



## What's So Radical About Christianity?

### *The Story of Scripture – Part 19*

Let me invite you to open with me to Ezekiel 36. It's good to be together across Washington and around God's Word. I'm wearing this t-shirt today in light of what we're going to do at the end of our time, but here at the start I want to ask a question. What is so radical about Christianity? I'm not sure what comes to your mind when you hear the word 'radical,' but I want to put two pictures in your mind—and neither of them is the book I wrote by that name.

The first picture goes all the way back to the original meaning of this word in Latin, *radicalis*. It means that which refers to the root or the core or the essence of something. So what's the root or the essence of Christianity? Then the second picture I want to put in your mind is a more contemporary meaning of radical—the idea of something that's extreme or revolutionary. So what's so revolutionary about Christianity?

That's what I want us to dive into today. What's the core, the essence, the root of Christianity? The answer to that question is what's extreme or revolutionary about Christianity. Answering this question is really important, for two reasons. One, if you claim to be a Christian—a follower of Christ—you need to realize the root of what that means and realize why the Christian life is indeed revolutionary. I say this because I'm concerned that many people who claim to be Christians don't realize in practice the actual root of Christianity. They're missing the essence.

As a result, many professing Christians' lives don't look that revolutionary. We don't look that different from anyone else in the world. The lives of many professing Christians look just like everybody else in the world, except we go to church on Sundays. We're missing what's revolutionary about the Christian life.

The second reason this is an important question is because there are some people here today who are exploring Christianity. You're considering following Christ, but you haven't taken that step yet. If that's you, I want you to understand clearly what the root of Christianity is, what's so revolutionary about it, what's so extreme about it—because it's extremely good. It's so different from anything and everything else in this world.

I'm concerned that many of you might look at Christianity and think, "It doesn't look that different." As a result, you're pretty unconvinced you should follow Christ. I want to invite you today to follow Christ in a way that will revolutionize your life—not just today, but forever. So in order to answer this question, "What is so radical about Christianity?" for all of us, I want to take us to one of the most important passages in the Old Testament of the Bible that talks about the revolution that was coming ultimately through Jesus.

Let me set the stage. If you were here last week, we talked about how context is really important. So here's the set-up. Babylonians had come and attacked God's people in Judah. They had not yet destroyed the capital city of Judah, Jerusalem, but they had taken the king of Judah, Jehoiachin, and thousands of other Israelites into exile in Babylon. One of those Israelites taken into exile was a prophet named Ezekiel, whose job it was to speak God's word to His people.

In this passage, God, through Ezekiel, is telling His people that eventually He's going to bring them back from exile, much like we saw last week in Jeremiah. But in a bigger way here, God is giving His people a glimpse into the essence, the core, the root of how they will relate to Him—and not just when they return from exile, but in the new covenant, in the New Testament, when Jesus comes. What that means is this passage gives us a glimpse today, thousands of years later, into the root of how we relate to God now that Jesus has come—and it is a revolutionary picture.

Let's start in Ezekiel 36:22. This is what God said to His people in Babylon:

*<sup>22</sup> "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. <sup>23</sup> And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. <sup>24</sup> I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. <sup>29</sup> And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. <sup>30</sup> I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. <sup>31</sup> Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. <sup>32</sup> It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.*

## 1. There is nothing you can do to earn God's love for you.

What's so radical about Christianity? This is the revolutionary root of Christianity. To be a Christian, you must realize there is nothing you can do to earn God's love for you. Remember, the context of this passage in Ezekiel is God's people are in exile because of their sin, because of their rampant idolatry and immorality. But God is saying here, "Despite your sin, I am going to restore you." And you'll notice at no point does God say anything about what they have done or will do to deserve that. Instead, every single verse of what we just read points to how God is the One doing all the work here.

