

## Freedom From Bondage

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Talking death is no fun! Some will feel uneasy and quesy, "Let's talk something else! Let's talk something fun." For a lot of people, talking death is taboo. In Indonesia, people don't like talking death. When we are talking death, it's same thing as wishing the person you are having a conversation with to die soon. But yet, this morning, courageously, I will allow myself to talk about death to you. For two reasons: death is inevitable. It's around us. It's part of life, some say. And another reason is just like what Jesus said in the gospel of John: so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. If death is the ultimate defeat of humanity, then we must talk about it, so that the power of God that has overcome death can shine through it. Do you agree? You don't have to agree. Because I'm going to talk about it anyway. HAH!

So, Lazarus had been dead for four days. imagine me as Lazarus, I have been dead for four days. Four days means: I am so dead! There is no more air coming in and out of my lungs. There is no more word flowing in and out of my mouth. There is no more thought running in and out of my brain. I am in this pitch dark cave, laying helplessly on the flat rock. In the time of Jesus, the dead body was wrapped with a linen cloth like a mummy. So, here I am, a mummy in the dark cave, immobile, and separated from the outside world where my family and friends live. I live, now, in my own dark world. For four days being death, my own body starts to separate. The medical journal I read says that maggots can consume up to 60 percent of a human body in under seven days. Dead for four days means maggots may have consumed more than a third of my body. When life is gone, death takes over. Death is separation, really. In that process, death separates everything. Separate myself from the great and grandeur world of color. Death separates me from the light that I used to see, from the air, words, thoughts, and mobility that I used to experience. The death separates me from every aspect of life and at the same time bound me into a new world: the world of darkness. The death me, is now inside a little dark cave. But at least I feel, that I am R.I.P. Resting in peace.

And then, suddenly I hear a commotion outside my little dark cave. There is a man, named Jesus, coming to town. Ah...yes, I remember now....he is my family's friend. O yeah....Jesus is my good bro, we used to hang out and break bread together. A nice man, he is. And I hear foot steps. my sister, Martha, running to meet Jesus....Ow, ow...here comes trouble. I hear Martha wailing so loudly, "Master, if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died."

“Good grief, what is she doing? Is she blaming my bro Jesus for my death? Chill out sista” And Jesus said, “Chill, sista!”

“That’s right! I just said that!”

And Jesus continues, “Chill! Martha! Your brother will rise again!”

“What the...?” I cannot believe my ear. “Did I hear it correctly? I am going to rise again? I am just resting in peace.” And then my sis says: “Yeah right! I know he will rise again in the end of day!”

Jesus: “No, no, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Friends, what would you say to Jesus if Jesus is going to rise you up? If you were Lazarus, what would be your reaction? Would you like to be back to life again? Or you’re just too happy in the new state of your life, away from the outside world, away from life altogether and living in the bondage of darkness? Perhaps you think, life is hard, too much sorrow, too much pain and suffering. I’d rather die than to live in this world full of sadness. I’d rather rest in my dark cave than thinking about wars between Israel and Palestinians, climate change, malnourished children, AIDS pandemic, ebola virus, corrupt government, broken relationship.....

Friends, I believe, the story of Lazarus talks not only about a physical death also about the spiritual death for us today. There is an interesting word play in this story: The name Lazarus is a shorter form of the name Eleazar means: God helps. And Bethany the town where Lazarus lived came from the Hebrew name Bet-anyan means: House of Affliction. Who among us today live like Lazarus who look for God’s help because we have been living in the house of affliction?

Spiritual death became a reality for humanity after the Fall of Adam and Eve. We know the story, God instructed Adam to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, warning that eating the fruit would result in death ([Genesis 2:16-17](#)). But they ate it anyway, however, they did not immediately experience physical death. Rather, their relationship with God was severed. They became aware of their nakedness, created clothes of leaves, and hid themselves from God in shame ([Genesis 3:6-9](#)). They were no longer functioning spiritually. Adam and Eve were spiritually dead. *Romans 5:12 explains, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”* The sin of Adam and Eve tainted all of humanity. We all have a sinful nature now. We are born separated from God, from one another, and from our own selves. Death is within us, even when we are still physically alive!

