

Life out of Death.

"He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life," etc. — John 5: 24-29.

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We have the Lord Jesus here set before us in two characters — as the Disposer of life, and also as the Judge - and I want, in a few words, to set before you Christ as the Fountain of life, and as the One who has authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.

You will see, first of all, the Lord Jesus tells us that He has life in Himself. Thus, you will see, in the twenty-sixth verse, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." What a marvellous thing, that a man should stand before his fellow-men, and say he has life in himself! Let us ask who it was that spake these words. We find He calls Himself the Son; but who is this wonderful Son, who can thus speak? We get the answer to this question in the first chapter of this Gospel, where we are told, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" and we are told the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and the apostle says, "We beheld his glory, as of the Father, full of grace and truth." We have, then, this marvellous fact, that the Word, who was God, became incarnate, that He dwells among men, and that He, as the Son of God, is able to save, for He has said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life."

Now, this is the character in which the Lord Jesus presents Himself to us as the Disposer and Fountain of life. If He, then, offers life, to whom is it He offers it? It must be to those that are dead; and so the Lord Jesus is standing, as it were (if I may use the expression), in the midst of a cemetery of dead men, and He cries in the midst of those dead men: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." If I were to go into one of your cemeteries, and tell you that, standing there, I should be able to call out the dead, what a crowd would assemble together! If I were to speak a word, and at that word the dead were to come out, what astonishment would seize the minds of all! And yet there was a scene like to this years ago. We read of One who stood by the grave of a dead man, and there was a crowd gathered round about Him; and He cried, "Lazarus, come forth;" and the dead man, we find, came forth. (John 11.) And thus, at the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking to the dead man the life was given - life out of death — life bestowed in response to His cry. You will thus see that Jesus Christ was able to do what He has promised to do, because, when He offers life, He has shown that He can give life. Is it not, then, plain to the minds of every one that, if Jesus can call the dead to life, He is able to bestow life?

Some of you, perhaps, have known what bereavement is, and the sorrows of bereavement — what it is to have your dear ones dead in your homes — what would you have said, if some one had come to you at such a time, and had spoken a word of power, and there had been a resurrection in your household? Would you not say divine power was put forth? This is what Jesus claims and what He has; because, as we have seen, He spake the word, and the dead came to life; and so He proved, as I have said, that He was divine, and able to bestow life upon those who listened to Him. To whom, then, is it He speaks these words? It is to every one who is dead in trespasses and sins. But you will say to me, "Am I dead?" It is God's word: "You who were once dead in trespasses and sins." You will say again "Am I dead?" Not as to the body, else you could not be here. What is death? It is separation from God; you have no life towards God. I will prove it. If I speak to persons in the street, and they do not, and cannot, hear what I say, am I not justified in saying that they are deaf, if they do not hear what I say to them? And supposing one were to turn round, and say, "I am not deaf," would it show that he was not? No. When God speaks to your souls, then, and you do not hear His voice, what does it prove? Does it not prove, at least, that you cannot hear the voice of God? And if you cannot hear the voice of God when He speaks to you, it can only be because you are dead in trespasses and sins. You have no power to hear, because death has come in. For what does the word of God say? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Shall we clear this point, before we proceed further? I want all unsaved souls to understand that they are dead as before God — yes, dead in trespasses and in sins. And, alas! there is something else. Not simply are you dead in trespasses and sins, but sentence is passed upon you as in that condition; not executed, we admit, but still the sentence is passed, and will be executed in God's time, when the day of His grace shall have closed. Shall we, then, simply understand this, beloved friends? Will you accept the statement — not my thoughts, be it observed, but God's own thoughts, God's word — that every unsaved soul is in a state of death? and it is to dead people that Jesus speaks in the passage before us.

Well, then, Jesus stands in the midst of dead ones, all lying dead about Him — yea, and in their graves, so to speak; and what does He say? He says: "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." Do you hear, then, the voice of the Son of God? He once spoke when He was on earth, but now He speaks to you from heaven; for that same One who came down to earth was crucified and buried, He ascended up on high, and now He is seated at God's right hand. But He still speaks the same words to you, and He now offers life to every one who believes on Him.

You will mark, from the passage which is read, it is not every one that shall live, but, "*they that hear shall live.*" Not all. You will see the words are very exact: "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." Do you hear that voice of the Son of God? Alas! beloved friends, how often has He spoken, and you have not heard Him! If you had heard the voice of the Son of God, you would, not now be dead, but among the living; and so, if you are not saved, it simply shows this, that you have never heard Him speaking to your souls. Will you not hear Him tonight speaking from heaven by His own word? He has come to you with the same message, and it is simply this: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life."

