

The Four Fold Risenness of the Christian - Part 1

by Tim Conway

The sermon explores the true nature of Christianity and how it is different from other religions, emphasizing the importance of being made alive together with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places.

Duration: 1:08:17

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "New Life"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the transformation from spiritual death to life in Christ, highlighting the contrast between our former state of sin and our current position of being alive together with Christ. It delves into the rich mercy and great love of God that brings about this change, leading to a life marked by a new desire for God and a rejection of worldly ways. The sermon challenges believers to grasp the reality of being made alive by God and to live in the power and freedom of this new life.

Transcript

Do you ever just stop and think about what we do? A bunch of people come together on the Lord's Day, and they all gather inside this place and they sing together. I mean, you get words up here and we all try to vocalize the words that we see and we try to all do it kind of in harmony simultaneously. We proclaim.

We sing and we proclaim. We teach. We proclaim truth.

We talk to each other. You ever think about what happens in these songs? I know years ago, we thought about all the different ways that sometimes in the song, we actually are talking to God. Sometimes in the song, God is talking to us.

Sometimes in the song, we're talking to each other. You ever notice that? Can anybody think of a song that we sing where God is talking to us? I was thinking of the same song. Anybody think of one where we talk to each other? A classic.

How about where we're speaking to the Lord? Oh yeah, it's endless. That fly. Who was telling me that Conrad Merle had a fly? Somebody just recently was telling me Conrad Merle had a fly flying around his head when he was preaching one time.

And he really believed it was demonic too. I think I've mentioned that before. Beelzebul is Lord of the flies.

And he commanded that fly in the name of Christ, and it immediately went up to the ceiling. True story. But think of the other thing that we do when we gather together.

You actually sit there and you listen to a man who comes up front and he talks to you. If you really think about what we do, and what is it all meant to do? It's all meant to strengthen our faith. It's all meant to portray God.

It's a way in which we refresh and we remind ourselves about who God is and what God requires. It's a way that we see God afresh. We see His glory.

We see His truth. It's a way that the Word of God is brought again and again and again to the people of God so that we might be built up, so that we might continue in the race. We put our eyes back upon the Lord Jesus.

This is a time when we use our spiritual gifts to help one another. We gather together to stir up one another to love and good works. Brethren, we find ourselves in the Epistle written by the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians.

You can turn in your Bibles there. We'll read the passage this morning and then we'll go to the Lord in prayer. Ephesians 2, and I'm going to read to you the first seven verses.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved.

And raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages, when the Christian is discouraged and wants to throw in the towel, God sends verses like this at us, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable or the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness. The coming ages. Think about an age.

We think of the Bronze Age. Ages are segments of time that we break up and we divide by certain realities, certain characteristics or attributes that can be ascribed to that age. Ages.

The coming ages. There's no end to that. It's just, imagine.

Christian, this is what you have to look forward to. Age after age after age of a God who does not lack for power or for wisdom. Who is going to be intent on showing you the unlimited, boundless, immeasurable, exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us.

All this grace is directional. It's coming at you. Let's pray.

Father, this is Your Word. This has been divinely breathed. This is a message from outside this world.

This is not simply the intellect of a man at work. This is an alien message. Foreign.

Outside. These are words that are sent from glory, from heaven, divinely breathed. Thy Word is truth.

Lord, confront us with the truth of Your Word. There's so much here. Help us just to fathom something of the depths of these things.

Father, please help us today. I pray in Christ's name, Amen. So, in the next several weeks, I want to deal with verses 4-7.

Many of you know and you remember, I hope you do, if you were here, the first three verses. I did five messages specifically on how dead is dead, the five-fold fallenness of man. Now, I want to contrast that because there's a but here.

The but is a but of contrast. So, what I want to do now is start another sermon series dealing with these four verses. And I've called it, How Alive is Alive? The Four-fold Risenness of the Christian.

And God helping us today is part one. So you see, verse 4, transition. We come to the transition point.

