

## It's Good To Be Alive (#38)

1 Corinthians 15: 12-34

**As we look back over the weeks and months of study in 1 Corinthians, we are reminded of Paul's teaching concerning the God of our salvation.** Paul has shown us God's faithfulness, His mercy, His patience, His love, and surely every one of us can say, "It is good to be alive!" **That phrase usually expresses delight in some experience which is here today and gone tomorrow. But here it has a deeper significance, and is far more permanent in this connection. I chose it to imply that our relationship with God is one which will last for all eternity.**

**What does it really mean to be alive in the spiritual sense of the word?** From our text tonight, I want to bring to your attention three suggestions concerning the real significance of life in Christ: what it means to be a Christian and what is involved in living the Christian life.

**In the first place, a Christian is one who is implanted in the power of God.** Look at verses 21-22, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." **Here are two distinct circles, two spheres of existence: *in Adam* and *in Christ*.** There is no possibility of a third. Everyone who has ever been born has chosen to live in one or the other of these two circles, and there is no neutral ground.

**Implanted by our natural birth into the nature of Adam, we can be implanted by the miracle of the second birth into the nature of Christ. You can be born in Adam's circle, living and dying there.** Or we can, by the miracle of regeneration of the Holy Spirit, be made alive for evermore in Christ's circle.

**"As in Adam all die;" that takes us back to the very beginning of history when one man, our first father, the head of the human race, refused to accept the only limitation put on his liberty, namely, the sovereignty of God.** He had been warned that rejection of God's authority would mean loss of his freedom, and he would become a slave to death. He had been told that if he wanted to enjoy freedom, it could only be along the path of submission.

**But he took the reins in his own hands, defied God's authority, and promptly died.** You might be thinking, "But he really did not just die." Yes, he did! **The devil said he wouldn't, but he did, for at the moment of his act of**

**rebellion he died spiritually. His relationship with God, the only source of spiritual life and power was cut off immediately.** The marks of death grew upon him, mentally and physically; there came into his life fear, the sense of sin, the futile attempt to justify himself, the attempt to hide from God, and then later jealousy and murder.

**And so, the story began, and has continued the tragic breakdown of human life at every level, out of proper relationship with God.** Each of us, by the simple law of heredity, has become involved in the tragedy; as Paul says in Romans 5:15, "by the disobedience of one the many were made sinners."

**It is true that we were not actually there when it happened, but we have all supported it personally by taking sides collectively and individually with that rebellion against God. We have all enthroned the capital "I" where God should be.** We have all put self in the center instead of Jesus Christ. **Consequently resistance to the will of God becomes natural, and sin in attitude and in action inevitable.** The logical conclusion is, of course, that "in Adam all die."

**The marks of death are upon each of us today: the stains of sin, of hatred, of all the decaying fruit of the self-life.** And unless we move out of the circle in which we were born, into the circle in which we are born again by grace, we will go on in rebellion, not only through this life, but also through eternity in hell!

That is one stream of life, but here is the other: "so in Christ shall all be made alive." Notice verse 21, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." **Here is heaven's counterattack, a full-scale offensive, the great invasion into the realm of sin and death.** Man, made like God, has chosen the mastery of the devil and become like him. Now God is made like man in order to rescue man from the domain of Satan, and restore again the beauty and loveliness of the character of God which rebellion has destroyed. **Because it was a man who rebelled, it is only by a man that the situation can be recovered, the lost ground retrieved. That is the only way that the justice of God's throne can be maintained.**

**Of course, it was not necessary for God to do this.** Justice would have been completely satisfied if the whole human race had been allowed to spend eternity in hell! But God is not only just, He is loving, and love is only satisfied when it reaches out to seek and to save that which is lost, as seen in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

**So Jesus came, the seed of the woman, to bruise the head of the serpent, to launch an attack upon the kingdom of darkness because those He loved were helpless slaves to the enemy.** There was nothing attractive in the men for whom Christ died, but He took up the fight alone in hostile territory with not a single individual or circumstance to assist Him. He accepted the path of submission to the will of God. It was to be the only path of freedom for Him, as it is always the only path of freedom for any individual. He chose it deliberately, knowing it meant that He would have to be made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

**For the first time, the kingdom of death was invaded by a Man in whose life there was not sin at all.** The Lord Jesus stepped down from the throne of the cross, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without guilt, and attacked death itself. Peter said in Acts 2:24, from his Pentecostal sermon, that Jesus was alive "because it was not possible that he should be held by (death)." So as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, but Romans 5:19 says, "by the obedience of one shall many were made righteous."

**The ground has been recovered and the territory restored.** And it now becomes possible for the human race to be put in right relationship with God, righteously forgiven and sin atoned for by the blood of Jesus that was shed on Calvary. As Head of a new race, Jesus Christ won back for us the privilege of freedom and life by accepting the principle of obedience and submission.

