

PLAIN TALK
ON THE
RESURRECTION

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From Death into Life

Why does the doctrine of the resurrection give so much hope to the Christian?

To answer this question I want to discuss both the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection of Christians. In other words, we will discuss the whole truth of the general doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. This was one of the significant phases in the life of Christ. We recognize that the life of the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the Scriptures has several distinct aspects: He was born of a virgin; while He was in His active ministry He worked miracles that astonished the onlookers; He died on Calvary's cross for the sins of the whole world, especially for those who believe in Him; He rose from the dead, leaving an empty grave; He was seen by His disciples after the resurrection off and on for forty days; He ascended into heaven in full view of them; He is there in the presence of God, interceding on our behalf; and this same Jesus shall so return in like manner as He went.

This, very quickly, is what we have in mind when we talk about Jesus Christ. Now, the very central part of this is the resurrection and what matters so far as you and I are concerned, and especially in our living, is that resurrection from the dead is real. There is another life possible after this life – not this life over again, not a second living like we did the first time, but life of a different dimension.

Perhaps this is the most incredible idea that can come to a person. How well we can understand Job's question, "If a man dies, will he live again?" And yet that is what the gospel of Jesus Christ says. Jesus of Nazareth Himself taught this. The people of His day and time could not understand it either. Early in His ministry the Lord Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Then we read, "Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" (John 2:20). John then explains, writing as he did after the fact of Jesus' bodily resurrection, "But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said" (John 2:21-22). So, right at the beginning of His ministry He told them that He would be raised from the dead.

Later, but still early in His ministry, He spoke of the resurrection of all mankind, "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" (John 5:25-29). He was preparing the people for the idea that there would be a resurrection of the dead.

God not only, for the sake of Jesus Christ, forgives the sins of those who believe in Him, but God will also, through the Lord Jesus Christ, raise the dead, not only eventually in the world to come but now, in this world, it is possible to live in the newness of life.

As we look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ we will see that *in* Him the believer is raised, *by* Him the believer is raised, and *through* Him the believer is raised into the newness of life. Christ Jesus did not remove death, He overcame death; He triumphed over it. Death is still here and it is real, but it has lost its sting. You remember how Paul expressed it: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" These are the familiar words in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Hear them again, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others who have no

hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive, and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Through all the ages and all over the world, Christians have had this truth in mind, and in all languages where the gospel is preached and understood they have repeated the wonderful promise the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples when He said to them in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." It is to be feared that some of us repeat these words as if they were poetry. They are beautiful – just as beautiful as any poetry we will ever read – but they are also real. At Eastertime we are all reminded that Christ arose and we all realize that was wonderful and amazing; but at all seasons of the year we need to remember that believers, too, will be raised.

Please note that in the resurrection it is the whole man who will be raised. Paul said, in writing to the Thessalonians, "I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved" (5:23). While it is significantly true that our bodies shall be raised, it is also true that our spirits and souls will be raised into the newness of life. This was the great ambition of Paul, that he might know the power of Christ's resurrection. It is important that we grasp the idea that the will of God leads the believer to be crucified with Christ that he might also be raised with Him. Thus we find in John 12:24 these familiar words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The Lord spoke these words just after He had said, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." And He tells about falling into the ground and dying that He might bear fruit. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25). Apparently what He is saying here is that this life is real and death following this life is real, but there is another, a better life after death.

Something of this truth can be seen even in the natural world. A grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies and out of it comes the plant, the stalk of wheat that grows and bears seed. Think of it in the case of any seed that is planted in the ground: a bean plant will grow from the bean seed. The plant does not look like the seed that was put into the ground, but it does come from the seed. You remember what happens to caterpillars: they become cocoons, then they emerge as butterflies. All of this is used in the Scripture to indicate to us that something else is coming – a new life is possible in Christ Jesus after the believer dies to this world.

Yes, we do move from death into life.

The Comfort of the Resurrection

Can you see how God's faithfulness to His promises can be a comfort to the believer?

The Bible deals with the issues of life and death and actually discusses conditions which involve living and dying. There is nothing more fundamental, more elemental, than what the Bible discusses about man. In the Bible we read that God created the world and made man in His own image. As we read the Bible and look around about us we get the impression very clearly that God keeps, sustains, and maintains the world by His own power. If we think of the world as being an expression of energy, it is Almighty God who controls the power that is in this world. We also learn from the Bible that God judges the world; He is a righteous Being and He judges the world in His own righteousness. Then we realize the very sobering fact that God will destroy the world that He has made.

Jeremiah learned a great lesson when he went down to the house of the potter and watched him at his wheel making vessels out of the potter's clay: when the potter had formed a vessel that did not please him, he crushed it and put the clay back and made another vessel out of it. This experience of Jeremiah made him understand more clearly God's sovereign control in this world. God will destroy the world that He made. But then we see a marvelous truth – God saves the world by His own grace. This world that was doomed to destruction will, by His grace, be reconstructed. It is clear to us, then, that God rules the world in His own sovereignty.

As we study the Bible it becomes clear to us that God is over all. Now, the Bible account shows that the creation, that which God made, does not always obey Him. Then we see this sobering truth: those who disobey, the sinful ones, shall be destroyed. But there is the gospel, the Good News: Man can be saved! "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him [shall] not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). It is true that if a man believes not he is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. But it is also marvelously true that whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish but have everlasting life.

The practical problem that is faced is this: if destruction is universal and all men are condemned to death because they are sinners, how can I be delivered? This is what is pictured for us in the Bible. There are various ways in which it is set forth, some more clearly than others. The account in Genesis, for instance, presents how man multiplied: there were Adam's children and they had children, and generation after generation multiplied until the earth was filled with them. But sin was rampant and sin grew worse until God, in judgment, sent the Flood. Although God had made man in His own image and put him in this world, He also sent the Flood as a judgment upon the earth to destroy all mankind. But there were those who were saved. God knew how to deliver the godly out of this judgment, this condemnation, and Noah and his family became the progenitors of the world as we have it now.

So we have Adam's descendants being destroyed by the Flood and yet out of the Flood, saved in the ark, came Noah, the father of the new generation.

Therefore, salvation has three phases. It begins with a person being physically alive but in sin and incurring the judgment of God; this living person has the sentence of physical death within himself and when his earthly life ends, death will take over and his earthly body will be destroyed; but out of physical death will come deliverance into living in Christ. This is sometimes indicated, as we shall see when we study it again, in nature and in all of nature leading up to death. Out from death comes the spirit. When we think of nature we have to add death, then we add the spirit.

Think of those three names – nature, death, and spirit – across a page in front of you. On the left-hand

side of the page is the word "nature" – natural, human. In the center of the page put "death" – destruction. On the right side put "spirit" – the children of God – the Spirit of God – eternal life. All of this is brought to our minds in various ways, but I want now to read Romans 5:12-21 and 6:1-19:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one [that one would be Adam], many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as by the offence of one [that would be Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [that would be Jesus Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. [There is brought to mind the contrast of what happened in Adam and what happened in Christ Jesus.] Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul goes on to say,

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh. . . .

The rest of chapter 6 and chapter 7 find Paul's thoughts going back and forth over just one thing: that your old man – the human nature – was doomed to death, but the new man – the spiritual nature that is in Christ Jesus – is actually raised to everlasting life, "planted together in the likeness of His death" – that we might be raised with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. This is what we have in mind when we think of the simple truth as set forth in the Bible. There was the first creation which ends in death and there is the new creation that goes on to eternal life. For this we thank Almighty God.

Resurrection to the New Life of the Spirit

Are you aware that you cannot get into anything better unless you are willing to get out of where you are?

"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27). These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus to the two disciples walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the day that His body was reported gone from the tomb. Early in the morning the disciples had gone to the tomb and found it empty. All day long there undoubtedly had been excitement. Who knows how many different persons had tried to understand or explain what had happened, and now as the evening hour draws near these two disciples are on their way home, walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, when this stranger comes along and walks with them. When asked why they are so downhearted they tell Him it is because of the things about Jesus Christ. Then He spoke these words; He reminded them what was taught in the Scriptures; what was promised. They may well have walked for an hour or more on their journey while He expounded on the Scriptures.

Now, He had just been raised from the dead and He was present there in person. What do you suppose He talked about? Do you think He talked about His resurrection? We are told He talked about the things concerning Himself. What things? Things that were written in the Old Testament. Not the fact that His body had been raised from the dead and brought back to life again. He was right there in person, but that was not the thing He was talking about. I am going to suggest to you that He was talking to them about the significance of His resurrection – that there is life after death, and what that means. During the time He was talking to them they did not recognize Him; apparently that was not necessary. They were not looking at the person so much; they were looking at the Scripture. Afterwards they said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Later He met the disciples in the upper room and the first thing He did was to convince them that He was literally and physically alive. We don't know how long that took; it would not be very long. He asked them to touch Him and when they yet believed not for joy He asked them, "Have you any food?" And they brought Him a piece of broiled fish and honeycomb and He took it and ate before them. "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45).

I suspect He talked to them for several hours about what was in the Bible. Many times since I first read this I have gone back to the writing of Moses in the Old Testament, trying to understand what He talked about. It certainly was not that He was alive – He had shown them He was alive. He showed them that in a few minutes without talking about the Scriptures at all; He asked them to put their hands on Him and handle Him "and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And He asked them for food and He ate. That was a public, actual, literal, physical demonstration.

Now, what portion or portions of Scripture did He expound to them? How did He open their understanding? Do you suppose that now with the resurrection a reality He could complete His message about eternal life that He had been talking about to them? We are going to look at one aspect of the Old Testament and it will be helpful if we take it as a parable. The children of Israel developed in the course of four hundred years in the land of Egypt. They came there a large family of about seventy persons and now

there were hundreds of thousands of them – a large company of people who were counted as foreigners, aliens, and treated as slaves.

