

# THE PRESENT DEATH AND FUTURE LIFE OF THE LOST

## A SERMON

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“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” Revelation 20:5

I HAVE, as you are aware, taken this thousand years in that which appears to me to be its meaning, namely, in the mystical sense, that it means the New Testament dispensation. And in the founding of that dispensation, the Lord Jesus Christ, here set forth as an angel, the angel of the covenant, laid hold of that old dragon the serpent, the devil, and bound him, and cast him into the abyss; not into the pit of the abyss. The word *pit* is not in the original used in this chapter at all but simply “the abyss,” and which, as I have before shown, means the world, And the Savior has shut him up within certain limits, and has placed the seal of infamy upon him; and that seal is that by which Satan is to be known wherever he is; and if you know his mark, you will by his mark know his presence. The twofold seal which the Savior has put upon Satan is this, that he is a liar and a murderer. And so, wherever you find an opposition to God’s truth, that is of the devil and that opposition to God’s truth, or that which would set the truth of God aside, would murder souls, would take souls away from God; just as Satan, by lies, originally took Adam and Eve away from God and thereby took the whole human race away from God; and he would so deal with the saints if he could; but this is not possible. They shall know him by the mark that he bears. He is a liar; he is one that opposes the new covenant; he is one that opposes the perfection of the Mediator of the new covenant. And here is the twofold seal, and that is the seal that is set upon him. I care not in what dress the enemy appears. He may appear as an angel of light in the eyes of men, but if it be in a position of hostility to God’s truth the mark denotes the presence of the liar and the murderer of our souls. But the dear Redeemer has shut him up within certain limits, though, at the end of this gospel dispensation, he will again have that liberty which I hope, before I have done with this chapter, to give you some thoughts upon. Suffice it here just to say, that if sin and Satan, and death did not receive their death blow at Calvary’s cross, they never will receive it now. If sin were not mediatorially destroyed then, it will never be realizationally destroyed; and if the sting of death were not mediatorially destroyed then, the saying, in personal realization, will never be brought to pass, that death is swallowed up in victory, “O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, that gives us the victory by our Lord

Jesus Christ.” He then inflicted upon sin, and Satan, and death, their death-blow when he died; so that if we speak of Satan, we have to speak of a conquered foe; if we speak of sin, we have to speak of a conquered principality and power; if we speak of death, we have to speak of a conquered power; and we realize the victory that he has wrought by faith in his precious blood. And where shall I look for the fulfilment of that scripture in the 30th of Isaiah, “The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun”? That verse, in its progressive description, is expressive of the augmentation of light from small beginning unto the perfect day; that the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun. There shall be an augmentation of heavenly light: “and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days;” there is a reference to the finished work of creation, as an illustration of the finished work of salvation. Where are we to look for this augmentation of light? and when is this to take place? Why, “in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people and heals the stroke of their wound.” And he did that, mediatorially, at Calvary’s cross. Jesus is born, there is the moonlight; he progresses, there is the sunlight; he atones for sin, there is the sevenfold light. He makes up the breach, he heals the stroke of our wound mediatorially; here is the perfection of light. We are brought into this light by degrees; a little now, a little then, and a little after. And so it is said, “The path of the just”, once brought into the path of justification, and that path is the path of faith in Christ, justified by faith in Christ; once brought into the right path, where death, and sin, and Satan are conquered and gone, and where the light of eternity shines, we come into this light by degrees, and so, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.” Thus, I get, at Calvary’s cross, the glorious fact that sin was conquered, Satan bound, death swallowed up in victory, our souls saved. I get at Calvary’s cross that augmentation of light that goes on to the perfection there described. And what is it we want, “when he shall make up the breach of his people, and heal the stroke of their wound”? Why, there is everything in that we need. Sin has done us infinite and, for aught we could do, eternal mischief. Jesus Christ made up the breach, healed the stroke of the wound, and has secured a likeness to himself; for we are, by what he has done, predestinated to be conformed unto his image.

