

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Things which accompany salvation: Quickening

Introduction

The word used as the title for this week's talk may need a little explanation, especially since it won't occur in any of the scripture passages we will read! If you are a regular reader of the King James, or Authorised, Version you may be more familiar with it. Centuries ago the word 'quick' meant alive. The King James Version uses the phrase "*the quick and the dead*" (in Acts 10:42, 2 Timothy 4:1 and 1 Peter 4:5) to mean "*the living and the dead.*" This usage only survives in modern English in a couple of words, one of which is quicksand. Quicksand is so named, not because it moves rapidly, but because it contrasts to the rather inert normal sand, by moving and swallowing things up as if it was alive. Quickening is translated in modern versions by the phrases "*gives life*" in the present tense, and "*made alive*" in the past tense.

Let's read one of the key passages on the topic. "*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*", Ephesians 2:1-6.

Our subject for today is closely linked to last week's subject of New Birth. Perhaps it is worth reminding ourselves of the other aspects of the "things which accompany salvation" that we are considering in this series of talks. Sin had a devastating and wide ranging impact on human lives.

Sin - impact and resolution

- It made us **guilty** and meant we needed for **forgiveness**.
- It resulted in our **condemnation** and so we needed **justification**.
- It brought us into **slavery** with a need for **redemption**.
- Sin produced **alienation** from God and the need for **reconciliation** with Him.
- It put us in very real **danger** of judgement, needing **salvation**.
- It created **impurity** that meant we needed **sanctification**.
- Sin caused the complete **corruption** of our nature so that we needed **new birth**.
- And today we are considering how sin left us **dead** and in need of **quickness** or being **made alive**.

"*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins*", we have just read from Ephesians 2. Colossians 2:13 says something very similar. "*And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all your trespasses.*" Sin didn't just make us weak or damaged, it left us quite dead. It's often useful to go back to where things are first mentioned in the Bible, to get a clear understanding of a subject, and that often means the book of Genesis, which means 'beginnings'. In Genesis 2:16-17 we read, "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'*"

Bible teachers have interpreted the statement "*for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*" (Genesis 2:17) in at least three ways. Some read it to mean that on the day they ate of it, it became certain they would die, sometime in the future. This seems to me to stretch the meaning of the words a little too much. Others think that when Adam and Eve sinned, God graciously commuted the sentence from **immediate** death and deferred it for an indeterminate number of years. While this is possible, I think a third interpretation is correct. That is, that God was talking about spiritual death rather than physical death. Spiritual death means that we are "*dead in trespasses and sins*", as we have read in Ephesians 2:1. Spiritual death will ultimately result in physical death since Romans 5:12 tells us, "*Thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.*" In fact, spiritual death is what makes physical death so terrible, because it means we cannot pass into the presence of God. It seems an odd kind of death when we read a little further on in

our passage in Ephesians *"Who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience"*! (Ephesians 2:1-2). When you analyse it, you wouldn't normally expect those who are dead to be still walking! This clearly shows that when we are spiritually dead we are very much alive to everything in the world. We are under the influence of Satan, described here as *"the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience"* (Ephesians 2:2) The Apostle Paul makes clear he is not just counting unbelieving gentiles as spiritually dead, he includes himself and all other religious, but unconverted, Jews when he continues to say, *"among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others"* (Ephesians 2:3). So, apart from salvation, everybody, Jew and Gentile, religious and secular, is "dead in trespasses and sins".

This is catastrophic for our chances of improving ourselves, because it means we do not and cannot respond positively to God in any way. Elsewhere Paul states, *"There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God"* (Romans 3:10-11).

- We are not right (none righteous);
- We do not understand that we are not right; and
- We have no desire to seek after the One who is right.

Towards God, we are completely dead, while towards sin and temptation we are very much alive! We are far beyond the reach of education, self-improvement, reformation or any 'five step plan'. At the risk of stating the obvious, dead people cannot do anything for themselves. Which is why it is wonderful that what comes next is one of the marvellous *"But God..."* expressions of scripture, that completely transform our prospects. *"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ"* (Ephesians 2:4-5). Thank God, that when we could not make the slightest movement towards Him, He acted out of His rich mercy and great love; mercy and love that were shown towards us while we were still dead in our trespasses, and made us alive.

