

When The Grave Looses It's Grip

by Brian Long

This sermon focuses on the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead by Jesus, highlighting the themes of overcoming despair, darkness, and death through faith in Christ. It emphasizes the need to come out of spiritual bondage, darkness, and hopelessness by responding to the voice of Jesus calling us to new life and freedom. The message encourages believers to shine the light of Christ in dark places, help others remove their 'grave clothes' of sin, and experience the power of God's resurrection in their lives.

Scripture: John 11:43, John 11:25, John 8:12, Romans 6:4, Psalm 34:17, Isaiah 60:1

Topics: "Resurrection Power", "Freedom from Spiritual Bondage"

Description

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Transcript

Praise God, praise the Lord. Hallelujah. We thank him for his presence tonight.

We thank him for his presence all day and even for what he is yet to do. Amen. Let's turn in our Bibles to the Gospel of John chapter 11, please.

John chapter 11. The title of the message tonight is When the Grave Loses Its Grip. When the grave loses its grip.

John chapter 11. And probably most of you know this is the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead after he'd been in the grave for four days. And it looked like everything, it was, it looked like it was too late.

And death has a confrontation with the resurrection and life, Jesus Christ. And death has to lose its grip. Now, Mary and Martha were sisters of Lazarus.

And as you probably most of you know the story here, Lazarus became very ill. And you know, sometimes we know all of the story and we read over it too fast. But put yourself in those shoes, brothers and sisters.

Your brother, somebody very, very close to you, is sick. And you try everything. You try to get the fever down.

You try to do everything you can to help him get better. He's not getting better. He's getting worse.

And you sin for Jesus, your only hope. And he doesn't show up on time. So you think.

Lazarus dies. They have a funeral. Jesus is still not there.

They put him in the grave. Second day, third day, he's still not there. Finally, he arrives.

And we've been, we pick up reading in verse 17. Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now, Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.

And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went out to meet him. But Mary sat still in the house.

Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now whatsoever thou will ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, thy brother shall rise again.

Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? In other words, do you believe this, Martha? She saith unto him, yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way and called Mary, her sister, secretly, saying, the master is come and calleth for thee.

As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then, which were with her in the house and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, she goeth unto the grave to weep there.

Then when Mary was come where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping and the Jews also weeping, which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And he said, where have you laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, behold, how he loved him. And some of them said, could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should have not died? Jesus, therefore, again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave.

It was a cave and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days.

Jesus said unto her, said I not unto thee that if thou would believe, thou should see the glory of God. Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

And I knew that thou hast heard me, hears me always. But because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, loose him and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did believed on him.

Now, Father, we call upon you in the mighty, mighty name of Jesus. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for the authority that you have, all authority in heaven and on earth and in this house tonight. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for the power of your Holy Spirit, risen, resurrected power, the same spirit that raised you from the dead.

You said lives in me, lives in us, Lord, those of us who have repented and believed on you. You live in us. You are in our midst.

You're not willing that any should perish. You're not willing that any should stay in the grave. You're not willing that any should stay in bondage.

Lord, you look at that and you groan. And we pray tonight, Lord, that for those who are broken hearted and in despair, you would heal the broken hearted tonight. We pray, Lord God, for those who are in bondage to sin and death and addiction, and they see no way out, that this very night, Lord God, that grip of despair and darkness and sin would loose and be destroyed.

We pray you would set captives free. We pray, Lord, for someone tonight who is dead in sin, dead in sin. They feel nothing right now.

We pray, O God, for the risen, resurrected power of Christ to confront this death tonight and raise the dead and bring sinners unto yourself, O Lord. And we pray for those of us, Lord, who have tasted and seen that you are good. We pray for those of us, O God, who have come out of that grave by your grace, O God, by your power, your saving power.

We pray, God, you would also speak to our hearts because you have a definite message for us as well tonight. Give us all ears to hear what you want to say to us, Lord. Pass not a single person by.

Let your name be exalted. Let your kingdom come right here, even as it is in heaven, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. When the grave loses its grip, I want you, brothers and sisters, to just take a glance with me at this grave, okay? We come to verse 38, and it says, Jesus, therefore, again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

This dark cave, covered by a stone, has inside of it this man whom Jesus loved, this brother of Mary and Martha, laying in that tomb, dead, wrapped in grave clothes. It looks totally hopeless. There's something about this grave I want you to see tonight.