I want you to circle in your Bible all the times God says "I will" in what we just read. Start back in verse 22, "*Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.*" Then circle in verse 23, "*I will vindicate the holiness of my great name.*" Verse 24, "*I will take you from the nations...*" Verse 25, "*I will sprinkle clean water on you....From all your idols I will cleanse you.*"

Verse 26, "*I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*" Verse 27, "*I will put my Spirit within you...*" End of verse 28, "*I will be your God...*" Verse 29, "*u deliver you... I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you.*" Verse 30, "*I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant...*" Then verse 32 sums it all up, when God says, "*I will act...*"

Thirteen times in 11 verses, God says, "I will do all these things." Not, "You do this and I'll do that, then we'll meet in the middle, like a contract." No, God says, "I am going to do all these things for you." This is exactly what the New Testament of the Bible says. Think about Ephesians 2. In the first three verses we read about people's sinfulness before God. Listen to Ephesians 2:1-3:

*And 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.*

That's a humbling description of how we have turned aside from God to our own ways and the ways of this world. But then the hinge verse—the verse where everything changes—is verse four when the Bible says, "But God, being rich in mercy..." Now, listen for all the things God does:

*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 in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Who's doing all the action here? God is. And notice how all the references to people, to us, are in the passive voice. At the end of verse five, "You have been saved." Not, "You saved yourself." You were saved. This happened to you. Again, verse eight, "By grace you have been saved." This has been done to you through faith, not by your works—and just in case we're not getting it, the Bible makes it clear that this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. It's a gift. God does this.

In Christianity, in Christ, you are saved from your sin solely by God's grace. To use the language from Ezekiel 36, you're cleansed from your uncleanness. You're cleansed from you idolatry. You're given an entirely new heart—on what basis? On the basis of God's love for you. Do you realize how revolutionary this is in a world of religions that are all based on what you can or should or must do? In Islam, its five pillars. In Buddhism, it's an eight-fold path. In Hinduism, it's multitudes of rituals to appease millions of gods.

But in the midst of it all, the one true God of the universe says, "You cannot appease Me. You cannot earn your way to Me. But I bring you good news—you don't have to. I come to you." This is the heart, the core, the essence, the root of Christianity. If you're not a Christian, please listen really closely here. You may not be familiar with the phrase "saved from your sin," but you need to know this phrase, because it is the solution to the most critical need you have in your life.

This is more important than your need for food or water or air, your need for love and relationships, your need for health or wealth. This is your most important need. The Bible teaches that we have all sinned against God (Romans 3:23); we've all turned aside from God's ways to our own ways (Romans 3:12). As a result, we are separated from God. Our most critical need, then, is to be saved from our sin and brought back to God, because if we die in this state of separation from God, we will spend eternity separated from God.

Here's the deal. The Bible does not say, "So here are the things you need to save yourself, to get back to God. Climb this ladder. Do this. Fix that. Check off these boxes. Get that cleaned up, then you can come to God." No, God says in the Bible, "I will make you clean. I will come to you and make you clean."

This is the promise in Ezekiel 36 and it was ultimately fulfilled when Jesus came—God in the flesh—to pay the price for our sins. Jesus came and lived a perfect life with no sin. Then, even though He had no sin to pay any price for, He died on the cross to pay the price for your sin and my sin. Then He rose from the dead in victory over all sin. Jesus has done what none of us could ever do to make it

possible for you and me to be saved from our sin by God, cleansed of all our sins before God, through faith in Jesus, not works for God.

How can you be saved from all your sins against the one true God? Believe in His love for you. Believe that Jesus died on a cross for you, then you will be saved (Acts 16:31). You say, “That’s too simple.” The Bible says this is salvation. It’s free. This is the root of Christianity. There’s nothing you can do to earn God’s love for you. God gives it freely to anyone who will trust in Him.

What this means for all who trust in Jesus, whether today for the first time, or for those of you who trusted in Jesus however many years ago, you have radically new rest from performance-based religion. Never forget how revolutionary this is. I think we miss this. I talk with so many Christians who feel so defeated, who feel like God is so upset with them all the time because they’re not measuring up in this way or that way. Do you ever feel like that?

If that’s you, hear God’s Word to you today. God’s pleasure in you is not based on your performance for Him. God’s pleasure in you is based on Christ’s performance for you. Jesus has died on the cross to pay the price for all of your inability to measure up. If you are trusting in Jesus, you have radical rest in the love God has for you. God loves you, not because you are good enough, but because He is gracious enough! So rest in His grace.

You say, “Wait a minute. If I’m saved by God’s grace alone, not by anything I do—my works—does that mean that now I just live however I want?” The answer is, “Yes.” Absolutely. As a follower of Jesus, you live however you want. What’s revolutionary is this: as a follower of Jesus, you have new wants. That’s the second thing here.

