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THE RESURRECTED SAVIOR

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THE MORNING GLORY

John H. Jowett (1864-1923)

"He is risen"—Matthew 28:6.

WHAT a sunrise this was after these dark days of disaster and hopeless defeat! It was "like some sweet summer morning after a night of pain." Love had been weeping amid the fallen leaves of her own tender hopes. All her joys were silenced like the songs of wounded birds. Love had been peacefully anticipating the coming of an endless summer, and lo! here was winter, in dark and merciless severity! The great Lover had seemed to be the

very fountain of life, with quickening vitality which nothing could destroy, and yet the fountain had been choked up in Gethsemane and Calvary! "We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel," but the shining, welcoming pool proved to be only a mirage; hope withered in disillusionment; and the brutal majesty of material force held the entire field.

And so all the disciples were in a mood of deepest and darkest depression. The light had been cut off from their minds. They were in the dark. The taste had gone out of their lives. Everything had become stale and profitless. Simon Peter was gloomy with despondency and haggard with remorse. Two disciples were walking in the twilight to Emmaus, "looking sad," communing about the awful and sudden eclipse in which their hopes had been so miserably quenched.

In every life the light was out. Mary Magdalene started at the "early dawn" to carry spices to the grave, but there was no dawning in her spirit, and the roadway was wet with her tears. Even in the heart of the Magdalene there was no vigil burning, like uncertain candle in a dark and gusty night. No one was anxiously watching on the third day, with eyes intently fixed upon a mysterious east. No; death reigned, and wickedness, and hopelessness, and no one was looking for the morning!

And then came the cry, "He is risen!" The Lord is alive. His tomb is empty! He has shaken off death and its ceremonies, and He has marched out of the grave! Think of that trumpet note pealing through the late night. Think of that great burning light streaming through the darkness, kindling life after life into blazing hope again—now the Magdalene, now Peter, now John, now the two journeying to Emmaus, now Thomas, until the entire disciple band was a circle of light again. It was an almost unspeakable revolution. "The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light!" "The Lord is risen indeed!"

Now what did the apostles find in the resurrection which made them give it this weighty and unfailing emphasis? What was its practical significance? What did it mean? First of all, it meant this, that Jesus of Nazareth had been clearly manifested to be the Son of God. Before this wonderful morning the disciples had been the victims of uncertainty, chilled by cloudy moods of doubt and fear.

But with the resurrection the uncertainty ends. It is not only that the immediate darkness passes, but the troublesome mists are lifted as well, and the Master emerges as the clearly manifested Son of God. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!" (Isa 60:1).

Now, it is with that trumpet note that St. Paul begins his great letter to the Romans. It is well to remember this, because the letter to the Romans is largely concerned with sin and the guilt of sin, and with the sacred ministry of emancipation from its stain and power. And yet, on the very threshold of this mighty book, it is the eternal Sonship of the Lord which is proclaimed, and this in association with the fact of His resurrection from the dead.

Here is the big-lettered placard we meet as soon as we address ourselves to travel this fine and bracing mountain road: "Jesus Christ...declared with power to be the Son of God...by the resurrection from the dead." Not, you will notice, "declared to be the Son of God with power"; the power belongs to the declaration, the proclamation, the trumpet.

Before the Resurrection morn the trumpet had seemed to the apostles to give an uncertain sound; there was either a trembling in its notes or a trembling in their ears; but now, with the resurrection, all uncertainty had gone, and the trumpet rang out its glorious blast, firm and rich and clear. "Declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead!"

What else did it mean? In the power of the resurrection the apostles saw a vast reservoir of spiritual energy for the quickening and emancipation of the race. This was their reasoning and their faith, that the Lord, who had emerged from the grave, and had thereby vanquished death, had the power to vanquish all death, whether it enthroned itself in body, mind, or soul. This was their faith, as this was their evangel, that in Christ we, too, can rise out of death into newness of life, that, just as He walked out of that tomb, we, too, can walk out of the grave and graveyard of our own corrupt past, and in vigour and sweetness of being become alive unto God.

*"I hold it true with him who sings To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on steppingstones Of their dead selves to higher things!"*

Ay, but those lines omit the evangel. It is true that man can take his own dead self, and stand upon it, and use it as a step into a larger life of blessedness and sacrifice, but the energy wherewith to rise upon the dead self is only to be found in "the power of the resurrection."

That is Paul's Gospel, and there is no other. We rise with Christ, we are risen with Christ. Because of the Lord's resurrection morn we may pass out of our three days of death and corruption, and may rise to the "higher things," and have our own resurrection morn "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." That is what the apostles found in the resurrection—vitality enough to quicken all the dead, whether the corruption be in body or in soul. "In Christ shall all be made alive" (1Co 15:22).

And surely we have a wonderful symbolism of all this in the mystic movements of the springtime. If anyone would be besieged by suggestions of the resurrection, let him look about in garden and in field, and he will see the quickening glory. Spring is ever a gracious time to me. Never do I so intensely feel the pressure of the quickening Spirit as when I see the black hedgerows bursting with their flooding life into green and tender leaf. Never do I so realize the surging, encompassing energy of God's resurrecting Presence. I can pray with more intimate and eager communion when the dominion of winter is breaking and the time of the singing of birds is come. "In Christ shall all be made alive!"

I would have the resurrection power flow into my dead affections, and make them bud in tender sympathies, and gentle courtesies, and all the exquisite graces of the heart of my Lord. And I would have the resurrection power pervade my dead conscience, and make it act with hallowed sensitiveness, with fine scrupulous feeling of the sacred and the profane. And I would have the resurrection power possess my mind, and make it fertile in noble ideals, in holy purpose, and in chivalrous resolution.

Wherever there is death where there ought to be life, let there come a resurrection dawning and the springtide of our God. And that possibility is just the apostolic evangel, and it is born in the light and joy of the resurrection of our Lord. Again and again I would say, "In Christ shall all be made alive!" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (Joh 5:25). Because He lives, we shall live also!

And, last, to the early apostles the resurrection had this further significance, that, in it right was manifested as the ultimate might. It had seemed to the apostles as though the truth had been defeated, that it had been overwhelmed by hordes of wickedness, and that amid the laughter and ribaldry of its foes it had sunk in complete and final disaster.

But on the resurrection morn the truth emerged again. It snapped the cerements of the grave, and reappeared almost before the laughter of the enemy had ceased. "Vain the stone, the watch, the seal!" "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again!"

I say that the apostles laid hold of this as one of the primary significances of the resurrection, the vital tenacity of the truth, the indestructibility of the right, its sure and certain resurrection. If we cannot permanently bury the Christ, we cannot permanently bury the Christ-like; if One emerged from His temporary grave, so assuredly will the other. Right is the ultimate might, and all the forces of Hell cannot gainsay it.

It may seem at times as though truth is a frail and fragile creature, a tender presence in a tempestuous day, and men may take her, and scourge her, and crucify her, and bury her in a sealed and guarded grave; but, as surely as right is right and God is God, that buried frailty shall reappear in invincible majesty, and shall incontestably dominate and command the affairs of men.

That is apostolic teaching; and, therefore, written in this faith we have that wonderful ending to Paul's great resurrection chapter in his letter to the Corinthians. Have we marked its culmination? "Wherefore," he says, in the closing verse, when he has just taunted the beaten forces of death and the grave, and sang anew the praises of the Lord, "wherefore, my beloved brethren, 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" (1Co 15:58). Do we mark the force of the succession? He seems to say, "Your Lord emerged from the grave in irresistible strength and glory. There were no bonds strong enough to hold Him. He broke them all like tender threads. There was no grave mighty enough to imprison the truth; all the stones were rolled away!"

So shall it be with the truth in our life and service. It shall not go under in endless defeat. Our strength shall not be spent for nought, precious water easily spilt upon the ground. Every bit of truth shall live, every bit of chivalrous service shall abide for ever." "Wherefore, be ye stedfast, unmoveable"; go on living the truth, speaking and doing the truth, even though immediate circumstances crush you like a juggernaut—go on—there is resurrection power in the truth, and it shall reappear and surely conquer, and your labour shall "not be in vain in the Lord."

And so it is true, what we learned in childhood, for the resurrection morn confirms it, “Kind words can never die, no, never die!” And so it is true what is said by Oliver Wendell Holmes, “Truth gets well if she is run over by a locomotive, while error dies if she scratches her finger.”

*“Truth crushed to earth will rise again, The eternal years of God are hers,
But error wounded, writhes with pain, And dies amid her worshippers.”*

“He is risen!” And in our Lord’s resurrection is the pledge of the resurrection of all that shares His nature.

John Henry Jowett (1864-1923): English Congregational pastor; born in Halifax, England, to a Christian home. After theological training at Edinburgh and Oxford, Jowett pastored in Birmingham, England. For the next fifteen years the church grew and increased its evangelism. He went to America for the first time in 1909, where the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York called him as pastor, which he assumed in 1911. His depth of knowledge, clarity of language, and power of life commanded respect, and attendance rose to 1,500. He moved to Westminster Chapel in London in 1917 to succeed G. Campbell Morgan.



*Blessed be the everlasting God, The Father of our Lord;
Be His abounding mercy praised, His majesty adored.
When from the dead He raised His Son, And called Him to the sky;
He gave our souls a lively hope That they should never die.
What though our inbred sins require Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Savior rose, So all His followers must.
There’s an inheritance divine Reserved against that day;
’Tis uncorrupted, undefiled, And cannot waste away.
Saints by the power of God are kept Till the salvation come;
We walk by faith as strangers here, Till Christ shall call us home.
—Isaac Watts*

THE POWER OF THE RISEN SAVIOR

C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”—Matthew 28:18-20.

THE change from “the man of sorrows” before His crucifixion to the “Lord over all” after His resurrection is very striking. Before his Passion He was well known by His disciples, and appeared only in one form, as the Son of man, clad in the common peasant’s garment without seam, woven from the top throughout; but after He had risen from the dead He was on several occasions unrecognized by those who loved Him best, and is once at least described as having appeared to certain of them “under another form.” He was the same person, for they saw His hands and His feet, and Thomas even handled Him, and placed his finger in the print of the nails; but yet it would seem that some gleams of His glory were at times manifested to them, a glory which had been hidden during His previous life, save only when He stood on the Mount of Transfiguration. Before His death, His appearances were to the general public—He stood in the midst of Scribes and Pharisees and publicans and sinners, and preached the glad tidings; but now He appeared only to His disciples, sometimes to one, at another time to two, on one occasion to about five hundred brethren at once, but always to His disciples, and to them only. Before His death His preaching was full of parable, plain to those who had understanding, but often dark and mysterious even to His own followers,

for it was a judgment from the Lord upon that evil generation that seeing they should not see, and hearing they should not perceive. Yet with equal truth we may say that our Lord before His death brought down His teaching to the comprehension of the uninstructed minds which listened to it, so that many of the deeper truths were slightly touched upon because they were not able to bear them as yet. Till His crucifixion he veiled the effulgence of many truths, but after His resurrection he spoke in no more parables, but introduced His disciples into the inner circle of the great doctrines of the kingdom, and as it were showed Himself face to face to them. Before His death the Lord Jesus was ever with His followers, and even the secret places of His retirement were known to them, but after He had risen He came and went among them at irregular intervals. Where He was during many of those forty days who among us can tell? He was seen in the garden upon Olivet, He walked to Emmaus, He comforted the assembly at Jerusalem, He showed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, but where went He when, after the various interviews, He vanished out of their sight? They were in the room alone, the doors were shut, and suddenly He stood in the midst of them; again He called to them from the sea-beach, and on landing they found a fire of coals kindled, and fish laid thereon, and bread; His appearances were strange, and His disappearings equally so. Everything betokened that, after He had risen from the dead, He had undergone some marvelous change, which had revealed in Him that which had been concealed before, though still His identity was indisputable.

It was no small honor to have seen our risen Lord while yet He lingered here below. What must it be to see Jesus as He is now! He is the same Jesus as when He was here; yonder memorials as of a lamb that has been slain assure us that He is the same man. Glorified in heaven His real manhood sits, and it is capable of being beheld by the eye, and heard by the ear, but yet how different. Had we seen Him in His agony, we should all the more admire His glory. Dwell with your hearts very much upon Christ crucified, but indulge yourselves full often with a sight of Christ glorified. Delight to think that He is not here, for He is risen; He is not here, for He has ascended; He is not here, for He sits at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us. Let your souls travel frequently the blessed highway from the sepulcher to the throne. As in Rome there was a Via Sacra along which returning conquerors went from the gates of the city up to the heights of the Capitol, so is there another Via Sacra which you ought often to survey, for along it the risen Savior went in glorious majesty from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea up to the eternal dignities of His Father's right hand. Your soul will do well to see her dawn of hope in His death, and her full assurance of hope in His risen life.

