

~Other Speakers A-F: Samuel Davies:

The Nature and Process of Spiritual Life

by Samuel Davies

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved!" Ephesians 2:4-5

It is not my usual method to weary your attention by a long confinement to one subject; and our religion furnishes us with such a boundless variety of important topics, that a minister who makes them his study will find no temptation to cloy you with repetitions—but rather finds it difficult to speak so concisely on one subject, as to leave room for others of equal importance. However, the subject of my last discourse was so copious and interesting, that I cannot dismiss it without a supplement. I there showed you some of the symptoms of spiritual death; but I would not leave you dead—as I found you; and therefore I intend now to consider the counterpart of that subject, and show you the nature and symptoms of spiritual life.

I doubt not but a number of you have been made alive to God by his quickening spirit; but many, I fear, still continue dead in transgressions and sins; and, while such are around me, I cannot help imagining my situation something like that of the prophet Ezekiel (chapter 37.) in the midst of the valley full of dry bones, spread far and wide around him. And should I be asked, "Can these dry bones, can these dead souls live?" I must answer with him, "Oh, Lord God, you know! Lord, I see no signs of life in them, and no tendency towards it. I know that nothing is impossible to you; I firmly believe you can inspire them with life—as dry and dead as they are; and what your designs are towards them, whether you intend to exert your all-quickening power upon them, you only know, and I would not presume to determine. But this I know, that, if they are left to themselves, they will continue dead to all eternity! For, oh Lord, the experiment has been repeatedly tried; your servant has over and over made those quickening applications to them, which your word, that sacred dispensary, prescribes; but all in vain! They still continue dead towards you, and lie putrefying more and more in transgressions and sins! However, at your command, I would attempt the most unpromising undertaking; I would proclaim even unto dry bones and dead souls, Oh you dry bones, oh you dead souls—hear the word of the Lord! Ezekiel 37:4. I would also cry aloud for the animating breath of the Holy Spirit, Come from the four winds, oh breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" verse 9.

You dead sinners, I would make one more attempt in the name of the Lord to bring you to life; and if I have the least hope of success, it is entirely owing to the encouraging perhaps, that the quickening spirit of Christ may work upon your hearts while I am addressing myself to your ears. And, oh sirs, let us all keep our souls in a praying posture, throughout this discourse. If one of you should fall into a swoon or an seizure, how would all about you bestir themselves to bring you to life again! And alas! shall dead souls lie so thick among us, in every assembly, in every family—and shall no means be used for their recovery! Did Martha and Mary apply to Jesus with all the arts of importunity in behalf of their sick and deceased brother; and are there not some of you who have dead relations, dear friends and neighbors, I mean dead in the worst sense, "dead in transgressions and sins"? And will you not apply to Jesus, the Lord of life, and follow him with your importunate cries, until he comes and call them to life?

Now let parents turn intercessors for their children; children for their parents; friend for friend; neighbor for neighbor; yes, enemy for enemy. Oh! should we all take this method, we might soon expect to see the valley of dry bones—full of living souls, an exceeding great army! Ezekiel 37:10. In praying for this great and glorious event, you do not pray for an impossibility. Thousands as dead as they, have obtained a joyful resurrection by the power of God.

Here in my text you have an instance of a mixed crowd of Jews and Gentiles that had lain dead in sin together, and even Paul among them—who were recovered to life, and are now enjoying an immortal life in the heavenly regions! And, blessed be God, this spiritual life is not entirely extinct among us. Among the multitudes of dead souls that we everywhere meet with—we find here and there a soul that has very different symptoms. Once indeed it was dead like the rest; but now, while they are quite senseless of divine things, and have no vital aspirations after God—this soul cannot be content with the richest affluence of created enjoyment; it pants and breathes after God; it feeds upon his Word, it feels an almighty energy in eternal things, and receives vital sensations from them! It manifests life and vigor in devotion, and serves the living God with pleasure, though it is also subject to fits of languishment, and at times seems just expiring, and to lose all sensation.

