



²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. ¹

THE SOUL'S AWAKENING

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 15TH, 1914.

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."—John 5:25.

I SUPPOSE that when a pearl-fisher is at the bottom of the sea, and has gathered his bag full of pearl-oysters, he will sometimes see others lying about, which he would be very, very glad to take up if he could; and I can imagine that when he has been safely taken into his boat, and has put away what he gathered the first time, he will be rather anxious to descend again somewhere near that same spot to bring up those which he left behind. This, at least, is much like my own case. While reading the chapter and preparing the sermon for this morning, I thought there were so many pearls in the text I could not say much about this particular verse, so I felt inclined to return to the same spot at once to see if we might not fetch up some fresh gems.

Those of you who were present this morning, will remember that we saw in the chapter a three-fold gradation of life-giving in the person of Christ. As here and there in the Old Testament dispensation God had raised up some persons from the dead, so Christ also in the days of his flesh had quickened whom he would; persons naturally dead he had restored to natural life. This is the first, and indeed a very wonderful, prerogative of live-giving for Christ to exercise, to be able to raise Lazarus from the grave, or to raise the young daughter of the ruler, or to restore to the widow her departed son. The second form of life-giving is that described in the verse before us. He was constantly giving, through his voice, spiritual life to those who were spiritually dead. The third kind of life-giving we spoke of is that of the universal resurrection, when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall rise to judgment. It is to the second that we propose to

direct our attention this evening—a form of life-giving which is going on now—not a matter of the past, as was the raising of a few in Christ's day; not a matter of the future, as the coming resurrection is, but a matter of the present; not so apparent to the eye and to the ear as either of those mysteries, in so much that it is to a great extent invisible, except to the man who is a participator in it, but just as real, just as miraculous, and in many senses even more marvellous and divine. Christ is constantly raising the spiritually dead, and giving them life. Oh! that we may be enabled by God's Spirit to open up this truth to your understanding, and may it be applied to your hearts! Our first endeavour shall be to describe:—

I. WHAT IT IS TO BE SPIRITUALLY DEAD.

"The hour is coming," says the Saviour, "and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." What is it to be spiritually dead? You all know what it is for the body to be physically dead. The soul has departed, and has left the body incapable, insensible, unable to preserve itself. The soul was like salt to it; that being gone, it soon becomes putrid and obnoxious. Poor dead body! A most terrible and humiliating spectacle to see, especially to look upon it after it has been lying for a while in the grave. We have most of us heard what it is to be morally dead. It does not happen, I hope, to very many, but there are some who seem to be dead to all moral feeling of right and wrong between their fellow-men—that is what I mean just now by morality. They have been so inured to theft, uncleanness, drunkenness, and some few even to murder, that when they have been arrested, convicted, imprisoned, nothing seemed to move them to repentance. Even the dread of the last terrible penalty of the law has not sufficed to bring from some of them any kind of emotion. Those who have been most earnest to arouse their conscience have felt the most painful conviction that their moral faculties were totally defunct. They have become callous, seared as with a hot iron. It is an awful spectacle to see a man morally dead—blind to reason, deaf to warning, numb to shame—thus morally dead. His passions raging without control, he becomes like some wild wolf of whom all the district is afraid, like a raging lion going about in quest of prey, whom every man dreads to encounter, and whom some think it only meet to slay. May none of us ever fall into such infamy! Alas! it might be! Step by step, little by little, men have become outcasts from society, and found their lodgement in the very lairs of corruption, though they were born in better circumstances and trained with brighter prospects. May God grant we may never come to it ourselves! But to be spiritually dead—what is that? It is something like these two, but I think it is somewhat different. I must describe spiritual death, not in its essence, for that I cannot do, but in its outward signs. Now, *observe a spiritually dead man*. He is not dead in any other respect. He walks abroad, and sees the fields full of abundant

