

# Death to Life

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Preacher: Todd Fisher

[ 0 : 00 ] It's my privilege to officially introduce to you our guest speaker today, who many of you know, Dr.

! Todd Fisher serves as the Executive Director Treasurer of Oklahoma Baptist. He earned his bachelor's degree from OBU in pastoral ministry, an MDiv in biblical languages from Southwestern, a D-Min in hermeneutics from Midwestern, and a PhD in preaching from Southern Seminary. That's three of the six Dr. Fisher seminaries that we have, so you need to get degrees from the rest. Dr. Fisher has served as a college and a seminary professor, has pastored several churches in Oklahoma prior to his current role, and he's joined today by his lovely wife, Jamie.

And as you heard Pastor Tyler pray, it is a miracle that Dr. Fisher is here with us today. If you recall, it's been almost a year since his car accident, his collision, and it's been amazing just the recovery in the way that God has been gracious to you, Dr. Fisher.

We're glad you're alive. We're thankful that you're here. Would you please welcome Dr. Fisher to the pulpit this morning? All right.

[ 1 : 41 ] Thank you all. I'm going to get up these steps here, and if at any point while I'm up here, if it looks like I'm on my last leg, it's because I am.

So, you know, no sense in just denying the obvious there, but I'm getting around. I'm doing pretty good, just trying to actually get my other ankle over here, my left ankle, to kind of try to play ball with me, because it was all messed up in the wreck too, but doing good on the prosthesis, and I'm just grateful that I'm able to be here.

I was preaching at First Baptist Church of Ardmore about a month or so ago. A 10-year-old girl wrote me a little note, and the note said, Dear Dr. Todd, I've been praying for your leg.

I hoped it would get better. I guess it kind of did, but at least you're not dead. And, you know, I said, You know, sister, that's kind of what I've been saying this whole time.

Whatever happens, at least I'm still here, and I'm grateful to God for that. But, and I want to just take a point of personal privilege, if I can, to give you thanks for praying for me.

[ 2 : 57 ] I am overwhelmed by the number of churches and the number of people, not just in our Oklahoma Baptist family, but really all across the world, that I know have been praying for me and praying for my wife.

And I just can't tell you what that means to me, and just appreciate your love and concern so much. So, I'd like to just come and just preach the Word, if I can.

Now, something that God has really laid on my heart a lot in these last 10, 11 months is just this whole idea of death to life.

Now, the first couple of nights I was in the hospital, it was unsure if I was actually going to live or not. And God literally just brought me from the very brink of physical death to life, as with you today. But way more important than that, God has brought me spiritually from a place of death to life. And I'm grateful that He's done that in my life.

[ 3 : 54 ] And I want us to talk about that today. And so, if you have your Bible, if you'll turn with me to the book of Ephesians chapter 2, Ephesians chapter 2, many of us are very familiar with Ephesians 2, 8 and 9.

We're not that familiar with verse 10, which is just as important, right? 8 and 9, we're saved by grace through faith and not of our works, lest anyone should boast. But then verse 10 says we are His workmanship.

We're created by Christ Jesus. We are saved by Him to good works. So, we are not saved by our works, but our goodness, our good deeds demonstrate that we have been saved by His grace through faith.

But a lot of us are not familiar with the first seven verses of Ephesians 2. And the first seven verses of Ephesians 2 are the setup to 2, 8 and 9, which most of us have probably memorized if you've been to church a lot in your life.

And so, I want us to read that and study that and make some comments about it this morning. But before we do, just to kind of give you a little bit of a visual of life to death or death to life, I want you to think of a picture with me here.

[ 5 : 04 ] Now, it's always interesting driving in the eastern part of our state. Now, there was parts of our two-hour road trip this morning where Jamie and I had to get snorkel and flippers out to make it.

