

In our series "Things That Matter Most," we learned that we really do not understand ourselves, nor do can we discover God. This is a key point to remember when we endeavor to live our lives with Christ as our Savior and Lord. On one hand we were created in such a way that we were "redeemable" according to the plan of God but on the other hand we are completely helpless to discover the way to a right relationship with God.

We, as sinners, are truly a paradox on the "Horns of a Dilemma." Let me explain. On one hand we are the result of God's creative act in our mother's womb,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand we are desperately wicked and cannot understand our sinful condition nor even seek God.<sup>2</sup> That's the paradox. The Horns of our Dilemma is this: First, we stand condemned before God as His enemies, completely impotent to even move in His direction.<sup>3</sup> Second, if we do move in His direction, we can only create a god in our own image - an idol.<sup>4</sup> This leads to further condemnation by God - read Romans 1:24 - 32.

The miracle of Salvation is that it is that God brushes the impossible paradox and dilemma aside by seeking us. It is *God* who had redeemed us - we had nothing to do with the Salvation experience except to accept what was freely offered to us; to repent of our sins, having been convicted by the Holy Spirit of our sinful condition, and answer the call of the Gospel. Even our Faith in Him is given to us as a part of our Salvation experience<sup>5</sup> - that is, apart from Christ and His finished work on the cross there would *be* no faith. So we need to understand the full implication of our initial salvation experience and how helpless, impotent, if you please, we are to understand the basis upon which we are to live our Christian life.

Let's have some scripture that will point us down the correct pathway of living the Christian life:

**Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! [10] For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Romans 5:9-10**

You might ask, "What point are you trying to bring out with this passage?" My point is precisely this - we have no more strength to live the Christian life apart from Christ now that we have been saved then we did when we were without Christ. Somehow, I get the impression that it is the worth or special moral strength of the Christian

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<sup>1</sup> "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." Psalm 139:13 (All passages are NIV unless otherwise noted).

<sup>2</sup> "there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God." Romans 3:11.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 5:6; Acts 17:27 (NASB)

<sup>4</sup> Romans 1:21 - 23.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 10:8, 17; 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:15.

individual that makes the difference between one who is living the successful Christian life and one, who might be of lesser moral strength, and therefore stands a lesser chance of living "successfully" the Christian life. Nothing could be further from the truth. That is precisely why Paul is making this point in our passage. We were *all* weak, indeed impotent and His enemies, before we came to Christ but then came Salvation. We were saved from God's wrath even in our sinful condition. Now that we are reconciled - not His enemies any more, we continue to be "saved" delivered - not, in our state of being be redeemed from God's wrath, but in this case are delivered from our weaknesses, our fears, our inadequacies or a return to the state of God's condemnation - even those of strong moral fibre. How? ***Through His Life!*** So, we must not look to ourselves for some sort of "inner peace, inner strength" but to Christ and His wonderful provisions - "assets," if you please for living a life that is pleasing to Him. Dr. John McArthur says of this passage:

"...If God had the power and the will to redeem us in the first place, how **much more**, does He have the power and the will to keep us redeemed? In other words, if God brought us to Himself **through the death of His Son** when **we were** His **enemies**, how **much more**, now that we are His **reconciled** children, will He keep us **saved by** the **life** of His Son? If the dying Savior reconciled us to God, surely the living Savior can and will keep us reconciled." (underline my emphasis)<sup>6</sup>

So it is not our own personal assets that will help us gain assurance of our salvation and help us walk the Christian walk but *His Assets*.

### **Important Assets We Have Been Given After We Receive Christ as Lord and Savior.**

#### **Asset: New Life in Christ.**

**Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?** Romans 6:3, NASB.

The question that was raised leading up to this passage was whether life should go on as before we were saved. Are we expected to go on sinning after we are saved for after all if when we do, would not God's Grace abound more and more - to overflowing resulting in a "carte blanche" dispensation by God to live our lives with no change whatsoever in our lifestyles. So the prudent, the folks who were given to honesty, and the "American Way" would live so, and the less morally upright would be expected to continue to make their "mistakes" that were consistent with *their* "sinful" lifestyles. Paul said of this ridiculous argument from his critics - "God forbid it" or "May it never be!" That was never the plan of God for the believer's life.