harvests. At night-fall he looks up to the skies and marks the glorious scenery of night. By day he climbs the mountains, beholds the valleys beneath in all their smiling beauty, and gazes upward at the golden sun above. God is to be seen in all these—God manifestly the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of mankind, but this man does not perceive Him. He sees no God. Peradventure he can stand, like Byron, under the shadow of Mont Blanc, and write himself "Atheos," without God where God is everywhere. Where God is in every breath of air, where God is in every flower beneath his feet, he sees not the footprints of the Almighty; he believes not in his secret presence. Is the Great Eternal First Cause defunct, then, or is there no God? No, sirs, the man's perception of God is all gone, and is all that is gone; his power to realise spiritual things has failed, or else his ears would hear the voice of God in the sounding tops of the pines; his eyes would see the name of God written in golden letters athwart the midnight sky; his every sense would perceive God, and his inmost soul drink deep of God, but he is dead, and therefore he cannot. Watch that man in the common events of Providence. Many mercies have come to his store; there are happy children climbing his knee; his wife is in strong health and full of happiness; they have no need to look whence the next meal shall come. The stream of mercy flows hard by their door, and this has been continued many years; they have long enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity. Now, all this cometh from God, and health and strength are peculiarly his gifts. The power to get, and the power to enjoy, our earthly goods must both proceed from him. But this man never sees God in it at all. He talks of luck sometimes, and thinks himself a fortunate fellow. Luck, chance, and fortune—these seem to be his deity. Though the hand of God, wide open and full of bounty, is so spread out that one might think a bat or an owl might see it, yet this man perceives it not. The man is dead to the perception of spiritual things, that the great Master-spirit himself is not perceived when he cometh near loaded with favours.

As it is in nature, and, as it is with the gifts of Providence, so especially it is in anything like outward religion. The man attends a place of worship; it may be he repeats his creed; joins in a form of prayer; or possibly he drops in where simpler worship is adopted, and what doth he? He sings as others sing; he bows his head as others do in prayer; he listens as others do to the preaching of the Word, but it is a heavy, dull, monotonous service to him. He wishes it were over; he sees nothing in it; at least, if he had his way, and custom did not bind him at all, he would never be found wasting his time in such unprofitable proceedings as he thinks them to be. He is like the mouse in church that thinks the Bibles and Prayer-books dry nibbling. He would rather be in the common ale-house, or at home reading novels, or walking out in the fields, or anywhere than in the place of worship. Yet others sitting by

his side have found the profoundest pleasure in those sacred engagements, which have only brought weariness to him. Unlike him, they have been carried as on eagles' wings up to heaven; their souls have been filled with joy and peace, and they have said as they have retired, "Surely God was in that place, and it was good to be there." Why is this? The things ministered, and the man who ministered them, were the same. Ah! the one was dead, while the others lived. How shall the dead derive comfort? How shall the dead be charmed? How shall the dead be fed and instructed? God was in the sermon, but the carnally-minded man, being dead, perceived him not.

Nor, my dear friends, is this spiritual death merely a failure to recognize the being of God; it is equally palpable in reference to the moral obligations it involves. Man by nature is dead to the right and to the true, to the commandment of the Lord which enlightens the eyes, and to the testimony of the Lord which makes wise the simple. He is alive, probably, to his obligations to his fellow-men, because he has a clear understanding of their obligations to him; he keeps himself within the bounds of law and decency generally, but his greater obligations to his Creator—these cross not his mind, yet it is the very essence of rectitude and truth that he who made all things should be served by those he made, and that he who sustains in life all his creatures should have honour from those creatures, who owe their continued existence to him. Why does not the ungodly man think of this? How is it he can live for thirty or forty years sustained by God, and yet never give to God the service of his heart—scarcely thinking about his God at all? How is it? Why, because the man is dead to spiritual obligations. It must be so, or else he would lament that he had not met those obligations, and begin to repent that he had transgressed the bounds that his Maker set. The man is dead, sirs—dead.

Further, *the natural man is dead to eternal things*. How quick-eared he is to the things of time—how swift to perceive their value, and in what haste to grasp them if he can! But ah! the eternal realities which God has revealed in Scripture, the man neither cares to hear about them, nor, hearing them, do they excite any desires within his spirit. Alas! my hearers, we have sometimes had to warn you of the judgment to come; we have had to take down the shrill-sounding trumpet and blow an alarm; we have had to tell you that there is a dreadful hell into which the wicked, dying impenitent, must be cast; how is it that men are not stirred by a theme so truthful and so dreadful? Because they are dead. They would be awake enough if they were afraid that their house should be on fire, and that they themselves might be burned with the natural element; yet the spiritual danger, far more to be apprehended, arouses them not—because they are dead to it. At other times it has been our delight to speak of heaven, to picture the pearly-gated city with all its

azure brightness, with its bejewelled foundations, and to talk of its inhabitants all blessed for ever, who walk in the light of their glorious King, and sure it were enough to put heart into a stone, and to make the cold marble glow with warmth. But no, the thing moved not men. Some little joy of earth would whet their appetite far more quickly. It is because to the spiritual heaven revealed in Scripture men are altogether dead, and care not for it. Oh! sirs, 'tis sad, 'tis sad, 'tis very sad, that to the fleeting shadows we should be wide awake, but to that substantial verities we should be sound asleep; that after the poor gew-gaws and child's bubbles of this mortal state we should be all agog, but as to the solid joys and lasting pleasures of an eternal world we showed no desire! This, again, is a mark of spiritual death.