My goodness, there was just water standing everywhere. The northeast part of our state is very beautiful. It's very green. It's very lush. It gets plenty of rain. But if you go out to the western part of the state, I mean way out into the panhandle of our state, it has a beauty of its own, but it's very, very different.

It's very dry. It's incredibly flat. You know, the first time I went out to the panhandle as executive director, one of the deacons in the church I spoke at said, Brother Todd, welcome to the panhandle. This is the only place in the world where you can watch your dog run away for three straight days. And he wasn't lying. It's flat out there. It's dry out there. And isn't it amazing that just in the width of one state, you have this dry, almost things look dead, very green things look like that.

Now, let's just squeeze all that in into something even more compact. Tyler was helping us to pray today for Israel. And if you've ever been to the nation of Israel, it's an incredibly beautiful country.

[ 6 : 22 ] But this idea of death and life is just squeezed even within about an hour, hour and a half drive, about 60, 90 miles of each other. If you go to the northern part of Israel, by the Sea of Galilee, it is green, it is lush, it is beautiful.

It looks very similar to Bartlesville here. The Sea of Galilee is teeming with life. It has fish all in it. And then if you just go straight down the Jordan River, not about 60 miles, you get to one of the most arid, dead-looking places on the planet.

And that is the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is so full of salt, you really cannot sink your head underneath the surface of the water. It is so thick with all the salt.

Nothing lives in the Dead Sea. Very few things live around the Dead Sea. And it's this amazing picture of death and life right here on top of each other.

And with that in mind, I think that is the picture that Paul wants us to have. Death to life in these seven verses of Ephesians 2. So look at it with me.

[ 7 : 31 ] And you'll hear the phrases in here. You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

Verse 4, But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. And raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Now, I think in this passage of Scripture, in these seven verses, I think Paul asks and answers four questions. How do I understand these seven verses? How do we unpack this?

I want you to think about these four questions and the answers that Paul gives them to him. Here are the four questions. The four questions are these. Who am I? The second question is, Who is God?

[ 8 : 58 ] The third question is, What has he done? And the fourth question is, Why did he do it? Who am I? Who is God? What did he do?

Why did he do it? And in these seven very rich verses of Scripture, Paul is going to lay out those questions to us and answer them. So here's the first question. Who am I?

Now, how I think Paul answers that question is, We are the walking dead. Now, I'm not trying to play off a TV show. I've never actually ever seen that TV show, so I'm not trying to endorse that.

But here's what I think is fascinating. What does Paul say right out of the shoot? He says, We were dead in our sins. Now, here's what you've got to understand first and foremost. Apart from faith in Christ, spiritually, you are dead.

You're not on life support. You're not just hanging on. You're not just kind of clinging there. You are dead. And the problem with a lot of people today is, they don't think that they are dead without Christ.

[10:01] And they think, Well, yeah, yeah, maybe I need Jesus, but I need him to just kind of help me. I am, after all, a good person. I'm not a bad person. My good deeds outweigh my bad deeds.

By the way, let me let you in on a little secret about Christianity. Christianity is not about balancing deeds. There's way too many people that think, One day when I die and stand before God as my judge, I'm going to go to heaven because my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds.

You understand it only takes one bad deed to condemn you to hell for eternity. Christianity is not about balancing deeds. Christianity is about canceling them, which is exactly what Jesus Christ did on the cross for us when he died for us.

He canceled out the penalty of those bad deeds. So I don't need to be improved. I don't need to be tweaked.

I don't need somebody to just kind of turn up the life support. No. If I do not know Jesus Christ personally by faith, if I have not been saved by him, I am dead.

[11:12] Had an old deacon at Emmanuel just say DRT, dead right there. Now why do I say the walking dead? Because one of the things that fascinates me about this passage is Paul says within the first four words, he says we're all dead, but then look at the active verbs that he uses to describe us.

