

JESUS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Lord's Day
Afternoon, June 11, 1865

"Jesus said unto her, 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. Believest thou this?" John 11:25, 26

What a beautiful, what an interesting family picture has the Holy Ghost, by the pen of the apostle John, drawn in the sacred narrative of the gracious household, which once dwelt in the little village of Bethany, near Jerusalem. In it we seem to see the rare spectacle of a family living together in happy harmony, united by the strong ties of nature, and united still more closely by the firmer and more enduring bonds of grace,—Martha, Mary, Lazarus. What an echo there is in our heart to these names. May we not also picture to ourselves our gracious Lord, when He had been at Jerusalem wearied—for we know He was subject to human infirmity and could be weary, for He sat weary once on Samaria's well—when our gracious Lord returned from Jerusalem, wearied in body and grieved in spirit, how He would come to this happy household, and there solace Himself with the company of these two gracious sisters and their no less gracious brother? for we read that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." (John 11:5.)

Our Lord went about doing good, and spent much of His time and exercised much of his ministry in Galilee; which being situated in the north part of the Holy Land, lay at a considerable distance from Bethany. But it would appear that at this time He was not in Galilee but beyond Jordan, in the place where John at first baptized, which lay at some

distance to the east of Jerusalem. Now when He was thus absent, engaged in performing His gracious errands of mercy, a dark cloud began to gather over this happy household. It might have been at first only as small as a man's hand, but it gathered thick and fast, and every hour seemed to hang upon them more and more densely. Lazarus had fallen ill. Now the first movement of his gracious sisters was to send a message to their dear Lord, that he whom He loved was sick. They knew His power as well as His love; and that as by the one He would at once come, so by the other He could at once heal. They naturally therefore expected that He would come speedily in a case so urgent as this, for in that climate disease makes rapid progress, and were doubtless looking out every day and almost every hour for His arrival.

But Lazarus gets worse and worse every hour. Denser, darker are the clouds, which hang over the house. Jesus tarries; for we read that "when He heard that he was sick, He abode two days in the same place where He was." Jesus comes not. All hope dies in their breast. The disease gradually increases until at last Lazarus sinks under its pressure. Now what a mercy it was for these two sisters, and their brother too, that Jesus did not come; and may I not add, for the Church of God also for all time? What treasures of mercy and grace were involved in His delay. What a stupendous miracle gave occasion for Him to work. What a demonstration of His power it afforded that He was truly the Son of God, and what a lasting blessing has it been made to successive generations of saints. Though the Lord well knew, in His omniscient mind, all that was transpiring in that little household, yet for His own wise and gracious purpose His footsteps tarried, and mercy made Him stay for a while as mercy made Him come at last.

I need not dwell further upon the features of this interesting narrative, though every part of it is pregnant with holy instruction, but shall come at once to that part which precedes our text. It is the interview of Martha with the Lord at Bethany. Martha, true to her character, could not stay at home; she was a restless body, for on a later occasion when she had obtained the Lord's company she could not be satisfied with merely listening to His gracious conversation. She must needs think about the dinner, nay come and ask Him to bid her sister help her to set it out properly, and not spend her time so—I will not say unnecessarily, but so long sitting at the feet of Jesus. Like many of our Marthas, she loved religion and the things of God; but being a bustling, active character, worldly business would intrude on her mind, and to this she would sometimes give a first place when it ought to have had but the second. Are you not sometimes like her, thinking more of business than of Christ, and even in the house of prayer, instead of listening to the word are thinking about the dinner?

Martha, then, true to her character, leaves Mary at home, praying, watching and waiting upon God in secret, and hurries out at the very first tidings of His arrival; but as soon as she meets Him, almost in the language of reproach, not very unlike the way in which she addressed the Redeemer with respect to her sister upon another occasion, says, "Lord if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Do not the words sound almost as if she was reproaching the Lord because He was not there? And yet the blessed woman, with all her infirmities, had faith in her soul, and this faith manifested itself in the midst of her complaint. "But I know that even now,"—though the case seems so desperate—"I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God wilt give it Thee." O, Martha, thy faith was somewhat lacking here. Thou shouldest have looked a little higher than this,

and seen that he was the true God Himself who stood before thee, and that He had but to speak the word, and Lazarus would rise. Thou shouldest have seen that He held creation in His fists, and that life and death were at His supreme disposal. Jesus, in that calm, blessed manner in which our Lord ever spoke, unruffled, unmoved, in all the quiet dignity and glorious majesty of God-head, saith unto her, "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha still shows faith, and yet evidently mixed with much weakness. "Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Then the Lord uttered those words which I shall, with God's help and blessing, endeavour to lay open and bring before you this afternoon: "Jesus saith unto her, 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. Believest thou this?"

