

Jesus Risen.

John 20.

C. H. Mackintosh.

Deep and varied as are the necessities of the soul, they are all met by the death and resurrection of Christ. If it be a question of sin that affects the soul, the resurrection is the glorious proof of the complete putting away of it. The moment I see Jesus at the right hand of God, I see an end of sin; for I know He could not be there if sin was not fully atoned for. "He was delivered for our offences;" He stood as our Representative; He took upon Him our iniquities, and went down into the grave under the weight thereof. "But God raised Him from the dead;" and, by so doing, expressed His full approbation of the work of redemption. Hence we read, "He was raised again for our justification." Resurrection, therefore, meets the need of the soul, as regards the question of sin.

Then, again, when we proceed farther, and enter upon the trying and difficult path of Christian testimony, we find that Jesus risen is a sovereign remedy for all the ills of life. This is happily exemplified for us in John 20. Mary repairs to the sepulchre, early in the morning. And, as we learn from the parallel passage in Mark, her heart was not only sad at the loss of her gracious friend, but also tried by the difficulty of removing the stone from the mouth of the cave. The resurrection removed, at once, her *sorrow* and her *burden*. Jesus risen filled the blank in her desolated affections, and removed from her shoulders the load which she was unable to sustain. She found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, and she found also her beloved Lord, whom death had for a season snatched from her view. Such mighty things could resurrection accomplish on behalf of a poor needy mortal.

Nor is it otherwise with us now. Have our hearts been broken and bereaved by the stern, rude hand of death? Has his cold breath chilled our affections? What is the remedy? Resurrection. Yes; resurrection, that great restorer, not merely of "tired" but of ruined nature, fills up all blanks — repairs all breaches — remedies all ills. If the conscience be affected by a sense of sin, resurrection sets it at rest, by the assurance that the Surety's work has been fully accepted. If the heart be bowed down with sorrow, and torn by the ravages of death, resurrection heals, soothes and binds it up, by securing the restoration and reunion of all who have gone before; it tells us to "sorrow not as others which 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" (1 Thess. 4: 13, 14). It is commonly thought that time fills up all the blanks which death has made in the affections; but the spiritual mind could never regard time, with its sorrowful vicissitudes, as a substitute for resurrection and its immortal joys. The poor worldling may, perhaps, find, in passing circumstances, something to fill up the void which death makes, but not so the Christian; to him, resurrection is the grand object: to that he looks as the only instrumentality by which all his losses can be retrieved, and all his evils remedied.

So also in the matter of burden and pressure from present circumstances; the only relief is in resurrection. Till then we have but to toil on from day to day, bearing the burden and enduring the travail of the present sorrowful scene. We may, like Mary, feel disposed to cry out, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Who? The risen Jesus. Apprehend resurrection, and you are raised above the influence of every burden. It is not that we may not have many a burden to carry; no doubt, we may; but our burdens shall not sink us into the dust, because our hearts are buoyed up by the blessed truth that our Head is risen from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of God, and, moreover, that our place is there with Him. Faith leads the soul upward, even into the holy serenity of the Divine presence — it

enables us to cast our burden on the Lord, and to rest assured that He will sustain it for us. How often have we shrunk from the thought of some trial or burden which appeared, in the distance, like a dark cloud upon the horizon, and yet, when we approached it, we "found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre." The risen Jesus had rolled it away. He had removed the dark cloud, and filled up the scene with the light of His own gracious countenance. Mary had come to the sepulchre expecting to find a great stone between her and the object of her affections, but instead of that, she found Jesus risen between her and the dreaded difficulty. She had come to anoint a dead body, but arrived to be blessed and made happy, by a risen Saviour. Such is God's way — such the power and value of resurrection. Sins, sorrows, and burdens all vanish, when we find ourselves in the presence of a living Lord. When John, in the island of Patmos, had fallen to the dust, as one dead, what was it that raised him up? Resurrection — the living Jesus; "I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." This set him on his feet. Communion with Him who had wrested life from the very grasp of death, removed his fears and infused divine strength into his soul.