We're dead in our sin, but then look at the verbs. He says we are walking, we are following, we are carrying out. So the reality is there's a whole bunch of folks that are actually dead in their sin, but because they're busy balancing deeds, because they're a good person more than a bad person, maybe even because they come to church, maybe even because they pray every now and then, maybe because they crack open the Bible every now and then, they think, oh, I'm not dead in my sin.

It's not that I hate God. I don't have animosity towards God. I don't have animosity towards the church, and so I'm going to be okay. And they look like they're alive, but in reality, they're dead. And if you have not turned away from your sin and died to yourself and died to sin and turned to Christ in faith where Jesus is living his life through you, we sang a beautiful song about it just a minute ago, then you are dead.

And so one of the things we have to ask ourselves is this, do I realize that? Am I someone who thinks I'm alive, I'm walking, I'm following, I'm carrying out, I'm going to church, I'm doing all these things, but in reality, has Christ changed my life?

[12:47] Has Jesus actually saved me? Now, I'll tell you a little story from my life to kind of illustrate that. Are you really dead, right? So I'll try to make this as benign as I can make it and not offend anything.

So one of my jobs in college, when I went to OBU back in 1900, none of your business, when I was a student at OBU, I worked at the funeral home.

And my job at the funeral home was, when someone passed away, I went to the hospital or the nursing home or the home, and I brought the corpse, I brought the body back to the funeral home for the mortician to embalm the body.

Now, the very first time I did this, it is a little creepy. You're driving in this suburban kind of vehicle that's been retrofitted to hold, and there's a dead body back there with you.

It's a little kind of, you know, you're a little on edge. And I'm a college kid. I'm 19. I don't know anything. And when I come back to the funeral home after this initial run to go pick up the dead body, the mortician plays a little prank on me.

[14:00] Okay? Now, I didn't, I don't know anything. The mortician says, now, initiation to working here is that when you go and get your first body, you have to watch the body be embalmed.

Now, I could have said, no, I'm not going to do that, and I could have, but I was dumb. 19, I still am dumb. You know, I'm 55. It hadn't gotten much better. But I was like, oh, okay. So I, so they have this big like porcelain table, and you place the body on.

And it's all done very respectfully, very, very, very dignified. But you start the process. And when you lay the body on this table, that body's dead. It has no color to it.

It doesn't move. It's lifeless. You look at this person. This person's dead. But when they come right up in here, and they start adding the embalming fluid, and the embalming fluid begins to make its

way down through that body, the color returns.

And you're looking like going, is that person dead? And then you have, what happened to me? I'm not making this up, okay? This is not a preacher story, right? My home church, my pastor used to always say, no, this story didn't happen, but it's true.

[15:16] This story did happen. I'm standing right here next to the table, and I'm watching this, the color come back to this corpse, and just watching this, and I'm just, it's amazing, and I'm watching this, and then I kid you not, as that embalming fluid makes it better, I kid you not, all of a sudden, the hand of this dead person goes, bloop, and hits me in the leg.

Bloop. And I jumped back and went, ho! Whoa! Did you see that? And for one split second, I thought that guy wasn't dead. But you know what?

I knew he was dead. There's a lot of folks today that maybe they get a little color back to them. Maybe they have a little, it appears, a little spiritual life in them.

But if you're still living for your world, still living for your sins, still living for yourself, you are dead in your sin. Now, Paul explains in this passage of Scripture, well, what makes us dead?

Well, actually, we're enslaved to three things. Look at them with me. In verse 1, Paul says, the reason that we are dead in our sin is because we are following the course of this world.

[16:31] And of course, what Paul means there is, he means the world system, right? He means the world view of the world that's far from God, and far from his word, but a world view that says, hey, everyone's out there asking the three big questions of life.

Where did I come from? Now that I am here, what do I do? What is my purpose and my identity and meaning and value? And one day when I die, will there be something waiting me after death?

Now, I know I'm biased. I'm just a Baptist preacher, but I'm going to tell you right now, I believe with all my heart that this book I'm holding in my hand is the only source that truthfully answers those three questions.