The Christian Baptism teaches a wonderful truth regarding our new lives in Christ. When we follow Christ in Baptism we demonstrate an important fact about the believer. That fact is that **we have been baptized *into* Christ**. John the Baptizer used the rite of

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<sup>6</sup> THE MacARTHUR NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY ROMANS 1-8, Page 286.

baptism to demonstrate to the apostate religious Jew that there had to be a turning away from their religion *toward God*. It was a rite performed by the Jewish religion on the Gentile who, after expressing a desire to become a proselyte - a Gentile who had accepted Jehovah and the Jewish religion as his own. After this confession he was, if a man, circumcised *and* baptized as a statement of his new identification with the Jew - as a believer. When John practices this rite on the Jew, it was a slap in the face for the self-righteous Jew because John was condemning them for *not* being a Jew but rather more like a Gentile needing the rite to demonstrate his true, correct relationship with Jehovah - the message was "Repent" remember?

When the Christian is baptized he is stating to the world that he completely identifies himself with the *death of Christ*. In effect, he is dying to his old life. Paul uses a wonderful picture from the gardener's experience in verse 5 **"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death,..."** Jesus related this experience to the kernel of wheat that is planted in the ground - the kernel dies but in the dying comes forth many grains of wheat.<sup>7</sup> It is in this example used by both Paul and Christ that we can learn that the Christian life starts at the cross where we die.<sup>8</sup>

So in baptism we learn that we die but we must go on to Paul's "Rest of the Story." In our dying at the cross, we also, like the kernel of wheat, live. Listen to Paul's words:

**Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.** Romans 6:4, NASB

For 3 days Jesus Christ was in the tomb but the message of the Gospel is that He didn't stay there. On the third day, He was raised from the dead - this is the difference between Christianity and the rest of the world's religions. Christianity is a reality whereas all other religions are just a system of religious beliefs that have no root in reality. So the reality is this - that when a sinner, who is dead in his sins, comes to Christ he is made *alive*. Spiritually alive. MacArthur makes a helpful comment on the word "newness" in our passage: "**Newness** translated *kairos*, which refers to newness of quality and character, not *neos*, which refers merely to newness in point of time."<sup>9</sup> Another familiar passage if we may:

**But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [5] made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.** Ephes. 2:4-5.

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<sup>7</sup> John 12:24.

<sup>8</sup> I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20, KJV.

<sup>9</sup> THE MacARTHUR NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY ROMANS 1-8, Page 322.

Please notice the close identification between our spiritual life and Christ. This is the significance of Baptism - identification with Christ. The greatest fact of our new adventure that begins with our confession of Christ as our Lord and Savior is that we are now spiritually alive and are placed in close relationship with God. We are alive in Him!

### **Our Spiritual of Life in Christ - a Close Relationship with Him.**

**If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. Romans 6:5.**

Let's go back to the gardener's illustration. I have used the NIV translation for this passage. The KJV uses what I think is a more accurate term "planted" - the word *sumphutos* is a compound word *phutos* "to grow" and *sum* in "connection with." Here's a quote from another of my favorite commentaries:

"'Planted together' is literally 'united together.' We share the life of Christ just as a branch that is grafted into a tree shares the life of the tree (John 15:5). The believer becomes grafted into Christ.

"Christ's death is our death, His burial was our burial, His resurrection was our resurrection. As a result of our union with Him, the power of sin is broken. God placed us in Christ when He died so we might share His death and receive the benefits of that identification with Him, specifically, to be separated from the evil nature as a part of our salvation. We were also placed by the Holy Spirit in Christ in order to share a new environment, the sharing of newness of life through His resurrection power."<sup>10</sup>

One final comment about our Asset of Spiritual Life: our last quote referred to a passage in John's Gospel where our relationship is compared to the vine. This is a familiar passage but I wonder if we really "make the connection" (pun intended). We cannot go on as we did before we came to Christ. We must have new priorities - new goals. No longer can we say that it's *our life*. No longer can we plan our *daily* life as our life - it must be as a partnership - no, even more intimate than that more than what our plans might between one spouse and the other. Word fail me but we must include Christ in our daily plans, our daily goals because we have been "connected" with Him in this new life and can no longer live our lives the way we wish. Some final brief comments on Romans 6:6 - 11:

- **6,7)** We are no longer slaves to our sin nature
- **8)** Just as the Death of Christ was followed by His Life, so we die to our old sin nature, but are alive to a new nature (2 Cor 5:17)
- **9)** The old sin nature no longer has mastery over us - Christ is our master.
- **10)** This new life is a permanent condition.
- **11, 12)** It is our responsibility to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ, in His righteousness.

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<sup>10</sup> The Complete Biblical Library, New Testament Study Bible, Romans - Corinthians, Page 95.