I think we may observe three leading features in our text.

I.—First, the gracious declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life."

II.—Secondly, the two gracious consequences, which are connected with, and flow out of this declaration:

1, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" and, 2, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

III.—Thirdly, the gracious **appeal.** "Believest thou this?"

I.—How blessed are the gracious declarations which the Lord has given of Himself, His own testimonies to His Person and work, such as, for instance, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me; I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the

sheep; I am the bread of life." What grace there is in these declarations of Himself, and how He seems to unfold Himself in and by them to the Church of God that she may receive these words from His lips and exercise faith upon them. Let us then view this gracious declaration, and observe in it two things which our Lord declares Himself virtually to be—"The Resurrection and the Life:" Let us consider each of them separately.

I. **"I am the resurrection."** The Lord does not say "By Me shall men rise," or "I at the last day will raise the dead." But he declares of Himself, "I Myself am the resurrection." Surely, there is something deep in these words. Surely there is some profound truth, if we can but penetrate into the bosom of it. Let us see, then, whether, with God's help and blessing, I can take you by the hand and lead you into the very bosom of this truth, that you and I may walk in it, feed upon it and know what it is to the joy of our souls.

1. The resurrection of Christ is, in the first place, the **grand cardinal doctrine of our most holy faith**. And why? Because on it our faith virtually rests. Our faith, if it be the faith of God's elect, is that Jesus is the Son of God. Now that our faith may not be a shadow but a substance, it must rest upon some solid foundation. What proof then have we that Jesus is the Son of God? His resurrection. We therefore read that He "was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:4.) His resurrection was thus God's own attesting seal that He was his dear Son. He was put to death as a blasphemer, because He said "I am the Son of God." When God therefore raised Him from the dead, He set his own attesting seal that Jesus really was what He said He was—the Son of God. It is for this reason that the resurrection of Christ is the grand cardinal, fundamental doctrine of our most holy faith; for upon it

hangs the substantial proof of His declaration, that he was the Son of God, and had come as the Son of God from the bosom of the Father to do the work which the Father had given Him to do.

2. But there is something more in the resurrection of Jesus Christ than the mere attestation of God and the declaration with power from on high that He was His dear Son. When our gracious Lord rose from the dead, **the whole Church virtually and mystically rose in and with Him.** We therefore read in the epistle to the Ephesians, that God "raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 2:6.) How and why? Because the Church of God mystically and virtually rose together with Christ. No sooner did the Head lift Himself up out of the grave than all the members rose together with Him. It was with Him spiritually as with us literally when we rose from our bed this morning: every member rose with our Head. So the Church of Christ as members of the mystical body of the Lord the Lamb, virtually and mystically rose together with her rising Head.

3. But there is something in the resurrection of the Lord more than this. On the resurrection of Christ hangs **what He now is to the Church of God.** If He had lain beyond the due time, lifeless in the tomb, not only would there have been no attestation by the power of God that He was His dear Son; not only would the Church have lain dead and buried with Him in the tomb where He lay; but He could not have fulfilled those present offices which He now sustains at the right hand of the Father as "the Mediator between God and men." He could not have been "the High Priest over the house of God." He could not have been King in Zion, waiting "till all His enemies should be made His footstool." He could not have sent the Holy Spirit down to testify of Himself. He

could not commune with us from off the mercy seat, and unfold the glories of His lovely Person, the efficacy of His atoning blood, and the beauty and blessedness of His justifying righteousness. Our faith would have had no Object, our hope no anchorage within the veil; and where would our love have been without a Person upon whom that love could have been fixed?

Every grace of the soul, therefore, hangs upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If we believe, we believe in a risen Christ; if we hope, we hope in a risen Christ; and if we love, we love a risen Christ; for a dead Christ is no Christ to us who want a living God to fulfil the desires of a living soul. But blessed be God, Christ is risen from the dead; He is gone up on high: He is even now at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. He has opened a way through the veil of His rent flesh, and our prayers, desires and supplications, with all our loving affections, may ascend to Him within the veil and enter into the holiest, even the presence of God, where He has gone as our forerunner, to sit down there until He comes a second time without sin unto salvation. Thus not only every doctrine of our most holy faith, but every experience of a living soul hangs upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Look at this in the light of your own experience. I was speaking this morning of the Son of God being come and our knowledge of it, and I endeavoured to show that one way whereby we know that He is come, is because we follow Him up by faith to where He is at the right hand of God, and communes with us from off the mercy seat. Faith must have a divine Object on which it may fix its eyes, which it may embrace, to which it may cleave and round which it may twine. This Object is Jesus as risen from the dead, and now at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He says, "Look unto

Me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." To Him therefore looking "as the Author and Finisher of our faith, we run with patience the race that is set before us" in the lively hope of His bringing us off more than conquerors over every foe and every fear. But if He be not risen from the dead, then of all men we are most miserable: we have no hope beyond the grave; no sins pardoned, no transgressions forgiven, no righteousness brought in, no present grace, no future glory. This is the reason why the apostles in all their sermons, as recorded in the Acts, preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ: "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.)

