Exchanging Living Death for Dying Life
Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10
Code: 80-186

Well, the fact that Jesus rose from the dead is not merely a historical novelty. It's not just an event that somehow upstages all those who've made claim to near-death experiences. Neither is the resurrection of Jesus merely a testimony that the Spirit of Jesus is somehow alive in a mystical way, as in the pain of poor people and the smile of a child. Neither is the resurrection of Jesus Christ intended as an illustration, a sort of means of teaching by object lesson that people can overcome their difficulties and triumph over their tragedies. It's not just an illustration that sometimes dead end roads of disappointment can have hope. All of those are nice sentiments, but have nothing to do with the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In fact, to understand the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you need to understand that it is the means and the only means by which people may enter eternal heaven and escape eternal hell. In the bottom line, that's what the resurrection means. It is the means by which people enter heaven and escape hell. Any definition or discussion of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that doesn't deal with that issue misses the point. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is, therefore, the most determinative event of all time because by it the destiny of every person is ultimately determined. It is the most impactful thing that ever happened in the history of this world. How you respond to the resurrection will determine whether you spend forever in heaven or hell.

Now, in approaching the resurrection this morning, I want to approach from the vantage point of the paradoxes of Christianity. There are a number of paradoxes in Christianity, things that appear contradictory, but are not. For example, when we talk about Christianity or the kingdom of God, the rule of God in the hearts of those who believe in Him and know Him; when we talk about Christianity, it is filled with paradoxes. For example, it is a kingdom on earth with a capitol city in heaven. It is a kingdom on earth without an earthly country. It is a kingdom on earth despised by men, but beloved by God. This kingdom paradoxically is made up of exalted people who once were all salves, righteous people who once were all wicked, honored people who once were all criminals, loyalists who once were all defiant rebels, friends who once were all enemies. It is made up of rulers who are at the same time servants, vanquished who are at the same time super conquerors, heroes whose glory is their weakness, overcomers whose highest goal is humility. All of these people in the kingdom are governed by a law, which produces complete freedom and a freedom, which is completely bound to the law of God. Everyone in this kingdom is ruled by a king who died for His subjects, a judge who was punished for the guilty in His court, a ruler of heavenly glory, crowned with earthly thorns, the Lord of life who was murdered, the Creator of men, who was executed by them.

The paradoxes culminate in a dead king who rises to life. Because of that reality, we can exchange living death for dying life. It's that last paradox that I want to talk about, exchanging living death for dying life. Those are both paradoxical statements, but make perfect sense if we understand Scripture. The Bible indicates that everybody outside God's kingdom, outside the Christian faith apart from Christ, everybody outside are the living dead, and those inside are the dying alive. Outside, everybody has a living death. Inside, everybody has a dying life. What do we mean by that?

Well, let me take you to a passage of Scripture that opens it up for us under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. Ephesians chapter 2, Ephesians chapter 2. I want to bring to you the Word of God this morning, not my word, but what Scripture says. The issue of the resurrection is at the heart of this matter of whether or not you're among the living dead or the dying alive. This is indeed the message of this wonderful passage in Ephesians chapter 2. Now, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was designed by God to move people from living death to dying life, and we'll explain that in a moment.

Let me read this text to you. Ephesians 2:1, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions 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 heavenlies in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Now we're going to look at that text more carefully, but I want you for the moment to look at verse 5. "Even when we were dead, He made us alive." This is the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the crux of the Christian faith. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the distinction of Christianity. This is the truth of God. Apart from God, all men are dead. Dead. Let's talk about that living death. Look at it in verse 1, "And you were dead." He's writing to those who now believe and reminding them that they used to be among those who were dead. Physically alive? Yes. Spiritually? Dead. Spiritually and eternally dead.

Not only was it true of the ones to whom he wrote, but you'll notice at the end of verse 3 that little phrase, "Even as the rest," and he throws in all humanity. This is a universal condition; not only you, but everybody else. Nobody would deny that our world is in trouble. Nobody would deny that we've got problems. We have problem solvers all over the place. People tell us the answer is in changing this or changing that, better education, better understanding of each other, the lessening of racial tension, the elevating of people's psychological self-esteem, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. People tell us that the real problems that man faces are social problems. It's an inability to live in harmony with

his social environment. He can't get along with the people around him. He needs to be socially aware, socially sensitive, socially educated.

