

Dying to Live

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- [0 : 0 0] I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking this morning about proofs of the resurrection. Those are important. What Christianity believes, I'll start with this, throw this one in here, is that the resurrection is not just one truth of many truths, but it is the truth that kind of names all other truths.
- All other truths fall under this one thing. Because Paul himself says, if Christ isn't risen, then guess what, guys? You are wasting a beautiful Sunday morning.
- But if Christ is risen, then you should be here. And this is good, and it changes everything. You know, historians, Christian and non-Christian historians, the vast consensus is that there was actually a guy named Jesus, and he actually gathered 12 disciples, and he was crucified on a cross.
- Pontius Pilate was the governor at this time, and he actually died, and he was buried in a tomb. And Christian and non-Christian historians will also agree that the disciples thought that they saw the risen Christ.
- Any credible non-Christian historian will agree with that. They will just disagree that it was actually, they'll either say Jesus didn't really rise, they just thought that they saw him rise, or we just can't know.
- [1 : 2 6] But they'll actually agree to that. And one of the interesting things in the Bible, as you go through, is that it doesn't mind being frankly honest about the truth of this, and what happens if it's not true.
- And if you read through the New Testament, I don't know if you ever noticed, sometimes it names these people, and you're like, who's Cleopas? Right? Like, who cares?
- There's this guy named Richard Baucom who talks about Jesus and the eyewitnesses. He says what they're doing, what the gospel writers are doing, is they're naming their eyewitnesses. And all of the New Testament was written within the lifetime after Jesus died and rose.
- And so they're saying, don't believe me, go ask Cleopas. You know him. He like worships in the church in Jerusalem. They're doing this again and again. And of all the disciples who thought that they saw the risen Christ, 11 of them died for this.
- Jesus' half-brother James, the leader in the church in Jerusalem, in the beginning, he also dies for it. The Bible says that his family didn't believe in him at first, but they changed their mind because they see the risen Christ.
- [2 : 3 6] The one disciple who didn't die for it was exiled to an island of Patmos, John. Interesting thing, right, for them all to kind of get their stories straight and just kind of, maybe we saw an apparition or not, but we're all going to do this and there is not one single evidence, not one writing of somebody going, hey, this was a hoax.
- We made it all up. I am about to die. I take it back. It's not true. There's reason to believe in the resurrection.

But here's the thing. Because the resurrection really happened, it means it's about real life. I was doing youth ministry in Florida. A few years ago, more years than I'd like to admit. And I remember there's this 17-year-old girl who's a student and in our youth group.

And she said to me, in this moment of just wonderful honesty, she looked and she said, Nate, listen, I believe in God. I know Jesus died for me, but sometimes I ask, so what?

That's a great question. So what? That's what Paul asks and tries to answer in our passage.

[3 : 42] Jesus has died and risen. So what? That's what Christians do. We like to ask big questions.

It's like we can hang out, but we can't just hang out. We want to ask big questions. Questions. I remember the first time that I had a meeting with my campus minister and the campus fellowship I was a part of in university.

We went and we both got cheeseburgers because that's what Americans do. We eat cheeseburgers for every single meal of the day. And we were eating cheeseburgers and we were having small talk and he was getting to know me and all of a sudden, he looked at me and he said, Nate, what do you struggle with?

What do you struggle with? It's like nobody had ever asked such a forward and blatant question to me. What do you struggle with? In my mind, I'm like, I'm struggling with this conversation, my man.

Like, let's just keep eating cheeseburgers. We had a good thing going on here. But in reality, I was struggling with a dozen things. Struggling with school and grades and what I wanted to do with my life.

[4 : 49] Struggling with relationships and friendships and where do I fit in. Struggling with my face and was racked with doubt. What do you struggle with? What do you struggle with?

It's good to ask these big questions. Paul likes asking big questions. What do people struggle with? What is your life all about? And the answer in our passage that Paul gives is that we struggle to believe that life is about dying and rising in Christ.