II. But our most gracious Lord is not only "the resurrection"—I shall bring that point to bear more fully upon your experience when I come to my second part—but he is also "**the life.**" Adam had life, for God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7) but he lost it in and by the fall; and the image of God in which he was created was thereby thoroughly marred and defaced. He thus became dead in trespasses and sins; and as he begat a son in his own image, after his own likeness, and we all partake of this fallen, corrupt nature, we come into this world dead in sin. But what union, what intercourse, what communion can a soul dead in sin have with the living God? Will you take a corpse into your bed, and embrace it as a suitable wife for a living husband? Our blood runs cold at the thought. When death seizes the wife of your bosom, you say with Abraham, "Let me bury my dead out of my sight." A cold clay corpse is no longer the partner of your bed; the coffin and the grave are now its fitting place.

How then can you think that Jesus can take to His bosom a dead bride? Or how can a dead soul enter into the courts of a

living God? What union, what communion can there be between a soul dead in sins and a God living in the light of His own holiness? Life, therefore, must be communicated and breathed into a soul before it can have union and communion with God here; before it can be fitted for His presence on earth, or enjoy the mansions prepared for it before time began in heaven. Now that this spiritual and eternal life might be breathed into, and communicated to the church, it pleased the Father that the fulness of this life should dwell in Christ: "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." This life, of which the Lord thus speaks, is not His life as the eternal Son of God, but His mediatorial life, which can be communicated; for there is this difference between His life as the Son of God and His life as Mediator, that the one is communicable and the other not. Thus when Jesus says here, "I am the life," He speaks of His mediatorial life, that spiritual and eternal life which was treasured up in Him as Mediator, that it might be imparted and communicated to the members of His mystical body. We, therefore, read, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4.) So also, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (1 John 5:11.) He therefore says of Himself, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

How often we are looking and looking in vain for life in ourselves. True it is that if God has quickened our souls we are partakers of life divine, of life spiritual, of life eternal, of the life that is in Christ and comes from Christ; and yet how often we vainly seek to find it warm and glowing in our breasts. If once given it never dies; but it is often hid beneath the ashes, and thus though it slowly burns and dimly glows, yet the ashes hide it from view, and we only know it is there by some remains of warmth. "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3.) and therefore not only hidden as

treasured and stored up safely in God, but hidden from the world, and even hidden from the eyes of its possessor. Christ is our life. There is no other.

To look, then, for life in ourselves independent of and distinct from the fountain of life is to look for that in the creature which is lodged in the divine Creator, is to look for that in man which dwells in the God-Man; to look for that in self which is out of self, embosomed in the fulness of the Son of God. And observe that it is not merely that life is in Him, but He is the life itself. As the sun not only has light and heat, but is light itself and heat itself, so the blessed Lord not only grants life, but He Himself is what He grants. As a fountain not only gives water but is itself all water, so Christ not only gives what He is but is all that He gives. Not only, therefore, is He the "resurrection," centering in himself everything both for time and eternity which resurrection contains and resurrection implies, but He is "the life," being in Himself a fountain of life, out of which He gives from His own fulness to the members of His mystical body. But as He has to teach us what He is thus in Himself by lessons of personal experience, I shall now, with God's help and blessing, enter upon the second branch of my subject, in which I was to show.

II.—The two gracious consequences which are connected with, and flow out of the Lord's being the resurrection and the life.

These two consequences are,

1, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" and,

2, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." If you read these words with any measure of gracious

understanding, you will see in them a bearing upon the two characters which the Lord claims for Himself as "the resurrection and the life," and will perceive in them a remarkable fitness as a connecting link between His being the resurrection and the life and the two gracious consequences which arise out of it.

