

Between Death and the Resurrection.

BY REV. WM. HURLIN.

There are Christians who tell us that our bodies and spirits are so essentially connected that both die together, and that therefore there is no conscious existence of the spirit between death and the resurrection. The object of this paper is to present a few of the many passages of the Scriptures which show that these persons are mistaken.

From Matthew 22: 23, and the parallel passages we learn that the Sadducees said "that there is no resurrection," and they came to Jesus with the statement of a case which they claimed proved the truth of their opinions. But Jesus not only showed that the case they presented was not a relevant one with reference to the resurrection; but from the statement made by God to Moses, Exodus 3: 6, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," he proved the separate, conscious existence of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by the statement, "God is not the God of the dead; but of the living." He thus asserted that although the bodies of these patriarchs had been in their graves a long time, yet when God spoke to Moses, the spirits were consciously alive. And according to Luke 20: 38, He asserted that this was a general principle by adding, "For all live unto Him."

In Luke 23: 42, it is recorded that one of the thieves who were crucified said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," thus asking for a favor to be bestowed at some future time. But Jesus promised him more than he asked, by replying, "Verily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He thus asserted that after they had both died the spirit of the thief would be with Him in Paradise in a state of conscious existence.

Philippians 1: 23, 24. Paul wrote, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." From this it is evident that Paul believed that when he died his spirit would not only continue to live in a state of conscious existence, but that he would "be with Christ." He loved and served Christ on earth, and had fellowship with Him; but he believed that after he died he would be brought into a closer relationship to Him, when he said, "is far better." Had he supposed that his spirit would remain unconscious until Jesus Christ came to raise the dead, there could have been no strait in his mind; but knowing that his continuance on earth was desirable for the Philippians, he would have prayed that his life on earth might continue as long as God saw fit to continue it. In II. Corinthians, 5: 8, Paul also expressed his conviction that when the time came for him to die his spirit would continue consciously existent, for he wrote: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

As the revelation which God has given to man is progressive in its character, we do not expect to find in the Old Testament such clear and definite statements on this subject as we have in the New Testament. Yet even there in the early history of the world, we find that the separate and conscious existence of the spirit of man is distinctly taught. In Genesis, 25: 8, we read, "Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered unto his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him." Genesis 35: 29, "And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him." Genesis 49: 23, "And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people." Genesis 50: 13, "His soles carried him (Jacob) into the land of Egypt, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah."

I know that it may be said that the expression "gathered unto his people," is only another mode of describing death. But this cannot be here, for in each case the fact of dying is stated separately and in distinction from being "gathered unto his people." It may also be said that it means burial, but again I reply that this cannot be so, for in each case the burial is spoken of as an after matter. And if this were not so, Abraham was not buried with his people, for his ancestors and his brother Haran were buried in "Ur of the Chaldees," and his father Terah was buried in Haran in Padan Aram, and only Sarah had been buried in the cave of Machpelah before Abraham was buried there. In the case of Jacob we are told that he "was gathered to his people," and that it was seventy days after this that Joseph asked permission of Pharaoh to carry the body of Jacob into the land of Canaan that it might be buried there. It may be further said that it was only a current opinion of the people of that age. But I submit that it is not given as a current opinion; but Moses, writing, as I believe, under divine inspiration, states distinctly that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were each "gathered unto his people," and thus declares the continuous existence of the spirit distinct from the body.

The above are only a few of the many passages in the Scriptures which teach that the spirit of man can and does exist separate from the body. We know very little of the state of existence between death and the resurrection, and probably it is a matter which in our present condition it is impossible for us to understand. But I think we have in

the Bible abundant proof that the spirits of those who "die in the Lord" do not sleep in the grave with their bodies, but that they have a conscious and a happy existence "with the Lord."—Watchman.

Paul's Cheerfulness.

BY REV. A. C. DIXON, D. D.