## **2. Your life is not about you anymore.**

What’s so radical about Christianity? Follow this, for Christians, your life is about you anymore. I want you to think about this passage in Ezekiel 36. We just told you about God’s love for you; God’s grace that He gives you freely. So here in Ezekiel 36, let’s ask the question, “Why? Why does God give His people such grace? Why is God saving His people here, even when they have sinned—and are still sinning—against Him? Why does God save us?”

In order to answer this question, go back to Ezekiel 36:16. Let’s look together for the motive of God in saving His people by His grace. In verses 16-18, God recounts His people’s rebellion. Listen to this:

*<sup>16</sup> The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>17</sup> “Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity. <sup>18</sup> So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it.”*

Just as a side note, we read in Jeremiah that they were sacrificing their own children to false gods. Horrible, wicked, evil things. So God describes what He did to them in judgment in verse 19: *“I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them.”* That’s the exile.

But now, here’s the answer to our question, why did God choose to save them from exile instead of leaving them there? Verses 20-21:

*<sup>20</sup> But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, “These are the people of the Lord, and yet they had to go out of his land.” <sup>21</sup> But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.*

Did you hear that? God says, “My people were profaning My name, so out of concern for My holy name among the nations.”

*<sup>22</sup> Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. <sup>23</sup> And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.*

God says, “I want the holiness of My name known among all the nations; that is why I will save and restore and redeem this sinful people. Not for their sake,”—that’s exactly what God said—“but for the sake of My holy name.” Are we hearing this? This could not be any clearer in the Bible. God is saving His people not ultimately for their sake. God is saving His people ultimately for His sake, for the sake of His name. This is the revolutionary root of Christianity. You are saved from your sin solely by God’s grace and you are saved from your sin ultimately for God’s glory. God loves you for His sake.

Now at this point you might say, “Wait, David. Are you saying that God has an ulterior motive in loving me?” I want to be clear—I am not saying that. God is saying that. Ladies and gentlemen, you are not at the center of God’s universe. I’m not at the center of God’s universe. God is at the center of His universe and everything He does—including saving us from our sin—revolves around Him.

Realizing that everything revolves around God will radically change your life. This is not the way the 21<sup>st</sup> century American thinks about life. Sadly, this is not the way most 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans who claim to be Christians think about life. It’s all revolving around God. If you ask the average Christian sitting in a church building today to summarize the message of Christianity, the core of Christianity, you’ll hear something like, “The core message of Christianity is God loves me,” or, “God

loves me enough to send His Son Jesus to die for me.” And just to be clear, that’s absolutely part of the core message of Christianity. We just talked about that.

But let me ask you a question. If “God loves me” is the core message of Christianity, then do a little English class with me for a moment. Who is the object of Christianity? “God loves me.” So Christianity is about me and my plans for my life. Church is about me, about programs and services that cater to me and my preferences. The problem is “God loves me” is not the core message of Christianity. That sentence is incomplete. The root, the core message of Christianity, says, “God loves me so that I can glorify God.”

Now who’s the object of Christianity? God is. And by His design, everything centers on Him. God loves us ultimately not for our sake, but for His sake, for His glory. Now, that might feel uncomfortable to some, maybe many of us. It would be wrong for any one of us to desire our own glory, to center on ourselves. That would be wrong for us, but ladies and gentlemen, that is more than right for God. It’s more than right for God to be God-centered. Whom else should He put at the center?

If it rubs you wrong that God lives to exalt Himself, I would just ask the follow-up question: whom else would you rather He exalt? You? Me? This or that? No. Because at whatever point He were to exalt someone or something else, He would no longer be the God Who is worthy of all exaltation—but He is. He is alone God. That’s the point. There is no one or nothing greater than God—no one or nothing is more wonderful and glorious than God. As a result, there’s no one or nothing worthy of exaltation but God. Because He is God, God is radically God-centered.

We have an entire book of the Bible—Psalms, right in the middle—filled with songs written by God, to be used to worship God. Imagine me going to Heather, my wife, and saying, “Babe, I have written something for you. I have written 150 songs that talk about how great I am. I want to give them to you as a gift, so that you can pull them out and read them to me. This will bring such delight to you.” No! I’m not giving that kind of book to my wife! Why? Because I’m not worthy of that—but God is.

