

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"IF THERE BE NO RESURRECTION,—."

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 18TH, 1892,

DELIVERED BY

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"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."—1 Corinthians xv. 12—19.

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

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

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

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

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

I. Paul's argument begins here, and this will be our first head, IF THERE BE NO RESURRECTION, CHRIST IS NOT RISEN.

If the resurrection of the dead is impossible, Christ cannot have risen from the dead. Now, *the apostles bore witness that Christ had risen*. They had met him, they had been with him, they had seen him eat a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb on one occasion. They had seen him perform acts which could not be performed by a spirit, but which needed that he should be flesh and bones. Indeed,

he said, “ A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” One of them put his finger into the print of the nails, and was invited to thrust his hand into Christ’s side. He was known by two of them in the breaking of bread, a familiar token by which they recognized him better than by anything else. They heard him speak, they knew the tones of his voice; they were not deceived. On one occasion, five hundred of them saw him at once; or, if there was any possibility of a mistake when they were all together, they were not deceived when they saw him one by one, and entered into very close personal communion with him, each one after a different sort. “ Now,” says Paul, “ if there be no resurrection of the dead, if that is impossible, then, of course, Christ did not rise; and yet we all assure you that we saw him, and that we were with him, and you have to believe that we are all liars, and that the Christian religion is a lie, or else you must believe that there is a resurrection of the dead.”

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

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

II. But now he proceeds with his subject, not so much arguing upon the resurrection of others as upon the resurrection of Christ; and his next argument is, that, IF THERE BE NO RESURRECTION, APOSTOLIC PREACHING FALLS: “ If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain ” (see the fourteenth verse). “ Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.”

If Christ was not raised, the apostles were false witnesses. When a man bears false witness, he usually has a motive for doing so. What motive had these men, what did they gain by bearing false witness to Christ’s resurrection? It was all loss and no profit to them if he had not risen. They declared in Jerusalem that he had risen from the dead, and straightway men began to hale them to prison, and to put them to death. Those of them who survived bore the same testimony. They were so full of the conviction of it, that they went into

distant countries to tell the story of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead. Some went to Rome, some to Spain; probably some came even to this remote island of Britain. Wherever they went, they testified that Christ had risen from the dead, and that they had seen him alive, and that he was the Saviour of all who trusted in him. Thus they always preached, and what became of them? I may say, with Paul, that "they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." They were brought before the Roman Emperor again and again, and before the pro-consuls, and threatened with the most painful of deaths; but not one of them ever withdrew his testimony concerning Christ's resurrection. They still stood to it, that they had known him in life, many of them had been near him in death, and they had all communed with him after his resurrection. They declared that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, that he died and was buried, that he rose again, and that there was salvation for all who believed in him.

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

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

As for Paul, who puts himself with the rest of the apostles, and says, "If Christ be not risen, we are found false witnesses of God," I venture to bring him forward as a solitary witness of the most convincing kind. I need not remind you how he was at first opposed to Christ. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, one of the most intolerant members of the sect that hated the very name of Christ. He had a

righteousness that surpassed that of the men of his times. He was a religious leader and persecutor; and yet he was so convinced of the appearance of Christ to him on the way to Damascus, that from that time he was completely turned round, and he preached with burning zeal the faith which once he blasphemed. There is an honesty about Paul which convinces at once; and if he had not seen the Saviour risen from the dead, he would not have been the man to say that he did. Dear brethren, you may rest assured that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead. You cannot put down these good men as impostors; you cannot reckon the apostle Paul among those readily deceived, or among the deceivers of others; so you may be sure that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, according to the Scriptures.

