

## **“IF A MAN DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?”**

(Another short and simple funeral sermon printed by request. Ted Smith)

Opening remarks.

I think I am safe in saying that practically everyone, has, down deep in his heart, the belief, the conviction, that there is a future life—somewhere, somehow. There is no outward proof that there is a future life, but the hope is in the heart just the same. This is true whether a person is a professed Christian or not.

There are certain expressions in the Bible that describe the attitude of the disciples of Christ. For instance “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Another one is “We have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which the world cannot give nor take away.” How can there be “contentment” and “peace” when there are so many things around us and in us that would tend to make contentment and peace well nigh impossible?

We think the secret is understanding—understanding that God has a plan and that he is working out the designs of this plan and nothing has gone wrong with that plan for the past 6,000 years, and nothing can interfere with that plan until it is completed. We think it appropriate this afternoon to touch upon a few details of God’s plan and see how wonderful it is. We wish our service this afternoon to be the final testimony of Sister \_\_\_\_\_.

There is something about the Bible that is very appealing and satisfying to intelligent people—it is honest, it tells things just as they are. The Bible does contain many parables and dark sayings; but when we catch the meaning of God’s plan from a careful study of the plain statements of the Bible, then these dark sayings and parables fairly sparkle with meaning that gives us a hope of a future life. There is so much in the Bible that we can touch upon only a few details in the time allotted to us.

We want to use as our text this afternoon the question found in the 14th verse of the 14th chapter of the book of Job—“If a man die shall he live again?” We are all interested in the Scriptural answer to that question.

In James 5:11 we read, “ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.” The story of Job is a very familiar one. He was a prosperous merchant prince. He was learned, influential and pious, revered God and appreciated justice. He was very generous, being considerate of widows and orphans. He had numerous servants, had 3,000 camels and had an extended and prosperous traffic. Suddenly disaster overcame him. He sought in vain for

an explanation, yet he still trusted God—“though he [i.e. God] slay me, yet will I trust him.” This is a very striking statement indeed.

Three of Job’s friends visited him, reasoning that Job must have sinned greatly, else he would not be in such deep trouble. Job defended himself and expressed words of intense interest to us—the hope of a resurrection. In the 14th chapter, Job expresses facts familiar to us—man is born, lives but a few short years, is cut down and no human power can deliver him.

Then Job tells us that when God’s due time comes, divine power will awaken man from his sleep. Let us read from Job 14 and see exactly how it is worded. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. . . . There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the spirit, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: so man lieth down, and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep.”

How true this is as we all know—no drug, no device, no pleading or prayer brings him back. The awakening is beyond human power as Job declares. But now the ray of hope, Verses 13 to 16: “O that thou wouldst hide me in sheol, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again: all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hand.”

When God’s appointed time comes, man will come back. Paul in Acts 24:15 exhorts us, “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.” We thank God daily that we have this blessed hope of a resurrection and that in the Bible we find an explanation of how man got into trouble and how he is to be rescued out of it.

The story goes like this: God designed a plan of lovingkindness for man, and this plan covers a period of 70 centuries, and 60 centuries are now in the past. To begin with, man was created a free moral agent; he was permitted to choose a wrong course so he will learn what it means to be set adrift on the sea of willfulness and be separated for a time from God’s love and wisdom. He was expelled from Eden and ever since he has been learning through experience the awfulness of evil and sin.

But God, our Creator had a rescue planned from the very foundation of the world. Forty centuries after man's fall, God sent his son to ransom Adam from the condemnation, the start of the plan of rescue. For 20 centuries now the gospel, the good news of salvation has been preached. The rescue has not been immediate, there has been no immediate rescue from sin and death. Those who accept the conditions of salvation now, must rely on God's promise to deliver in his own good time—this is called a salvation by faith—a belief in God's Word, his precious promises.

A peculiar feature of this gospel message is something more than a promise of rescue from sin and death—it includes a call to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and run for a prize. This is called a “high calling,” a “holy calling,” a “heavenly calling.” There is a reward promised to joint-heirship with Jesus in his throne—to reign with him a thousand years over the nations. Those rescued now, while evil reigns, are called “first fruits,” the “Bride of Christ,” the Body Members of the Anointed, a “Little Flock.” They are to share with Jesus, His “glory, honor and immortality.”

