

The General Resurrection

by Samuel Davies

The sermon teaches that there will be a general resurrection when all who are in the graves will hear God's voice and come out, either to the resurrection of life or the resurrection of damnation.

Scripture: Genesis 3:19, Job 19:26, Matthew 25:34-46, John 3:6, John 5:28, Acts 26:8, Romans 8:7, 1 Corinthians 15:51, Philippians 3:21, 1 Thessalonians 4:15

Topics: "Resurrection Of Life", "Eternal Judgment"

Description

Samuel Davies preaches about the General Resurrection, emphasizing the inevitable time when all in the graves will rise to face judgment based on their deeds--either to the resurrection of life or damnation. He vividly describes the earth as a vast graveyard, highlighting the multitude of generations that have passed and the solemn reality of death. Davies paints a striking picture of the resurrection, detailing the transformation of bodies and the reunion of souls, contrasting the destinies of the righteous and the wicked. He urges listeners to examine their lives, emphasizing the importance of doing good with a renewed heart and a dependence on Christ's righteousness to secure a resurrection to eternal life.

Transcript

The General Resurrection

Samuel Davies

(1724 - 1761)

"Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out; those who have done good--unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil--unto the resurrection of damnation!" John 5:28-29

Ever since sin entered into the world and death by sin, this earth has been one vast graveyard or burying place for her children. In every age and in every country, that sentence has been executing, "Dust you are--and unto dust you shall return!" (Gen 3:19). The earth has been filled up with graves, the last lodgings of mortals; and the bottom of the ocean has been paved with the bones of men! Human nature was at first confined to one pair--but how soon and how wide did it spread! How inconceivably numerous are the sons of Adam! How many different nations on our globe contain many millions of men--even in one generation! And how many generations have followed one another, in the long run of nearly six thousand years!

Let imagination call up this vast army army! Infants that just enter upon our globe and then wing their flight into an unknown world; the gray-headed that have had a long journey through life; the blooming youth and the middle-aged--let them pass in review before us from all countries and from all ages. How vast and astonishing the multitude! If the posterity of one man, Abraham, by one son was, according to the divine promise, as the innumerable stars of heaven or as the sand by the seashore; what numbers can compute the multitudes that have sprung from all the patriarchs, the sons of Adam, and Noah?

But what is become of them all? Alas! They are turned into earth--their original element! They are all imprisoned in the grave, except the present generation--and we are dropping one after another in quick succession into that place appointed for all living!

There has not been perhaps a moment of time for five thousand years--but someone or another has sunk into the dwellings of the dead. In some fatal hours, by the sword of war, or the devouring jaws of earthquakes, thousands have been cut off, swept away at once, and left in one huge heap of carnage!

Beyond comparison, the greatest number of mankind is now sleeping under ground. There lies 'beauty' moldering into dust, rotting into stench and loathsomeness, and feeding the vilest worms! There lies the 'head that once wore a crown'--as vile and contemptible as the poorest beggar's head! There lie the mighty giants, the heroes and conquerors: the Samsons, the Ajaxes, the Alexanders, and the Caesars of the world! There they lie--dead, senseless, inactive, and unable to drive off the worms that riot on their marrow--and make their 'houses' in those sockets where the eyes once sparkled with living luster.

There lie the wise and the learned--as rotten, as helpless as the fool does! There lie some that we once conversed with, some that were our friends, our companions. There lie our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters.

And shall they lie there always? Shall this body, this elaborate workmanship of heaven so wonderfully and fearfully made, always lie in ruins--and never be repaired? Shall the wide-extended valleys of dry bones, never more live?

This we know, that it is not an impossible thing with God, to raise the dead (Act 26:8). He who could first form our bodies out of nothing--is certainly able to form them anew and repair the wastes of time and death! But what is His declared will in this case? On this, the matter turns, and this is fully revealed in my text. "A time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out; those who have done good--unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil--unto the resurrection of damnation!"

And for what END shall they come forth? Oh! For very different purposes: some to the resurrection of life--and some to the resurrection of damnation! "All who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out; those who have done good--unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil--unto the resurrection of damnation!"

All who are in the graves will hear His voice! The voice of the Son of God here, probably means the sound of the archangel's trumpet, which is called "His voice" because it is sounded by His orders and attended with His all-quicken power. This all-wakening call to the tenants of the grave, we frequently find foretold in Scripture. I shall refer you to two plain passages. "Behold," says Paul, "I show you a mystery," that is--an important and astonishing secret, "we shall not all sleep" (1 Corinthians 15:51); that is--mankind will not all be sleeping in death when that Day comes.