It is a place of despair. It is a place of darkness, and it is a place of death. It is a place of despair.

It is a place of darkness, and it is a place of death. Now, here's a message tonight for every single person. There are those here tonight who are in despair, and there is there are two kinds of despair.

There is despair that comes from sin. You put yourself in that place, and you're in despair because of your own choices. There's another kind of despair that you suffer because of the sins of others.

It's not a sin you've committed. It's a storm you're going through, and a storm you've continued to go through, or it's some kind of blow, some kind of wound. The sisters spoke today of the bruised reed.

There are bruised reeds here tonight, and a bruised reed is something that is so weak. It's bruised, and it's so weak that tall slender green plant, so weak that even if a little bird landed on it, it could break. And you're here tonight, and you feel weak.

You're feeling in despair. It's wounded, and sometimes there are bruised reeds who feel absolutely worthless, and there's that kind of despair. There's a message for you tonight.

There's also a message for those of us tonight who have been there, but praise God, the Lord has delivered us. And you say, praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

What does the Lord have to say to me tonight? He's got a very specific word for you tonight. Listen to me, beloved. If God has set you free, He is equipping you tonight to go to this cave, and just as Jesus did, because Jesus said, as the Father sent me, even so send I you.

And you have a calling tonight to go to this place of the grave and darkness and call others out. So don't dismiss the message. It's for every single one, wherever you are here tonight.

First of all, I want to talk to that one who is in despair, not because of your own sin, but because of whatever circumstances, storms. Here, Mary and Martha are in despair. It's not necessarily anything they've done.

They have a brother whom they love who got sick and he died. And where does despair come from? Despair comes when you think it's too late. It's too late.

There was a time, Lord, when you could have done something. Lord, if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died. But it's too late.

In other words, it's hopeless. Is there really anything such as hopelessness, though, when it comes to the Lord, the God of all hope? Some of you may feel like that. You may feel like it's too late.

Certainly Mary did. Martha, at least when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, verse 20, Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, even though it was four days later, she ran out to meet him. But verse 20 tells us Mary just sat still in the house.

Why did she just sit still in the house? Jesus is coming. She sat still because she thought it's too late. It's hopeless.

The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 13, verse 12, hope deferred makes the heart sick. When you hope for something and you've hoped for it for so long and you've prayed for it for so long and the answer's not coming. And pretty soon hope deferred makes the heart sick.

Pretty soon you get heart sick. You get heart sick. And I say Jesus is coming.

Jesus is here tonight. Jesus wants to speak to you. And yet there are some who sit still in the house.

They're unmoved. They're unmoved. They say, yeah, that's good for somebody else.

But you don't know my circumstance. It's been four days, four years, 40 years, and it looks totally hopeless. You're a bruised reed.

You're wounded. You're weak. For some you feel, you know, I see many believers today being being hounded by these thoughts of condemnation, you know, and just lies of the devil to where you get so beat down and you see you see no way out and you can come into this place of absolute despair.

What is the answer for you? What does God require of you? God requires one thing, especially tonight. They just believe in tonight. Will you? Will you just believe him to meet you tonight? Would you believe that he wants to speak to you tonight? That's all he's looking for.

Brothers and sisters, if you go through this 11th chapter of John, you see it not once, but not twice, not three times, over and over again, six or seven times you read this one word, believe. This is one thing that Jesus comes and looks for. Who will believe me? Who will trust me when it looks totally hopeless? He says in verse 15, I'm glad for your sake that I was not there to the intent that you may believe.

Nevertheless, let us go on to him. Verse 25, Jesus says, I'm the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. And then he asked, do you believe this? He's looking for faith. Faith is what pleases him.

He says over and over. Verse 40. Jesus said unto her, did I not say unto you, Martha, if you would believe, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God.

Verse 42. And I knew that thou hearest me always. He's praying to the father.

But because of the people which stand by, I said it that they may believe that you sent me. Who will believe me? And I believe this is one reason Jesus groans and one reason he's weeping. He wept with them, surely because he loved them and because they were broken.

