

SERMON

RAISED WITH JESUS FROM THE DEAD



Today is a day of celebration for Christians around the world.

We celebrate the victory of Jesus over evil, sin and death. He is the perfect man come down from heaven. He lived in our corrupt flesh. He lived a perfect life for all of us completely accepting and submissive to God's perfect will.

When we read the biblical story in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, do we read these accounts as distant events for those people living in the first century but events not really applying to us?

As Mr. Williams said in his sermon, do we see ourselves as sinners for whom Christ died? Do we see the love of Christ expressed towards all those people who witnessed his horrible death on the cross?

- He died for the women and the apostle John who faithfully followed him.
- He died for the soldiers who brutally beat him.
- He died taking upon himself the sins of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
- He died on the cross, carrying in himself the sins of Herod and of Pontius Pilate.
- He died on the cross carrying the sins of all those ordinary people, the crowds

who watched him die on the brutal instrument of torture of the Roman cross.

- He died for Adam and Eve and all those people in between. He carried all their sins in his body on the cross.
- He died for all the people in his generation both Jews and Gentiles.
- He died for the apostle Paul and all the apostles who deserted him when he was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane somewhere on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives.
- He died for people who came after in succeeding generations.
- He died and carried the sins of the people who live today.
- He died and carried the sins of all the people who will be born today, tomorrow.
- He died for all people who will live until the time of his return to earth, a date set by God the Father.

He died for you and me. He entered the tomb for the better part of three days and three nights as he had prophesied. He experienced the estrangement of living as a man feeling the utmost separation from God which is physical death itself.

When he entered the tomb and the tomb tried to swallow him, it couldn't. There was no reason apart from our sin for him to enter suffering and death. He was guiltless, faultless and blameless.

He entered our deadness and all that it means. In fact, the Bible tells us that when Jesus died, we all died in his death. We were crucified with him.

We died with him. As we shall see in the next few verses we are going to read in Ephesians, we were already dead when God called us to himself.

The good news is when he was raised, we were raised with him.

There is no doubt even for those who do not have faith that Jesus did live as a human being. Human history shows us that fact very clearly. There is no doubt that he was resurrected because he showed himself to hundreds of people. He resurrected people to physical life. This is a fact that people in his generation could not deny although many tried to call that "false or fake news".

Have you ever considered that when Jesus entered my life and yours by the Holy Spirit that he entered the tomb of deadness? This is the state we were in before God prepared our hearts and our minds to receive him. We were the walking dead.

What happened at Calvary becomes very personal.

Let us consider briefly what the apostle Paul is telling us in Ephesians chapter 2. As we ponder and consider this scripture, let us read it as a message that applies to each

one of us both individually and collectively.

“1 ¶ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins
2 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—
3 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.
4 ¶ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,”

“5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Eph 2:5-7 ESV



Verse 1 The apostle Paul here is talking to Christians living in Ephesus. He takes the time to describe a grand miracle that happened in their lives.

He describes their former life, their life before becoming disciples of Jesus, their life before receiving a new heart and a brand new life, the life of Jesus.

He tells them that they were “dead”. This is a strong word in the Greek. *nekrós (an adjective, derived from nekys, “a corpse, a dead body”)—dead; literally, “what lacks life”; dead; (from Biblehub.com).*

Before being given life, the life of Jesus, they were walking dead.

In **verse 2**, the apostle Paul speaks of their former state. Being walking dead, they lived according to the standards and the values of this world.

Then he adds that in their blindness and darkness, they were following the prince of the power of the air. This prince of the power of the air is completely opposed to Jesus. Jesus lived in perfect obedience to God the Father. The prince of the air lives in utter disobedience and contrary to God’s will.

We were created to live in response and receptivity. The Bible is clear that there are only two sources which influence our allegiance and behaviour: either the prince of the air or God through the Holy Spirit indwelling us.

This prince of the air works in the sons of disobedience in those who, in their blindness, do not see the glory of the gospel of the kingdom of God (2 Cor. 4:4). The prince of the air is the originator of people's rebellious thoughts and behaviours before their repentance and their acceptance of God's reconciliation of the world in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5).

How did we live then before our conversion?

Our point of reference was not Jesus in us as he reveals himself in Scripture. Our point of reference was the guidance given by the prince of the air. Consequently, we just looked at earthly things. Jesus described the unconverted Gentiles in the following manner. **“31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”** (Mt 6:31-32 ESV)

Rather than seeking and trusting in God the Father we looked for security in physical things influenced and blinded by the prince of the air.

Verse 3 describes clearly how we used to live. The apostle Paul writes of this life as in the past. It was the Ephesians and our life pre-conversion life. Life post-conversion is completely different. Paul is describing you and I before our conversion.

Verse 4 begins to describe the joy of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus did not stay in the tomb.

Verse 5 God the Father made us alive together with Christ. He did not leave us dead but has made us alive together with Jesus Christ through faith and trust in him. This is the good news. God's Son was resurrected from the dead and through the gift of faith and trust in him, we receive his life, eternal life.

God the Father raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Jesus Christ.

This is an amazing miracle that can only be apprehended by faith that the word of God is true. It is by grace because there is absolutely no possibility that we could have given ourselves this new life. What we read in these verses is completely God's doing. Our responsibility is to receive this gift once he opens our minds to it.

Because Jesus rose from the dead as he died the death we should all have died, God the Father changed our life forever. Because we have been raised in Jesus Christ, we now live to serve him. We have been bought with a high price. Jesus shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins. We don't belong to ourselves anymore to live according to the way we please. We don't walk according to the evil influences of the prince of the power of the air anymore. God makes this temple in us as we voluntarily and freely receive him. The apostle Paul states that Jesus then becomes our life. Just like Jesus descended into the tomb cut in a rock, he came in our tomb, our dead heart, our dead self to give us his life so that we would not remain dead in our trespasses and sins.

This is an absolutely life-changing miracle.

Verse 7 although we do not see it with our naked eyes anymore, God the Father has a supreme purpose. We realize it now. We understand it partially now. One day, we will fully know the immeasurable riches of God's grace and kindness towards us in Jesus Christ. It is immeasurable, incalculable. It exceeds. It surpasses.

Right now, we live in hope of seeing God's loving purpose for us. One day, because Jesus conquered death through his life and resurrection for all of us, our hope will become sight in the fullness of the kingdom. For now, we live in anticipation of this full reality. Because God has so loved us in Jesus Christ, we live to love him with all of our soul, mind and body and to love our neighbour as God has loved us. This is to be our loving response to his amazing gift of grace. This is what Jesus said:

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love." (Joh 15:9 ESV)

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (Joh 15:12 ESV)

In the full reality of the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns, faith and hope will no longer be necessary. Love will remain. God is love. United to the Man Jesus, we will experience and participate in the triune God perfect and eternal loving relationship! Such a high calling baffles and perplex our limited minds. But is the truth revealed by Jesus the eternal and true Word of God!

Let us thank God the Father for what he has done for us in Jesus Christ. As difficult as this physical life can be, it does not change the reality of our hope and the miracle of the gift of the new life given to us in God's immeasurable love and grace.

Jesus is risen! He is alive! He is our high priest! He loves us with grace and love

immeasurable. God's utmost desires is to share his life with you and me and will all who will respond and accept this awesome gift! What an awesome, encouraging and sure hope we are given as we live this earthly and often time difficult life.

Let us pray!