

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 2:13-15

SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

Some of us have good memories, while some of us have poor memories. Even those with good memories, though, can't remember everything, and eventually start forgetting more as they age. So we all forget something at some point or other.

Sometimes, our forgetfulness has limited consequences (e.g. forgetting to wash our car). Other times, our forgetfulness has far greater consequences (e.g. forgetting to put gas in the car).

Today, I want to consider with you a forgetfulness that has very serious consequences. As Christians we sometimes forget how spiritually dead we were before Christ gave us life. Christ may have given us life last year, or many years ago, but we've forgotten what life was like, or what we were like, before Christ gave us life. This has serious consequences. When we forget how spiritually dead we were:

- We don't realize how desperate our condition was (which undermines humility)
- We don't realize how bad the consequences were (which undermines gratitude)
- We don't realize how great God's life-giving power was (which undermines worship)

Solution?

The Colossians faced the same challenge, but, in Colossians 2:13-15, the Apostle Paul reminded them of what their condition was, how awful the consequences were, and how great God's life-giving power was. He did this to increase their humility, gratitude, and worship. We want to learn from how Paul did this, but, first, let's remind ourselves of the background to these verses.

CONTEXT

Last week, in 1 Corinthians 15:12-20, we learned how important Christ's physical resurrection was. Without it we have no salvation. The week before, looking at Colossians 2:11-12, we learned how God sees his people as complete in Christ because he regards them as having died, been buried, and been raised with Christ, 2000 years ago.

In verses 13-15, Paul says the Colossian's spiritual condition was so bad that they need their own resurrection. They needed Christ's physical resurrection, but they also needed their own spiritual resurrection, which is what the Apostle goes straight into.



**How bad was our spiritual condition?
So bad that we need spiritually resurrected.**



1. SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION IS NECESSARY (13A)

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh” (13a)

You were dead in trespasses

“You were dead.” Clearly, he’s not saying they were physically dead, but rather spiritually dead. What does that mean. It means that they were as spiritually responsive to God as a dead body is to human voices. That’s zero response. Not a spark of spiritual life, vitality, energy, or grace. They were physically alive but spiritually dead. They were the living dead, or the walking dead.

Having described their state, he then traces it to two causes. The first is the sins they committed: “being dead in your trespasses.” Their sins had killed them and were keeping them dead. They were under the dominion of sin and, therefore, of death.

You were dead in uncircumcised flesh

The second cause of the deadness was their “uncircumcised flesh,” This was literally true of the Gentile Colossians. They were uncircumcised and, therefore, cut off from God’s family and the source of life. But this is probably more about their moral state than their physical state. The previous context was about spiritual circumcision, and therefore this is probably the case here too, with “uncircumcision of the flesh” a way of speaking of the Colossians’ spiritual condition and state, from which their sins and transgressions proceeded.

APPLICATION



Christian, remember how dead you were. Dead as dead could be. Spiritually dead because of your sin and your state. Drowning in sin, cut off from life. Although it was many years ago, remember what you were by nature, in order to humble yourself. No matter how God has changed and improved you, remember what you were. It’s like looking at old pictures. It’s a bit embarrassing in a way, but it’s humbling too.



But, you might say, I’ve been a believer for as long as I can remember. I cannot remember when I was not spiritually alive. If so, that’s a great blessing in so many ways. If you

came to faith in early childhood, you probably cannot remember how dead you were. But you can still learn how dead you were using a passage like this. You may not have the experience of it, but, by faith you can believe it.



If you are not a Christian, if you are not spiritually alive and responsive to God, see how bad your sin and state is. It is deadly. You’re cut off from the life-giver. You cannot give yourself life. Confess that to God and plead for his life-giving mercy.

REMEMBER YOU WERE DEAD.
AND THEN YOU’LL LOVE LIFE.



**Our condition is desperate, our need is great.
Is there any hope?**



2. SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION IS AN ACT OF GOD (13B)

"He has made alive together with him" (13b).

God made you alive

The Colossians who were dead as dead could be, are now more alive than they've ever been. What changed? God made them alive. They didn't make themselves alive. They didn't cooperate in this. This was not a team effort. It was a unilateral act of God. The same power that raised Christ from the dead in verse 12, raised them from the dead. God breathed life into their entombed souls and they lived. They see God, hear God, love God, trust God, worship God, and hope in God in ways that make all previous religious activities look like a graveyard.

Although this is a dramatic act of God, it does not necessarily mean that the Christians' experience of it is dramatic. There are some, like the Apostle Paul, for whom, it was a dramatic experience. It was so fast we need a slow-motion camera to actually see what happened.

