

The body is dead, but the spirit is life

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. (1 Corinthians 15:12-14).

If there is no resurrection of Christ, our preaching in this church is without any foundation and destitute of the truth. It is grounded in falsehood and deception. And that's a bad thing.

But beyond that, if Christ be not raised from death it would be useless to preach. What would be the point? Preaching would be an idle thing and of no value, empty, delusory (false; misleading; deceptive), unprofitable and unreal.

Yet the principal argument of the first preachers in support of Christianity was that God had raised Christ from the dead. **Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. (Acts 1:21, 22). This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. (Acts 2:32). Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. (Acts 4:10). And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33). But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. (Acts 13:37). Concerning his**

Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. (Romans 1:3, 4). **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Now, that is powerful and undeniable testimony. It's part of the **sure word of prophecy [] whereunto [we] do well that [we] take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in [our] hearts[.]** (2 Peter 1:19). Indeed, those potent verses are included in that scripture that we are assured are **given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine and instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto good works.** (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

Nestled in the midst of one of the greatest theological treatises ever written, that being the book of Romans, we find a most intriguing passage that rests on this assured resurrection. Here's the passage: **And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.** (Romans 8:10, 11).

This passage warrants further inspection and the balance of this sermon is devoted to that end.

The body is dead. Of this clause, Barnes says: *This passage has been interpreted in very different ways.* Having considered those various interpretations, here is what I believe Paul was primarily getting at.

Notwithstanding our union with Jesus Christ, our bodies are dead. Scriptures speak of three kinds of death: one is in this life, another is at the end of this life, and the third is after this life.

The first is spiritual death. **And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.** (Ephesians 2:1). **Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses[.]** (Colossians 2:12-13).

The second is natural death, which takes place at the separation of the soul from the body (excluding those that are alive at the return of Christ). Third, after this life, eternal death occurs, which consists in everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. (In Revelation 2:11 this eternal death is called **the second death**, second in relation to the natural death; any confusion only results from my consecutive numbering. **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.**)

It is only of the second or natural death that the Apostle Paul here speaks, for believers are delivered from the first and third. He says the body is dead, to show that it is the lowest part of man that for a time is afflicted by death, as it is said, **[t]hen shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.** (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Men die for the sin of Adam. **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[.] (Romans 5:12). So why then do believers die, since death is the punishment of sin and Christ has covered their sins by his death?

Answer: A sheep's death is not punishment for sin, but an affliction from a loving Father designed to make the sheep better; were it otherwise, the blood of Christ would be of no value.

By the work of Christ, death is to His people no more a punishment of sin, but a blessing, a passage to eternal life and the entrance into the heavenly paradise. **Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours[.]** (1 Corinthians 3:22).

We know from 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 that death to the Lord's people is **swallowed up in victory** and has no **sting**. If something stings you, it pricks or wounds you. Anybody who has been stung by a bee or wasp knows the sting is a sharp, smarting and briefly overwhelming pain. Death has no sting for the Lord's sheep.

The grave has no victory over them. Instead of the day of their death being a day of punishment of sin, it is a day of triumph over death. The death of the body is as to them the preparation for its immortality and incorruption, as the seed deposited in the earth passes in such a way through death as to overcome it, and revives and fructifies (becomes fruitful), so that when in the earth it is not lost.

Haldane writes on this very point: *In like manner the bodies of believers do not perish by death, but derive from the grave what is contrary to its natural character. They are sown in corruption, but they are to rise in incorruption. They are sown in weakness, but they are to rise in power. They are sown in dishonor, but they are to rise in glory. They are sown natural bodies, but they are to rise spiritual bodies. * * * As the grain is not quickened except it die, in the same way our bodies die and moulder in the*

dust, to be revived and reconstructed in holiness. You surely recognize that Haldane plucked much of this language straight from 1 Corinthians 15, especially verses 42 through 44.

The nature, then, of death, is changed to believers by Jesus Christ, so that the day of their death is better than the day of their birth. (Ecclesiastes 7:1). Death to them is a blessing which puts an end to their sins and troubles, causing them to pass to perfect holiness and happiness, and from being absent from the Lord to carry them into His presence in paradise. From their seemingly endless wanderings and agitations here on this earth, it brings them into a haven of everlasting rest.

Gill concisely captures it. He believes when the Apostle here tells us that the body is dead, that death is *not by way of punishment for [sin], for Christ has bore that, [but] death is one of the saints' privileges, it is for their good, and therefore desired by them; but that they might be rid of it [sin], and free from all those troubles which are the consequences of it[.]*

But the spirit is life. As comfort, and in contrast to the dead body, we are here told that our souls are life. It is a life that is already possessed, **even life for evermore.** (Psalm 133:3). It is a life which, being borne down by so many encumbrances here on earth, and therefore somewhat feeble and imperfectly enjoyed now, will flourish in the world to come, with full vigor and without any abatement. It is a life derived from and subsisting in our Lord and Savior who has assured us: **I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.** (John 11:25, 26).

And note the language here is not that the spirit is alive, but potentially later at some point on the horizon to be subjected to death. No; it says the spirit is life – in the sense of the declaration of our Lord: **He that hath the**

Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:12).

So much for our look at Romans 8:10. We now delve into Romans 8:11, that touches in a unique way on the matter of the resurrection of Christ that we started with today. Here, again, is the text: **But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.** (Romans 8:11). Fascinating language.

