



**Death
Activates
Life**



TITLE & AUTHOR

“Death Activates Life “
By W D Furioso



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Preface

A ten-year pursuit of Western philosophies, then Eastern philosophies and Occult sciences brought me to a state of enslavement to a particular form of Chinese divination called the I Ching along with an addiction to street drugs.

In a footnote in the particular publication of the *"I Ching or Book of Changes"* I was using referenced Jesus' words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."¹ Even in my spiritual stupor, the verse captivated me. I read it repeatedly. My mind could not comprehend its meaning, except that this was obviously a "natural law" that could be seen in "nature" with seeds and fruit. Notwithstanding the profoundness of this phenomenon, was there more to "come to light" by contemplating this mystery? For years, this verse had grabbed hold of something in my heart. It never left me. I would liken it to a hook at the end of a fishing line – I was being "reeled in". It was a few years later that the Holy Spirit had drawn me into surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. After the gifts repentance and faith, I received the Gift of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Spirit and baptized into Christ. I then began to gain some understanding of the verse: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls

¹ John 12:24 *KJV*

into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”²

I was fortunate that my initial experience in Christian community, through its teaching ministry and general fellowship in the Spirit, nurtured this concept of spiritual life emerging from “putting to death the deeds of the flesh”.³ And this perspective has remained consistent in my walk with the Lord for these more than fifty years.

Indeed, this perspective can be found in much of my writing as well. Suffice to say, this particular article is specifically about **newness of life emerging from death.**



² John 12:24 *NASB*

³ Romans 8:13

Introduction

The title of this message is based on 2 Corinthians 4:12. A literal translation would be: **“Death is active in us, but life is active in you.”**

The principle upon which this message is based is found in 1 Corinthians 15:36: “That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies.” As previously stated, in John 12:24, Jesus expressed the same principle this way: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

The theme of this message is found in Jesus’ words in John 6:63: “The Spirit alone gives eternal life (or the life of the Eternal One). Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”⁴

“The Spirit Gives Life”

The apostle Paul also said that “the Spirit gives life.”⁵ He said this in the context of his discussion of the difference between the Old and the New Covenants. The life of the Spirit within as well as in the midst of the people of God distinguishes the New Covenant from the Old Covenant.⁶ Both the prophets Isaiah and

⁴ *New Living Translation*

⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:6

⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:3, 6

Ezekiel, as well as Jesus Himself, all referenced the New Covenant in terms of the life of the Spirit being within as well as in the midst of the people of God.⁷

Scripture is clear that “the Spirit gives life.” But *how*? What is the process by which the Holy Spirit gives life to the people of God? We know that God brought forth life out of nothing in the Creation, but we do not know the *exact details of how*. Scripture actually gives us more information about *how* God creates “newness of life”⁸ in the New Creation. And that is the subject matter of this message. Admittedly, the process is not obvious – it takes some in depth analysis of the Scripture. And the process may seem mysterious, surprising, and even unpleasant. But, this “newness of life” within and in the midst of the people of God is the essence of the New Covenant which Jesus died to give us.⁹ Like the Athenians, the Church tends to always look for “some new thing”.¹⁰ But what is needed is for the Church to fully live in the New Covenant, if we are to experience a refreshing, renewal, revival, which has “fruit that remains”.¹¹ So, *how* does the Spirit give life? What is the process?

⁷ Isaiah 59:21; Ezekiel 36:26-27, 37:14; John 14:17

⁸ Romans 6:4

⁹ Hebrews 9:15-17

¹⁰ Acts 17:21

¹¹ John 15:16

Resurrection Follows Death

This is what the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans: “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”¹² The spiritual principle by which God works is this: **“Newness of life” follows a resurrection from death.** There must be a death and a burial for there to be a resurrection; and “newness of life” follows that resurrection from death.