But he's also weeping because he's he's he's looking for faith. When the son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth? Who will trust me? Who will believe me? That's what he's looking for you tonight, those who feel in hopelessness and despair. There's somebody else here who feels in this year in despair, but it's because of your own sin.

You say, I'm reaping what I've sown. You feel like it's too late by now. You're sinking.

You're sinking. You said you see yourself just like God showed Jeremiah. He said, go to the potter's house and I'll show you.

I'll give you my message. And he saw this potter molding this lump of clay into a beautiful vessel. But something happened to that vessel.

It was marred in the hand of the potter. It was ruined. And that's how some feel tonight.

You say, yeah, there was a time there was a time that God could do something with me. But I'm all marred and messed up. I messed it all up, Brother Brian.

And you're in despair. But I remind you, what did God do with that marred clay? Did he throw it away? Did he reject it? No, the Bible says he remade it. He made it into a vessel, another vessel, as the potter seemed good to make.

And then at the end of it, he says, can I not do with you as this potter does the clay? And tragedy of tragedies. Israel said, no, it's no use. There's no hope.

Even after God said, I'm going to remake you. I give you a promise. Repent.

Trust me. Believe me. And that's what God, that's what God is requiring of you tonight.

It's not complicated. It's very simple. You're here tonight.

God is calling you, number one, to believe Him. And with that faith, to repent, to turn from your sins. Say, Lord, I believe you.

And I'm going to come to the sound of your voice tonight. Out of despair, I rise. Even though I can see no way you could ever use me again.

No way you could ever accept me again. Beloved, behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. I say that with such a passionate heart because I myself have been in that place.

I've been in that place to where you feel that there's never any way God could ever use you again. And you need to know that there is no such thing as hopelessness with God, if you're willing to repent. And we're hearing it throughout the camp.

Repentance is not just turning away from your sin. It is that you do turn away from your sin. You get out of that place and you turn away from it.

But it's also turning unto God. That's the main part of repentance. Returning unto God.

You can turn away from sin and go to another sin. You're still in darkness. And there's many believers, there are Christians that boast, and I don't drink anymore.

I don't cuss anymore. I don't do this. And I think of that sometimes.

You know who else doesn't do that? My good cow dogs. They don't cuss. They don't lie to me.

They don't drink. They don't steal. They don't cheat.

But they're not holy. They can't come to Jesus. Forget about what you're not doing.

Have you turned to Him? Have you come to Him? Not only turned away from sin, but turned to the light, to Christ. And that's what He's calling you to. And the marred clay can be made again.

Failure doesn't have to be final. I was in that place. And here comes to the next group of people I want to speak to.

Those of you who say, I'm not in despair tonight, Brother Brian. Praise God. There's a joy in my heart.

I've been set free. What is God's message for me? You, my brother and my sister, are ambassadors of Christ. Ambassadors of Christ.

And you are called to go to this grave of despair, where somebody else is out there. Some of them are backslidden. They once knew the Lord.

And they need another brother or sister to approach that grave of despair and say, what are you doing here? Isn't that what happened to Elijah? You remember the story of Elijah when he just experienced an incredible victory. And then the next thing you know, he's running from a woman, Jezebel. And he goes to a cave and he hides in this cave, this dark place, this place of despair.

And God and his mercy comes to Elijah in a still small voice. And he asked him this question not once but twice. Elijah, what are you doing here? What are you doing in that in that in this cave? That's not who I created and called you to be.

And God is still doing that today. But can I tell you how he how he's chosen to do that today? For the most part, he's chosen to send one of his ambassadors. As the father has sent me, even so send I you.

He's chosen you to go to you to you to go. You know who he sent to me when I was in that place? Brother Edgar. All the way from Canada.

And we were in the front seat of it. We were in the cab of my pickup. And it was as if God said, what are you doing here? When all he said was, Brian, I want you to tell me about how God called you.

Well, he knew how God called me. But I thought maybe he forgot the story. So I started telling him the story.

I was horseback. I was up on a mountain. I told him.

And as I'm telling him this story, it's as if the presence of God was in the truck. I pulled over in the gas station and began to weep. And I hadn't shed a tear in a long, long time.