The matter of new birth, that was the subject last week, is set out in John 3:1-13. A little later on in John's Gospel, in John 5, we learn more about the topic of making alive. John 5 commences with the account of how Jesus healed an infirm man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (John 5:1-15). This man had been unable to walk for 38 years when Jesus' words, *"Rise, take up your bed and walk"* (John 5:8) appeared to put new life into the man's legs. The rulers objected to the man being healed and carrying his bed on the Sabbath day (John 5:10). Jesus responds to their opposition by setting out some of the boldest and clearest statements in the gospels of His oneness with the God who is His Father (see John 5:19-23).

Jesus speaks about how He will do greater works than the remarkable miracle He has just performed, saying, *"For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will"... 'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him Who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live'"*, (John 5:21, 24-25).

John 5:21 plainly states that both the Father and the Son are able to make alive. We might have understood this to have referred to Christ's power to raise the dead, but John 5:24-25 make plain that Jesus is talking about the work of salvation and the imparting of eternal life, not just the kind of physical raising of people like Lazarus that saw them die again some years later (see John 11:1-44).

John 5:24-25 also tell us how this life giving power operates today. We read, *"those who hear will live"*, and *"he who hears My word and believes in Him Who sent Me has everlasting life."* So this life comes by hearing Jesus Christ through His word, that is the gospel.

We will find that all of the really important actions of the New Testament are said to be the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, the resurrection of Jesus is said, in different scriptures, to be by the Lord's own power, by the power of the Father and also the work of the Spirit. John 10:17-18 makes plain Jesus will lay down His own life and take it up again Himself: *"I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."* Galatians 1:1 explicitly states that the Father acted in resurrection. *"Paul, an apostle ... through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead."*

Romans 1:4 assigns the action to the Holy Spirit. *"Declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."* These statements are not contradictory: they show that All three Persons of the Godhead were active in the vital work of Christ's resurrection. We have already seen that both Father and Son have the power to give life. In John 6:63 we read, *"It is the Spirit who gives life."* This emphasises the importance of this quickening, or giving life, that we are thinking about today.

1 Corinthians 15:45 says, *“The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”* Adam started out as dust and God breathed life into him, making him a living being (Genesis 2:7). That life was passed on only in the sense that Adam had children, grandchildren etc.. This was the way that Adam became the head of the human race. Adam could not breathe life into dust the way that God could. Jesus is the last Adam because He is the head of a completely new race, and there will be no further ‘Adams’ coming after Him! Unlike the first Adam, Jesus is truly life-giving: His children are given life, not by natural means, but by Jesus supernaturally giving life to the dead.

It is worth pointing out, as other speakers in this series may already have done (but repetition of truth is very useful!), that, although we are speaking about many different aspects of salvation in this series there is only **one** salvation. Not only that, we get all of these different elements at exactly the same moment: there is no concept of sequence or order in these things, as if new birth occurred sometime after justification, or redemption has to precede reconciliation. Imagine that one day I discover that a distant relative of mine has died and I have suddenly become Lord Britton! This is complete imagination; I have no titled relatives or aspirations to grandeur!

On this day, I become master of a great house with dozens of bedrooms and hundreds of acres of grounds. I also become the proud possessor of countless works of art, a fleet of vehicles and a private island! Now on day one, I may never have seen the house, let alone entered every room, or strolled through the grounds, or seen all the other possessions, but they are all mine. Indeed, they all became mine at exactly the same moment; the moment I inherited them. If the estates are grand enough it might take me years to get to know them thoroughly. The application is obvious. The very moment I accepted the Lord Jesus as my Saviour, the whole of this great salvation became mine. I was saved, sanctified, quickened etc., all at once. It might have been some time before I properly appreciated each element of what Christ had done. I might never fully understand all that He has done for me this side of heaven, but I got the whole thing, at once, in a single package.

