Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In **John 14:15**, Jesus said, “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*.” It is often used as a memory verse for children. So here is a question: How is it going with you and keeping the Lord’s commandments? If I were to ask you, How long ago did you break a commandment, or fail to keep one perfectly, would your answer be in days, hours, minutes, or seconds? And if we are all honest, we certainly won’t need to go back any further than one day to find at least one instance of disobedience, but probably more. And this can become wearying, can’t it. We want to obey but it seems so hard. And it is especially hard with what we call our ‘bad habits’ and our ‘personality defects’ and our ‘besetting sins’ or ‘addictions.’ And our repeated failures in these areas can even lead us to question our salvation.

Well, what we are going to see today is that as well as commanding our obedience, the Lord supplies us with the power to obey His commandments. But in what may come as a surprise to many of us, the power for obedience is linked to the resurrection of Christ. Answer 45 says, the second benefit of Christ’s resurrection is that “*By His power too we are already now resurrected to a new life*.” So what does this mean? How can something that happened to Jesus 2000 years ago affect how you and me live today as believers? And what does this new resurrected life look like?

Well, you will see that our text is one of the Scripture references for this part of the answer. So we want to work through these verses to see that **the same power that resurrected Christ** **is the Power for the Resurrected Life**.

Now, if you have watched a detective show, you will know that when someone dies suddenly an autopsy is required. The word ‘autopsy’ comes from Greek and it literally means ‘to see for oneself.’ So rather than make guesses or accept the opinions of others, the surgeon performs an autopsy so he or she can scientifically establish things like the *time* of death*,* the *state of health of the person before* he or she died,and the *manner* of death*.* And when the death is suspicious, all that information is put in the autopsy report and given to the police and lawyers as they try and work out *why* the person died and *who is responsible* for the death.

Well, our text could be described as an autopsy report with a major difference. You see, the autopsies I just described are performed *post-mortem*, which means after death. But the autopsy report in verses 4-6 is performed *post-vitae*, which means after life. The person described in this report was dead but they are now alive. And of course, what is described here is a *spiritual* event, not a *physical* event. So this post-vitae, spiritual autopsy report, will reveal that **the same power that resurrected Christ** **is the Power for the Resurrected Life**. And we will see this as we consider the findings of the report: **the description of the person’s spiritual condition *before* this resurrection happened**, the **time of life**, meaning when the resurrection happened, the **manner** of the resurrection, the **cause** of the resurrection, and the **purpose** of the resurrection.