Before this, in this chapter, before this, nothing but gloom and despair and hopelessness and wrath. You were, Christian, you were that. But, with verse 4, we find out what happens when God goes to work.

Notice, I want you to notice the word here. Go to verse 5 and look at the word made. Now, the subject that you attach to that verb is God from the previous verse.

But God made us alive. I know the old King James says quickened. That's the archaic word for making alive.

Quickened. Don't you like that? Quick. Quickened.

God makes something happen. God makes us into something. Just grasp that.

That's what we're dealing with here. When we come to these verses, this is about what God has done. That's what we have in these verses.

The making of a Christian. And we want to notice this. Why? Because, brethren, you tell me what is more important than being a Christian.

Tell me. There's nothing you can put in its place. There's nothing that rivals this.

There is nothing above this. There is nothing beyond this. Why? Brethren, because there's nothing beyond verse 7. And you don't get to verse 7 unless 4, 5, and 6 are a reality in your life.

4, 5, and 6 are past tense. If you're a Christian, they've already happened to you. This is God making a Christian.

The only thing future in these four verses is verse 7. There's nothing beyond that. There is nothing. What can be beyond a God of all power and all wisdom saying, you know what? I am going to, from the depths of my power, the depths of my wisdom, the depths of my grace, the riches of my mercy, I am going to reach in.

I'm going to reach into the depths of my being, the depths of my innovation, and I am going to create ways through all these coming ages to show my kindness. And make no mistake about it, God means to put

Himself on display in the so doing of this. To be an object.

To be a vessel of mercy. You understand God's mercies are not just like this gold one time and then that's it. To be a vessel of mercy means God is going to seek to fill you to overflowing with His mercy again and again and again and again through all the coming ages.

There's nothing beyond that. There's nothing higher than this. This is what we're dealing with.

And we're dealing with what God does to make a person who actually becomes one who is going to enjoy all of this. This is God making some people into something that they were not before. That's what we have.

That's what's before us. This is the making of a Christian. Do you recognize that? To make alive is to make a Christian.

What we have before us is God's Christianity. And I want to emphasize that because there's a lot that purports to be Christianity. A lot of name only out here.

But what we have here is the real deal. This is what you've got to have if you're going to be a Christian. There's a lot of decisional stuff.

I just had somebody ask me, what do you think of altar calls? There's lots of people making lots of decisions. Listen, there is a place for that. People decide for Christ.

But people decide all sorts of things. People decide I'm going to go to church. People decide to not do this and to do another thing.

You know, probably, most of you, it's a decisional regeneration. We're not talking about something that men start. Listen, no one goes down this process.

Nobody goes through this process. I shouldn't say down through this process. I mean down in the way you read the text, but it's actually up.

There's a being raised up. There's an upward movement here. Maybe down in the page, but up in the spiritual reality.

It doesn't happen unless it happens this way. This is so important. This is so essential.

This is it. Some of you know, we recently had a man like right over here. You may remember.

He was here on a Sunday. He stood up afterwards. He wept and he wept and he wept.

And he showed up at our conference. A man who is right now striving, seeking to pastor a church out there in West Texas. And he's striving to lay foundations.

And I talked to him on the phone this week. Brethren, wherever you are, whether you're out in Valentine, Texas, or you're here in San Antonio, Texas, whether you live today or whether you lived 2,000 years ago like these Ephesians, there's no more important question than this. What is true Christianity? What is it? Because I'll tell you this, Satan means to deceive this race.

Most men at least have some concept that we need to do something about our sin. And one of the most prevalent lies that Satan loves to blanket this world with is that there is a way other than this to in the end,

miss punishment for our sin. Listen, Christianity is the only hope this world has.

There is no other. Being a Christian is the only hope in this world. You know, I know we know that truth, but sometimes we just need to really be gripped with it.

Unless the people up and down our streets, unless our children, unless our family, unless this happens to them, there is no other hope. This is the hope. There is none other.

There is nothing else. We theoretically know this. Brethren, we need to just stop for a moment and really let it sink in.