I. The first gracious consequence is connected with His being "the resurrection." He says "I am the resurrection." Now see how there flows out of this declaration a spiritual consequence, which very much meets the experience and feelings of God's family; and as such I shall unfold it. "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

1. What is resurrection? What does it imply? Out of what state does resurrection bring? A state of death. Death is necessary to resurrection. Was not our Lord dead when He was raised from the grave? So His resurrection, viewed with a believing eye, as pregnant with gracious fruits, carries with it this most blessed consequence, that it meets the case, is adapted to the experience, and embraces the spiritual state and condition of those who are dead. It will do so one day as regards **the body**. Christ is the resurrection both of body and soul. When then He comes again a second time without sin unto salvation, His voice will quicken the dead; the graves will burst open, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible; for His voice will call the sleeping dust of the saints out of the tomb, and they will stand up in all the glorious vestments of immortality. Do we not, therefore, read "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; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." (1 Cor. 15:20-23.)

But His resurrection has also a spiritual import—a gracious fruit in this life, as well as that which is to come. There is a **spiritual** resurrection consequent upon His resurrection from the dead, as there will be a literal resurrection when the body is raised from the tomb at the great day. As, therefore, none can and will be raised but the sleeping dead, by virtue of His being the resurrection, so none can be raised from a spiritual death but by His power and influence as the same. But whom does the text mean by the dead? Let me open this. It does not mean the dead in sin; I will tell you why. The character pointed out in our text is said to believe, which no man dead in sin does or can do. Look at the words: bring to them your spiritual understanding. Follow me, if you have any confidence in me as a spiritual guide: see whether I cast any fight upon the meaning of the words, and if you see with me then follow me on. I will lead you safely, if God give me ability. I would not deceive you, for I would not deceive myself. The dead spoken of in the text are not then those who are dead in sin or dead in a profession; because they are said to believe, which no man dead in sin ever did. "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." But how can one who is dead believe? He can, or our Lord would not have said so. I will show you how. He is a living man as quickened into life by the power of the Spirit of God, and yet he is dead. How can we reconcile this mystery? It is one of those paradoxes, which form a part of the great mystery of godliness.

(a) First, he is dead as **slain by a killing law**. He is alive unto God, and yet he is dead in law. The law has come; it has discharged its fiery contents into his bosom and slain him outright. Therefore, though he is a living man, has the love and fear of God in his soul, he is dead in law and dead also to

the law, because he is slain by it as to any hope of justification. Thus he is dead.

(b) But he is dead in another sense: **according to the verdict of his own conscience.** Take a man upon whom the law has passed its condemning sentence. The judge sentences him to death; he is taken away from the bar, and shut up in the condemned cell. Though not yet set upon the scaffold, though not yet executed, he is virtually a dead man. The law has condemned him; he is condemned in his own feelings; he knows he must die; and therefore he feels to be a dying man. Thus when a man's own conscience seconds the verdict of God's holy law, and he falls down before the throne of God, slain by its condemning sentence, and this is ratified by the verdict of his own guilty conscience, he is dead as falling down dead before God. And yet he is a living man. The man in gaol is a living man, and yet the law pronounces him dead; for every gloomy hour, and every tolling bell, and every striking clock, falls upon his ear and strikes the death-knell into his soul, as knowing how soon he must before assembled spectators make an awful end.

(c) But he is dead also in a third sense: as to **any exertion of his own strength,** wisdom or power to do his soul any spiritual good; for he feels unable to raise up any living faith—and he knows that nothing but living faith will be of any avail—any gracious hope, or any warm, living love. So he is dead by law; he is dead by conscience; and dead by a sense of his own spiritual helplessness and inability. As Abraham knew that he was dead in body, so he knows that he is dead in soul.

Now see how suitable to this dead man is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is said to believe: mark that: "He that **believeth** in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he

live." There is then in the breast of this dead man a living faith. This is the deep mystery, that though he is dead in law, dead in conscience, dead in helplessness, yet God the Holy Ghost has breathed into him and deposited in him a seed of living faith. By this faith he cries, by this faith he sighs, and by this faith he hungers and thirsts after righteousness: yea, more, by this faith he looks unto and believes in the Son of God. He scarcely knows that he has faith. His faith is so weak and so small in his own estimation, that he dare not say he has faith; and yet he has all the fruits of faith, all the marks of faith, and all the evidences of faith. Take as a parallel case Jonah in the whale's belly. Had he faith or had he not faith? How low he sank when the waves were heaped over his head, when carried through the boundless deep in the belly of the whale. Yet even there he could say, "I will look again toward Thy holy temple." Had he no faith? Yes, he had; and by that faith he was saved, justified, accepted, brought out and delivered, and able to say, "Salvation is of the Lord."