And that is The sad thing about spiritual death, that we are so dead inside while we're still walking in this world. People may see us alive and well, but deep inside, we are the walking death, like that TV show. We lose touch with the world. We disconnect ourselves from the world around us. And we live inside our own dark little box. We see the world as a depressing place to live not as a good world that has been redeemed by God and we see others as a threat for our well being.

**Story:**

There is a story about a man who was roaming in this world.

He saw people love each other, and he saw that love made strenuous demands on the lovers. He saw that love required sacrifice and self-denial. He saw that love produced arguments, jealousy, and sorrow. He decided that love cost too much. He decided not to diminish his life with love.

He saw people strive for distant and hazy goals. He saw men strive for success and women strive for high ideals. He saw that the striving was often mixed With disappointment. He saw strong and committed men fail, and he saw weak, undeserving men succeed. He saw that striving sometimes forced people into pettiness and greed. He decided that it cost too much. He decided not to soil his life with striving.

He saw people serving others. He saw men give money to the poor and helpless. He saw that the more they served, the faster the need grew. He saw ungrateful receivers turn on their serving friends. He decided not to soil his life with serving.

When he died, he walked up to God and presented his life to Him undiminished, unmarred, unsoiled. The man was clean and untouched by the filth of the World, and he presented himself to God proudly saying, "Here is my life" And God said, "Life? What life?"

The guy had been living in a bondage of his own dark tiny cave that separates him with the outside world. He's been long dead even though he was still walking on earth!

Do you feel there is a bondage around you that keeps you from God and the world around you?

We argue that the death that befalls us doesn't come out of nowhere. We've been dealing with bad relationship for years. We came from abusive parents, abusive spouse, we argued. We've been dealing with sickness for years and years: surgery after surgery, disease after disease has incapacitated us to enjoy the world. We've been dealing with betrayal of our best friends, megalomaniac bosses, and hectic schedules of life. We've had it enough we said. I'd rather drop dead than to continue living in this hell. We've lost the battles and we cannot accept living like a loser. And then we found ourselves coming to church every Sunday

means nothing, just an empty ritual. We feel that we pray to the God who will never give answer to our prayers and we listen to a deceptive sermons that are too good to be true: loving God? forgiveness? Everlasting life? Hope? How about this painful world? I'd rather drop dead! We throw in the towel. That's it! I had it enough. Leave me alone, people! Leave me alone, God. The disappointments, deceptions, ignorance, and fear have crippled us and bound us so strongly, and make us dead spiritually.

Just like in Lazarus' story, the physically dead Lazarus could do nothing for himself. The bondage of death is so strong. He was unresponsive to all stimuli, oblivious to all life around him, beyond all help or hope. That's what we feel today: helpless and hopeless!

So, when you heard that Jesus is about to rise you up, what would be your response? What would be your response when you hear: *"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."*? Everyone who lives will live in the fullness to see the joy and grace of God in every single aspect of life: good and bad.

But Jesus does not give any choice to Lazarus. When Martha came wailing under the foot of Jesus, she knew that there is still hope. And for those who encounter Jesus, Jesus doesn't give any options. You must back to life! You must stop living in the dark tiny cave of yours! Therefore Jesus shouted: "Lazarus, get out!" This a very rare occasion where we find Jesus is shouting. Jesus did shout to Lazarus: Get out! Like our mother who came to our bedroom after found out that we spent too much time in our room: Come out, and see the world! Come out! Come out of that pitiful life of yours! Come out of your deceptive minds! Come out of your stress! Come out of your addiction, stress, hopelessness! Come out of your pitiful life. Come out of your embarrassing life. Get out Mickey, Chris, Get out Portia...He's calling us out today! Come out of the miserable life of yours!!

Jesus said: I came bringing freedom to the bondage. I came to bring life to the death! I came to bring light to the darkness! Come out and receive life!

After Jesus shouted, Lazarus came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Today...Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior brings freedom to our life. When Lazarus encountered Jesus that day, he regained back his life!

The stance of bondage of death is : crossing your arms. And the stance of power and life is: raising your hands toward the sky!

AMEN!