Reading through the Story of Scripture, we haven’t got to the end yet. So here’s a spoiler alert for what’s going to happen. At the end of this Story, all the nations of the earth are going to gather around the throne of God and they’re going to give Him glory. That’s where all of history is headed, because God designed it that way. And the natural person, the non-Christian, balks at this. He says, “I don’t want to live for the glory of God. I’m going to live for myself, or for this or that, above God.”

But the Christian is different. The Christian has been radically changed, because the Christian realizes that for God to be centered on God is really good news. You say, “How is that good news?” Think about it with me. Put these together: God’s love, His grace and God’s glory. How has God chosen to glorify Himself? The good news of the Bible is that God has chosen to glorify Himself by saving you and me from our sins. God has chosen to glorify Himself by sacrificing His Son in our place, for our sins,

so that we might be saved by His grace alone and brought into relationship with Him in all His glory forever.

So, yes, we glorify God for His grace. Keep going with this. If God is infinitely, gloriously loving, if all that is love is summed up in God, if God is perfect love, then what is the greatest way God could show love to us? It's by giving us Himself, the enjoyment of Himself and exaltation of Himself. The true Christian realizes it is revolutionary that life and love and joy and happiness are not found in living for self. Putting self above God leads to separation and emptiness and death. No, life and love and joy and peace are found in living for the glory of God.

When you truly become a Christian, you have radically new passions, zeal, joy and delight for God's worship and God's ways. You're not just cleansed of your sin. Listen to Ezekiel 36:26-27. God says, *"I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and to be careful to obey my rules."*

Do you hear this? For the true Christian, there is something inside you—or better put, there is Someone inside you—the Spirit of God now lives in you and causes you to want God's worship and God's ways. That's why I say, as a Christian, "Yes, you can live however you want." You want to live so differently from the rest of this world.

This is another place we miss it. It's like we created the idea today that a Christian is someone who loves the ways of this world but finds out that the ways of this world lead to eternity separated from God in hell. So we pray a prayer, say some words, go through some ritual, to jump out of the line going to hell and into the line going to heaven. But deep down inside, we still prefer the ways of this world. So we put our foot over here and live according to the standards of this world, thinking because we've walked through whatever ritual, we'll have a foot over here to make us safe for eternity.

This is not Christianity. This is nominal Christianity—Christianity in name only. But it's not biblical Christianity, because it misses the root of what's revolutionary about the Christian life. In Christianity, you have a new heart put in you by God—His Spirit that actually desires to live for His glory. You want to live for His worship. You won't go to heaven if you don't want God, His worship and His ways.

Sure, you still struggle with sin. We all do—I do, you do—but you have a desire to turn from it. Sure, you still feel yourself pulled to the ways of this world, but you have a passion to live according to God's Word. Sadly, so much of Christianity today, and even so much in the church, misses this. So much of Christianity today is trying to cajole people to do what they don't really want to do—give generously, live sacrificially, spread the gospel boldly, worship weekly—not just every once in a while when it's comfortable.



In reality, many professing Christians would rather just coast comfortably into heaven. It's like we want the idea of God's grace, but we don't actually want to live for God's glory. But the reality of Christianity is that once we truly know God's grace, we will want to live for God's glory. What's so radical about Christianity? Your life is not about you anymore—and you are glad.

### **3. You are more concerned about the glory of God in all nations than you are about your comfort in your own nation.**

Then there's the final piece in this revolutionary root that in Christianity, you become more concerned about the glory of God in all nations than you are about your comfort in your own nation. Again, this is not David Platt talking—this is God talking in His Word. Look again at Ezekiel 36:22-23. Count how many times God refers to the nations when He uses that word or a pronoun that refers to them:

*“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.”*

Five times in two verses God makes it clear that His focus is not just on the nation of Judah or Israel, but on all the nations of the earth. The problem is that God's people had missed this. They had lived with a focus on what they thought was best for them, regardless of what the nations around them thought about God—and that's the whole point here.

Think about it. If you're a surrounding nation and you see this people who claim to worship the one true God, but they're being sent into exile, what do you think about that people's God? You think, “That God is weak. That God is not able to protect or provide for His people.” God says, “You are profaning My name among the nations, so I'm going to work among you in a way that shows all the nations My grace and My glory.”

This is the revolutionary root of Christianity. Christianity is not about the grace and glory of God being made known in one country or one nation among one type of people. Christianity is all about making the grace and glory of God known in every country, every nation, among every type of people. Think Daniel here—our favorite stories that we read this last week from the book of Daniel. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are thrown into a fiery furnace. They come out without a drop of sweat on their brows. Daniel is thrown into a den of lions for a night. He comes out the next morning totally untouched.