Take Jeremiah in the low dungeon, when it seemed as though every hope was closed, and he sank deep into the mud and mire. Even there, when the waters flowed over his head, his prayer could enter into the ears of God and bring down a gracious answer. Does he not say: "I called upon Thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon? Thou hast heard my voice: hide not Thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee: Thou saidst, Fear not." (Lam. 3:55-57.) Take Hezekiah upon his bed of sickness. Had he no faith? How then could he turn his face to the wall and pray unto the Lord? How could his eyes fail with looking upward, when he said, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." Take David in his mournful journey, when he went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up barefoot, with his head covered, at the time of Absalom's rebellion. Had he no faith? How then came he to

pray? "O Lord, I pray thee turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." And why did the Lord answer that prayer, if it were not the prayer of faith?

In all these men of God, sunk though they were almost to the last and lowest point, there was still the life of faith; and by that faith they called upon God. They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. Here then is the connection between the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and the experience of this seemingly dead soul. When Christ died, He bare the sins of this poor dead soul in His body on the tree, and thus atoned for them and put them away. When Christ rose from the dead, this poor dead soul rose with Him, as a member of His mystical body. When Christ went up on high, he ascended with Him. And when Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father, he virtually and mystically sat down with Him in heavenly bliss. Therefore, because Jesus is the resurrection, and because as such he has an interest in Him, he that believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

How often, dear friends, we sink into places where we are in our feelings dead men. Has sin never slain you? Have convictions never, so to speak, knocked the life of God out of your soul? Has Satan never come with his fiery darts, with all the artillery of hell, and sought to scorch up every gracious feeling and every living desire? And have you not sunk at times in your soul into such miserable deadness of spirit, that it seemed that not only there and then you were devoid of all grace, but that it was an impossibility for grace ever again to renew and revive your soul? Here you were dead. I have been often here which enables me to describe it to you. Yet with all this there is a longing look, a heartfelt groan, a heaving sigh, a resisting unto blood, not an utter giving way, nor sinking down into miserable despair.

God the Spirit kept alive His work upon the soul, and Christ Himself as the resurrection dropped into our bosom, raised up and drew forth towards Himself some fresh movements of that life which is in Him. There was thus fulfilled that gracious consequence of His resurrection, "Whosoever believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." O, amidst all our deadness, all our gloom and desolation, all our emptiness, barrenness and helplessness, if there be in our souls a longing look, a heart-felt cry, an earnest groan, a sincere desire toward Him who is the resurrection, our prayer will ascend into His pitying, sympathising ear; and as He is the resurrection, He will once more raise up into life and feeling our dead and drooping soul. We have no other source of life. If we were altogether and really dead, we should always continue dead unless He were the Resurrection. But because He is the Resurrection, He can re-animate, revive, renew and requicken us by pouring into our hearts fresh life and feeling. It will be our mercy to be ever looking unto Him, hanging upon Him, believing in Him, trusting to Him, and giving Him no rest until He appear again and again to the joy and rejoicing of our heart.

I fully believe that very many, perhaps I may add, the large majority of the people of God feel much of this death, which I have been describing; and perhaps, though it may seem singular so to speak, those who are most lively feel it most. Were we totally dead, we should have no sensible feeling of our death at all, but should be like those described by Heman: "Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom Thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from Thy hand." (Ps. 88:5.) Were we half or three parts dead we should feel it just in proportion to the amount of our life over our death. It is in spiritual things almost as in natural; the more a person is paralysed the less feeling he

has. Thus, though it may seem a paradox, the more life that you have the more do you feel your death. How light and trifling, easy and unconcerned most professors are. Why? Because they have not enough life to feel their death.

It is good then that we should feel our death; for it not only shows us more clearly and sensibly our wretched case and state by nature, but by driving us out of all help and hope in self, makes us to prize more dearly the life that is in Christ. How suitable then, how comforting, how reaching down to the utmost extremity of our case, are the words, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." When, too, we see and realise the connection of every gracious revival with the resurrection of Christ, how sure and firm it makes those revivals to be, those visitations which preserve our spirit. This made Paul long so ardently to know the power of Christ's resurrection. (Php. 3:10.) It was not the bare doctrine or the mere fact of His resurrection that he wanted to know, but the power of it as revealed and made manifest in his own heart. But it is by believing in Him that we receive these gracious revivals—not by looking to ourselves, but to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

II. But I now come to the other gracious consequence, connected, like the last, with the gracious declaration, which fell from the Lord's lips, "I am the resurrection and the life." It would almost seem as if the Lord divided His people into two classes. They are both believers, for you will find the same thing spoken of each. "He that believeth in Me," and "Whosoever believeth in Me." They are therefore both partakers of the same faith, for there is but "one faith;" and yet our Lord speaks of one class as dead, and the other class as living. How is this paradox to be explained? I will endeavour to show you. The dead I have described as those not dead in sin, nor dead in profession, but dead in feeling.