My heart was hard. My heart was cold. And I had to run into the restroom, shut the door, and I just wept.

And it was God saying, what are you doing here? I'm not through with you. I'm not finished. It requires, simply requires this.

Return with all of your heart and return in faith. Believe, believe, believe that I'm not through with you. Out of that despair.

Come out. Come out, my child. That's what he's saying.

You can be made again. Faith. That's what he's looking for.

Hope. Hope. Hope.

When the world talks about hope, it's a hope so kind of hope. When God talks about hope, it's a no-so kind of hope. It's an assurance.

It's the anchor to our soul. We know because God said it. There's no such thing as hopelessness.

And love. He's going to send you to those who are in that cave of despair. And you must go with the compassion of Christ or you don't go.

You go with the love of God in your heart or you don't go. Look at how, look at what it says of Jesus. Verse 33.

It says, when Jesus therefore saw her weeping and the Jews also weeping, which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. I think Jesus, you know, he felt their pain. How can the one who called us to weep with those who weep? Does he not weep himself? He does.

He sees every tear. He says, where have you laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.

And then notice this. Then said the Jews, behold, how he loved him. How he loved him.

When you go, ambassadors of Christ, to that place where that other brother or sister or backslider, whoever it may be, is in that cave of despair, you go in the compassion of Christ. Before you go, you cry out to God to break your heart and cause him and cause you to see them as he sees them so that you might weep with them and so that you might bring a word in due season so that you might say, what are you doing here? Come out. He wept.

Behold, how he loved, how he loved them. Not only is it a place of despair, it's a place of darkness. You notice that there is a stone rolled across the cave.

Lazarus is now in this grave, which is a cave with a large stone covering the mouth of it. And there his body lies in total darkness. You know, sin's grave is always a place of darkness.

Throughout the scriptures, the Bible represents sin as darkness being enveloped in darkness. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. So it's a place of darkness, a place of sin.

And it's a place of darkness because there's a cover up. And one of the first things the Lord tells him to do here is take away the stone. Take away the stone.

So there's someone here tonight who is in sin, in the grip of sin, in the grip of darkness and sin. Here's one of the first things the Lord says to you. Take away the stone.

What does that mean? Remove the cover. Remove the cover. You know what? Let the light shine in, which this is going to require honesty.

This is going to require you getting honest before God, telling the truth. It's thought, you know, we can say we can look right on the outside. You can look very modest on the outside and have a heart that is absolutely perverse with sin.

You can have you can have a very pious, religious look on the outside and on the inside, be full of hypocrisy. Unbelief, we can put all kinds of external expressions on it's the heart that God looks at. And if you're in that place of sin and darkness, God is saying, take away the stone, remove the mask, remove the mask.

He requires this. You cannot hide in his presence. How can we hide before the one whose eyes are like fire, his eyes piercing in their omniscience? They see right through us.

Nothing is hid before the eyes of him with whom we have to do now get honest before God. And here's the beautiful thing, brothers and sisters. He already knows anyway.

He already knows anyway. But if we listen, the Bible says God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another.

And the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanses us from all sin. I've got to get honest and say, Lord, I am in darkness. Lord, I have sinned.

I have sinned against you, Lord. And you name it and you confess it. You're taking away the stone.

And that's the first step to freedom. Take away the stone. Let the light, the glorious light of the presence of Christ shine in and come to the sound of his voice.

Now, for those of us, those of you who can say praise God, that's where I was. But I've passed from darkness to light. He's called me out of terrible darkness into his marvelous light.

What is your calling tonight? Again, you, not so much here, but when you leave this camp, you are called to go to these places of darkness, not to commune with darkness, but to conquer it. And you conquer it with the very light and presence of Jesus Christ. You have in you, my beloved, the spirit of the living God.

The light of the world lives in you. We also have thy word, a light, a lamp unto my feet, a light into my path. And what happens? You know, the sister had us the other day come up here, had some come up here and light that candle.

What was giving off the light? What was giving off light was a fire, a flame, a flame. A flame gives off two things. It gives off light and it gives off heat.

Light is truth. Heat is love, light and warmth, truth and love. And you as ambassadors of Christ, ambassadors of Christ are called now to go into places of darkness.