Let me pray for us and we'll get deeper into this text. God, would you rend the heavens and come down. By the power of the Spirit would you make your word come alive so that we might die and in dying find life.

We pray this in the name of our resurrected Savior, Jesus. Amen. Amen. So many of us struggle to know what things are worth.

I was reading an article some years ago and it was about the psychology of prices on things that are sold. And it told this story, there's this kind of like kitchenware store high-end thing in America called Williams-Sonoma.

[6 : 16] I don't know if it's over here. Do we have those here? Williams-Sonoma. Well, anyways, they're struggling to sell this bread mixer which cost \$279, like 220 pounds.

And they couldn't sell it and it wasn't making any money. So do you know what they did? They built a deluxe, even more deluxe bread mixer and put it next to the bread mixer that cost \$279 and they put a price tag on it for \$479.

And you know what happened? The sales for the \$279 one doubled. Everybody saw all of a sudden looked and goes, that looks about the same. I think I found a deal.

We struggle to know what things are actually worth. I don't know if you know this, theaters do this. How do you get people to buy the seats that aren't actually the best seats?

You know what you do? You charge more money for them. And we click it and we buy it because we think it must be. If the world says it costs that, it must be worth a ton.

[7 : 20] We struggle to know what things are actually worth. What the world says is valuable isn't always valuable. Do you know what Jesus is worth?

Paul, he's doing some accounting in our passage. He has these two columns, right? He's got a gain column and he's got a loss column. And what he says is he's struggled his whole life to realize what goes in the gain column and what goes in the loss column but something has happened that's rocked his world.

He met the risen Christ and it flips everything around. And he starts to see what things are really worth. He's struggled his whole life with this but now he's starting to see what life is truly about.

Got an outline for our message and it's just two points and it's this. The first one, from gain to loss and then second point, from loss to gain. Got it? From gain to loss, from loss to gain.

First thing, from gain to loss. If you have your Bible in front of you, look at it here. Paul says in verse 2, he says, look out for the dogs. It's not a nice thing.

[8 : 27] He's not like, hey, what's up dog? It's not a nice thing to call somebody a dog at that time. They didn't have pet dogs that you spent like 75 pounds a month feeding them and they have like their own health insurance policy.

You know who you are, right? No, no, no. Dogs would be mongrels who would kind of scavenge the streets. So it's not a nice thing. Some people at that time, you're wondering, why is Paul using that then, right?

Some people at that, Jewish people at that time, they would refer to Gentiles and to Jews who deconverted from their faith, who left the faith as dogs. In fact, he's talking about a specific group called the Judaizers.

That's what he's referring to. The Judaizers were this heretical group in the early church, right? And they would refer to Gentile Christians, those who weren't circumcised, as dogs.

And so Paul is flipping the term around in a rather shocking way. You see, this group, the Judaizers, they insisted, they're like, okay, we can get on board with this Jesus thing, but in order for a Gentile to follow Jesus, to become a Christian, they'd have to become Jewish, which would mean you have to be circumcised.

[9 : 47] And not just that, but in doing that, the way that you're going to be okay, the way that you're going to be saved is through performing the works of the law. It's through your doing that you're going to be saved.

Okay? You have to perform. You have lots, you have to have lots of things in your gain column. Otherwise, you're a loser and you're in the loss column. And so they would call, refer to others as dogs.

And what would they refer to themselves as? Of, they would say they're of the circumcision. Because they insisted that it's through circumcision that you knew that you were righteous and that you were okay.

Now, here's the thing. In the Old Testament, circumcision wasn't a bad thing. It's actually a thing that God commanded and it was supposed to remind people, right, that he'd set them apart.

And through the shedding of blood that he sets them apart. It's a reminder of his grace and his redemption, right? But the Judaizers, you see, they're twisting it. And they're not only insisting the Gentiles had to become Jews to be saved, but that to be saved you needed to depend on your performance.