For others, the life is implanted more like a little seed and it slowly grows over many years. We need a time-lapse camera to see the growth. Both were dead and are now alive, but their experience of spiritual resurrection is different.

God made you alive together with Jesus

How did God do this? How did he breathe life into them? He did it by bringing them into contact with Jesus Christ: "God made you alive together with him."

When a loved one dies, we might lie beside them and long that we could give life to them, that we could transfer our life to them. Although Elijah did this once when he lay on a dead boy (1 Kings 17:17-24), we can never do it. But when a sinner comes into contact with Jesus by faith, she is resurrected. When Christ's life is laid on our deadness, we come to life.

APPLICATION

♥ Christian, do you trace all your life to Christ. Do you disown any contribution to your salvation? Do you give him all the glory?

♥ If you've been a believer for as long as you remember, remember that it's the same God and the same power who gave you that life. The question is not how did you get life, or, when did you get life, but do you have life? And you know you do if Christ is your life, if looking to Christ alone is your life.

♥ If you are still dead in your sins, then bring your deadness to Christ and ask him to give you a sight of him by faith that will be a look of life. No matter how deep your grave, Christ's resurrection life can reach you.

TO LIVE APART FROM GOD IS DEATH,
TO LIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST IS LIFE.



**That's an astonishing possibility, but how can God do this?
We deserve death, so how can he give us life?**



3. SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION IS SECURED BY FORGIVENESS (13C-15)

Forgiveness cancels our legal debt

“Having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us” (13c-14a).

If sin caused the Colossians’ death, they have to deal with sin to live. If sin killed them, they need a remedy for sin to get life. The remedy is Christ’s forgiveness of sin. God brought them alive by forgiving their sins through Christ’s cross-work.

Notice how Paul describes their sin here. He speaks of the “handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.” The Colossians would have understood exactly what Paul was referring to here. Debtors signed a certificate of indebtedness which listed all they owed, how and when they were to repay, and any penalty for failure to reply. Every time they looked at it, they felt its painful accusing and condemning power. It was against them, contrary to them.

This is true of all the Colossians, even the rich ones, and of every human being. We are indebted to God because of our sins, we know what we owe, and we know the penalty if we don’t pay. But, Paul says, Christ has wiped it out. Cancelled it. Obliterated it. Expunged it. Every single entry removed.

APPLICATION

♥ How would you like to see your list? It’s not one you would frame and keep in your living room is it? But if you’re a Christian, it’s been cancelled. It’s been obliterated. There’s nothing to frame. "All sins."

♥ If you are not forgiven, that list still exists. You may hide it, deny it, and not want to think about it, but that doesn’t make it go away. It’s like not wanting to look at your bank statement because you’re afraid of what you will see. It doesn’t change our bank balance.

Forgiveness is secured at the cross

“And he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (14-15)

He nailed sins to the cross: How did Jesus do this? He can’t just declare it cancelled. He can’t just take it away and rip it up. No, he did it by nailing these debts and their penalties to the cross.

Children, “How many nails were at the cross?” Maybe you answer “four.” One for each hand and one for each foot. Some say just three because one nail was driven through both feet. But let me tell you that there were millions of nails at the cross. No one saw them with their physical eyes but we can see them with the eyes of faith. Every single Christian’s sins were nailed to that tree and paid for with Christ’s blood and death.

It was common for crucified people to have their name, crime, and punishment nailed above them. Jesus had that when Pilate had “Jesus, King of the Jews” nailed above him, accusing Christ of rebelling against Caesar by claiming that title. But, Jesus had far more charges above him. All the charges of all his people were charged to him.



He disarmed principalities and powers: If we were at the cross, we would see many weapons attacking Christ. Fists, nails, thorns, a spear. The demons of hell were also armed to the teeth and attacking with fury. But, with the eyes of faith, we see Christ disarming these principalities and powers, because he's taking away sin and its condemning power. That's the most malevolent force in the universe, the one the demons of hell love because they use it to make people hate God and despair of salvation. Here we have them disarmed, defeated, despoiled, disabled, discredited, and dethroned.

He made a public spectacle of them: Yes, if we saw Christ on Calvary's cross we would see him shamed and disgraced, stripped naked, exposed to humiliation. But with the eyes of faith we see something entirely different. We see him shaming the hosts of hell, "triumphing over them on his cross." While they were putting forth the greatest power possible, they were being fatally weakened, their power was being taken from them. Their triumph was turned to total defeat. Imagine their surprise when they realized they actually lost.