Thus, then, you find, at least, so I think, that the souls of them that were beheaded, as I showed last Lord’s day morning, mean the souls of all the children of God, because they all possess a martyr’s spirit, they all possess a martyr’s soul, the qualities of which I described last Lord’s day morning. Now, these are they that are made alive; but the rest of the dead, all by nature are dead, all are in that position. Some are brought out of that state; “but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” John saw what we see, that they had a life in the first Adam; that they relatively lived in holiness, not personally, but relatively in holiness, and righteousness, and love, and peace; but sin entered, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. And thus those who are not interested in Christ’s resurrection; those who are not interested in regeneration, are not associated with the first resurrection, and therefore that life which they had in the first Adam is gone, and they live not again until the thousand years are finished.

Now, again, I am not sure that these thousand years are not in the 7th of Deuteronomy called a thousand generations. In the 9th verse of the 7th chapter of Deuteronomy, there is something very emphatic: “Know therefore that the Lord your God he is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.” I am not sure that while we may attach, in the first place, an old covenant

dispensational meaning to the period there named, whether in its ultimate meaning it does not mean, mystically, the same thing that here is called a thousand years. Just look at the verse. "Know therefore that Jehovah, your Interposer", for that is the proper meaning of the original. He is an Interposer, the faithful Interposer, "which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him;" first, with Christ, who loved him, and secondly, with the people who are brought by Christ Jesus to love God, and to keep the commandments; not of legal performance, but to keep the commandments of faith; and to keep the commandments of faith is to keep the truth whole and entire, and abide by the covenant of the blessed God. He will keep his covenant in mercy With such for a thousand years, unto a thousand generations, So that there shall be during this gospel dispensation, a succession of living men, a succession of martyr souls, a succession of men that shall reign with Christ generation after generation, during this whole dispensation; and when the dispensation shall end, then the same persons shall reign with him forever.

Some suppose that the word *resurrection* cannot apply to regeneration; some suppose that the word *resurrection* necessarily means the resurrection of the body from the dead. Some suppose this; but that is a wrong supposition. The original word itself does not necessarily imply the resurrection of the body at all; for if it does, why is the word *dead* added to it sometimes; where it is not in this chapter, "resurrection from the dead." But if the word *resurrection* itself meant the resurrection of the body from the dead, why add the word *dead* to it? The word *resurrection*, then, simply signifies to raise anything up, let it be what it may. Hence, in the 2nd of Luke, for instance, it is said of Christ Jesus that he is "set for the fall and rising (*resurrection*, original) again of many in Israel." Before I enter upon the subject, let me give you one sample of this. When the Lord met Saul of Tarsus, he brought Saul down. Now mark the language. "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;" Christ Jesus. And so, Saul of Tarsus fell before him; and it was the best fall that Saul ever had. Happy for you if you know what it is to fall down under a conviction of your need of Christ; to submit to the authority of Christ, with the prayer unto Christ, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" It was a fall of mercy and therefore, as it was a fall of mercy, he was in due time raised up; and so the same Jesus Christ that brought him down, brought him up, raised him up, not only as a sated sinner, but made as you are aware, an apostle of him. So that the word *resurrection* simply signifies "to raise up." "He has raised us up to sit together in heavenly places; in Christ Jesus the Lord." Thus, then, the Savior has limited Satan; thus, the Savior has brought in a perfection of light, and thus the Savior shall have a succession of living souls down to the end of time. I shall take no notice this morning of other theories; that would make our Sermon controversial. I will only just say I have received several letters this week, some in a tone very-kindly, and others as unkindly, I think, as they could be written; and the writers of some have used such gross language, so abusive, which I should be very sorry to imitate. But their abuse of me did not hinder me from taking into my serious and prayerful consideration the little bits of argument that they threw in between their abusive epithets; for I thought, Never mind that, I will set that aside; because I think the words of the poet are very wise:

"Trust not yourself, but your defects to know;  
Make use of every friend and every foe,"

And, as the old Latin adage says, "It is lawful to learn even of an adversary." But as these letters contain the old theories that I was acquainted with thirty years ago, and never felt satisfied with, why, of course, they have not the slightest power with me; and if I should be favored to preach

another sermon upon this subject, I will bring things from the latter part of this chapter that are entirely fatal to all those theories advocated by the customary and fashionable ideas of men.