[10 : 54] Isn't that how so many of us operate? If you live your life like you're amassing some resume, some CV, you're putting all of your merits and your accomplishments, things for people to see on the CV.

That's literally what we have to do in this world in order to get into university, to get a job, to get into social clubs, right? You have to show, this is why I belong.

Here's my accomplishments. Here's my gain column. Is it enough? Will you let me in? Pretty please? What do we struggle with?

What do you struggle with? So many of us struggle to know if we're okay. Because we want to be on the inside, right? We want to be on the inside. We want to know that we're right.

If I can get into university, you're on the outside. Show me why you should get in. Now you're on the inside. If you want that job, you're on the outside. You want to come in? You want to get paid well?

[11 : 54] You want to have this job? Oh, you've got to show me why. And Paul, he startlingly says that all these Judaizers are doing and living this way and they're insisting on circumcision to be saved.

He says, verse 2, they're mutilating their flesh. And what's more, look at verse 3. He says, the true circumcision, remember the Judaizers, what would they call themselves?

We are of the circumcision. He says, Paul says, the true circumcision are those who put no confidence in the flesh, meaning those who don't depend on their works, but on the Holy Spirit and being in Christ Jesus.

And see, here's the thing. Paul used to think like these guys. He was just like them. So he says in verse 4, hey, you want to play the confidence in the flesh game?

Let's go. Let's see if you can beat me. And so he starts to listen, he starts to list his game column. He starts to show all the accomplishments on his CV. Here's my resume, he says.

[12 : 57] If anybody should have confidence in the flesh, look at verse 5 and 6. He was circumcised on the eighth day, meaning he was born a Jew and observed the Jewish law.

He's not a Johnny come lately. He's of the people of Israel, literally meaning of the race of Israel. He is the real McCoy of the tribe of Benjamin.

The tribe of Benjamin, the Old Testament, was one of two tribes that didn't abandon and was actually faithful to the house of David. Ooh, he's in the good tribe. A Hebrew of the Hebrews at that time.

Paul didn't grow up in Jerusalem, moved there later. He grew up in Tarsus and Cilicia, which would be further up, away from Palestine. And you see, at that time, the Jews, they would be kind of dispersed throughout the Roman Empire.

And what happens when the further you move away from home, you start to forget your roots? So there's a lot of people who would kind of be semi-quasi-Jewish, but they would actually be more in their culture.

[13 : 59] They'd be Greco-Roman. They'd be Greek. They wouldn't even speak Hebrew. Not Paul. As for the law of Pharisee, he got a PhD from Pharisee University.

He went down to Jerusalem and he studied in the best synagogues under this massively important, esteemed rabbi named Gamaliel. Woo!

He did? You got your PhD under Gamaliel? Wow, this guy must be something. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. He actually thought he was protecting the faith. As to righteousness under the law, blameless.

See, the Pharisees, they took law-keeping very, very seriously. If you looked at their life and you looked at your life, you'd be like, ah, they probably keep the rules way better than I do.

In fact, they cared so much about the rules, they would add to God's rules just in case. Here's the thing. Some of those things that Paul says, it's not bad to be Jewish and to want to keep God's law.

[15 : 01] But you see, Paul saw these things as making him superior. Superior. Making him an insider. These are the reasons why God should love him. Here's my gain column.

God, accept me. Let's imagine Paul was here today. Paul didn't live 2,000 years ago, but he lived today. And not just anywhere, but he lived in Scotland and he grew up in the free church.

What would he say? Let's just have an imagination here. Maybe he would say this. I'm Paul. I was baptized on the eighth day, you know, the right way. Of the people of Scotland.

Of the free church. In the line of John Knox, a Presbyterian of the Presbyterians. As to the law, I studied at ETS under Donald MacLeod. As to zeal, perfect in prayer meeting attendance.

As to righteousness under the law, I memorized the Westminster shorter catechism and longer catechism. Now, don't hear what I'm not saying.