Today my business is to show, as far as God the Spirit may help me, first, Our Lord's resurrection power; and secondly, Our Lord's mode of exercising the spiritual part of that power so far as we are concerned.

I. Our Lord's Resurrection Power

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." At the risk of repeating myself; I should like to begin this head by asking you to remember last Sabbath morning's sermon, when we went to Gethsemane, and bowed our spirits in the shade of those grey olives, at the sight of the bloody sweat. What a contrast between that and this! There you have the weakness of man, the bowing, the prostrating, the crushing of the manhood of the Mediator; but here you see the strength of the God-man:—He is girt with omnipotence, though still on earth when He spoke these words, He had received a privilege, honor, glory, fullness, and power which lifted Him far above the sons of men. He was, as Mediator, no more a sufferer, but a sovereign; no more a victim, but a victor; no more a servant, but the monarch of earth and heaven. Yet He had never received such power if He had not endured such weakness. All power had never been given to the Mediator if all comfort had not been taken away. He stooped to conquer. The way to His throne was downward. Mounting upon steps of ivory, Solomon ascended to his throne of gold; but Our Lord and Master descended that He might ascend, and went down into the awful deeps of agony unutterable, that all power in heaven and earth might belong to Him as our Redeemer and Covenant Head.

Now think a moment of these words, "All power." Jesus Christ has given to Him by His Father, as a consequence of his death, "all power." It is but another way of saying that the Mediator possesses omnipotence, for omnipotence is but the Latin of "all power." What mind shall conceive, what tongue shall set in order before you, the meaning of all power? We cannot grasp it; it is high, we cannot attain unto it. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. The power of self-existence, the power of creation, the power of sustaining that which is made, the power of fashioning and destroying, the power of opening and shutting, of overthrowing or establishing, of killing and making alive, the power to pardon and to condemn, to give and to withhold, to decree and to fulfill, to be, in a word, "head over all things to his church"—all this is vested in Jesus Christ our Lord. We might as well attempt to describe infinity, or

map the boundless as to tell what “all power” must mean; but whatever it is, it is all given to our Lord, all lodged in those hands which once were fastened to the wood of shame, all left with that heart which was pierced with the spear, all placed as a crown upon that head which was surrounded with a coronet of thorns.

“All power in heaven” is His. Observe that! Then He has the power of God, for God is in heaven, and the power of God emanates from that central throne. Jesus, then, has divine power. Whatever Jehovah can do Jesus can do. If it were His will to speak another world into existence, we should see tonight a fresh star adorning the brow of night. Were it His will at once to fold up creation like a worn out vesture, lo the elements would pass away, and yonder heavens would be shrivelled like a scroll. The power which binds the sweet influences of the Pleiades and looses the bands of Orion is with the Nazarene, the Crucified leads forth Arcturus with his sons. Angelic bands are waiting on the wing to do the bidding of Jesus of Nazareth, and cherubim and seraphim and the four living creatures before the throne unceasingly obey Him. He who was despised and rejected of men now commands the homage of all heaven, as “God over all, blessed for ever.”

“All power in heaven” relates to the providential skill and might with which God rules everything in the universe. He holds the reins of all created forces, and impels or restrains them at His will, giving force to law, and life to all existence. The old heathen dreamed of Apollo as driving the chariot of the sun and guiding its fiery steeds in their daily course, but it is not so: Jesus is Lord of all. He harnesses the winds to his chariot, and thrusts a bit into the mouth of the tempest, doing as He wills among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world. From him in heaven emanates the power which sustains and governs this globe, for the Father hath committed all things into His hands. “By him all things consist.”

“All power” must include—and this is a practical point to us—all the power of the Holy Ghost. In the work which lies nearest our heart the Holy Spirit is the great force. It is He that convinces men of sin, and leads them to a Savior, gives them new hearts and right spirits, and plants them in the church, and then causes them to grow and become fruitful. The power of the Holy Ghost goes forth among the sons of men according to the will of our Lord. As the anointing oil poured upon Aaron’s head ran down his beard, and bedewed the skirts of his garments, so the Spirit which has been granted to Him without measure flows from Him to us. He hath the residue of the Spirit, and according to His will the Holy Ghost goeth forth into the church, and from the church into the world, to the accomplishment of the purposes of saving grace. It is not possible that the church should fail for want of spiritual gifts or influence while her heavenly Bridegroom has such overflowing stores of both.

All the power of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, is at the command of Jesus, who is exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.

Our Lord also claimed that all power had been given to Him on earth. This is more than could be truly said by any mere man; none of mortal race may claim all power in heaven, and when they aspire to all power on earth it is but a dream. Universal monarchy has been strained after; it has seldom, if ever, been attained; and when it seemed within the clutch of ambition it has melted away like a snowflake before the sun. Indeed, if men could rule all their fellows, yet they would not have all power on earth, for there are other forces which scorn their control. Fell diseases laugh at the power of men. The King of Israel, when Naaman came to him to be recovered of his leprosy, cried, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?” He had not all power. Winds and waves, moreover, scorn mortal rule. It is not true that even Britannia rules the waves. Canute, to rebuke his courtiers, places his throne at the margin of the tide, and commands the billows to take care that they wet not the feet of their royal master; but his courtiers were soon covered with spray, and the monarch proved that “all power” was not given to him. Frogs and locusts and flies were more than a match for Pharaoh; the greatest of men are defeated by the weak things of God. Nebuchadnezzar, struck with madness and herding with cattle, was an illustration of the shadowy nature of all human power. The proudest princes have been made to feel by sickness, and pain, and death that after all they were but men, and oftentimes their weaknesses have been such as to make the more apparent the truth that power belongeth unto God, and unto God alone, so that when He entrusts a little of it to the sons of men, it is so little that they are fools if they boast thereof. See ye, then, before us a wonder: A man who has power over all things on earth without exception, and is obeyed by all creatures, great and small, because the Lord Jehovah has put all things under His feet.

For our purposes it will be most important for us to remember that our Lord has “all power” over the minds of men, both good and bad. He calleth whomsoever He pleaseth into His fellowship, and they obey. Having called them, He is able to sanctify them to the highest point of holiness, working in them all the good pleasure of His will with power. The saints can be so influenced by our Lord, through the Holy Ghost, that they can be impelled to the divinest ardours, and elevated to the sublimest frames of mind. Often do I pray, and I doubt not the prayer has come from you too, that God would raise up leaders in the church, men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, standard-bearers in the day of battle. The preachers of the Gospel who preach with any power are few; still might Paul say, “Ye have not many fathers.” More precious than the gold of Ophir are men who stand out as pillars of the Lord’s house, bulwarks of the truth, champions in the camp of Israel. How few are our apostolic men! We want again Luthers, Calvins, Bunyans, Whitfields, men fit to mark eras, whose names breathe terror in our foemen’s ears. We have dire need of such. Where are they? Whence will they come to us? We cannot tell in what farmhouse or village smithy, or school house such men may be, but our Lord has them in store. They are the gifts of Jesus Christ to the church, and will come in due time. He has power to give us back again a golden age of preachers, a time as fertile of great divines and mighty ministers as was the Puritan age, which many of us account to have been the golden age of theology. He can send again the men of studious heart to search the word and bring forth its treasures; the men of wisdom and experience rightly to divide it, the golden-mouthed speakers who, either as sons of thunder or sons of consolation, shall deliver the message of the Lord with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. When the Redeemer ascended on high He received gifts for men, and those gifts were men fitted to accomplish the edification of the church, such as evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These He is still able to bestow upon His people, and it is their duty to pray for them, and when they come, to receive them with gratitude. Let us believe in the power of Jesus to give us valiant men and men of renown, and we little know how soon He will supply them.

Since all power on earth is lodged in Christ’s hands, He can also clothe any and all of His servants with a sacred might, by which their hands shall be sufficient for them in their high calling. Without bringing them forth into the front ranks He can make them occupy their appointed stations till He comes, girt with a power which shall make them useful. *My brother, the Lord Jesus can make you eminently prosperous in the sphere in which He has placed you; my sister, your Lord can bless the little children who gather at your knee through your means. You are very feeble, and you know it, but there is no reason why you should not be strong in Him.* If you look to the strong for strength He can endue you with power from on high, and say to you as to Gideon, “Go in this thy might.”

Your slowness of speech need not disqualify you, for He will be with your mouth as with Moses. Your want of culture need not hinder you, for Shamgar with his oxgoad smote the Philistines, and Amos, the prophet, was a herdsman. Like Paul, your personal presence may be despised as weak, and your speech as contemptible, but yet like him you may learn to glory in infirmity, because the power of God doth rest upon you. Ye are not straitened in the Lord, but in yourselves, if straitened at all. You may be as dry as Aaron’s rod, but He can make you bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit. You may be as nearly empty as the widow’s cruse, yet will He cause you still to overflow towards his saints. You may feel yourself to be as near sinking as Peter amid the waves, yet will He keep you from your fears. You may be as unsuccessful as the disciples who had toiled all night and taken nothing, yet He can fill your boat till it can hold no more. No man knows what the Lord can make of him, nor what he may do by Him, only this we do know assuredly that “all power” is with Him by Whom we were redeemed, and to whom we belong. Oh, believers, resort ye to your Lord, to receive out of His fullness grace for grace. Because of this power we believe that if Jesus willed He could stir the whole church at once to the utmost energy. Does she sleep? His voice can awaken her. Does she restrain prayer? His grace can stimulate her to devotion. Has she grown unbelieving? He can restore her ancient faith. Does she turn her back in the day of battle, troubled with scepticisms and doubts? He can restore her unwavering confidence in the Gospel, and make her valiant till all her sons shall be heroes of faith and put to flight the armies of the aliens.

Let us believe, and we shall see the glory of God. Let us believe, I say, and once again our conquering days shall come, when one shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight. *Never despair for the church; be anxious for her, and turn your anxiety into prayer, but be hopeful evermore, for her Redeemer is mighty and will stir up his strength. “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”* Degenerate as we are, there standeth one among us whom the world seeth not, whose shoe’s latchet we are not worthy to unloose: He shall again baptise us with the Holy Ghost and with fire, for “all power is given unto him.”

It is equally true that all power is given unto our Lord over the whole of mankind, even over that part of the race which rejects and continues in wilful rebellion. He can use the ungodly for his purposes. We have it on inspired authority that Herod and Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever the Lord's hand and counsel determined before to be done. Their utmost wickedness did but fulfill the determinate counsel of God. Thus doth He make wrath of man to praise Him, and the most rebellious wills to be subservient to His sacred purposes. Jesus' kingdom ruleth over all. The powers of hell and all their hosts, with the kings of the earth, and the rulers set themselves and take counsel together, and all the while their rage is working out His designs. Little do they know that they are but drudges to the King of Kings, scullions in the kitchen of His imperial palace. *All things do His bidding, His will is not thwarted, His resolves are not defeated; the pleasure of the Lord prospers in His hands.* By faith I see Him ruling and overruling on land and sea, and in all deep places. Guiding the decisions of parliaments, dictating to dictators, commanding princes, and ruling emperors. Let Him but arise, and they that hate Him shall flee before Him; as smoke is driven, so will He drive them away; as wax melteth before the fire, so shall all His enemies perish at His presence.

As to *sinful men* in general, the Redeemer has power over their minds in a manner wonderful to contemplate. At the present moment we very much deplore the fact that the current of public thought runs strongly towards Popery, which is the alias of idolatry. Just as, in Old Testament history, the people of Israel were always breaking away after their idols, so is it with this nation. The Israelites were cured of their sin for a little while, so long as some great teacher or judge had power among them, but at his death they turned aside to worship the queen of heaven or the calves of Bethel, or some other visible symbols. So it is now. Men are mad after the idols of old Rome. They are turning the old churches into joss-houses¹, and building new ones on all sides. Idol-temples are becoming as numerous in London as in Calcutta. The worshippers and priests call themselves Christians, but they might better call themselves wafer-worshippers or adorers of a fetish made of flour and water, for that is nearer the truth.

