are two gatherings mentioned, you remember, in the Revelation. The *harvest* is the gathering in of the righteous; they are carefully housed in God’s barn. The *vintage* is the gathering of the wicked; they are cast into the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God: “The winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles” (Rev 14:20).

Now, how am I to know whether I belong to that portion of which Christ is the firstfruits? Why, thus: If Christ rose for me, and if I rose in Him, then I died in Him. Oh! Soul, dost thou believe that Christ died for thee? Hast thou a part in His passion? Dost thou hope in His agonies? Dost thou rest on His cross? If so, He that died for thee rose for thee too, and thou art a part of that holy lump of which Christ was the holy offering. Hast thou died with Christ thyself? Art thou dead to the world? Dost thou hate the things that thou didst once love? Art thou weaned from thine old pleasures? Dost thou seek for something higher and better? Ah! Then, if thou hast died with Him, thou art risen with Him. Say now, dost thou desire to be one with Christ? For if thou art one with Him in heart, thou shalt be one with Him in all His trophies and His glories. Dost thou say, “Nay. I care not for Christ”? Soul! Soul! If thou diest in that mind, thou shalt have no part in the first resurrection; but when the wicked rise, then shalt thou awaken “to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2). But, and if thou sayest in thy heart this morning, “I believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead according to the Scriptures, and I put my sole and only trust in Him; He is to me all my salvation and all my desire,” go thy way; thou shalt “stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (Dan 12:13); thou shalt have thy portion among them that are sanctified; thou shalt rejoice together with Him, and sit down at His marriage banquet forever.

God add His own blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, April 20, 1862,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



⁸ See FGB 210, *Day of Judgment*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁹ *vintage* – when grapes are gathered to be pressed into wine; figuratively, the wrath of God.