1. So let’s begin with the **description of the person’s spiritual condition before this resurrection happened**. And this is described in the first part of verse 5, “*Even when we were dead in our trespasses*.”
   1. And these words point us back to verses 1-3, which begin with the same description: “*Dead in the trespasses and sins*.” And what this looks like is described in the rest of verses 1-3: “*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 … we all once lived in the passions of the flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind*.”
      1. And the first thing to note about this description is that it includes **every single human being** – this is the natural, spiritual condition of everyone. In verse 1 Paul refers to “*you*,” meaning his original Ephesians readers, and in verse 3 he changes to “*we*,” to include himself, and verse 3 ends with “*like the rest of mankind*.” So everyone who reads this letter, including believers, needs to understand that this is the natural, spiritual condition of everyone; this is how we all begin.
      2. And you just can’t get any clearer than ‘**dead** in sin’ and everything that is described here. It’s not saying that persons like this are never kind or polite and only ever murdering and committing immorality; it is saying that because they are in unbelief and they exclude the true God from everything they do, they are in slavery to sin; dominated by sin; utterly in the grip of sin. **Romans 8:4**ff describes it like this: “*Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires … The mind of sinful man is death … the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God*.”
      3. And one of the best biblical illustrations of this spiritual condition is the **prodigal son**. Do you remember him, boys and girls? He rudely demanded his inheritance before his father was dead, and then squandered away his money, was abandoned by all his friends, was eating pig’s food, and he thought he could pay off his debt to his father, when he couldn’t. But when he went home his father freely forgave him and laid on a feast, saying, “*For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found*.”
   2. So the first finding of this post-vitae spiritual autopsy is that the spiritual condition of this believer before he or she was resurrected was being dead in their trespasses.
      1. Do you understand this in relation to yourself, believer? Do you see what you have been resurrected from? You see, if you think you are and always have been a pretty good person, then you don’t need a very great Saviour. But if you understand that you were dead in your trespasses, then you know that you have a very great Saviour! And you know how much you owe Him in terms of your gratitude.
      2. And if you are not yet a believer, then I pray that the Spirit of the Lord is at work in your heart right now to show you your true spiritual condition and that you will see your need to repent and believe in Jesus as your Saviour.
2. And that brings us to the second part of this post-vitae, spiritual autopsy report – **the time of life**. Normal autopsies try and establish the time of death. But with this one is explaining when a believer was resurrected to spiritual life. And our particular interest here is some of the phrases in verses 5-6 – God “*made us alive*” and “*raised us up*” and *“seated us … in the heavenly places*.”
   1. Now, we need to remember here that this autopsy report is not about one believer in particular but about every believer. So while they will have much in common, there will be some variation of the exact details from one person to another, as we shall see.
      1. But let’s begin with what they have in common: And we begin with a grammar question: What tense do each of these phrases have in common? They are all in the **past tense**. So, for the believer, being made alive and raised up and seated in heaven is a one time, decisive, in-the-past event.
      2. And the good thing about our autopsy is that because the person being described is alive, we can ask him or her for more information about when this happened!
      3. The Bible says, “*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*.” So a person is saved, spiritually resurrected, the moment they confess and believe.
      4. And there are many examples of this happening in the Book of Acts: There are the 3000 on the Day of Pentecost, and the Ethiopian Eunuch, and Saul, and the Roman Centurion and his household, and Lydia and her household, and the Philippian jailer and his household; they all heard preaching and believed And were spiritually resurrected. So they could all tell us the day and time when they were ‘made alive.’ And I was talking to someone new at church the other day for whom this happened in June of this year. They know the moment that they got down on their knees and confessed their sin and trusted in Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord! Perhaps you too can identify the exact moment that you first believed in Jesus. Well, that is your **time of life**.
      5. But others of us, like myself, cannot point to a definitive moment when we first believed. I was raised in a covenant or believing home and as far back as I can remember I have always believed in Jesus as my Saviour. And that is fine too! Praise the Lord! But I know that there was a moment when I was made alive, because of what it says here in Ephesians 2. And I praise God that He made me alive even though I cannot pin point when that moment was!
      6. And for those of you who have not yet believed in Jesus my friend, I pray that today might be your time of life; the day that you believe in Jesus and receive Him as your Saviour; the day that you were made alive.
3. But there is still more that we can learn from this post-vitae, spiritual autopsy report. For the third part of the report is about the **manner** of this resurrection. And we see this also in verses 5-6, where our being made alive is “*together with Christ*,” and our being raised up is “*with Him*,” and our being seated is “*with Him in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus*.” So the manner of this spiritual resurrection is **with Jesus Christ**.
   1. Just prior to His death and resurrection and ascension, Jesus said to His disciples, “*It is to your advantage that I go away … [because then I can send the Holy Spirit to you]*.” They wanted Jesus to stay with them, to have Him physically next to them, but it was only as the resurrected and ascended Lord that He could send His Spirit into the hearts of each one of them and be united with them, spiritually. And He does this with every believer. It is the doctrine known as our union with Christ.
