



The Resurrection of the Body

A Sermon By George Müller of Bristol

The last sermon preached by George Müller at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol on Sunday evening 3rd October 1897

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” 2 Cor 5 v 1

As the Lord may help us, we will meditate on the verses we have now been reading. They particularly refer to the resurrection body, which means the glorified body, that believers in Christ shall have, and in which they shall be seen, at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, such a body as the Lord Jesus Himself received after His resurrection.

“For we know.” This is in connection with what is stated in the last verses of the previous chapter. “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Our present body is called “an earthly house of this tabernacle.” In other words, shortly, briefly, “a tent-house”- that is, our present body is a tent-house. A tent may be broken up, and pitched elsewhere. It may be very soon broken up. *Thus* it is with regard to the body in which we are now. It is frail, it is weak, it is earthly, it is of time - in contrast with the glorified body which we shall have. No more weakness, no more frailty then; no more of the earthly character, but of the heavenly character! No more of the body of time, but of eternity. *That* is the difference between our present bodies and the body we shall have.

“We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved,” if this tent-house were dissolved, “we have a building of God.” It is likened to a building to bring before us the substantial character, and the enduring character of it, in comparison with a tent. “A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The glorified body we shall receive at the return of the Lord Jesus is eternal; and all weakness, all infirmity, will be done with for ever. No more pain, no more weakness, no more sickness, no more death - all gone completely; gone, all this in connection with our glorified body. And this is something exceedingly refreshing to the inner man. Now those who seek to labour for the Lord in a variety of ways - it may be in the Sunday School, or as tract circulators, as visitors from house to house of the unconverted, or as visitors of the sick, in all these various ways in which they may labour, they may go on for four or five hours, those who are of greater physical strength may be able to go on six or seven hours, it may be even eight hours, but at last the weakness comes, the “being-tired” is felt, and they are obliged to discontinue going on further in the work, and leave it to the next day. All this will be at an end for ever and ever.

There will be labouring in eternity. There will be no sleeping, no folding hands throughout eternity; but work, continual service constrained by the love of Christ. And this working for the Lord, this seeking to glorify Him by our labour, will go on hour after hour, one four-and-twenty hours after the other, one week after the other, one month after the other, one year after the other, one hundred years after the other, one thousand years after the other, one million years after the other, during a period which never, never, never, will come to an end; and the delightful service going on all the time is held out as an especial promise to the Church of God, not merely that the curse will be gone when we are in glory, but an exceedingly high honour and glorious privilege. “His servants shall serve Him,”

we read at the close of the Book of Revelation. All our work, and labour, and service, much and varied as it may have been while on earth, shall be considered as nothing in comparison with what there will be of work going on throughout eternity. O how precious this consideration in connection with our glorified body. We shall have that without the least particle of weariness; we shall go on labouring for ever and ever to the glory of God!

Therefore this word “eternal” is so precious! “Eternal in the heavens.” In the heavens we shall obtain this glorified body. “For in this” - that is, in our present tent-house, in our present frame of weakness, our body of infirmities - “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” One groaning on account of weakness, another groaning on account of pain, another groaning on account of other infirmities connected with the tent-house in which we find ourselves at present; but especially on account of spiritual infirmities, spiritual weaknesses. SIN - on account of this the child of God especially groans, longing to be delivered from all the spiritual weaknesses, spiritual infirmities, which even in the best of us are found. For the more holy we are, the more do we find ourselves extremely burdened on account of the spiritual infirmities that yet remain in us. “In this we groan earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” At present we are not “clothed upon” in this life. We have not a glorified body. We are yet in this tent-house.

“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.” Do you all understand this verse? Just ask yourselves what we mean to put on, for it is important to understand this verse, and I have reason to consider that some do not know what is the meaning of it. Therefore, with such particularly who have doubts about whether they understand it or not, seek to pay attention to what it means. The time will come when there will be given a glorified body; but will all human beings obtain it? No! There will be the first resurrection, the resurrection of the just, there will be the resurrection when the glorified bodies will be given; but not all human beings will obtain the glorified body; the time of the resurrection will have passed, and multitudes not have obtained a glorified body! O let us see to it that when the time comes that the glorified body shall be given, when the time comes to be clothed, “we shall not be found naked.” That is, found to have been left in the grave, found not to have obtained the glorified body; and at the last, at the general resurrection, be raised again but for judgement, not raised again to obtain the glorified body. And regarding all those who do not obtain this glorified body, it is stated here that not being clothed, they shall “be found naked.” The time passed of the first resurrection, the resurrection of the just, and the glorified body not obtained! To obtain this, every poor sinner, however feeble and weak spiritually he may be, however ignorant in a variety of ways he may be, yet, if trusting truly in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a child of God, and will obtain a glorified body.

