

Zombie moves are as old as the film industry, but the genre took off with *Night of the Living Dead* in 1968.<sup>1</sup> There is a certain fascination as well as obsession with the slow-moving, flesh-eating creatures but the whole thing is obviously a production of human creativity.<sup>2</sup> It's another way of fending off and ostracizing our fears and anxieties, especially our sense of powerlessness in relation to death and inspire hope and a sense of control. We can easily out-run and out-wit the "slow, [...] mechanical inept, ...[and] technologically challenged" creatures.

Paul surely is not referring to Zombies, but he also speaks of the living dead. In his view, **those who are separated from God are separated from the Source of Life.** They are obviously alive but have chosen to feed themselves on what does not give them life.

According to Eugene Peterson's translation of Ephesians 2, Paul rebukes them with straight words:

It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. (verses 1-4)

**By following our own senses and whims,** we lost our mind and our way, in search of meaning and affirmation and for a temporary fix, what can only give a impermanent satisfaction and sense of worth: **we lived a no-life life, a life empty of Life's energy.** It was our relationship with God that we compromised. And so, God shows God's immense glory by acts of mercy and rescues us from our illogical and stubborn blindness. In Peterson's translation of Paul's teaching in Ephesians, **"He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ."** (v. 5)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://editorial.rottentomatoes.com/guide/essential-zombie-movies/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.psu.edu/news/research/story/probing-question-why-are-we-so-fascinated-zombies;> see also <https://www.livescience.com/63365-why-love-zombies.html>

Therefore, Jesus' being "lifted up," had nothing to do with condemnation or satisfaction for human evil. Instead, it revealed God's loving solidarity with all who suffer and demonstrated that suffering and evil will never have the last word.

### ***So, It's Not Substitution Atonement***

Please, pay attention. Jesus doesn't say "For God so loved *you*, that God gave God's Son...to be crucified *in your place*, so that if you *confess your sin and agree that Jesus saves*, you will not die but go to heaven."

This is not about God's Son being sacrificed *in our place* to satisfy an offended, angry, and vengeful God, and is not about mental assent or repentance and feeling forgiven or going to heaven.

### ***It's About Healing Love, Growing Love***

Jesus seems rather to be saying: "God murmurs within our hearts: 'I love you just as you are. I so love you that I come to heal you and to give you life. Do not be afraid. Open your heart. It is all right to be yourself and not the person others want you to be. You do not have to deny yourself. You do not have to abide by society's worth-determining judgments and labels: perfect or clever, slim or good-looking, rich or poor, gay or straight. You are loved just as you are. Become the person I made you to be. As you become more conscious of my love, your heart will expand, and you will want to respond to that love with love and grow in love.'"

### ***Even More So, It's About Universal, All-encompassing Love***

Jesus says "For God so loved the *world*..." that is, the *Kosmos*, the whole created and *ordered universe*. Not just one nation; not just one people; not just one religious group; and not just humans. God loved the whole *Kosmos*.

And *this* is God's gift, such a strong desire to remain connected and intimate with us to the point of giving God's Self away, putting God's