Other people come along and say, "Well, the real problem of man is psychological. It's not social. It's not about his relationships with others. It's about his relationship with himself. He can't get in touch with his own inner feeling. He can't calm down his own inner anxieties. He needs somehow to be at peace with himself. He needs to cultivate self-esteem. If he can solve his psychological problems and get together with himself, he can easily get together with somebody else.

There are others who would tell us that man's problem is really not social and it's not psychological. It's environmental. It's the way he's been treated. People have traumatized him and abused him and beaten him and done all kinds of things to him, and he can't quite get along in the complexity of the world. He's misunderstood and can't achieve his dreams, and it's really his environment that messes him up. So man is out of harmony with the people around him. He's out of harmony with himself. He's out of harmony with his environment and that's his problem. That's not his problem. That's not his problem at all. Those are symptoms of his problem. Man's problem is he's dead. He's absolutely dead. He's alienated from the life of God.

Chapter 4 of Ephesians verse 18, that's what it says. "Excluded from the life of God." He is spiritually dead. His body lives, but man is dead. He is destitute of the life that recognizes God. He can't know God. He can't understand God. He is insensitive to God. He can't comprehend God. He can't have a relationship with God. He can't do God's will. He can't fulfill God's Word, and so he can't enjoy God's blessing. The unbelieving man is not merely sick; he is dead. He is dead. And what is death? It's an inability to respond to stimulus. He can't respond to God. He can't respond to divine reality. He's dead to it.

I was in my office up there one day and a phone call came in from a frantic mother right down the street on Roscoe Boulevard who cried over the phone that she found her baby dead in his crib and could someone come? I ran down the street as rapidly as I could, and I knocked on the door, and I was ushered in. She was alone with this little baby lying on her bed, blue and dead and cold. She picked up the baby, of course, as a mother would, and she was kissing the baby and she was hugging the baby and rubbing the baby and doing everything she could to this baby, and there was absolutely no response at all. If there is anything that is true of human life, it is that a baby responds to the love and affection of its own mother. But this little baby only a matter of months old made no response at all, and that is the nature of death. It is an utter and total inability to respond to any stimulus.

That is precisely the definition that the Scripture gives of people outside the kingdom of God. They are totally shut off from God altogether. They live as if He did not exist. They are not able to respond at all to Him. I've had a number of funerals through the years where little babies have been lying in

the casket at the funeral home and mothers gave gone up and lifted the little head and kissed that little baby in a final effort, as it were, to sort of breathe life into that little child. There is absolutely no response. That is death, the ability to respond.

The Bible says that people apart from Jesus Christ are alienated from the life of God. They are dead to all divine stimuli. All sinners are in the same condition. They are all absolutely dead. Therefore, they cannot do what pleases God. Therefore, they cannot enjoy His blessing and His favor. All sinners are dead, all sinners. The only different between sinners is the state of their decay. They are all dead. The world, then, is the graveyard of the living dead. They move around as if they're alive, but they're not. Scripture says they're dead while they live.

John Eadie, the nineteenth century Scottish preacher said, "Men without Christ are death walking. The beauties of holiness do not attract man in his moral insensibility nor do the miseries of hell deter him." You can talk about heaven to him; he's not interested. You can talk about hell to him; he's not afraid. Now, this kind of man doesn't need renewal. This kind of man doesn't need repair. This kind of man doesn't need restoration, resuscitation. This kind of man needs resurrection. He needs life because he's dead. That's the problem with mankind. That's the problem with the world. It's full of the living dead who are literally shut off altogether from the life of God. They can't know Him; therefore, they can't hear His voice. They can't understand His truth. It is foolishness to them. It is folly to them. It is incomprehensible to them. They do not respond to it, and therefore, they cannot enjoy His blessing.

Now, this state of living death can be easily understood with six words that describe it in the text before us. The first word we'll just use the word "sin." The first word that gives us the nature of this spiritual death is the word "sin." Notice in verse 1, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." Both of those words simply referring to the category of sin; moral evil, doing what is against God, doing what breaks the law of God. Of course, if man is dead to God, alienated from the life of God, if he is a corpse and can't respond to any divine stimulus, then of course he cannot do what pleases God, what honors God. He is dead in the sphere of sin. "In" means the sphere, the realm, the position.