There will be a generation then alive upon the earth. Though they cannot have a proper resurrection, yet they shall pass through a change equivalent to it. "We shall all be changed," says he, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound" (1 Corinthians 15:52). It shall give the alarm! No sooner is the awful trumpet heard, than all the living shall be transformed into immortals, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. We, who are then alive, shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:52). This is all the difference: the dead shall be raised, and the living shall be changed.

This awful prelude of the trumpet, is also mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16, "We who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God," that is, with a godlike trumpet, such as it befits His majesty to sound. The dead in Christ shall rise first, that is, before the living shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. When they are risen and the living transformed, then both shall ascend together to the place of judgment.

My brethren, realize the majesty and terror of this universal alarm! When the dead are sleeping in the silent grave; when the living are thoughtless of the grand event--or intent on other pursuits--some of them asleep in the night; some of them immersed in sensual pleasures--eating and drinking; some of them planning or executing schemes for riches or honors; some in the very act of sin--the generality of people stupid and careless about the concerns of eternity, and the dreadful Day just at hand; and a few here and there conversing with their God and "looking for the glorious appearance of their Lord and Savior" (Titus 2:13); when the course of nature runs on uniform and regular as usual, and infidel scoffers are asking, "Where is the promise of His coming? Forever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation?" (2 Peter 3:4). In short, when there are no more visible appearances of this approaching Day, than of the destruction of Sodom on that fine clear morning in which Lot fled away; or of the deluge, when Noah entered into the ark--then in that hour of calm security---then suddenly the heavens shall open over the astonished world; then shall the all-alarming trumpet break over their heads like a clap of thunder in a clear sky!

Immediately the living turn their gazing eyes upon the amazing phenomenon! A few hear the long-expected sound with rapture--and lift up their heads with joy, assured that the day of their redemption has come; while the thoughtless world is struck with the wildest horror and alarm!

In the same instant, the sound reaches all the dwellings of the dead. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they are raised--and the living are changed! This call will be as animating to all people--as that call to a single person, "Lazarus, come forth!" (John 11:43). Oh, what a surprise will this be to a thoughtless world! Should this alarm burst over our heads this moment, into what a terror would it strike many!

Such will be the terror, such the consternation, when it actually comes to pass. Sinners will be the same fearful, self-condemned creatures then--as they are now. Then, they who are deaf to all the gentler calls of the Gospel--now will not be able to stop their ears! Then, the trumpet of God will constrain them--to whom the ministers of Christ now preach in vain--to hear and fear! Then they must all hear, for my text tells you y you:

All who are in the graves graves, all without exception, shall hear his voice! Now the voice of mercy calls, reason pleads, conscience warns--but multitudes will not hear. But this is a voice that shall, that must reach every one of the millions of mankind, and not one of them will be able to shut his ears! Infants and giants, kings and subjects, all ranks, all ages of mankind shall hear the call. The living shall be changed,

and the dead rise at the sound!

The dust that was once alive and formed a human body, whether it flies in the air, floats in the ocean, or vegetates on earth--shall hear the new-creating fiat! Wherever the fragments of the human frame are scattered, this all-penetrating call shall reach and speak them into life!

We may consider this voice as a summons, not only to dead bodies to rise--but to the souls that once animated them--to appear and be reunited to them, whether in heaven or hell. To the grave, the call will be, "Arise, you dead, and come to judgment!" To heaven, "You spirits of just men made perfect, descend to the world whence you originally came, and assume your new formed bodies!" To hell, "Come forth and appear, you damned souls, you prisoners of darkness, and be again united to the bodies in which you once sinned, that in them you may now suffer!"

Thus will this summons spread through every corner of the universe! Heaven, earth, hell, and all their inhabitants shall hear and obey! Devils, as well as human sinners--will tremble at the sound: for now they know they can plead no more as they once did, "Do not torment us before the time!" (Mat 8:29). For the time has come, and they must mingle with the prisoners at the bar. Now when all who are in the graves hear this all-quicken voice,

They shall come forth hey forth! Now I see, I hear the earth heaving, charnel houses rattling, tombs bursting, graves opening! Now the nations underground begin to stir. There is a noise and a shaking among the dry bones. The dust is all alive and in motion, and the globe breaks and trembles as with an earthquake, while this vast army is working its way through and bursting into life!

