

## From Death to Life Through Christ.

Text: John 5:19-29

1) The Assurance Of Eternal Life Can Be Found  
In Jesus Alone

Suggested Hymns:  
322, 423, 96, 125, 179

2) Eternal Life Is Attained Only Through Faith  
In Jesus Christ

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 5:19-29, <sup>19</sup> *Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. <sup>20</sup> "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. <sup>21</sup> "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. <sup>22</sup> "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> "that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*

<sup>24</sup> *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. <sup>25</sup> "Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, <sup>27</sup> "and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice <sup>29</sup> "and come forth - - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Christian's hope extends beyond the grave to the life of the world to come. Among the comforting truths which we confess with believing

hearts is this truth, ***“I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.”***

We maintain steadfastly against all opposition that the grave is not man’s end, but merely the beginning of an endless eternity. Whether this endless eternity will be in bliss or in hell depends upon the faith, or lack of faith, of the individual.

We believe this, not because it is embodied in our creeds, but because it is a clear teaching of our Lord and Saviour and of His inspired Apostles. This promise of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting to those who believe in Christ is also made in our text.

The enemies of truth to whom Jesus directed His words did not find fault with the promise of everlasting life. With the exception of the Sadducees, who were few in number, the Jews believed in the immortality of the soul.

What irritated them was the teaching of Christ that He was the Son of God and that eternal life can be found only in Him. To this day we meet opposition, not so much in teaching that life does not end at the grave, but in teaching what Jesus so definitely asserts, namely, that the sinner lives eternally through faith in Him.

May our hearts be lifted to new heights of faith, confidence, and courage as we summarise the words of Jesus with the phrase, *from death to life through Christ*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Assurance Of Eternal Life Can Be Found In Jesus Alone**

Jesus said, ***He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*** <sup>24</sup> ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.***

This teaching was not pleasant to the ears of those who heard Jesus speak the words of our text. It added fuel to their anger and it increased their determination to get rid of Him.

The Saviour’s fearless testimony concerning Himself and eternal life through Him was preceded by a significant incident in which Jesus demonstrated His divine power and gave proof of the truth of His words.

Jesus had gone to Jerusalem at the feast of the Jews. At the Pool of Bethesda He saw a man lying on his bed. The man had suffered from an infirmity for thirty-

eight years. Touched by the man's pitiful plight, Jesus told him, "**Rise, take up your bed, and walk.**"<sup>1</sup> The sick man did as Jesus commanded and was healed instantly by a miracle.

However, it was the Sabbath day, which figured so strongly in the Jewish religion. When the leaders of the Jews saw the man carrying his bed, they accused him, "**It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.**" The man replied, "**He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'**"

The leaders of the Jews demanded that he tell them who it was that gave such an order. But the man, strangely enough, did not know, for Jesus had gone away. Afterward the man came face to face with Jesus in the Temple and learned that his Healer was Jesus.

He returned to the Jews to inform them that it was Jesus who had made him well. But they were not impressed by the miracle, they did not rejoice with the man whose miserable existence was transformed into a healthy, normal life through Jesus.

They did not honestly question, *Where has this Man got the power to heal with a word of His lips?* On the contrary, they were incensed that their Sabbath regulations had been transgressed. Murderous thoughts filled their hearts. They sought to kill Jesus because, according to their interpretation, He had broken the Sabbath.

When the Jewish leaders confronted Jesus with the charge of Sabbath-breaking, He replied calmly, "**My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.**" Even as the Father continued His providential and gracious work on the Sabbath day, so the Son must work. Then they became all the more determined to kill Jesus, because He said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

Their blind and stubborn hearts condemned Jesus, despite the proof which they should have found in the miraculous cure of the sick man. To the charge of Sabbath-breaking they now added blasphemy. They locked their hearts against Jesus and closed the shutters of their souls against His light. Thus they condemned themselves to eternal death.

### **The Life-Giving Power Of The Son Of God**

The mighty works of Jesus, of which the healing of the man with an infirmity at Bethesda was one example, which can lead to only one conclusion, as expressed by Nicodemus, ***“Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”***<sup>2</sup>

But the logic of the Jewish leaders ruled out that conclusion. Instead, they reasoned with pious indignation, He breaks the Sabbath; He makes Himself equal with God; therefore He is a liar and a blasphemer.