This is Israel in Egypt. Notice that that same group of people was brought out of Egypt across the desert into the Promised Land, thereby demonstrating a great representation, a great revelation of the will of God. Something like that is to happen in the spiritual world. So the question is: What can we understand about Israel in Egypt? Let me point out these things to you: Egypt was not their home – Canaan was their home. Egypt was not the promised land. There was no promise that in Egypt the Hebrews would be blessed. Never were they promised that in Egypt each man would be sitting under his own fig tree, that each man would be free to worship and to serve God and have his own possessions. In Egypt they owned nothing and they did what others told them to do; there was no chance in Egypt for each Hebrew to have his own dealing with God. There was no peace for the people, no rest or quietness among the people, and no power. They were slaves. There was no joy in Egypt; Israel was in distress. All of this is a type of the soul in the natural world. The believer is in distress in this world; the Christian will have tribulation. This is not his home; here in this world he has no promise. This is very important.

What can we understand about Israel in the land of Canaan? That was their home, their promised land that was to be given to them of God. In Canaan the Hebrew people would be blessed; there each man would sit under his own fig tree and each would be free to serve his God – to come to Him personally. All of the great words of triumph are in Canaan – peace, rest, quietness, power, victory, and joy. All of this is a type of the soul in the spiritual world. The believer who belongs to God is blessed in the Lord. In the Lord he is at home for he has the promises of God. This, again, is very important and our preaching and teaching should emphasize that in Christ Jesus the believer is blessed.

In that other world of the spirit the Christian is at home and he freely does the will of God and he has the blessing of God. The believer does pass from living in the natural to living in the spiritual – a process through which the Lord brings the believer. There is a further truth: the believer is led through this process and must respond in obedience; the soul hears the call of God and responds by turning to God.

The truth of the matter is that the soul must let go of the things of this world, give in so far as God is concerned, and turn from idols to worship the living and the true God. The soul will then receive God's promises.

This is implied in the resurrection from the dead.

The Freedom of the Resurrection

A rancher can use horses bigger than he is, stronger than he is – they are useful to him in his work so long as he can control them. In the entire life of the Lord Jesus Christ the resurrection is the big thing, the important thing. It is because of Christ's resurrection that we can be saved, and this is something to understand. It is more than just understanding that the body of Jesus Christ rose from the dead; its meaning is to be found in the writings of Moses and in the Psalms and the Prophets about the Lord Jesus Christ.

We read in Romans 6:11-23:

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. [You will have this sin in your body, but don't let it *reign* in your body.] Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are now studying the truth of the resurrection. The Bible teaches us that in this world there is a great contrariness, that is, in this world there are a great many things against a great many other things. Let me illustrate to you: a man walking is a demonstration of victory. Take the body we have – what would it naturally do if left to itself? What does the body want to do? It wants to fall down – gravity pulls it down. A living person exercises his strength against gravity, he skillfully keeps his balance, and his will to direct his movements makes it possible for him to walk where he wants to go. A living person has victory, then, over the power of gravity.

We live by breathing. Our human body is using up oxygen all of the time; as the blood passes through the arteries of our body it is carrying the oxygen out to the tissues and carrying back the waste material, and in the tissues of our body the oxygen is being used up all of the time. What does that mean? We must have oxygen to live and oxygen comes from the air. Not only must we have air around us, we must have it in our lungs, else we would die. We could be surrounded by the area of the whole universe, yet we would die if we did not have air in our lungs.

The same is true with our strength. Each person who lives has strength to move because he eats food; movement burns up tissues and these tissues must be replaced. The tissues that are used up when our muscles move are replaced, when we eat, by digestion. If we want to live we have to eat food and this is true about everything in this world. Let me put it this way: the living being must control certain elements around him in such a way that he may be able to use them to live. This is also true spiritually and it was pictured in the Bible in the history of Israel.

When Israel entered the land of Canaan, the land of promise, they found the land occupied by Canaanites. According to the Scriptures, God's will was that the Canaanites should be destroyed. Israel in actual practice disobeyed God and let them live, and in the land there were both Israelites and Canaanites.

How can Israel be blessed in the land of Canaan while the Canaanite is still present? The answer is revealed in the history of Israel in that time of Israel's history that is called "the time of the judges."

Turn to Judges 6:1-6. In this passage is recorded an incident that will reveal something of this very thing, where the children of Israel were subject to the Canaanites round about them and the consequences of this subjection.

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds. . . . And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.

The children of Israel were in general distress because they were subject to the people of Midian.

The situation illustrates the condition of believers in this world who are in bondage to sin. Israel as slaves was very much out of character; they were not supposed to be slaves. When the flesh dominates the spirit there is shame and distress for the Christian. But something can be done. In the case of Israel, God sent a deliverer whose name was Gideon and Gideon led the people of Israel to victory; he showed them how to win. Led by Gideon the people of Israel were victorious and blessed; and the spiritual truth is that when the spirit dominates the flesh there is glory and joy.

I want to draw your attention to something: the same people who were in bondage to Midian became free citizens over Midian. The one thing that was necessary was the work of the judge who would identify sin and lead the people to repent, to turn to God and accept His grace; God would set them free. The relationship afterward would be different from the relationship before – this is the important fact we must be made aware of. As long as the children of Israel were under the Canaanites there was misery and distress, but when they became masters over the Canaanites there was peace.

This is true in the Christian experience as well. As long as the Christian is subject to his body, his flesh, and his sin, he is miserable; but if he will be in charge of and in control of his flesh and master these things he can be at peace. The process of overcoming the flesh and having victory in the spirit is involved in the resurrection and that is what we will be thinking about – when we can actually be raised from the dead and, in the newness of life, live a life of victory and peace.

Heaven Is Real

The promises to Israel in the Old Testament depend on the fact of heaven to be realized.

When the Lord Jesus talked to His disciples about heaven He was not standing in a cathedral; He was not reciting a poem. We need to realize this. We are accustomed to thinking about the things of Jesus Christ in church. We go to church, listen to the choir sing anthems of praise to God, then we hear the preacher read from the Bible, and once in awhile he refers to heaven. We come away from church and do not hear the word again until the following week. Is that the way it is?

There was no church building when the Lord Jesus talked to His disciples. He did sometimes talk in a synagogue; that was all He had. More often He spoke in the open road or out in the open field. He talked about heaven sitting in a boat and He was not reading a poem or giving expression to some fantastic and fanciful ideas. When He talked about heaven He was referring to something real.

When you and I think about heaven we need to remember that heaven is real now. There are persons who do not believe in these things, some who do not know what to believe. Those of us who do believe in God need to learn what the promises of God are. How can we learn? How can anyone living here learn the truth about what is up there? Let me tell you: this is what the Bible is for. The revelation came from God through the prophets and the apostles by His Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. In the wisdom of God the truth of what is true in heaven and eternity was demonstrated here upon earth. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

We are thinking about the resurrection and there is one general truth that is very important: an inadequate form of living can die and be raised from the dead in a different, adequate form of living. An acorn has in it what can become the oak tree. The oak tree in a certain sense was in the acorn but the acorn had to fall into the ground and be destroyed as an acorn: it was dissipated, it disintegrated as an acorn before it could grow into the oak tree. Let me repeat: a person can live in a limited way – faulty, weak, inadequate, unhappy, miserable, helpless, defeated. This way of living in your physical body and in your human mind can be destroyed in death, but you can live again in a new way – able, strong, and victorious.

Have you ever noticed the bulb of a lily? When these bulbs are placed in the ground or in a flower pot in the window they begin to grow; as they grow the bulb doesn't stretch – it doesn't become the lily, but out of the bulb there grows a lily. The lily is beautiful and decorative, but it came out of the bulb. The bulb did not make it, but the bulb had in it what became the lily by the processes of living.

Paul used examples like this to illustrate this fact. John Doe, living in this world in his own limited human way, passing through the experience of death, can be raised from the dead into the newness of life and still be John Doe, but not in the same way: he is a different person. Mary Doe can be living in this world – limited, faulty, with her own personal peculiarities, weak and many times discouraged with living. She can pass through the experience of dying and come out of it in the newness of life-strong, shiny, victorious in Christ Jesus. Life afterwards is different from the one before. The first – called the old – can die and be raised in what we call the resurrection in a new, different form.

We have been noting this in different manifestations and I want to draw your attention to how this was set forth in the Old Testament. Let us consider Israel, the people of God. There are three stages concerning Israel as the people of God. First, Abraham received the covenant from God; blessing was promised because of his obedience. More than four hundred years later Moses received the Law of God showing the people what the will of God was, but they did not obey it. Then David, as king, received the covenant

from God. Obedience was to be brought to pass by the king. But they failed again; in that period of time there were both good and bad kings. David and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah – were godly men; but on the other hand there were Jeroboam, Ahab, Athaliah (the wicked queen), and Manasseh – all of whom were wicked. In those days Israel in their human nature, with the promise to Abraham and the promise to David in hand, failed to obey and were incorrigible even though they received instructions from God. Then came the judgment of God which resulted in the destruction of the nation. The northern nation was destroyed by Assyria and years later the southern nation was destroyed by Babylon. Because of sin, Israel died.

There was a new covenant promise that of these people who had been carried away captive in their sins, whosoever would repent and would return to God would be received and regenerated. God said, "I will give them a new heart. I will put my spirit within them." Through the Messiah they would be given the privilege of becoming the children of God with the life of God in their hearts when the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon them.