Our text this morning, or rather our subject, then, lies, in one sense, in a small compass. Our subject this morning is *the present death and future life of the lost*. Now, by nature, men are dead in sin, they are dead, and except we are made to live by the grace of God, we must be lost. The rest of the dead lived not again until the dispensation was ended; that is, those dead in sin. We are not naturally dead; we have animal life, therefore can use our bodily powers: we are not rationally dead; we have our rationality, and, therefore, can conduct our business: we are not morally dead, or incapable of moral right and wrong; for, if so, you would do away with moral accountability, moral restraint, and all law together; there would be no principle by which men could be held accountable, either to one another or to their Maker, for their actions, if we held that doctrine that they are morally dead. I deny that they are morally dead, but I do hold that while man is not naturally or physically dead, or rationally dead, or morally dead, I do hold that man is, by nature, *spiritually* dead; that there is a spirituality in God's law that the man dead in sin cannot conform to; and therefore, they that are in the flesh cannot please God, and that man being spiritually dead, while in that state he can no more spiritually receive the things of the Spirit than the dead man naturally can receive natural things. I will prove this presently in as striking a way as I think you yourselves that are Christians would wish to understand the matter. I will show you the word of the Lord upon this matter, in order that I may this morning be the means of carrying home to your minds the solemn, the absolute necessity of the Spirit of God quickening the soul, the absolute necessity of vital godliness in the soul. Now men can take silver, or gold, or wood, or stones, or iron, and other things, and they can sculpture those materials into the shape of men, and give them every appearance of human beings; but then, at the same time, it is only the appearance, there is no life in them. And just so now spiritually, or in the Christian sense; you may convert men to Christianity, you may convert them to the dispensation of Christianity, you may convert them to a certain creed, you may convert them morally and mentally, and give them every possible appearance of a Christian, and yet they are no more Christians than those stocks and stones, sculptured into the shape of men, are living men. This I will prove. 115th Psalm, "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not." So, the natural man; can he speak, out of his own soul, of soul-trouble? Does the natural man know what it is to come under a sight and sense of his lost, ruined, and helpless condition? He has a mouth as a man; he can speak naturally, and rationally, and morally, but he cannot speak out anything of a vital experience. You may have undergone soul-trouble enough to convert you to Arminianism, and that will relieve and deceive you into the bargain; you may have soul-trouble enough to convert you to duty-faithism, and that same false gospel that falsely convinced you, and falsely converted you, shall give you false peace, and settle you down in the damnable heresies of Satan as a perverter of the gospel. And yet at the same time you are not a Christian; you have all the forms and shapes of a Christian, but you are not a Christian. "They have mouths, but they speak not;" they cannot speak nor give any testimony of what God's truth is to their souls, for they have never vitally and really received it. "Eyes have they, but they see not;" they do not so see God's Christ, in the order of his eternal perfection, as to receive him to the exclusion of anything and everything else. "They have ears, but they hear not;" they cannot hear the tidings of the gospel as a joyful sound; they would rather have it mixed with something that, as they call it, moderates the matter, just as though they were moderate sinners. It is enough to make one tremble to hear men talk of moderation in the things of eternity. My hearer, is sin a moderate thing? Is the curse of the law a moderate thing?