And whence is this vast difference? Why is this soul so different from what it once was—^{and} from what thousands around still are? Why can it not, like them, and like itself formerly—lie dead and senseless in sin, without any vital impressions or experiences from God or divine things? The reason is, the happy reason, my brethren, is, this is a living soul: "Like the rest, it was by nature an object of wrath. But because of his great love for it, God, who is rich in mercy, made it alive with Christ—even when it was dead in transgressions!" And hence it is alive to him.

My present design is to explain the nature and properties of this divine life, and to show you the manner in which it is usually begun in the soul. I shall open with the consideration of the last particular. Here you must observe, that, though spiritual life is instantaneously infused—yet God prepares the soul for its reception by a course of previous operations. He spent six days in the creation of the world, though he might have spoken it into being in an instant. Thus he usually creates the soul anew—after a gradual process of preparatory actions. In forming the first man, he first created chaos out of nothing, then he digested it into earth; on the sixth day he formed and organized the earth into a body, with all its endless variety of members, muscles, fibers, veins, and arteries; and then, after this process, he inspired it with a living soul; and what was but a lump of clay, sprung up a perfect man. Thus also the fetus in the womb is for some months in formation before the soul, or the principle of life, is infused.

In like manner the Almighty proceeds in quickening us with spiritual life; we all pass through a course of preparation, though some through a longer, and some shorter. And as one reason why the great Creator took up so much time in the creation of the world, probably was, that he might allow the angels time for leisurely surveys of the astonishing process, so he may advance thus gradually in the new creation, that we may observe the various steps of the operation, and make proper reflections upon it in future life.

My present design is to trace these steps to their grand result, that you may know whether divine grace has ever carried you through this gracious process.

And that you may not fall into needless perplexities, it may be necessary for me to premise farther, that there is a great variety in these preparatory operations, and in the degrees of spiritual life. Indeed the difference is only circumstantial, for the work is substantially the same, and spiritual life is substantially the same in all. But then, in such circumstances as the length of time, the particular external means, the degree of previous terror, and of subsequent joy and vitality, etc., God exercises a sovereign freedom, and shows that he has a variety of ways by which to accomplish his end; and it does not matter how we obtain it—so long as we have but spiritual life.

I shall therefore endeavor to confine myself to the substance of this work, without its peculiarities, in different subjects; and, when I cannot avoid descending to particulars, I shall endeavor so to diversify them, as that they may be easily adapted to the various cases of different Christians. To draw their common lineaments, whereby they may be distinguished from all others who are still dead in sin, is sufficient to my present purpose. Whereas, to draw the particular lineaments, or peculiar features, whereby they may be distinguished from one another—is a very difficult task, and cannot be of any great service to what I have now in design.

I have only one thing more to premise, and that is: that the way by which divine grace prepares a sinner for spiritual life, is by working upon all the principles of the rational life, and exciting him to exert them to the utmost to obtain it. Here it is proper for you to recollect what I observed in my last discourse, that even a sinner who is dead in transgressions and sins—is alive and capable of action in other respects: he can not only perform the actions and feel the sensations of physical life—but he can also exercise his intellectual powers about intellectual objects, and even about divine things. He is capable of thinking of these, and of receiving some impressions from them. He is also capable of attending upon the ordinances of the gospel, and performing the external duties of religion. These things a sinner may do—and yet be dead in sin. Indeed he will not exercise his natural powers about these things while left to himself. He has the power—but then he has no disposition to employ it. He is indeed capable of meditating upon spiritual things—but what does this avail, when he will not turn his mind to such objects? Or if he does, he considers them as mere speculations, and not as the most vital and important realities.

How few, or how superficial and unaffecting are a sinner's thoughts of them! Heaven and hell are objects that may strike the emotions, and raise the joys and fears of a natural man—but in general he is little or nothing impressed with them. He is capable of prayer, hearing, and using the means of grace; but I believe, if you make observations upon the conduct of mankind, that you will find they are but seldom employed in these duties, or that they perform them in such a careless manner, that that they have no tendency to answer the end of their institution.