III. Once more, Paul's argument is that, IF THERE BE NO RESURRECTION, FAITH BECOMES DELUSION.

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

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

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

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

When you are sure that “the Lord is risen, indeed,” then you feel that there is something beneath your foot that does not stir. If

Jesus died for you, and Jesus rose for you, then, my dear brother, you are not afraid even of that tremendous day when the earth shall be burned up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. You feel a confidence that will bear even that test. If Christ did not rise from the dead, and you are resting your soul on the belief that he did rise, what a failure it will be for you in another world, what disappointment when you do not wake up in his likeness, what dismay if there should be no pardon of sin, no salvation through the precious blood! If Christ is not risen, your faith is vain. If it is vain, give it up; do not hold on to a thing that is not true. I would sooner plunge into the water, and swim or wade through the river, than I would trust myself to a rotten bridge that would break down in the middle. If Christ did not rise, do not trust him, for such faith is vain; but, if you believe that he did die for you, and did rise again for you, then believe in him, joyously confident that such a fact as this affords a solid basis for your belief.

IV. Now I am going to advance a little further. Paul says next that, **IF THERE BE NO RESURRECTION, THEY REMAINED IN THEIR SINS:** "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

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

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

"If Jesus ne'er had paid the debt,
He ne'er had been at freedom set."

The Surety would have been under bonds unless he had discharged all his liability; but he has done so, and he has risen from the dead,—

"And now both the Surety and sinner are free."

Understand clearly what I am saying. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took upon himself the sum total of the guilt of all his people. "The Lord hath made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all." He died, and by his death obtained the full discharge of all our obligations. But his rising again was, so to speak, the receipt in full, the token that he had discharged the whole of the dread liabilities

which he had taken upon himself; and now, since Christ is risen, you who believe in him are not in your sins. But, if he had not risen, then it would have been true, “Ye are yet in your sins.”

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

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

V. Now follows, if possible, a still more terrible consequence. IF THERE BE NO RESURRECTION, ALL THE PIOUS DEAD HAVE PERISHED: “Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” “Perished”, by which is not meant “annihilated”; they are in a worse condition than that.

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

If Jesus Christ be not raised, the godly dead are yet in their sins, and *they can never rise*; for, if Christ did not rise from the dead, they cannot rise from the dead. Only through his resurrection is there resurrection for the saints. The ungodly shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt; but believers shall rise into eternal life and felicity because of their oneness with Christ; but, if he did not rise, they cannot rise. If he is dead, they must be dead, for they must share with him. They are, they ever must be, one with him; and all the saints who ever died, died under a mistake if Christ did not rise. We cast away the thought with abhorrence. Many of us have had beloved parents and friends who have died in the Lord, and we know that the full assurance of their faith was no mistake. We have seen dear children die in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection; and we know that it was no error on their part. I have stood by many death-beds of believers, many triumphant, and many more peaceful and calm as a sweet summer evening. They were not mistaken. No, dear sirs, believing in Christ, who lived, and died, and rose again, they had confidence in the midst of pain, and joy in the hour of their departure. We cannot believe that they were mistaken; therefore we are confident that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead.

VI. Once more, IF THERE BE NO RESURRECTION, OUR SOURCE OF JOY IS GONE. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we, who believe that he did, are of all men the most miserable: “If in this life only we

have hope in Christ," and we certainly have no hope of any other life, apart from Christ, "we are of all men most miserable."

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

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

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

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

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

Our eternal hopes do not depend upon our moral condition; for, observe, these men in Corinth would not have been better or worse if Christ had not risen from the dead. Their character was just the same. It had been fashioned, it is true, by a belief that he did rise from the dead; but whether he did or did not, they were just the same men, so that their hope did not depend upon their good moral condition. The apostle does not say, "If you are or are not in

such and such a moral condition,” but, “ If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins.” So, my beloved, the reason of your being safe will be that Christ died for you, and that he rose again ; it is not the result of what you are, but of what he did. The hinge of it all is not in you : it is in him, and you are to place your reliance, not upon what you are, or hope to be, but wholly and entirely upon a great fact which transpired nearly nineteen hundred years ago. If he did not rise from the dead, you are in your sins still, be you as good as you may ; but if he did rise from the dead, and you are one with him, you are not in your sins ; they are all put away, and you are “ accepted in the Beloved.”

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

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

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

is the mark for you to aim at, not at your sincerity, though there must be that; but if Christ was raised, and that is where you are resting your hopes, then you are not in your sins, but you are accepted in Christ, and justified in him.

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

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

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

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

Exposition by C. M. Spurgeon.