The ruins of human bodies are scattered far and wide, and have passed through many and surprising transformations. Multitudes have sunk in a watery grave, been eaten up by the fish of the deep, and transformed into a part of their flesh. Multitudes have been eaten by beasts and birds of prey, and incorporated with them; and some have been devoured by their fellow men in the rage of a desperate hunger, or of unnatural cannibal appetite, and digested into a part of them. Multitudes have moldered into dust, and this dust has been blown about by winds, washed away with water, or it has petrified into stone. Or it has been burnt into brick to form dwellings for their posterity. Or it has grown up in grain, trees, plants, and other vegetables, which are the food of man and beast, and are transformed into their flesh and blood. But through all these various transformations and changes, the omnipotent God knows how to collect, distinguish, and compound all those scattered and mingled seeds of our mortal bodies!

Now at the sound of the trumpet--they shall all be collected, wherever they were scattered; all shall be properly sorted and united, however they were confused; atom to its fellow-atom, bone to its fellow-bone. Then, my brethren, your dust shall be reanimated and re-organized. "After my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God!" (Job 19:26).

And what a vast improvement, will the frail nature of man then receive! Our bodies will then be substantially the same--but how different in qualities, in strength, in agility; in capacities for pleasure or pain; in beauty or deformity; in glory or terror--according to the moral character of the person to whom they belong! Matter, we know, is capable of prodigious alterations and refinements: there it will appear in the highest perfection.

The bodies of the saints will be formed glorious, incorruptible, without the seeds of sickness and death. The glorified body of Christ, which undoubtedly is carried to the highest perfection that matter is capable

of--will be the pattern after which they shall be formed. He will "change our vile body," says Paul, "that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phi 3:21). "Flesh and blood," in their present state of grossness and frailty, "cannot inherit the kingdom of Go. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:50, 53).

And how vast the change, how high the improvement from this present state! "The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (15:42-43). Then will the body be able to bear up under the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory! It will no longer be a clog or an encumbrance to the soul--but a proper instrument and assistant in all the exalted services and enjoyments of the heavenly state.

The bodies of the wicked will also be improved--but their improvements will all be dreadful and vindictive. Their capacities will be thoroughly enlarged--but it will be that they may be made capable of greater misery! They will be strengthened--but it will be that they may bear the heavier load of torment! Their sensations will be more quick and strong--but it will be that they may feel the more intense pain. They will be raised imperishable--that they may not be consumed by everlasting fire or escape punishment by death or annihilation. In short, their augmented strength, their enlarged capacities, and their immortality--will be their eternal curse! They would willingly exchange them, for the fleeting duration of a fading flower, or the faint sensations of an infant! The only power they would rejoice in, is that of self-annihilation.

Now when the bodies are completely formed and fit to be inhabited, the souls that once animated them, being collected from heaven and hell, re-enter and take possession of their old dwellings. They are united in bonds that shall never more be dissolved, and the moldering tabernacles are now become everlasting habitations. With what joy will the spirits of the righteous, welcome their old companions from their long sleep in the dust, and revel in their glorious resurrection! How they will rejoice to re-enter their old habitations, now so completely repaired and highly improved! To find those bodies that were once their encumbrance; once frail and mortal in which they were imprisoned and languished; once their temptation, tainted with the seeds of sin--now their assistants and co-partners in the business of heaven; now vigorous, incorruptible, and immortal, now free from all corrupt mixtures and shining in all the beauties of perfect holiness!

In these bodies, they once served their God with honest, though feeble efforts, conflicted with sin and temptation, and passed through all the united trials and hardships of mortality and the Christian life. Now, they are united to them for more exalted and blissful purposes! The lungs that were accustomed to heave with penitential sighs and groans--shall now shout forth their joys and the praises of their God and Savior. The heart that was once broken with sorrows--shall now be bound up forever, and overflow with immortal pleasures. Those very eyes that were accustomed to run down with tears and to behold many a tragic sight--shall now behold the King in His beauty, shall behold the Savior, Whom though unseen they loved, and all the glories of heaven--and God shall wipe away all their tears!

All the senses, which were once avenues of pain, shall now be inlets of the most exalted pleasure. In short, every organ, every member shall be employed in the most noble services and enjoyments, instead of the sordid and laborious drudgery and the painful sufferings of the present state. Blessed change indeed! Rejoice, you children of God, in the prospect of it!