We have then to explain the living in a similar way. "He that liveth" is one who has the life of God warm in his soul; one that knows something of the living experience of faith and hope and love; one who can and does rise by the power of God out of darkness and death, and knows something of living union and living communion with a living Lord; one in whose heart the kingdom of God is set up with a divine power; one who has righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; in whose heart the holy Dove nestles; over whose soul He sheds his gracious influences; whom He stirs up as the eagle stirs up her nest, and makes him alive and lively too.

You will find this striking difference among the family of God. There are some who scarcely seem to have, or at least to realise the life of God in their souls. You will find them almost always complaining of a body of sin and death; always full of doubt and fear, always crying out bitterly against themselves and mourning and sighing under the pressure of heavy burdens, constant trials and continual afflictions. Now and then it is true they get a little relief, a little lightening of their burdens, tokens for good, helps from the sanctuary, encouraging promises, and gracious gleams of light and life across their path. But for the most part their almost daily experience is to feel and bewail their own deadness. Now to these the resurrection of Christ is blessedly adapted. He who is the Resurrection folds them in His loving embrace, though they can hardly realise His sustaining arms. But who keeps them from utterly falling, or from time to time revives their drooping hope? None but He who is the Resurrection. The gracious Lord who feeds his flock like a shepherd, gathers these lambs with His arms, carried them in His bosom and gently leads those that are with young.

But there are others of God's family, a small minority perhaps, who are more favoured, more blessed, whose souls are kept more alive and warm in the things of God. I have known a few of these in my time, though but a few, for we live in a dark and gloomy day when the Spirit of the Lord seems much straitened, and His gracious consolations little vouchsafed. But these are the most profitable Christians that we can have intercourse with; for sometimes they seem to warm us by the influence of their own warmth, are made instrumental in stirring up our sleeping graces, or reprove us in our consciences for our coldness and deadness.

Thus we get good from their company and find their society strengthening and profitable. Their prayers, too, whether in public or private are a blessing to the Church of God; and if they be ministers, as having life and power in their souls, they can speak with more unction and savour to the hearts of God's family than their brethren who are more borne down by a body of sin and death. Not but that the Lord makes use of both—His tried and tempted servants to feed His tried and tempted people, and those who walk more at liberty to feed that part of the family who are similarly favoured and blessed. And yet they are as dependent on the Lord of life as the others. They have to believe and do believe in the same Lord, hang upon the same atoning blood, shelter themselves beneath the same justifying righteousness, trust to the same faithfulness, and cleave to the same blessed Redeemer as their less favoured brethren. But to them in an especial manner He is "the Life," as to the others He is "the Resurrection." Sitting in His risen glory at the right hand of the Father, He contains in Himself life in all its fulness; and as they feel and realise this, it draws them up into sweet communion with Him.

The Lord Jesus is first the Resurrection and then the Life, for necessarily He rose from the dead before He ascended on high. Each has its special power and virtue. By virtue of His resurrection He quickens the dead; by virtue of His life He maintains the life that He gives. Thus as dead, we both need and realise His resurrection; as living, we feel and realise His life. But it is by looking unto him and at Him, by contemplating His Person and work, by going out after Him in earnest breathings and desires and by receiving out of His fulness that we realise Him to be the life, and draw life out of Him into our needy and empty souls. As then those that live thus believe in Him, He indulges them with visitations of His presence and grace, communes with them from off the mercy-seat; keeps their souls tender in the fear of God; separates them in person, in heart, in affection from an ungodly world; makes them spiritually-minded, which is life and peace; and draws them near to His bosom, where they find food and shelter.

And yet it is the same living faith, though stronger, which we have seen acting in those who are lamenting their death; and as stronger exposed to sharper trials, weighted down by the pressure of heavier afflictions, carrying a more heavy daily cross, and fighting harder against the world, the flesh and the devil. This may seem strange; but was it not Paul's experience to be "sorrowful yet always rejoicing?" So it is with these. None more burdened, none more blessed; none more afflicted, none more favoured; none fighting harder battles, none gaining greater victories. Thus their very afflictions are made use of as goads to urge them forward; their crosses though heavy to bear, are employed as means to make them move on, if more slowly, yet more surely; and those very circumstances which most deeply try them prove in the end their richest mercies. Thus, take the whole family of God, whether they be in the class which I have first

described, dead in law, dead in feeling, as Berridge says, **"Self condemned and self abhorred,"** scarcely able to trace the life of God in their own souls, and often sunk very low in gloomy fears, still they are believers in the Son of God; for He who is the Resurrection can and does raise up in their hearts some living faith in Himself. And yet for the most part they drag wearily on from this deadness of spirit and coldness of affection. But the other class, fewer indeed in number, yet still partakers of the same faith, and looking to the same Lord, enjoy more of His manifested presence and love.