Is the wrath of God a moderate thing? Are not all these things tremendous. Do we not, then, need a gospel that shall deliver us from these infinities of woe? It will be time to talk of a moderate gospel when sin is a moderate thing, when Satan is moderate in his designs, when you are a moderate sinner. Hence, in our day, Ah! I like the man that is moderate. Yes, that just shows that you are not a sinner convinced of your real condition; for if you were, then you would have ears to hear that great gospel, that great salvation, that great grace, that great mercy, which alone can save you. "They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not" the word of life: "feet have they," but for the life of them they cannot walk in the narrow way: "Wide is the gate, broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in there at." These persons have feet, they walk in a profession; but to walk in the narrow way, to be narrowed into God's sovereignty and the certainty of eternal truth, for the life of them they can't do this. "Neither speak they through their throat." Why not? There is no breath, there is no spiritual breath, there is no sighing, no mourning, no distress; no, it is all pleasure, all outwards how, all glee, all fancy; all Come to Christ, all do this, and do that, and do the other. Ah, my hearer, that may please your carnal senses, but it will never save the soul.

Now, then, "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusts in them." So that if I make a profession of religion, and am not quickened by the power of the Holy Ghost, I may have all the outward appearance of the Christian, as these sculptured images had all the outward appearance of men; yet at the same time, they were no more men after being sculptured into the shape of men, than they were when they were in the rough material. And so, as the Lord God Almighty lives, I believe there are thousands in our day that are no more Christians after they are converted, such a conversion as it is, than they were before; that there is no more spiritual life in them now than when they made no profession at all. Let us, then, my hearer, look to it, and see whether we still remain in the congregation of the dead. We know the man who makes no profession at all is dead; that we are quite sure of. But then, it is solemn to think of that judgment must begin at the house of God, and that many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. Look, then, at that 115th Psalm, see then the silver and gold sculptured into images, and see those dead images made by the living God himself, a figure of the state we are all in by nature, even when conformed by profession outwardly to Christianity, or to Christ Jesus. These are the dead.

Now, you will say, How shall I know that my religion is vital, that I am not among the dead? Does the same Psalm that represents us all in that state show what the characteristics of those who are not dead are? That same Psalm does, and a word upon which I will just give presently, after I have said a few words more upon the images. Now, here are some images made of lifeless material, and I am to go and exhort those images to come to Christ and tell them it is their duty to come to Christ! I make no hesitation in saying that, for vital purposes, I do not say for moral and social purposes, but for vital and saving purposes, I might just as well preach to the stones of the field; I might just as well preach to the dry bones in Ezekiel's valley; I might just as well preach to the pillars, and pews, and materials of this chapel, as to any vital good that, will be done, if the Holy Ghost does not quicken the soul. Hence, John the Baptist felt this; "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham;" as though John should say, If a soul be quickened, it will as much require supernal power to make a Christian as it would to turn a stone into a living man. It will take the same power to quicken a soul from the dead that it did to bring Lazarus out of the grave. And do you not find this? You argue with a natural man; I care not whether he is a profane man or a Catholic, or a duty-faith man, an Armenian, a Socinian; you cannot convince them of vital

godliness. You may tell them of your soul-trouble, they can't understand it; you can't convince them; you can't shut their mouths; they can't realize the force of your argument; they can't understand these things. And hence, then, it is vain for you, some of you young ones, rather mad brained, perhaps, running about and going to correct everybody. Why, you will come no better off in your self-sent sort of mission than the sons of Sceva did. Oh, said they, we are determined to overcome the devil; we will do something. Why, says the devil, who are you? Paul, we know, and Jesus Christ we know; we know that Paul and Jesus Christ go together; wherever, we see Paul we are afraid of him; we are not afraid of Paul himself, but because we know that where Paul is Jesus Christ is not far off; and therefore, Paul we know, and Jesus Christ we know; but who are you? And they were glad to go away and leave the matter, and so will you. Go steadily on, and remember it is the work of God to raise the dead. The doctrine of universal exhortation I believe to be from beneath. Well, now, if it be so, how solemn a matter is it! The doctrine of universal exhortation, of inviting all men to come to Christ, is a burlesque upon the souls of men; it is an insult upon the majesty of the Holy Ghost; it is direct rebellion against the sovereignty of God; as though we were determined to save whom we pleased, and that we would almost curse the Almighty himself rather than let him have his own way. But no, my hearer, those that the Lord sends, they must go in the spirit that the apostle Paul was in when Agrippa said, "Almost you persuade me to be a Christian." What a wonder Paul had not said, "So you ought to be; it is your duty to be; you can be at once." No: "I would to God," for all that is not of God will come to nothing; "I would to God that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." I do not wish you my trouble; I should like to see you have my religion; should like to see the Holy Spirit quicken your soul; should like to see you come into the same soul-trouble, and into the same salvation. I do not wish you any harm, wish you nothing but good. Such is the feeling of every Christian man towards others. Look at it again; then, "Their idols are silver and gold;" there is the description of them, and that is just what men are by nature. Now you can see the error; when I tell you that none, but God could turn one of those images into a living man. the proposition is self-evident. But when we come to the state of the soul by nature, because man is not naturally dead, and not rationally dead, and not morally dead, but is as spiritually dead as those images are literally dead; but because man has a trinity of powers, the bodily, the mental, and the conscience, because he has those powers, they infer that he can do something towards coming to Christ, in direct opposition to God's own representation of it. The finally lost are the dead; and they remain dead; they never can be quickened; God never intended to quicken them; and if God does not quicken them, vain is the help of man.