¹² Romans 6:4

Putting to Death the Works of the Flesh

Paul gives us even more understanding of that principle in operation when he writes in 2 Corinthians 4:8-12:

“⁸ afflicted in every way but not crushed; perplexed but not despairing; ⁹ persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed; ¹⁰ **always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.** ¹¹ For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, **so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.** ¹² **So death works in us, but life in you.”**

I would like to draw your attention to a couple of things in this passage: Firstly, notice the phrases “not crushed”, “not despairing”, “not forsaken”, “not destroyed”. Paul is referring to a *type* of death which is not literally the biological death of the body. God’s intention is to “manifest the life of Jesus” in *living bodies*, not dead bodies. This is another way of Paul discussing his concept of a “**living sacrifice**”.¹³

Secondly, notice the phrases “in the body” and “in the flesh”. Paul is not referring to a “death of self” or “crucifixion of self”. God’s desire to “manifest the life of Jesus” “in our body” does not involve the elimination of the personality of the individual human soul. I use the

¹³ Romans 12:1

phrase, “the personality of the individual soul”, as a way of defining the Greek word which is used for the English word, “self”.¹⁴ But here, Paul is not using that Greek word for “self”.¹⁵ He is using a *different* Greek word translated “flesh” or “body”.¹⁶ There is a difference between “the self” and “the body”. There is a difference between “the self” and “the flesh”. While Scripture does refer to the “putting to death **the works of the flesh**”¹⁷, it does **not** refer to putting to death **the self**. Jesus never spoke of “death of self”. Rather, He spoke of “denying self”.¹⁸ In all of his epistles, Paul *never* refers to “death of self”;¹⁹ but he does speak of **a type of “death”** in the realm of the “flesh” – specifically **“putting to death”²⁰ the works of the flesh”**.²¹ *That* is the “death” which is being referred to in this message – **a type of death to the works of the flesh** which will activate that “newness of life”. **A type of death** which activates resurrection life within the individual believer and in the midst of the people of God.

¹⁴ Greek: *autos*, Strong’s # G5367

¹⁵ Greek: *autos*, Strong’s # G5367

¹⁶ Greek: *sarx*, Strong’s # 4561

¹⁷ Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:24, Cf. vv.19-26. “flesh” or “body”, Greek: *sarx*.

¹⁸ Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24

¹⁹ Jesus, also, never spoke of “death of self”, but rather “denying self”. (Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24). I have written about this in my article [“Transformation of Self”](#).

²⁰ Greek: *thanatoo*, Strong’s # G2289

²¹ Romans 8:13. Also: “laying aside the “old man”: Ephesians 4:22, 25; Colossians 3:9.

This is the New Covenant promise of “resurrection life” for the New Creation – something which God intends for all who are in Christ. Yet, the Church too often experiences this “resurrection life” as a temporary “refreshing”, or “renewal”, or “revival”. This is merely being “touched” by “the life of Jesus” rather than actually “**living**” by **His life**. The reason for the incomplete embracing of this “newness of life” can be attributed to various things, both within the individual believer and in the midst of the Church. These things, which are many²², are the things which “bind” and “block” the people of God from experiencing a full baptism into this flow of the life of the Spirit. These things need to be “put to death” and “buried” so that “newness of life” might be activated within the individual believer and in the midst of the people of God.

²² I am intentionally not specifying any of “these things”. If this message were being delivered in person, I would open a discussion at this point, asking what you think are some of the things in your personal lives and in the life of the Church which you think “bind” and “block” the flow of the life of the Spirit. I will summarize “these things” here by identifying them as a self-centered, rather than God-centered message, ministry and mission of the Church.

Resurrection Life

There is a picture of resurrection in the story of Lazarus, who can be seen as a type of the Church. John 11, verse 6: “So when He (Jesus) heard that he (Lazarus) was sick, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was.” Why did Jesus postpone coming to Lazarus? Why does revival not come to the Church? We try to analyze what will bring revival to the Church. We fast, we pray, we praise, and still often revival doesn’t come. Why?

John 11, vv. 14-15: “So Jesus said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.’” We see that Jesus simply waited for Lazarus to **die**. Sometimes the Lord raises up adversaries to execute judgment on the Church; and sometimes He merely allows our iniquities to overtake us. Scripture refers to it as “the fullness of iniquity” or “iniquity reaching its full measure”.²³ This is “the law of sin and death”²⁴. The proverb says, “He who pursues evil will bring about his own death.”²⁵ **It seems that the Lord often allows the iniquities in the Church to be carried out to their natural end, before he visits the Church with revival of “newness of life”.** So, if our fasting, praying and praising truly results in “the fruits of repentance”, then we may see revival. If not, then our fasting, praying and praising are merely more religious