Now see the two promises which are made to each. Of the first it is said that "he shall live;" of the second, that "he shall never die." How precious are these promises in themselves. How much more precious is, or should be, the Lord Himself who made and gave them, and who is Himself their sum and substance! I could wish for myself and you, to find their fulfilment in our daily experience; that we might prove the firm foundation on which they rest, and that as spoken by the mouth of Christ, they are spirit and life to our souls. We shall never get the least benefit by looking to ourselves; for all that we are and have is sin, darkness and death. We must look out of ourselves, come out of ourselves, live out of ourselves to find resurrection and life in the risen Son of God.

But we may stretch our thoughts a little further still. The promise has a future aspect as well as a present one, a literal as well as a spiritual meaning. One part of it embraces those who are gone before and now lie sleeping in their graves. As Christ is the Resurrection, these though dead shall live again when He comes to call forth their sleeping dust; for they will hear and answer His voice. As Job says, "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." (Job 14:15.) And so speaks Paul: "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." (1 Cor. 15:51, 52.) The second part of the promise where the Lord declares that "whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die," seems to have a reference to that change which will pass upon the living saints when Christ appears; for these will not die but be changed in a moment, death being swallowed up of life, (2 Cor. 5:4) and they caught up together with the risen dead in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. 4:17.) O that we could live in the daily experience and blessed enjoyment of these divine realities. What an effect they would have on our daily walk and life.

III.—But I come now to our last point, which is **the gracious appeal** which the Lord made to Martha's faith; and I would use the words of our gracious Lord as if they spoke individually to my and your conscience: "**Believest thou this?**"

Can you then by a living faith set to your seal that these things are true, for this was the meaning and import of the Lord's address to Martha? And you will observe that His appeal embraces the whole of His declaration, "Believest thou that I am the Resurrection? Believest thou that I am the Life? Believest thou that he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live? Believest thou that whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die?" How close the appeal! How piercing the enquiry! How it seems as if the eyes of the Lord looked into her immortal soul. And those same eyes, which are "as a flame of fire," now also read the thoughts of our heart. If, then, you have the life of God in your bosom; if you are amongst those who believe in Christ, in which of these two classes do you rank yourself? How shall

I put my hand upon you that I may guide my fingers aright? Ephraim and Manasseh stood before Jacob, each to receive a blessing. God guided his hands aright, though his eyes could not see. I cannot see your hearts. God guide my hands aright, that a suitable blessing may come to each as I lay my hand upon you!

I. I will first take those who feel much of the state of death and darkness into which sin has brought them, and who for the most part are little able to rise out of it. And I would say to you, "Believest thou this?" Believest thou that though thou art condemned by law, condemned by conscience, condemned by the feelings of thine own soul, as being much shut up in darkness and death, there is in thee some living faith in the Son of God?

Dost thou believe that Jesus is the Resurrection? What evidence hast thou that He is? Has He quickened thy soul? Has he convinced thee of thy sins and given thee repentance for them? Has he brought thee out of the world? Has he turned thee from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God? Has he raised thee from the dead—that death in sin or death in profession in which thou once walkedst? Dost thou ever feel any movements of divine life in thy soul, such as sighing, crying, groaning, hungering, thirsting, longing, panting and mourning? Hast thou any spirit of prayer in thy breast? Any earnestness, sincerity, self-abhorrence? Hast thou any contrition, brokenness, humility, softness of spirit and tenderness of conscience? Hast thou any godly fear working in thy bosom in buying and selling, in your daily walk, in your families, in your business, in the various matters and movements of your dally life? Do you find a fountain of life in you to depart from the snares of death, and some power and strength communicated to fight against your corruptions and overcome them? Has Jesus at

any time or in any measure manifested Himself as a suitable Saviour to your soul? I say suitable, for that is sometimes the first view, which we have of Him. Has He in any measure drawn out a faith in Himself as such, and in the power and experience of that faith you have received and embraced Him as the Son of God?

Believest thou that He is the Resurrection? Why do you believe it, and that Jesus has risen from the dead? What evidence have you of that cardinal doctrine of our most holy faith, that vital, glorious truth, which shines in the world like the sun in the sky to illuminate the whole page of revelation with its gracious and glorious beams? Is this your evidence that you have seen Him as such by the eye of faith, and life flowed through it into your soul? Then you have a real, experimental evidence, though perhaps not a very sure one in your own feelings, that He has quickened you into divine life; that He raised you up with Himself when He rose from the dead, and that you are a member of His mystical body.