It won't look the same for all of us. The Holy Spirit will lead you. The Holy Spirit will call you and you will end up in places of absolute darkness.

And our calling is to shine. It's to rise and shine, to shine with what? The truth of the word of God. You will need to open your mouth and proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

And you will need to share his love. Sometimes before you speak, you first embrace, you first wash feet, you first, you know, express your love, not in word but in action. Maybe, I don't know if I shared this before, but some of you have probably heard it, but it comes to my mind here all of a sudden.

Pastor Carter Conlon tells the story of his dad, who he shared the gospel with many, many times. And his dad was totally closed, would not hear anything he had to say. He was angry because Carter became a preacher and he wanted him to become a lawyer.

And he was totally resistant to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But the day came when Carter Conlon's dad was diagnosed with cancer. He got colon cancer and he ended up having to have a colostomy bag and he wouldn't clean, he wouldn't take care of it.

And he was a very proud man. And Carter's mom called him one day and said, what to do? He won't let the nurses do anything. He won't let me.

And he's just, it's a mess. And he came to visit his dad and he asked his dad if his dad would allow him to help him, to clean him up. And he did.

And the nurse comes in and says, you need to put on gloves and you need to put on a mask. And he said, no, he put all of that away, says my dad. And he cleaned him and he took care of that day after day after day.

Until one day he says to his dad, one more time, he proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ to his dad. Only this time his dad had ears to hear. He listened to it and he led his dad to Christ.

He said, why? Why did my dad finally hear? Not because the message had changed, but because his waist had been on my hands. Sometimes you got to get your hands dirty in love. Sometimes you got to wash feet.

Sometimes you got to, God will give you, he will lead you by his spirit ways to express his love to those who seem unlovable, to those who are in darkness. And in doing that, you are shining with the light of Christ. You know what the problem is, brothers and sisters? Some of us have gotten used to the dark.

Our eyes have gotten so used to the dark. We don't even have eyes to see. We're so numb.

We're so used to it. We, our eyes have grown dim. Turn to Isaiah chapter 60 and see what he says here.

What a calling he's placed upon your life. Isaiah 60 verse one, hear the word of the Lord. He says, Arise, shine for thy light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon me.

For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people, but the Lord shall arise upon thee and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Arise, shine.

And he says his glory will be seen on you. What is the glory of God? That would be pretty hard to define in one little statement, but I can tell you part of what the glory of God is. When Moses asked the Lord and he said, Lord, show me your glory.

What did the Lord show him? He said, I will let my goodness pass over you. You know what the world needs to see? The goodness of God demonstrated through his people. And in seeing that they will see his glory, the goodness of God.

Jesus went about doing good, doing good, loving. He says, you are the salt of the earth church. You're the light of the world.

The city that is set upon a hill cannot be here. Neither do bend light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick. And it gives light unto all them that are in the house.

And when you are shining with the light and love of Jesus, can I tell you this? You don't have to be afraid of any dark place. Why? Because light always dispels darkness, always overcomes darkness. When you know your heart is pure and you are abiding in Christ and you're not going into places of darkness to commune with darkness, but to conquer it, you need not fear.

The Lord is with you. The Lord is with you. I remember a time in our ministry when I was still pastoring where the Lord said, okay, you've been praying, praying, praying.

Now it's time to go invade. Now it's time to go and go to some of these places. And we used discernment.

We sought the Lord to be led by his spirit. We didn't just go in presumptuously, but there were places that I went, that I would never go did I not know the Lord was with me. But the Lord's going to call you to that.

We can't just stay behind four walls. There's going to be a time when God calls you to go to certain places, places of absolute darkness and to open your mouth and to proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God and the salvation, the light and truth of Almighty God. And you need not fear.

Call them out of darkness. Rise and shine. D.O. Moody tells this story.

He says, on a dark stormy night when the waves rolled like mountains and not a star was to be seen, a boat rocking and plunging near the Cleveland Harbor. Are you sure this is Cleveland, asked the captain, said only seeing only one light from the lighthouse. I'm quite sure, sir, replied the pilot.

Well, where are the lower lights? They're gone out, sir. Can you make the harbor? We must or we'll perish, sir. And with a strong hand and a brave heart, the old pilot turned the wheel.