We don't become sinners because we sin. We don't become dead because we sin. We are sinners and we sin because to start with we're dead. We're born dead. We're stillborn spiritually. We sin because we are born dead in a condition of deadness in trespasses and sins. Sins is the word *hamartia*. It literally means "to shoot something and miss it." To fail to hit the target is what it means. What is God's target? "Be ye holy as I am holy," God said. Jesus said, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." God's standard is perfection, and nobody hits it. That's why Romans 3:23 says, "All have come short of the glory of God." We all fall short.

Most people think of sinners as robbers and murderers and child molesters and rapists and gangsters, but sin has much more to do with what man cannot do than what he does. While certainly

what he does is sinful, the nature of man's sinfulness is manifest in his ability to meet God's standard. It's what he can't do that shows his sin, and what he can't do is be perfect and holy. Even a moral man who hits the target of human goodness misses God's perfect standard of absolute holiness.

Now, the second word that is used here is the word "trespasses" and that simply means "to slip or fall or get off the path." It means to lose your way. It was used of somebody who strayed away from the road and got lost. Man has a severe problem. He is dead, and he is completely incapable of hitting God's target, therefore, satisfying God and he's lost his way. He's wandering around in a state of death, utterly insensitive to God, unable to respond to a divine stimulus, falling far short of what God requires and lost as lost can be. That's why we talk about lost sinners. They have wandered off the path. They have gone the wrong way in terms of truth and virtue away from God. "There is a way which to them seems right, but the end is the way of death," the Psalmist said.

So these two words simply describe man in his dead state. He is engulfed in unbroken patterns of sinfulness, unrelenting sinfulness in which he falls short of God's standard and wanders further and further away from God. Those two words include every form of sin, every manifestation of sin and thought in word and in action. It is comprehensive iniquity, comprehensive and monumental failure, comprehensive insensitivity to God's way as man wanders around lost in his sin, falling short of God's standard because he's utterly insensitive to God.

Second word is "wordliness" verse 2. He says, "In which you all," of course, before your conversion, "formerly walked according to the course of this world." What is worldiness? What is the course of this world? What is the path of this world, the way of this world? Well, he's really talking about the world's system. The word "world" I'll just give you a little thought on that, is the word *kosmos, kosmos*. Now, what that word means in the New Testament is the system of life on earth apart from God. It's the system of life on earth apart from God. It's a word that means order. Is the opposite of chaos. Chaos means disorder. *Kosmos* means order. It's this ordered world system, and as we look around the world, it's very organized. The world is very, very organized. It's amazing how much of an organizational being man is, how well he networks himself and creates societal links and connections and how he organizes himself both to structure his social life and his economic life and his political life and his recreational life and his entertainment life and whatever else he does. He's a very organizing kind of creature. As he organizes himself, he develops this *kosmos* this order of life, but it's the order of life that's according to the world, not God.

It's the spirit of the age; that's what it is. It's the world's system. Let me tell you something. While man is dead to God, he is alive to the world's system. He feels all its impulses. He is dead in God's world, but He's alive in this one. What does it mean to go according to the course of the world? It means simply to conduct your life according to the spirit of the age. Whatever the issues of the times are, that's what you're into. Whatever the times advocate, whatever the times allow, whatever they call for, whatever values they articulate, whatever they tell you is important, whatever their priorities are,

whatever their tolerances are, whatever they promote – you buy, because those are the stimuli that move you.

People take their cues from the surveys. They take their cues from the newspapers and the magazines and the books and from their peers and from television and from movies and from music and from politicians and from educators. Whatever values their world system holds, that's what values they hold. Today, it's dominated by humanism, materialism, and sex, and people just buy into the spirit of the age. But there are some, of course, who are religious, and that's part of the spirit of the age. The spirit of the age also invents highly sophisticated, highly organized false religious systems. Men and women are engulfed in the thoughts and words and deeds of the world's system, and there's no escaping it because they're dead to any other environment but that, and they're really alive to that one, susceptible to all its influences.