To repeat: In the first Covenant there was promise that blessing and victory would be given to Israel; but when Israel sinned they came through sacrifices to receive grace to help them to obey. Then they were given a king who was to activate God's will, but they did not obey. The nation was divided, became disobedient again, worshiped idols, and finally became incorrigible. That is human nature. In judgment the nation was destroyed. That is the second phase.

But there was restoration – the willing ones came back and they were given what they could never have earned or won – opportunity and means to rebuild the temple and the city. Some returned to the land from Babylon. They did not fight; they did not die. Everything needful was provided for them. They were the same people but they were not the same kind of people. They had been changed.

We must realize that the resurrection is in between the first life and the second life. You and I have the wonderful prospect of being raised from the dead to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Death Is a Doorway

No person can have real peace until he has come face to face with death.

If a man dies, shall he live again? Yes! This is the crowning thrust of the gospel of Jesus Christ: a man when he dies will live again. Perhaps this is most keenly appreciated when a loved one dies, when a parent has seen a child die. There is no time when the thought of the angels is as dear and as sweet to the heart as when one stands there and sees a loved one die. It is most helpful then to remember that Christ Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Oh, how we rejoice to remember those words when some dear one – perhaps a mother or a father – dies, and leaves this world. How wonderful to be able to say as we Christians so often do say, "My mother went home," or, "My father went home," because we are sure, and rightly so, in our hearts of the reality of the resurrection from the dead.

Death? That is one of the finalities in living. No matter how it is spoken of – whether in levity or soberly – death always comes to our minds as something final. It is an unalterable ending; it is irrevocable. But you and I are going to ask ourselves right now – is it really that way? Christians lose so much when we fail to follow through on this whole idea. We know death is real; but it is *not* final.

The gospel brings much help as we live day by day; the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ can be very comforting to the heart. It is wonderful to know Christ Jesus in this world and to walk with Him day by day. But for a Christian the crowning comfort comes when we die. It is when death comes that the victory bell should be rung, for it is then that we triumph over all enemies. I remember what a moving experience it was to attend the funeral service of a young man who had died suddenly just when he finished preparing for a professional career. All of the friends of that family were shocked and their hearts went out in sympathy to those bereaved parents. But the parents turned the experience into one grand triumphal victory. Do you know how? In that church sanctuary the service was concluded by singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Going right on through in glory with the colors flying – going home to God.

We shall die, yes. But we shall not stay dead. Oh, no! The natural man can see only from here to the grave; the future may be unknown and he may live through variables here in this world, but the end is sure – death. This implacable certitude of death is not true. As it stands, death before us is fearful – it is menacing. For the natural man's mind death is the last act. He speaks of being after that "six feet under." Before we look at the gospel let us point out at once that the natural man is mistaken in his thinking. Even though the natural man cannot see beyond the grave, he is going beyond the grave. He may not be going to the resurrection of life, but he is going on. Man has always had an intuition that he is going on; everywhere in the world, among all nations and cultures, there is an undertone of expectation that when a man is through with this world he is not through. Poets have expressed the longing of men and the fear of men in various ways.

I do not doubt there are many persons who wish their existence would end at the grave; those who have unpaid bills, who have run up a score against themselves which they hope they will never have to payoff. That is the case of people who have sinned and sinned; they hope that when they are finished here on earth, life will be done with. But that is not the case. When a man dies life is over here, but for the man – no, the man is not finished. It is from the revelation in Scripture that Jesus Christ rose from the dead that we know the resurrection is real.

We do know that whatever possessions a man may have in this world he must leave. He cannot take them with him. Whatever joys, whatever pleasure he may have had – good or bad – they are finished.

Whatever friendships there were here, whatever hopes he cherished, and whatever plans he made are now in the dust. That is true.

I remember a family, a neighbor of ours out in the country. Some fifteen years earlier one of their boys, nine years of age, died. On the night before he died someone had brought an orange to him. He was feeling too sick at the time to eat it and he said to his parents, "Just put it on that dish over there on the mantelpiece where I can see it and when I wake up I will have it." Fifteen years later I saw that dried, wrinkled, dusty orange still on the dish on that mantelpiece. That is the way it is with the natural man. Death robs us so far as this world is concerned.

Many people consider death a hole in the ground and they feel when they go down into the hole that is the end. For the Christian it is right at that point that the gospel raises a shout of triumph. We sing, "Up from the grave He arose in mighty triumph over His foes." Death is not a pit but a passageway. Death is not a hole in the ground, it is a tunnel. To be sure you go into the grave just as do all people who die, but you go through the grave into eternal life. To be sure we cannot avoid death, but it is equally true that death cannot hold us. The Christian can be free from the fear of death. Death *is* an enemy and the grave *is* dark; dying *does* interrupt and it *does* strip; it *does* break up and it *does* end – but it is not final. It cannot be avoided, but it need not be dreaded.

When a Christian looks ahead he sees death, but death is a doorway. Out of this world, yes; but through it and into the world to come. You may be sure when you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ that when you are through here, you are going there.

The Spiritual World Is a Real World

There is a world other than this one.

As we continue our study of the resurrection we find many things that seem strange to the human mind; although those of us in the church are inclined to feel that we understand it because we have heard about the resurrection, we have read the Scriptures, and we have sung the hymns. But we may not fully understand it – we may have heard all of these words and still not know their real meaning. When it comes to trying to understand what is really meant by the resurrection there is so much that seems strange to our natural minds. The truth of the resurrection will never be understood by what I would call the natural mind of the natural man.

One of the passages that tells us about the resurrection is I Corinthians 15:35-54:

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory .So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is Sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. And as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Thus the apostle Paul writes about these things. Keep this passage in mind. Notice that here two worlds are mentioned: the natural world and the spiritual world. These terms, "natural" and "spiritual," refer to realities that are not just quantities of thought. It is not a case of saying that this man is talking about natural things and this man is talking about spiritual things just because there is a difference in ideas. Natural is centered in nature, that is true, and it means the created world, even this earth. Spiritual is centered in spirit and it refers to the world of God, that which we would normally call heaven. Now the natural things are known to everybody, but the spiritual things are known only to those who believe what is recorded in the Scriptures. In the natural world and in my own natural self I am conscious of this world through my senses as I hear, see, touch, taste, and smell. There are five senses and the things that I sense comprise the mind of the natural man. In my spiritual being I am conscious of the spiritual world – the world where God is – by faith.

We need to be very careful about our understanding of faith. We read in Hebrews 11:1, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" and I want to underscore something to you: *Things* – real things – not imagined ideas. Faith is the substance of real things hoped for, not seen as yet. Often people speak of having faith and what they really mean is that they *wish* very much or they *intend* to

do something. This is "make believe," pretending that the thing you say is going to be true. You don't have any particular reason beyond the fact that you say it. That can be thrilling. Any number of people have thrilling experiences when they live in the world of their own "make believe," but it is not really so and it is not Christian faith.

The spiritual world centers in God and God is real. God is spirit – we can't see Him – we can't touch or handle Him – but He is real. He is invisible. That is, we cannot get to Him with the senses to hear Him, taste Him, smell or touch Him, but He is real. We read in Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." So we say that God is real and heaven is real, as are our souls and spirits. Why is it necessary to say "by faith"? Because they are invisible and since they are invisible they can never be experienced physically; I would never know about them in my human mind unless I were told. Let me say again: this world – the natural world – constitutes my consciousness of everything that I carry in mind and memory based on what happens in the natural world.

The other world – the spiritual world – is also in my consciousness if I will take the promises to be true or that which is said about it to be true. We say that the natural world of this creation is the habitat of the natural man who becomes conscious of himself and sees himself as a person; the spiritual world is the home of the spiritual man who becomes conscious of Christ. It is natural to think of what pleases self but it is spiritual to think of what pleases Christ. Because of self-centeredness the natural man tends to move toward self; he does his thinking in terms of self-service: self-entertainment, self-indulgence, self-will, and self-power. Because of Christ-centeredness the spiritual man tends to seek approval from Christ by seeking the welfare of others; he becomes an outgoing person.

The natural man thinks in on self; the spiritual man thinks out on Christ; the natural man becomes conscious of hunger; the spiritual man becomes aware of loneliness. Because of hunger the natural man seeks food; he is never satisfied. You remember the Lord said to the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." That is true about everything in the natural world. Because of loneliness the spiritual man seeks fellowship with God; he shall never thirst again because the Lord promises him, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

It is possible to move out of this natural world in which we live through death into the spiritual world, and it is a common temptation on the part of man to try to keep both worlds; this is a very subtle thing to understand. We live in this world but we are not of this world. The believer is translated out of this world in death into the world to come and this is what gives the resurrection its great meaning.

The Spiritual World Contrasted with the Natural World

Why is it so hard to comprehend the spiritual world?

In the preceding study we considered the very important passage in I Corinthians 15 in which the apostle Paul referred to two different worlds – the natural and the spiritual. We are now going to consider one being in the flesh and another being in the spirit. In the Christian experience we come from the flesh into the spirit – out of the natural into the spiritual. It will be helpful to turn again to I Corinthians 15 and read verses 35-50.

Some may wonder if it is important to have this in mind; they may as well ask, "Is heaven important?" There is a tremendous difference between thinking of this world as if it were the real thing and heaven just an ideal notion, or whether we think of this world as temporary and heaven as permanent. We need to ask ourselves the question, "How important is heaven to me? How important is God and how important is eternal life?" If importance is attached to anyone of these, then it is very important to think of the resurrection. In this world we are flesh and blood; in that world we shall be in the spirit.