[16 : 02] I don't want any angry emails after this. I'm not trying to besmirch the good name of Donald MacLeod. Presbyterianism and prayer meetings and memorizing catechisms are good things.

Keep doing those things. They just can't be the thing that you put in your gain column. If you put your confidence in the flesh, meaning in your own performance, if your answer to the question is, what is life all about?

It's amassing this beautiful spiritual resume. And trust in your own morality. Paul wants to have a word with you. He wants to have a word with you.

And maybe you're sitting here and you're like, I don't know what ETS is and I don't know what you're talking about. That's not my struggle. Like, I haven't been to a prayer meeting in a couple years. I must be fine.

That's not the point, right? Maybe you're not tempted to boast about your religious accomplishments. But what are you tempted, here's my question, what are you tempted to put into your gain column, to put your confidence in?

[17 : 06] Is it your wealth? Your educational achievements? Your beauty? The friend circles you run in?

Which area of town you live in? Your perfect grammar? Your parenting? Your ability to kick a football really, really hard and aim it right where you want it to go?

And your kindness? What happened to change Paul's accounting? To go from the gain column to loss column, to switch them, to scrub them, to start over.

He pivots in verse 7. He said, whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Paul met the crucified and risen Lord on the road to Damascus in Acts chapter 9.

And all of a sudden he looked at his life and all the things that he had been doing and he says, uh-uh. I've got to start over. I've got to die.

[18 : 09] All these accomplishments and Paul realized that apart from Jesus, he's just spiritually bankrupt. So Paul, he's listed all these things that he thought was gain, things that would mask a sparkling spiritual CV and now he counts them as loss.

So he goes from gain to loss. Now second point, from loss to gain. Paul, he does this pivot in verse 7. There's this new accounting that takes place, this different gain and loss columns.

So he says in verses 7 and 8, if you've got it in front of you, look down at it. Whatever gain I had, I count it as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything.

Everything's a lot of things, right? Here to make these really deep insights for you. Everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

How can he say this? Because Jesus is risen. One book I was reading recently, it talks about how the resurrection, it kind of wakes us up to a new reality, a new way of living in the world and the illustration the guy used is, have you ever, whether it's a hotel room or you've traveled to see family or friends and you're far away, you're not in your own room and you wake up in the morning and you're like, it takes you a second, right?

[19 : 32] Where am I? What day is it? Is it Saturday or am I late for a meeting? What's going on? And it takes you a moment and you have to kind of look around and reorient yourself to reality in order to be able to get up and know what you're supposed to do with the day.

And that's what it's like to come and to meet the risen Christ. That this changes everything. It's a new way of seeing reality. You have to reorient yourself to reality if you believe that Christ is risen.

And so many of us, we live on this pendulum of life, right? Swinging back and forth at one end, you know, one day we're worthless and no good and why should anybody love us much less God and then we swing to the other side and we're like, yeah, no, actually, I'm pretty okay.

At least I'm better than that guy or gal over there. And the life, the pendulum of life swings back and forth and the gospel is not the pendulum stops in the middle.

And you should kind of like feel like you're a little bit rubbish and then also actually think a little bit better, you're better than some people. No! It's this whole new way of living.

[20 : 42] It's this whole new thing. It's death and resurrection together. And so Paul, he's awoken to this whole new world and he looks at his old CV, his old gain column and he counts it as loss.

And not just as loss, what does he call it in verse 8? He counts it as rubbish. Now, our English translators are far too timid with that word because if we were to try to find a better equivalent word in English, it would offend us.

Old King James Version gets it closer. It calls it dung. Paul looks at all the things that he thought used to make him okay and he says, it's a pile of scubala.

That's the Greek word. You can look it up. The real deal is knowing Christ. And it's not just knowing Christ. Do you hear what he says? It's the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

Not many things get better and better the more you get to know them. Jesus does. A Christian is someone who wants to know Christ more and more and the way to know him is in dying and rising.