Now, the description continues to descend into more bleakness as we come to the third word, and that's the word "Satan." I use that word because it describes the one who is named in verse 2, "the prince of the power of the air," also called the "spirit that is now working." Man, being dead to God - follow very carefully – man, being dead to God can only respond to his earthly environment. His earthly environment is a system of evil that dominates his age. Behind that system of evil is a supernatural power orchestrating all of it. He's called here, "the prince of the power of the air." The air is the realm, the environment in which the death walkers live. It's the atmosphere of the death walkers, and he's the prince over it. Satan is also called the "god of this world."

People like to think they're free. Oh, they love to think they're free. That's the biggie nowadays. Everybody is free to do his own thing, do whatever you want, do whatever feels good. Man is not free. You don't do your own will. You are locked in spiritual death. You are utterly insensitive to the realities of God, to the divine realm. You are hypersensitive to the influences of the evil world system around you. You are engulfed in your own personal sin, and the evil system is coming against your sinful character under very sophisticated terms being orchestrated by a supernatural being the Bible calls Satan who once was the most powerful angel in God's heaven.

This doesn't mean that Satan is actually, personally, individually at work in the life of every non-believer, but along with his demons, he is behind the world system, the world system of anti-God evil influences dominating sinners. Satan is the one who has designed the world system. They're not free, and may I add that religion is Satan's most sophisticated tool of deception. He wants to undo the work of God. He wants to oppose everything that God desires, and so he knows that in order to do that, he has to invent false religious systems for those who would be religious and otherwise might turn to the truth. So he appears as if he were an angel of light in his evil world systems that are religious.

This is the condition of spiritual deadness, shut off from the life of God, engulfed in unrelenting sin, under the influence of the world system around us and all its values, which is being totally controlled

by the primary anti-God supernatural being in the universe, namely Satan and is carried out through all of his millions of demons who do his bidding. But the picture gets even bleaker as we come to the fourth word. The fourth word is disobedience, end of verse 2. “This spirit, the prince, Satan, “is now working.” He’s working, “In the sons of disobedience.” Satan is at work in the lives of these walking dead.

By the way, the “sons of disobedience” is a Semitic form of reference to describe a life characterized by disobedience. When a person was characteristically disobedient, they would say, “He’s a son of disobedience.” In the Old Testament, if he was characteristically wicked, they would say, “He’s a son of wickedness or a son of Belial,” which was the old name for Satan. Naturally, people cut off from God, engulfed in sin susceptible to all the influences of a system orchestrated and energized by Satan, obviously those people will disobey God, obviously. They can’t obey God. Satan hates all that God desires, and Satan feeds into the world system and all of his hatred of God. Since people buy what the world is selling, they get in on the God-hating, anti-God, anti-Christ activity.

When Scripture says they are “sons of disobedience” then it’s not some small issue. It simply says they are characteristically against God, disobedient. All God desires men to do, Satan opposes. His goal is to lead sinners to defy God at every possible turn, whether with their overt gross wickedness or with their hypocritical religion, which is false. Satan works to get men to defy God. This is the state of the living dead. Sinking yet deeper into his description of human depravity, we come to a fifth word: lust. Verse 3, “We all used to formerly live in the lust of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind.”

You’re dead to God. You cannot respond to God, like a corpse can’t respond to a physical stimulus. You are literally buried in iniquity. You are under incessant influence by the wicked world system around you, cleverly energized and orchestrated by Satan so that you live a constant pattern of disobedience to what pleases God. Behind it all, is this driving personal motivation of lust. You do whatever your body or mind desires. That’s what he’s saying. Whatever your body wants, that’s what you do. Whatever your mind wants, that’s what you do.

It may be that some people keep the two in sort of a balance. Some people fulfill some of their fleshly passions and some fulfill some of their intellectual passions at the same time. There are some who flop all the way over on the mind side and become lost in academia or lost in the intricacies of false religion. Some fall all the way on the side of bodily passions and become lost in sexual perversion. What the case, whatever the extent, those are the areas where lust operates. Without the law of God moving your heart, without the will of God moving you, without being able to understand God, you then become God in your universe. You become the center of your world, and what matters to you is whatever you want, whatever your body cries for, whatever your mind cries for.

Here is the corrupt human nature controlled and driven by its internal passions, as it tries to exist and fulfill itself utterly apart from God. Life is controlled by personal longings. So Satan orchestrates into the world system all of the worst most gross anti-God fulfillment of those personal longings, and they act as temptation upon us. As I said, for some, religion is the passion, self-righteous hypocrisy. For others, sexual perversion is the passion and everything in between.