The natural world all around us is experienced by us through the senses. We see, hear, taste, smell, and touch it. The spiritual world is experienced by us through faith in reading the revealed Word of God. The Christian is involved both in the natural and the spiritual; he is involved in things that have to do with this world and with those that have to do with the world to come. The natural lives in the material, the spiritual lives in the spiritual. The natural, material world has limitations in time and space; the spiritual world has no limitations. We are interested in the fact that a man may move out of the first into the second; he may come out of the flesh which leads into death and then through death he may be raised in the spirit. The flesh has in it the seeds of death and comes to nothing – to ruin. In that emptiness God will raise the dead and lead him on into eternal life. Why is this so hard to grasp? I think one reason is because so few people accept it that way. Many people who talk about heaven do not believe in it. A man may talk poetically and imaginatively and be called a very spiritual man when he is only using language and referring to ideas that are intellectual and not basic. Many people just do not believe in invisible reality; they do not want to look at it. For many people the idea of God and everything pertaining to God is too cumbersome, too threatening. They feel they have enough trouble in this world that they can see without getting into that world which they cannot see. The fact that the entire spiritual world is not visible, not audible – it cannot be sensed – is too much for many men. They do not know the Bible and its meaning with regard to spiritual realities. The common fallacy is that whatever is physical is real and whatever is spiritual is imaginary. Even the miracles in the New Testament were held to be manipulations of the natural world by clever subtlety; whereas faith is more like radar. If you are acquainted with the phenomenon of radar you know what I mean when I point out that this instrument can detect the location of mountains hundreds of miles away because a radio signal is beamed against them and it bounces back. Faith is like that. It is not a simple thing to hold, and along the line of the connections that are made in the natural world there can flow the spiritual power of the world to come. What looks like a normal human situation may be the work of God. For instance, a man may be talking to another man, using words that convey spiritual truths to the heart of the other and God may be blessing it so that there are actually three present.

I sometimes think of the carnal as copper wire. This wire may be used to tie up a package, or to conduct electricity. It may be the means of bringing electric power to machinery, or the means of communication by electricity in a telephone conversation. The electricity cannot be seen, but it has power. To be sure, the flesh can be beautiful and refined, but flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of

God.

Long ago the poet said, "The paths of glory lead but to the grave." So far as this world is concerned, no matter how good flesh and blood are, they cannot inherit the kingdom of God. All natural forms will die but God can and will raise the dead into new life. The life of God in Christ Jesus which is available for the person who believes will be different from the old life. No one in the old life will ever be able to walk acceptably in the ways of God, but in the new life this can be done. The spirit is not an improvement of the flesh – the spirit is a substitution for the flesh. The spirit is something else again. It is not an extension of my human nature – it is an exchanged form of my human nature – that is the way in which we are to understand the meaning of the new life. In the resurrection we pass from the old, natural, earthly man to the new, spiritual, heavenly man. This translation is what we refer to when we speak of the resurrection from the dead, living again after death but living in a different way.

From Earth to Heaven

Did you know that in the Christian gospel heaven is just as real as earth?

"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." That is the way the Bible starts. We read in Genesis 2, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished" and God was seen as the creator of the heavens and the earth. As we try to understand the significance of the resurrection of the dead we are especially interested in these two ideas: heaven and earth. It is very important to have these two worlds in mind: the earth on which we live and heaven where God is. We are in the flesh but the spirit is available. Man is to subdue the earth and have dominion over it and God, although He is spirit, is nevertheless Lord of heaven and earth.

Man's body is of the earth. You will remember that the Lord took the dust of the ground and fashioned the body of man. But there is more to a man than his body. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; yet in the plan of God, man is first made of the earth; surrounded by the things of this world he gets his satisfaction in the things of this world. Heaven and earth are two different places, yet they are interrelated in such a way that God is Lord of each and of both.

Jacob was given a profound insight into the relationship between earth and heaven in his vision at Bethel (Gen. 28). It is commonly called Jacob's ladder; actually, Jacob saw a stairway between earth and heaven. Not only did he see this connecting link, but on this ladder angels of God were ascending and descending, implying that what happened down here mattered up there; what was willed in the presence of God is worked out down here. When Jacob saw the relationship between the things on earth and the things in heaven he made a vow as to how he would live on earth, trusting in the God of heaven. His vow was based on the reality of God in heaven. Later, you will remember, Jacob wrestled with the messenger of God who came at the ford Jabbok and there received from the messenger the blessing of God.

This teaches us that a man on earth, with his body made from the dust of the earth, can have dealings with God in heaven. Earth and heaven are connected, as Jacob saw it in the ladder. We read in John 1 how the Lord Jesus was talking to Nathanael and identified him as having been under the fig tree. Nathanael wanted to know how He knew him and the Lord Jesus said, "Thou art affected by the fact that I saw thee under the fig tree. How much more will you be impressed when you will see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." He used the figure of Jacob's ladder for and offered Himself as the connecting link between earth and heaven.

Daniel brought to mind that the God of heaven had sovereign power over the earth to set up and to take down any man that he saw fit. He could lift up a king or he could cast down a king, and Daniel foresaw that the God of heaven would one day send out the Messiah who would set up a new kingdom under God. God would send His Son to redeem and to save His people. In the record that we have of the Lord Jesus Christ while He was here on earth there are glimpses of heaven shining through. There was the remarkable birth of this child from a virgin. And bear in mind Gabriel and the angels on the night of His birth. During His public ministry here He performed miracles and again when we think in terms of His praying experience He lifted His eyes unto the heavens and said, "Father, I know that thou hearest me always." Then there was the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

There was that shining glory on the Mount of Transfiguration and in all of the actions of Christ Jesus the powers of heaven and the glory of heaven were revealed again and again. The New Testament records how He came to earth, took on Him a prepared natural body, performed miracles, died, and was raised from the grave. He ascended from earth to heaven and will return from heaven to earth. Salvation involves

the believer being translated from earth to heaven. Paul writes,

"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (I Cor. 15:46-50).

Here we read these two words again and again – "earthy" and "heavenly." Earthy is anything that comes out of the earth; this is not necessarily bad although it may become bad, or dirty. Flowers come out of the earth; grain comes out of the earth. When we say the things of the earth are earthy all of the works of man are included. Everything that man has done by invention and by his ingenuity of engineering is earthy; everything that technology has produced is earthy. Certain pleasures are also earthy, among them satisfying hunger. There are values that are earthy, even esthetic values – everything in science, art, and in religion, in the sense that it comes from man with one common trait.

Notice this: all of these earthy things are temporary. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, it is the Word of God that endureth forever." Heavenly joys with spiritual benefits are free. The poet writes, " 'Tis only heaven that is given away. 'Tis only God that may be had for the asking." Like the manna that came down as bread from heaven so there are certain benefits coming to the believer from heaven; the believer may be in the world but he is never of the world. Much of this is implied on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John were on that mount with Jesus of Nazareth and they saw Jesus transformed before them, the natural body was unveiled and He was seen as He was, the Son of God.

The Bible speaks of our being translated out of earth into heaven; there is a transition and that is the event of death. Between earth and heaven is the experience of death when the earthy will die, but the power of God can and will raise from the dead. I am reminded of something I saw at the oceanside: boats from the ocean were being brought to the edge of the pier and then, with a crane, they were lifted up and put on trailers behind cars. There was the boat, which had been sailing in the water, now being put on a trailer and hauled over the highway. It is the same boat but it is in a different place – out of the water and onto the trailer by the crane lifting device.

So it is with a man when he is raised from the dead. A man of the earth can be raised into heaven.

The World of the Christian

A Christian belongs to the other – the spiritual – world.

In our study of the resurrection we have been thinking of the fact that the Bible frequently contrasts earth and heaven-this world and that world; the things of nature and the things of the spirit, speaking of the difference between the two. In Philippians 3:20-21 the apostle Paul makes a statement that is very significant to us. In the King James Version it reads, "For our conversation is in heaven" but that word "conversation" does not mean spoken dialog between two people; it means, rather, a manner of life. A good translation for that is to say, "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body [or the body of our humiliation], that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

The apostle is referring to the prospect that we have as Christians. We live in this world, but our citizenship is in heaven; we are expecting to go there and to be changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. The Christian really belongs in heaven, where he is a citizen. That is one reason why in the Bible the Christian is spoken of as being a pilgrim and a sojourner. He will keep the laws while here and he will try to be a good neighbor. It is like an American living in France – he may be living there but he is not a Frenchman. So the Christian lives in this world but he really belongs in heaven.

Sometimes he is ridiculed because of this; people may laugh and sneer at him and I am sure that at times we have felt keenly the contempt of those who speak of us as being of the other world. A Christian should never deny that he does belong to that other world, nor should he be ashamed of it. Certainly I am of the other world and so far as my relationship with this earth is concerned, it is a temporary situation. One of these days I will be leaving.

Think about the Lord Jesus Christ. He came down from heaven into this world and He went back into heaven from this world and even while He was here among men He said that He was in heaven while He was actually experiencing things of this world. When we say "this world" we refer to the whole complex of action and behavior that is carried out by men who seek to satisfy the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. So far as this world is concerned it is the whole structure, everything that is done together by men who are seeking to accomplish their purposes. The Bible says the fashion of this world passes away and what is implied is that it will not last. Here we are, meeting and dying in this world; Jesus of Nazareth showed how to win the victory over this world. He said, "In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." How did He accomplish this? By yielding to it; I am not speaking of a poetic paradox – He was put to death, then He arose from the dead and in this way He was able to effect salvation for all who believed in Him.

The reality of the two worlds is to be seen in some of the parables. In Matthew 13 we have the parable of the wheat and the tares; you remember how these two were allowed to grow together until the harvest, when there would be a separation. Both grew together in the same field but they were not alike; at the harvest there was a separation and different destinies. The Christian, living in this world among men, has tasted the powers of the world to come; it is possible that while here on earth he can be related to heaven; this world is marked as temporary and unstable. Death is the end of all in this world. It is the harvest, and living here is a fearful business for men who are thinking of this world only – dreading the end because, no matter how beautiful it may be, the rose will wither.