I must hasten on to mark a few more indications of this spiritual death. Prayer is one of the most blessed engagements and occupations of men while they are out of heaven—to ask of the All-bountiful One the mercies which they want. But there are some here to-night who never pray, who never really ask of God what they require. They take the attitude of supplicants, perhaps, as a matter of habit, but there they are like kneeling corpses. They do not pray; they are dead to prayer. Open this book, this holy Bible, before them. There was never such another; no angel ever gazed upon a page more rich with glory than this. This book it is that opens to us immortality, and gives us the news of eternal love. Set the natural man down before it. It is to him a mere history, or a dry book of dogmatic matters; he sees nothing in it that can charm him, nothing that can entrance his spirit. The man is dead, sir. To the sightless eye-balls the brightest jewels flash back no radiance. He is dead; yea, to Christ himself the man is dead, for when he is preached—Christ, the Father's son, the virgin's child, the condescending Saviour, the ascending Conqueror, the exalted King with glory crowned—why, the people of God delight to hear of him; to them the savour of Jesus' name is like ointment poured forth; but exhibit this Saviour to the natural man, he perceiveth nothing. How should he? He is dead, dead in trespasses and sins. All the outward phenomena that you will discern in the best natural man indicate that, whatever kind of light there may be in him, the light that deals with God, with the spirit-world, the world to come, is not there. He is unconscious of these, has no fellowship with them. He is dead, and a prey to corruption. When we have paused a minute we shall endeavour to describe:—

II. THE WORD WHICH JESUS BRINGS TO THE DEAD.

"The hour is coming, and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." Our Lord Jesus Christ is in Scripture, especially in the Gospel of John, called "the Word." Here his voice is spoken of, but what is a voice apart from the person that utters it? What is the Word which Jesus speaks by which

dead men are quickened? Is not Jesus Christ himself the Word of God to man? The distinct, articulate manifestation of Deity is Jesus Christ. Now, let me show you this. Jesus Christ came once upon a time from heaven, condescended to become a babe, to be nursed in a manger, to hang on a woman's breast. He was God. What did that say—that child, that babe—human, yet divine? Why, it said this, "God has pity upon man, and has not left him; he is about to establish an intimate relationship between himself, the great and the glorious, and man, the weak, and the pitiable—an union not at first between God and fully developed man, but between God and the babe; as if it should be said the weakest and feeblest of all that bear the name of manhood may take comfort, for God has come down and taken a baby's form into union with himself." That meant pity, it meant mercy, it meant fellowship, and it meant hope to the race of man. To this end Jesus passed a life in the midst of all our sorrows and infirmities, and took upon himself our sickness, and what meant that? Why it meant *compassion*. A beautiful word that—compassion—a united passion, a fellow-feeling, a kindred suffering. It seemed to say, "God is not indifferent to your woes. Oh! sons of men! Ye have fallen through your sins, but God pities you; God feels for you; he is no flinty-hearted Jupiter, who sits serenely on his throne amidst the pains, and agonies, and death eternal of his creatures; nay, but he hath come down to you; he hath taken upon himself manhood that he may suffer with man, and let man see that he has not left him, but that he feels for him. And, after he had lived a life of holiness, which was, indeed, comparatively but a small part of his work, our Lord Jesus Christ *gave himself up to die*. Into the garden he went, and there the wrath of God was laid upon him, till that precious cluster was so crushed in the awful press of the divine wrath, that great red drops of bloody sweat were distilled from every pore like the red juice from the cluster. He went to Pilate's hall, to Herod's tribunal, to be mocked, and scourged, and spat upon, and at last in agony extreme, he offered up his life on the accursed tree. What said he then to us? He said this, "God is just; I come down to you poor mortal men, and taking upon myself your nature, and taking also your sins, as your substitute I have to suffer." Christ Jesus' suffering is a loud word from God to this effect, "I pity you, men, but your sins I must punish; I cannot pass them by; if they are laid upon My Son I must prostrate my Son beneath their load; I cannot wink at sin, though it be laid upon the perfect Substitute, for even there I must hunt it to the death; it is an accursed thing and must not be tolerated; I must stamp it out of my universe." This is God's Word; he saith, "Justice as well as compassion; pity, but pity consistent with severity." Moreover, Jesus rose again from the dead, and now he ever liveth at the right hand of God, and his Holy Spirit has come, and animates at this time the preaching of the Word with divine energy. Christ now declares to