Where did I come from? God created me. What is my purpose right now? To be in a relationship with Christ. But the problem is, the world says, it's the world that gives you meaning and identity and purpose and value and significance.

I'm going to tell you right now, my friends, I've tried that before in my life. And if you look to anything in the world, if you look to making money or a hobby and there's plenty of things in the world that in and of themselves are not wrong, it's not wrong to have money, it's not wrong to have a hobby, it's not wrong to have activities that you like to do.

[17:51] When it's wrong is when those things have you. That's when it's wrong. And so, for a lot of us, we'll listen to the world and say, hey, if you put this substance in your body or if you have this relationship or if you watch this thing on the internet or TV or you listen to this thing or you do this thing or whatever, this is where you'll find identity, meaning, purpose, significance.

I'm telling you right now, if you ever look to the world or yourself to find those things, it will always turn into ash in your mouth. Trust me. Only following Christ brings you true meaning, identity, purpose, value, significance, worth.

And it's eternal. It's true. It's real. So listen, to bring people from death to life, to bring people from bondage in their sin to liberty, the world says, you need to reject this book in my hand.

We don't need to do that. The world says, we need a sexual revolution. We need a gender redefinition. We don't need any of that. You know what we need? We need a gospel revival.

That's what we need. And when we turn away from the world into Christ, we will find life and move from death. Look at the second thing, verse two. Why are we dead?

[19:10] Well, one, we follow the world system. Verse two, we follow the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience. That obviously is speaking about Satan.

And at the end of the day, we have to realize and remember all of these things of sin, all of these things that are opposed to Christ, they will call out to us and they will say to us, oh, we are what is best for you.

We love you. This is what will bring you all of these things. Never ever forget who is behind all of that, the devil, and never ever forget that the devil hates your guts.

And the devil wants you to bring you down to where he is at all costs. And then the third thing is verse three. Why are we dead? We follow the world, we follow the devil.

And then in verse three, we follow the flesh. Look what he says. He says, we carry out the desires of the body and the mind. How many of us can relate to what the apostle Paul said?

[ 20 : 12 ] Boy, the things I want to do, I don't do, and the things I really wish I wasn't doing, that's what I end up doing. The mind, the flesh, can be very strong. And sometimes the devil doesn't need all that much help, does he?

It's like that little girl, she, little girl kicked her brother in the shin and pulled his hair. And mama got onto her, got her in trouble, and mom said, why did you let the devil kick your brother in the shin and pull his hair?

And she looked at mom and said, well, kicking his shin was the devil's idea, but pulling his hair was my idea. So you put all this together. By the way, let's just kind of think of it in these terms.

The world, the devil, the flesh. The world dominates us from without. Right? The devil from beyond, the flesh from within.

We get dominated by all these things in life if we're not following Christ, and that's why we're dead.

And so what does Paul say in this passage of Scripture? Well, the answer to this is to follow Jesus.

[ 21 : 19 ] And incidentally, can I just say this? This is a little bit like the first three chapters of Romans or so. Boy, you read this and you say, man, Paul sure doesn't think much of people. No, listen, people are good.

People can be good. Even lost people can do good things, can do nice things. Remember, we're not talking about balancing deeds. So it doesn't mean that humans can't have some kind of significance and worth.

It just means that on our own we cannot save ourselves. There's nothing I can do to even contribute to my salvation. And at the end of the day, it has to be dependence on Jesus.

That's what this passage is all about. And of course, it culminates in 8 and 9. It is by grace through faith in Christ that we are saved and brought from death to life. Now, let's just talk about this for one second.

Hey, here's the good thing. I totally forgot to ask Pastor Mike what time I'm supposed to stop preaching. So I just keep preaching. Y'all are like, I'm going to go up there and kick your one good leg out from underneath you.