This is eloquently expressed in one of the best-known passages in the Old Testament:

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it (Eccles. 12:1-7).

That is death. It is frequently a subject of poets in literature. They speak, as did Swinburn, of the pale loveliness of death, which is all this world has to look forward to. With only this prospect the heart of man will despair, but as Christians we know there is another world. Jesus Christ lived, died, and arose here; He lives there. When a man dies he shall live again. The grave is a tunnel and for the Christian it opens out into light; death is a doorway we pass through. In this world there are men and in that other world there is God; in this world the works of men, in the other world the works of God. When the believer is brought into newness of life he lives in the context of the works of God. One day we shall be there in the presence of God and we now live in the light of that knowledge.

The Literal, Bodily Resurrection of Christ

Did you know that the resurrection of the body of Jesus of Nazareth is considered to be the best authenticated fact in ancient history?

"But God raised him from the dead." This is the way the apostle Paul spoke about it in Acts 13:30. He was speaking in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia; he addressed people whom he called "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God." In speaking to them Paul reviewed the history of Israel and the facts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth up to and including His crucifixion and burial. When he had reached that point he stated the profound words above.

We read further in that chapter, verses 31-35,

And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption, but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

Paul was emphasizing the fact that the body of Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. When He was standing in the city of Athens on Mars Hill confronting the intellectually minded people of that city, after sketching the world view that they themselves accepted, Paul openly said to them, "Because he [speaking of God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). That is the way the apostle stated it, openly saying that God raised up the body of Jesus Christ. And for this witness Paul was commonly recognized.

When he was in court Festus spoke to the governor of the fact that this prisoner spoke of one, Jesus, which was dead whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And in standing before the council of the Jews, Paul plainly says, "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." Later in his defense before Agrippa when he was on trial for his life he said to the king, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" There was apparently no doubt at all that the apostle Paul believed in the physical, literal resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And there seems to be no doubt that is what the early church believed. This is what the apostles believed.

You will remember that in the Apostles' Creed we confess, "On the third day He rose again from the dead." What do the Gospel records say? We read in Matthew 28:1-2, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." You say, "What? An angel of the Lord?" And I say, "Yes, an angel of the Lord, just as you read it." He descended from heaven and rolled back that stone and sat upon it. You say that is astonishing. It was. Amazing. You say, "I just don't see how it could be." Maybe not. There is much we don't know. But there it is.

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus,

which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said, Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

And I want to tell you these women went to that sepulcher, they looked into that tomb, they saw the angel, but they didn't see a body.

They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy and ran to bring His disciples word:

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch [that is, some of the soldiers] came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. [That is, at the time the Book of Matthew was written.]

And I want to tell you, it hasn't stopped being said to this day.

All kinds of people are saying, in all sorts of manners, that this wasn't true, that this didn't happen. But there is no question about what Matthew said, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted." So don't be surprised if there are people who doubt today. There were people who doubted in the time of the disciples.

Now let us turn to Mark 16,

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

You find it hard to believe; so did they. "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them." It was the same everywhere. It was hard to believe and we are just going to be face to face with the fact that these early disciples did finally believe it. The early church was convinced of the actual resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we think of all these things, we can bring them together in our hearts and minds and appreciate the fact that the body of Jesus Christ, the body of Jesus of Nazareth, was taken down from that cross, wrapped in linen, laid in a new tomb, a large stone was rolled in front of it with a reinforced guard of soldiers to prevent any tampering with the tomb; that stone was rolled away, that grave was empty, an angel proclaimed, "He is risen." He actually appeared to Mary, He appeared on the road to Emmaus to those two disciples, afterward He appeared in the upper room and challenged the people, "Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And when they yet could not believe for joy, He asked them, "Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a

honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them" (Luke 24:41-43).

Now, there is no question at all, there cannot be any doubt in anybody's mind that the New Testament Scriptures plainly say that the body of Jesus Christ was literally raised from the dead.

Was Christ's Resurrection Real?

When we hear the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ read or talked about, do we think the grave was really empty?

It is an astonishing fact about the mind of man that he can say he believes something when he really does not. Many people hear the resurrection story of Jesus of Nazareth at Easter services. They rejoice when they sing, "Up from the grave He arose in mighty triumph over His foes" and appreciate the lilies that decorate their churches, reminding them that this beautiful flower grows out of that dark brown bulb. The resurrection is symbolized before us and we rejoice in that. Many of us will want to share in the comfort of the resurrection and if we have lost loved ones we will be glad to talk to one another about the reality of seeing them again when we get to heaven.

Many will do that who do not believe that the body of Jesus Christ was literally raised from the dead; they will say, "Oh, that is impossible" or, "That could not be true." And I tell you, "It is true." There are any number of people who want to be accepted as Christians, yet would hesitate to say that they believe that the body of Jesus Christ – the flesh and bones of Jesus Christ – was brought out of the grave alive. It is true that some people say and sing these things who do not really believe them. Thus their spiritual experience is weak and unsatisfactory. Some feel that if they had been living then and could have seen it they could believe. Don't be too sure about that. Thousands of people who lived in that day did not believe. If you cannot believe today with all of the evidence in history and testimony in witness of the living Lord Jesus Christ, you would not have believed if you had lived at the time of His resurrection.

Some say it is not important. Far more than important, it is absolutely necessary. In writing to the Christians in Rome, Paul says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

I want to raise the question, "Was the body of Christ Jesus literally raised out of the grave?" Perhaps my own experience along this line will be helpful to some. You may know that I was not born a Christian. I was very much interested in understanding things in the scientific field and I was naturally skeptical. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork," but I had trouble believing it. The evidence was all about me; but there was, as it were, a veil over my heart. Very slowly, after I became a school teacher, I came to accept and to believe in my heart the reality of God. But then I ran up against this barrier: to believe in the resurrection of the body of Jesus of Nazareth. I could accept it as an idea, as poetry, and I could sing about it; but to feel it was real and that one could have walked into that tomb at the time the body of Jesus Christ was there and actually have seen His body wrapped in linen cloth, then later find the body gone, having been literally raised from the dead, that was not easy.

One day, on my father's farm during school vacation time, I was working in the wheat field. I remember setting up sheaves and what we call "stooking" the wheat in the field. These questions were in my heart and mind and I was impressed by what Paul had said that if I did not believe in my heart that Jesus was raised from the dead I could not be saved. Because my mind had been so conditioned to believe in natural law I found it difficult to believe in miracles; I thought things had to happen according to regular procedure; but at the same time I could not let it go. Apparently there were people who did believe it; the Bible said we should believe it, and the Christian gospel demanded that we believe it. I was desperate; I needed the blessing of God, so I kept thinking about it.

On that particular day in the wheat field I decided to go over it slowly and I asked myself, "Why can't you believe it?" I could not have done it, of course not; but could God have done it? True, I had never

seen it, but then there are many things I have not seen. People who believe it said nothing like it had ever happened before nor would it happen again. This was of God, not of man; this was the Son of God, not an ordinary human being. But again I asked myself, "Could God actually raise the dead?" Then I thought, "How did Adam get here?" I remembered the Bible tells us God created man in His own image.

That afternoon in the wheat field I was stunned when the realization came to me that the creation of Adam was a greater wonder than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What we have in the creation of Adam is that God made him out of nothing, whereas now, in the resurrection, He raised a man back again into the life he had had before. Take, for instance, myself. Does anybody claim I have been forever? No. Then there was a time I was not? Yes. However, the Bible puts it plainly that the body of Jesus Christ was literally raised from the dead, and we have that hope.

The Resurrection Body

Do you have any ideas as to the kind of body Jesus Christ had after the resurrection?

In our study about the resurrection we are talking about the resurrection of the body; we are not talking about the continuing of an idea or about the passing on from generation to generation of certain plans and purposes. We are thinking about the body of Jesus Christ – the one that was nailed to the cross at Calvary and was taken down dead, wrapped in linen cloths, and put into a grave where it lay until the third day. We are talking about that body coming to life again-being raised from the dead. This is what we mean by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turning to I Corinthians 15:35 we read:

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

You will notice that in this discussion Paul is using the illustration of putting a kernel of wheat into the ground and letting it disintegrate there and in a sense die. Out of it comes the wheat stalk and the wheat plant that does not look like the kernel of wheat that was put into the ground. It is a different thing. So with reference to the resurrection of the dead. This is what he is talking about. In verse 39 we read,

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: ["Celestial" means heavenly and "terrestrial" means earthly. The one is of the heaven and the other is of the earth.] but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. [They are both bodies, but they are different.] There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.

At the time the body died it was a corruptible body; at the time the body is raised from the dead it is an incorruptible body. "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power."

Let us illustrate: this man, John Brown, who was put into the grave, that body was weak enough to die. That body will be raised from the dead in a body that will never die. This is worth stopping to think about. There is a body the elements of which are nature's, and there is a body the elements of which are spirit.

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Here Paul is going back and forth in two kinds of living – natural living and spiritual living; earthly living and heavenly living; an earthly body, a heavenly body. And so he goes on to say,

As we have borne the image of the earthy [we look like our human parents], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [and look like the heavenly Father]. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom

of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

It is true that the first time we were born it was in a corruptible body; our bodies were made of the dust of the ground in flesh and blood. What Paul is pointing out is that there is another world and there is a different form of living that we call the kingdom of God. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither does corruption. My corruptible body inherits incorruption.