²³ Genesis 15:16

²⁴ Romans 8:2

²⁵ Proverbs 11:19. Cf. Proverbs 10:16 & Romans 6:23

“works of the flesh”. And these religious “works of the flesh” are particularly sickening to God. Listen to what He had to say through the prophets:

Isaiah prophesied: “¹¹The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?’ says the LORD. ‘I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹² When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? ¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. ¹⁴ Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood! ¹⁶ Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong.’”²⁶

Amos prophesied: “²¹ I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. ²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. ²³ Away with the noise of your

²⁶ Isaiah 1:11-16 *New International Version*

songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. ²⁴ But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”²⁷

Samuel prophesied: “²² Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.”²⁸

Back to John 11 with Jesus and Martha:

v. 25: “Jesus said to her (Martha), ‘I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.’”

Resurrection life is available through faith in Christ - that is, through **utter dependence** upon Christ. Paul told the Philippians that true faith is “... serving God through his Spirit, boasting in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in human nature.”²⁹ Too often, the Church continually proliferates a plethora of programs which are generated from “the works of the flesh” rather than being directives from the Head of the Church, which is Jesus Christ. The Body of Christ lives on the “life of Christ”. As the Lord said: “The Spirit alone gives the life of the Eternal One. Human effort accomplishes nothing.”³⁰

²⁷ Amos 5:21-23 *New International Version*

²⁸ 1 Samuel 15:22-23a *New International Version*

²⁹ A literal translation of Philippians 3:3. Cf. *Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament and Vincent’s Word Studies*.

³⁰ John 6:63 *New Living Translation*

Scripture assures us that the Lord will test what is being built in His Church.³¹ All that is not built in obedience to the Head will collapse in a flood.³² All that is built with “wood, hay and straw” will be destroyed by fire.³³ All that is built by “the works of the flesh” will be shaken and removed.³⁴

Jesus commanded that Lazarus’ gravestone be removed. John 11, vv. 38-39a: “³⁸So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, ‘Remove the stone.’” This “removing the stone” signifies the removal of all “the works of the flesh” which have been blocking off the Spirit of Life and hindering our living in the New Covenant. This is a removal of an Old Covenant paradigm dependent upon religious people, religious places, and religious things, rather than on **“worship in Spirit and truth” which “boasts in Christ Jesus”**.³⁵

These grave clothes signify a type of church ministry which fails to make disciples of Christ³⁶ who are

³¹ Ezekiel 40:1-5; Revelation 11:1; 21:15

³² Luke 6:46-49

³³ 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

³⁴ Hebrews 12:25-29

³⁵ Philippians 3:3. Again, I have intentionally not specified things I am attributing to an “Old Covenant paradigm”. If this message were being delivered in person, I would open a discussion at this point, asking you for examples of religious people, religious places and religious things in the Church which unintentionally end up blocking off the Spirit of Life and hindering our living in the New Covenant. I do specify some of “these things” in my message, [“The Woman & The Well”](#).

³⁶ Matthew 28:19-20

equipped to walk in the New Covenant promises and responsibilities.³⁷

John 11, v.44: “The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’” These grave clothes signify a people who have insufficient revelation of Christ, hindered in their walk and service of the Lord, and are dependent upon religious people, places and things – immature sheep who are unable to shepherd others. This is the fruit of church ministry which fails to make disciples of Christ³⁸ and fails to equip people to walk in the promises and responsibilities of the New Covenant.³⁹

John 11, v. 43: “When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’” Jesus died and rose in order to redeem a people for Himself – a people who are not merely “touched” by resurrection power, **but a people who have died, been buried and resurrected with Christ in order to live in His resurrection life.**

³⁷ Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13

³⁸ Cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28-29

³⁹ Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13

When the Holy Spirit Blows on the Church

Just as there is a picture of resurrection in the story of Lazarus, there is another picture of refreshing, renewal, and revival in Scripture. In all four gospels we read of John the Baptist.⁴⁰ I believe we can see the roots of his prophetic message and ministry rooted in a passage from Isaiah 40:

v. 3 “A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.’” Matthew, Mark and Luke all quote this verse in reference to John the Baptist. And in John’s gospel, John the Baptist uses this verse to identify himself. The Lord had given John the Baptist a message and ministry much like the one he had given to Jeremiah. This was the prophet’s commission: “⁹Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. ¹⁰See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”⁴¹ The Lord used this type of prophetic message and ministry to precede and prepare for the coming of Christ to establish the New Covenant. It is this type of movement of the Holy Spirit - “plucking up”, breaking down”, “destroying”, “overthrowing”, as well as, “building” and “planting” – which God uses in preparation for a