There is absolutely no other hope but one. There are not five hopes. There are not three.

There are not two. This is it. Period.

Or we might put the question this way. Why am I a Christian? Why is anybody, if they are one, why? What has happened? And there's only one answer to that question. That man, that woman, or that child is a Christian solely based on this one fact.

God made them one. God makes. God makes.

This goes way beyond decisions. People make decisions. People make the right decision only as a consequence of God making something happen.

God makes. Look at the text. Brethren, as I'm studying it, it's like, wow, there's a lot going on here.

There's a lot of places we could focus. But, what I want to do today is just, I mean, right now, at this moment, I want us to try to peel not unimportant aspects of these verses, but I want to peel back the adornments. Paul loves to decorate his sentences.

Do you ever recognize that? Oh, he loves that. He loves all these expressions. He loves all sorts of modifiers and adjectives and qualifiers and explanatory phrases.

But I want us to look past them. I want us to peel them away for a second to where we have this. The main subject and the main verb.

Now actually, in this sentence, there are three main verbs or predicates. There's one subject, three verbs. Look here.

Verse 4, But God... Okay, there is our subject. What is a subject or the main subject of a sentence? It is the who or the what that is doing the action of the verb. That's the idea.

The main subject is the one word that tells us who or what the sentence is all about. And that's God. But now, brethren, what's next? Being rich in mercy.

Well, that's an adornment here. Paul wants us to know where this comes from, the action that God is going to do. It comes from God's mercy.

And he goes on to say, because of the great love with which He loved us. Where does the mercy come from? You see, what he's doing is he's wanting to look here just momentarily at the very character of God, at the attributes of God that cause God to do what He does. It's not what He does, but it's the cause of

why He does what He does.

Now, look at v. 5. Let's peel this away. This has to do with when this takes place. This is important to Paul.

Because again, it communicates much about God's mercy and love. It happened when we were dead in trespasses. Not when we did good things.

Okay, now here we are. Made us alive together with Christ. Now you have a parenthesis.

By grace, you have been saved. Let's peel that off for a second. Now here we are back to the second main verb.

And raised us up. The new KJV, stay together. It's implied together with Christ.

The ESV puts with Him in there. It's implied from v. 5. He made us alive together with Christ, raised us up together, and seated us together with Christ is implied in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Now just stop right there.

Here's what we're left with. But God made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You see that? He did it.

He made alive. The making alive is where we were. We were dead.

He made us alive. And then there's movement. He raised us up.

And then there's where He takes us to. He seated us with Christ in the heavenly places. This is the action that God performs.

Let it sink in. You cannot be a Christian apart from the truth that's contained in these verses. V. 7 is the only thing that's future for the Christian.

Now get this. Let's sink in. Christian, you are alive.

That's not something future. That's not something that happens when you die and then you go off into eternity and God makes you alive. You are alive now.

You are raised up now. How high are you raised up? You are raised up so that you are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Every one of these verbs indicative, eric.

What is that? Past tense. Simply put, you convey that over into the English. It's a simple past tense verb.

These things have already happened to you. Now you need to recognize that. You are alive.

You are raised up. And you are raised up so high that you are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Only verse 7 is future.

And look, I'm sure those Ephesians sitting there 2,000 years ago when they first heard this read, the actual handwritten, maybe by his hand or by his secretary, you know it was actually read for the first time publicly in the church at Ephesus. Or it was a circular letter or whatever church this was going up in. I can guarantee you this.

They didn't all hear, you have already, past tense, been seated with Christ in the heavenly places. And they didn't just think, oh yeah, that's totally plain to us. We have all that figured out.

We see exactly how that is. The same way that you say, what? No, no, no. No, Paul.

That's future. And he says, no, I'm under the inspiration of God here. I know what I'm saying.

Or maybe Paul could even say, I don't know what I'm saying, but this is what the Spirit is leading me to say. However, this is what God says. This is what God has already done.

God seated us. Seated. The verb here is caused us to sit down together already.