At a minimum, we can take from this verse that the stunning power of God that acted to raise Christ Jesus from his 3-day grave is the same power that quickens or enlivens the sheep's mortal bodies. Note there are two references in this one verse to raising Christ from the dead. Everything revolves around that single historical event and the incomparable force that accomplished it.

Developing this theme, Ellicott tells us: *And this vitality extends beyond the grave. It will even react upon that material body which had just been spoken of as given over to death. Die it must; but the same Spirit to which the soul owes its life will also reinfuse life into the dead body, just as the body of Christ of Himself was raised from the dead.*

Is this not a fair paraphrase of this verse? If the Spirit of the Christ-raising One dwells in you, all the resurrection-power which He put forth in raising Jesus will inure to your benefit by the revival of your dead, mortal body.

This discussion by Gill seems to fairly capture the message of this verse:

The Spirit dwells in the saints as his temples: the Spirit that dwells in them is, "the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead"; by whom is meant God the Father, to whom the resurrection of Christ from the dead is here and elsewhere ascribed.
* * * *[H]e that raised up Christ from the dead, which is the Father, shall also quicken*

your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you; not the souls of the saints, for these die not: but their "bodies", called "mortal", because appointed to death, are under the sentence of it, and in which it already works; "your" bodies and not others; mortal ones, and not airy, celestial, immortal ones; the very same they carry about with them here, and in which the Spirit of God had dwelt. These shall be quickened.

There's another wonderful passage of the power of the Savior's resurrection found at Philippians 3:10-11: **That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.**

The best discussion I find available as to the meaning of **power of his resurrection** in this scripture is from Barnes: *And the power of his resurrection - That is, that I may understand and experience the proper influence which the fact of his resurrection should have on the mind. That influence would be felt in imparting the hope of immortality; in sustaining the soul in the prospect of death, by the expectation of being raised from the grave in like manner; and in raising the mind above the world; [Romans 6:11](#). There is no one truth that will have greater power over us, when properly believed, than the truth that Christ has risen from the dead. His resurrection confirms the truth of the Christian religion (notes, [1 Corinthians 15](#)); makes it certain that there is a future state, and that the dead will also rise; dispels the darkness that was around the grave, and shows us that our great interests are in the future world. The fact that Christ has risen from the dead, when fully believed, will produce a sure hope that we also shall be raised, and will animate us to bear trials for his sake, with the assurance that we shall be raised up as he was.*

And consider this interesting discussion from Jamieson-Fausset-Brown as to what Paul is saying when he says **I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead**: *[A]ttain unto the resurrection of the dead—The oldest manuscripts read, "the resurrection from (out of) the dead," namely, the first resurrection; that of believers at Christ's coming (1Co 15:23; 1Th 4:15; Re 20:5, 6). The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. "The power*

of Christ's resurrection" (Ro 1:4), ensures the believer's attainment of the "resurrection from the (rest of the) dead."

Along this same line of thought, note these comments from Matthew Poole: *The wicked also shall be raised at the last day. But the righteous shall be raised after a peculiar manner; they shall be raised, as by the almighty power of God, so by virtue of their union with Christ as his members, and by virtue of their relation to the Spirit as his temples. They only shall partake of a resurrection that is desirable and beneficial to them. Therefore it is called emphatically the resurrection of the just, [Luke 14:14](#); [for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just] and these two are joined together, as belonging one to the other; the children of God, and the children of the resurrection, [Luke 20:34-36](#) [The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.]*

Quicken their mortal bodies. From this it truly appears that, as to their substance, the bodies of believers will in their resurrection be the same as those that died. This is delicious territory. **And 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; though my reins be consumed within me.** (Job 19:26, 27). Though Job has died and his internal parts are consumed, he will nonetheless see God, in his flesh, with his eyes. Same flesh; same eyes.

And this: **Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.** (Isaiah 26:19).

The soul of each believer will be reunited to his own body. But, though the same body, there will be differences, as we know from 1 Corinthians chapter 15. The new body will be heavenly, not earthy. (1 Corinthians 15:49).

At that time, the bodies of their humiliation will be like our Lord's glorious body. **Who shall change our vile body, 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.** (Philippians 3:21). This is a **mystery** (1 Corinthians 15:51) it's our body, but it's new and improved. That new body will look like the body utilized here on earth, but it will have a perfect beauty, exempt from all maladies and sicknesses, adapted to their spiritual and heavenly state. And as, when Jesus was transfigured, His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as light, so the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. So the death of believers is only a sleep, since it is to be followed by such a resurrection. **But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even 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 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

By His Spirit which dwelleth in you. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is here set before believers as a pledge that their bodies shall not remain under the power of death. That indwelling, which renders their resurrection certain, imports the Spirit's care to adorn and to beautify the temple in which He resides. In other words, the Holy Spirit, by dwelling in each sheep, has a vested interest in each sheep, the end of which is to confer everlasting life, everlasting purity, and everlasting communion with the Triune God.

It would be derogatory and shameful to the majesty and glory of that blessed Holy Ghost to allow those bodies, in which he dwells as His temple, to lie forever in ruins in the dust.

The power, efficacy and legitimacy of the three glorious persons of the Godhead are thus brought into view as securing the complete re-establishment of the bodies of believers, which, though at present mortal, shall hereafter partake in all the glories and blessedness of eternal life.

So Ellicott nicely says *[i]t cannot be thought that God would leave in the grave that body in which His own Spirit has dwelt.*

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.
(Ephesians 6:24).