[ 22 : 24 ] The world says we've got the power to make you happy, to give you meaning, identity, purpose. The world doesn't have any of that power. And so what you see in this passage of Scripture is Paul kind of painting this picture for us.

The things that bring about death are actually very powerless. The one who brings about life is all powerful. Okay? So let's just get our mind around that and think about that for a second. Okay.

By my count, there's five people in the Bible, Old and New Testament, that raise someone from the dead. Now let's just take Jesus off the table for a second.

Okay? We all know Jesus raised someone from the dead. Four people, other than Jesus, that raise someone from the dead. Who are they? Elijah, Elisha, Peter and Paul.

Now here's what's fascinating. If you go home this afternoon and you study those four men that raised someone from the dead, here's what's very fascinating. Every time one of these guys was going to raise someone from the dead, they prayed and they asked God, God, raise this person from the dead.

[ 23 : 30 ] They knew that on their own, they did not have the power to raise someone from the dead. And so they say, God, I appeal to your power. I don't have the power to raise this person from the dead, but God, I appeal to your power.

And they prayed and they said, Father, will you please raise this person from the dead? All four of those guys did that. You know who did not do that? Jesus. It's a fascinating study.

Take Lazarus. He's standing in front of the tomb of Lazarus. All right, roll that stone away, guys.

They roll the stone away. And then Jesus prays, just like the other four guys, but his prayer is very, very different.

Jesus' prayer at the tomb of Lazarus is, Father, I want to pray for all these people standing around me that what I'm about to do, I pray that they will see it as evidence that you have sent me.

And then what is the next thing out of Jesus' mouth at the tomb of Lazarus? Is the next thing in that prayer is the next thing, now, Father, I want to appeal to your power. Would you please raise Lazarus from the dead?

[ 24 : 33 ] Jesus never prays that. You know what Jesus' next words out of his mouth are? He looks in that empty tomb and he says, Lazarus, come out. Do you know why Jesus never asked the Father for power to raise Lazarus from the dead?

I'll tell you why. Because he is the Father. And if you're looking for anyone other than Jesus to bring you from life to death, from bondage to liberty, to give you meaning and identity and purpose and value and worth and significance, you are wasting your time if you look to anyone else other than Jesus.

I can go stand in the middle of Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. and look at all that sea of white crosses and say, hey, y'all, thank you for serving our country.

Come back to life. You know what? Everybody's going to stay right where they are. But Jesus Christ walks in the middle of that cemetery and just says, rise.

And every tomb there would pop wide open. Isn't that amazing? Well, can I just say this very quickly? The stakes of all of this are very high.

[ 25 : 46 ] Don't miss this in verse 3. Look in verse 3. He says, we all lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out desires of the body and the mind. And then look at this. We are by nature children of wrath.

You know what Paul's saying right here? Hey, friends. This is no game we're playing. We're talking about heaven and hell. We're talking about eternal life and damnation.

And if you are spiritually dead apart from Christ, your destiny is the wrath of God. This is big. Now, what's the second question? Who am I?

I am the walking dead. Second question, who is God? Well, God is the timely rescuer. So you see verse 4? Don't you just love that wonderful adversity in verse 4?

But God, man, if this passage, if this book stopped at the end of 2 verse 3, that would be a real downer, wouldn't it? Man, I am lost. I am dead in my sin.

[ 26 : 47 ] I am bound for hell and there ain't a blessed thing I can do about it. But God see, God steps in and he changes all of it. Now, I really wish I had the time to just explain to you how this is written in the original language, but here's a fascinating thing.

Okay? How do I answer who is God? Here's how I'd answer it based on this text. He is the timely rescuer. What do you mean by that? The way this is written is Paul's setting God up as in he steps in right in the nick of time.

This is very, very Galatians 4, 4-ish. In the fullness of time, a phrase that means if you added one more cup of coffee to the cup, it would spill over.