In short, the more I know of mankind, I have the lower opinion of what they will do in religion when left to themselves. They have a natural power, and we have seen all possible means used with them to excite them to put it forth; but alas! all is in vain, and nothing will be done to purpose—until God stirs them up to exert their natural abilities; and this he performs as a preparative for spiritual life. He brings the sinner to exert all his active powers in seeking this divine principle: nature does her utmost, and all outward means are tried, before a supernatural principle is implanted.

The evangelist John has given us the history of the resurrection of the dead body of Lazarus after it had been four days in the grave; and I would now give you the history of a more glorious resurrection, the resurrection of a soul that had lain dead for years—yet is at last quickened by the same almighty power with a divine and immortal life!

Should I exemplify it by a particular instance, I might fix upon this or that person in this assembly, and remind you, and inform others, of the process of this work in your souls. And oh! how happy are such of you—that you may be produced as examples in this case! You lay for ten, twenty, thirty years, or more—dead in trespasses and sins; you did not breathe and pant like a living soul after God and holiness; you had little more sense of the burden of sin—than a corpse has a sense of the pressure of a mountain! You had no appetite for the living bread who came down from heaven; the vital pulse of sacred passions did not beat in your hearts towards God and divine things—but you lay putrefying in sin! Filthy lusts preyed upon you—like worms on the bodies of the dead! You spread the contagion of sin around you by your conversation and example, like the stench and corruption of a rotten carcass! You were odious and abominable to God, fit to be shut up in the infernal pit of hell—out of his sight! And you were objects of horror and lamentation to all who knew and daily considered your case, your dreadful and deplorable case.

During this time, many quickening applications were made to you; you had friends that used all means to bring you to life again; but alas! all in vain; conscience proved your friend, and pierced and chafed you, to bring you to some feeling—but you remained still senseless, or the symptoms of life soon vanished. God did not cast you away as irrecoverably dead—but stirred and agitated you within, and struggled long with the principles of death to subdue them. And if it was your happy lot to live under a faithful ministry, the living oracles that contain the seeds of the divine life were applied to you with care and solicitude. The terrors of the Lord were thundered in your ears to awaken you. The preaching of a Savior's dying love, and the rich grace of the gospel—were repeatedly tried upon you. Now you were carried within hearing of the heavenly music, and within sight of the glories of Paradise—to see if these would charm you. Now you were, as it were, held over the flames of hell—that they might by their pungent pains scorch and startle you into life.

Providence also concurred with these applications, and tried to recover you by mercies and judgments, sickness and health, losses and possessions, disappointments and successes, threatenings and deliverances. If it was your unhappy lot to lie among dead souls like yourself—you had indeed but little pity from them, nay, they and Satan were plying you with their opiates and poisons to confirm the deadly sleep. And oh! how astonishing is it that you should be quickened in a charnel-house, in the mansions of the dead—with dead souls lying all around you!

But if it was your happiness to be in the society of the living, they pitied you, they stirred and agitated you with their warnings and persuasions, they, like Martha and Mary in behalf of their deceased brother, went to Jesus with their cries and importunities, "Lord, my child, my parent, my servant, my neighbor is dead! Oh come and restore him to life! Lord, if you had been here, he would not have died; but even now I know it is not too late for you to raise him." Thus, when one is dead in our family, the whole house should be alarmed, and all the domestics be busy in trying to bring him to life again.

But, oh! reflect with shame and sorrow—how long all these quickening applications were in vain; you still lay in a dead sleep. Or, if at times you seemed to move, and gave us hopes you were coming to life again—you soon relapsed, and grew as senseless as ever.

And alas! are there not some of you in this condition to this very moment? Oh deplorable sight! May the hour come, and oh that this may be the hour—in which such dead souls shall hear the voice of the Son of God—and live! John 5:25.