[22 : 00] You know, at one time, Paul in his life, he's like, hey, my synagogue sermons, they were podcasted and platformed and now he's writing the book of Philippians from prison.

And he's going to lose everything and he will lose anything if it means he gets to gain Christ and to be found in him. There's a few examples in the New Testament of church of people who follow Jesus being called Christians.

It's not a bad thing. But Paul is someone who never actually uses that term. The way that Paul refers to somebody who is a Christian in all of his letters is in this way.

Somebody who is in Christ. In Christ. Right? What does it mean to be in Christ? Well, many things, but one of them being what Paul says in verse 9.

He says that he has a righteousness that isn't his, but one that comes through faith in Christ. If you are a Christian, if you have put your faith in the dying and rising of Jesus, you are as righteous as Jesus is.

[23 : 12] Because you're in him. Jesus is not any bit more righteous than you are because the only righteousness you have is found in him.

It's his righteousness. There's this good word, he imputes it to you. He reckons it to you. Anybody use the word impute this morning? I imputed the granola into my yogurt this morning.

No. Such a good word, though. It's so much better to trust in Christ's righteousness than your own. Not to go into it.

Trust me, I know. I know. Lived like Paul. Wanted everybody to know I was okay. The reason when that campus minister said, what are you struggling with? Well, I couldn't get anything out even though there was a thousand things in my life that I was struggling with because I had no idea how to talk about that.

Because it was all about gain. All about showing myself to be okay until that got ripped away and all I had was Christ's righteousness left.

[24 : 16] And do you know what? It was enough. And let me make this explicit. To know Jesus is to know the one who is crucified and who is risen.

And so if we are to know him, if you want to know Jesus, you know him in his death and in his resurrection. It's why Jesus says, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. He also says about his own life, truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, what does it do? It bears much fruit. It grows. Farmers don't have a big bag of grain sitting in their home and being like, check out my bag of grain.

It's not what it's for. It's meant to be planted in the field and it goes under. It gets buried and that's what brings life. Paul's saying that is not just what you believe, but that is what you live into.

[25 : 23] That's how Jesus brings salvation and that's how we grow in knowing him. That's why Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4, he says, we're always carrying around in our bodies the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in us.

What a weird thing to say. Right? What are you doing today? I'm just carrying Jesus' death in my body. What? Just walking around. Jesus' death in my body.

Why? So that his life may shine through me. If you're a Christian, you don't do a thousand things. You do one thing in a thousand ways and it's this.

you die and you rise. In our marriages, in our parenting, in our friendships, in our witness, in our inner life, in our meetings, in our service, we die and rise.

What is your life all about? May I suggest that the answer ought to be my life is about knowing Christ in his death and resurrection.

[26 : 30] We're good presbyters. Remember the shorter catechism? Chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Yes. And the way to do that is to know Christ in his dying and rising.

In our worship, we sing and glory in the dying and rising of Christ. In our prayers, we pray in the name of the risen Christ.

In our fellowship, we share together our life is in Christ. The one who has died and the one who is risen. When we take the Lord's Supper, we look and we remember the dying and rising of Christ and we taste it.

In our prayer life, we wrestle to die and to rise. This isn't an optional feature, y'all, for like super Christians out there. This is what it means to be in Christ, to follow Jesus, is to die and to rise.

Everything is either on the basis of your life, your gain column, or on the basis of his. It's either all up to you or you die.

[27 : 47] and you rise in Christ. Do you want to know the power of resurrection?

That sounds good, doesn't it? You want some power in your life? You want the power of resurrection? Heck yeah, I do. How can I? We've got to die. Verse 10, that I may share that I may share in his sufferings becoming like him in his death.

If you're in Christ, you don't go through any disappointment or trial where Christ doesn't go with you. And now, you're as one writer puts it, you're caught up in reenacting the most magnificent story ever told, the gospel.