Why? What's the point of these stories? Don't miss the point. Keep going and look at Daniel 3:28-29 and Daniel 6:25-27. In both stories, a pagan king declares that every nation should give glory to God, because He is able to save those who trust in Him. God miraculously saved these men so that His glory might be proclaimed among all the nations. I'm telling you, this is all over the Bible.

Now, we're obviously coming up on July 4<sup>th</sup>, a patriotic week in our nation for good reason. We have so much to be thankful for, namely the freedoms we enjoy even today that we do not take for granted. We honor and celebrate men and women all across our church specifically who have served and who are serving now to protect and promote those freedoms.

Todd, our campus pastor at Prince William, who served for decades in all kinds of dangerous situations, is a Navy SEAL. He sent me and others a text about two more special forces soldiers who were killed in Afghanistan this past week. We thank God for individuals and families who protect and promote freedom and good, fighting against oppression and evil.

At the same time, in a pretty revolutionary way, do you know what we also do? On a church level, we send individuals and families to risk their lives for the spread of the gospel among men, women and children in Afghanistan and Iran, all over the Middle East in nations like Syria, as well as to Russia, China and North Korea. When we as Christians think of these countries, our first impulse is not animosity because of their posture toward our country. Our first impulse as Christians is compassion, as we long for them to know Christ in eternity.

We don't just sacrifice our lives in other nations defending earthly freedom; as Christians, we also sacrifice our lives in other nations spreading eternal freedom. This is why I love stories of retired veterans in our church who have valiantly fought for freedom around the world and are now using their retirement to passionately spread the good news of God's grace and glory around the world. After all, this is why God puts His Spirit in us, right?

So this promise in Ezekiel 36:27—*"I will put my Spirit within you..."*—is ultimately fulfilled after Jesus dies on a cross and rises from the grave. Right before He ascends into heaven, remember what He says in Luke 24:45-49?

*Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."*

Jesus is promising the filling of God's Spirit—for what purpose? So that they might be His witnesses in the world. When Luke picks up his writing in Acts 1, what does Jesus say there in verse eight? *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in*

*Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” Don’t miss the revolutionary root of Christianity. For the Christian, you are filled with God’s Spirit for the spread of God’s gospel among all nations.

I included Ezekiel 37 in the text for today, so although we’re out of time, let me at least read it, because you’ve got to see this picture:

*The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”*

*<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup> And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” <sup>10</sup> So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.*

*<sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”*

There is so much we could talk about here, but just ask the question in this passage, how do the dead come to life? The answer is twofold: first through the power of God’s Spirit and second, through the proclamation of God’s Word. Ezekiel speaks God’s Word in the power of God’s Spirit and the dead come to life. This is a picture that applies not just to what God was saying and doing in Ezekiel’s day; this picture applies to what God is saying to us and doing among us today.

Today God is still bringing dead people to life—the spiritually dead. In our congregational meeting last Wednesday, Philippe out of Prince William was sharing that some guys were doing work at his house, including a father and a son. Philippe started sharing the gospel with the father who said he was a follower of Christ, but that his son was not. He’s been praying for his son for a long time. So the

son comes over. Philippe shares the gospel with the son. He speaks the gospel in the power of God's Spirit and the son says, "I'm ready to follow Jesus." He goes from death to life at Philippe's house.

A teenager here at Tysons, Riley—a senior who just graduated—shared how she went to Beach Week, came back and there was one friend she knew she needed to share the gospel with. So she called her up, they met and talked, and that night her friend called her back and said, "I want to follow Jesus." She went from death to life.

#### **4. You have radically new power to see the dead come to life.**

Do you realize that you can do this, too? Somebody you meet this week, a friend you call up—Christian, you have radically new power to see the dead come to life. That's a revolutionary root and I'm concerned that we're missing this. When almost two-thirds of us rarely if ever share the gospel with somebody else, we're missing what's revolutionary about Christianity. We have the greatest news in the world. We have God's Spirit living in us—supernatural power to share this gospel and to see dead people come to life for all of eternity—all over the city and all over the world. Let's not miss this.