But as to such of you in whom I would exemplify this history of a spiritual resurrection, when your case was thus deplorable, and seemingly helpless—the happy hour, the time of love came, when you must live! When all these applications had been unsuccessful, the all-quickening Spirit of God had determined to exert more of

his energy, and work more effectually upon you. Perhaps a verse in your Bible, a sentence in a sermon, an alarming Providence, the conversation of a pious friend, or something that unexpectedly occurred to your own thoughts—first struck your minds with unusual force. You found you could not harden yourselves against it as you were accustomed to do; it was attended with a power you never before had felt, and which you could not resist. This made you thoughtful and reflective, and turned your minds to objects that you were accustomed to neglect; this made you stand and pause, and think of the state of your neglected souls. You began to fear that matters were wrong with you; "What will become of me, when I leave this world? Where shall I reside forever? Am I prepared for the eternal world? How have I spent my life?"

These, and the like inquiries, brought you to a standstill, and you could not pass over them so superficially as you were accustomed to do. Your SINS now appeared to you in a new light; you were shocked and surprised at their malignant nature, their number, their aggravations, and their dreadful consequences! The great GOD, whom you were accustomed to neglect, appeared to you as a Being that demanded your regard; you saw that he was indeed a venerable, solemn, majestic Being, with whom you had the most important concern. In short, you saw that such a life as you had led, would never bring you to heaven. You saw you must make religion more your business than you had ever done, and hereupon you altered your former course. You broke off from several of your vices, you deserted your worldly company, and you began to frequent the throne of grace, to study Scripture, and to attend upon its institutions; and this you did with some degree of earnestness and solicitude.

When you were thus reformed, you began to flatter yourself that you had escaped out of your dangerous condition, and had secured the divine favor. Now you began to view yourselves with secret self-applause as a true Christian; but all this time the reformation was only outward, and there was no new principle of a divine supernatural life implanted in your hearts! You had not the loving passions and sensations of living souls towards God—but acted entirely from natural, selfish principles. You had no clear heart-affecting views of the intrinsic evil, and odious nature of sin, considered in itself; nor of the entire universal corruption of your nature, and the necessity not only of adorning your outer man by an external reformation—but of an inward change of heart by the almighty power of God! You were not deeply sensible of the extent and spirituality of the divine law, nor of the infinite purity and inexorable justice of the Deity. You had no love for true religion and virtue, for their own sakes—but only on account of their happy consequences. Indeed your love of novelty and a regard to your own happiness, might so work upon you, for a time—that you might have very raised and delightful passions in religious duties; but all your religion at that time was a mere system of selfishness, and you had no generous unselfish delight in holiness for its own excellency, nor did you heartily relish the strictness of pure, living religion!

You were also under the government of a self-righteous spirit: your own good works were the ground of your hopes, and you had no relish for the mortifying doctrine of salvation through the mere mercy of God and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Though your education taught you to acknowledge Christ as the only Savior, and ascribe all your hopes to his death—but in reality, he was of very little importance in your religion; he had but little place in your heart and affections, even when you urged his name as your only plea at the throne of grace. In short, you had not the spirit of the gospel, nor any spiritual life within you.

And this is all the religion with which multitudes are contented. With this they obtain a name that they live; but in the sight of God, and in reality, they are dead! And had you been allowed to rest here, according to your own desire, you would have been dead still. But God, who is rich (oh how inconceivably rich!) in mercy, for the great love with which he loved you, resolved to carry on his work of salvation in you; and therefore, while you were flattering yourselves, and elated with a proud conceit of a happy change in your condition—he surprised you with a very different view of your case; he opened your eyes farther, and then you saw, and then you felt those things of which, until then, you had but little sense or apprehension; such as the corruption of your hearts, the awful strictness of the divine law, your utter inability to yield perfect obedience, and the necessity of an inward change of the inclinations and relishes of your soul. These, and a great many other things of a like nature, broke in upon your minds with striking evidence and a kind of almighty energy; and now you saw that you were still "dead in sin," weak, indisposed, averse towards spiritual things; and "dead in law," condemned to everlasting death and misery by its righteous sentence!

