

RAISED TO NEW LIFE

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One cannot adequately measure the impact upon our world of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. That single event—that single Man—initiated a ripple of grace and righteousness that has illuminated generations with God-consciousness, rescued countless individuals through salvation, and transformed entire communities with new life.

The awareness of the reality and presence of God the Creator is an amazing gift, but most of the world doesn't know what to do with it. It remains but a glimmer for so many, who can scarcely articulate what it is that they sense—only a vague sense of belonging and responsibility.

Others adopt various religious articulations and practices in an effort to find expression for what they feel. All of these struggle to one degree or another with a lack of closure—a sense of insecurity or incompleteness.

But those who have put their trust in Jesus Christ have discovered “so great a salvation”—the forgiveness of sins, assurance of adoption, hope of heaven, and peace that surpasses all understanding.

I don't mean to suggest that real Christians have no struggles of faith, no insecurities, but we *do know* that the answers lie with Jesus Christ, even if we are buffeted by circumstance or emotion. We know that He is Lord and we are in His hand.

But it is the aspect of newness of life that has captured my imagination today. The new life that Jesus offers is not on hold until the day you die. It is now! It is here!

He Cut The Cord

If you have claimed Jesus Christ as your Forgiver and the Leader of your life, the new life has already begun in you. As we walk through several Scripture passages about this new life today, notice that each one identifies the resurrection of Jesus as the basis for its promise.

Paul wrote to the Roman believers (6:4-11), *“⁴ We died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. ⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. ⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. ⁹ We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.”*

Consider verse 4:

“Just as Christ was raised...” means just as surely, just as actually, just as materially.

"We also may live..." indicates we have an opportunity. It is God's purpose; is it yours? An opportunity also means an option, an everyday choice. What will you choose?

"Live new lives..." means not in the old way, not by the old rules, and not for the old rewards.

Consider verses 5-7:

"Since we have been... we will be." One leads to the other. It is a certainty. We shall be raised *"as He was."*

The Holy Spirit revealed that sin has lost its power to deceive, to control, or to determine your course of action.

"We are no longer slaves... we were set free." Once you—and all of us—were under sin's mastery, when we offered little (if any) resistance to its enticements. Now, we have been given our freedom to follow Christ.

When you think of your own death—not what might be its circumstance, but simply its inevitability—do you shudder? Do you turn your thoughts away? Does it frighten you?

Paul expresses a peculiar confidence, a surprising readiness, about the subject.

"We are sure... because." This is our source of assurance: Jesus' resurrection. If you are uncertain about your own future, spend time examining His. Your viewpoint will shift.

"Death has no power over Him" means that it also has no power over you. Jesus has said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying"* (John 11:25).

Consider verses 10 and 11:

"He died once to break." Jesus' death was so effective that it does not require a repeat performance. Once was enough. Once was sufficient to break the power of sin. Not only did Christ cancel our debt and remove the judgment for our sin that was to come, but He broke sin's rule over our lives.

Now, Jesus lives—not to continue dealing with sin (that is finished)—but to reveal the full glory of God. And what is that? What does that look like?

It is you and I—and all the Church—living in the fullness of God's Spirit, in godliness and righteousness.

"Godliness" is your heart's devotion to God. Your constant gaze in His direction. Your attentiveness to His words. Your frequent conversations with Him. Your praise and thankfulness.

"Righteousness" is life expression of God's character. Your demonstration of what is right in God's eyes.

Now, this is important, please listen. This freedom depends on your *thought processes*—not your thoughts, but the way that you process your thoughts. You cannot control the occurrence of thoughts, nor your involuntary reaction, but you can control your response to their occurrence. When a certain type of thought occurs, what is your *plan* of response?

When a sinful idea presents itself, will you embrace it? Explore it? Run with it? Or, will you renounce it? Replace it? Counteract it?

“Consider yourselves... dead to the power of sin.” When sinful thoughts occur, you should declare them powerless. They are no longer your masters, even if they onetime were. Don’t fall back into the old way of thinking and acting; take a fresh stand in faith.

“Consider yourselves... alive to God.” Jesus has connected you to God and to His purpose for your life. Even if His purpose is challenged, or if it’s difficult, don’t abandon it. Recall your new life in Christ. Rely on Him for help every day.

This is about how you process the thoughts that occur in your mind. Just because they occur doesn’t mean you must own them or follow them. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has given you a choice.

How are you going to think about yourself? As a child of God? As a follower of Jesus? As a new person who was raised together with Him?

Or will you think of yourself like you did *before* Jesus came into your life? Your thinking has to change! It will not do so in a miraculous moment. It does so by repeated application. You have a choice; you are no longer sin’s slave.

New You, New Purpose

Apostle Peter is responsible for this timeless reminder (1 Peter 1): ³ *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, ⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.*

“Born again.” New birth is what all people need. Not a reformation, but a transformation. Our nature must be altered, or we’ll just keep producing what we’ve produced before. Therefore, Jesus admonished, *“Don’t be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again’”* (John 3:7).

