

Dead or Alive?

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Bible Text: Ephesians 2:1-10

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The Lord Jesus is Christ and Lord of your life and that you will follow and pursue and chase after him hard for the rest of your life. If we miss Christ, we've missed it all. I want you to know that the overtures of love and grace and mercy are clearly seen in the very fact that we're assembled in his name.

This morning I want to read from the book of Ephesians 2 and I want to ask the question: Dead or Alive? Ephesians 2 and let's begin reading in verse 1 down to verse 10.

“1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Our gracious heavenly Father, we come and we bless you. Lord Jesus, we thank you. We thank you for your life and for your obedience, for your dying and for your paying on Calvary's cross for our sins. We thank you, heavenly Father, for raising him from the dead. We thank you that we know that he is at your right hand making intercession for us. We come this morning, we have assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and we would ask, will you enable us to hear and understand and will you enable us to respond to the truths of the Scriptures? Will you show us the truths that are here declared and write them on our hearts? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

I don't know whether you have seen that or not but there is a television series that is entitled "The Walking Dead." I don't know whether you have heard or seen that there was a movie several years ago that was entitled "Dead Man Walking." Have you noticed in this month of October, that how our world responds to October, the month where Halloween is celebrated? Have you noticed all of the things that are on television? I thought about, in particular, with its theme of dead man walking or the walking dead and then, of course, October, the Halloween month and I thought since I had accessibility to the internet I was just going to Google the question: how many programs are there in the week of the 27th through this week where we are today? I thought, well, I'm sure it would probably bring up dozens of television programs that deal with fear and death, the graveyards, the vampires and evil and darkness and violence and bloodshed and, really, the more gory the better that people like it. I thought, well, I Googled that and I thought it would bring up maybe a couple of, three dozen programs. It brought up 600+ programs in one week, 24 hours a day. And in all of it, you see, there are again and again dealing with death and dying and raised from the dead and all kinds of stuff and I was overwhelmed by that.

One recurring theme that came across was dead men walking or the walking dead. I asked the question: that's not real, that's fiction, that is really Hollywood having some entertainment that would lay hold of people's curiosity. I want you to know as you look at the word of God, that that is really not far-fetched. Dead men walking and the walking dead, I want you to know, that is the true description of people who are lost. The portion of Scripture that we just read declares that, that "you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according." Think about it. That's the fact that physically you want to say, "I am very much so alive," but I want you to know when we begin to look at the Scriptures that it is teaching us that they are spiritually dead really without any ability.

No doubt walking people are alive and at the same time when we look at society, we look at mankind, we want to say, "I'm sure that, yes, mankind does have some problems and does have some flaws." We say man is sick; man is injured. Man does have some problems when you look at our society and you look at people and you say, "There is a problem. Look at the hatred. Look at the jealousy. Look at the strife. Look at the wars. Look at all of it." Yes, man has a problem but I want you to know what the problem is: the problem is dead or alive, the problem is man is physically alive but he is spiritual dead and in that sense you can say a man that is walking, he is living but he is spiritually dead. That which we as a society in the month of October, in a sense, we concentrate on for entertainment sake, I want you to know there is a reality to that and yet at the same time, what a catastrophe when you think of where we are as mankind.

This morning, the portion of Scripture that we read in Ephesians 2:1 says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Then he gives us a description of that, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the

children of wrath, even as others.” Dead man walking. That’s spiritually dead and yet very much alive but not alive to God.

I want you to know, as we don’t have our doctor here with us this morning, when we think about death what is it that we think about? I want you to know when I think about death I think about that there is absolutely no life, no breath, no pulse, no heart, no nothing. Period. There is no responding to. The Apostle Paul when he writes to the Ephesians, he’s saying to the Ephesians, “You at one time, you were spiritually dead. You walked and you were alive, not to God, but you were alive to the dictates of the world. You were alive to the dictates of Satan. You were alive to the dictates of your own heart and your own flesh. You were very much alive, you were living then, but you were spiritually dead and it is he who quickened us.”

I want you to know I with the very thought of that, as I was preparing and looking at this message, yesterday in particular, I was thinking about the masses and I could not get away from the thought that when I look at the masses and I ask the question, I ask myself the question and as I stand before you this morning, I’m asking the question: those of you who are sitting in these pews, are you dead or are you alive? That’s a good question and I know when I think about Christianity, we’ve literally summed up the plight of mankind with Romans 3:23 as we, at times, evangelize and we try to bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ. We have dealt with it this way, we’ve quoted Romans 3:23 and we’ve said, “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” And then we have explained sin this way, “Sin is simply missing the mark.” That’s the bottom line. I want you to know the plight and the condition of mankind is a whole lot more serious than, you see, simply missing the mark; the plight that man has, he is spiritually dead. So, the question that I’m asking you this morning, would you stop and ask yourself: am I dead or am I alive? Am I one of these that is walking and I’m alive physically but yet I’m at the same time dead? Am I one of these dead men walking or walking dead, am I one of those?