And here's the thing, as Christians, don't doubt it. Let's all together just seek to comprehend it in the weeks ahead. I'm not going to deal with that so much today.

But let's seek to comprehend these things. Let's seek to comprehend what's being said here. It's obvious that Paul is concerned that we be very clear in our thinking as to the great thing that God has done for us.

This is tremendous, folks. This is tremendous. And what we need to do, here's what I want us to do.

Here's what I really feel constrained in these four messages to try to get at. Brethren, this is not simply some theoretical or hypothetical thought here. There's reality to this.

These texts mean something. They are experiential. This has to do with our lives.

You don't go from dead to living and have this just be some theory. This is experience. This is real.

This is transforming. This has to do with things that are observable in our lives. And what I want us to try to do is get our hands around this these weeks ahead.

So let's dive in. At least make some effort to explore some of the riches here. Let me just say this, or ask this, you want to know another name for what God's doing here? One of those things we peeled off, let's bring it back in.

Notice, let's just read this. Verse 4, God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. What's another name for all that? Adoption would be one.

If you go back to chapter 1, you definitely see it there. But immediately in Paul's mind, notice what he says in the parenthesis here. By grace, you have been saved.

Now, I like that. Do you know what he's saying here? Brethren, let's grasp this. What he's saying here is that to be made alive together with Christ is to be saved.

He's saying, of course. But let's think. You know what I find? Very often, being saved is connected with being forgiven.

That's true. Or being saved is being connected with justification. It goes right along with being forgiven.

It's being declared righteous. No longer are your sins imputed to you. They're imputed to Christ and paid for in His Person.

But here's what I find interesting, and I want to emphasize this. Because what I found when Brother Charles came out with his book, *Justification and Regeneration*, is I have found that in the reformed movement, there is a great love and appreciation for the doctrine of justification. But I want you to see right here, Paul bypasses forgiveness and justification.

Now, he doesn't always do that. I'm well aware of that. And in other places in this letter, he definitely deals with those things.

But right here, when he wants to size up what it means to be saved, he's not so interested in the legal aspects as much as he is in the experiential transformation that takes place by way of regeneration, being made a new creation. That's what it is to be born again. To be made alive.

Whereas you were dead, you are alive. This is what it is to be saved. Why emphasize that? Because look, to be saved isn't merely walking through life with this mental notion that all my sins are forgiven.

Listen, time and again in Scripture, the authors come back to this, that there's no legal reality unless there is this kind of transformation in your life. You must be alive. There must be life pulsing through you.

This is Christianity. Christians are not just people who say, oh, the old wretched man that I am, but my sins are forgiven. You know, yeah, I know there's nothing good in me, but I'm forgiven.

I believe. Listen, there better be something good in you. There better be the seeds of life in you, or you're not saved.

There better be the fruit of life. That's salvation here in this verse. Here's something else.

Don't miss Christ in these verses. It's together. Notice that reality.

Our being made alive, it's not separate from Christ. It's integrally tied with Him. Being joined with Him.

Being in union with Him. Being together. Together.

We are made alive together. Not separate. Together.

This is essential. Essential. This is unique.

No other religion has this. No other religion has this essential togetherness with Christ. Nothing else.

Christianity is solely unique at this point. Together. This is what makes Christianity and God's salvation entirely different and apart from everything else.

Look, this is not man's effort to rise up to God and to get to God and to seek God. This is God making people what He makes them. Christians in union connected with Christ.

Never apart from Christ. If God saves, if God makes alive, it is always in this fashion. Biblical salvation is all about what God has done through His only begotten Son.

Just think about what Paul's saying here. Again, I'm not asking you to comprehend all this. I hope in the weeks ahead, we're going to reach down deeper and deeper and deeper.

I'm not asking for full comprehension here. But just try to absorb this truth into your brains to some degree. The Christian is together with Christ.

Connected. Even tighter than this. Like the branch and the vine.

There's an organic union. Integrally one with Him. The thing is, it's everywhere assumed that in this connection that what's true of Christ is likewise true of the Christian.