In just the right time, in just the nick of time, God sent his son. And so, the idea almost here is here we are, we are dead in our sin.

we are destined for this horrible eternity that is going to wait us, but then, here comes God. Think of one of your favorite movies. I will date myself, Star Wars.

[ 27 : 56 ] My family took me yesterday to a special Father's Day weekend showing of Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. You know, where his dad, Sean Conner, I can tell you are not interested, but I loved it.

Remember the good guys in a lot of these movies like Star Wars? They show up in the nick of time. Remember, here's Luke Skywalker. He's flying down the trench of the Death Star and Darth Vader's right behind him. Another weird Father's Day thing going on there, but we didn't know it then, okay?

He's about to shoot his son down. Weird, but that's okay. You know, and Darth Vader's right behind him. I have you now, you know? And then right as Darth Vader's about to blow Luke Skywalker right out of the sky, pow, pow, pow, what happens?

Here comes Han Solo and Chewie and the Millennium Falcon just in the nick of time. They save the day. You like Lord of the Rings? There they are at Helm's Deep just about to be overrun and they look up and there is Gandalf and the riders of the Rohirrim and they show up just in the nick of time. Maybe you're a little older. The damsel in distress has been tied to the railroad track and the great hero comes just at the right moment trying to get all the ages in.

[ 29 : 10 ] I took a little survey of the phrases in the Bible where it says, but God, and by the way, can I just say a word to you? If you're spiritually dead and don't have a relationship with Christ, now's the time.

Now's the time. Maybe you're struggling with something else today. Maybe something's got you discouraged. Just remember, but God. Always. So I jotted these down.

I'll start them with a question. You ready? Here. See if you can relate to any of these. Do you ever feel like giving up? The psalmist says, my flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Are you tempted to sin? Paul told the Corinthians, no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man, but God is faithful. And you know the rest of that. Do you ever get incredibly discouraged?

Listen to Jonah. To the roots of the mountains I sank down. The earth beneath barred me in forever, but you, my God, brought my life up from the pit. Have you ever been the victim of someone else's sin or ill will?

[ 30 : 26 ] Hear Joseph in Genesis speaking to his brothers. He said, you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done.

Do you ever feel like God couldn't love you? Do you ever feel like your sin is beyond God's forgiveness? Hear what Paul said to the Romans in chapter six. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Are you mourning the passing of a loved one? Do you doubt your own eternal existence and relationship with God? Here again, the psalmist.

But God will redeem my life from the grave. He will surely take me to himself. Those two words, but God, our rescuer. Who am I?

I'm the walking dead. Who is God? The timely rescuer. What did he do? And here comes the best part to me. I love this part. What has he done? Well, he's united us with Christ.

[ 31 : 30 ] Now again, if we had more time, we'd just go into deep diving all the Bible study of this. But let me ask you to do this for me. Okay, you ready? Listen, this is so good. So rich. Okay. In verse five, I want you to find this phrase with me.

Do you see the phrase, but made alive together with? You see that in verse five? Now look at verse six. Do you see the phrase, he raised us up together with?

Do you see also in verse six, and we are seated together with? Now here's what's going to be crazy to you. All three of those phrases, to make alive together with, to raise up together with, to sit down together with, none of those appear in ancient Koine Greek until right here.

We don't see it in any of the philosophers. We don't see it in any of the historians. We've never seen these words until right here in the New Testament. What does that tell us? It means that Paul has actually created Greek words, and he's made synonyms, and he's taken the Greek word together with, and he's added it to another word, all right?

To rise, to be seated. He's added it. What he's done is what we do in English sometimes, where we take two words and squeeze them together for emphasis. Have you ever heard of the word ginormous?

[ 32 : 48 ] That thing's ginormous. What is ginormous? Giant and enormous. This is exactly what Paul's done. And what does it mean he's done all these things to make, made alive with, raised up with, seated with Jesus?

It means he has united us with him. We have union with Christ. Listen to John 15. Jesus says, Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself.