I'm not just believing the gospel, I'm becoming like the gospel. Let me be clear, you and I are not the gospel, but this is the pattern of the Christian life. Paul says it a chapter earlier, you can go home and read it this afternoon in Philippians 2.

He's encouraging the church towards humility and what does he say? Hey, remember Jesus? He humbled himself. He came down. He didn't cling to all his divine prerogatives.

[29 : 07] He became a servant. And he didn't just serve, but he went to the cross. He died. So God exalted him and gave him a name above every other name that at the name of Jesus every nation, every tongue will bow and will declare that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

This is what it means to be a Christian, to die and to rise in Christ, not in your own power. You're going to find that if you follow Jesus into the world, you're going to be reenacting his sufferings.

Just think. Always tell the truth. Turn the other cheek. Show grace. You are inviting suffering. But that is where you will find the power of resurrection.

Because in that moment you are depending on the Holy Spirit, the one who raised Jesus from the dead and his life, the life of our risen Christ will come to you, in you, and through you, to the glory of God the Father.

Listen, no one is resurrected who hasn't first died. We get weakened so that we can taste Christ.

[30 : 21] I wonder if for some of you, even right now, Christ is weakening you. A famous Welsh preacher, Martin Lloyd-Jones, he tells the story of a meeting with all these older ministers and they were around, they were gathering to talk and to pray and the group started to talk about this younger minister who was so gifted in preaching and they started to say, he's got amazing gifts and we're kind of hoping that it's through his preaching that God is going to bring revival.

And then this older, wiser minister stopped and he said, that's all well and good. But you know what? I don't think he's been humbled yet.

And it hit Lloyd-Jones that there is knowing and then there is knowing. That to be truly brought low is the place where God wants you to be because then it is not you.

There is no mistaking it. It is not your own power but it is his. It's in him and when you're weak he's strong.

What does this mean for us? I think it means this. I think it means our evangelism. You know, we're in part two congregations.

[31 : 39] One now. We want to reach out to those around us. Our evangelism is going to be utterly ineffective as long as we refuse to really share our own struggles and what it means to die and rise in Christ.

[32 : 48] Because Jesus has forgiven me and Jesus is worth it. Why? If you're here and you are a Christian, you put your faith in the doing, the dying, the rising of Jesus, nothing less than a resurrection, a spiritual resurrection by the power of the Holy Spirit, the one who raised Jesus from the dead.

What have you had to die to in order to live? That is where the power of resurrection will start to take shape. Revival comes through repentance. And if we won't die to our pride and to our comfort, our witnesses are dying and rising.

Because Jesus has forgiven me and Jesus is worth it. Why? If you're here and you are a Christian, you put your faith in the doing, the dying, the rising of Jesus, nothing less than a resurrection, a spiritual resurrection by the power of the Holy Spirit, the one who raised Jesus from the dead.

It's dying and rising. It's like, we need to wrap it up. That thing's gonna distract all of us. I just say this. It's not just dying. It's not just... Certain denominations want to just emphasize it's dying.

What do you struggle with? What's in your gain column and your loss column? What's your life all about? May I be so bold as to say, you need to die.

You need to die in Christ. You've been trying to live. You're struggling. Asking, what's your life all about? It's about living, right?

You don't want to die to the things that hurt you in the past. But if you cling to all that stuff, you're already dead.

[35 : 13] Resurrection life starts now. Eternal life starts right now. What are you struggling with? What's your life all about? Christ who died lives again.

Let me pray for us. Father, would you help us to die, to be crucified with Christ by faith so that we can actually start to live.

To live not in our own strength and performance, but to live in resurrection power. Help us to be a people who can say that we want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and even to share in his sufferings.

Because where you are, we want to be. Because where you call us, we want to go.
Because what doors you open for us, we want to walk through. And we can't do this in our
own strength.

So come, Holy Spirit, and work in us something that we can accomplish on our own. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

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Amen. Amen.