Well, what next? Are we despairing? God forbid that we should ever despond while all power is in the hand of Jesus. He can turn the whole current of thought in an opposite direction, and that right speedily. Did you not observe when the Prince of Wales was ill some months ago that everybody paid respect to the doctrine of prayer? Did you not notice how the Times and other newspapers spoke right believably as to prayer? At this moment it is fashionable to pooh-poo the idea of God's hearing our requests; but it was not so then. A great philosopher has told us that it is absurd to suppose that prayer can have any effect upon the events of life; but God has only to visit the nation with some judgment severely felt by all and your philosopher will become as quiet as a mouse. In the same way, I am firmly persuaded that, by one turn of the wheel of Providence, the Popery which is now so fashionable will be made, as it has been before, a red rag to set mobs a rioting, and my lords and ladies, instead of hastening to the Pope, will be most anxious to disown all connection with the whole concern. To my mind it matters very little which way these fine folks go at any time, except that they are the straws which show which way the wind blows. I repeat it, the current of thought can readily be turned by our Lord; He can as easily manage it as the miller controls the stream which flows over his wheel, or rushes past it. The times are safe in our Redeemer's management, He is mightier than the devil, the Pope, the infidel, and the ritualist, all put together. All glory be to Him Who has all power in earth and heaven.

So too, our Lord can give, and He does give to the people an inclination to hear the Gospel. Never be afraid of getting a congregation when the Gospel is your theme. Jesus, who gives you a consecrated tongue, will find willing ears to listen to you. At His bidding deserted sanctuaries grow crowded, and the people throng to hear the joyful sound. Ay, and He can do more than that, for He can make the word powerful to the conversion of thousands. He can constrain the frivolous to think, the obstinately heretical to accept the truth, and those who set their faces like a flint to yield to His gracious sway. He has the key of every human heart; He openeth, and no man shutteth: He shutteth, and no man openeth. He will clothe His word with power and subdue the nations thereby. It is ours to proclaim the Gospel, and to believe that no man is beyond the saving power of Jesus Christ. Doubly dyed, yea, sevenfold steeped in the scarlet dye of vice the sinner may be cleansed, and the ringleader in vice may become a pattern of holiness. The Pharisee can be converted—was not Paul? Even priests may be saved, for did not a great multitude of the priests believe? *There is no man in any conceivable position of sin, who is beyond the power of Christ.* He may be gone to the uttermost in sin, so as to stand on the verge of hell, but if Jesus stretch out His pierced hand, he will be plucked like a brand out of the burning.

¹ **joss-house** – Chinese temple or shrine.

My soul glows as I think of what my Lord can do. If all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, then this morning He could convert, pardon, and save every man and woman in this place; nay, He could influence the four millions of this city to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" Nor in this city only could He work, but throughout the whole earth: if it seemed good to His infinite wisdom and power He could make every sermon to be the means of conversion of all who heard it, every Bible and every copy of the Word to become the channel of salvation to all who read it, and I know not in how short a time the cry would be heard, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Heard that cry shall be, rest assured of that. We are on the conquering side. We have with us One who is infinitely greater than all that can be against us, since "all power" is given unto Him.

Brethren, we have no doubts, we entertain no fears, for every moment of time is bringing on the grand display of the power of Jesus. We preach today, and some of you despise the Gospel; we bring Christ before you, and you reject Him; but God will change His hand with you before long and your despisings and your rejectings will then come to an end, for that same Jesus who went from Olivet, and ascended into heaven, will so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into heaven. He will descend with matchless pomp and power, and this astonished world which saw Him crucified shall see Him enthroned; and in the self same place where men dogged His heels and persecuted Him, they shall crowd around Him to pay Him homage, for He must reign, and put His enemies under His feet. This same earth shall be gladdened by His triumphs which once was troubled with His griefs. And more. You may be dead before the Lord shall come, and your bodies may be rotting in the tomb, but you will know that all power is His, for at the blast of His trumpet your bodies shall rise again to stand before His terrible judgment seat. You may have resisted Him here, but you will be unable to oppose Him then; you may despise Him now, but then you must tremble before Him. "Depart ye cursed," will be to you a terrible proof that He has "all power," if you will not now accept another and a sweeter proof of it by coming unto Him who bids the laboring and heavy laden partake of His rest. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

II. Our Lord's Usual Mode of Exercising His Great Spiritual Power

Brethren, the Lord Jesus might have said, "All power is given to Me in heaven and earth; take ye then your swords and slay all these My enemies who crucified Me." But He had no thoughts of revenge. He might have said, "These Jews put Me to death, therefore go ye straightway to the Isles and to Tarshish and preach, for these men shall never taste of My grace," but no, He expressly said, "beginning at Jerusalem," and bade His disciples first preach the Gospel to His murderers. In consequence of His having "all power" His servants were bidden to disciple all nations. My brethren, the method by which Jesus proposes to subdue all things unto Himself appears to be utterly inadequate. To teach, to make disciples, to baptize these disciples, and to instruct them further in the faith! Good Master, are these the weapons of our warfare? Are these Thy battleaxe and weapons of war? Not thus do the princes of this world contemplate conquest, for they rely on monster guns, ironclads, and engines of death-dealing power. Yet what are these but proofs of their weakness? Had they all power in themselves they would not need such instruments. Only He who has all power can work His bidding by a word, and dispense with all force but that of love.

Mark that *teaching and preaching are the Lord's way of displaying His power*. Today they tell us that the way to save souls is to rig out an altar with different coloured silks and satins, variable according to the almanac, and to array priests in garments of divers colors, "of divers colors of needlework, on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil" (Jdg 5:30), and to make men wear petticoats, dishonorable to their sex. With these ribbons and embroideries, joined with incense-burning, posturing, and incantations, souls are to be saved! "Not so," saith the Master, but "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Do any of you fear that, after all, the preaching of the Gospel will be defeated in this land of ours by these new editions of the old idolatry? God forbid. ***If there were only one of us left to preach the Gospel, he would be a match for ten thousand priests.*** Only give us still the tongue which is set on fire by the Holy Ghost, and an open Bible, and one solitary preacher would rout the whole rabble of your monks and friars and father-confessors, sisters of misery, and nuns, and pilgrims, and bishops, and cardinals, and popes: because preaching and teaching and baptizing the disciples are Christ's way, and priest-craft is not Christ's way. If Christ had ordained sacramental efficacy it would succeed, but He has ordained nothing of the kind; His mandate is—All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth, go ye, therefore, disciple, baptize, and then still further instruct in the name of the Triune God.

My brethren, remember who the men were who were sent on this errand. The eleven who foremost were mostly fishermen. Does the omnipotent Jesus choose fishermen to subdue the world? He does, because He needs no help from them; all power is His. We must have an educated ministry, they tell us; and by “an educated ministry” they mean, not the ministry of a man of common sense, clear head and warm heart, deep experience, and large acquaintance with human nature, but the ministry of mere classical and mathematical students, theorists, and novices, more learned in modern infidelities than in the truth of God. Our Lord, if He had wished to employ the worldly-wise, might certainly have chosen an eleven in Corinth or in Athens who would have commanded general respect for their attainments, or He could have found eleven learned rabbis near at home; but He did not want such men: their vaunted attainments were of no value in His eyes. He chose honest, hearty men who were childlike enough to learn the truth, and bold enough to speak it when they knew it. The church must get rid of her notion that she must depend on the learning of this world. Against a sound education we cannot have a word to say, especially an education in the Scriptures, but to place learned degrees in the place of the gift of the Holy Spirit, or to value the present style of so-called culture above the spiritual edification of our manhood, is to set up an idol in the house of the living God. The Lord can as well use the most illiterate man as the most learned, if so it pleaseth Him. “Go ye,” He said, “ye fishermen, go ye, and teach all nations.” Carnal reason’s criticism on this is—a feeble method to be worked out by feebler instruments!

Now let it be noted here that the work of preaching the Gospel, which is Christ’s way of using His power among men, is based only upon His having that power. Harken to some of my brethren; they say, “You must not preach the Gospel to a dead sinner, because the sinner has no power.” Just so, but our reason for preaching to him is that all power is given unto Jesus, and He bids us preach the Gospel to every creature. “But when you tell a sinner to believe, you have not the power to make him believe.” Truly so, nor do we dream that we have, for all power lies in Christ. Neither in the sinner is there power to believe, nor in the preacher power to make him believe, all power is in our Lord. “But do you think,” say they, “that your persuasions will ever make a man repent and believe?” Certainly not. The power that leads men to repent and believe does not lie in rhetoric or in reason, or in persuasion, but in him who says, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” I tell you this, if my Lord and Master should bid me go tomorrow to Norwood cemetery and bid the dead to rise I would do it with as much pleasure as I now preach the Gospel to this congregation; and I would do it for the same reason which now leads me to urge the unregenerate to repent and be converted; for I regard men as being dead in sin, and yet I tell them to live, because my Master commands me do so: that I am right in thus acting is proved by the fact that while I am preaching sinners do live; blessed be His name, thousands of them have been quickened into life.

Ezekiel had to cry, “Ye dry bones, live.” What a foolish thing to say! But God justified His servant in it, and an exceeding great army stood upon their feet in what was once a large charnel house. Joshua’s men were bidden to blow their trumpets around Jericho—most absurd thing to blow a trumpet to fetch city walls down—but they came down for all that. Gideon’s men were bidden simply to carry lamps within their pitchers, and to break their pitchers, and stand still and cry aloud, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,”—a most ridiculous thing to hope by this means to smite the Midianites—but they were smitten, for God never sends His servants on a fool’s errand. It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to accomplish His divine purposes, not because of the power of preaching, nor the power of the preacher, nor any power in those preached to, but because “all power” is given unto Christ “in heaven and in earth,” and He chooses to work by the teaching of the Word.

Our business, then, is just this. We are to teach, or as the Greek word has it, to make disciples. Our business is, each one according to the grace given, to tell our fellow men the Gospel, and to try and disciple them to Jesus. When they become disciples, our next duty is to give them the sign of discipleship, by “baptizing them.” That symbolic burial sets forth their death in Jesus to their former selves and their resurrection to newness of life through Him. Baptism enrolls and seals the disciples, and we must not omit or misplace it. When the disciple is enrolled, the missionary is to become the pastor, “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” The disciple is admitted into the school by obeying the Savior’s command as to baptism, and then he goes on to learn, and as he learns he teaches others also. He is taught obedience, not to some things, but to all things which Christ has commanded. He is put into the church not to become a legislator or a deviser of new doctrines and ceremonies, but to believe what Christ tells him, and to do what Christ bids him. Thus our Lord intends to set up a kingdom which shall break in pieces every other; those who know Him are to teach others; and so from one to the other, the wondrous power which Christ brought from heaven shall spread from land to land. See, then, my brethren, your high calling, and see also the support you have in pursuing it. In the van behold “all power” going forth from Christ! In

the rear behold the Lord himself—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." If you are enlisted in this army, I charge you be faithful to your great captain, do His work carefully in the way which He has prescribed for you, and expect to see His power displayed to His own glory.