Now, we thought about that when we were just a few moments ago baptizing. Think of these truths. I'm not asking you to fully comprehend them, but think about them.

The Apostle Paul, his language, especially in these four letters. Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians. He loves to use this language.

Galatians 2.20. You don't have to turn there. Stay here in Ephesians. But listen to this.

I have been crucified with Christ. Do we think like that? Do we know that reality? See brethren, the thing is, what Paul is doing here, I've been made alive together with Christ. I've been raised up together with Christ.

I'm seated together with Christ. He talked this way. I am crucified with Christ.

Or this, Romans 6.8 says, we have died with Christ. So I'm crucified with Christ. I have died with Christ.

Colossians 2.12 and Romans 6 say that we are buried with Christ in baptism. Colossians 3.3, for you have died and your life is hidden. Listen, your life, all that you are as a Christian, is hidden with Christ in God.

Just take this in. There's a mystery here. I know it.

But what ought to be clear is that Paul is teaching us that what God does to us spiritually has a parallel in Christ physically. Because think with me here. Think.

It's not a direct parallel. It's not a one-for-one physical reality where there's a parallel physical reality in us. It's not a spiritual reality in Christ that has a spiritual reality in us.

It's a physical reality in Christ that God has designed. It's amazing. It's amazing how God has designed all that Christ would do so that there are these spiritual parallels in now what He does in the life of a Christian.

Think with me. Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ. Christ was physically crucified.

When Paul wrote that, He had not been physically crucified, but He had been spiritually crucified. Or think with me here. We are seated together with Christ in the heavenly places.

Now Christ is physically there. You and I are not physically there. We are physically here.

But, it doesn't take away the reality that there is a spiritual crucifixion. There is a spiritual death. There is a spiritual being made alive.

A spiritual rising up. A spiritually being seated with Christ in the heavenly places. And these are the realities that I want us to try to draw on and try to get to the root of and try to pull some of the reality.

Brethren, what does it mean? I mean, look, Paul's not mincing words here. He's not wasting these people's time. He recognized the people he was talking to struggling with the same kind of trials our brother Mark is.

Being put in the fire. Facing persecution. Oftentimes ready to throw in the towel.

What do you say to first century Christians who are facing a Greek-Roman society that hates Christianity, feeds them to the lions, has their own set of God, calls the Christians atheists, persecutes them in certain seasons, murders multitudes of them. What do you say? He says to these people, you are already seated together with Christ in the heavenly places. Now look, if that doesn't have some kind of real bearing on the life of people, what good is it? What good is it? You know what? If it means nothing, it's like telling somebody that has cancer and they're dying, oh, but you have the remedy.

It's like telling somebody, oh, it'll all work out okay. And the truth is, it's not working out okay. But if you tell somebody, oh no, the remedy doesn't work inside you, and you're going to feel pretty rotten at first, but shortly to follow, the healing will start.

Paul's telling these people something to get them through. Your husband leaving you for another woman. Your wife leaving you.

Your child not being converted. Death close to you. Persecution.

When God's providence doesn't seem to smile on you. When it's hard. If you haven't experienced what Mark has experienced, you haven't lived Christian life very long.

I've had those seasons too. And you know, the seasons are not where I wanted to go back to my old life. For me, the throwing in the towel was not that.

It's not like, oh, I'm just going to go back to the old life. I don't want that. I don't desire that.

The throwing in the towel is just, pass the car, and let's go to Frisco, Colorado for good. And I'm going to hide away in a cabin, and don't anybody come looking for me. That, for me, is throwing in the towel.

But that's not what God's called us to. And you can imagine that these people in Ephesus 2,000 years ago, many of them, they wished they had wings just like David wished, and they could fly away and be at peace. But we've not been promised peace.

Not even in the confines of our own family. No promise of peace. In fact, a promise of a sword.

So, somebody has a sword piercing their own heart in their family. And seriously, Paul, you're going to come along and tell me I'm seated with Christ in the heavenly places? Try again. Give me something better than that.