But how shall I glance a thought upon the dreadful case of the wicked in that tremendous Day! While their bodies burst from their graves, the miserable spectacles of horror and deformity, see the millions of gloomy souls that once animated them, rise like pillars of smoke from the bottomless pit! With what reluctance and anguish do they re-enter their old habitations! Oh, what a dreadful meeting! What shocking salutations!

"And must I be chained to you again?" may the guilty SOUL say. "Oh, you accursed, polluted body, you system of deformity and terror! In you I once sinned, by you I was once ensnared, debased, and ruined; to gratify your vile lusts and appetites, I neglected my own immortal interests, degraded my native dignity, and made myself miserable forever. Have you now met me--to torment me forever? Oh, that you had still slept in the dust and never been repaired again! Let me rather be condemned to animate a vile serpent--rather than that odious body once defiled with sin, and the instrument of my guilty pleasures, now made strong and immortal to torment me with strong and immortal pains!

Once indeed, I received sensations of pleasure from you; but now you are transformed into an instrument of torture! No more shall I through your eyes behold the cheerful light of the day and the beautiful prospects of nature--but the thick glooms of hell, grim and ghastly spirits; heaven at an impassable distance, and all the horrid sights of woe in the infernal regions!

No more shall your ears charm me with the harmony of sounds--but terrify and distress me with the echo of eternal groans and the thunder of almighty vengeance! No more shall the gratification of your appetites afford me pleasure--but your appetites, forever hungry, forever unsatisfied--shall eternally torment me with their eager, unceasing cravings. No more shall your tongue be employed in mirth, jest, and song--but shall complain, groan, blaspheme, and roar forever! Your feet that once walked in the flowery, enchanted paths of sin--must now walk on the dismal burning soil of hell. O my wretched companion! I parted with you with pain and reluctance in the struggles of death--but now I meet you with greater terror and agony! Return to your bed in the dust, to sleep and rot! Let me never see your shocking visage again!"

In vain the petition! The reluctant soul must enter its prison, from whence it shall never more be dismissed. If we might indulge imagination so far, we might suppose the BODY begins to recriminate in such language as this: "Come, guilty soul, enter your old dwelling. If it is horrible and shocking--it is owing to yourself. Was not the animal nature, subjected to your government, who are a rational principle? Instead of being debased by me, it befit you to have not only retained the dignity of your nature--but to have exalted mine by nobler employments and gratifications worthy an earthly body united to an immortal spirit! You might have restrained my members from being the instruments of sin, and made them the instruments of righteousness! My knees would have bowed at the throne of grace--but you did not affect that posture. My eyes would have read and mine ears heard the Word of Life! But you would not set them to that employment or would not attend to it. Now it is but just the body you did prostitute to sin, which will be the instrument of your punishment!

Indeed, gladly would I relapse into senseless earth as I was--and continue in that insensibility forever! But did you not hear the all-rousing trumpet just now? Did it not even shake the foundations of your infernal prison? It was that call that awakened me and summoned me to meet you--and I could not resist it. Therefore, come, miserable soul! Take possession of this frame, and let us prepare for everlasting burning! O that it were now possible to die! O that we could be again separated and never more be united! Vain wish! The weight of mountains, the pangs of hell, the flames of unquenchable fire--can never dissolve these chains which now bind us together!"

O sirs! What a shocking interview is this!

O the glorious, dreadful morning of the resurrection! What scenes of unknown joy and terror will then open! We should always have it in view. It must even now engage our thoughts, fill us with trembling solicitude, and make it the great object of our labor and pursuit to share in the resurrection of the just.

But for what ends do these sleeping multitudes rise? For what purposes do they come forth? My text will tell you.

They shall come forth, "some to the resurrection of life--and some to the resurrection of damnation." They are summoned from their graves to stand at the bar, and brought out of prison by angelic guards to pass their last trial. And as in this impartial trial they will be found to be people of very different characters, the righteous Judge of the earth will accordingly pronounce their different destinies.

"Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out; those who have done good--unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil--unto the resurrection of damnation!" John 5:28-29

"Then the King will say to those on his right: Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world!" (Matthew 25:34) See a glorious multitude, which none can number, openly acquitted, pronounced 'blessed', and welcomed into the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world! Now they enter upon a state that deserves the name of LIFE. They are all vital, all active, all glorious, all happy. They shine brighter than the stars in the skies, like the sun forever and ever! All their faculties overflow with happiness. They mingle with the glorious company of angels. They behold that unseen Savior Whom they loved. They dwell in eternal intimacy with the infinite Father. They are employed with ever new and growing delight, in the exalted services of the heavenly sanctuary. They shall never more fear, nor feel the least touch of sorrow, pain, or any kind of misery--but shall be as happy as their glorified natures can admit, through an immortal duration. What a glorious new creation is here! What indescribable creatures, who were originally formed from the dust!

Shall any of US join in this happy company? Oh, shall any of us feeble, dying, sinful creatures share in their glory and happiness? This is a most important inquiry!

The prospect would be delightful, if charity could hope that this will be the happy end of all people.

But, alas! Multitudes shall come forth from their graves, not to the resurrection of life--but to the resurrection of damnation! What terror is in these words! If audacious sinners in our world make light of it--their comrades already in the infernal fires, who feel its tremendous import are not so hardy--but tremble, groan, and can trifle with it no more!

Let us realize the miserable doom of this class of mankind!

"Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out!" See them bursting into life from their subterranean dungeons! Horror throbs through every vein--and glares wildly and furiously in their eyes. Every joint trembles and every countenance looks downcast and gloomy! Now they see that tremendous Day of which they were warned in vain--and shudder at those terrors of which they once made light. They now experientially know the grand business of the Day and the dreadful purpose for which they are roused from their slumbers in the grave: to be tried,

to be convicted, to be condemned, and to be dragged away to execution!

Conscience has been anticipating the trial--and no sooner is the soul united to the body, than immediately conscience ascends its throne in the soul. It begins to accuse, to convict, to pass sentence, to upbraid, and to torment! The sinner is condemned, condemned at his own tribunal--before he arrives at the bar of his omnipotent Judge!!

The first act of consciousness in his new state of existence, is a conviction that he is condemned--an irrevocably condemned creature. He enters God's court, knowing beforehand how it will go with him. When he finds himself ordered to the left hand of his Judge, when he hears the dreadful sentence thundered out against him, "Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!" (Matthew 25:41), it was just what he expected.

While on earth, he could flatter himself with vain hopes and shut his eyes against the light of conviction--but then he will not be able to hope better. Then he must know the worst of his case.

The formality of the judicial trial is necessary for his conviction before the world--but not for his own conscience, which has already determined his condition. However, to convince others of the justice of his doom--he is dragged and guarded from his grave to the Judgment Seat by fierce, unrelenting devils, before his tempters, but now his tormentors. With what horror does he view the burning throne--and the frowning face of his Judge--that Jesus Whom he once disregarded! How he wishes for rocks and mountains to cover and conceal him from His angry eye! But all in vain. Appear he must! He is ordered to Christ's left hand, among the other trembling criminals.

Now the TRIAL comes!

All his evil deeds and all his omissions of duty--are now produced against him. All the mercies he abused, all the chastisements he despised, all the means of grace he neglected or mis-improved, every sinful and even every idle word; more--his most secret thoughts and dispositions are all exposed and brought into judgment against him! When the Judge interrogates him, "Is it not so, sinner? Are not these charges true?" His conscience obliges him to confess and cry out, "Guilty! Guilty!" Now the trembling criminal, being plainly convicted and left without any plea nor any excuse--the supreme Judge, in stern majesty and inexorable justice, thunders out the dreadful sentence, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!"

Oh tremendous doom! Every word is big with terror and shoots a thunderbolt through the heart!

"Depart!" Away from My presence! I cannot bear so loathsome a sight as you! I once called you to come to Me that you might have life--but you would not regard the call. Now you shall never more hear that inviting voice!

Depart "from Me"--from Me, the only Fountain of happiness, the only proper Good for an immortal soul!

"But, Lord," we may suppose the criminal to say, "if I must depart, bless me before I go."

"No!" says the angry Judge, "Depart you who are cursed! Depart with My eternal and heavy curse upon you; a curse dreadfully powerful--which blasts whatever it falls upon like flashes of consuming, irresistible lightning!"

"But if I must go away under Your curse," the criminal may be supposed to say, "then let that be all my punishment. Let me depart to some agreeable or at least tolerable remote place, where I may meet with something to mitigate the curse!"

"No! You must depart into FIRE! There you must forever burn in excruciating tortures!"