You have read of the jailor in the Acts of the Apostles, and you remember that the two apostles were, imprisoned in the city of Philippi. At midnight they sang praises to God; and what happened? There was an earthquake, and there was great alarm in the midst of the prison, and all the bonds of the prisoners fell off from them; and we are told that the jailor called for a light, and came into the presence of the apostles, and he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? He knew he was a dead man, and he wanted to know the means to get life and salvation. What was the answer? Did the apostle tell him he must do this or that? No, it was simply this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." No other way. And so, in the message that comes to the dead ones tonight, there is only one way: it is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And why? Because He once died for sin; because He died upon the cross as the sacrifice for sin; because there, as Christians can say, He was made sin for us. It was because He died as the sinner's Substitute, and bore what was due to us, met and exhausted all the judgment of God against sin, and so, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death. He is, therefore, the Resurrection and Life to every believer.

Now, beloved friends, I want you to mark the very strong words we have in the passage. Not simply are we told, that "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life," there is something else, "and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." And this will bring us to the second part of the passage. Jesus offers life, but what is the consequence if you do not receive the life? It is this: You must stand before Him as the Judge. For what do we read? "The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."

I may speak one word as to the judgment, as revealed to us in the word of God. Now is the time when God offers life to every sinner, but the consequence of rejecting salvation, is, that you must stand before the judgment-seat. That same Jesus who is now the Saviour, will one, day be the Judge. Will you turn with me to one passage of scripture, and see that it does not depend upon my statement. In the thirtieth and thirty-first verses of the seventeenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we have: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he 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." The Lord Jesus is thus not simply the Saviour. Now He is the Saviour, but He will be the Judge; and thus it is that we have that solemn scene in the last book of the Bible. You remember there are certain people crying, and saying to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Has the marvellous singularity of the words that are used ever struck you? Do we ever associate "wrath" with a lamb? There is always quiet peacefulness, innocence, and the like, associated with the lamb, and so we say, "as gentle as the lamb." But in this instance it is "the wrath of the Lamb."

It is on this ground — Jesus rejected has become the Judge, and, consequently, the Lamb who is now preached as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world then comes in judgment; and the blood of Christ, which is now the foundation of salvation, is then the foundation of the exercise of judgment. And so it comes to pass with every one that rejects Christ, that there is fear and terror at the prospect of His coming.

The rejected One is coming as the Judge; and so, knowing they rejected Him as the Saviour, they say, "the great day of his wrath is come." I want, therefore, to present this truth to you — salvation now, through the blood of Christ. If you will not have salvation now, you must stand before the judgment-seat at last.

Now turn with me to the twentieth chapter of the last book of the bible, the Revelation, and we read: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Now see the marvellously solemn character of the scene that follows: "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Now turn to the fifth chapter of John, and we will seek to combine the two passages: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." You will not forget that we made a distinction at the outset, that only those who heard *now* shall live; but here we are told that all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God. See the marvellous contrast! *Now* the Lord Jesus is presented to you as the Saviour; those who receive Him here live. When He comes as the Judge, there will be no offer of Christ as the Saviour. It will not then be a word of grace, but a word of mighty power, that will be spoken. This was illustrated when Lazarus was called forth from among the dead. He was in the grave, and when the Lord spoke, he came out; and so at the last, when He comes as the Judge, the mighty word of power will be spoken, and all the dead will be called out of their graves — all the dead that are there at the time, because God's people will then be with Christ; all the unsaved that are then in their graves - by the word of power, which will be uttered by the Son of God. No hiding from the face of the Lord Jesus then.

See how careful the Spirit of God has been to show us this: "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it." Do you not read of shipwrecks, and hundreds of souls being launched into the bottom of the ocean? And the unbelieving say, "These are lost out of sight for ever." No, says the word of God, the time is coming when the Son of God is coming as the Judge, and the souls that have been drowned in the depths of the sea will have to come forth, and stand before that great white throne. And then, oh! we are told that death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them. There is no escape from the piercing eye of that Judge.