But alas, in the darkness, he missed the channel. And with the crash upon the rocks, the boat was shattered to pieces and many a life lost in a watery grave. And Moody says this, brethren, the master will take care of the great lighthouse, but let us keep the lower lights burning.

Jesus is the great lighthouse. He's the light of the world, but he has given us a tremendous responsibility. And we're doing in the power of his Holy Spirit.

And that is to let the lower lights be burning. We are to be burning. We are to be shining.

Brightly beams our father's mercy from the lighthouse evermore. But to us, he gives the keeping of the lights along the shore. Let the lower lights be burning.

Send a gleam across the way. Some poor wandering wayward seaman you may rescue, you may save. Dark the night of sin has settled.

Loud the angry billows roar. Eager eyes are watching, longing for the lights along the shore. Let the lower lights be burning.

Send a gleam across the way. Some poor wandering wayward seaman you may rescue, you may save. Trim your feeble lamp, my brother.

Some poor sailor, tempest-tossed, trying now to make the harbor in the darkness may be lost. Let the lower lights be burning. Let the light of truth shine.

Let the love of Christ come forth from you. Listen to him. Jesus says here, did I not say to you, in verse 40, if you would believe, you would see the glory of God? All of us want to see the glory of God.

Amen? Can I tell you something, Lord? We're stirring on my heart this afternoon. You want to see the glory of God. You want to see my glory displayed, but you're not going to see it all behind four walls.

You'll see the glory of God when you go. As you go, and you go into these places of darkness, what brings God more glory? What could bring him more glory than to see sinners resurrected from the dead of sin and coming to Christ, the light of Christ? All of heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents. This is to see

the glory of God.

Did I not say if you would believe, now what are you to believe? To believe the Lord is with me, the Lord is sending me. Open your mouth and trust him to speak through you. Just proclaim.

All of us know enough. If you know Jesus, you know enough. Open your mouth and just begin to share your testimony.

Can I share with you what the Lord has done for me? And you begin with your testimony, and we get back to what you're doing is penetrating the darkness, shining in the light of Christ in this dark place, and then to love people. I remember one time seeing this man walk down the street with a brown paper bag, and he had a cowboy hat on, and so I sort of was, you know, looked again. There's a cowboy in the middle of town, and he's got a bag.

No doubt he had a bottle of liquor in that bag, and he's walking down the street, and I just sort of walked away, and the Holy Spirit said to me, go after him. And so I followed him, and I said I followed at a distance for quite a while, and I saw him go in this house, and so I approached the house, knocked on the door. He came to the door, introduced myself, he invited me in, and I just began to talk to him, and then I began to share the gospel with him, and pretty soon we're on our knees next to his couch, and I put my arm around him, and the guy just, he was pretty hard, hard as stone up to that point.

He kind of acted like he wanted me to, yeah, I'll pray, you pray with me, and then you can go, but as we begin to pray, and I put my arm around him, he suddenly just broke, and he just started weeping uncontrollably, and I said, what is it, what is it? And he says, you don't understand, he says, I can't remember the last time I felt somebody's, somebody touch me, somebody's arm around me, and he was melted just by, just by the touch, the warmth of a human hand. You'd be amazed, brothers and sisters, how many, how many people in this dark world have never, they've experienced lust, they've experienced, you know, everybody wanting to take from them, but the true, pure, genuine love of God, how many have never even tasted, and they're starving and then dying in that dark world, longing for someone to shine with this glorious light of the gospel. So it's a place of despair, the grave is a place of darkness, and both have to lose their grip when they meet the Lord Jesus Christ, amen? It's also a place of death.

Verse 41, they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

Can you imagine seeing this? A dead man who'd been dead for four days, suddenly his heart starts to beat again. His lungs start to breathe, blood starts to course through his veins, his fingers and toes are moving, his eyes are open, he's wrapped in grave clothes, but somehow he gets up out of that grave. He's alive, he's alive.

Death heard the voice of God, and there is power in the voice of the Lord. Read Psalm 29, there is power in the voice of the Lord. So much power.

Somebody said if Jesus had not said Lazarus, every body and every grave would have risen. That's the power of our Lord. Come forth, and they all would have come out of the grave.