Now you set about the duties of religion with more earnestness than ever; now you prayed, you heard, and used the other means of grace as for your life, for you saw that your eternal life was indeed at stake. And now, when you put the matter to a thorough trial, you were more sensible than ever—of your own weakness, and the difficulties in your way. "Oh! who would have thought that my heart had been so depraved that it should thus fly off from God, and struggle, and chafe against returning to him?" Such was then your language. Alas! you found yourselves quite helpless—and all your efforts feeble and ineffectual! Then you perceived

yourselves, as really dead in sin, and that you must continue so to all eternity, unless quickened by a power infinitely superior to your own! Not that you lay slothful and inactive at this time; no, never did you exert yourselves so vigorously in all your life, never did you besiege the throne of grace with such earnest importunity, never did you hear and read with such eager attention, or make such a vigorous resistance against sin and temptation! All your natural powers were exerted to the highest pitch, for now you saw your case required it! But you found that all your most vigorous endeavors were insufficient, and you were sensible that, without the assistance of a superior power, the work of salvation could never be effected in you.

Now you were reduced very low indeed. While you imagined you could render yourselves safe by a reformation in your own power—you were not much alarmed at your condition, though you saw it was bad. But oh! to feel yourselves dead in sin, and that you cannot help yourselves; to see yourselves in a state of condemnation, liable to execution every moment—and yet to find all your own endeavors utterly insufficient to relieve you; to be obliged, after all you had done, to lie at mercy's gate, and confess that you were as deserving of everlasting punishment as ever the most notorious criminal was of the stroke of public justice; this was a state of extreme dejection, terror, and anxiety indeed! The proud, self-confident creature, was never thoroughly mortified and humbled until now—when he is slain by the law, and entirely cut off from all hopes from himself.

And now, finding you could not save yourselves, you began to look about you, and look out for another to save you! Now you were more sensible than ever of the absolute need of Jesus; and you cried and reached after him, and stirred up yourselves to take hold of him. The gospel brought the free offer of him to your ears, and you would gladly have accepted of him; but here new difficulties arose. Alas! you did not think yourselves good enough to receive him, and hence you took a great deal of fruitless pains to make yourselves better. You also found your hearts strangely averse to the gospel-method of salvation, and, though a sense of your necessity made you try to work up yourselves to an approbation of it—yet you could not affectionately acquiesce in it, and cordially relish it.

And now, how melancholy was your situation! You were "shut up unto the faith;" Galatians 3:23; there was no other possible way of escape—and yet, alas! you could not take this way! Now you were ready to cry, "I am cut off—my strength and my hope are perished from the Lord!" But, blessed be God—he did not leave you in this condition. Man's extremity of distress—is God's opportunity for relief and salvation! And so you found it. Now the process of preparatory operations has come to a result. Now it is time for God to work, for nature has done her utmost, and has been found utterly insufficient! Now it is proper that a divine, supernatural principle should be infused, for all the principles of nature have failed, and the proud sinner is obliged to own it, and stand still, and see the salvation of God.

In this situation you wanted nothing but such a divine principle to make you living Christians indeed. These preparatives were like the taking away the stone from the sepulcher of Lazarus, which was a prelude of that almighty voice which called him from the dead. Now you appear to me like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision in one stage of the operation. "So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them!" Ezekiel 37:8. This was all that was lacking to making them living men.

In like manner you, at this time, had the external appearance of Christians—but you had no divine supernatural life in you; you were but the fair carcasses of Christians; your religion had a body completely formed—but it had no soul in it; and had the holy Spirit now given up his work—you would have continued dead still!