I want to know whether you are going to hear the voice of the Son of God as the Saviour, or whether you will hear Him as the Judge? If you do not hear the voice of Jesus Christ as the Saviour, you must hear Him as the Judge: it is no matter of choice. *Now* He speaks, now He invites, yea, entreats. You know the parable of the prodigal son — how that when the elder brother murmured at the reception of the prodigal, the father went out, and *entreated* him. Now, the message of His love goes out continually: "Be ye reconciled to God." God says, "Come, let us reason together." That is His word. Now He commands, beseeches, and entreats; but, beloved friends, it will not be always so, for the time is coming when 'all that are in the grave shall hear His voice' and I want to know — it is the last question I want to ask — which shall it be: now to hear Christ as the Saviour, or THEN to hear Him as the Judge? Do you know the consequence of hearing Him as the Judge? What will you say to Him? When you stand before that great white

throne, what will you say to Him? What plea will you make? Can you say, Not guilty? No, you cannot say that, for God says that all have sinned, and come short of His glory. What will you plead? Will you say that you have lived pure lives? That will not avail, for God says, All are sinners. I ask you, What will you do when you stand before the judgment-seat? If you do not accept the salvation which is offered you, you must receive the sentence; and what is that sentence? "Every one that was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Those who are not saved will not be found in that book of life; and they are cast into the lake of fire, and we are told "this is the second death."

Have you ever stood by the side of a dying one? Is it not sad to see a soul passing into eternity? Indeed, I know nothing so solemn as a living soul passing into eternity, dying without Christ. But here is something, if possible, more awful still. And what is that? The everlasting sentence that God passes upon the unsaved, and that everlasting sentence is this — the lake of fire. There is no appeal from that sentence. And why is it that men attempt to destroy the truth of God's word? Because their consciences tell them it pronounces their doom. They are restless and uneasy under it; but it is God's word, and He that speaks will secure the fulfilment of that word. Why do I tell you of these things? It is only this, beloved friends, that when Jesus is lifted up as the Saviour, you may flee to Him. If you stand before that great white throne, it will not be God's fault. If you stand before that great white throne, it will be because you reject Jesus now.

Beloved friends, let me plead with you tonight to hear Christ's words, and believe on Him that sent Him. Shall one more opportunity pass over your heads, and will you once more say in your hearts, "Not now"? Not now! Alas! how many have said, "Not now," who are in eternity! Just take the newspaper, any day, and you will see a long catalogue, "died such a day, so-and-so." We are not told about them, whether they believed in Christ; and we know, as everybody knows, that in that catalogue there are some who have passed into eternity without Christ. If they could speak to us tonight, would it not be, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"? The Lord Jesus Christ Himself has told us of a man in torment, who had died without believing, and when he saw Abraham, what did he say? "Oh, send Lazarus to my five brethren." He did not want them to come and be tormented in that flame. Even the lost man desired the salvation of those who were dear to him. *He* was lost, but he wanted his brothers to be saved.

Ah, dear friends, you are in life now, and the Lord Jesus is the Saviour still; and because He is the Saviour still, the message goes forth: "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." Will you come? There was a woman, one (we have it in the Gospels) who had heard something of Jesus, and she came with the crowd — and what did she do? We find that she pressed through the crowd, reached out her hand, and touched the hem of the Saviour's garment, and she was instantly healed. Is there not some poor soul that would desire to do this — just by living faith — to touch the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive everlasting life?

I remember being once in the country, and seeing a bough covered with the blossoms of May, and on my reaching out to take it, it came away in my hand. It was only connected by a little piece of bark with the tree, and so I saw that all the sap flowed through that one little piece of bark, and sustained the bough in life, and covered it with blossoms. And so it is with the soul that touches Christ; one simple touch of the Lord Jesus Christ is saving. Oh, then, that you might come to the feet of Christ, and take the place of sinners before Him, and receive everlasting life!

I was told last night that I ought to tell sinners to forsake their sins. Alas! how are they to forsake their sins? I was told that I was misleading sinners, as they must forsake their sins to come to Christ. How can they do that when they are dead? God comes down to sinners, meeting them where they are — in their state of condemnation and death — and His message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" and wherever a sinner comes to the feet of Christ, and takes the place of a sinner, and looks to Him, instantly that soul passes from death unto life. It is God's own word: "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, shall not come into judgment, but is passed into life."

And so the judgment is gone for every believer. "Gone," you say; "will you not stand before the white throne?" Never! Why should I? Jesus has borne my judgment for me. It is, therefore, behind my back. I am saved. No! my blessed Substitute has died for me; and because He has died, I am free. And so, tonight, if there be but one here who is not saved, if he does but come to the feet of Christ as a sinner, looking away to Him who is the only Saviour, he instantly, while he gazes, passes from death to life. May God grant that all of you may look and live! E.D.