      1. And brothers and sisters, young people and boys and girls, our union with Christ, is **so important**. Have you ever glued two things together with superglue? You cannot break them apart – they basically become one thing. And that is how it is with the believer and Jesus – by the power of the Holy Spirit, they are permanently ‘glued’ together as one. So everything that the Father does for you is because you are *in* Christ or *with* Christ or *together with* Christ.
      2. And the reason this is so important is because **you know what you are like and you know what Christ is like**. Are you obedient, always? Are you faithful to God? Are you constant in your devotion to God? Does daily Bible reading and prayer and sexual purity and loving others as yourself come easily and regularly to you? We have to say, ‘No,’ don’t we. But was Christ obedient, always? Was He constant in His devotion to His Father’s will? Was He perfectly pure? Answer? Yes! And Is He now perfect and glorious and powerful and victorious? Answer? Yes!
      3. So it is because of Christ that you can have a rock solid certainty that you will not lose what is described in these verses; that you will not miss out on any of the blessings of salvation
      4. And that is why, when you have succumbed to sin and are weighed down by guilt, you must look at Christ! Remember His sacrifice and His obedience and remember that the Father has united you with Him and deals with you as an in Christ person.
4. And by way of extra comfort and assurance of salvation, the next part of the post-vitae spiritual autopsy report establishes the **cause of life**. Normal autopsies establish the cause of death. But this one explains the cause of life – what it is that led to the believer being spiritually resurrected. And this is spelled out in verse 4: “*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us*.”
   1. So the cause of life, the reason why you, as a believer, were spiritually resurrected, is all about God and His mercy and love. Do you see that? There is nothing here about how good you were or your deservingness or anything else in you or from you. And we saw that when we looked at the spiritual condition of the believer before they were made alive – *dead* in trespasses and sin. “*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us*.”
      1. **Mercy** is showing kindness to someone who does not deserve it. An example of mercy would be a Judge who lets off a person who is clearly guilty of some criminal offense. And verses 1-3 make it very clear that every believer was a very guilty sinner who deserved eternal condemnation. But God is ***rich*** in mercy to those He has chosen to salvation.
      2. And to God’s rich mercy is added His ***great* love**. And we don’t have time today to exhaustively explore this but the great love of God with which He loved us points us back to ch. 1:4: “*[God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ*.” So God’s love for believers has its origins way back in eternity past, before the world was created. It was way back then that He chose to love some of fallen humanity and to show them mercy. And Christ agreed to go and die on the cross and rise again that they might be forgiven. And the Spirit agreed to enter into each of God’s chosen ones and spiritually resurrect them by the same power that resurrected Christ.
   2. So believer, the cause of your spiritual resurrection is God’s *rich* mercy and His *great* love. And again, this is important because if spiritual resurrection was about something you did, then you might undo it tomorrow. But if it is about the unchanging mercy and love of God that has its origins in eternity past and its goal as eternity future, then your spiritual resurrection and your hope of eternal life is rock solid!
5. And that brings us to the last part of this post-vitae spiritual autopsy, which is the **purpose** of our spiritual resurrection. And here we are dealing with the so-what of our spiritual resurrection.
   1. If what we were when we were spiritually dead was everything described in verses 1-3, “*Following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air … [living] in the passions of the flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind,*” then surely it stands to reason that having been spiritually resurrected we will not be like this. Right?
      1. This is an impossible illustration, but if you witnessed an actual resurrection, and the newly resurrected person just wanted to stay lying in the coffin, that would be bizarre because they are not dead anymore! So they shouldn’t act like they are dead. Right?
      2. And this is the exact point. **Romans 6** states it this way: We were buried with Christ in His death, “*in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead … we too might walk in newness of life … [We] once presented the parts of our body as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness [that’s being spiritually dead], [but we must] now present the parts of our body as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness [that’s being spiritually alive]*.”
      3. So because the same power that raised Christ from death is at work in us, by His Spirit, we can and must walk “*in newness of life*.”
   2. And if you are wondering, what does this look like? Well, look down at **verse 10**: “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*.” And if you are wondering what these good works are, well, in **chapters 4-6** Paul gets very detailed and specific and practical about good works.
      1. He calls on believers to guard against sinful anger and not to steal, and to work hard so that they can share with those in need. He is going to say, Don’t use bad language and instead say things that build others up and benefit them. He is going to say, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. [And instead] Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” He is going to forbid every form of sexual immorality, including even filthy jokes. He is going to forbid drunkenness and command the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. And then he will give specific and detailed commands about family relationships and workplace relationships.
      2. And brothers and sisters, young people and boys and girls, the whole point of this passage is to tell you that you can obey the commandments of Jesus because the same power that raised Him from death is at work in you by the Holy Spirit. So don’t be comfortable with your sins; don’t write particular sins off as ‘just your personality’ or ‘a sickness’ or a ‘weakness.’

Last month we bought a **new vacuum cleaner**. And man it can suck! After each vacuum, we look at how much dirt has been sucked up and we are amazed at how much more powerful this vacuum is compared to our last one. Well, the resurrection power of Christ’s Spirit is like a vacuum cleaner for sin – it is most powerful! And He is at work within you. So ask the Lord to cleanse of you of this sin or that sin, knowing that He loves to answer those prayers. Praise God for this benefit of Christ’s resurrection. Amen.