

Journey to Pentecost

D.O.A.

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Dr. Paul said it most clearly. He was willing to be the diagnostician who delivered the bad news.

“Bad news?” you ask. “But I thought Paul preached the *Good News*.” That’s true. Paul did bring Good News, as much as any man ever has. But one thing that motivated him to do so was the Bad News.

The Bad News

The Bad News was something he had personally experienced for most of his life, so he knew whereof he spoke. He described his pain this way:

Philippians 3

⁵ I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. ⁶ I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

*⁷ I once thought these things were valuable, but **now I consider them worthless** because of what Christ has done. ⁸ Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, **counting it all as garbage**, so that I could gain Christ ⁹ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God’s way of making us right with himself depends on faith.*

The Bad News is this: For all of the religiousness of humankind—in Paul’s case, laudable authenticity, knowledge, and self-discipline, according to the Hebrew Scriptures—religiousness is *worthless*, garbage. It cannot save you. It may make your behavior more moral, but it cannot make you better; it cannot make your heart clean, or your judgment pure. In fact, the notion that it will is a deception of major proportions that leads to a rude awakening and eternal expulsion from the presence of our Creator. The Bad News is that Hell is real, even for good people!

Some people speak of “the human condition.” Well, the human condition, from God’s point of view, is desperate and devastated.

Z World

Zombies are one of the fads of youth culture today, producing dozens of books and movies. Zombies are real. But they don't look anything like the ones in the movies, and they don't behave much like the ones in books.

The notion of zombies originated in Haiti. They are called the "living dead"—dead persons who have been physically revived by black magic to function as robotic slaves of their sorcerer master—an animated corpse. This belief has its roots in traditions brought to Haiti by enslaved Africans, and their subsequent experiences in the New World—something of a metaphor for the history of slavery in Haiti.

I said, zombies are real. Actually, Paul said it first.

Colossians 2

³ **You were dead** because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

¹⁶ So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷ For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, ¹⁹ and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

²⁰ You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, ²¹ "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"? ²² Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. ²³ These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.

Curiously, according to the tradition, a zombie could be saved by feeding them salt. (I'll just let you think about that one for a bit.)

The bottom line here is that you and I—all of us—were spiritually dead from birth, until God the Holy Spirit makes us alive.

Titus 3

³ *Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.*

⁴ *But when God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, ⁵ he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, **giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.** ⁶ He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior.*

In other words, we were D.O.A.—dead on arrival. Dead—not just weak, or ailing, or critically ill, or comatose, but DEAD. We were dead, without God and without hope in the world (Ephesians 2:12). And the only source of real life for any of us is the wonderful Holy Spirit. He was the “Spirit of life” in Genesis, chapter 2, when God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the “breath of life,” and He is still the “Spirit of life” who frees us in Romans, chapter 8.

Last week, I told you that the Holy Spirit is WITH us, with *every person* on the planet, using the Scriptures to reveal Jesus and lead everyone to salvation and newness of life through faith in Christ. But Jesus offers us more!

More Than Life

John 14

¹⁵ *“If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate (just like Me), who will never leave you (He’s here to stay!).*

¹⁷ *He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into (not just to an understanding, but to an experience of and a possession of) all truth. The world cannot receive him (it is necessary to receive Him), because it isn’t looking for him (what is the world looking for?) and doesn’t recognize him (why can’t the world recognize Him?). But you know him, because he lives with you now (we discussed this last week) and later will be in you (this week’s topic).*

Jesus offers us more! “More than life?!” you ask. As a matter of fact, yes!

“What could be ‘more than life’?” you persist. *Aha!* You see, that’s just how dead we truly have been—we can’t even imagine what “more than life” could be.

“In you” is life, and *more* than life.

We are so accustomed to the kind of life that is little more than mere existence. Go to work, come home, eat, entertain ourselves, sleep, then do it all over again. We spice it up with as much entertainment as we can—celebrations, adventures, travel, learning, experience—but to what end?

In the end, we will all be too soon and too suddenly gone. And all that we have accumulated is handed off to someone else, who did not earn it.

“In you” is *more* than life!

How does the Holy Spirit get IN us?

Another Birth

John 3

⁶ *Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.*

⁷ *So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'*

All Christians, at some point in their lives, were non-Christians, who required a new birth.

Early followers of Jesus were called “people of the Way.” This name was given because of Jesus’ teaching that there are two ways in our lifetime: the broad way and the narrow way. One of them leads to destruction; one of them leads to life.

The spiritually dead, like mindless zombies, follow the broad way of the world (they buy into and slavishly follow the values and customs of the secular culture). This is why Paul counseled us, “Don’t be conformed to that way of living.” He said, *“Instead, let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”* (Romans 12:2)

The spiritually dead prefer the way of disobedience (rebellion against God’s leadership, self-government, and selfishness).

It is the Holy Spirit—the so-precious Holy Spirit—who regenerates, who gives new birth, who gives life eternal.

God alone can make something out of nothing and bring life out of death.

New birth is like Lazarus arising from his tomb—directly, at the word of Jesus.

“Come forth!” He shouts. And the dead begins to live again.

“Unbind him and set him free,” He commands. And more-than-life begins.

A new birth is only a beginning, but an all-important one. It’s the beginning of an everlasting adventure. It’s the starting point for spiritual growth.

Free Indeed

Like Paul, I used to think I was growing spiritually... until I was born again, and then I realized that all of my so-called “spirituality” was just zombie activity; I was dead on my

feet, dead in my skin. I was alive to my own ideas, but dead to the real and living God.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for setting me free! I used to be free to do what I wanted. Now I am free to do what I ought. Thank you for coming INTO me!

Paul wrote, *“Even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him to **reveal his Son in me** so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles.”* (Galatians 1:13)

People used to look at me and see... ME, sometimes Good Me and, sometimes, Bad Me... but always, just ME, a whole lot of me.

Now, when those who know Jesus—who recognize Jesus—look at me... sometimes, they see Jesus, a little bit of Jesus. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for revealing Christ IN me and helping me grow. Thank You for bearing spiritual fruit in my life.

I call you, this morning, to an opportunity of decision.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit has ALREADY come INTO you. Have you been letting Him lead? Or, have you been keeping Him in a box until a special need arises? He wants to be your steering wheel, not your spare tire!

I'm asking you to walk away from the crowd. Get off the broad way today. Kneel before the Savior today and crown Him Lord of your life.

What about you? Have you been born again? Has life-with-God begun for you? Or, is it still all about life-with-you?

I give you an opportunity... I ask you to make a decision... I ask you to receive a new birth. Come, invite the Holy Spirit to come INTO your heart and life.

Respond to this amazing news today, and God will transport you from death to everlasting life.