It is the nature then of unregenerate people without Christ to be dead. What that means is sinful, worldly, Satanic, disobedient, and driven by personal lust. The last word and the sixth word tells us where this ends up. It's the word "wrath." End of verse 3, "They were by nature children of wrath." That's where it all ends. They are so associated with wrath that they can be said to be the sons of wrath just as they were called the sons of disobedience. It is their nature to be destroyed. They are born to be damned. That's why I call them the living dead really. They are dead now, and they are going to enter into eternal death, which is another word for hell, which is conscious suffering, but a kind of terrible death in that it is a permanent separation from the life of God. Born to be damned. Born to be condemned. In fact, Jesus in John 3:18 said they're, "Condemned already, condemned already."

So, he describes living death. That's where everybody is. Everybody comes into the world that way, and what the dead need is resurrection. That takes us into the next section starting in verse 4. Just wonderfully and briefly, I want you to look at this, verse 4. Here is dying life. First, was living death. Here's dying life. "But God." Friends, I want to tell you something; it had to be initiated by God because dead men can't raise themselves. We can't even respond at all. It had to be outside us, and it was.

"But God being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in our transgressions made us alive." Verse 6, "And raised us up." That's exactly what we needed. That's exactly what we needed. Here is the great wonderful truth of Easter, the great truth or resurrection. This is it, folks. Dead people can come to life. Those spiritually dead, eternally dead can come to life. We can come alive. It says in verse 5, "He made us alive." Verse 6, "Raised us up."

Six key words define this life, just as six key words define the death. Word number one is mercy. Verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy." What is mercy? Well, simply defined, mercy is not giving sinners what they deserve. Mercy is not giving sinners what they deserve, holding back what should come. In fact, in Psalm 103 there is probably as good a definition of this anywhere. I'll just read it to you. Psalm 103:10 says, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, not rewarded us according to our iniquities." Mercy speaks of what God doesn't do to us even though we deserve it. We deserve to be punished. We deserve to be judged. We deserve to be condemned. We deserve to be sent to hell, but God being rich in mercy holds back His judgment. Mercy pities.

By the way, God doesn't have just a little to spread around. It says in verse 4, "He is rich is mercy." *Plousios* in Greek. It means limitless, exhaustless, boundless. The second word is grace. Notice again in verse 5 toward the end of the verse, "By grace you have been saved," or delivered from death. "By grace." Mercy pities and holds back. Grace pardons and releases. Mercy withholds God's judgment. Grace releases God's forgiveness. Mercy doesn't give us what we deserve. Grace gives us what we don't deserve. In spite of our trespasses, in spite of our sins, in spite of our worldliness, in spite of being dominated by Satan, in spite of living in disobedience and being driven by our passions and desires, in spite of being on schedule for deserved, divine wrath, God steps in and shows sinners mercy and grace.

Why does He do that? That's the third word. Why does He do that? Well, it's not because of anything in us. We are the opposite of everything attractive to Him. "God is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity." God hates sin. God hates the sinner. God is angry with the sinner every day. God will not have sin in His presence. God despises iniquity. Scripture says all of that, and yet God comes to sinners with mercy, which withholds the judgment and grace, which releases the forgiveness. Why? Verse 4, "Because of His great love with which He loved us." This is a love which is beyond our comprehension. We know about love in our life. We know what it is to love. We love what's lovable. We love what attracts us. We love what suits us. We love what we like. We love what fits into our formulas for life. Certain things appeal to us. Certain things don't. Certain people appeal to us. Certain people don't.

We basically love on the basis of an attraction of some kind. That's quite unlike the love of God. God loved those who were opposite everything that was attractive to Him. He loved sinners, who were the absolute opposite of everything He loved. This is a kind of love the likes of which is foreign to us. Paul calls it a "great love" and I'm sure he could have lined up a dozen or so adjectives, but he just sort of bailed on it and said "great love." It's inexplicable. It's beyond comprehension. God loved us while we were enemies. "God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners - " Romans 5:8 " - Chris died for us." He demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, He gave His Son to die for us.

The immense love of God can be seen in that He would give His Son to die on the cross for those who were the antithesis of everything attractive to Him. "Greater love hath no man that this, that a man would lay down his life for his friends." The greatest love of all loves is the love of sacrifice of life. God loved us enough to give His life for us.