And Paul would say, oh no, my friend. There is nothing better than that. You just need to grasp something of the reality of it.

Because if you do, you will have foretaste of glory. It will change your whole mindset. It will change your thinking.

Brethren, think with me here. We're not dealing with being seated. We're dealing with being made alive in Christ.

Let's try to reach down into some of the realities. Look, here's some of the reality. But, at the beginning of v. 4, that's the contrast.

But, what? You're alive and you were dead. You're no longer dead. Now you're alive.

That's the contrast. You are no longer what you used to be. You've put off the old man who belongs to your former manner of life.

Right? Former. You were formerly something. You're not that anymore.

That is the opposite. That's the contrast. Brethren, we've got to let that grip us.

The truth is, our life in Christ puts an end to our death. You're not dead any longer. The Christian has come to the end of the days as a dead man.

The word, but, that's the stark contrast. We are truly alive together with Christ. Don't you see what this is saying? Look at the contrast.

Brethren, you are alive. You are not like you were. You are no longer dead in sin.

That is no longer true. You no longer follow the course of this world. Listen.

Listen, Christian. You no longer follow the course of the world. You are alive.

Put off the rags of death. Put off the grave clothes. Put them off.

Enough. You're not of the world. You're no longer following the prince of the power of the world.

You're no longer among the sons of disobedience. You're no longer lusty after all the things in the body and the mind. You're no longer children of wrath.

You're no longer under the displeasure of God. You live in His smile. Be done with that.

It's no longer. You're alive. Brethren, alive together with Christ.

I'm amazed. I'll be real direct. My children showed me a thread.

Something we just dealt with in our elders' meeting. My children showed me a thread off of Facebook where Christians, some in this place, are arguing for why it is appropriate for a Christian to be entertained by movies with filthy, foul language. What in the world are you thinking? Are you alive together with Christ? Or are you following the course of this world? There is a contrast here.

And if you can find no contrast between your life and the world, fill in the blank. Amen? We're alive. You know what? I'm not in the course of the world because my desires are changed.

I love new things. I've been made alive to God. I desire God.

I desire to please God. I desire to have the things in my life that He loves. Not the things that He hates.

Not the things that He forbids. Not the things I find in Scripture that He despises. Why in the world would you fill your life with movies full of garbage? Worldly garbage? Unless that's what you love.

Unless that's what you pant after. Brethren, we're the living ones. There is an end to our death.

We no longer live like the dead. We are the living ones. We're alive.

This is not theoretical. This is what God-wrought Christianity is and we need to be gripped by the contrast. The Christ, the Christian is a total contrast to what He once was.

Brethren, you get to the end of this letter, we no longer follow the course of the Prince of the Power of the Air. You know what we do now? We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but who do we wrestle against? We wrestle. Why? That's what living people do.

They wrestle. They put off the former manner of life. Or they put off the old man which belongs to the former manner of life.

And guess what? Deceitful desires. Not deceitful desires. They want to go desire movies that are full of filth.

Filthy, foul language. What is that? That's worldly. That's ungodly.

That's filling your life full of companionship that corrupt good manners. Why in the world? Look, you're not worthy of the calling to which you've been called. What have you been called to? You've been called to life together with Christ.

Your life is hidden with Christ in God. That speaks of children of lust. Not children of wrath.

Not sons of disobedience. Children of light. So let all that is true of light burst forth from your life.

Put all filthy communication away. Not only out of your mouth, but why would you put it away? It shouldn't even be named. That's in this letter.

That's what living people do. Look, don't let worldly, professing Christians be surprised when they wake up in hell. Why? Because this is true Christianity.

Being made alive together with Christ. It's not theory. You see, our whole position as Christians has changed.

Position. That's the where we are. Where are we? Well, we used to be dead in... You've noticed the prepositions of Scripture sometimes.

Where were we? Dead in. There's your preposition. In trespasses and sins.

That's where we were. Where are we now? In Christ. Where were we before? In the place where we followed the world.

In the place where we followed the devil. Where are we now? Raised up. Up.