Made alive ‘with Christ’

There is another important truth about this life giving work that is brought out in Ephesians 2:5-6. We were, *“made... alive together with Christ... and raised us up together, and made [to] sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* Notice the use of the word ‘together’ three times in that sentence. This teaches us two things:

The first is the most important, and that is our association with Christ in the life we are given. We are *“alive together with Christ.”* That is, we have the same life that He has. It is possible to imagine that we might have been given the life of angels, or some new kind of eternal life created especially for saved human beings. But in fact, Christ has given us His own life. This is such a wonderful life that we can now be *“made [to] sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* This is both something that we can enjoy now, and something we can look forward to enjoying, to its full extent, when we are physically at home with Christ in heaven in a day to come.

The second thing we should notice is that the word together also infers that we are united with other believers. We are often reminded that as Christians are connected with Christ so they are connected to each other. Indeed, the closer we are to Christ, the closer we will be to each other. It is a lovely thing that we do not enjoy the privileges that this life gives us in splendid isolation in this world any more than we will in heaven.

Made alive in the body

In fact, the New Testament also uses the expression we are considering today about our bodies. We can read in Romans 8:11, *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”* The phrase *“give life”* is here applied to our physical bodies rather than to spiritual life and death. The English word mortal derives, quite simply, from the Latin word ‘mort’, meaning death and ‘mortalis’, meaning subject to death. A mortal body is simply one that dies. In the future our mortal bodies will either be raised from the grave or, if we are alive at the Lord’s return, transformed by God’s power into bodies that are immortal, that is **not** subject to death. Paul writes about this in some detail in 1 Corinthians 15, which contains the following words in 1 Corinthians 15:54, *“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”*

Distinguishing resurrection from making alive

It is perhaps worth carefully distinguishing making alive from resurrection since the passage we quoted earlier, from John 5, seems to make a difference between them. The distinction is made in John 5:21 which says, *“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them.”* It is more clear in John 5:28-29. *“For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and*

those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." So there is a resurrection that is not about life, but for condemnation. It is stated that the wicked dead will be raised, and the word resurrection is used, but the purpose is not to give life, but judgement. For believers, the life and the resurrection are much more closely connected, though there does still appear to be a distinction. We have looked in some detail at how we are given spiritual life here and now, in this world. If we die, we shall have our part in the "*resurrection of life*" that will bring life, as we have just thought, to our mortal bodies, but our eternal, spiritual life will have begun many years before.

How we live this new life

Finally, we need to consider how we should live now that we have been transformed from being "*dead in trespasses and sins*" to being "*alive together with Christ*." Some verses from Peter's first epistle may help. "*That [we] should no longer should live the rest of [our] time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries, in regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason, the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. But the end of all things is at hand; therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins*", 1 Peter 4:2-8.

Peter begins by recounting how we used to live our lives before we became believers. It sounds rather like the description in Ephesians 2:1-6. He says plainly that we have spent quite enough of our lives in this way, and it is now appropriate for us to behave quite differently. Those who continue to live in that way, prove that they have not been made alive, and will come under the judgement of the of "*the living and the dead*." But we who **have** been made alive should, "*live according to God*." We should live out the new lives that have been given to us. This is especially important, Peter says, as we are close to the end of all things.

The contemplation of the fact that the world, and everything in it, will soon disappear, should be enough to make us serious and watchful in our prayers! But it should also cause us to have fervent love for other believers. We thought earlier about the fact that we have our life together with Christ and together with other Christians. We also pondered how the life we have is the same life as Christ Himself. Therefore, if Christ loves us fervently, which He certainly does, we should have the same kind of love for our fellow believers.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the wonderful salvation that we have through Your death and resurrection. We give thanks that You loved us even when we were dead in our sins. When we could make no movement at all towards You, we were shown mercy and love. Please increase our understanding, and appreciation, of all that You have done for us, and so motivate us to live out faithfully the life You have given to us. Amen.

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