Behold, I show you a mystery [something that is hidden, something that people would not know about, but I can tell it to you]. We shall not all sleep [that is true. There will be one generation that will not die; they will be here when Jesus Christ comes back. There will be one such generation.] but we shall all be changed [those that went into the grave and those who didn't go into the grave]. For this corruptible [my human body] must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible [this body of mine which can decay] shall have put on incorruption [shall have become a form that cannot be destroyed] and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

This is the classic pronouncement about the resurrection, especially the resurrection of the body. I want to examine the actual record of what happened here to the Lord Jesus Christ, with reference to verse 35, "With what body do they come?" In what I have to say to you now I want you to keep something in mind. Remember, I believe in the resurrection of the dead. I believe in the literal resurrection of the body of Jesus of Nazareth. I think that in that resurrection body He challenged any kind of test and showed by many infallible proofs that He was really alive. I believe that Jesus is alive now; I believe heaven is real. I believe the ascension from this world to that world actually occurred, that it is real. I want to look at these Scriptures, to look into the promises of God, and I am going to ask again, "When I am raised from the dead, what sort of body will I have?" We can say one thing at the outset – lay this down as a floor to walk on – my body will be like His. It does not yet appear what we shall be like. When He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is and so I will say that my body will be like His.

The Body Changed

Do Christians expect to have their bodies again after their resurrection? Do Christians really expect to have their bodies again? Paul discusses part of this very matter,

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. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (I Cor. 15:12-26).

Does a Christian expect to have a body after the resurrection? Yes. Does he expect to have his own body? Yes. Now that body will be composed of different elements; it will be made of different materials, and it will have other properties. The body that the Christian has after his resurrection will never perish. It will never suffer any diseases. That body belongs in heaven where there is no pain, no sickness, no death. Paul referred to this in another place, "This mortal shall have put on immortality." Our earthly body is actually referred to in the Bible as the body of our humiliation, and it is to become another body which will be glorious. We find this in Philippians 3:21 where Paul writes about the Lord Jesus Christ "who shall change our vile body." That is the way it is translated in the King James Version. A good translation of that Greek phrase would be, "Who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body [the body of his glory] according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

As Christians we have the prospect of having our bodies changed in their nature, in their essence; that new body will never decay. We can find comfort in this aspect of the resurrection, especially those who may possibly think of a beloved mother who has gone on to be with the Lord. She may, in this world, have become weak, weary, and worn, and as she grew older she may have become feeble and she may have been sick until she died. But never again. When she comes in the resurrection she will be living in a body that will never die. That little blind girl that you know: you can tell her the gospel story of the Lord Jesus Christ and promise her something. If she puts her faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and receives in Him the new body that God has prepared for her, she will not be blind. She may be blind in this world – she will not be blind over there. And that little crippled boy who has had only those twisted legs during this life will not need crutches when he gets over there. There will be no one in any kind of distress there.

So what can we expect in this resurrection body? To be really raised from the dead? Yes. Forever. With a body that can obey anything that I want it to do? Exactly. With a body that can appear and disappear at will, not subject to the common ordinary laws of this world? Just so. In a body that will be subject to my direct will, whatever I want to do, it can do without any difficulty? Yes. With a body that can serve Almighty God and the Lord Jesus Christ again and again without tiring and without being weary? Yes. Nothing that hurts or destroys will enter His holy mountain. Can the Christian person expect

to be in a body that he need have no fear will ever turn away from God into disobedience? Just exactly that. He will be kept by the very power of God.

We shall have fellowship with our loved ones in the world to come. The question might be raised in someone's mind. "Will we look the same as we do now?" I cannot tell you. It does not yet appear what we shall be like; but we do know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him. We do know that the disciples, when their eyes were opened, recognized Him, which proves that He looked enough like Himself so that they could tell it was He. So we will look the same? Well, perhaps not entirely so. Those who are troubled with some disfigurement or some blemish on face or body, there will be nothing like that. You have scars on you just now? There will be no scars there because you will be as He is. Will we know each other? Oh, yes, we will know each other. This is to be our expectation; this is what the apostle Paul said. We will be caught up together with those who have gone before and be together with them in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Will we, in that life to come, in that being with the Lord, know what goes on down here on earth? I don't know. The Bible doesn't say. It doesn't give us any idea about that at all. Can I project what it will be like? Can I figure out now what it will be like there? No. I can't even imagine it. It does not yet appear what we shall be like. We know when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Should this frighten me? Should it worry me? It is going to be new and different and I will not even feel like I am at home because it will be so different. It will be something like this: suppose I have been living in a certain house, built, perhaps, of wood – if that house could be transformed into a marble mansion and instead of wood be made of precious stone, should that worry me? Should that trouble me?

Perhaps there may be some who would have just some little feeling that "I don't know that I will be comfortable, or feel at home. Shouldn't I be somewhat afraid of what is going to happen since it is all so new and different?" Years ago there was in my congregation a woman who was troubled with a heart ailment of such a nature the doctors had told her she might pass away at any time. I used to go to see her in my pastoral calls, and when I visited her I was struck by the fact she never seemed to be worried. I marveled at it and one time when I had come to know her well I told her of my interest. "Isn't it true that your condition is such that you might go at any time?" She smiled and said, "Yes, that is true." Then she added, "By the way, how sure are you that you will stay? You know, it is not so different between us." I asked, "Doesn't it trouble you?" "No, why should it trouble me? You mean, because I have never been to heaven before? When I came here as a baby I had never been here before. God arranged for loving hands to care for me, He will be there when I go up there and I feel quite sure He will take care of me there just as He arranged to take care of me here." She wasn't the least bit concerned. When she thought about dying and being raised from the dead, she was going home. Her Savior was there.

Will Everyone Be Raised?

Did you know that Christians believe that all men will be raised from the dead?

When the apostle Paul preached in various places he did not come as representing any large company of people. There were no great cathedrals or big sanctuaries for him to stand in. This was a man who preached on the street corners and who talked in men's homes; who stood by the wayside and discussed matters with people. On occasion he did have a number of people to talk to when he was in court, accused of being a public nuisance, having to explain what he was doing.

On one such occasion while he was in court explaining himself to Felix the governor he made this statement,

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets; and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men (Acts 24:14-16).

This is the statement that the apostle had to make of himself. I want to draw your attention especially to this affirmation on his part. "Have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:14).

When our Lord Jesus was teaching He is quoted as saying,

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).

I am sure there will be many people to whom this will come as a shock. Everyone is to be raised from the dead. Those who have done good unto the resurrection of life and those who have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. This is the way Jesus Christ taught it and this belongs to the Christian's view of man and the world.

We are just now thinking about the resurrection of the body – far more than just the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ, but that to begin with. Because the body of Jesus Christ was raised from the dead we understand that man will be raised from the dead. You see, the Christian holds a view like this: man was made by God; man actually had nothing to say about this world. He has nothing to say about the life that was given to him. God could make him as He wanted and man had nothing to say about the natural processes. We have much knowledge today that has been discovered by scientists, and I know that all of the natural processes are under careful scrutiny by intelligent and trained men. There is one thing that everyone of them will say: they will not be able to change the processes of nature. The sun rises in the morning and shines during the day and sets in the evening, regardless. It does not matter one bit whether that fits into man's program or suits anybody's economic situation.

To be sure, man has some things he can do. He can make choices. He can turn his back on the sun or he can face the sun; he can get Out into the sun or he can walk in the shade. And he can manipulate by hand things that are in this world. He can plant beans if he wants to plant beans, or he can plant potatoes if he wants to plant potatoes. But he can't make the beans and potatoes grow. He can adjust himself by moving, but he won't be able to change the mountains in their place or the sea where it lies. As to his own responsibility, the fact that man was made responsible to God and that he is going to have to give an

account for the things that he has done – this is God's doing.

Why does the prospect of the resurrection bother some people? There are those who feel guilty, who know they have done wrong and they want to hide out – some even want to hide from God and they avoid worship services, reading the Bible, and praying. They will not really appreciate meeting Him. Yes, there are people who would be glad if there were no resurrection. But their feelings will not change matters at all. Have you ever been so busy during the day that you wished the sun would not set at night? But it did. And have you ever been in bed in the morning – tired, worn, and weary – and wished the sun would never rise? But it did. Your feelings didn't change anything.

To ignore the prospect of the resurrection is actually to remove a strong control over your own conduct. Have you ever noticed how differently you feel about shoes when you stop wearing them? Do you remember how carefully you took care of them – even polished them for protection and resoled them on occasion. Then there came a day when you discarded those shoes. They quickly became dusty, dirty, and were thrown into the trash. Or perhaps you can think about paper that you used when you were trying to make a sketch. After you had finished the sketch, what did you do with the paper? Into the trash can. Have you ever had the experience of a suit of clothing that you kept perhaps for years, cleaning and mending it, taking care of it. But then there came a day when you were through with it and it was discarded. How did you treat it then? Or perhaps there was a certain company you expected to work for. As long as you thought you were going to get a job there, how did you feel toward them? Then the day came when you were no longer interested in the job, then how did you feel toward them?

This is the way it is with life: if you have no expectation for the future, if you don't expect to be raised from the dead, and if you are not expecting to meet God, your attitude is careless toward God. To give up hope makes for deterioration. It will cause your whole attitude to go to ruin. Sometimes you may ask, "Well, does anybody know about this resurrection? Maybe those folks who doubt are right." I want to put before you one witness – one person – the testimony of Jesus Christ. That is what I have to say. After all, that is who I am; I am called a minister of Jesus Christ and I want to tell you something about Him. He expected to be raised on the third day. Do you think He was? He promised to raise up any who would put their trust in Him. Do you think He was wrong? He demonstrated His power when He raised up Lazarus from the dead. Do you believe it? And then I would ask you, "When is the prospect of the resurrection a comfort?" Not everybody is afraid of it. There are people who actually rejoice in it – for the lonely and unwanted and out of place the thought that "in my Father's house are many mansions" is a joyous one. "If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." The weary, those who are worn – what a wonderful thing to think that you can be raised from the dead in the newness of life and have rest in God. The suffering – what a wonderful thing it will be to be in existence and to actually live where there is no sorrow and no pain. The victim – people who have been wronged – what a wonderful thing it will be to be brought up from the dead; to be brought back into the presence of God and have things set straight. The people who have been mistreated – what a wonderful thing it will be to have relief and to deal with Almighty God. The distressed, the people who are burdened and troubled – how marvelous it will be to be in the blessedness of His presence. Or the bereaved, the people who have lost loved ones. Have you ever been around where there are Christians who have lost loved ones? They are looking forward to being with them again. Perhaps you would say, "But the Christian will have to face judgment." Oh, no. The fear of judgment is all gone for him. His case was settled out of court.