⁴⁰ Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23

⁴¹ Jeremiah 1:9-10

new season in the kingdom of God – for a fresh visitation of His Spirit bringing “newness of life” to the people of God. **The principle is: death, then life – tearing down, then rebuilding.**

Isaiah 40, vv. 4-5: “⁴Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; ⁵ then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” These words paint a picture of revolutionary and traumatic changes taking place in an environment. The apostle Paul told the Church, “We must go through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of God.”⁴²

Isaiah 40, v. 6: “A voice says, ‘Call out.’ Then he answered, ‘What shall I call out?’ All flesh is grass, and all its glory is like the flower of the field.” What is it that the Lord wants the prophet to proclaim? The proclamation is to remind Humanity of its fallen nature. The Lord says that human beings are like “grass”; and our “glory”⁴³, that is our greatest accomplishments, are like “the flower of a field”.

Isaiah 40, v. 7-8: “⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”

⁴² Acts 14:22

⁴³ Hebrew: *chesed*, Strong’s # H2617

The words “withers” and “fades” speak of **a type of dying**. The “grass withers”. All works of the flesh will wither. The “flower fades”. Even what we consider the greatest accomplishments of men will fade.

The Hebrew words have much richer meaning. The Hebrew word translated “wither” means “to become confounded and ashamed and therefore wither away”.⁴⁴ That is how human beings can become when the breath or Spirit⁴⁵ of the Lord blows upon the Church – either confounded or ashamed - not really comprehending what the Spirit is saying and doing, because it is disrupting the “status quo”.

The Hebrew word translated “fades” means “to come to nothing, be lightly esteemed, and therefore fade away”. It can even mean “to become disgraced and dishonored”.⁴⁶ This is what can happen to men’s greatest accomplishments when the breath or Spirit of the Lord blows upon the Church.

What is God’s purpose in this type of dying of which even the greatest of churches and ministries are not exempt? It is the same purpose He had with His people in the wilderness: “^{16b} ... that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.

⁴⁴ Hebrew: *yabesh*, Strong’s # H3001

⁴⁵ Hebrew: *ruach*, Strong’s H7307

⁴⁶ Hebrew: *nabel*, Strong’s # H5034

¹⁷ Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this abundance.’ ¹⁸ But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you ability to have abundance, that He may confirm His covenant....”⁴⁷

The moving of the Holy Spirit which brings refreshing, renewal, revival, “newness of life”, and resurrection life in the Church *must first bring a type of death to the works of the flesh. **Death activates life.***

“To Him be glory in the Church.”⁴⁸

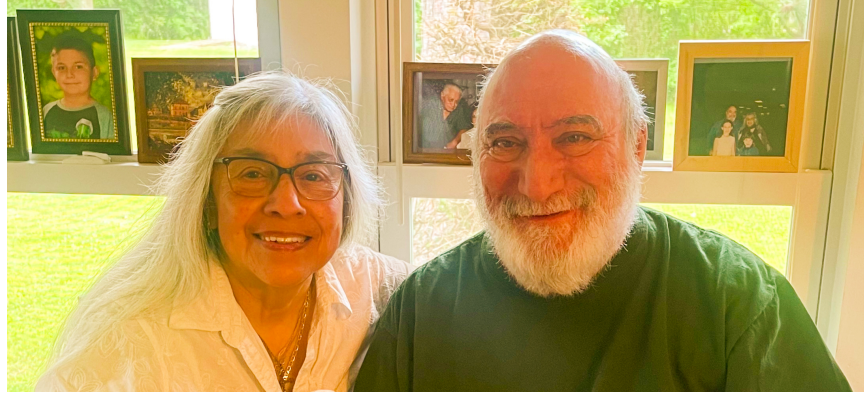


⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 8:16b-18

⁴⁸ Ephesians 3:21

Bill & Frances Furioso

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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet...

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