A question naturally comes to mind—is this the end of God's plan of salvation, a rescue only of a “Little Flock”? Are the vast majority of mankind to be cast aside? No, this is not the end of the gospel of salvation—there are to be “after fruits” too.

We thank God for revealing that all are to eventually benefit from the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. We understand that those who are rescued now are to be used to complete God's plan of salvation. We quote John 5:28, 29, “Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.”

Paul gives an interesting thought in 1 Cor. 6:2 and 3—“know ye not that ye shall judge men and angels?” What did Moses do when he sat and judged Israel? Did he condemn the Israelites? No, he instructed the Israelites as to what was right and what was wrong. And the Prophet Isaiah tells us (26:9) that when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. And in Isa. 2:4 we are told that when God judges the nations, he will rebuke many people, and they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Paul tells us in 1 Tim. 2:3-6 that all are to be saved from death and brought to a knowledge of the truth. Jesus' ransom for all is to be testified to all in due time. In Isaiah 61 we are informed that the time will come when “all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest.”

Now there is a Narrow Way and few find it. Later there will be a Highway and the way will be so plain that even a fool could not err therein. The Highway will be for all the Redeemed. Then there will be an individual trial for each one—no one will be condemned for Adam’s sin.

Yes, according to the Scriptures, Adam and his children will live again—when Jesus exercises divine power for this purpose. All will be brought to a knowledge of the Truth, when Satan is bound so he cannot deceive the nations any longer. In 2 Peter 3:7, 8 we are informed that it will take 1,000 years to judge mankind; and each individual will have at least 100 years trial to determine his eternal destiny. There will be no deceiving agencies then, and no persecution for doing what is right. All who will not obey will be destroyed — those who will not “hear” Jesus as the great Teacher. Jesus and his Church will be qualified in character to deal justly and mercifully. Each one who proves worthy of life will dwell under his own vine and fig tree, and long enjoy the works of his hands. None will need to say “I am sick,” and the desert will blossom as the rose.

We would like to leave with you a mental picture of the future conditions of mankind when perfected; and we believe some day this will be rated as a classic: “Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth’s society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.” (Vol. I, page 191, par. 2.)

Those in the Narrow Way of life at this time should realize their superior blessings and responsibilities. There are lessons in the Scriptures and from these lessons we learn of God’s purposes and we are given rays of hope which are so vital to us as we experience the effects of sin and death. We are deeply grateful for the hopes given us in the Scriptures, and to know that this life is a schooling in preparation for a future life. “If a man die, shall he live again.” Ah, yes! “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven.”

(Closing remarks.)

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## "THE SCREW IN THE WATCH"

A tiny screw in the works of a watch  
Sighed, "Oh dear, I don't amount to much;  
I wish I were a wheel or the mainspring strong,  
Something that makes things move along,  
Or the hands that travel round and round,  
Or the gong that makes such a pleasing sound.  
They do something, but here I just stick,  
Screwed tight in a hole and can't even kick."  
"Tut, tut" said the dial, with his wise old face,  
"'Tis little you know about the works in this case;  
How do you suppose the mainspring could work  
The wheels in this watch if you were to shirk?  
Don't you see that whether large or small,  
There's a special work for each and all?  
Be content with your lot, be patient and strong,  
For if you were to quit, then all would go wrong.  
For each little part, no matter how small  
Is obviously necessary for a complete 'all',  
Each part is made for the burden it bears,  
And has his certain amount of the cares.  
The spring couldn't push, the wheels couldn't turn  
If the screws didn't hold them, tight and firm.  
No more could the hands with accuracy trace  
The time and declare it on my smooth face.  
And the hours as told by the ring of the gong  
Would never be right but would always be wrong.  
Hence you see the position which you occupy  
Whilst apparently lowly, is in reality high.  
Hold fast to your place, for it depends upon you  
To make the works in this watch more perfectly true.  
Then the patient performance of duty's a joy,  
That may properly all of your powers employ."  
Dear friends from this fable a lesson learn,  
Some duties are pleasant but others are stern,  
Let us each do the very best we can  
To fill our small part in God's great Plan  
This body of ours has many members and parts,  
And the head to each member its labor imparts;  
So we in Christ's Body being many, are one,  
And each has a part in the work that is done.