He had to say Lazarus. There is power. We need to see the power in our God, the power in his voice, the authority that Jesus has all power and authority in heaven and on earth.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Death cannot hold its grip.

Where, O death, where, O grave, is your victory? Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O grave, is your sting? Death is no match for the very author of life himself. And Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. If you turn to John chapter 5, he says in verse 24, Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Who passes from death to life? He who hears my word and believes on him that sent me.

Now, how are they going to hear his word unless we go and tell? Isn't that what the scripture says in Romans? How will they believe in the one in whom they've not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? And who is that preacher? Not just, not clergy, not just the elders. That is everyone who has been born again by the Spirit of God. How will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach except they be sent? We've already heard, as the Father has sent me, even so send I you.

So you go and proclaim. Their part is to believe. You can't make them believe.

But as you proclaim, many will believe. Some will believe. And when they believe, they will come out of that grave, passing from death unto life.

Hallelujah. Did I not say to you, if you would believe, you would see the glory of God? Now, Lazarus, he rises from the dead, but he's all wrapped up in grave clothes. And I imagine this, you know, he's alive, everybody's rejoicing, but he's all wrapped up, his face is covered, he's wrapped up, and the grave clothes no doubt stunk.

And Jesus says next, loose him and let him go. And he couldn't do that by himself. They had to go and strip those grave clothes off.

And we're also called to do that. We're called to help others through the Word of God, the preaching of the Word of God, to see, look, this, this, this just doesn't fit you, who you are as a Christian. It's got to go.

And we get rid of those grave clothes. I was thinking about this, I was thinking, you know, there's times, one of the problems with, if you have stinky grave clothes on, you get used to them, you don't realize how much you stink, you know. I would, oftentimes I'll be out working cattle all day, and I come home and I don't smell anything.

I think I smell just fine. And little Holly comes up to run to give daddy a hug, and I give her a hug, and she goes, oh dad, you stink. You smell like cows.

And I don't realize it. Now, I'm not saying we go out and tell people how much they stink, but I'm saying we go out, and as you lift up Jesus and the aroma of Christ, you know what happened? As we, as we shine with the light of Christ, and we give off this aroma that we have been in the presence of the Lord, that we're children of the Living God, and the Spirit of God lives in us, and the aroma of Christ is rising, suddenly people realize, I don't smell like that. Oh, I really do stink.

What's wrong? These grave clothes have to come off. They've got to come off. Loose Him and let Him go.

Not only did Jesus Christ die to save you from the penalty of your sin, but also from the power of your sin. It's not His will that any of us be in bondage to anything. Remember the eagle.

The eagle doesn't belong in a cage, bound up and enslaved. He's free. And Jesus said, if the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed.

That you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. So, I want to say to you very simply, this is not a complicated message, very simply tonight, you know if you're in bondage. You know if you're all wrapped up by a certain sin or addiction.

Is there any hope for you? And tonight, I tell you on the authority of God's Word, and by the risen, resurrected power of Christ, there is. There is freedom in Christ, and you can be free. What do you do? Take away the stone.

Say, I'm in bondage. Be honest. I'm in bondage.

Lord, I confess to you, I'm all wrapped up by it. This thing has got me gripped. It's got me in its grip, and it's killing me.

Take away the stone. Come to the light. Come to the sound of his voice.

Tonight, when he says, come forth, you just move to the sound of his voice. What you will find, that death is no match for the risen Lord. Death has to lose its grip.

When Jesus confronts death, it has to lose its grip. When darkness is confronted with light, it has to lose its grip. Come out of the darkness.

I remember, beloved, one time when I was working on this farm, and it was somebody else's farm, and he had sheep on his farm. And I arrived one morning. It's probably four o'clock in the morning at 430, and I remember walking down this hill to feed, to go to the barn.

And as I was walking down this hill, I looked over. There's this big light pole on this farm, and at the foot of this light pole, all these lambs and sheep were just huddled as close as they could be under that light pole. They were laid down.

They were chewing their cud. They looked so happy, you know, so content, just at rest. Out there in the darkness, there was a river that came through.

And out there, you could hear coyotes howling. I could hear them. I knew there were bear.