us God's Word after this fashion, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; whosoever will trust in the Incarnate Son of God and fully rely upon the merits of his wondrous suffering, shall be saved; God willeth not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto him and live, and everyone that will turn unto the living God, and trust his Son to make propitiation, shall be saved from the damning power of sin and have everlasting life." Christ, the living One, is God's Word to us that we shall be delivered from the wrath to come if we trust in him, even as he himself was delivered when he rose again from the dead and ascended into glory. My dear friends, the gospel which I preach again to-night is that which I have always preached, till I have a fear lest I should preach till you are almost nauseated with the repetition. Yet if it were so, I could not help it, for no other name do I dare to preach, nor is there any other foundation that I dare to lay and bid you build on it but this. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come. Here on earth, he lived and died, and suffered for the sake of mankind. God is a God of love, but he is also a God of justice. There is a way in which he can be just and yet tender to you. If you trust his dear Son, your sins shall not destroy you; Christ's sufferings shall stand, instead of yours, and you shall live. If you will now accept Christ, if you now will lean fully on Jesus, if you now will fling away both your love of sin and your love of our own righteousness, and come and rest where God would have you rest, God shall be reconciled to you, and you shall be his child, and you shall live for ever and ever. I must now close with a third point:—

III. THE MODE BY WHICH THIS WORD IS APPLIED.

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear." I have told you what they will hear; they will hear the word; but who will speak it? Who is it that alone can speak it to purpose? Why—"When the dead shall hear *the voice of the Son of God*, they that hear shall live." Whenever any dead soul does live, it is through the Word, but it is not through the voice of the preacher. That is but an instrument, and nothing more. The real voice that makes dead souls live is the voice of Christ Jesus. What, is it so? Does he actually speak to every soul that is saved? He does, I do not mean in fancy, as though you heard voices in the air, but I mean that this Word which I have just now preached to you must come home to your heart and your conscience, and be applied by the Holy Ghost thereto, so that you prove its power and feel its energy. Through the Holy Ghost it is that the voice of Christ is heard in the soul. But while I speak to you thus, some will say, "What, then, can we do with sinners, as we have not the voice that can raise them?" Why, you can pluck your Master by the skirt, and say to him, "Good Lord, speak the word, speak the word!" When I come into this pulpit the prayer that rises to my heart always—I hope I can say without guile always—is this, "Lord, be here to speak thyself

through me." I am persuaded that, though I preach to dead sinners ten thousand years, never will one be saved by my voice. Why, then, do I preach to sinners, knowing them to be dead? Because I am simply the instrument of Christ, and he speaks through his voice with his own Spirit, which is as his voice, and the dead do hear, and they are made to live—not without the instrumentality; not through the instrumentality alone, but by the voice of Jesus Christ. I ask you, then, dear brethren and sisters who are alive to God, to pray that Jesus would speak while the preacher speaks. Be lifting up your hearts and silently crying:

"Oh! let the dead now hear thy voice,
 Bid, Lord, thy banished ones rejoice;
 Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
 Jesus, the Lord, our righteousness."

What encouragement there is in this for you, my brethren and sisters! However feeble you may be in yourselves, yet, if it is the voice of Christ you have to rely upon, what power there is in that! You may go to your class and say, "I cannot teach these troublesome boys and these inattentive girls; how can I hope to see them saved?" Ah! but your Master can speak through you, and he can do what you cannot. Though it is true that old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon, he is not too strong for the mighty Saviour, whose voice does not speak to the living merely, but to the dead, and all who hear that voice shall live. Bend thine ear, then, and bow down thine heart, attend to the voice of Christ, seeing that thereby alone the dormant faculties can be quickened, and a lively interest excited.