Will all Christians have the same experience in the resurrection? I would say, "In a certain sense, Yes and in a certain sense, No." Each one who believes in the Lord will be full to overflowing, no matter whether he is big or little; so in that sense, Yes. People will differ from each other and in that sense, No, but they will be blessed. Every Christian – every single Christian – will be blessed in Him.

How Powerful Is God

Have you ever felt that it was hard to believe in the resurrection?

Why do you find it so? Right away you can say, "Well, you couldn't do it." I know I couldn't do it. Is that why we find it hard to believe? With the historical record of what happened to Jesus of Nazareth before us, with such things as the testimony of the empty grave (nobody questions what the record says), the witness of the disciples who saw Him, do you think they all lied? The Scriptures present the story as truth; do you think the Bible is a great big fake?

We have been thinking of the resurrection of the body. Once in awhile we even hear some preacher who will say it does not matter whether His body was raised or not; they think it is inconsequential. That is not the case with Paul. When he was writing about this in I Corinthians 15:14 he said, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain." This word vain means "empty, useless." This will give you an idea of what Paul preached about. Again in verse 17 he says, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain. You are yet in your sins." This brings out the truth that to be delivered from sin is not just a prize for believing the Word of God – it is a result. When you are delivered from your sins you share in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and if Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead, then you won't share in His resurrection and you are yet in your sins. As a matter of fact, it was this very doctrine that was the reason Paul was persecuted. In Acts 23:6 we have the report of Paul standing before the council of Jews, where he pointed out that it was because "of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question."

Nobody criticized Paul for what he had to say for the poor; nobody criticized Paul because he was interested in going out to win people to Christ. What they criticized Paul for was that he said the dead would be raised. "Of the hope and the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question." In chapter 24, when Paul stood in the presence of Felix the governor in defense of himself, he made the comment that he had hope toward God which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. When Paul moved around among people and they listened to him talk, one thing Paul always emphasized was that this life is not everything. We are going to be brought into the presence of God – each of us – those who have done right and those who have done wrong. Every man will be raised from the dead.

Again in his defense before Felix, Paul reiterated that they had nothing against him. They could not hold a particular charge against him and make it stick "except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day." That was the one thing they held against him. It is worthy of note that in his preaching Paul did not only preach the historical fact of the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ but he pressed the meaning of that resurrection into daily living. Being held a prisoner because of this very doctrine, he was called before Felix time after time to speak. Felix called Paul before him, hoping to hear some important thing and also hoping that he would receive money from Paul as a bribe to let him go. When Paul came before Felix we read, "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." When he did, Felix trembled. Mind you, Paul was in jail basically because he preached the resurrection of the dead. When Festus became governor he sent Paul to King Agrippa and this is what he wrote about Paul,

Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. (Acts 25:18-19).

That was the thing they really had against Paul. We need to take a long look at this fact. Why was Paul in jail? Why was he in bonds? What objection did they take to his preaching? Why was he opposed? Because he preached the resurrection of the dead.

We read that standing before Agrippa he said,

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers. . . . For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Then Paul asked this question,

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?

This is the way Paul talked to the king and this is the question I want to raise with you today. Why should anyone think it strange that God should raise the dead? Let it be kept clearly in mind that Paul was noted for this one basic trait in his preaching: he preached the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. In what context shall we understand this doctrine?

First of all, I want to say this doctrine is being preached in this world, right where you and I live. What do Christians say about this world? They say, "God created the heavens and the earth"; God made the world. He designed it. He could have made it anything he wanted to. We may not yet know all about this world. Scientists are discovering many things, but God knows and one thing you and I can have in mind now is that the whole world is in His hands.

Now I want to raise another question: If He wants to raise the dead, who is going to prevent it? God made the world like He wanted it and if He wanted to make it with resurrection in it, who is going to stop Him? This message, this doctrine, is preached about man. What do Christians say about man? God created man in His own image. The Scriptures say something like this: What is man that thou art mindful of him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels. God made man; He judges man and He redeems man. In His own time God sent His Son to be born of a woman, to live in this world as a man, to be incarnate and to die, then to be raised from the dead. This is what Christians say. If God wants to call man before Him after the man has died, can anyone stop Him?

What do Christians say about Jesus Christ? They say that He was the Son of God; that God took upon Him the likeness of man. Someone will say, "I could never believe that" and I will tell you, "Oh, yes, you could." Maybe the truth is you won't believe it. I will agree with that, but don't ever say you can't believe it. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Consider the Scriptures. What do Christians say about the Bible? That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; they call the Bible the Word of God. The Bible clearly teaches the resurrection. You will say some people don't believe the Bible. I know. There were people who did not believe in Jesus of Nazareth, and He was perfect. There have always been unbelievers—they are not new. The woods are full of them.

What about the Christian? What shall we say about that because it is being said by Christians? Who are these people? They are people in whom God is working by His grace. I can remember long years ago when I was an unbeliever and a skeptic, meeting an old farmer who believed in the living Lord Jesus. I asked him one time, "How do you know Jesus is alive?" With a smile he looked at me and said, "I have dealings with Him." Now, there are skeptics, I know. Are they exceptional? Oh, no. There were scoffers who mocked Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross and you can consider the way they indict all believers. Think about the skeptics who continue doubting in the face of all the Christians. Do you want to join them? And the agnostics – are they unusual? Oh, no. How much do they know? By their own claim, they know nothing. Let them speak for themselves. Or the atheists. Are they new? No, there will be a few of those. The Bible says "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Make no mistake about it. The

Bible, the Christian, the whole world is to hear the message. God raised Him from the dead. Yes. God can raise the dead.

What Does the Bible Say About the Resurrection?

Do you ever have any doubt that there will be a resurrection of the dead?

In John 5:19-30 we read,

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 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 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. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

That is the record of what the Lord Jesus Christ had to say. Let us turn to John 6:39-40:

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Can you doubt this? Everything depends on Jesus Christ and I ask you – How do you feel about Him? Jesus Christ said, "I will raise him up at the last day," and you and I know that last day has not yet come. Do you think there will be a last day? Until now there has not been. He has never raised anyone yet unto eternal life. Do you think He will? The resurrection could take place only if God would do it. Once more I ask you, do you think He will do it? Do you think He could? You will remember that Gabriel told Mary nothing is impossible with God.

Some years ago a fellow minister told of something that had happened in his family. He had a boy twelve years of age who, at a certain stage, came one day to his father's study very sober, very quiet, and said, "Dad, I have trouble." The father said, "What is it, son?" "Well, I am troubled about Jonah. How could a whale swallow Jonah?" The father replied, "You know, son, I have had trouble with that story, too, but my trouble was not with Jonah. My trouble was with the whale. Where did that whale come from?" He said his boy sat there for awhile, quietly, then with a quick smile he looked up and said, "Thanks, dad, I was just wondering." Do you recognize what the boy saw? If God could make the whale, do you think it would be a great trick for the whale to swallow Jonah? If God wanted to raise the dead, couldn't He? Then we could ask, will God *want* to raise the dead? Who would know the mind of God; can you think of anyone more likely to know the mind of God than Jesus Christ? Do you think it is reasonable for me to assume that I will know what God will do? Can you see that if I do not know that God will do it, then I do not know that God will not do it? He created man without asking anybody; He made this world without asking anybody's advice and He rules this world as He sees fit.

Now as to what God intends to do tomorrow and what He *will* do tomorrow, who would ever know?

Ah, but there is One who does know and He has already told us. Jesus of Nazareth could say that the Father loved the Son and showed Him all things that He did. The Father shows the Son what He will do; the Father commits the doing of what He has in mind into the hands of His Son. The will of the Father is the resurrection of the dead and the Son will raise the dead. If I believe in Jesus Christ I will believe in the resurrection. Christians have always been comforted by the promises of God. We read these wonderful words of comfort,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

Can there be any doubt what that means ? I know there are people who do not believe. I am sorry. The question is, "Do I believe? How do I know?" I will tell you: God will raise the dead; the Bible says so. If you read the writings of the apostle Paul there will be no question as to what he thought. It was Paul who said, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." And again, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not even as others that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

The apostle taught the resurrection of the dead; the early church believed it. Throughout history Christians have witnessed to it. Preachers and evangelists believe in it; missionaries and godly men believe in it. So, let me humbly confess to you, I verily believe God will raise the dead, and I can say, "Thanks be to God. Praise His holy name. Hallelujah. God will raise the dead."

Walking in Newness of Life

Have you ever wished that you could be different?

We read in the third chapter of the First Epistle of John as follows,

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

"We shall be like him." What a wonderful prospect! What a glorious hope! I am sure some will doubt that this can be. They feel that they certainly could not do it. So far as that is concerned, they are right. Change yourself? Oh, no. The Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is quoted as saying, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" The answer is, of course, obvious. Nobody. I cannot change myself – but *God* can. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, we shall all be changed; but not here in this life.