Paul's faith gave him good cheer, while every one else was in the dumps. It is easy to be cheerful when every one else is cheerful. A smile begets a smile. Hope is contagious. Laughter produces laughter. But a smile is most needful when others are frowning. Paul was serene when others were perturbed. He had a quiet heart while others were quaking with fear. He did not depend upon environment. His faith was in God. Black clouds, fierce winds, high waves and leaking ship only caused him to trust more implicitly in God. As the ship was about to leave "Fair Haven," Paul went to the captain and suggested that they winter in this good port, for there were indications of a stormy voyage. I can see the proud captain look with contempt upon the little Jew, as he says to him, "Go down to your bunk and stay there until you are needed. I am captain of this ship, and when I want your advice I will call for it." But before the voyage was over Paul was captain of the ship, and the former captain was coming to him for orders. The man who believes God will sooner or later be captain of the ship. Such a man never knows defeat.

Let us stand by Paul and watch him while the ship is being torn to pieces by the waves. He orders all who can swim to plunge in and strike for the shore, while those who could not swim should seize a loose board or spar and float ashore upon it. Paul's faith in God does not lead him to dispense with the use of means. He knows that faith without works is dead. But it is just like Paul to let every one else be supplied before himself. He could doubtless swim, and after every sailor and passenger had left the ship, he leaps from the sinking wreck into the water and heads for the shore. I can hear him say to the exhausted swimmer at his side, "Be of good cheer, you are certain to reach the shore. God has said it and it is true. I am wearied also, and I have no board. I need none, for I am depending on the promise of God."

When the count is made it is found that every man is accounted for. All are safe, though the ship and cargo are lost. And so will it be with every promise of God. If we fulfil the conditions, not one jot or tittle of them shall fail.

The secret of Paul's good cheer and power is in the fact that he was completely abandoned to God. His creed was, "God whose I am and whom I serve." He put God first; and when God is put first He can still bring things to pass, though He has to create something out of nothing. Write on the blackboard the numeral 1. Put a big naught before it and it remains only 1. Put two big naughts, three big naughts, a thousand big naughts before it, and it is only 1. Now rub out the big naughts before it and put a little naught after it that makes ten. Two little naughts and that makes a hundred; three little naughts and that makes a thousand. Put 1 first and it can create ten out of one nothing, one hundred out of two nothings and a thousand out of three nothings. So put God first and He can create something out of nothing. Though you be so insignificant as to be naught in yourself, if you put God first He will make you a power in the world. Like the religion of the old colored woman in the South who went to school just after the Civil War at the age of sixty. She was used to big things like plows and hoes and pots, but little things like letters and words she found it difficult to manage. So she came to the teacher one day and said, "Missus, I wish you would teach me to spell Jesus first?" The teacher replied, "Why is it, Auntie, that you want to spell Jesus first?" "Because," she answered, "I sometimes feel that if I could spell Jesus all the rest would come easy." Such faith in God will make all the rest come easy. Let us learn how to spell God, and with those letters we can spell all that is good.

Paul regarded himself as belonging completely to God. "Whose I am and whom I serve." He did not belong to God because he served Him, but he served God because he belonged to Him. The ties that bound him to God were the silken cords of love and gratitude. David said, "O, God, truly I am thy servant. Thou hast loosed my bonds." We make servants by binding bonds. God makes servants by loosing bonds. He links us to Himself by liberating us from sin. I have read of an Englishman who walking through the slave market at Cairo saw a fine-looking black man among the slaves whom he determined, if possible, to release. He went to the Arab master and asked him the price. The slave learned that the Englishman was trying to purchase him and it made him very angry. He had seen enough to know that this Englishman, if at home, would not dare to traffic in human flesh, but now that he is in Egypt he is buying slaves with a view of making money. The black man said to a brother slave at his side, "I would like to put a knife into his heart." But the Englishman finished the bargain and then came to the slave with a paper in one hand and a roll of money in the other hand, saying, "Here is your liberty and here is some money with which to begin your life of freedom. Go and make the best

of yourself. The black man at first could hardly take it in. He said, "Do you mean that I am now a free man to do just as I please?" "Yes," said the Englishman, "that is just what I mean." "Well, if that is true, I beg of you the privilege of going with you and serving you as long as I live."—Western Recorder.