I knew there were mountain lion. All traveled that river, not maybe a quarter mile away from that light pole, but none of them would come up here for one reason only. They would devour the sheep if they could.

You know why they were safe here? Because of the light. When we stay at the food, we come to the feet of Jesus. If you choose to continue in darkness, I'll give you a warning.

You choose to continue in darkness, you're in the realm of Satan. That's where he operates. That's where the demons, that's where they thrive, in this realm of darkness.

You play around with sin, and you think, yeah, yeah, you know, I've gotten along okay so far. You are on the devil's territory. The lion will devour you out there.

Come to the light, come to the feet of Jesus, and he is terrified. What happened when Jesus walked through a place? The demons trembled. They trembled.

We know who you are. Have you come to torment us before the time? They trembled. They're afraid.

Stay in the light. Come sit at his feet, and you have nothing to fear. Fear has to go.

Sin has to go. Every form and degree of darkness has to go if you'll come to the light. Despair has to go.

The only way despair can hang on to you is if you hang on to unbelief. Doubt and despair go together. When you begin to put all of your trust in the Lord, all of your faith in him, despair and hopelessness have to go.

I remember there was a young family in Boyce City. We'd taken off for Thanksgiving holiday, and we were only gone a few days, and I received a phone call, and they said, Brother Brian, something terrible has happened. Jim and Gaylene Perkins, they played in the praise team.

They both slid off an icy road, had a head-on collision with the semi truck. Both of them were taken to heaven immediately. Both of them were killed.

They left behind three children. Children were in their late teens and early 20s, and I came back. Of course, everybody was just grieving, and the children were very much grieving, but I'll never forget when we sat down to plan the funeral.

The children looked at me, and they said, Brother Brian, we want to sing. I said, You want to sing? They said, We want to sing. I said, What do you want to sing? They said, We want to sing Blessed Be the Name of the Lord, and they sang at their mom and dad's funeral, Blessed Be the Name of the Lord.

He gives and takes away. They praise the Lord in the midst of their pain, in the midst of their heartache. They were heart sick.

You know what that is when you praise the Lord in the midst of your pain, brothers and sisters? That's an exercise of faith. Faith praises God. Regardless of how you feel or what you're going through, if you want to see doubt and despair flee, begin to open your mouth and offer up the sacrifice of praise.

Begin to praise Him when you're all alone, and you feel like the darkness is just coming, and the despair is coming in. Would you do this? Would you step out in faith and give the Lord the one thing that He's looking for that pleases Him so much? Faith. Exercise that faith by lifting your voice and offering praises to His name.

Hallelujah. Let's all stand together. Oh, Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus, you see every single person here, Lord. You see the state of each and every one. I cannot see their hearts.

We don't know one another's heart. We don't know each other's condition, but you see us through and through. And Lord, I'm praying right now, Lord, for that person who is in the grip of the grave, in the grip of

despair, in the grip of darkness, in the grip of sin and death.

Would you, Lord Jesus, let them hear your voice now as you call them. Come forth. Come forth.

Take a step of faith. Turn away. Come out of that grave.

Come forth. If that's you, brother or sister, and you just even want to do that physically just to make a statement, a testimony, I invite you to come forward just to come forward for prayer. Come forward to the altar.

If you say I'm in despair, I'm in darkness, I'm in this place of sin and death. Jesus called him. Call them unto yourself.

Come forth. Come forth out of darkness into light. I pray for those those of us as well, Father, that you're going to send from this place.

Lord, in a couple of days, we'll all be gone from this place. And I pray, Lord God, that you would burn it in our heart that as the father sent you, you're going to send us and you are sending us. Lord, would you show us those caves, those graves and places of darkness and despair and death that you're calling us to go to? Lord, prepare our hearts now that when we go, we may proclaim the light of your word.

We may share your love, oh God, and your very light. We may rise and shine as you've called us to. Oh, God, I pray, Lord, that as we go, we would see your glory.

Oh, God, we would see your glory. Oh, God, demonstrate your awesome glory by raising the dead. Thank you, Jesus, that you're still raising the dead.

Thank you for the power that's in your glorious gospel. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/mmVa47Ve5nM.mp4>
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