The imagery here is of a Roman victory parade that often went on for days, with hundreds of chariots, thousands of soldiers, tens of thousands of prisoners and the captured weapons and loot. Our eyes see victory on Easter Sunday, but Paul is telling us to see Easter Friday as a victory also. We need faith to see that. The cross was a moment of triumph not defeat; glory not shame.

APPLICATION

♥ Worship God for this amazing sequence of events: he nailed sins to the cross, he disarmed powers, he made a spectacle of them. Worship God for Christus Victor! See him triumphing over his enemies even in his weakest moment (Heb. 2:14).

♥ Is your hope of forgiveness secured by the cross? Or by something else? Put your faith in Christ's cross as the only way to secure the forgiveness of sin and share in Christ's triumph over the evil powers. Don't be in Christ's victory train as a captured and defeated prisoner but as a "more than conqueror" with him.

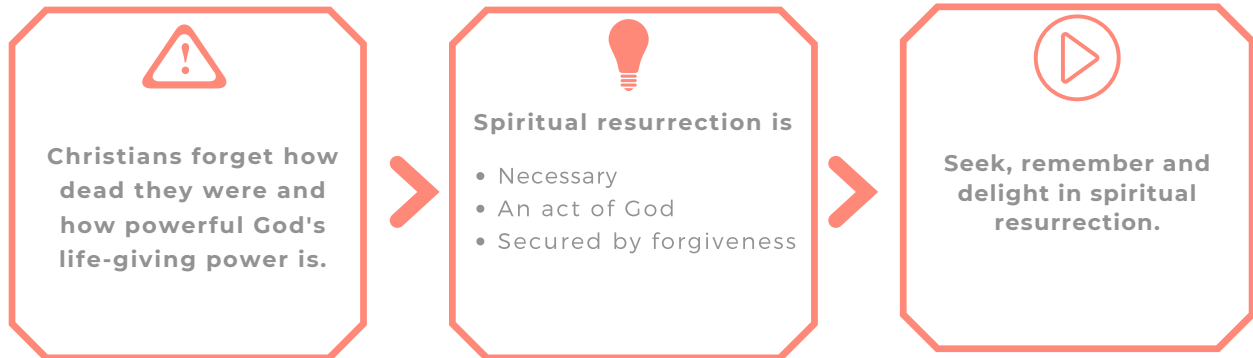
CHRIST WAS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES,
BUT STRIPPED THE DEVIL OF POWER.



Do you see how dead you were and how alive you are?



CONCLUSION



PRAYER: Living and life-giving God, if I'm dead, give me life. If I'm alive, help me to remember my death and delight in my new life. AMEN.

FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [You You Must Be Born Again](#) by Keith Mathison
- [Born Again: God's Sovereign Grace in the Miracle of Regeneration](#) (Credo Online Magazine)
- [Spiritual Resurrection](#) by C H Spurgeon
- [Christus Victor](#) by Robert Kolb

Books

- [What does it mean to be born again?](#) by R. C. Sproul (free ebook)
- [Finally Alive](#) by John Piper.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe your spiritual state and experience before Christ gave you life?
2. How does remembering our spiritual deadness help evangelism?
3. How would you use the truths in this sermon to worship God?
4. Describe the way you came to spiritual life.
5. How would you describe spiritual deadness to an unchurched person?
6. In what ways has this sermon changed your view of the cross?
7. How can you stop past sin accusing you?

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SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

LIVING AND LIFE GIVING GOD, IF I'M DEAD, GIVE ME LIFE, IF I'M ALIVE HELP ME TO REMEMBER MY DEATH AND DELIGHT IN MY NEW LIFE. AMEN



Christians forget how dead they were and how powerful God's life-giving power is.

- Forget condition
- Forget consequences
- Forget power

Biblical answer?



Spiritual resurrection is necessary

- Dead in trespasses
- Dead in uncircumcised flesh

REMEMBER YOU WERE DEAD AND THEN YOU'LL LOVE LIFE.

Any hope?



Seek, remember and delight in spiritual resurrection.



Spiritual resurrection is secured by forgiveness

- Forgiveness cancels our debt
- Forgiveness is secured at cross

CHRIST WAS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES, BUT STRIPPED THE DEVIL OF POWER.

Action?



Spiritual resurrection is an act of God

- God made you alive
- Alive together with him

TO LIVE APART FROM GOD IS DEATH, TO LIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST IS LIFE.

How can God do this?