"The Friend of God."

BY DAVID JAMES BURRELL, D. D.

It is written that Abraham went out not knowing whither, and sojourned in a strange country, by the power of faith. But how came he by such faith? How was it that he could trust God so perfectly, following, with eyes blinded, the Voice? There is an answer in the glowing language of the prophet: "He was a cedar in Lebanon, with high stature and fair branches; the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches, nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto him for beauty; and his root was with the great waters!" Here we have the secret of faith. "His root was with the great waters." Abraham drew his life from the life of God. Like Enoch, he walked with God. His tent was a moving synagogue. His household was a pilgrim church. Wherever he rested, whether by the oaks of Mamre, or along the olive slopes of Hebron, or on the lofty ridges of Bethel, there he builded an altar, and his prayers went upward with its ascending smoke. Such daily, intimate, and loving communion did this saint hold with heaven that God was pleased, to call him friend. God's friend!

He lived on terms of fellowship with God. "Voices addressed him from the skies, angels paid visits to his tent, guests who bore the folded wings of heaven beneath their vestments, and visions of glory hallowed his lowly couch and mingled with his dreams. He was a man of prayer, and therefore a man of power." The setting sun left him where oftentimes the sunrise had found him, on his bended knees; as one friend with another, so he communed with God.

The days of miracles are past, they tell us, and angels' visits come few and far between; the divine Presence is no longer manifested so that we may touch it, look upon it. Believe it not! The child of God in these as in other times may say, his lips a-quiver with filial love, "Abba, Father." He may walk with God as really as Adam did at evening in the garden; may talk with him as really as Samuel did in the night watches; may look upon him as Moses saw him in the burning bush.

Have we learned what the communion is, this discerning of His face? Have we found the trusting place of His friendship? Have our earnest thoughts and longings gone into the upper depths of His life, seeking for life, as the roots of the evergreen and fruitful tree that is "planted by the waters?" Our Lord has multitudes of friends who make of their severest toil a pleasure by knowing that His kindly eyes are ever looking down upon them. Jonathan Edwards was wont to speak of himself as walking in his best hours "hand in hand with God." And a deep well of truth was in the humble words of the freed woman, Phoebe Jacobs, when she said: "My poor hut is become a palace today; for while sweeping it there came to me the thought that I must sweep softly, since He was here." The secret of peace and sweet content and hopefulness is to know that He is not far from every one of us. My friend, let God make a friend of thee! Open all thy doors! Wide open! For it is written, "Behold, I stand and knock; if any man will open unto Me, I will come in and sup with him."

"This is His will; He makes me act the host

To shelter Him, and lo! He shelters me;

Asking for alms, He summons me to be

A guest at banquets of the Holy Ghost."

Is there a reader of these words who would have this more than kingly honor? There is none that may not have it. "I am the way," said the King's Son. "I am the door." God in this Person has made Himself accessible to all, and by the lips of messengers, whose feet are beautiful on all the mountains of the earth, He has sent forth the word of His mercy, "Whosoever will, let him come!" To what? To reconciliation with God in Jesus Christ; to communion and friendship with Him.

He that has entered thus into the holiest of all may face the future, the unknown land of trials and responsibilities, as hopefully as Abram did the land beyond the Euphrates; may face tomorrow and eternity! Are clouds and darkness before us; can we see but a single step? What matters it? Here is a footprint—a man hath been here before us—the man Christ Jesus; and here is a hand, warm and outstretched.

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on!"

Out of the mists of the remote past; nay, rather, from the shining seats of heaven, let the fire-touched lips of the patriarch speak to us of the pilgrimage, the brief passage of the river, and the unending splendors of those fields that lie beyond the swelling flood, all dressed in living green.

For they that hearken thus go forward at the divine bidding, and seek a better country, even an heavenly. This is the lesson:

"The God of Abraham praise,
Who reigns enthroned above,