

LIVING DEAD

Romans 6:1-7

Before Reading:

Why is the resurrection of Jesus so important?
Could Jesus have died for us, but not risen again?

I have a friend who is a big fan of Liverpool FC. I often hear him say things like this: "We won our game last night," or, "Our best player is out injured for the season." What I always find funny about this is the way that he feels united to the team: he says 'we' and 'our', but he isn't even a member of the team!

As Christians, we are united to Jesus in a strangely similar way. In this passage, Paul says that because Jesus died, we also died (v3), and because he rose again, we are also risen to new life (v4-5). This is different to how we usually talk about the gospel. Normally we say that *when* we die, the we will rise to life *afterwards*. But Paul here says that we died when we put our faith in Jesus (which Paul describes as baptism, v3), and we live resurrected lives *right now*.

That's a neat idea, but what does it actually mean? After all, I don't remember dying when I

first became a Christian.

Paul doesn't really mean we literally die when we become Christian. Look at his words in verses 2, 6, and 7. When we die with Christ, it is our old, sinful self that dies - the part of us that is enslaved to sin and an enemy of God. Our body that was ruled by sin is done away with when we trust in Jesus (v6)! We are set free (v7)!

But the gospel isn't good news if it only offers us death - thankfully it also offers us new life! Because Jesus is resurrected, we are also if we are united to him by faith. We can now live as those who are free from sin's rule in our lives. As it said in our passage on Sunday, our lives are now hidden with Christ in heaven with God (Colossians 3:3-4). Christians are risen now, but our resurrected life will only be revealed in full when Jesus returns. So let's pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, come!"

Reflection Questions:

1. Does what Paul describes in these verses make sense to you? If not, who can you ask to make better sense of it?
2. What does living the 'resurrected life' look like in our world today? What does it look like for you?

Prayer:

Lord God, I know that you love me and care for me because Jesus died and rose for me, and I am united to his death and resurrection now. But God, even though my old, sinful self has died, I still struggle to live the life free from sin that you have called me to. Help me to do this, and to grow in love and thankfulness to you. Amen.

GRACE & SALT

Colossians 4:2-6

Before Reading:

Has a friend ever asked you a tricky question about Christianity that you didn't know how to answer?

How Christians interact with the world is important. How we act has the power to tell other people a lot about what we believe, and as Christians we are called to point people to God and the wonderful gospel of Jesus. But how do we do this?

Paul starts by talking about the importance of prayer in a Christian's life; he says to 'continue steadfastly in prayer' (v2). Notice how his prayer point is that God may provide opportunities for him to tell people about the gospel (v3-4). Our prayer life is a vital part of living in a way that glorifies Jesus in front of others. Prayer is something we always need to continue in: not because it's something we are commanded to do, but because in prayer we learn to rely on God and ask him to transform us more and more into the likeness of his son Jesus. Regular, thankful, gospel-centred prayer is an essential part of living as a Christian in this world.

But how do we interact with the world? What do we do when our friends have different opinions

to us and ask difficult questions about our faith? Verse 5 says to 'walk in wisdom toward outsiders'. From Paul's time to now, people have always had misconceptions about Christians and about who God is, and how we act and speak as believers can have an effect on these views.

Our speech should be two things: gracious, and seasoned with salt (v6). In conversations, especially difficult ones about our faith, it is easy to become frustrated or even angry with people; to speak with grace means to reflect God's love in what we say and how we say it; it makes for more helpful and productive discussions. 'Seasoned with salt' is talking about our conversations having flavour, that is, wisdom, truth and sense, which we find in the bible.

While we often won't know an answer immediately, how we conduct ourselves in conversation is often just as important as what we say. So while it's important to do our best to answer well for our faith, it's vital to do so with love and grace.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does your prayer life look like? Does your prayer lead you to depend on God?
2. How might you learn to speak words that are gracious and seasoned with salt?
3. What do you usually do when someone asks you a question about your faith that you don't know the answer to?

Prayer:

Dear Father, thank you that I can pray to you and bring everything before you. Please help me to be mindful of how I interact with the world, and please help me to speak in a way that honours you and is gracious and wise. Thank you that you give me the bible and other Christians around me, please help me to seek answers in your word. Thank you that you love me and have saved me. Amen.