It is true so far as this world is concerned that the leopard cannot change his spots, but we have other prospects in this world. We have another way and Paul describes this in the resurrection:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption [that means the body that was put in the grave will decay but the body that is raised from the grave will never decay]: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory [the body that died and was put in the grave did shameful things many times; the body raised from the grave will never do shameful things]: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power [the body that fell into the grave was oftentimes weak, the body that is raised from the dead will never be weak, will have power]: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. (I Cor. 15:42-46).

It needs to be emphasized here that something else can and will be. We read in verse 47,

The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

What all of this actually amounts to is that I, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, will be different; not only when my body is raised from the dead but from the very time that I give myself over to God and am accepted of Him. Once I stood before God in myself as I was; now I stand before God in Christ as He is. Once I stood before God as a sinning person; now I stand before God as a forgiven person. Once I stood before God as a person interested in serving self; now I humbly but definitely stand before God as one who would serve Christ. Once I stood before God in my own weakness; now I stand before God in His strength. I often think of a man I once knew. Friends would ask, "Why is it, Uncle Tom, that you never seem to be uncertain or worry about the future?" And he would answer, "It's true that I personally often tremble, but I am on a Rock and while I may tremble on that Rock, the Rock never trembles under me."

There was a time when I looked on men to get; I wanted to get what they had if I could. Now, by the grace of God, I can truthfully say that I look on men to give. I wish I could give to them the things I know about Christ. There was a time in my natural self when I wanted to have things and inasmuch as I am

natural to this day, my natural self wants to have things; but now, in the Spirit, truly I want to please Him. There was a time when I belonged to my own family. You know that saying "Me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four and no more." Now I find that I belong to the whole world.

All men, like myself, are made of God. There was a time in my own spirit when I was impatient; and now, by the grace of God, I can wait and wait. There was a time when it was very easy for me to be irritable; and now, by the grace of God, in Him I can be calm, quiet, and at rest. There was a time when I looked to men to see what they would do; and now I look to God to see what *He* would do. There was a time when I used to feel, "It is now or never"; and now I can truthfully say I can think it is forever. Once I could not keep myself from wanting present pleasures; and again I can say that in the Lord above all else I want to please Him forever.

Now what could possibly bring about such change? So far as the old man is in me and so far as I am still human, inasmuch as there is anything natural about me, everything about the first is there but, by the grace of God, knowing the Lord Jesus Christ and accepting Him and the gospel, the other is true. We read in Titus 2:13-14,

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself. There was a time when I could be obsessed with my own wishes; now I can feel that above all else my desire is that He should be pleased. This is more than a change of mind and intention; it is not only a matter of being reconciled to God but of being born again. We read again in I Corinthians 15:49, "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." You see, when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we will be different, because in yielding ourselves to Him we are crucified with Christ and we will be raised with Him in the newness of life. We remember how He said about Himself, "I do always all things that please my Father."

This is the way it can be with us. The Holy Spirit activates the will of Christ in the heart of the believer and those of us who are Christians can know that our hearts turn to Him as flowers turn to the sun. Our eyes turn to Him as the bride turns to look at the bridegroom. Our hands reach out to Him as a little child reaches up his hand to his mother's hand. Our spirits long for Him "as the heart panteth after the water brook – so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1).

How can I further this change within myself? By yielding myself into the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will enable me to live and to walk in newness of life.

Will Wrongs Be Righted in Heaven?

Do you expect that whatever is wrong will one day be made right?

There are those, perhaps, who feel unhappy to think that the man who has done wrong will get away with it; their natural reaction to injustice would be a desire to see him get his deserts. The man in traffic who races past and risks damage to others, or the businessman who cheated – our natural reaction to all of these could be a desire to retaliate, to get even. I wonder if some do not actually look forward to life in the next world with such an idea as this in mind.

Our Lord Jesus Christ told a parable that teaches what happens in the afterlife; this is the one sketch of living after this world that we have,

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. [Notice that he was conscious: he had feeling, he suffered, and he had the powers of recognition.] And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. [This man, after this world was over, was conscious and was hurting and asking for mercy.] But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. [In that state of consciousness after this world there will be memory of what happened here when we are there.] And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. [This is a truth we need to soberly consider. In this world we have a chance to get on either side; after this world, no chance.] Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. [Notice his continuing consciousness. Now he is aware of his five brothers; he does not want them to come where he is.] Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. [What that says today is that they have the Bible, let them go by the Bible. Let them hear the gospel.] And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. [As much as if to say it has not been put realistically enough. Send someone back from the dead and then they really will turn.] And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:19-31).

In reading this passage one is struck by the fact that the rich man did not want his brothers to suffer his fate. There may be a good deal of discussion about heaven and hell; there may be a number of people who say they don't believe in hell and some who have only a vague feeling about heaven; but I will tell you one thing: nobody living wants hell for his folks and everyone who has ever thought in terms of heaven would like it for his loved ones. As you think about that parable notice another thing: no retaliation; no getting even. It was not the case of Lazarus having much to eat and the rich man going hungry. Not that. Here is a profound truth: after the resurrection, in the world to come, the believer does not care about the things he missed in this world. And the unbeliever will be personally destroyed. In other words, there is no carry-over into the life after this of what is going on here. You and I might think, humanly speaking, that it would be a good thing to have it that way, but truthfully it will not be. What does all of this mean? It means that for the believer it will not matter. After the resurrection from the dead it will not matter what he suffered here. Seeing the Lord will be so wonderful. Things he did without down here – he couldn't care less. Possessions that he lacked in this world will not matter. He will be free from covetousness.

What about the unbeliever? It will not count. The story is told that in the court of King Frederick the

Great the commander in chief of the army was seated next to the chaplain at a banquet. Feeling that he should open the conversation, he said, "Pastor, tell me something about heaven." And the chaplain replied "Well, we don't know a great deal about it, but there is one thing for sure – you won't be a general there."

Let us be wise and live now in resurrection terms. What about being without money? Does it really matter? What about injustice? Reckon yourself to be indeed dead unto sin. Ignore those insults – you belong to God and you need not fear man. Don't worry about the prosperity of the wicked – leave them to God. And so I would say to you: we don't have to get ahead; we don't have to win the race. We have the Lord. Thank God. So let us today live in the reality of the resurrection in the very presence of God.

Heaven on Earth

Do you realize that the Christian gospel calls men to heaven now?

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples to pray, saying "Our Father, which art in heaven." Thinking of the future (I do not refer to the future here in this world) is one thing that makes life in this world bearable. Christians have always cherished the prospect of another world – being in heaven. We sing it in our songs: "There is a better land far, far away." We sing the Glory Song,

When all my labors and trials are o'er
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore
Will through the ages be glory for me.

What a joyous sound when we sing, "When we all get to heaven what a day of rejoicing that will be." It will be centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. We sing, "Face to face shall I behold Him."

Believers are sure there is "a land that is fairer than day and by faith we can see it afar." That became clear to Jacob in the Old Testament story when, in the vision that night, he saw a stairway linking earth and heaven and he saw heaven and earth in the same picture. What a source of strength this was to Moses when, for forty days on Mt. Sinai, he was dealing with the invisible God in heaven. Joshua and Caleb counted on this God when they told the people in their day, "Our God shall fight for us." Gideon found out that this Almighty God would be on his side when he put out the fleece to learn whether God was actually going to be with him and give him the victory. Samuel knew even as a child and we hear the boy saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." David knew when word had come to him of what God intended to do for him. David said, "There is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee." Elijah knew that in his great contest with Ahab and we hear him praying. "Show that thou art God and that I am thy servant." Daniel knew it and he prayed to God several times a day, calling him "the God of heaven." Jesus of Nazareth knew it. You will remember how many times while here in this world "he lifted up his eyes and spoke."

On one occasion it is recorded that He said, "I know that thou hearest me always." It is only when we see this world in the context of heaven that this world can be acceptable at all. Living in this world is for many people an experience of grief and trouble. We have sorrow and suffering and wrongs will be done. There are people who suffer injustice and others who are cheated. "In the world you shall have tribulation." When our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples He could say, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Right now, while we are in this world, we are in the very presence of God.

Some years ago while in my office early one morning the door opened and my daughter-in-law stepped into the office. I could tell from the look on her face that she had something very sober on her mind. The thought came that this was not the time of day she would ordinarily come to my office. She said, "Poppa, I don't know how to say it to you." I said, "Just tell me." Then, very simply, she said, "Al died this morning." Al was our son-in-law. This is what came into my heart and what I said to her, "It is not far from here to there, is it?" How many, many times I have thought of that. One short step.

For you, how far is it from you to the presence of God? Do you remember how Jacob found that out? When he saw that stairway, the ladder between earth and heaven, he said, "Woe is me, I am undone. I have seen the glory of God." Then he made this comment, "This is the very house of God and I knew it

not." Can you realize this in your home? Right where you are is the very house of God. Remember how it was with Moses when he turned aside to look at the strange sight of the bush that was burning and was not consumed and the Voice that said, "Take off thy shoes. The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." What makes a place holy? The presence of God.

Think again of Jesus of Nazareth, lifting His eyes up to heaven and speaking, "I know that thou hearest me always." I ask my heart, "Do I know that?" I want to emphasize that heaven is possible. It is all round about us. Not that this world is good; not that the ground I am standing on is holy in itself, but the presence of God makes it holy. Think of Paul on the road to Damascus and the light suddenly shining there before him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Later Paul could write. "The angel of the Lord stood by me this night." Will He do that with you? God is no respecter of persons. It is to the glory of God that He will deal with anybody, and He will deal with you. Hear again the word of the Lord Jesus, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also." This is the word and the promise of Almighty God in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Yes, heaven is possible now.