Yet while Christ speaks to the dead, *power is communicated to them that they may have it and use it, call it their own, and exercise it.* "The dead shall hear," and, do notice it, "*They that hear shall live.*" You must not imagine that man is passive in the matter. What does it say, "Draw us," and we will be drawn? No, but "Draw us, and we will run after thee." There comes an activity. I have heard some speak of faith and repentance as the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Most truly, so they are, but why speak ye of these gifts as though the sinner had nothing to do to repent and to believe? Always recollect that it is you who must repent and believe. The Holy Ghost will not repent for you. What should he repent about? He never did wrong. And the Holy Ghost will not believe for you. What should he believe for? He is God himself. The fact is, that the apostle has expressed it exactly, when he says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Christ gives the voice, but the man hears. There is a something done; there is a something to be received. It is no great act to hear a sound when it is made; it is no great act to receive mercy when it is presented; yet the hearing is a miracle, for the dead

hear; and the receiving by faith is a miracle, for none do this but those to whom it is given; yet it is done by man. Faith and repentance are gifts of God: the voice that saves is the voice of Christ, but the point of personal salvation is reached when the man actively hears and receives the truth.

I pray you, then, my dear hearers, if you would be saved, be diligent in hearing the gospel. I would urge you to frequent those places of worship most where there is most of Christ preached. Do not seek after eloquence, oratory, gaudy periods, or grotesque observations that might amuse you. You have something else to do on the Lord's Day besides being amused and having your ears tickled. There is a soul in you that will either be saved or lost, and this day is given you peculiarly that you may listen to the gospel which saves you. Hunt out the gospel, then, in your locality. Follow it wherever you may hear it preached. I entreat you to hear it, but do not think that the mere hearing it with your outward ears will be enough. Alas! such a hearing may involve responsibility, and bring you no blessing. I pray you, ask the Lord as you go up to the house of prayer to open your inward ears, to quicken you from your spiritual death, and give you to derive profit. I do believe, my dear friends, that few will miss a blessing who hear a gospel minister, anxiously desiring to get a blessing. In these waters men shall catch what they fish for, and if you seek all earnestly after God's blessing, you shall find it. Thirst for it; pant for it; long for it; you already have the beginning of it, for to desire grace is an evidence that you have grace in a measure, and to seek Christ earnestly is already to have something from Christ, a foretaste of the feast they enjoy who find him.

Ah! my dear friends, we keep on preaching, and you keep on coming and going Sunday after Sunday, but how is it with you! Are you saved or not? A man opens a shop for the sale of drugs, and I will suppose them to have great medicinal virtue. There is a plague in the district, and he asks himself, "Are these drugs, after all, what they profess to be?" If men keep on dying, he will, as an honest man, begin to get anxious and to enquire, and if he meets with persons who are talking of other things, he will say, "Nonsense! Put them aside a bit; I want to ask you about something of more importance. Are these drugs of mine true shots with which to do battle with the plague? Are these the weapons with which to chase away this horrible disease, and avert the threatening? Is the plague increasing in your street, or is it dying out?" Oh! I want to push these questions home to you to-night. The Word of Christ I know I preach. I am sure I have told you the gospel of his salvation. The voice of Christ I cannot imitate, nor would I if I could. 'Tis his to use his own voice. His tongue, and his tongue only, is like a two-edged sword, which can cut and cure, kill and heal at the same time. How is it with you? Are you saved? Are you awakened? Are you

seeking? Are you finding? Or, are you, after all, just hearing, and hearing, and hearing, again and again, to no purpose? Ah! I would to God that I were not the preacher to such as you, and that you were not my hearers, for I cannot bear that I should be adding to your condemnation; that I should be hardening you—for so it must be—hardening your hearts with the very truth that ought to soften them! I pray the Master bring you into a different state, and give you to lay hold on these things, for if they be not true, it is time I had done preaching them; if they be true, it is time you had received them. If they be not true, it is time that these services were given over, for they are awful farces; but if this Book be true, and Christ's gospel a verity, it is time that you did not make farces of them, but that you turned unto God with full purpose of heart.

The Lord save you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.²

Reflection: Are you aware of God's presence in your life or are you still spiritually blind? Do you hear the saving voice of Christ guiding you each day or are you still lost? How are you sharing this hope with the dying world we live in?

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Jn 5:25–29). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

² Spurgeon, C. H. (1914). *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (Vol. 60, pp. 25–34). London: Passmore & Alabaster.