I would close this sermon very practically. The greater part of my congregation at this time consists of persons who have believed in Jesus, who have been baptized, and have been further instructed. You believe that Jesus has all power, and that He works through the teaching and preaching of the Gospel, and therefore I wish to press you with a home question. How much are you doing as to teaching all nations? This charge is committed to you as well as to me; for this purpose are we sent into the world; ourselves receivers that we may be afterwards distributors. How much have you distributed? Dear brother, dear sister, to how many have you told the story of redemption by the blood of Jesus? You have been a convert now for some time: to whom have you spoken of Jesus, or to whom have you written? Are you distributing as best you can the words of others if you are not capable of putting words together yourself? Do not reply, "I belong to a church which is doing much." That is not to the point. I am speaking of that which you are personally doing. Jesus did not die for us by proxy, but He bore our sins in His body on the tree. I ask, then, what are you personally doing? Are you doing anything at all? "But I cannot go for a missionary," says one. Are you sure you cannot? I have been long looking for a time when numbers of you will feel that you must go to preach the Gospel abroad, and will relinquish comforts and emoluments for the Lord's sake. I shall never feel that we have reached the full degree of Christian zeal until it becomes a very common thing among us to have young brethren, such as the two who left us a little while ago, consecrating themselves to the grandest of all services. Perhaps some among you have that intent half formed in your hearts; I hope you will not repress it, and that your parents will not hinder you from the blessed sacrifice. There can be no greater honor to a church than to have many sons and daughters bearing the brunt of the battle for the Lord. Lo, I set up a standard among you this day, let those whose hearts God has touched rally to it without delay. The heathen are perishing; they are dying by millions without Christ, and Christ's last command to us is "Go ye, teach all nations:" are you obeying it? "I cannot go," says one, "I have a family and many ties to bind me at home." My dear brother, then, I ask you, are you going as far as you can? Do you travel to the utmost length of the providential tether which has fastened you where you are? Can you say "Yea." Then, what are you doing to help others to go? As I was thinking over this discourse, I reflected how very little we were most of us doing towards sending the Gospel abroad. We are, as a church, doing a fair share for our heathen at home, and I rejoice at the thought of it; but how much a year do you each give to foreign missions? I wish you would put down in your pocket-book how much you give per annum for missions, and then calculate how much percent it is of your income. There let it stand—"Item: Gave to the collection last April 1st." One shilling a year towards the salvation of the world. Perhaps it will run thus—"Item: Income £5000, annual subscription to mission £1." How does that look? I cannot read your hearts, but I could read your pocket-books and work a sum in proportion. I suggest that you do it yourselves, while I also take a look at my own expenditure. Let us all see what more can be done for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, for all power is with Him; and when His people shall be stirred up to believe in that power, and to use the simple but potent machinery of the preaching of the Gospel to all nations, then God, even our own God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. Amen.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential Baptist minister in England. History's most widely read preacher (apart from those found in Scripture). Today, there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. Born at Kelvedon, Essex.

MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD

G.D. Watson (1845-1923)

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is

seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"

—Romans 8:22-24.

LET us notice the groaning of the children of God who have received the Holy Spirit. "And not only they (that is, the lower creatures), but ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." It is by an inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we are yearning or groaning for the resurrection. Now it is true that all the heathen world is in a state of groaning, and millions of them are seeking for peace and know not where to find it. Though they have no knowledge or information of the resurrection or the promises of God concerning the future, yet their souls are conscious of being under a curse and they are yearning for deliverance, and we know not to what extent the Holy Spirit may be working in them to produce these longings. But it is in a more definite and scriptural manner that the Holy Spirit inspires believers with groanings for the coming glory.

When the apostle speaks of us having the first fruits of the Spirit, the meaning is, as expressed in other passages, that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the first of all the things that God has promised to His servants concerning the future life and coming glory. In another place the apostle speaks of the Holy Spirit, He is God's pledge that we shall receive all other things embraced in the covenant of redemption. Our inheritance, as joint-heirs with Christ, includes a glorious resurrection like Christ has, and perfect dominion and lordship over the lower creation, and perfect participation in the joy of God, and perfect exemption from every evil, and perfect possession of every good, and that this completeness of glory is to last throughout all ages without ever being diminished; and hence, He is God's pledge to us that all other things will come to us in due time. This is the import of receiving the first fruits of the Spirit.

Now, in the next place, it is this Holy Spirit that causes us to groan for our adoption in the resurrection of our bodies. The Holy Spirit does not work outside of the believer in bringing things to pass, but He works through the believer. The Holy Spirit cannot pray by Himself and apart from the human soul; but He prays through the believer. Just as the Son of God cannot save the world except by taking a human body and a human soul, and through that humanity make an atonement for the sins of the world, so the Holy Spirit must needs be joined to the believer and live in the believer, in order to inspire the prayers and yearnings and good works and experiences that belong to the Gospel of Christ.

And another thought is, that this groaning of the believer for coming glory is not altogether voluntary on our part; that is, we do not originate these longings, but the Holy Spirit takes the initiative with us, and prompts us to yearn for things to come, so that we hear a great cry coming up from the unknown depths of our being, that God would consummate His great plan of redemption. Just as the lower creation groans without understanding the subject, so the believer, under the operation of the Holy Spirit, has drawings and yearnings for coming glory which are beyond his own understanding, and which he does not originate through his own choice.

In the next place, this groaning of the believer, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is for the resurrection in a glorified body. The word "adoption" as used in verse 23 is very seldom understood. We are not really adopted until the resurrection and we come into our full inheritance, though we receive the spirit of adoption after we are regenerated, which is an assurance that we are God's and are heirs to all that Christ has purchased. The word "adoption" was taken from the custom of the Roman people in the days of Paul, which was that when a son of a gentleman reached his majority of twenty-one years, there was a public way in which he recognized his son as heir to his estate, and passed over to his son certain possessions which gave him power as a free citizen of Rome, and also authority to act in all matters of business and property affairs. This custom was used by St. Paul to illustrate a similar thing in the kingdom of God, that when the sons of God shall be resurrected and glorified, God will, in a public and universal manifestation, recognize them as His sons before angels and men, and pass over to them their full inheritance of all the possessions which accrue to them as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is the Heir appointed to receive all things in the universe. When we are born of God, we become at once heirs to these possessions, and God gives the obedient believer the Holy Spirit to assure him of his sonship and as a pledge that he will possess his full estate in due time; and this is called the spirit of adoption; but the full adoption takes place only when the children of God are manifested openly to the universe in resurrection glory. This is what Paul teaches by saying, in verse 23, that we groan within ourselves because we have the Holy Spirit, and we are waiting for the adoption, which is the glorification of our bodies.

The word “redemption” in the New Testament always refers to the resurrection of the body, the complete consummation of the whole plan of redeeming grace. Also the word “salvation” is often used in reference to the final part of salvation which we are to receive at the coming of the Lord. The Scriptures speak of an initial and of a full salvation, and also of a present and a future salvation; and hence we read of the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Christ, and of an eternal salvation. When a believer dies and his soul enters paradise, that is not the consummation of New Testament salvation; that is not the perfect state, for as long as his body is resting in the grave he has not received his full redemption; and so we do not enter upon our majority or reach the time of receiving our full possession until our spirits and bodies are united in resurrection glory, and then we reach the consummation of all our prayers and all our groans and all our faith and all the purpose that God has made for us through the redemption of the Lord Jesus.

And this is why the apostle says, in verse 24, “We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” It is hope that runs ahead and links us onto coming glory in the resurrection state, and this hope, by taking hold of future glory and the resurrection, is the power by which we are saved, by which we press on, by which we continue to maintain our life of prayer and trust in this present state. We are saved by faith from our past sins and in our present condition, but if our salvation is not likened unto the future, and if it does not bring us to the consummation of resurrection glory, then everything is lost. Paul says: “If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.” And again the apostle speaks of hope being like an anchor that enters within the veil and holds steadfast in perseverance until we are consummated in glory. Hence everything in our Christian religion and experience has an ongoing movement, and we are bending forward and like the apostle, pressing to the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus; and this is why we, by the Holy Spirit, groan within ourselves, constantly looking and waiting for our glorious resurrection, or else, our glorious translation to meet the Lord in the air.

George D. Watson (1845-1923) was born in Virginia into a committed Christian family with six children. As a youth, he was self-willed. His conversion came during the American Civil War during a camp meeting for soldiers, after he joined the Southern Army at age 18. He began holding prayer meetings of his own, with endless enthusiasm for his new Master. In poor health after the war, he attended a Bible institute and began to preach the Gospel in 1868, pastoring several churches. Later he traveled extensively throughout the USA, England, and the Far East. His many writings include *Soul Food*, *Pure Gold*, and *Our Own God*.

*Hosannah to the Prince of light, That clothed Himself in clay,
Entered the iron gates of death, And tore the bars away.*

*Death is no more the king of dread, Since our Immanuel rose;
He took the tyrant's sting away, And spoiled our hellish foes.*

*See how the Conqueror mounts aloft, And to His Father flies,
With scars of honor in His flesh And triumph in His eyes.*

*There our exalted Savior reigns, And scatters blessings down;
Our Jesus fills the middle seat Of the celestial throne.*

*Raise your devotion, mortal tongues, To reach His blest abode;
Sweet be the accents of your songs To our incarnate God.*

*Bright angels, strike your loudest strings, Your sweetest voices raise
Let heav'n and all created things Sound our Immanuel's praise.*

– Isaac Watts

THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED

John Newton (1725-1807)

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

As, in the animal economy, the action of the heart and of the lungs, though very different, are equally necessary for the maintenance of life, and we cannot say that either of them is more essentially requisite than the other; so, in the system of divine revelation, there are some truths, the knowledge and belief of which, singly considered, are fundamentals with respect to the salvation of a sinner. And though they are distinct in themselves, we cannot determine which of them is of most importance to us; for unless we know, approve, and receive them all, we can have no experience of a life of faith in the Son of God. Such, for instance, is the Scriptural doctrine concerning the depravity of human nature.

This is a first principle; for unless we understand what our state is in the sight of God, the enormity of our transgressions, and our incapacity for true happiness until our hearts are changed by the power of his grace, we cannot rightly understand a single chapter in the Bible. Such, likewise, is the doctrine of the atonement. For if we could know how totally we are lost, without knowing the gracious method which God has appointed for our recovery, we must unavoidably sink into despair. Again, if we were sensible of our state as sinners, and even if we trusted in Christ for salvation, yet the apostle observes in this chapter, that unless he be indeed risen from the dead, our faith in him would be in vain, and we should still be in our sins. The resurrection of Christ, therefore, is a doctrine absolutely essential to our hope and comfort; and it is likewise a sure pledge, that they who believe in him shall be raised from the dead also, by virtue of their union with him, and according to his pattern. For “now is Christ risen from the dead, and is become the first fruits of them that slept.” Let us at present consider his resurrection. The sure consequence of it, that his people shall be raised from the dead, will offer to our meditations from the following verses.

The resurrection of Christ, as a fact, being the great pillar upon which the weight and importance of Christianity rest, it has pleased the Lord to put the indubitable proof of it within our power. There is no one point of ancient uninspired history so certainly and unquestionably authenticated. It may seem unnecessary to prove it, and to many of you it is entirely so. Yet I think it proper to take some notice of it; not so much on account of the weak and trifling cavils of infidels, as for the sake of persons who may be assaulted with temptations. For many plain people, who are not much acquainted with the subtleties of skeptics, are sometimes pestered with difficulties and objections in their own minds, perhaps more shrewd and powerful than such as are commonly found in books, or retailed in coffee-houses. For unbelief is deeply rooted in every heart; and Satan, our great enemy, can, and if permitted will, work powerfully upon this evil disposition. He endeavours to beat us off from the belief of every truth of Scripture, and of this among the rest. And many persons, who have been so well convinced that our Lord rose from the dead, as to venture their souls and their all upon it, have found themselves at a loss how to answer the enemy in an hour of sharp and pressing temptation.

Let us suppose, then, that we had lately received the news of some extraordinary and almost incredible event, and let us consider what evidence we should require to satisfy us that the report was true, and apply the same kind of reasoning to the point in hand. That there was, a great while ago, a person named Jesus, who gathered disciples, and died upon a cross, is universally acknowledged. Both Jews and Heathens, who lived at the time, and afterwards not only admitted it, but urged it as a reproach against his followers. Many testimonies of this kind are still extant.

The turning point between his enemies and his friends is his resurrection. This has been denied. We acknowledge that he did not appear publicly after he arose, as he did before his death, but only to a competent number of his followers, to whom he showed himself, and satisfied them, by many infallible proofs, that he was alive, and that he was the same person whom they had seen crucified. They reported what they saw, and we believe their report. We are therefore to inquire, who they were? and on what grounds we receive and rely upon their testimony.

If they were mistaken themselves, or if they were engaged and agreed in a crafty design of imposing upon mankind, we who depend upon their relation may be involved in their mistake, or deceived by their artifice. But if neither of these suppositions can possibly be true, if they were competent and impartial witnesses, then we are not only justified in giving credit to their testimony, but it must be unreasonable, and (in a case of this importance) presumptuous and dangerous to reject it.