The fourth word, and here we come to the main word, is "resurrection." Mercy, grace, and love from God lead to resurrection. Verse 5, "Even when we were dead in our transgressions, He who loved us, God who was rich in mercy and grace, He made us alive." Verse 6, "He raised us up." That's what we needed. That's what we needed. Now, what is He talking about? Well, He's talking about resurrection. What kind of resurrection? Well, what kind of death? Spiritual death. So He gave us a

spiritual resurrection. What does it mean? Well, a spiritual death means we were insensitive to God. Spiritual resurrection means we became sensitive to God. We were awakened in terms of our ability to comprehend God, to know God, to fellowship with God, to hear God, to serve God, to be blessed by God.

There's only one thing a dead man needs: that's life. That demands resurrection. That's what men need. That's what our society needs. That's what our world needs. We don't need better education. That's not going to do it. We don't need better psychoanalysis. We don't need better capability to handle our emotions. We don't need that. We don't need better relationships among people groups or family groups on the surface. We need life. That's what we need. We need the life of God in the soul of men, and that's exactly what is given us here. God looks at those spiritually dead, and because He loves them, He wants to show them mercy and grace. He makes them alive. He just infuses life into them. What kind of life? Spiritual life and eternal life. How did He do that? Well, the next word tells us.

The next word is "Christ." How did He do it? Verse 5, "He made us alive together with Christ." Verse 6, "He raised us up with Him." Now you're getting to the core of what the resurrection means, folks. Jesus said, "Because I live, you shall live also. Whoever lives and believes in me - " John 11:25 " – will never die," Jesus said. What are you saying? Well, what the Scripture is saying is that Jesus not only died for our sins, but He rose to provide our life.

The amazing truth of the gospel is that sinners were dead in trespasses and sin and as such, were objects of God's wrath, called here "children of wrath." But God took His wrath, diverted it away from the sinners, and poured it out on Christ on the cross, who died under the wrath of God, took the wrath for us. Then He went into the grave and rose out of the grave for us. His death was applied to us. His resurrection is applied to us together with Christ. That's what it means; together with Christ.

In Romans 6, probably better than anywhere else, verses 3 to 5, "We have been buried with Him into death in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father. Even so, we too walk in newness of life." When He went into the grave spiritually that was for us, and when He came out, it was for us. God applies is to us. Verse 5, "If we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." This is the great miracle of the gospel. This is the heart of the Christian faith, my friend. This is what you must understand. This is Christianity. It is this: sinners are headed for eternal damnation because they are in a state of spiritual death. God offers them life. How? By taking care of their sin, which His justice requires, pouring out all His wrath on Christ, by raising Christ from the dead, having conquered death for us.

His resurrection can be our resurrection. That's the meaning of Christ's resurrection. It wasn't just somehow an illustration of the fact that you can triumph over your trouble. It wasn't just a spiritual, mystical, whimsical kind of resurrection in that the Spirit of Jesus who was nice to poor people and

children ought to be alive in us today. The resurrection was a historical fact. Jesus died and he rose again, but when He died, He was bearing our sins. When He came out of the grave, He was providing our life. God applied His sacrifice and His resurrection to us. That's the glory of the resurrection.

There's a sixth word beyond the word "Christ" and that's the word "heavenlies, heavenlies." Verse 6, "Raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in – " the Greek says, " - the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Now, what happened after our resurrection? Listen, this is very clear. I want you to understand it, right here. When we were raised from the dead by the power of Christ's resurrection, we were seated in the heavenlies. We were literally lifted up. What does that mean? Well, it simply means all of the sudden we became alive to God. The heavenlies is the sphere in which God lives. It's the realm of God's presence. We came alive to God where heretofore, we had been dead to Him.

All of the sudden, we knew God. All of the sudden, we understood who He was. All of the sudden, we loved Him. All of the sudden, we desired to serve Him and to know Him and to fellowship with Him, and to commune with Him, and to worship and praise Him. All of the sudden, His Word made sense to us, and we longed to do His will and follow His way and fulfill His purpose and bring honor to His name. All of the sudden, the whole world of spiritual reality dawned on us, and for the first time, we began to love what was pure and holy and just and good.