In the case of Peter and John, too, we find another instance of the power of resurrection. In them it is not so much a question of sin, or sorrow, and burden, as of difficulty. Their minds are evidently puzzled by all that met their view at the sepulchre. To see grave-clothes so carefully arranged in the very tomb, was unaccountable. But they are only puzzled, because "as yet, they knew not the scripture that he must rise again from the dead." Nothing but resurrection could solve their difficulty. Had they known that, they would have been at no loss to account for the arrangement of the grave-clothes; they would have known that the Destroyer of death had been there, doing His mighty work, and had left behind Him the traces of His triumph. Such was the meaning of the scene at the tomb; at least it was calculated to teach that lesson. The Lord Jesus had calmly and deliberately passed through the conflict. He had exhibited no haste — no perturbation. He had taken time to set in order His grave-clothes and His tomb; He showed that it required no strained effort on His part to vanquish the power of death. However, Peter and John knew not this; and, therefore, they went away to their own home. The strength of Mary's affection made her linger still; love was more influential than knowledge; and though her heart was breaking, she remained at the sepulchre; she would rather weep near the spot where her Lord was laid, than go anywhere else. But resurrection settled everything. It filled up the blank in Mary's broken heart, and solved the difficulty in the minds of Peter and John. It dried up *her* tears and put a stop to *their* amazement. Jesus risen is, in good truth, the sovereign remedy for all evils, and nothing is needed but faith to use Him,

At ver. 19, we have a fresh illustration of the principle on which we are dwelling. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when *the doors were shut* where the disciples were *assembled for fear of the Jews*, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you." Here the closed door evidenced the fear of the disciples. They were afraid of the Jews. And what could remedy their fear? Nothing but communion with their risen Lord. Nor did He (blessed be His name!) leave them destitute of that remedy; He appeared amongst them — He pronounced His benediction upon them. "Peace be unto you," said He. "Peace," not because their door was secured, but because Jesus was risen. Who could harm them, while they had in their midst the mighty Vanquisher of death and hell?

There is unspeakable value in this word "peace," used by such an One, at such a time. The peace that flows from fellowship with the risen Son of God cannot be ruffled by the vicissitudes and storms of this world; it is the-peace of the inner sanctuary — the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Why are we so much troubled, at times, by the condition of things around us? Why do we betake ourselves, if not to the closed door, at least to some other human resource? Surely, because

we are not walking with our eye steadily fixed on Him who was dead, but who is alive for evermore, who has all power in heaven and on earth. Did we but realize that our portion is in Him, yea that He Himself is our portion, we should be far less affected by the prospects of this poor world. The politics, the agriculture, the commerce of earth, would find their proper place in our hearts, if we could remember that "we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." It is commonly said, that while we are here we must take an interest in the circumstances, the prospects, the destinies of earth. But then, "our citizenship is in heaven." We are not of earth at all. Those who are risen with Christ are no longer of earth. All that in us (I mean believers) which could have any affinity with earth — all that which can be called nature, is dead, and should be reckoned as dead, and our life is in heaven, where we are now in spirit and principle. No doubt, if we only see ourselves as earthly men, we shall be occupied with earthly things; but if we see ourselves as heavenly men, we shall, as a consequence, be occupied about heavenly things. " If ye then be risen with Christ, seek *those things which are above*.

This is simple. "*Things above*" are those which we are commanded to seek, and that because we are "risen with Christ." The difference between Abraham, in his day, and a believer now, may be thus stated: Abraham was going from earth to heaven; the believer has come from heaven to earth; *i.e.*, in spirit, and by faith. Abraham was a pilgrim on earth, because *he sought a* heavenly country; the believer is a pilgrim on earth, because *he has gotten* a heavenly country. The Christian should regard himself as one who has come from heaven, to go through the scenes and engagements of earth. This would impart a high and heavenly tone to his character and walk here. The Lord grant that it may be more so with all who name the name of Jesus!

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that the Lord Jesus remedied the fear of His poor disciples by coming into their midst, and associating Himself with them in all their circumstances. It was not so much a question of actual deliverance from the matter that caused the fear, but rather raising their souls above it by fellowship with Himself. They forgot the Jews, they forgot their fear, they forgot everything, because their souls were occupied with their risen Lord. The Lord's way is often to leave His people in trial and to be with them therein. Paul might desire to get rid of the thorn, but the answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is a far richer mercy to have the grace and presence of Jesus *in* the trial, than to be delivered *from* it. The Lord allowed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be cast into the furnace; but, if He did, He came down and walked with them therein. This was infinitely more gracious of Him, and more honourable to them, than if He had interposed on their behalf before they were cast in.

May it be our heart's desire to find ourselves in company with the risen Lord, as we pass through this trying scene, and then, whether it be the furnace of affliction, or the storm of persecution, we shall have peace; whether it be the bereavement of the heart, the burden of the shoulder, the difficulty of the mind, the fear or unbelief of the heart, all will be remedied by fellowship with Him who was raised from the dead.