I. Competent Judges

That they were competent judges of what they asserted, is evident,

1. From their numbers. The eye-witnesses of this fact were many. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once; after that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles; and last of all, he was seen of me also"(1Co 15:5-8). Thus Paul wrote when multitudes who lived at the time were still living, and would readily have contradicted him, if he had declared an untruth. Five hundred concurring witnesses are sufficient to establish the credit of a fact, which they all saw with their own eyes, if their word may be depended upon. We can be certain of things which we never saw no otherwise than by the testimony of others. And certainty may be attained in this way. For though some persons would appropriate the word demonstration to mathematical evidence, yet moral evidence may be in many cases equally conclusive, and compel assent with equal force. I am so fully satisfied by the report of others, that there are such cities as Paris and Rome, though I never saw them, that I am no more able seriously to question their existence, than I am to doubt the truth of a proposition in Euclid which I have seen demonstrated.

2. From the nature of the fact; in which it was not possible that so many persons, could be mistaken or deceived. Some of them saw him, not once only, but frequently. His appearance to others was attended with peculiar, striking circumstances and effects. His disciples seem not to have expected his resurrection, though he had often foretold it previous to his sufferings. Nor did they hastily credit the women who first saw him in their way from the sepulchre. Thomas refused to believe the report of all his brethren, to whom our Lord had shown himself. He would see for himself; he required no more than ocular proof; for he said, "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (Joh 20:25). It is no wonder, that when these proofs were offered him, he fully yielded to conviction, and with gratitude and joy addressed his risen Saviour in the language of adoration and love, "My Lord, and my God!"

But his former conduct showed that he was not credulous, nor disposed to receive the report as a truth, however desirable, without sufficient evidence.

II. Upright and Faithful Witnesses

As they were competent judges, so they were upright and faithful witnesses. There is no more room to suspect that they had a design to deceive others, than that they were mistaken or deceived themselves. For,

1. If we judge of them by their writings, we must at least allow them to have been well-meaning men. They profess to aim at promoting the knowledge and honour of the true God, and thereby to promote the morality and happiness of mankind. Their conduct was uniformly consistent with their profession, and their doctrines and precepts were evidently suited to answer their design. The penmen of the New Testament were confessedly men in private life, most of them destitute of literature, and engaged in low occupations until they became the disciples of Jesus. Is it probable that men, who speak so honourably of God, who inculcate upon their fellow-creatures such an entire devotedness to his will and service, should be impostors themselves? Is it at all credible, that a few men, in an obscure situation, should form a consistent and well-concerted plan, sufficient to withstand and overcome the prejudices, habits, and customs, both of Jews and Heathens; to institute a new religion, and, without the assistance of interest or arms, to spread it rapidly and successfully in a few years throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire? Or is it possible that such men could, at their first effort, exhibit a scheme of theology and morality, so vastly superior to the united endeavours of the philosophers of all ages? A learned man in France attempted to prove (for what will not learned men attempt?) that most of the Latin poems which are attributed to those whom we call the Classic writers, and particularly the Æneid of Virgil, were not the production of the authors whose names they bear, but gross forgeries, fabricated by monks in the dark ages of ignorance, and successfully obtruded upon the world as genuine, till he arose to detect the imposture. He gained but few proselytes to his absurd

paradox. Yet, to suppose that men who could only express their own dull sentiments in barbarous Latin, were capable of writing with the fire and elegance of Virgil, when they undertook to impose upon the world; or to affirm that the Principia of sir Isaac Newton was in reality written by an ignorant ploughman, and only sent abroad under the sanction of a celebrated name; cannot be more repugnant to true taste, sound judgement, and common sense, than to imagine that the evangelists and apostles were, from their own resources, capable of writing such a book as the New Testament; *the whole of which must stand or fall with the doctrine of our Lord's resurrection.*

2. But farther: They could not possibly propose any advantage to themselves in their endeavours to propagate the Christian religion, if they had not been assured that the crucified Jesus, whom they preached, was risen from the dead, and had taken possession of his kingdom. Knowing whom they had believed, filled with a constraining sense of his love, and depending upon his promise and power to support them in the service to which he had called them, they were neither ashamed nor afraid to proclaim his Gospel, and to invite and enjoin sinners every where to put their trust in him; otherwise they had nothing to expect but such treatment as they actually met with, for professing their belief of his resurrection, and especially for the pains they took to publish it, first among the people who had put him to death, and afterwards among the Heathens. It required no great sagacity to foresee that this doctrine would be an offence to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks (1Co 1:23). They were in fact despised, hated, opposed, and persecuted, wherever they went; and those who espoused their cause were immediately exposed to a participation in their sufferings. Nor was there the least probability that the event could be otherwise. Impostors there have been many; but we cannot conceive that any set of men would deliberately, and by consent, contrive an imposture, which, in the nature of the thing, could procure nothing to them, or to their followers, but contempt, stripes, imprisonment, and death.

3. Even if we could, for a moment, suppose them capable of so wild and wicked an undertaking, as, under pretence of the service of God, to provoke and dare the hatred of mankind, by asserting and propagating an offensive falsehood, it would be impossible upon that ground to account for the success which they met with. If this counsel and cause had not been of God, it must have come to nought (Act 5:38). But by preaching Jesus and his resurrection, in defiance of all the arts and rage of their enemies, they mightily prevailed over the established customs and inveterate prejudices of mankind, and brought multitudes into the belief of their doctrine against all disadvantages. The Lord confirmed their word with signs following. The miracles which were wrought in the name of Jesus were numerous, notorious, and undeniable; and the moral effects of their preaching, though too frequent and universal to be styled miraculous, were such as can only be with reason ascribed to a divine power. The pillars of Paganism, the superstitions of idol worship, though in every country connected and incorporated with the frame of civil government, and guarded for ages, not more by popular veneration than for reasons of state, were very soon shaken, and in no great space of time subverted. Within about two hundred years after Tacitus had described the Christians as the objects of universal contempt and hatred, Christianity became the established religion of the empire. And in a letter of Pliny to Trajan on the subject, we have indisputable evidence, that even in the time of Tacitus, hated, vilified, and persecuted as the Christians were, their religion so greatly prevailed, that in many places the idol temples were almost deserted.

III. The Power of God

But the proof of the resurrection of Christ, which is the most important and satisfactory of any, does not depend upon arguments and historical evidence, with which multitudes of true Christians are unacquainted, but is, in its own nature equally convincing in all ages, and equally level to all capacities. They who have found the Gospel to be the power of God to the salvation of their souls, have the witness in themselves; and are very sure that the doctrine, which enlightened their understandings, awakened their consciences, delivered them from the guilt and dominion of sin, brought them into a state of peace and communion with God, and inspired them with a bright and glorious hope of eternal life, must be true. They know that the Lord is risen indeed, because they are made partakers of the power of his resurrection, and have experienced a change in themselves, which could only be wrought by the influence of that Holy Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow. And many believers, though not qualified to dispute with philosophers and skeptics upon their own learned ground, can put them to shame and to silence, by the integrity and purity of their conduct, by their patience and cheerfulness under afflictions; and would especially silence them, if they were eye-witnesses of the composure and elevation of spirit with which true believers in a risen Saviour welcome the approach of death.

This is the evidence which I would principally recommend to my hearers to seek after. If the resurrection of Christ be a truth and a fact, much depends upon the right belief of it. I say the right belief; for, though I have offered you a brief view of the external evidence in proof of this point, I am aware that I am not preaching to Jews or Mohamedans. If I should ask you, Believest thou the resurrection? might I not answer myself, as the apostle did on another occasion, “I know that thou believest”(Act 26:27)? But so powerful is the effect of our depravity, that it is possible, yea, very common, for people most certainly to believe the truth of a proposition, so as not to be able to entertain a doubt of it, and yet to act as if they could demonstrate it to be false. Let me ask you, for instance, Do you believe that you shall die? I know that you believe it. But do you indeed live, as if you were really assured of the certainty of death, and (which is equally undeniable) the uncertainty of life? So in the present case—If Christ be risen from the dead, according to the Scriptures, then all that the Scripture declares of the necessity and design of his sufferings, of his present glory, and of his future advent, must be true likewise. What a train of weighty consequences depend upon his resurrection! If he rose from the dead, then he is the Lord of the dead and of the living—then he has the keys of death and hades—then he will return to judge the world, and you must see him for yourself, and appear at his tribunal—then, it is he with whom you have to do—and then, finally, unless you really love, trust, and serve him, unless he is the beloved and the Lord of your heart, your present state is awfully dangerous and miserable.

But let those who love his name be joyful in him. Your Lord who was dead, is alive, and “because he liveth, ye shall live also.” “If ye be risen with him, seek the things which are above, where he sitteth, on the right hand of God.” “And, when he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory.”

John Newton (1725-1807): Newton was born in London, England on July 24, 1725. He was educated early in life by his mother while his father, a respectable master of a ship in the Mediterranean, was at sea. He was deprived of the godly influence of his mother before he was seven years old. When he was fourteen years of age, he became an infidel. When England was at war with France in 1744, Newton joined the Navy. He was in love with Marj' Catlett, so he overstayed a leave and finally deserted his ship. In 1750 they were married. When he was twenty-three years old after having lived a terrible life, he sought the mercy of the Lord. He became more serious and earnest. He studied for the ministry and was ordained at the age of thirty-nine. Newton was curate of the church at Olney, Buckinghamshire, for sixteen years, where he became an intimate friend and adviser of William Cowper, and a collaborator with him in the production of the *Olney Hymns*. In 1779 he was appointed rector of St. Mary, Woolnoth, in London, where he remained until his death. He founded the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England. He was famous for writing hymns, some of which were: *Amazing Grace*, *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds*, and *Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken*. Two-hundred eighty of his hymns were published in the Olney hymnbook. He wrote many letters and had volumes of sermons printed. In theology he was a pronounced Calvinist. He also had an influence on various people, including Thomas Scott, amongst others. He died on December 21, 1807.

“IF THERE BE NO RESURRECTION”

C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? **But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and 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”***
—1 Corinthians 15:12-19.

OUR religion is not based upon opinions, but upon facts. We hear persons sometimes saying, “Those are your views, and these are ours.” Whatever your “views” may be, is a small matter; what are the facts of the case? We must, after all, if we want a firm foundation, come down to matters of fact. Now, the great facts of the Gospel are that God was incarnate in Christ Jesus, that He lived here a life of holiness and love, that He died upon the cross for our sins, that He was buried in the tomb of Joseph, that the third day He rose again from the dead, that after a while he ascended to His Father’s throne where He now sitteth, and that He shall come by-and-by, to be our Judge, and in that day the dead in Christ shall rise by virtue of their union with Him.

Now, very soon, within the Church of God, there rose up persons who began to dispute about the fundamental and cardinal principles of the faith, and it is so even now. When those outside the Church deny that Christ is the Son of God, deny His atoning sacrifice, and deny His resurrection, we are not at all astonished; they are unbelievers, and they are acting out their own profession. But when men, inside the Church of God, call themselves Christians, and yet deny the resurrection of the dead, then is our soul stirred within us, for it is a most solemn and serious evil to doubt those holy truths. They know not what they do, they cannot see all the result of their unbelief; if they could, one would think that they would start back with horror, and replace the truth, and let it stand where it ought to stand, where God has put it.

The resurrection of the dead has been assailed, and is assailed still, by those who are called Christians, even by those who are called Christian ministers, but who, nevertheless, spirit away the very idea of the resurrection of the dead, so that we are today in the same condition, to some extent, as the Corinthian church was when, in its very midst, there rose up men, professing to be followers of Christ, who said that there was no resurrection of the dead. The apostle Paul, having borne his witness, and recapitulated the testimony about the resurrection of Christ, goes on to show the horrible consequences which must follow if there be no resurrection of the dead, and if Christ be not risen. He showed this to be a foundation truth; and if it was taken away, much more was gone than they supposed; indeed, everything was gone, as Paul went on to prove.

Beloved friends, let us never tamper with the truth of God. I find it as much as I can do to enjoy the comfort of the truth, and to learn the spiritual lessons of God’s Word, without setting up to be a critic upon it; and I find it immeasurably more profitable to my own soul believingly to adore, than unbelievingly to invent objections, or even industriously to try to meet them. The meeting of objections is an endless work. When you have killed one regiment of them, there is another regiment coming on; and when you have put to the sword whole legions of doubts, doubters still swarm upon you like the frogs of Egypt. It is a poor business, it answers no practical end; it is better far firmly to believe what you profess to believe, and to follow out to all the blessed consequences every one of the truths which, in your own heart and soul, you have received of the Lord.