Let us see the exception. What is the character of the people that are quickened? Why, that same 115th Psalm that I have quoted gives a description of the living. You have the language of the living. The living were persons that renounced all confidence in the flesh, and assigned the reasons there for; the persons that were living were persons that submitted to the sovereignty of God, and made it their delight; the persons that were living were made to trust in God after a certain order of things; the persons who were quickened were blessed of the Lord after a certain order of things. Hence it is, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name give glory." What for? "For your mercy;" there it is "your mercy." Ah, it was your mercy by which you did remember me in my low estate; it was in mercy you did send your dear Son into the world; it was in mercy that Jesus died, and rose, and ascended on high, and pleads our cause; it was in mercy, God who is rich in mercy, that he found, us out and showed us our state; it is of his mercy that we are not consumed; and it will be, down to the end, of his mercy that we are not consumed. "Not unto us, O Lord, not

unto us, but unto your name give glory, for your mercy," is that all? No, "and for your truth's sake." Mercy without truth would have no certainty in it; but mercy to sweeten truth. The Lord could swear by no greater, but he swore by himself, saying, "In blessing I will bless you." Now, my hearer, let me bring you to the bar, if I can, of God's word, this morning, with all the solemnity of a dying man, as though we were all going into eternity (and; we shall very soon) as though we were going into eternity today. Can you truly say that your depraved condition as a sinner has been made such a burden to you that it has severed you from an ungodly world, and made you walk in the ways of the Lord? Can you say that your state has been such a burden to you that it has severed you from all these yea and nay gospels, and made you feel that if you are not saved by the mercy of a sworn covenant, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;" that you have no anchorage ground for your soul anywhere else; that you are convinced, if ever you have the spirit of adoption, it must be after the order of this sworn mercy, after the order of this yea and amen truth, after the order of that new covenant that is sealed with the Mediator's blood? Do you know what this is as in the sight of the living God? If you do not, you are dead in trespasses and in sins; you are a mere image, and that is all you are. You may have the outward show, and you may be dressed off so well that people may make the same mistake of you as is sometimes made in a certain exhibition in London, where effigies are got up to such perfection that I myself there, on one occasion, spoke to one of them, and said, "How do you do, sir? I am very glad to see you;" but he did not answer me. And so I have spoken to many a professor, but I could get no answer; that is, not the kind of answer that I wanted, And I thought at the time, at this exhibition, This is a trifling mistake that I have fallen into; but there are some terrible mistakes in this matter. Second, these living people were a people that had not their religion, at their command, but their religion had them at its command. And hence, the heathen taunted them, the same as mere professors taunt the afflicted and poor in Zion now. "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where, is now their God?" I don't see, says the heathen, that they get on better than other people; they have their faults as well other people; they have their adversities as well as other people. How can they be the elect? If they are the elect, if they are a part of that favored number; they ought to get on well in the world. Such is the carnal reasoning of the enemy. But mark the conclusion of the living man: "Our God is in the heavens; he has done whatsoever he has pleased." There it is, "he has done what soever he has pleased." Now can you, with a good conscience before God, say this; O thou God of heaven and earth, such is my state as a sinner, that if you had not, of your own pleasure, your own will, your own mercy, your own sovereignty, put me into the happy number, I never could have been there? I do not glory in God's sovereignty because some are left out, but I glory in God's sovereignty that any are taken in, and I glory in God's sovereignty as having a hope he has taken me in. Happy the man who can say this. If you can say this, then, O man, he has showed you what is good, and he will cause you to love mercy, to do justly, and to walk, not haughtily, but humbly with your God, in direct contrast to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. I do not, as the Lord lives, hold a single doctrine, I mean, not in essential matters of salvation, that is not a vital, living truth in my soul; it lives there, prevails there, reigns there, strengthens me there. People think, Ah, you hold a certain creed, that is, certain articles of belief. Alas! alas! alas! if that be all, it is a dead faith. No; every truth of the gospel must become a truth loved, a truth felt, a truth the value of which is to be so recognized as never either to be trifled with or to be parted with. The dead, then, know not what this mercy and truth means; the dead know not what it is thus to be brought down to the sovereignty of God. And well may the inspired writer, after setting forth the contrast, say, "O house of Israel! O house of Israel!" you that are thus brought to know that you are saved by his mercy and truth, you that are brought to side solemnly with his sovereignty "Trust