I want to do two things to close this service. One, there are some of you here today who are not Christians. You've never trusted God to save you from your sin solely by His grace. You don't have a heart that ultimately lives for God's glory in the world. Maybe you know you're not a Christian, or maybe you've called yourself a Christian, but truth be told you've missed the root—the essence—of Christianity. I want to invite you, right now, to say in your heart, "God, I receive Your love for me. I believe Jesus died for my sins and I'm asking You to save me by Your grace, not by what I do. I'm asking You to give me a new heart that is oriented around You and Your glory in the world." I want to invite you to say that to God in your heart right now.

If you do, I want to challenge you to share that with somebody today. Or if you have questions about any of this, I want to encourage you to ask those today. I have prayed that today the lightbulb would come on for many people by the power of God's Spirit and that you would realize and personally experience what's so radical about Christianity.

Then second, in a few minutes we're going to scatter with supernatural power for the spread of new life. A team of just under 200 from all of our campuses are going to head to the Dominican Republic this week, plus over 100 are heading to Ethiopia a couple weeks from now. I want us to pray for these two teams in particular. A lot of them are wearing this kind of shirt today and I'll be joining them in both places. So anybody who's going on one of these two unique church-wide trips, start making your way up to the stage.

As they're coming, I've got to tell you—especially when it comes to the Ethiopia trip—two nights ago the ambassador from Ethiopia invited all the folks who went to Ethiopia last year from

McLean Bible Church and all who are going this year to come to the embassy. There were over 100 of us gathered at the embassy on Friday night. He just wanted to thank this church for all you're doing to make an impact on the orphan crisis in Ethiopia in the name of Jesus. It was a powerful night. So I want you to be encouraged. If you're not going on one of these particular trips but are able to give, this is what we're a part of together. These brothers and sisters are going out as the overflow of our church family, as a reflection of our church family.

We want to pray for them. We want to intercede for them now and in the next few weeks for the spread of new life among the nations. I want to invite us to bow our heads right now and start praying out loud all at the same time. Pray for this trip to the DR, brothers and sisters serving in all kinds of ways in the midst of physical needs—poverty, trafficking—and spiritual needs, sharing the gospel, training pastors, serving churches. Then in Ethiopia, much of the same type of work and specifically focusing a lot on the orphan crisis. There are four or five million orphans in Ethiopia.

So start praying right now and these folks here on the platform are going to be praying too. Let's pray for the spread of God's grace and God's glory through these two trips in particular, then I'll close in prayer. Start praying out loud, all at the same time—and not whisper praying, but really calling out to God. Let's go for it.



We lift our voices together to You now and we praise You for Your grace in our lives. We praise You for saving us by Your grace and for Your glory. We gladly say to You now, “Use our lives for Your glory, for the spread of this good news, the spread of Your grace among the nations.” As thousands scatter throughout Metro Washington this week, make Your glory known, make Your grace known through us. We pray that You would bring the dead to life this week, outside our homes and our apartment complexes, among our friends and family members, neighbors and coworkers. God, please, please cause Your Word and Your Spirit in us to bring life.

And God, we praise You for the privilege of doing that beyond Washington, DC. Thank You for the opportunity that close to 200 people will have to do this in the Dominican Republic and over 100 in Ethiopia after that. We pray for Your supernatural leadership, Your supernatural anointing and directing of every single step, every single individual. God, we pray that You would bless these teams for the spread of new life. We pray that people would come to know Christ. We pray that churches would be encouraged and built up. Please help us to love our brothers and sisters in the DR and in Ethiopia well, to come alongside and serve them well.

God, we pray that even as we help amidst physical needs, give us the right perspective. We are not rescuers. We are the rescued; You are the Rescuer. You are the One we need and Who every single person in the DR and Ethiopia needs—the One Who every single orphan needs. You are Father to the

fatherless. You love the nations and desire them to know life in You. So God, please use us as instruments in Your hands to be a reflection of Your love, compassion and care.

I praise You for these brothers and sisters. I praise You for this church family, that You've given us the opportunity to be part of this kind of work. So God, help us to steward it well, for Your glory in every one of our lives. We pray that You would do in and through these trips immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine, in ways that can only be explained by Your hand and only be attributed to Your glory; we pray this not only during these trips, but beyond these trips as well. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Permissions:** You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

All Scriptures are quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

**Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:** By David Platt. © David Platt. Website: [Radical.net](http://Radical.net)