One of the truths most surely believed among us is that there will be a resurrection of all those who sleep in Christ. There will be a resurrection of the ungodly as well as of the godly. Our Lord Jesus said to the Jews, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Paul declared before Felix the doctrine of the “resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust;” but his argument with the Corinthians specially referred to believers, who will rise from the dead, and stand with Christ in the day of His appearing, quickened with the life that quickened Him, and raised up to share the glory which the Father has given to Him.

I. If There Be No Resurrection, Christ Is Not Risen.

If the resurrection of the dead is impossible, Christ cannot have risen from the dead. Now, the apostles bore witness that Christ had risen. They had met Him, they had been with Him, they had seen Him eat a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb on one occasion. They had seen Him perform acts which could not be performed by a spirit, but which needed that He should be flesh and bones. Indeed, He said, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” One of them put his finger into the print of the nails, and was invited to thrust his hand into Christ’s side. He was known by two of them in the breaking of bread, a familiar token by which they recognized Him better than by anything else. They heard Him speak, they knew the tones of His voice; they were

not deceived. On one occasion, five hundred of them saw Him at once; or, if there was any possibility of a mistake when they were all together, they were not deceived when they saw Him one by one, and entered into very close personal communion with Him, each one after a different sort. "Now," says Paul, "if there be no resurrection of the dead, if that is impossible, then, of course, Christ did not rise; and yet we all assure you that we saw Him, and that we were with Him, and you have to believe that we are all liars, and that the Christian religion is a lie, or else you must believe that there is a resurrection of the dead."

"But," says one, "Christ might rise, and yet not His people." Not so, according to our faith and firm belief, Christ is one with His people. When Adam sinned, the whole human race fell in Him, for they were one with him; in Adam all died. Even those that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression have, nevertheless, died. Even upon infants the death-sentence has taken effect, because they were one with Adam. There is no separating Adam from his posterity. Now, Christ is the second Adam, and He has a posterity. All believers are one with Him, and none can separate them from Him. If they do not live, then He did not live; and if He did not rise, then they will not rise. But whatever happened unto Him must also happen unto them. They are so welded together, the Head and the members, that there is no dividing them. If He had slept an eternal sleep, then every righteous soul would have done the same, too. If He rose again, they must rise again, for He has taken them unto Himself to be part and parcel of His very being. He died that they might live. Because He lives they shall live also, and in His eternal life they must for ever be partakers.

This is Paul's first argument, then, for the resurrection of the righteous, that, inasmuch as Christ rose, they must rise, for they are identified with Him.

II. If There Be No Resurrection, Apostolic Preaching Falls.

But now he proceeds with his subject, not so much arguing upon the resurrection of others as upon the resurrection of Christ; "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain" (see the fourteenth verse). "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."

If Christ was not raised, the apostles were false witnesses. When a man bears false witness, he usually has a motive for doing so. What motive had these men, what did they gain by bearing false witness to Christ's resurrection? It was all loss and no profit to them if He had not risen. They declared in Jerusalem that He had risen from the dead, and straightway men began to hale them to prison, and to put them to death. Those of them who survived bore the same testimony. They were so full of the conviction of it, that they went into distant countries to tell the story of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. Some went to Rome, some to Spain; probably some came even to this remote island of Britain. Wherever they went, they testified that Christ had risen from the dead, and that they had seen Him alive, and that He was the Savior of all who trusted in Him. Thus they always preached, and what became of them? I may say, with Paul, that "they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." They were brought before the Roman Emperor again and again, and before the pro-consuls, and threatened with the most painful of deaths; but not one of them ever withdrew his testimony concerning Christ's resurrection. They still stood to it, that they had known him in life, many of them had been near Him in death, and they had all communed with Him after His resurrection. They declared that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, that He died and was buried, that He rose again, and that there was salvation for all who believed in Him.

Were these men false witnesses? If so, they were the most extraordinary false witnesses who ever lived. What were their morals? What kind of men were they? Were they drunkards? Were they adulterers? Were they thieves? Nay; they were the purest and best of mankind; their adversaries could bring no charge against their moral conduct. They were eminently honest, and they spoke with the accent of conviction. As I have already said, they suffered for their testimony. Now, under the law, the witness of two men was to be received; but what shall we say of the witness of five hundred men? If it was true when they first declared that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, it is equally true now. It does not matter though the event happened nearly nineteen hundred years ago; it is just as true now. The apostles bore witness which could not be gainsaid, and so it still stands. We cannot assume that all these apostolic men were false witnesses of God.

If we even suppose that they were mistaken about this matter, we must suspect their witness about everything else; and the only logical result is to give up the New Testament altogether. If they were mistaken as to Christ having risen from the dead, they are not credible witnesses upon anything else; and if they are discredited, the whole of our religion falls with them; the Christian faith, and especially all that the apostles built on the resurrection, must be turned out of doors as altogether a delusion. They taught that Christ's rising from the dead was the evidence that His sacrifice was accepted, that He rose again for our justification, that His rising again was the hope of believers in this life, and the assurance of the resurrection of their bodies in the life to come. You must give up all your hope of salvation the moment you doubt the Lord's rising from the dead.

As for Paul, who puts himself with the rest of the apostles, and says, "If Christ be not risen, we are found false witnesses of God," I venture to bring him forward as a solitary witness of the most convincing kind. I need not remind you how he was at first opposed to Christ. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, one of the most intolerant members of the sect that hated the very name of Christ. He had a righteousness that surpassed that of the men of his times. He was a religious leader and persecutor; and yet he was so convinced of the appearance of Christ to him on the way to Damascus, that from that time he was completely turned round, and he preached with burning zeal the faith which once he blasphemed. There is an honesty about Paul which convinces at once; and if he had not seen the Savior risen from the dead, he would not have been the man to say that he did. Dear brethren, you may rest assured that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead. You cannot put down these good men as impostors; you cannot reckon the apostle Paul among those readily deceived, or among the deceivers of others; so you may be sure that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, according to the Scriptures.

III. If There Be No Resurrection, Faith Becomes Delusion.

As we have to give up the apostles and all their teaching, if Christ did not rise from the dead, so we must conclude that their hearers believed a lie: "your faith is also vain." Beloved, I speak to you who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are resting in Him with great comfort and peace of mind, yea, who have experienced a great change of heart, and a great change in your lives through faith in Christ. Now, if He did not rise from the dead, you are believing a lie. Take this home to yourselves: if He did not literally rise from the dead on the third day, this faith of yours, that gives you comfort, this faith which has renewed you in heart and life, this faith which you believe is leading you home to heaven, must be abandoned as a sheer delusion; your faith is fixed on a falsehood. Oh, dreadful inference! But the inference is clearly true if Christ is not risen; you are risking your soul on a falsehood if Christ did not rise from the dead. This is a solemn statement. I said last Sabbath, and I repeat it,

"Upon a life I did not live, Upon a death I did not die, I risk my whole eternity."

It is so. If Jesus Christ did not die for me, and did not rise again for me, I am lost; I have not a ray of comfort from any other direction; I have no dependence on anything else but Jesus crucified and risen; and if that anchor fails, everything fails with it, in my case; and so it must in yours.

"Your faith is also vain," wrote Paul to the Corinthians, for, if Christ is not risen, the trial will be too great for faith to endure, since it has for the very keystone of the arch the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If He did not rise, your faith rests on what never happened, and is not true; and certainly your faith will not bear that, or any other trial. There comes to the believer, every now and then, a time of great testing. Did you ever lie, as I have done several times, upon the brink of eternity, full of pain, almost over the border of this world, fronting eternity, looking into the dread abyss? There, unless you are sure about the foundation of your faith, you are in an evil case indeed. Unless you have a solid rock beneath you then, your hope will shrink away to nothing, and your confidence will depart.

When you are sure that "the Lord is risen, indeed," then you feel that there is something beneath your foot that does not stir. If Jesus died for you, and Jesus rose for you, then, my dear brother, you are not afraid even of that tremendous day when the earth shall be burned up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. You feel a confidence that will bear even that test. If Christ did not rise from the dead, and you are resting your soul on the belief that he did rise, what a failure it will be for you in another world, what disappointment when you do not wake up in His likeness, what dismay if there should be no pardon of sin, no salvation through the precious blood! If Christ is not risen, your faith is vain. If it is vain, give it up; do not hold on to a thing that is not true. I would sooner plunge into the water, and swim or wade through the river, than I would trust myself to a rotten bridge that

would break down in the middle. If Christ did not rise, do not trust Him, for such faith is vain; but, if you believe that He did die for you, and did rise again for you, then believe in Him, joyously confident that such a fact as this affords a solid basis for your belief.

IV. If There Be No Resurrection, They Remained in Their Sins.

“If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

Ah! Can ye bear that thought, my beloved in Christ, that ye are yet in your sins? I think that the bare suggestion takes hold upon you, terrifies you, and chills your blood. A little while ago, you were in your sins, dead in them, covered with them as with a crimson robe, you were condemned, lost. But now, you believe that Christ has brought you out of your sins, and washed you and made you white in His precious blood; ay, and has so changed you that sin shall not have dominion over you, for now you are by grace a child of God. Well, but, if Christ did not rise again, you are yet in your sins.

Observe that; for then there is no atonement made; at least, no satisfactory atonement. If the atonement of Christ for sin had been unsatisfactory, He would have remained in the grave. He went there on our behalf, a hostage for us; and if what He did upon the tree had not satisfied the justice of God, then He would never have come out of the grave again. Think for a minute what our position would be, if I stood here to preach only a dead and buried Christ! He died nearly nineteen hundred years ago; but suppose He had never been heard of since. If He had not risen from the dead, could you have confidence in Him? You would say, “How do we know that His sacrifice was accepted?” We sing right truly,

“If Jesus ne’er had paid the debt, He ne’er had been at freedom set.”

The Surety would have been under bonds unless he had discharged all his liability; but He has done so, and He has risen from the dead, *“And now both the Surety and sinner are free.”*

Understand clearly what I am saying. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took upon Himself the sum total of the guilt of all His people. “The Lord hath made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all.” He died, and by His death obtained the full discharge of all our obligations. But His rising again was, so to speak, the receipt in full, the token that He had discharged the whole of the dread liabilities which He had taken upon Himself; and now, since Christ is risen, you who believe in Him are not in your sins. But, if He had not risen, then it would have been true, “Ye are yet in your sins.”

It would have been true, also, in another sense. The life by which true believers live is the resurrection-life of Him Who said, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (Joh 14:19). But if Christ is not risen, there is no life for those who are in Him. If He were still slumbering in the grave, where would have been the life that now makes us joyful, and makes us aspire after heavenly things? There would have been no life for you if there had not first been life for Him. “Now is Christ risen from the dead,” and in Him you rise into newness of life; but, if He did not rise, you are still dead, still under sin, still without the divine life, still without the life immortal and eternal that is to be your life in heaven throughout eternity.

So, you see, once more, the consequences that follow: “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

V. If There Be No Resurrection, All the Pious Dead Have Perished.

“Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” “Perished,” by which is not meant “annihilated”; they are in a worse condition than that.

One phrase must be explained by the other which went before it; if Jesus Christ is not risen, they are yet in their sins. They died, and they told us that they were blood-washed and forgiven; and that they hoped to see the face of God with joy; but if Christ rose not from the dead, there is no sinner who has gone to heaven, there is no saint who ever died, who has had any real hope; he has died under a delusion, and he has perished.

If Jesus Christ be not raised, the godly dead are yet in their sins, and they can never rise; for, if Christ did not rise from the dead, they cannot rise from the dead. Only through His resurrection is there resurrection for the saints. The ungodly shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt; but believers shall rise into eternal life and

felicity because of their oneness with Christ; but, if He did not rise, they cannot rise. If He is dead, they must be dead, for they must share with Him. They are, they ever must be, one with Him; and all the saints who ever died, died under a mistake if Christ did not rise. We cast away the thought with abhorrence. Many of us have had beloved parents and friends who have died in the Lord, and we know that the full assurance of their faith was no mistake. We have seen dear children die in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection; and we know that it was no error on their part. I have stood by many death-beds of believers, many triumphant, and many more peaceful and calm as a sweet summer evening. They were not mistaken. No, dear sirs, believing in Christ, who lived, and died, and rose again, they had confidence in the midst of pain, and joy in the hour of their departure. We cannot believe that they were mistaken; therefore we are confident that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead.

