

What was good shall be good..."

4. And what does our text say?

"But as touching the resurrection of the <sup>dead</sup>, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

This text is unique in that it is the only one in the N.T. in which Jesus argues for belief in the future life. In ~~many~~ many other statements He assumes it or proclaims it, but here He is giving a reason- and with all the soundest of all reasons- for His faith in immortality. His argument in a word is this: When God enters into an intimate relationship with a person, you cannot conceive of His breaking off that relationship. The souls that have become united to Him, He will not cast away. Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end- and with God there is no end short of eternity. If God exists, He must care for what He has created. And if He truly cares, He will never cease to care! As Dr. Fosdick has written: "To talk about the Fatherhood of a God who begets children, only to annihilate them, is absurd... If death ends all, the Creator is building men like sand houses on the shore, caring not a whit that the fateful waves will quite obliterate them all. If death ends all, the struggle and aspirations of humanity have meant no more to Him than the mist that rests in the morning on the Alps and at noon is gone." What can we say of a God who "treats the individuality of heroic souls like oyster shells at a banquet, whisked from the table to make room for the next course?" What about His character if He be content "to ~~to~~ treat a living personality like a rocket which, once its cascade of stars has been displayed, falls back ~~underneath~~ unregarded into surrounding gloom"?

From any such conclusion the mind recoils of horror! The idea of a God at the last will be no more than the keeper of a vast cemetery- such ~~is~~ an idea a logical mind cannot abide. But a logical mind can hold to the idea that "if a human parent would not allow the extinction of a cherished child, is God likely to consent to such a thing? If a reasonably good employer hates to regard his workmen simply as "hands," as mere instruments for working out his purpose, are God's thoughts less than his? If a general loves the men whom at times he is compelled to treat as 'cannon-fodder,' and hates to send them into battle, will God care less?"

You see, there is no logic sounder than this- God could not love His friends less either in degree or in time than we love ours. When our friends die, we do not forget them. We retain them in our memory and in our love, and in desire we see

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our anticipations on to a good time coming when they and we shall be side by side again... He is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and it is more true of Him even than of affectionate human hearts that when His friends die, He does not, He never will, forget them.

There is striking story in the O.T. which illustrates and enforces this argument. It concerns the father and mother of Samson who have a vision in which a heavenly messenger converses with them, tells them they are to have a son, permits them to offer a burnt-offering unto the Lord in his presence, and finally disappears in the flame which is being rising from the altar. By this time Manoah is terrified and exclaims to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God."

Thereupon his wife says something so deep, so final, so like Jesus says in our text, that there seems nothing more to be said on the matter. She says: "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."

Here surely is an insight beyond which and deeper than which nothing can be said from the lips of man. In effect she said to her husband, "Is that what you think of God? Do you think we are in the hands of a person who lifts us up in order to fling us down? Who teases us with things beyond ourselves to later mock and deny our pathetic aspirations? If God had intended to slay us, He would not have visited us, He would not have enter our little home and shared our food and received our sacrifices. But since He has done all these things, we need have no fear. He will not be less gracious in the future than He has been in the past.

Tolstoy has summed it up in four lines:

"His love in times past  
Forbids me to think  
He'll leave me at last  
In troubles to sink

There is just one final word- if you want to be sure of a blessed immortality such as we have been talking about, then see to it that you continue to live close to your Lord and Savior, because if what he taught is true, there are two kinds of immortality, not one. The dark kind, to be separated from God, to exist thru eternity without God- that kind is dreadful to contemplate.

The other kind is to live with God. Then when your summons comes, you can say with the Apostle Paul: "Death is swallowed up in victory." *Vic. O with whom is thy Victory? O glorious, thy Victory? Thanks be to God - yours is the victory.*