Do bear in mind that these things can only be received and realised by faith. Your faith may be small and yet blessedly real. But you say, "The law condemns me, my conscience accuses me, my sins are a heavy burden to me, under which at times I seem almost ready to sink, and I do feel such thorough inability to bring myself any relief, such complete helplessness and miserable impotency to deliver myself out of my state, that it seems as if I shall die in my sins. O that pardon would reach my breast." But is there no longing look to the risen Son of God, no ardent cry, that He would manifest Himself and drop a word into your soul? Is there no breathing in your heart after Jesus that He would graciously come over the hills and mountains of your sin and shame, and break in upon you with some beams of heavenly light? Have you never seen Him suitable to your case? Have you

never beheld his Person by the eye of faith as the great and glorious God-Man? Have you never seen the efficacy of His atoning blood, the beauty and blessedness of His justifying righteousness, and have you never heard some gracious words from His mouth? Has His holy word never been opened up to your mind so that you have seen light in God's light, and believed what you read from the sacred, solemn power, which attended it to your Soul? Have you never been blessed under the preached word, and found faith raised up to receive and believe what dropped with sweetness into your ear and heart? This was faith; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Then, though you feel dead, as slain by the sentence of the law and the verdict of your own conscience, yet if you find any living faith in the Son of God as the resurrection, you shall live. The Lord has declared it, and His word will stand when the world is in a blaze, "Thou shalt live." Thou shalt live here by a life of faith in the Son of God. Thy small faith shall be increased, thy hope be enlarged, and thy scanty love, which now steals through the weeds almost unseen, like a little tiny brooklet, will open into a stream, and before thou art laid upon a dying bed, or perhaps there, thy peace shall flow like a river. It is hard to believe this, for we look so much to self and so lose sight of the freeness and fulness of sovereign superabounding grace. But do weigh these things in the balance of the sanctuary, and especially by the word of the Lord in our text. Do you not find in your own bosom these two things—death and life? Your own death as a condemned sinner and your life, which is hid with Christ in God. Then, by this death and by this life you have a manifested interest in the promise, "Though he were dead, yet shall he live."

II. But now I will take the other character, of whom the Lord says, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." And may I not also say to you, "Believest thou this?.... Yes," you answer, "I do believe it; for I feel the sweet assurance and blessed earnest of it in my own soul. I know that Jesus is the life, because I live upon him, and he sustains my life by daily supplies. Sometimes I get a sweet portion out of His word to comfort my heart; sometimes a touch of His soft hand to melt my soul; sometimes a smile from His loving face to cheer my spirit; sometimes a word from His gracious lips to instruct my understanding; and by these things I live."

"I find," you say, "that these things separate me from the world, make me live much alone, teach me to prize my Bible, bring me often to close dealings with God, favour a spirit of prayer in my breast, and make me feel that there is a blessedness in the things of God which nothing else can give. But I have my changes and these very many; for I cannot keep alive one warm or tender feeling. 'If two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?' (Eccl. 4:11.) When I am left alone I soon grow cold; and when the Lord suspends His gracious operations upon my heart, I sink down into carnality and death. So that I do believe He is 'the life;' for I am sure I have none in myself, and it is only because 'He lives that I live also'."

Then you can set to your seal that Jesus spake words of grace and truth when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Your faith, my dear friends, will ever be embracing Him in these two characters: sometimes dead and embracing Him as the resurrection; sometimes living and embracing Him as the life. But whether He be the Resurrection to raise up our dead and drooping souls, or whether He be the Life to maintain in our bosom the life He gave, we come to this one point, that the only life we can live worthy of the name, or

attended with any fruitfulness in any good word or in any good work, is by a life of faith in the Son of God. And do bear in mind that the life of Christ within must be evidenced by a corresponding life without. Wherever there is faith there will, there must be the fruits of faith, and these will be manifested in a godly life, in the performance of every good work to which we are called by our station or position, so as to make it manifest that our faith is not a dead but a living principle, and that by it we glorify God in our body and in our spirit which are His.

I shall add no more. I have laid before you according to my ability the way in which the Lord for the most part leads His dear family; and if you can find any clear mark or blessed evidence of the grace of God being in your breast, thank God and take courage. Jesus lives at the right hand of the Father: He lives to save, He lives to bless, He lives to bring you off more than conquerors through His own blood and love and grace.