VI. If There Be No Resurrection, Our Source of Joy Is Gone.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we, who believe that He did, are of all men the most miserable: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ," and we certainly have no hope of any other life, apart from Christ, "we are of all men most miserable."

What does Paul mean? That Christian men are more miserable than others, if they are mistaken? No, he does not mean that; for even the mistake, if it be a mistake, gives them joy; the error, if it be an error, yields them a present confidence and peace. But supposing they are sure that they are under an error, that they have made a mistake, their comfort is gone, and they are of all men the most miserable.

Believers have given up sensuous joys; they have sedulously given them up; they find no comfort in them. There are a thousand things in which worldings find a kind of joy, all of which the Christian loathes. Well, if you have given up the brown bread, and cannot eat the white, then are you starved indeed. If we consider the mirth of the worldling to be no better than the husks of swine, and there be no bread for us, in the fact that Christ rose from the dead, then we are hungry indeed.

And, more than that, we have now learned superior things. We have learned to love holiness, and we seek after it. We have learned to love communion with God, and it has become our heaven to talk with our Father and our Savior. We now look after things which are spiritual; and we try to handle the things that are carnal as they should be handled, as things to be used, but not abused. Now if, after having tasted these superior joys, they all turn out to be nothing, and they must turn out to be nothing if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then we are indeed of all men the most miserable.

More than that, we have had high hopes, hopes that have made our hearts leap for joy. We have been ready sometimes to go straight away out of the body, with high delights and raptures, in the expectation of being "with Christ, which is far better." We have said, "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." We have been transported with the full conviction that our eyes "shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off;" and if that be not sure, if it can be proved that our hopes are vain, then are we of all men the most miserable.

You will wonder why I have been so long in bringing out these points, and what I am driving at. Well, what I am driving at is this. After all, everything hinges upon a fact, an ancient fact, and if that fact is not a fact, it is all up with us. If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then His Gospel is all exploded. What I want you to notice is this, that there must be a basis of fact in our religion; these things must be facts, or else nothing can give us consolation.

Our eternal hopes do not depend upon our moral condition; for, observe, these men in Corinth would not have been better or worse if Christ had not risen from the dead. Their character was just the same. It had been fashioned, it is true, by a belief that He did rise from the dead; but whether He did or did not, they were just the same men, so that their hope did not depend upon their good moral condition. The apostle does not say, "If you are or are not in such and such a moral condition," but, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." So, my beloved, the reason of your being safe will be that Christ died for you, and that He rose again; it is not the result of what you are, but of what *He* did. The hinge of it all is not in you: it is in Him, and you are to place your reliance, not upon what you are, or hope to be, but wholly and entirely upon a great fact which transpired nearly nineteen hundred years ago. If He did not rise from the dead, you are in your sins still, be you as

good as you may; but if He did rise from the dead, and you are one with Him, you are not in your sins; they are all put away, and you are “accepted in the beloved.”

Now I go a step further. The great hope you have does not hinge even upon your spiritual state. You must be born again; you must have a new heart and a right spirit, or else you cannot lay hold of Christ, and He is not yours; but still, your ultimate hope is not in what you are spiritually, but in what He is. When darkness comes over your soul, and you say, “I am afraid I am not converted,” still believe in Him Who rose from the dead; and when, after you have had a sight of yourself, you are drifting away to dark despair, still cling to Him who loved you, and gave Himself for you, and rose again from the dead for you. *If thou believest that Christ is risen from the dead, and if this be the foundation of thy hope of heaven, that hope stands just as sure*, whether thou art bright or whether thou art dull, whether thou canst sing or whether thou art forced to sigh, whether thou canst run or whether thou art a broken-legged cripple, only able to lie at Christ’s feet. If He died for thee, and rose again for thee, there is the groundwork of thy confidence, and I pray thee keep to it. Do you see how Paul insists upon this? “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” The inference is that, if Christ be raised, and you have faith in Him, your faith is not vain, and you are not in your sins, you are saved. Your hope must not be here, in what your hands can do, but there, on yonder cross, in what He did, and there, on yonder throne, in Him who has risen again for your justification.

The hardest thing in the world seems to be to keep people to this truth, for I have noticed that much of the modern-thought doctrine is nothing but old self-righteousness tricked out again. It is bidding men still to trust in themselves, to trust in their moral character, to trust in their spiritual aspirations, or something or other. I stand here tonight to say to you that the basis of your hope is not even your own faith, much less your own good works; but *it is what Christ has done once for all*, for “ye are complete in him,” and you can never be complete in any other way.

Here, again, I would have you notice that Paul does not say that your being forgiven and saved depends upon your sincerity and your earnestness. You must be sincere and earnest; Christ is not yours if you are not; but still, you may be very sincere, and very earnest, and yet be wrong all the while; and the more sincere and earnest you are in a wrong way, the further you will go astray. The self-righteous man may be very sincere as he goes about to establish a righteousness of his own; but the more he does it, the more he ruins himself. But here is the mark for you to aim at, not at your sincerity, though there must be that; but if Christ was raised, and that is where you are resting your hopes, then you are not in your sins, but you are accepted in Christ, and justified in Him.

This is where I stand, and I pray every believer to keep here. There are many new discoveries made in science; we are pleased to hear it. I hope that we shall be able to travel more quickly, and pay less for it. I hope that we shall have better light, and that it will not be so expensive. The more true science, the better; but when science comes in to tell me that it has discovered anything about the way to heaven, then I have a deaf ear to it. “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins.” But if Christ be risen, then I know where I am. If it be really so, that He is God in human flesh; if He took my sin, and bore the consequences of it, and made a clear sweep of it from before the judgment-seat of the Most High; and if His rising again is God’s testimony that the work is done, and that Christ, who stood as Substitute for me, is accepted for me, oh, hallelujah, hallelujah! What more do I need, but to praise and bless the name of Him who has saved me with an effectual salvation? Now will I work for Him. Now will I spend and be spent in His service. Now will I hate every false way, and every sin, and seek after purity and holiness; but not, in any sense, as the groundwork of my confidence. My one hope for time and eternity is Jesus, only Jesus; Jesus crucified and risen from the dead.

I do not know any passage of Scripture which, more thoroughly than this one, throws the stress where the stress must be, not on man, but on Christ alone: “If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” O dear hearer, if thou wouldst be saved, thy salvation does not lie with thyself, but with Him who left His Father’s bosom, and came down to earth a babe at Bethlehem, and hung upon a woman’s breast; upon Him who lived here, for thirty-three years, a life of suffering and of toil, and who then took all the sin of His people upon Himself, carried it up to the tree, and there bore all the consequences of it in His own body,

“Bore all that Almighty God could bear, With strength enough, but none to spare.”

Jesus Christ bore that which has made God's pardon an act of justice, and vindicated His forgiveness of sin so that none can say that He is unjust when He passes by transgression. Christ did all that; and then, dying, was laid in the tomb, but, the third day, His Father raised Him from the dead in token that He spoke the truth when He said, on the cross, "It is finished." The debt is paid now; then, O sinner, leave thy prison, for thy debt is paid! Art thou shut up in despair on account of thy debt of sin? It is all discharged if thou hast believed in Him Who was raised from the dead. He has taken all thy sin, and thou art free. That handwriting of ordinances that was against thee is nailed to His cross. Go thy way, and sing, "The Lord is risen indeed," and be as happy as all the birds in the air, till thou art, by and by, as happy as the angels in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MESSIAH WITHIN THE VEIL

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

MESSIAH could not be "holden" by death, because He was the Holy One, who could not see corruption. Death must be annulled. The broken body must be made whole; resurrection must come forth out of death; and that resurrection was to be life, and glory, and blessedness. Through the rent veil of His own flesh, He was (if we may so use the figure) to enter into "glory and honour, and immortality." Thus He speaks in the sixteenth Psalm:

"Therefore my heart is glad, Yea, my glory rejoiceth: 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. Thou wilt show me the path of life: In thy presence is fulness of joy; At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

Let us dwell upon these verses in connection with Messiah's entrance within the veil.

The speaker in this Psalm is undoubtedly Christ. This we learn from Peter's sermon at Jerusalem (Act 2:25). He is speaking to the Father, as His Father and our Father. He speaks as the lowly, dependent son of man; as one who needed help and looked to the Father for it; as one who trusted in the Lord and walked by faith, not by sight; as one who realised the Father's love, anticipated the joy set before Him, and had respect to the recompense of the reward.

He speaks, moreover, as one who saw death before Him—"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell"; and looking into the dark grave, on the edge of which He was standing, just about to plunge into it, He casts His eye upwards and pleads, with strong crying and tears, for resurrection, and joy, and glory—"Thou wilt show me the path of life." For the words of the Psalm are the united utterances of confidence, expectation, and prayer; not unlike those of Paul, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

He speaks too as one who was bearing our curse; as one who was made sin for us; and to whom everything connected with sin and its penalty was infinitely terrible; not the less terrible, but the more, because the sin and the penalty were not His own, but ours. The death which now confronted Him was one of the ingredients of the fearful cup, against which He prayed in Gethsemane, "Let this cup pass from me"; for we read that, "in the days of His flesh He made supplication, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death." In this Psalm, indeed, we do not hear these strong cryings and tears, which the valley of the Kedron then heard. All is calm; the bitterness of death is past; the power of the king of terrors seems broken; the gloom of the grave is lost in the anticipated brightness of the resurrection light and glory. But still the scene is similar; though in the Psalm the light predominates over the darkness, and there is not the agony, nor the bloody sweat, nor the exceeding sorrow. It is our Surety looking the king of terrors in the face; contemplating the shadows of the three days and nights in the heart of the earth; surveying Joseph's tomb, and while accepting that as His prison-house for a season, anticipating the deliverance by the Father's power, and rejoicing in the prospect of the everlasting gladness.

Resurrected from Death unto Life

The first thing that occupies His thoughts is resurrection. The path of death is before Him; and He asks that He may know the path of life—the way out of the tomb as well as the way into it. Death is to Him an enemy; an enemy from which as the Prince of life His holy soul would recoil even more than we. The grave is to Him a prison-house, gloomy as Jeremiah's low dungeon or Joseph's pit, not the less gloomy because He approaches it as a conqueror, as bringing life and immortality to light, as the resurrection and the life. Into that prison-house He must descend; for though rich He has stooped to be poor; and this is the extremity of his poverty, the lowest depth of His low estate—even the surrender of that, for which even the richest on earth will part with everything—life itself. But out of that dungeon He cries to be brought; and for this rescue He puts Himself entirely into the Father's hands, "Thou wilt show me the path of life."

Very blessed and glorious did resurrection seem in the eyes of the Prince of life, of Him who is the resurrection and the life. Infinitely hateful did death and the grave appear to Him who was the Conqueror of death, the Spoiler of the grave. He had undertaken to die, for as the second Adam He came to undergo the penalty of the first, "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return"; yet not the less bitter was the cup, not the less gloomy was the valley of the shadow of death; not the less welcome was the thought of resurrection.

Resurrected to the Presence of God

The next thing which fills His thoughts is the presence of God—that glorious presence which He had left when He "came down from heaven." His thoughts are of the Father's face, the Father's house, the Father's presence. Earth to Him was so different from heaven. He had not yet come to the "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" but He felt the difference between this earth and the heaven He had quitted. There was no such "presence" here. All was sin, evil, hatred, darkness; the presence of evil men and mocking devils; not the presence of God. God seemed far away. This world seemed empty and dreary. He called to mind the home, and the love, and the holiness He had left; and He longed for a return to these. "Thy presence!" What a meaning in these words, coming from the lips of the lonely Son of God in His desolation and friendlessness and exile here. "Thy presence!" How full of recollection would they be to Him as He uttered them; and how intensely would that recollection stimulate the anticipation and the hope!

Of this same Messiah, the speaker in the psalm, we read afterwards, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God" (Joh 1:1); and elsewhere He speaks thus of Himself: "Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old; I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was...I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him" (Pro 8:22,30); and again, He, in the days of His flesh, thus prayed: "O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (Joh 17:5). Thus we see that the "presence" or "face" of God had been His special and eternal portion. His past eternity was associated entirely with this glorious presence. No wonder then that in the day of His deepest weakness—when the last enemy confronted Him with his hideous presence, He should recall the Father's presence; anticipating the day of restoration to that presence, and repossession of the glory which He had before the world was.