I CORINTHIANS XV. 1—20.

Verse 1, 2. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

Paul preached the gospel, his hearers received it, and also stood in it: "wherein ye stand." It is essential to salvation to hear the gospel, to receive it, and then to stand in it.

Now, what was this gospel? Paul is going to tell us; and instead of making a list of doctrines, he mentions a set of facts.

3. *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,*

Notice that the preacher does not make the gospel. If he makes it, it is not worth your having. Originality in preaching, if it be originality in the statement of doctrine, is falsehood. We are not makers and inventors; we are repeaters, we tell the message we have received.

3. *How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

This, then, is the gospel, that Jesus "died for our sins", taking our sins upon himself. He bore the death penalty for us, "according to the Scriptures." There are plenty of Scriptures, Old Testament Scriptures, which teach this great truth by way of prophecy.

4. *And that he was buried,*

This was necessary as a proof of his death, and as the ground work of his rising again.

4. *And that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

This is the gospel, Christ dead, buried, risen again, ever living. We must dwell upon these points, for they are the essentials of the gospel.

5, 6. *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present,*

When Paul wrote,—

6, 7. *But some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*

In different places, and at different hours; sometimes by one, sometimes by eleven, once by five hundred brethren at once, Jesus was seen after he had risen from the dead. As I have often said, there is no historical fact that is so well authenticated as that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

8. *And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

Paul calls himself an abortion, and speaks of himself as one hardly worth mentioning; yet he had seen the Lord after his resurrection from the dead. He was not a man to be deceived, for he had persecuted the Church of Christ. He was exceedingly mad against the Messiah; so that if he said that he had seen Jesus of Nazareth, and that he was converted by the sight, we may be quite sure that it was so. Paul was not a man to undergo all the sacrifices he had to endure, for the sake of a mere dream.

9, 10. *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

No man could be more thoroughly with Christ, heart and soul, than that Paul who, aforesaid, had been the blood thirsty Saul of Tarsus. His witness may well be believed; and, in connection with all that went before

it, it proves beyond all doubt that he who was crucified and was laid in the tomb, did certainly rise again, and was seen in life after death.

11. *Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.*

There was not a doubt about that. All the apostles, all the early Christians preached the resurrection of Christ; and the Corinthians, when they became Christians, believed it.

12. *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

What! had they got so far as that, to call themselves Christians, and yet they doubted the truth of the resurrection of the dead? Yes, they spirited it away, they made it into a kind of myth or fable; and yet they called themselves Christians. That the heathen should not believe it, was not wonderful; but that those who professed to believe that Christ had risen from the dead, yet doubted the resurrection of his people, was indeed a strange thing. Paul argues with them about this matter.

13, 14. *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.*

If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, we are preaching a falsehood. If he did not rise from the dead, you are believing a falsehood, and our preaching and your believing are nothing but vanity.

15—17. *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.*

If Jesus Christ is not risen, he has done nothing for you; you are not saved, you are not pardoned, you are not renewed. It is all a myth, all a piece of deceit. If that fact be given up, that Christ rose from the dead, everything connected with salvation is also given up.

18. *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

All the godly saints died resting in the risen Christ; and if he is not risen, they died under a delusion, and they have perished.

19. *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

Those who are believers in Christ, says Paul, are miserable dupes if he has not risen from the dead. They are believing and resting all their hopes upon a lie. It makes them happy, truly; but if you can take away from them that hope, by persuading them that what it is grounded upon is not true, you have made them miserable indeed.

20. *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*

Paul has been arguing on every supposition, and now he comes back with his own positive witness that Christ is risen. You remember that Jesus died at the time of the Passover, as the one great Paschal Lamb; but he rose again on the first day of the week, and that was the feast of firstfruits with the Jews. They brought handfuls of wheat from the fields to show their gratitude to God, and in order that a blessing might rest on all the crop; and Paul uses Christ's rising on that particular day as a figure: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." He lives. He is the firstfruits, and the full harvest will follow. All who are in him will rise from the dead; for he is one with them, and none can separate them from him, nor sever him from them. They died in him, and they live because he liveth, blessed be his name!