But now the important crisis-point has come, when he who stood over the grave of Lazarus, and pronounced the life-restoring mandate, "Lazarus, come forth!" When he who breathed into Adam the breath of life, and made him a living soul; I say, now the crisis-point has come, when he will implant the principles of life in your souls. Suddenly you feel the amazing change, and find that you are acting from principles entirely new to you; for now your hearts, which were accustomed to chafe and withdraw from God—rise to him with the strongest aspirations! Now the way of salvation through Christ, which you could never relish before, appears all amiable and glorious, and captivates your whole souls! Holiness now has lovely and powerful charms, which captivate you to the most willing obedience, notwithstanding your former disgust to it! And though once you were enamored with sin, and disliked it only because you could not indulge it with impunity—it now appears to you a mere mass of corruption and deformity, an abominable thing, which you hate above all other things on earth or in hell!

At this juncture you were animated with a new life in every faculty of your souls, and hereupon you felt the

instincts, the appetites, the sympathies and antipathies of a new life, a divine life; justly styled by the apostle the life of God—the life of God in the soul of man. The pulse of sacred passions began to beat towards spiritual objects; the vital warmth of divine love spread itself through your whole frame. You breathed out your desires and prayers before God; like a new-born infant you began to cry after him, and at times you have learned to lisp his name with filial endearment, and cry "Abba Father". You hungered and thirsted after righteousness. And as every kind of life must have its proper nourishment, so your spiritual life fed upon Christ, the living bread, and the sincere milk of his Word.

You also felt a new set of sensations; divine things now made deep and tender impressions upon you; the great realities of religion and eternity now affected you in a manner unknown before; you likewise found your souls actuated with life and vigor in the service of God, and in the duties you owed to mankind. This strange alteration no doubt filled you with surprise and amazement, something like that of Adam when he found himself spring into life, out of his eternal non-existence. With these new sensations, everything appeared to you in a quite different light, and you could not but wonder that you had never perceived them in that manner before!

Thus, my dear brethren, when you were even dead in sin—God quickened you together with Christ. It is true, the principle of life might be very weak at first, like the life of a new-born infant, or a fetus just animated in the womb. Nay, it may be but very weak still, and at times may languish, and seem just expiring in the agonies of death; but, blessed be the quickening Spirit of Christ, since the happy hour of your resurrection, you have never been, and you never will be to all eternity—what you once were, "dead in transgressions and sins."

Should I give you your own history since that time—it would be to this purpose, and you will discern many symptoms of life in it. You have often known what sickness of soul is, as well as of body; and sometimes it has risen to such a height, as to endanger your spiritual life. The seeds of sin, which still lurk in your constitution, like the principles of death, or a deadly poison circulating through your veins—have often struggled for the mastery, and cast you into languishing or violent spiritual disorders. Then was the divine life oppressed, and you could not freely draw the breath of prayer and pious desires; you lost the appetite for the Word of God, and what you received did not digest well and turn to kindly nourishment; the pulse of sacred passions beat faint and irregular, the vital life decayed, and you felt a death-like cold creeping upon you and benumbing you.

Sometimes you have been afflicted, perhaps, with convulsions of violent and outrageous passions, with the dropsy of insatiable desires after earthly things, with the lethargy of carnal security, or the fever of lust! At other times you have felt an universal disorder through your whole frame, and you hardly knew what ailed you—only you were sure that your souls were not well. But perhaps your most common disorder that seizes you—is a kind of consumption, a lowness of spirits, a languor and weakness, the lack of appetite for your spiritual food, or perhaps a nausea and disgust towards it.

You also live in a country very unwholesome to living souls; you dwell among the dead, and catch contagion from the conversation of those around you, and this heightens the disorder! And further, that old serpent the devil, labors to infect you with his deadly poison, and increase the peccant state by his temptations! At such times you can hardly feel any workings of spiritual life in you, and you fear you are entirely dead! But examine strictly, and you will discover some vital symptoms, even in this bad state of soul; for does not your new nature exert itself to work off the disorder? Are not your spirits in a ferment, and do you not feel yourselves in exquisite pain, or at least greatly uneasy? Give all the world to a sick man, and he despises it all: "Oh, give me my health!" says he, "or you give me nothing!" So it is with you; nothing can content you while your souls are thus out of order.