"Thy presence," said the only-begotten of the Father looking up into the Father's face! He speaks as the sin-bearer, on whom the chastisement of our sins was laid, and between whom and heaven these sins had drawn a veil; He speaks as an exile, far from home, weary, troubled, exceeding sorrowful even unto death; He speaks as a Son feeling the bitterness of separation from His Father's presence, and of distance from His Father's house; He speaks as one longing for home and kindred, and the unimpeded outflowings of paternal love. "Thy presence," says the Man of sorrows looking round on an evil world—oh, that I were there! "Thy presence," says the forsaken Son of man, for "lover and friend hast Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness"—oh, that I were there! "Thy presence," not this waste howling wilderness, this region of pain, and disease, and sin, and death, and tombs. "Thy presence," not these temptations, these devils, these enemies, these false friends; not this blasphemy, this reproach, this scorn, this betrayal, this denial, this buffeting, this scourging, this spitting, this mockery! "Thy presence,"—oh, that I were there; nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.

Only through death can He reach life, for He is burdened with our sin and our death; and death is to Him the path of life. He must go through the veil to enter into the presence of God. Only through the grave—the stronghold of death, and of him who has the power of death—can He ascend into the presence of God; and therefore, when about to enter the dark valley, He commits Himself to the Father’s guidance, to the keeping of Him who said, “Behold my servant whom I uphold,” the keeping of which He himself, by the mouth of David, had spoken: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Capernaum, Gethsemane, Golgotha—these were all but stages in His way up to “the presence”—the presence of the Father; and it is when approaching the last of these, with the consciousness of His nearness to that presence, only one more dark passage to wind through, that He gives utterance to this psalm—His psalm in prospect of resurrection and glory—“I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved: therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth; 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; Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Resurrected to Fulness of Joy

Connected with this “presence,” this glory within the veil, he speaks of “fulness of joy.” On earth, in the day of His banishment here, He found want, not fulness. He was poor and needy; no house, no table, no chamber, no pillow of His own. His was the extremity of human poverty; though rich He had become poor; he was hungry, thirsty, weary, with no place to lay His head. Though He knew no sin, He tasted the sinner’s portion of want and sorrow. He was in the far country, the land of the mighty famine; and looking upwards to the happy heaven which He had left, He could say, “How many servants in my Father’s house have bread and to spare, and I perish with hunger.” Drinking also of the sinner’s deep cup of wrath, He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It was as such that He looked up so often as we find Him in the Gospels doing, and as we find Him in this Psalm, with wistful eye reminding Himself of the joy He had left, and anticipating the augmented joy that was so soon to be His when, having traversed this vale of tears, and passed through the gates of death, He was to re-ascend to His Father, and re-enter the courts of glory and joy. “Fulness of joy” is His prospect; fulness of joy in the presence of God. Concerning this going to the Father He spoke to His disciples; and then added, “These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” It is of this same full joy that He speaks in our psalm; a joy which was to be the fulness of all joy; a joy which was to be His recompense for the earthly sorrow of His sin-bearing life and death; a joy which He was to share with His redeemed, and on which they too should enter, when they, like Him, had triumphed over death, and been caught up into the clouds to meet Him in the air; a joy which would be to them, in that wondrous day, infinitely more than a compensation for earthly tribulation; even as one of themselves has written, “Our present light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

This was “the joy set before Him,” because of which He endured the cross; and here He calls it **FULNESS OF JOY**. That which He calls fulness must be so; for He knows what joy is, and what its fulness is; just as He knew what sorrow was and its fulness. The amount of joy sufficient to fill a soul like His must be infinite; it must be joy unspeakable and full of glory. The amount of joy reckoned by the Father sufficient as the reward of the sorrow of such a Son, must be infinite indeed. What then must that be which Messiah reckons the fulness of joy. What a day was that for Him when, death and sorrow ended, He entered on life and gladness! And what a day will that be, yet in store for Him and for His saints, when we, as His joint-heirs, shall enter on all that life and gladness; the day of His glorious coming, when that shall be fulfilled which is written, “Come forth, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him, in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.”

Resurrected to Honour, Power, and Favour

Besides the “presence” or “face” of God within the veil, Messiah sees the right hand; the place of honour and power and favour—the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens; and at that right hand there are pleasures for evermore; eternal enjoyments, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. For all the things on which Messiah’s soul rests are everlasting; the life, the fulness, the joy, the presence, the pleasures—all eternal! No

wonder, then, that He who knows what eternity is—an eternity of glory and gladness—should feel that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed”; and should, when going up to the cross, and down into the grave, say with calm but happy confidence, “Thou wilt show me the path of life, in Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.” Most mysterious are such words as these from the lips of Him who is the resurrection and the life; and yet it is just because they come from Him—from this Prince of Life—that they are so assuring, so comforting to us. His oneness with us, and our oneness with Him, account for all the mystery. His oneness with us, as our substitute and sinbearer, the endurer of our curse and cross and death, accounts for all that is mysterious in this Psalm. Our oneness with Him clears up all that is wonderful in such words as “I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” Blessed, thrice-blessed oneness—mutual oneness; He one with us, we one with Him, in life, in death, in burial, in resurrection, and in glory. Now we can take up His words as truly meant for us, “Thou wilt show us the path of life”; for in believing God’s testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, we have become one with Him!

In all this we have [the following].

1. *Messiah’s estimate of death.* He abhors it. It is His enemy as well as ours. He came to conquer it, to destroy it for ever. He conquers it by being conquered by it; He slays it by allowing Himself to be slain by it. He crucifies it, kills it, buries it for ever. Death is swallowed up in victory. “O death,” He says, “I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction.”

2. *Messiah’s estimate of resurrection.* He longs for it; both on His own account and His people’s. It is the consummation of that which He calls life. It is the second life, more glorious than the first; the opposite extreme of being to that which is called “the second death.” The Son of God came into the world as the Prince of Life; He came not merely that He might die, but that He might live; and that all who identify themselves with Him by the acceptance of the divine testimony concerning His life and death and resurrection, might not only have life, but might have it more abundantly. Resurrection is our hope, even as it was His; the first, the better resurrection; and as we toil onwards in our pilgrimage, burdened with the mortality of this vile body, and seeing death on every side of us, we take up Messiah’s words of hope and gladness, “Thou wilt show me the path of life.”

3. *Messiah’s estimate of joy.* He recognises it as a thing greatly to be desired, not despised; as the true and healthy, or, as men say, the “normal” condition of creaturehood. God Himself is the blessed one; and He formed His creatures to be sharers of His blessedness. Heaven is full of joy; and all its dwellers are vessels of gladness. Earth was not made for sorrow, but for joy; and, before long, that song shall be sung over the new creation, “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.” For this day of joy Christ longed, anticipating it as the consummation of all that He had come to do. As the eternal Word which was with the Father, He knew what joy was; as the Man of sorrows, He knew what sorrow was. He was in the true condition and circumstances to take the proper estimate of joy. And here He tells us what that estimate was. He longed to be done with sorrow, which was as the shadow of hell; He “desired with desire” to enter into the joy set before Him, the joy of life, the joy of resurrection, the joy of God’s presence and right hand for ever. Let our eye, like His, be fixed on that coming gladness—that sunrise of eternity for which the Church is waiting and creation groans. That hope will cheer, will nerve, will liberate, will heal, will animate, will purify; will do miracles for us. As yet, the joy has not arrived. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. Not now; not here; not on this side of the grave! But the promise of its possession, and the assurance that when it does arrive, it will be great enough and long enough to make up for all trial and all delay, are sufficient to keep us ever looking, waiting, watching. Resurrection is coming, with all its light and joy; and then comes the world’s second dawn, and the Church’s long-expected dayspring; the cessation of creation’s groans, the times of the restitution of all things; the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

4. *Messiah’s estimate of the Father’s love.* It is this love that is His portion; it is in this love that He abides and rejoices; for it is He who says, “Thy loving kindness is better than life.” No one knew so well as He did the glorious truth, “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” The Father’s love! Here His soul found its resting-place, in the midst of human hatred and reproach. The Father’s love! It was with this that He comforted Himself, and with this it was that He comforted His Church, saying, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you”; “Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me”; “Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world”; “that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” Is that love to us what it was

to Him? It was His rest, is it ours? It was into this hidden chamber, this holy of holies, that He retired, when the world's storms beat upon Him; is it in this that we take refuge in our evil days? It was sufficient for His infinitely capacious soul; it may well suffice for ours. Is, then, His estimate of the Father's love our estimate? Is this love our gladness? Is its sunshine the brightness of our daily life? And with simple confidence in it, like Messiah's, do we look into and look through the future, however dark, saying, "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore?"

On all that light, and joy, and fulness, and love, Messiah has now entered. For eighteen hundred years He has been in that presence, and at that right hand, which He longed for; and though yet greater things are in store for Him in the day of His promised advent, yet He has now for ages been done with sorrow and death, with reproach and hatred. He has entered on His rest; He has passed into life; His blessedness is now without a shadow. And is not this a thought full of joy to us? He whom we love is happy! No second Gethsemane nor Golgotha for Him. Whatever may befall us, whatever of tribulation we may have yet to pass through, He is blessed; it is all well with Him. He has trodden the path of life; He has entered into that presence which He longed for; He has sat down at that right hand where there are pleasures for evermore. Is this not a joyful thought to us here, even in the midst of our weakness and sorrow? And was it not to this He referred when He said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father"? and was it not with forgetfulness of this that He reproached His disciples, "Now I go my way to Him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, whither goest Thou? but because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart."

Should we not rejoice in His joy? Should not the thought of His happiness be a continual source of consolation to us? Amid the dreariness of the desert, it was a cheering thought to Israel that there was such a region as Canaan, over which the barrenness of the waste howling wilderness had no power. Amid the griefs and cares of earth, it is a blessed thought to us that there is such a place as heaven, to which the storm reaches not, and where there has never been known, neither shall be, one cloud, one pain, one sin. So amid the troubles of our own troubled spirits, or the sorrows of those about us, it is a happy thought that there is one heart, once full of grief, that now grieves no more; one eye that often wept, which now weeps no more; and that this blessed One is none other than our beloved Lord—once the Man of sorrows. He who loved us, He whom, not having seen, we love, is now for ever blessed; He has entered that presence where there is fulness of joy; He has taken His seat at that right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

Does not this comfort and gladden us? What He now is, and what we so soon shall be—this gives vigour and consolation. It lifts us almost unconsciously into a calmer region, and gives us to breathe the very air of the kingdom. It purifies, too, and strengthens; it makes us forget the things which are behind, and reach forward to what lies before.

The prospect of resurrection and glory sustained the soul of our Surety here. This was the joy set before Him. Let us set it before ourselves, that we may not be moved. We have much to do both with the future and the past. In that future lies our inheritance, and we cannot but be seeking to pierce the veil that hides it. But in the past we find our resting-place. Christ has ascended on high, leading captivity captive; he has ascended to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. The work is done. The blood is shed. The fire has consumed the sacrifice. It is finished! This is the testimony which we bring from God, in the belief of which we are saved. It needs no second sacrifice; no repetition of the great burnt-offering. That which saves the sinner is done. Another has done it all. Messiah has done it all; and our Gospel is not a command to do, but simply to take what another has done. He who ceases from His own labours, and enters on these labours of another, has taken possession of all to which these labours entitled Him, who so performed them, even the Messiah of Israel, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889): born in Edinburgh, Scotland, brother of Andrew Bonar. Following education at the University of Edinburgh, he maintained a powerful ministry for more than half a century. He pastored one of the main Presbyterian churches in Edinburgh until his death, which became known for its solid Bible teaching and revival. Throughout his life, he avoided all sensationalism and was patient, solemn, and a steady writer. He was foremost a winner of souls, although he was also a great preacher and hymn writer (writing 600 hymns, over 100 of which are still in use). He had a special gift to put great truths into plain and understandable language. His tracts and books have become Christian classics, being in continual use since their writing.

*“And as they were afraid, and bowed down
their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the
dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying,
The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the
third day rise again.”—Luke 24:5-7*

*“We are troubled on every side, yet not
distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but
not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the
Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway
delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made
manifest in our mortal flesh.”—2 Corinthians 4:8-11*