Where did it start? I want you to know it started with our parents and I want you to know that every one of us are all related to one another. Did you know that, Sister Gail? You know, we all have the same grandparents. Did you know that? When we look at the family tree, we go a little bit further than just 2, 3, 4, 5 generations but you remember when God created man and he said, “Let us create man in our image and in our likeness?” And do you remember there in Genesis 2 where the Lord made it very plain and clear to Adam and Eve? Here’s what he said to them, “And the Lord commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat but of that tree of knowledge and good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it for in that day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” No doubt, Adam and Eve as the Lord communicated to them, not only were they living but they were also alive in their relationship with the true and the living God. They sensed and knew his presence. The Lord walked with them in the cool of the day. He was there. The relationship and the fellowship was there was nothing lacking in it. They were alive to God. They were living and they were alive to God.

The Lord said, "In that day when you eat thereof, thou shalt surely die." You remember in Genesis 3:2 where Satan comes in the form of a serpent and he communicates with Eve and she said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." What did the serpent say? How did he respond to her? "The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." I want you to know that when Eve took and she gave to Adam, I want you to know that they died that very day. They died spiritually as they found themselves naked and they were ashamed and you see they were hiding from God. They died spiritually. Alive physically but spiritually dead.

Then we read of the curse and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. I want you to know who died with them: not only Adam and Eve but all of his posterity. I want you to know that little baby that Mia is holding and rocking in her arms, that little baby has no spiritual ability. None whatsoever. Very much alive but spiritually dead. That is the truth of the Scriptures. That includes you and me. Not only Adam and Eve but you and I. In Genesis 5:1 we read, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness."

The Apostle Paul, he makes much of that and I want you to know that I believe it is right here that we make an error: Christianity has made an error; we have made an error in our day that we do not identify with the word of God and the condition that mankind is in. Somehow or another we want to say, "Yes, we all have been affected by the fall. Yes, we're all sinners. Yes, we all have fallen short of the glory of God. But, no, the effects of what happened in the Garden of Eden didn't have any effect upon me." And somehow or another we think that yeah, we have a problem but that problem is really not as bad as the grave.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." In that portion of Scripture he goes on, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come." Then at the same time, we find, "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace." And I want you to know, it is a grand thing to be assembled in a place of walking dead and dead man walking to hear the message of life and the message of the resurrection from the dead, is it not?

What does it mean to be dead? I want you to know: no breath, no heartbeat, no pulse, no movement, no feelings. None whatsoever. What does that mean to us? He tells us in this passage. He tells us very plainly to be spiritually dead, he says, as you walked in the past according to the course of the world. I want to tell you something: you can identify even though we don't have the doctor. We do have the doctor in the house. Would we ask Dr.

Jesus, would we ask the Holy Spirit, would we say, "Holy Spirit, would you take and evaluate and examine my body?" What do you think? Here's what he said, "in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience and we had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." This is the true diagnosis of God himself as he describes the sinner who at one time, those of us who are in the Lord Jesus Christ and alive and quickened, he gives a description that that's how you walked in the past.

What do you think? I'm not asking you this morning to say to you, "Well, tell me, are you dead or alive?" I'm not asking you, "Have you walked an aisle? Have you followed an altar call? Or have you made a profession of faith? Or have you been baptized as an adult or as an infant?" I'm not asking you, "Your name is on the church roll?" I'm not asking you, if several years ago, if somebody asked me, "Are you dead or alive?" I would've said, "That's the dumbest question I've ever heard." I was raised in a nation that was civilized; we were educated people. We didn't bow before trees and images. "That's the dumbest question. Sure I'm alive." We didn't worship idols and I'm not asking you, "Well, do you have confidence that your parents are followers and believers of the Lord Jesus?" But I'm asking you: would you check the pulse rate of life, "that therefore by grace are ye saved for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus."

Let me tell you when we are alive for God and alive for Christ, there are certain things that are going to be there. Let me tell you what's going to be there, the Siamese twin to faith is prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus. I want you to know that. Do you know what it is to pray in the name of Christ? Do you know what it is to lay in your bed? Do you know what it is to be driving along in the car? Do you know what it is to know that in me, myself, you see, I'm not trusting. But I'm trusting in the living God for we have the sense of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but to trust in the living God. Do you know what it is to pray? Do you know what it is to pray for yourself and to pray for others? Do you know what it is to pray unto the Lord Jesus? Do you know what it is to open up your heart and to call your sins for what they are? Do you know what it is to pray for lusts of the eye and lusts of the flesh and the pride of life? Do you know what it is to pray and to call up on God? If that's the case, there is an indicator, there is life.

How about reading the Scriptures? Or is this book just something that you have to dig out on Sunday mornings? But do you know what it is to simply go to this book? I'm not suggesting to you that you're reading this book to study for a Sunday School lesson but I'm suggesting to you: do you know what it is to have your eyes in this book and to glean from its pages? And to say, "Lord, here I am. Will you teach me your truth?" And that you study and read that word and that you would say, "I know this word that you've given to us." And like that little baby back there that is on Momma's breast, that as newborn babies desire the sincere milk of the word that you go thereby. That's an indicator that there is life. Prayer and reading the Scriptures and that I can say to you: is that indicator there? Is there life there? Feeding on God's word.