There's position there. We're not down there. We're not in the darkness.

We've been raised up. We used to be among the sons of disobedience. Among.

That's where we were. Lost. The lust of the mind.

Wanting what's foul. But that's not where we are anymore. Where are we now? You know how far up we are? We're up there where He's seated.

That's where we are now. There's a change of position here. And there's a change of state.

I mean, that is the greatest, most obvious reality Paul's bringing out in verse 5. This transition from death to life. It's done. For Christians, it all lies in the past.

The Christian above all other things can shout it out. I am no longer dead. I am alive.

The days of my death are past. They're gone. There's nothing, absolutely nothing, brethren, but life before us.

Physically, what is that? That is so harmless now that Scripture calls it sleep. To be absent with the body. Christ said to that, He wasn't a doomed criminal.

It's not doom to say this today, you will be with Me in paradise. We don't have to look forward to Christ never forsaking me, never leaving me, putting me in trials, yes. But there aren't only trials here.

My son just got saved. There's not only trials here. And He promises that His grace will be sufficient.

And He brings seasons of great joy here. The suffering is but for a moment. The sun will break forth even in our darkest seasons.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel even when we can't see it. This fullness of day. Greater likeness of Christ.

Purifying, being made more and more and more sinless. More and more and more like Christ. And then, bang! It's just going to grab us.

We're going to be hauled off into eternity and gaze on His face and be made like Him. There's no more death. You don't get eternal life when you die.

You don't get it at the day of judgment. You haven't. It's past tense.

You've been made alive. The Christian is done with death. We are done with dying.

Don't you get it? We are together with Christ. You go to Scripture and it says, in Him was life. That's who we're together with.

The Father has granted the Son to have life in Himself. We are together with Him who is life. Who has been granted to have life within Him.

The last Adam is what? He has become a life-giving Spirit. When Christ who is your life. That's how Scripture speaks.

Christ, you're together with life. Listen, Christ has come and He's put His arms around us and embraced us. But see, it's closer.

It's more organic than that. There's actually a connection now. We have become one with Him.

We're one with life. There's no more death. You're one with He who is life.

You're one with the One who is the last Adam who is a life-giving Spirit. He breathes nothing but life into you. And we can suffer and we can be in dark seasons, but that life is very real.

Because even in the darkness, even in that darkness, our faith in Christ presses us through. Even in that darkness, that faith is upheld by the mighty hand of God. Even when we waver and we teeter all over, when we feel like we're going to throw in the towel and we're going to fail, there's an unmovable hand beneath us that carries us through.

Some through the water, brethren, and some through the flood. It's true, there's floods and there's fires. But He is going to finish that work which He started.

Have you ever heard Paul exclaim, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. Do you know this? He who is life lives in me. I cannot die because Christ cannot die, and because Christ is one with me, and because in that union, His life is my life.

My life is bound to His life. And He can't die. I can't die.

I'm one. I'm bound with Him. Have you experienced this? This is what it is to be a Christian.

This isn't what it is simply to be a great apostle like Paul. This is what it is to be the lead Christian. You have been made alive because God has made you alive.

If you are a Christian, this is a reality. What does it mean? We're alive. We're no longer alienated to God.

Have you ever read in scripture, alive to God? No longer alienated. What does it mean to be alive to God? Suddenly, we recognize Him. We see Him.

We feel Him. We experience Him. There's reality to the living God.

We hunger for Him. We hear His voice in His Word. We long after, we desire after, desiring God, hungering for Christ, feasting on His blood.

Brethren, this is the reality. This is life. Life.

Life. Why would God do this? Well, you see it there. You see it there at the beginning of verse 4. If we would find an answer, it's in the character of God Himself.

You just think. I mean, Paul's amazed by this. Even when we were dead in our trespasses, that's the thing that just blows him away.

God did this when I was the way I was? Even then? Even then? Such riches of mercy. Brethren, you look at the way that this Word has been translated. Sometimes, it's tender mercy or tender compassion or loving kindness.