"But, Lord, if I must make my bed in fire--oh, let it be a transient blaze that will soon burn itself out and put an end to my torment!"

"No! Depart into everlasting fire! There burn without being consumed, and be tormented without end!"

"But, Lord, grant me," cries the poor wretch, "at least the mitigation of friendly and sympathizing company. Or, if this cannot be granted, grant me this small, this almost no request--to be doomed to some solitary corner in hell, where I shall be punished only by my own conscience and Your immediate hand. But, oh, deliver me from these evil, tormenting devils! Banish me into some hidden corner in the infernal pit--far from malicious fiends!"

"No! into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels! You must be one of their wretched crew forever. You joined with them in sinning--and now must share in their punishment! You gladly submitted to them as your tempters--and now you must submit to them as your tormentors!"

The sentence being pronounced and read--it is immediately executed!

"And they will go away into eternal punishment!" (Matthew 25:46) Devils drag them away to the pit, and throw them down headlong! They must go away into the bottomless pit! There they are confined in chains of darkness, and cast into the burning lake of fire and brimstone forever and ever!

In that dreadful word "forever" lies the epitome of torment! This is the 'hell' of Hell. If they might be but released from suffering, though it were by annihilation after they have wept away ten thousand millions of ages in extremity of pain--it would be some mitigation, some encouragement. But, alas! When as many millions of ages are passed as the stars of heaven, or the sands on the seashore, or the atoms of dust in this huge earthly globe--their punishment is as far from an end--as when the sentence was first pronounced upon them!

FOREVER! There is no exhausting of that word. When it is affixed to the highest degree of misery--the terror of the sound is utterly insupportable!

See, sirs, what depends upon 'time'--that span of time we may enjoy in this fleeting life. Eternity! Solemn, all-important eternity, depends upon it!

All this while, conscience tears the sinner's heart with the most tormenting reflections. "Oh what a fair opportunity I once had for salvation, had I improved it! I was warned of the consequences of a life of sin and carelessness. I was told of the necessity of faith, repentance, and universal holiness of heart and life. I enjoyed a sufficient space for repentance and all the necessary means of salvation. But fool that I was--I neglected all, I abused all. I refused to part with my sins. I refused to engage seriously in religion and to seek God in earnest. And now I am lost forever without hope! Oh! For one of those months, one of those weeks, or even so much as one of those days or hours I once trifled away! With what earnestness, with what solicitude would I improve it! But all my opportunities are past, beyond recovery, and not a moment shall be given me for this purpose any more. O what a fool I was--to sell my soul for such trifles! To think

so lightly of heaven--and fall into hell through mere neglect and carelessness!"

You impenitent, unthinking sinners, though you may now be able to silence or drown the clamors of your consciences, yet the time--or rather the dread eternity--is coming when they will speak in spite of you, when they will strike home to your soul--and be felt by the most hardened and remorseless heart. Therefore, regard their warnings now--while they may be the means of your recovery. You are vitally concerned in the solemn transaction of that Day I have been describing. You shall either be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; or while moldering in the grave, you shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth--either to the resurrection of life--or to the resurrection of damnation!

And which shall be your eternal destiny? Have you any evidence to hope that you shall not be of that wretched, numerous multitude who shall rise to damnation? If there is any inquiry within the compass of human knowledge that demands your solicitous thoughts, certainly it is this!

Methinks you cannot enjoy one moment's ease or security while this is undetermined. And is it an answerable inquiry? Can we now know what are the present distinguishing characters of those who shall then receive so different a doom? Yes, my text determines the point:

"Those who have done good--unto the resurrection of life;

and those who have done evil--unto the resurrection of damnation."

These are the grounds of the distinction that shall then be made in the final states of men: doing good--and doing evil. And certainly this distinction is perceivable now; to do good and to do evil are not so much alike as that it should be impossible to distinguish between them. Let us then see what is implied in these characters, and to which of us they respectively belong.

1. What is it to do GOOD? This implies:

(1.) An honest endeavor to keep all God's commandments. I say, ALL his commandments, with regard to God, our neighbor, and ourselves; whether easy--or difficult; whether fashionable--or not; whether agreeable to our natural constitution--or not; whether enjoining the performance of duty--or forbidding the commission of sin; whether regarding the heart--or the outward practice.

I say, an uniform, impartial regard to all God's commandments, of whatever kind, in all circumstances, and at all times--is implied in doing good. For if we do anything because God commands it, we will endeavor to do everything that he commands, because where the reason of our conduct is the same, our conduct itself will be the same.