We marvel how patiently Jesus defends Himself against those who have set themselves against Him. Solemnly He declares, ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”***<sup>20</sup> ***“For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.”***

The miracle referred to, and the greater works still to follow, could only be performed by the finger of God. The persons of the Holy Trinity do not work independently of each other. God cannot be divided. The work and will of God is one, just as God is one. Emphatically Jesus teaches, not that He is a mere prophet, or the Master Healer, but that He is the Son of God, the Christ through whom spiritual and eternal life would be restored to a spiritually sick and dying race of men.

Unless faith and doctrine begin and end with that truth, it is worthless. ***He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*** ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,”*** is the rock of confession upon which the invincible Church of the living Christ is built.<sup>3</sup> When the human heart comes to that conviction, then a sinner has been reborn, and the Kingdom of God has another citizen. Nothing else will do. Any other basis for faith and doctrine is a lie and a delusion.

### **Proof Of The Life-Giving Power Of Jesus**

Christ has the power to give life. <sup>21</sup> ***“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”*** We are acquainted with the claims of Jesus in which He said, for example, ***“I am the Resurrection and the Life,”***<sup>24</sup> and again, ***“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”***<sup>25</sup>

But Jesus did not merely say these words; He demonstrated them by works greater than the healing of the man with the infirmity. Jesus' word, "**Lazarus, come forth,**" brought life to the corpse which had been four days in the grave. The widow's son at Nain and Jairus' daughter were restored to life.

But the outstanding proof of His life-giving power was His own empty tomb on Easter morning. Because He lives, we, shall live also. We pass from death to life through Christ.

### **Unbelief Bars Life And Earns Condemnation**

The fact of life through Christ alone is stressed from another angle in the words of our Lord, <sup>22</sup> "**For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.** Man will live eternally, either to bless God eternally in the bliss of heaven or to curse the day that he was born in the pains of hell, depending upon his relationship to Christ.

We read in Romans 10:9, <sup>9</sup> **that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** And in Mark 16:16, <sup>16</sup> "**He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.** In our belief or rejection of Christ lies the sentence that shall be passed upon us in the day of judgment.

Unbelief closes the door and shuts out the grace of God in Jesus Christ, which alone can save the sinful soul.

The Father has given Christ "**authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.**"<sup>6</sup> By the appearance of Christ in the world in human form as the Revealer of God, by His sacrifice upon the Cross for the sins of the world, by His offer of eternal life to all who will look to Him and believe, He necessarily judges all men.

People simply condemn themselves - by rejecting the Son of Man, Jesus Christ; or by stumbling at the lowliness of His Person, the simplicity of His Gospel, and the claim of His divinity; or by ignoring His salvation or viewing His Cross with scornful wonder; or by exalting human wisdom above Christ's revelation or trusting in their own merit.

The faithful God, through Jesus Christ, must execute the judgment of damnation upon such people, for they refuse His offer of an escape from sin and His promise of eternal life through Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. Thus the Son of Man becomes man's Judge, not that He is willing that any should perish, but only when He is rejected.

### **Jesus Came To Bring Us Life**

The purpose of Christ's coming into the world was to bring us life. He came to bring people the fullness of life by bringing sinners into communion with God through the forgiveness of sins, and to give them the golden crown of eternal life beyond the grave in the presence of God and His holy angels. ***"I have come,"*** Jesus explains, ***"that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."***<sup>7</sup>

Some people scoff at this simple faith in Christ, who became Man that He might die for sin and reveal God's eternal plan of salvation for a lost world! Nevertheless, it still remains everlastingly true. They derided, persecuted, and killed Christ, but those who pierced Him with nails and spear, who spurned and rejected Him, shall someday see Him again. Then they shall wail because of Him, for then the hour of grace will have passed, and the hour of judgment has come. They will pass from death into eternal despair.<sup>8</sup>

But those who now believe in Christ will see Him with great joy, for they shall not be condemned, their faith will be vindicated, and they shall live forever in Paradise Regained. ***"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"***<sup>9</sup>

A second consideration that Jesus forcefully impressed upon those who heard His words, and upon us who read them, is that

## **2. Eternal Life Is Attained Only Through Faith In Jesus Christ**

### **The Spiritual Death from Which Jesus Delivered Us**

All people are by nature under the curse of sin. Paul reminds the Christians at Ephesus, ***"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins."***<sup>10</sup> Just as a dead man cannot give himself life, so those who are dead spiritually because of sin cannot give themselves spiritual life.