Do you not long for their recovery, that you may go about your business again; I mean that you may engage in the service of God with all the vigor of health? And do you not apply to Christ as your only physician in this condition? And oh! what an healing balm is his blood! O! what a reviving cordial is his love! and how kindly does his Spirit purge off the corrupt humours, and subdue the principles of sin and death!

Has not experience taught you the meaning of the apostle, when he says, Christ is our life: "I live—yet not I—but Christ lives in me," Galatians 2:20. Do you not perceive that Christ is your vital head, and that you revive or languish—just as he communicates or withholds his gracious influence? And have you not been taught in the same way, what is the meaning of that expression so often repeated, "The just shall live by faith." Hab. 2:4. Do you not find that faith is, as it were, the grand artery by which you derive life from Christ, and by which it is circulated through your whole frame; and that when faith languishes, then you weaken, pine away, and perhaps fall into a swoon, as though you were quite dead?

Are you not careful of the health of your souls? You endeavor to keep them warm with the love of God; you

shun those sickly regions as far as you can—where the example and conversation of the wicked spread their deadly infection; and you love to dwell among living souls, and breathe in their wholesome air. Upon the whole, it is evident, notwithstanding your frequent indispositions, you have some life within you; life takes occasion to manifest itself—even from your disorders. It is a plain symptom of spiritual life—that you have something within you, that makes such a vigorous resistance against the principles of sin and death, and throws your whole frame into a ferment, until it has wrought off the distemper. In short, you have the sensations, the sympathies and antipathies, the pleasures and pains—of living souls!

And is it so indeed? Then from this moment, begin to rejoice and bless the Lord, who raised you to spiritual life. Oh, let the hearts he has quickened, beat with his love; let the lips he has opened, when quivering in death, speak his praise; and devote that life to him which he has given you, and which he still supports!

Consider what a divine and noble kind of life he has given you. It is a capacity and aptitude for the most exalted and divine services and enjoyments. Now you have a relish for the Supreme Good as your happiness, the only proper food for your immortal souls; and he will not allow you to hunger and thirst in vain—but will satisfy the appetites he has implanted in your nature! You have some spirit and life in his service, and are not like the dead souls around you, who are all alive toward other objects—but absolutely dead towards him! You have also noble and exalted sensations; you are capable of a set of pleasures of a more refined and sublime nature, than what are relished by groveling sinners! From your inmost souls you detest and nauseate whatever is vile, base, and abominable; and you can feast on what is pure, amiable, excellent, and worthy of your love. Your vitiated taste for trash and poison—is cured; and you now feed upon heavenly bread, upon food agreeable to the constitution of your spiritual nature. And hence you may infer your fitness for the heavenly world, that region of perfect spiritual vitality.

You have a disposition for its enjoyments and services, and this is the grand preparative. God will not encumber the heaven of his glory—with dead souls; nor infect the pure healthful air of paradise—with the poison of their corruption! But the everlasting doors are always open for living souls, and not one of them shall ever be excluded! Nay, the life of heaven is already within you! The life that reigns with immortal health and vigor above—is the very same with that which beats in your breasts! Only there it is arrived to maturity and perfection, and here it is in its rudiments and weakness.

Your physical life, which was hardly perceivable in the womb—is the very same now—only now it has come to maturity. Thus you are now angels in embryo, the fetus (might I be allowed the expression) of glorified immortals! And when you are born out of the womb of time—into the eternal world, this feeble spark of spiritual life will kindle and blaze, and render you as active and vigorous as "the enrapt seraph who adores and burns!" Then you will fear no more weakness, no more languors, no more qualms of indisposition! The poison of temptation, and the contagion of bad example cannot reach you there! And the inward seeds of sickness and death will be purged entirely out of your soul! You will be totally removed out of the sickly country—and breathe a pure reviving air, the natural element of your living souls.

There you will find the fountain, yes, whole rivers of the waters of life, of which you will drink in large draughts forever and ever, and which will invigorate you with immortal life and health! Oh, how happy are you—in this single gift of spiritual life! This is a life that cannot perish, even in the ruins of the world!