I do not mean that godly men, in the present state, perfectly keep the commandments of God in everything, or indeed in anything; but I mean that universal obedience is their honest endeavor. Their character is in some measure uniform and all of a piece; that is, they do not place all their religion in obedience to some commands which may be agreeable to them, as though that would make atonement for their neglect of others; but, like David, they have a respect to all God's commandments, Psalm 119:6. My brethren, try yourselves by this test.

(2.) To do good in an acceptable manner pre-supposes a change of nature and a new principle. Our nature is so corrupted that nothing really and formally good can be performed by us until it is renewed. To confirm this I shall only refer you to Ephesians 2:10, and Ezekiel 36:26, 27, where being created in Christ

Jesus unto good works, and receiving a new heart of flesh, are mentioned as prerequisites to our walking in God's statutes.

As for the principle of obedience, it is the love of God: 1 John 5:3. That is, we must obey God--because we love him; we must do good--because we delight to do good. Otherwise it is all hypocrisy, constraint, or selfishness, and cannot be acceptable to God. Here, again, my brethren, look into your hearts, and examine what is the principle of your obedience, and whether ever you have been made new creatures.

(3.) I must add, especially as we live under the gospel, that your dependence for life must not be upon the good which you do--but entirely upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ. After you have done all--you must acknowledge you are but unprofitable servants; and renounce all your works in point of merit--while you abound in them in point of practice; Phil. 3:7, 8. This is an essential characteristic of evangelical obedience, and without it you cannot expect to have a resurrection to eternal life and blessedness.

I might enlarge upon this head, but time will not permit; and I hope these three characters may suffice to show you what is implied in doing good. Let us now proceed to the opposite character.

2. What is it to do EVIL? This implies such things as these: the habitual neglect of well-doing; or the performance of duties in a languid, formal manner, or without a right principle; and the willful indulgence of any one sin; the secret love of sin, even though it is not allowed to break forth into the outward practice. Here it is evident at first sight that profane sinners, drunkards, swearers, defrauders, avowed neglecters of religion, etc., have this dismal brand upon them, that they are such as do evil. Nay, all such who are in their natural state, without regeneration, whatever their outside be--must be ranked in this class; "for that which is born of the flesh--is flesh," John 3:6; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God, nor be rightly subject to his law. Romans 8:7, 8.

And now who is for life--and who for damnation among you? These characteristics are intended to make the distinction among you, and I pray you apply them for that purpose.

As for such of you, who, amidst all your lamented infirmities, are endeavoring honestly to do good, and grieved at heart that you can do no more, you also must die--you must die, and feed the worms in the dust. But you shall rise gloriously improved, rise to an immortal life, and in all the terrors and consternation of that last day, you will be secure, serene, and undisturbed. The almighty Judge will be your friend, and that is enough. Let this thought disarm the king of terrors, and give you courage to look down into the grave, and forward to the great rising-day. Oh what a happy immortality opens its glorious prospects beyond the reach of sight before you! And after a few struggles more in this state of warfare, and resting awhile in the bed of death--at the regions of eternal blessedness you will arrive, and take up your residence there forever!

But are there not some here who are conscious that these favorable characteristics do not belong to them? that know that well-doing is not the business of their life, but that they are workers of iniquity? I tell you plainly, and with all the authority the Word of God can give, that if you continue such--that you shall rise to damnation! That undoubtedly will be your doom, unless you are greatly changed and reformed in heart and life. And will this be no inducement to vigorous endeavors? Are you armored against the force of such a consideration? You careless sinners, awake out of your carnal security, and prepare for death and judgment! This fleeting life is all the time you have for preparation, and can you trifle it away? Your all, your eternal all is set upon your short life. You have but one opportunity, and if that fails, through your sloth or mismanagement, you are irrecoverably undone forever!

Therefore, by the solemn authority of the great God, by the terrors of death, and the great rising-day, by the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, and by the value of your immortal souls--I entreat, I charge, I adjure you to awake out of your security, and improve the precious moments of life! The world is dying all around you. And can you rest easy in such a world, while unprepared for eternity? Awake to righteousness now, at the gentle call of the gospel, before the last trumpet gives you an alarm of another kind!

"There is a dreadful hell,

And everlasting pains;

There sinners must with devils dwell,

In darkness, fire and chains!"

"He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness." Acts 17:31

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