Unless it abides in the vine, neither can you. Unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

This sounds a little crazy, but here's a linchpin of Pauline theology. You ready for it? A linchpin of Pauline theology essentially says, the moment you come to faith in Christ, you basically crawled on that cross and died with him.

And now I am dead. I was dead in my sin and then Christ came and saved me by his grace. But now I am dead to sin and I am dead to self and now Jesus is actually living his life through me.

[ 34 : 02 ] Abide in me and I in you. Remember what he said in Galatians 2, 20, my paraphrase? Hey everybody, I'm alive, but it's not me that's alive.

It's Jesus living his life through me. That's what he's saying right here. I've been risen, I've been seated, I've been made alive in him.

Here's a picture. I'm out in the lake, I can't swim, I'm drowning, I'm dying, I'm gonna be dead and here I come. And it's not like Jesus comes in the rowboat, rows up to where I am in the lake, leans over the side of the boat, picks me up and says, I saved you and then drops me on the other side of the boat back in the water.

What does he do? He rose out there where I'm out there drowning and dying in my sin and what does he do? He puts me in the boat with him.

Isn't that beautiful? So I don't have to face stuff, this is what's happened with me. I didn't have to face all this stuff with my 30 broken bones.

[ 35 : 11 ] And right now, you know, I'm not sure I'm ever gonna live life without chronic pain. I don't have to do this on my own. But I know that if I surrender and die to this, that Jesus is gonna do this through me.

So just to try to illustrate this, everybody's wondering, what's in the blue bag? Is it another leg? No, it's another leg.

So I brought a work glove from home, okay? One of the things I like to do to unwind and just turn my brain off and just de-stress, I like to go outside and mow and weed eat and run the chainsaw and haul things off and burn things.

And I just like to do it. So I, work gloves are important to me. And I brought one of my work gloves from home. This is a good work glove. It's made out of a really good leather. You can tell I've used it a lot. It's got all this good stitching in here.

This is a good, solid work glove. Now, how does a work glove work? So just for example, let's just say that I took this work glove and I said it right here and I said, okay glove, I got a job for you.

[ 36 : 20 ] You're a work glove so let's get you to work. I want you to pick up my Bible and carry it over there to Pastor Mike. All right? Go. Go glove. Pick up my Bible and go take it to Pastor Mike.

Maybe what this glove needs is just a little more instruction. Okay? All right, here's how this works glove. So you take your hand and you kind of curl your fingers and you put your thumb and you squeeze it around the Bible and then you just kind of, if you're like me, you hop over there and you take it over there.

So now I've taught you how to do it. Go. Hmm. Maybe this glove just needs a little bit of encouragement. Maybe y'all help me. Come on glove, let's go.

You can do it. Come on glove, I know you can. Hmm. I know what this glove needs. This glove just needs to know that in this job it's not going to be alone.

It's got all kinds of fellowship. In fact, look, I brought other gloves. See? See glove, you don't have to do this alone. Look, there's all these gloves and they're all, there's one just like you and then there's here that are others and you know, all the kinds of different kinds and so, now you're not alone glove.

[ 37 : 26 ] Go. Hmm. How is the only way that work glove is going to do its work? Is if I take my hand and I fill every part of it and bring it to life, if you will, to pick up this Bible and do the job.

Friend, if that isn't a picture of the Christian life, I don't really know what is. without him, I'm just DRT. Dead right there. But when I die to myself and sin and surrender to him and he comes and he lives his life through me and then fills every part of me with his spirit, isn't that good news, my friends?

That's what it means to follow Christ. And I close with that last question. Why in the world did he do all this? Who am I? I'm the walking dead. Who is God? He's the timely rescuer.

What did he do? He united me with Christ. Why did he do it? His love and his grace. Can you find for me in verse four the word love? Can you find in verse four the word mercy?

Can you find in verse five the word grace? Can you find in verse six the word kindness? It's his unconditional love. It's not because I did anything.