What though you must before long—yield your mortal bodies and physical life to death and rottenness? Your most important life is immortal, and subject to no such dissolution; and therefore be courageous in the name of the Lord, and bid defiance to all the calamities of life, and all the terrors of death; for "your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear—then shall you also appear with him in glory!" Col. 3:3, 4.

I would willingly go on in this strain, and leave the pulpit with a relish of these delightful truths upon my spirit; but, alas! I must turn my address to another set of people in this assembly. But "where is the Lord God of Elijah," who restored the Shunamite's son to life by means of that prophet? I am going to call to the dead, and I know that they will not hear, unless God attends my feeble voice with his almighty power. I would pray over you like Elijah over the dead child, "Oh Lord my God, I pray you, let this sinner's life come into him again!" 1 Kings 17:21.

Are not the living and the dead promiscuously blended in this assembly? Here is a dead soul, there another, and there another—all over this meeting-house! And here and there are a few living souls thinly scattered among them!

Have you ever been carried through such a preparatory process as I have described? or if you are uncertain about this, as some may be, who are animated with spiritual life.

Inquire—have you the feelings, the appetites and aversions, the pleasing and the painful sensations of living souls? Methinks conscience breaks its silence in some of you, whether you will or not, and cries, "Oh no! There is not a spark of life in this breast." Well, my poor deceased friends, (for so I may call you,) I hope you will seriously attend to what I am going seriously to say to you. I have no bad design upon you—but only to restore you to life. And though your case is really discouraging—yet I hope it is not quite desperate. The principles of nature, reason, self-love, joy and fear—are still alive in you; and you are capable of some application to divine things. And, as I told you, it is upon the principles of nature, that God is accustomed to work, to prepare the soul for the infusion of a supernatural life. And these I would now work upon, in hopes you are not armored against considerations of the greatest weight and energy; I earnestly beg you would lay to heart such things as these:

Can you content yourselves with an physical life—the life of beasts, with reason—just to render you a more ingenious and self-tormenting kind of brutes; more artful in gratifying your sordid appetites—and yet still uneasy for lack of an unknown something; a care that the brute world, being destitute of reason, are unmolested with?

Oh! have you no ambition to be animated with a divine immortal life, the life of God? Can you be contented with a mere temporal life—when your souls must exist forever? That infinite world beyond the grave is filled with nothing but the terrors to you—if you are destitute of spiritual life. And oh! can you bear the thought of residing among its grim and ghastly terrors forever? Are you contented to be cut off from God—and to be banished forever from all the joys of his presence? You cannot be admitted to heaven, without spiritual life. Hell is the sepulcher for dead souls—and there you must be sent, if you still continue dead. And does not this thought affect you?

Consider, also: NOW is the only time in which you can be restored to life. And oh! will you let it pass by without improvement? Shall all the means that have been used for your revival be in vain? Or the strivings of the Spirit, the alarms of your own consciences, the blessings and chastisements of Providence, the persuasions, tears, and lamentations of your living friends—Oh! shall all these be in vain? Can you bear the thought? Surely, not! Therefore, oh heave and struggle to burst the chains of death! Cry mightily to God to quicken you. Use all the means of vivification, and avoid every deadly and contagious thing!

I know not, my brethren, how this thought will affect us at parting today—that we have left behind us many a dead soul. But suppose we should leave as many bodies here behind us—as there are dead souls among us! Suppose every sinner destitute of spiritual life should now be struck dead before us—oh how would this floor be overlaid with dead corpses! How few of us would escape! What bitter lamentations and tears would be among us! One would lose a husband or a wife, another a friend or a neighbor. And have we hearts to mourn, and tears to shed over such an event as this? Have we no compassion for dead souls? Are there none to mourn over them? Sinners, if you will still continue dead, there are some here today who part with you with this wish, "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears—that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" And oh, that our mournings may reach the Lord of life, and that you might be quickened from your death in transgressions and sins! Amen and amen.