For the first time, we set our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth. For the first time, we began to battle the flesh and battle the desires of the mind. We began to battle the influences of the world around us because we had a new heavenly agenda. We had a new power and a new will and a new life and a new disposition and a new direction. That's the heavenlies. He took us and seated us right in the middle of that environment where we have heavenly life now and shall have it forever.

God didn't just raise us and leave us to wander in the graveyard. He lifted us up into another world altogether. We are citizens of heaven. That's why the little song says, "This world is not my home/I'm just a passing through/my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue." Our whole life is up there. We see things completely different. Everything is viewed in the light of eternity. Everything is seen through the eyes of God, as it were. All the world is different to us because we live in the heavenlies. Sure, the flesh is there. The desires are there. The world is there. Satan is there. The battle is there, but we understand the battle and we understand the alternative, and we understand the will of God and the glory of God and the purpose of God. It's all fresh and vivid and beautiful and clear to us.

That's the difference between the living dead and the dying alive. That's the difference between existing with the living death and a dying life. We're dying physically, but we're alive spiritually and shall be forever. The final matter is to answer the crucial question, "How do I move from one to the other?" Isn't that the question? How do I stop being among the living dead and come to be among the

dying alive? Answer: verses 8 and 9. Here is the sum of it all. This is the answer. How does it happen? “For by grace,” we’ve been through that. Yes, we’ve been delivered by grace, but how does it happen? “Through faith, and that not of yourselves.” It’s not a work that you do. It is the gift of God. It’s not a result of works that no one should boast. There’s no place for self-effort. There’s no place for boasting. No place for self-congratulation, no human achievement. It’s not of works. It says it’s of faith, through faith.

You say, “Well, what is that? What do you mean through faith?” I’ll give you a simple definition of faith. Faith is a God-given conviction, a God-given conviction that the promise of resurrection life, forgiveness of sins, and eternal heaven through Jesus Christ is true. Did you get that? Faith is the God-given conviction that the promise of resurrection life, forgiveness of sin and eternal heaven through Jesus Christ is true and that conviction moves the will to ask God for that gift. That’s saving faith. The conviction that it’s true, that it moves the will to ask God for that gift. The fact of the resurrection is indisputable, Jesus rose from the dead. The evidence commands belief in that event and that person.

Furthermore, the facts of the gospel are true, that in Christ there is resurrection from spiritual death, there is the complete forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal heaven. Pray to God that He would give you that conviction so that it would act on your will to ask you to simply ask Him for that gift. If you have that conviction, have you asked, “Oh God, give me the gift of life in Christ, forgiveness of sin, and eternal heaven”? Have you asked that?

I think it’s Tuesday is the anniversary day of the sinking of the now famous *Titanic.* One night in the cold Atlantic, a grim countdown reached zero for over 2,000 people. The *Titanic*, the unsinkable ship, sank. The amazing part of the story and I think what fascinates people about it, is that many reached their dead end voluntarily. I even understand, while the band played on. How did they reach their dead end voluntarily? They refused with scorn, the lifeboat that pulled away half empty convinced the ship couldn’t sink. So they went to their death.

It seems to me that the *Titanic* is a metaphor for the world, and that the world is nothing but a larger *Titanic*. Let me tell you something folks. This world is sinking fast, and all the environmentalists and all the politicians and all the educators and all the psychologists and all the religionists can’t stop the leaks. The whole world is sinking fast, and the band is playing, and with some people it’s life as usual. But we’re going down, folks. We’re going down, and Jesus is the only lifeboat, the only lifeboat who saves from inevitable death and takes you to the shore of God’s immortal heaven. What fool dies voluntarily? Jesus offers Himself as your lifeboat. Let’s pray together.

Oh God, how we pray that you would be gracious to all of us today, that you would be gracious to love us and grant us grace and mercy and resurrection through Christ, and deliver us from this sinking world about to plunge into the abyss. Save those, Lord, who otherwise would die on a ship of

fools, spurning the lifeboat. Oh Father, be gracious to all of us. Cause us to have that God-given conviction that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life are, in fact, true. Having that conviction, may we ask to receive the gift of life in Him. We just pray that the lifeboat would go away full today of sinners who have been delivered from their terrible death.

For those of us who already know you and love you, we praise you and thank you for the life we already enjoy because of Jesus Christ. We pray in His great name, Amen.

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