**The question tonight is this: in which circle are you living right now? Have you stepped from death in Adam to life in Christ?** This is not something that happens by growth as the years go by, but it is the crisis of a certain moment in your life. **Submission to sin means slavery; submission to Christ means deliverance. Upon the man who is not a Christian are the marks of death.** Upon the Christian are the marks of life, as seen in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death."

When you see a gigantic jet plane sitting on the runway, you may well stare and think, "How does a thing like that ever get off the ground at all?" **Loaded with more than a hundred and their baggage, sitting like a great dead weight on the ground, how can it ever fly? But soon, as you watch, the engines begin to whistle and whine, and that huge aircraft roars down the runway, screaming its way off earth into the sky.** Has the law of gravity ceased to operate? **No, the law of gravity is unable to control that plane because of the mighty power of a new law of aerodynamics, a new authority that lifts it up against the gravity, which would pull it down. The law of sin and death has not ceased to operate,**

but there is a new law in Christ's death and resurrection, which overcomes the power of the old law.

**The second implication of being a Christian is that we are involved in the program of God (verses 23-28).** Brought to life in Christ, the Christian discovers that now he is part of God's plan of redemption. What a great sweep Paul takes here in his theme! He goes back to the beginning of all history in verse 22, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Then he says, "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits" and that goes back over two thousand years.

**All the program of God's salvation for us depends upon that fact.** If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then everything else is a fraud. That is the argument in verses 14-19 which Paul is not afraid to face, and I paraphrase it this way, "If Christ is not risen, then our faith is empty, our preaching useless, and he has failed to deal with sin at all. If he has not been raised from the tomb, we are still in our sins and all his promises are absolutely untrue. He is a fraud, an imposter, and his ashes are buried somewhere in Palestine today. There is no hope beyond the grave for anybody, and those who have died professing faith in him are just left there forever." And in verse 19 he says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." **If it is not true that Jesus is alive, you had better be anything but a Christian. If you are a professing Christian, and Jesus is not actually living today, you have the worst of everything in life.**

"But he is risen!" says Paul. **The evidence is indisputable, and Christ is the first fruits.** Then notice that as he sweeps over the centuries, instead of looking back to that day when Christ rose from the dead, he looks ahead and says, "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." **There is going to be another resurrection day when all who go through the centuries have submitted their lives to the will of God and lived on the principle of submission to the sovereignty of Christ, will be raised from the dead also.**

As if Paul could not stop there because his theme is running away with him, he continues in verses 24-25, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." **That is the greatest glimpse into the ultimate future that the Bible gives to us.** Paul goes further there than any other portion of Scripture. It is thrilling to know that Jesus indeed does reign now! **Amid all the storms and upheavals, Christ is still in command. But on that day, He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father!**

**There is only one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, our great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us. And He will continue to do so until His church is complete, until this new humanity of which He is Head, composed of every individual who has submitted himself to the authority of God in Jesus Christ, is redeemed; then He will deliver up that kingdom to the Father, and present us faultless before the throne.**

**We are involved by grace in that program, stretching through time and eternity. You and I, if we are saved, are members of a new race, and we live under a new sovereignty, for Jesus must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. But the price of the enjoyment of freedom from self and sin is still the same: submission to the authority and will of God. **Lift your sights high, fellow Christian, and understand the dignity and wonder of your position in Jesus!****

**But there is one more thing here, perhaps the most important of all, the most significant for us tonight. What does it mean to be alive in Christ? It also means that a Christian is implicated in the purity of God.**

**Notice the argument of these closing five verses: Paul says if it is *not* true that Jesus lives, what is the use of being baptized for the dead? Now we need to look at the word of God right here, because this is where those folks get the idea that you can baptize for people whom have died already. But, what did Paul really say in verse 29, "Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they, then, baptized for the dead?" **The answer is simple: If Christ is not raised from the dead, then why be baptized in the name of a dead Savior? If that is the case, there is no resurrection for the dead anyway.****

Verse 30 says, "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" **In other words, if Christ is not alive, why suffer for Him?** If there is no resurrection, then look at verse 32b, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." **If Jesus is not raised, then there is no after life, so we might as well just please the flesh!**

**But, glory to God; the historical evidence says that He is alive.** Verses 33-34 say, "Be not deceived: Evil company corrupts morals. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." **Listen, good behavior is based on sound doctrine, and if you hang around with people who are not excited about the power of Jesus, then you will have bad manners, and a life filled with sinfulness!** There is no margin between those two: you are either excited about Jesus, or you are a candidate for

immorality!

**Which circle are you in? Are you in Christ, or are you in Adam? Are you alive, or are you dead? Are you the servant of sin, or are you a servant of Jesus Christ?**

If you are not saved, then tonight is a good time to come to Christ!