Think about those words. Those are like words, tender compassion. They're the kind of words that humanly speaking, we would expect a wife to feel towards her husband or a husband towards his wife.

Two people who love each other. Attracted to each other. Find much in the other that is very desirable.

God comes along and finds this absolutely an abhorrence. This is what rocks Paul to the core of his being. Even when I was a blasphemer.

Even when I was insolent opponent. Even then, even after the things that I've done, rich, rich mercy extended towards me. Brethren, I fear that man seems to find it almost impossible to harmonize the God Who is sovereign, the God Who makes alive and chooses which ones to make alive and which ones not to make alive.

The God of election. The God of predestination. Many find it very difficult to harmonize rich.

There's this idea that the God of Calvinism, He's cruel. He's distant. He's out there.

He's cold. He's stoic. He's unfeeling.

He's harsh. Brethren, that's Allah. That's not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

His mercies are tender, tender reaches of mercy and they flow out of a great love. I hope you can see that. Look, should we fear such a God? Yes.

Oh yeah. He is kind. He is full of tender mercies.

Brethren, we don't want to misread those mercies. If you go on rejecting His Son, oh, He is greatly to be feared. Be sure of that.

These mercies don't mean that this God is a pushover. Listen, what God presents Himself as in Scripture is holding out His arm all day long even. What's there? He's offering these mercies.

Come take them. Come take them. This is how He portrays Himself.

Come take them. Jesus can look to His Father and say, Father, I thank You that You have not revealed these to the wise and the prudent and to babes. What's God's answer to the fact that nobody comes and takes these mercies from His hand? Election.

Be made alive. No man can come to Me unless My Father who sent Me draws him. He says, be made alive.

Suddenly, we look at those mercies in His hands. I want those. I'm a sinner.

I need those. Spirit convicts us of sin. And there's the remedy.

Be made alive. That's God's work. God makes Christians.

That's the reality. Have you tasted God's rich mercies? Are you alive? Do you have life? Are you aware of such a reality that has grabbed you, has embraced you, has changed you, has made you something you weren't before? Do you see it? I desire what I didn't desire before. I don't desire what I did desire before.

That group of friends, I can't sit with them anymore. Why? Because I'm alive and they're dead. When I was dead, well, that was comfortable.

But I'm not dead. Something has changed. Do you know this? A power in your life influencing you, moving you, directing you.

I'm talking about something outside of yourself. Got some ingenuity with yourself. Got some decision you made.

But do you feel this? Do you know this reality of God who is working on you from outside? Are you aware of this reality like the songwriter was? I was blind, but now I see. I see why God has made me alive. My eyes are open.

Sin. I'm no longer impotent. I'm no longer in it as a slave.

I'm dead. And now it no longer has dominion over me. I may fall, but I'll tell you this, it doesn't have dominion because it's not like I just jump up and run back after it again.

I confess those sins. He is faithful and just to forgive those sins. There's a fight.

I don't follow the devil anymore. I wrestle with him. Oh, there's battles.

Yes, there's battles. But see, there was no battle before because I was dead in sin. I followed the flow.

Now, I'm seeking to move against it. I'm walking the other way and I feel it. And there's a power within me that keeps my legs moving step after step even though the flow is strong to go back the other way.

I keep going in that direction. Why? There's a power at work within me that is not of this world. It's supernatural.

It's divine. Are you aware of this? Brethren, are you aware of being made alive together with Christ? What a tremendous thing, is it not? Brethren, to God. God makes sinners.

It's to God be the glory. To God be the praise as we heard it in the first hour. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

Father, we just bow our heads before You. You are God and we are not and You are full of the most tender mercies towards those who deserve them not in the least. And we thank You.

Thank You. Thank You that Your love was so great, so deep, that You even offered up Your own Son. He became sin.

All that punishment came upon His head that we might be made alive. That we might experience the exceeding, the immeasurable riches of Your grace and kindness through all these coming ages. Lord, what have You done for sinners? What an amazing thing this is.

Thank You in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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