This is not a religious experience of the imagination, but a transforming act of God. This genuine, spiritual new birth is possible because Jesus was raised from the dead. His new life is the measure of our new life—in quality, as well as quantity.

Paul wrote (Colossians 2), ¹² *For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.*

Jesus rose, you rose—that’s the story of water baptism—because you trusted in the mighty power of God that raised Jesus from the dead. That’s the same power that has raised your spirit, and will one day raise your body.

“Christ’s love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

When Christ died, you died—that is, you died to the old way of living (for yourself), and began to live with a new purpose (for Jesus). So, just what does it mean to “live for Christ”?

God does, indeed, have a unique purpose just for you, and has been and is now uniquely fashioning you through life's experiences in order to fulfill that purpose. It's details only unfold as we walk with faith in Jesus. But we can know something about God's common purpose for all of us. For instance:

Paul wrote (Romans 7:4) *"So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God."*

It may sound simplistic, but good deeds—not bad ones—are in God's purpose for your Christian life. This doesn't mean you'll become a "do-gooder" or a rule-keeper, who does good just because it is good to do so (though even that would be better than doing what is bad); rather, the Spirit of God, operating in you, will lead you to intentionally seek what is good and helpful for others, and reveal God's own goodness.

You're All Right

Actions proceed from beliefs. That's why becoming clear about what you believe is so important. And that's why Jesus once said, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"* (Matthew 12:34). Righteous living is the fruit of righteous being.

Paul taught, *"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*¹⁰ *For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved."* (Romans 10:9-10)

Paul also said that Jesus *"was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God"* (Romans 4:25). That's where it all begins. Because of the resurrection of Jesus, we who believe in Him have been made "right with God" or "put in right standing with God." In other words, concerning those who believe God has raised Jesus from the dead, God says, "You're all right with me." Knowing that—just knowing that God is for you, not against you—is liberating and encouraging.

Peter described the miracle at the Red Sea, through which the Israelites had to pass in order to be freed from slavery to Egypt. He said, *"That water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 3:21).

Water baptism is meaningful and effective because Jesus is alive. If He were not, it would only be an empty ritual. Instead, it is life-changing. But there's more!

Paul asked, *"Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us"* (Romans 8:34).

Because Jesus lives, He prays for us. He pleads our acquittal; He pleads for God's mercy. Jesus Christ is praying for your victory, your good success in life. He is praying that every good thing He has begun in you will reach its fulfillment. He is praying that your faith will remain strong. He is praying that you will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Made Whole

The last aspect of this new life that I want to mention is wholeness. The resurrection body is complete and immortal. It cannot be touched by sickness or death. Now that Jesus has risen from the dead, He will never die again.

Reincarnation is a belief that contradicts the Bible; the resurrection of Jesus does not support the notion of reincarnation, it contradicts and eliminates it. The Word of God says, *“each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). Resurrection life is whole life.

But our resurrection is only in part right now. As we have read, we *“have been raised with Christ,”* yet our completeness is still off in the future, *“reserved in heaven”* for us.

We know in part, and today we live just a part of the life Jesus has won for us. However, “in part” is not nothing. We don’t have only hope; we also have experience, but partial.

What could be a “partial” experience of wholeness and immortality? There are others, but today I want to focus on one: physical healing.

Parenthetically, let me say that I believe all healing is wondrous! The natural capacity of the body to heal itself, and in some cases, to regenerate itself, is nothing short of amazing! Truly, we are *“fearfully and wonderfully made”* (Psalm 139:14).

The science of medicine, in so far as it explores the processes of health in order to assist them, is a gift from God and an avenue through which He commonly works. Far from being contrary to the Scriptures, it actually underscores many of the things the Bible says about God and His creative and redemptive plan for humankind.

But there is another kind of physical healing, which God has given to the Church, which is by its very nature less common and more dramatic; that is, miraculous, spontaneous healing. This is one of the gifts the Holy Spirit imparts through the Church and one of the signs which follows those who believe in Jesus’ name. And this amazing grace is also anchored to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Listen...

A man, who had been lame, in some way, from his birth, was carried to the gate through which people entered Jerusalem’s Temple to pray. There, each day, he begged for money in order to survive. One of those days, he asked Peter and John for money as they headed to the prayer meeting.

As their eyes met, Peter said, *“I have no money for you, but I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”* (Acts 3:6).

As Peter helped him to his feet, the man was instantly healed and strengthened, and began walking, leaping, and praising God. The people were amazed. The religious authorities were infuriated. Arresting the two evangelists, they questioned and threatened them.

In response, Peter testified, *“Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead”* (Acts 4:10).

Such acts are the result of Jesus being alive today. The miracles of healing that He once did in person, He now continues through His Church, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is His resurrection that makes His name so graciously powerful.

Reminds me of a song...

*I serve a living Savior, He's in the world today
I know that He is living whatever men may say
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer
And just the time I need Him He's always near*

*He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today.
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart.
You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart!*