Nicodemus, who came to Jesus with the question in his heart, *How can a man enter into the kingdom of heaven?* received the answer, ***"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of***

**God.**<sup>11</sup> New spiritual life must be given to the sinner. And this new life comes when the Holy Spirit through His Word and Baptism creates faith in Christ. The spiritual resurrection of faith must precede the physical resurrection to eternal life.

A new life must be created, the life which we live by the Holy Spirit, the life which flows from and is lived in the faith of Jesus Christ. Such people shall not taste eternal death. The death which they now die is but a cessation of the tears and evils of this world and the entrance into eternal life.<sup>12</sup>

This resurrection from spiritual death now manifests itself in a new life. Paul speaks of this in Romans 6:4, *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Christ bestows this spiritual life upon those who believe in Him. <sup>25</sup> *“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.*

The second resurrection from physical death follows the first resurrection from spiritual death, and the resurrection from the grave is a mere continuation and perfection of the life which was begun in us with the first resurrection.

### **Good Works In The Plan Of Salvation**

In this we discover the relation of good works to salvation. It is the fruit of the life bestowed upon us through faith in Christ.<sup>13</sup> Good works are a witness to the fact that we are God’s children through faith in Christ.<sup>14</sup> A holy life already on earth is the result of our salvation, not the cause of it.<sup>15</sup> Faith, without the corresponding life of faith, is worthless for salvation, just as good works without faith cannot save.<sup>16</sup>

Good works will be the criterion in the day of Judgment, not as the cause of salvation, but as proof of a living faith in the living Christ. While good works do not save us, the absence of works that correspond with our faith in Christ would damn us. *“For the hour is coming,”* Jesus prophesied, *“in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice”*<sup>29</sup> *“and come forth -- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”* The works of the heart which have been reborn through faith in Christ recommend us to heaven.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Conflict Of Faith And Flesh**

The new spiritual life in the faith of Jesus Christ cannot be lived without a struggle while we are still in the flesh. Our sinful nature rebels against the new life of the Spirit. The Old Adam in us *“should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity for ever.”* This is what Baptism means for daily living.

If Christ lives in us by faith, and if we daily seek strength from His holy Word to overcome our sinful flesh, then we shall be enabled through Christ to live the risen life upon earth and to rise to eternal life in the world to come. Our life will become truly worth while, if we have the faith of Paul, ***“For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”***<sup>18</sup>

### **Truths Which Delight The Believing Heart**

Two truths become apparent from a study of the defence of Jesus before His enemies: first, that the assurance of eternal life can be found in Jesus alone, and second, that eternal life is attained only through faith in Jesus.

These are truths that cannot be repeated too often, because if we lose them, we have lost everything. Possessing these truths in faith, we have everything. Barns filled with grain and a bursting bank-account become worthless in the hour of death; but the heart filled with faith in Jesus has the treasures of heaven.

These are truths, therefore, which always delight the Christian heart, no matter how often we have heard them, just as the admirer of flowers never tires of seeing an exquisite blossom.

### **Prepared To Die**

It is as natural for man to die as to be born. While we may pursue various occupations and interests on earth, we reach one common goal — the grave. Death is a preacher whose message nobody can escape, and whose theme is, ***“Here have we no continuing city.”***<sup>19</sup> The Psalmist faced the fact of how short our lives are, and the certainty of death realistically when he prayed, ***“So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.”***<sup>20</sup>

Christianity issues a mighty call to preparedness, to wake up from sleep, to arm ourselves against the destruction of our souls, and to prepare for the hour of death. Our sure defence is Christ. We live because He died for us and rose again. With that faith in our hearts, death holds no terror. Rather, we rejoice as victors. We have passed from death to life through Christ Jesus. Amen.



The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 5:8

<sup>2</sup> John 3:2

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 16:16-18

<sup>4</sup> John 11:25

<sup>5</sup> John 14:6

<sup>6</sup> John 5:27

<sup>7</sup> John 10:10

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Rev. 1:7.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. 15:57

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 2:1

<sup>11</sup> John 3:5

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Rev. 20:5-6.

<sup>13</sup> John 15:5

<sup>14</sup> Rom. 8:12-14

<sup>15</sup> Eph. 2:8-10

<sup>16</sup> James 2:17

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Matt. 25:31-46.

<sup>18</sup> Phil. 1:21

<sup>19</sup> Heb. 13:14

<sup>20</sup> Psa. 90:12