[ 38 : 48 ] It's not that I earn it. It's not that I deserve it. You know why God loves me? God loves me because he loves me. Why did God save me? Because he saved me. And so friends, if you're listening to me this morning and you don't have a relationship with Christ, boy, today's a great day to begin that.

Today's a great day for you to turn away from your sin, to turn away from self, to turn away from anything in this world that you're trying to find meaning, identity, and purpose, and value in.

Turn away from all of that and reach out to Christ and say, Jesus, I want you to save me. I know you died on the cross to pay the penalty of my sin. I know heaven is a perfect place.

I will never go into heaven because I'm not perfect. But you, perfect Jesus, when you died, you satisfied the perfect righteous demands of God. And Jesus, it is your perfect righteousness placed into my account that makes me right with you, not anything I've done.

And so, Jesus, I want to come and die to self and surrender to you and say, live your life through me and help me to follow you in faith and obedience. Friend, maybe you're here, you know the Lord, you're struggling, you got an illness, you had an accident, an injury like me, you got something going on in your marriage, you got something going on at home, you got something going on with your kids or your grandkids, you got something going on in your job and I'm just going to tell you right now, quit trying to do it yourself.

[ 40 : 18 ] Why not just surrender and say, hey God, I want to die to myself. Listen, I'm a Baptist preacher, I think you're only saved one time. But I think you die to yourself every day.

And instead of focusing on the circumstances, let's focus on the God who can do so much more than we can. Some of y'all might remember this back in the old, old days and pharmacies and the drug stores when you went to check out they had the glass jars of candy back there.

Anybody? Not many? Well, trust me, I'm not that old enough, I never saw it, but they did. And one day mom goes in there with her son and she's checking out and when she makes her purchase, the pharmacist reaches up, grabs one of those glass jars of candy and hands it down to her son. And he says, here you go, you want some candy? And he just kind of stands there like this. And he goes, it's okay son, stick your hand in there, you can get some candy. And he just looks at the pharmacist like this.

And so his mother says, son, it's okay. He said that you can stick your hand in there and get some candy, it's okay. And he just looks up at his mom like this. So finally the pharmacist, he sticks his hand in there, grabs a big handful of candy and gives it to him.

[ 41 : 31 ] And that boy is walking out in the parking lot with two handfuls of candy like this. And on the way to the car, mom says, well son, why wouldn't you reach your hand and get there and get some candy? And he smiled and looked up at his mom and said, because his hand is bigger than mine.

Will you remember that? If you're trying to find identity and meaning and purpose and worth, his hand is bigger than anything you can find. You're going through a struggle, going through a hard time, his hand is bigger than yours.

Only he brings us from death to life. Let's pray together. Father, thank you so much for this passage of scripture. And thank you God for the things that you have taught us today about how only in Christ and Christ alone can we be brought from death to life, from bondage to freedom.

And so thank you God that in your mercy and your grace and your unfailing and unconditional love, you sent Jesus at just the right time to this earth to die on a cross for our sin, to be risen from the dead three days later.

And we thank you Lord that when we turn from our sin and look to you in faith, we can receive salvation, we can receive your spirit and you living your life through us.

[ 43 : 00 ] Father, would you bring us to that point of surrender every day before our feet hit the floor every day would we die to ourself looking to you and not anything the world can provide our own circumstances but to you God and how you want to work all things for your glory and for our good in your life.

So this morning, Father, anyone today that needs to respond to this invitation to come and commit their lives to following Christ by faith, I pray today they would do that.

Anyone that wants to come today and just pray and ask the Lord to just come and help them to surrender and something going on in their life and for the Lord to live his life through them, I pray today they would do that.

Someone today that needs to come and make this church their church home, speak to them to that God. And so how we praise you, Lord, how we thank you that you did not leave us in our death and sin but through Christ came and brought us to life.

And we ask all of this in his precious, perfect, powerful name. Amen.