“For we that are in this tabernacle,” in this tent-body, “do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” “We that are in this tabernacle” - that means, we children of God, yet on earth in the ordinary body, in the tent-body - “do groan, being burdened.” We cry, we sigh, we wish to be brought to a different state. And what is it that we long for? Not that we should be unclothed; but “clothed upon” to obtain our glorified body, in order that mortality may be “swallowed up of life.” This is what the child of God especially longs for, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ - not death, but the return of Christ, because then the whole of the Church of God will obtain, every one of them, a glorified body, and thus mortality will be “swallowed up of life.” For this body that we shall obtain will be an eternal body, and we shall never have to pass through death any more.

“Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, Who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” Notice particularly this precious verse. “He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing.” That is, we children of God, weak, feeble, and erring, foolish and ignorant, thought as yet we may be, have been appointed for this. God has wrought us for this self-same thing - that we should obtain a glorified body. In other words, I, as assuredly as I am speaking now, shall have a glorified body, and my brethren and sisters in Christ here present, and everyone trusting in Jesus for salvation, will obtain the glorified body. Every one of us, without exception, for we are appointed for it, we are wrought for it, we are prepared for it, and we have the evidence that it will be so. The earnest is given to us already; and this is, that we have received the Spirit. And as assuredly as we have the Spirit received, so certain is it that we shall have a glorified body. This is the earnest given to us in the gift of the Spirit, to comfort our hearts, to make us look out for this glorified body, to ponder it again and again and again with truth that we shall have a glorified body. For this very purpose was given to us the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit might be the warrant to us to look out for the glorified body.

“Therefore we are always confident” - that is, of good courage - knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. It would be well that we seek to test ourselves by what is written here. “We are always of good courage, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” That is, we have not yet been brought into the presence of the Lord to have habitual, full, complete communion with Him, and have not entered upon the eternal happiness, as every child of God will have it for ever and ever. “We are confident” - we are of good courage - “I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” That means rather wishing that the Lord Jesus Christ would come and take us to Himself than that simply we should die and put off this our tabernacle. Is this the state of our hearts? When we look at ourselves, are we able to say, “We are willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord; rather to go Home to get our glorified bodies, instead of remaining longer here on earth?” The more we are in a spiritual state, the more this will be the case, but with an exception, one in which Paul found himself, when longing to go Home, yet willing to stay longer here on earth to labour for the Lord. With this one exception, the spiritual state of heart is to go Home to be with the Lord for ever and ever. But if it pleases God to allow us to labour for Him, to be ready to stay, counting it an honour and privilege to labour yet further on earth. I myself have been praying to obtain the great honour, the glorious privilege to be allowed to stay yet longer in the body, that I might be able, in my weak, feeble measure, to labour further for the Lord, for I count it the greatest honour, the most glorious privilege, to be allowed to do any little thing for my adorable, precious Lord, Who has done so much for me.

“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.” “We labour” - that is, we endeavour - “that whether present or absent” - that is, whether in the body or out of the body, whether with the Lord or whether from the Lord, that however it may be with us, on earth, or in heaven - “we may be accepted of Him” - that is, please Him well. That is the one great concern we should have, to please our Lord well, whether by labouring much or little, in easy or trying circumstances, among friends or foes, at home or abroad, on the land or on the sea. However it may be with us, as to our circumstances, that we may please Him well is the one great business of life if we are believers in the Lord. How greatly we should endeavour to do this whilst life is continued!

Now, in conclusion of our subject, the most solemn word comes in our last verse. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The Eye of God is on every human being! The Ear of God hears every word uttered by every human being, and whatever we do, and whatever we say, nothing escapes the Ear or the Eye of our Heavenly Father. According to all this, we have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The believers, all who trust in Christ, are pardoned for all they have been doing, for all they have been saying, great and many and varied though their failures and shortcomings may have been. All, all who have condemned themselves, passed sentence on themselves, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are escaping thus the judgment. But if we are not believers in the Lord Jesus, if we are going on thoughtlessly and carelessly and unconcerned about the things of God, or trusting in ourselves for salvation, instead of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, or think that by living a different life, we are able to make up for past misconduct, which is a fatal, soul-destroying error - if, in any way, we are not thus found believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, then God is under the necessity, as a Holy God, and as a Just God, of bringing us to an account for all our deeds, for all our words, even for every one of our thoughts. And O how will it be then, when having thus to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the body? O how will it be then? May I entreat and beseech all here present, who are yet out of Christ, not to come to this, for they will not be able to answer God one thing out of a thousand; they will not be able to justify themselves regarding their doings, their speaking, their thinking. Numberless millions will be found out, their evil deeds, their sinful words, their unholy thoughts. And O what will be their condemnation at the last, if they are found without Christ? Therefore, before it be too late, let them hasten to Him for the forgiveness of all their numberless transgressions!

May God grant it all for Christ's sake. Amen

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Müllers is a working name of the
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