you in the Lord, trust you in Jehovah; he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield. You that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield. The Lord has been mindful of us; he will bless us: he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.” You observe the Lord’s people are spoken of there in three degrees, house of Israel, house of Aaron, and you that fear the Lord. Now the New Testament handles that subject like this: “Fathers” there is the house of Israel, princes with God, that have prevailed with God, that stand on the vantage-ground of triumph and victory, and rejoice that this God is their God; the house of Aaron, there are the young men that have overcome the wicked one, for they have just found out, the house of Aaron just found out, the priesthood, the perfection of the priesthood, the perfection of Christ’s death; just found out the truth of the efficacy of his blood, and they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, there are the young men, the house of Aaron: “And you that fear the Lord” there are the little children, they just begin to fear Jehovah, the original word there is Jehovah, “You that fear Jehovah;” there are the little children. I can hear the little ones lisping thus, Ah, I am just beginning to see that the love of God is eternal; I am just beginning to see the salvation of God is eternal; I am just beginning to see that redemption is eternal; I am just beginning to see that the covenant is eternal. Ah, people told me it was a gospel that might be gospel today, and something else tomorrow, but I am just beginning to fear Jehovah, I am just beginning to see the eternity of these things. There are the fathers have got there, there are the young men have just got there, and the little ones are wending their way towards it. And therefore, O Israel, that are thus brought into full assurance; you house of Aaron, you young men that have just taken the shield, and are armed with the testimony of the blood of the Lamb, by which Satan flies from you, and you obtain the victory; and you little ones, that are just beginning to see into the eternity of the gospel, that have renounced all yea and nay gospels, and are just beginning to see the yea and amen gospel, trust you in the Lord, he is your help and your shield, and he will bless you. And then these fathers and young men and little children all come together, and bear this testimony, first, concerning others; second, concerning the Lord. “The dead praise not Jehovah.” We lose a great deal from that word being translated very often, “The dead praise not Jehovah.” No; the dead professor does not like the eternal certainty of the truth; he does not like that; he does not like the import of that scripture, “I am that I am” as a good Hebrew scholar renders it very nicely, “I will be what I will be.” No creature can say that. You may say, I will be what I can be; that is as far as you can go; but you can’t say, I will be what I will be. But the Lord says, “I will be what I will be.” “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” I will and they shall. “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.” What a profession, a profession that goes down into silence. When the man dies his religion will die; he goes into silence.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Future Life of the Lost, will be noticed in a future Sermon.