What about fellowship? Fellowship with God's people? And what about being united with the church? Now, I want you to know something, folks, I'm not suggesting to you that if you do those things then you're going to produce life. I'm suggesting to you that these things are the evidence that there is life. That's important to us. I want to know what thinking does the church have in your mind? When I think of the church, I want you to know this morning that I'm totally overwhelmed with your love to me, but when I think about the church I'm thinking about the bride of Christ. I'm thinking about the saints that have been called out from all the corners of the world that the Lord has placed in the church. There's that hymn where we sing:

“Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God.
He whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for his own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake my sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou mayest smile at all thy foes.”

What does the church mean to you? Do you think about the church that they are those of God's people for whom Christ died? Those are indicators that you cannot wait to go to church, to have that appetite. And then, “Lord, will you stir my heart to that?” Laboring. Love for God and love for Christ and love for the church and love for God's people and love for the truth. You may be here this morning and you think that when I think about the church and when I think about all of these things, that sounds good to me and you say, “I've tried all of that. I've tried to turn over a new leaf. I've tried to read the Scriptures. I've tried to pray. I've tried to go to church. I've tried to love God. I've tried to do this and all of that. I mean, a few days, a few weeks and it's all gone.” Because all of that is done by efforts that are not brought about in the heart.

Our text tells us this is what we were. We at one time, we walked and this was our life. What a desperate condition, hopelessly and helplessly but I want you to know that and I stand here very eager and very proud to proclaim the truth of the Scriptures. Once we recognize and realize what condition that I am if I'm not in the Lord Jesus, let me make it plain again, make it clear one more time: you are spiritually dead and like a dead person, you have no ability. None whatsoever. You are in desperate straits.

But God. But God. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” I want you to know that he raised us from the grave and he has placed us in the heavenly places in the Lord Jesus.

Who did that? Who is responsible for that? Who is responsible for that? Who is it that stood in front of Lazarus' grave that was already dead for four days? He was already stinking. Who is it? It was the Lord Jesus when he said, “Come forth, Lazarus.” Then

what happened? Lazarus came forth. I want you to know: when you recognize and realize that what condition that we're in that puts a different picture, that puts a different focus on all of it, that puts a different interpretation on all of it, when I think about the fact that my condition is a whole lot farther off from missing the mark.

Let me tell you where Christianity is leaving us: Christianity is leaving us in this case that whenever you get good and ready, exercise your free will and call on the Lord, and whenever you think that it's right and let God do something for you and all of that, I want you to know that all of that is false. We need a Savior that breathes the breath of life in us.

I was talking about that in my Sunday School class this morning. I was talking about those that suffer around the globe and those in the early church and those that died at the stake. How is it, I want to ask you, how is it that those followers of the Lord Jesus that at the point of a sword, they were tied on top of a woodpile and they were setting flame to that woodpile, how is it that they were able to respond the way they responded in blessing and praising the name of Christ, their Savior, and that they would say, "I am so glad I'm counted worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ?" How was that a possibility? Take somebody that's physically alive and spiritually dead and you tie them onto that stake and let me tell you what's going to happen: when they say, deny the name of Christ and you'll have your freedom and as soon as they do that, I want you to know, they'll say I deny the Lord Jesus. I don't know him at all.

It is the Lord that does that work. When you recognize and realize that it is his mercy and grace alone, how does he do that? I want you to know that he does that exactly the way we're doing it this morning: it is by the foolishness of the preaching; it's looking to the Holy Spirit to do that work in the heart and to bring about the conviction of the fact that he shows us the condition that we're in. That, yes, I'm a sinner, I'm a child of wrath even as others and that I am in desperate straits. Then I hear the message of the beauty and the glory of the Lord Jesus that has come to seek and to save that which is lost and he gives me faith and repentance and I run and flee and I embrace the Lord Jesus. I say, "Lord, save me!" He does that with the new birth. He does that with regeneration. He does that with the quickening of the Spirit.

In Ephesians 1:9 we read, in the chapter before, we read these words and he says, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." Listen to this next verse, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

Are you dead or alive? Are you here this morning and have you tried to be alive for the things of Christ and you've tried over and over again and fallen short, flat on your face? Recognize that it is not by your might or by your power but recognize that it is he that must do that work in the heart of quickening and breathing life in you. And how does he do that? He does it on the basis of responding to him on the basis of what he's saying in this book and we respond on the basis of faith.

Is that not a mysterious work? And you had he quickened. How did he do that? He's done that with the declaration of the word of God; he's done that with the work of the Holy Spirit and he breathed life in us. Then with the songwriter, we can say,

“Alive in him, my living head,
And clothed with righteousness divine
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.”

How did he do that? He's done that simply by quickening us and raising us from the dead, a child of wrath even as others and he's elevated us and lifted us into the heavenlies in the Lord Jesus. One of these days we're going to see him face-to-face, the Savior, who gave himself for us.

Are you walking dead? Are you dead man walking? Are you alive or are you dead? Only you can answer that. May the Lord be merciful to us and write these truths on our hearts. May we see the one who is the one who has come that we might have life and have that life more abundantly.

Let's pray.