

CHAPTER VII

THE RESURRECTION IN THE BELIEVER'S DAILY LIFE

THE RESURRECTION: The "New Man" And The Need Of Enablement.

The provision of cleansing in the Crucifixion is largely negative. It is a cleansing from the power of the fallen nature. The believer, however, needs more than cleansing. He also needs a divine enablement to obey God and to possess and to practice the virtues commended in the Scripture.

Even the most careless reading of the Bible will indicate the importance of obeying God. Throughout the New Testament, obedience is presented as an evidence of salvation. Those who do not practice the commandments and Word of God are not true believers (I John 2:3-5). Obedience to God is equated with salvation (Hebrews 5:9) and forgiveness (I Peter 1:2). In the return of Jesus Christ, those who will be judged are described as those who *"know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (II Thessalonians 1:8).

Even more emphatically, obedience is described as a characteristic of sanctification. To love God is to obey Him (John 14:15, 21, 23; I John 5:3; II John 6). According to Paul and Peter the secret of progressive sanctification is found in the practice of obedience (Romans 6:16-18; Philipians 2:12, 13; I Peter 1:14-22). The four great exhortations of sanctification, to *"put off"* (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9); *"put on"* (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10); *"resist"* (Ephesians 4:27; 6:11-13; I Peter 5:9); and *"be filled"* (Ephesians 5:18) are amplified and applied throughout the New Testament in principle and precept. There is no substitute nor alternative for obedience.

In regard to sanctification and obedience two things of importance must be kept in mind. The first has to do with **motivation**. Happy is the person who lives in a culture which demands a morality paralleling the Bible. Not stealing from the neighbor but being kind to him is approved by the Scripture. However, if we refrain from stealing simply because of our culture we are not reflecting our sanctification. Even the non-Christian lives according to the demands of culture. Sanctification grows out of a relationship with God - not culture.

It is necessary, therefore, to question our motivation. To act in harmony with the Bible because of our culture, or because of our fear of criticism, or because of our reputation, or because of our desire for success, is surely not an expression of loving obedience to God.

The second factor of importance in regard to sanctification concerns one of its characteristics: **sanctification is positive**. Too often the emphasis is placed upon a negative separation. Many of the commandments of the New Testament do exhort the believer not to engage in certain activities (Ephesians 4:25-31; Colossians 3:5, 8, 9; I John 2:15-17). This, however, is so we may be free to give God His rightful place in our lives and to practice His will. In the Scripture sanctification is inseparably related to the positive manifestation in daily life of the virtues of love, faith, and hope (Matthew 22:36-40; I Corinthians 13; Hebrews 11:6; I Thessalonians 1:3; 3:6; I John 3:14-18). It is not enough to abstain from loving the world (I John 2:15); we must love God (Matthew 22:37, 38). We must do more than refrain from putting faith in ourselves (Jeremiah 17:5; Luke 18:9; we must put our faith in God (Jeremiah 17:7; Hebrews 11:6; I John 3:23). Freedom from despair and pessimism is not sufficient (Romans 4:18); one must practice hope in God (Romans 15:13; I Peter 1:1,3).

Sanctification is, therefore, a process whereby the believer is increasingly brought into a spiritual conformity with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28, 29). For this the Christian needs divine enablement.

THE RESURRECTION: The "New Man" And The Provision Of Enablement.

In the New Testament almost all of the positive benefits of salvation and sanctification are traced back to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this great deed of God in history, the Lord Jesus Christ not only verified the truthfulness of His divine Sonship (Romans 1:4); presented evidence that His work of atonement was finished and accepted (Acts 13:29-39); assured all men of a future judgment (Acts 17:31) and resurrection (John 5:29; I Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 20:11-15); but also made adequate provision for the Christian to live in "*newness of life*" (Romans 6:4).

In his salvation the believer was given spiritual life (John 3:3, 5; 10:10, 28; 17:2 Ephesians 2:5; I John 5:11, 12). Through this work of regeneration his character was transformed and he was given a "new nature" (I Corinthians 6:11; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). The believer now has the ability, through his new nature, to say "no" to the old nature with all its evil, and to live with faith, love, hope, and spiritual power, as part of his daily experience. These benefits all find their source in the work of Jesus Christ in His Resurrection (Romans 6:4; 7:4 Colossians 2:12, 13; I Peter 1:3, 21).

As the recipient of this work of Christ, the believer is described as being "*alive unto God*" (Romans 6:11) and "*married to another*" (Romans 7:4). These terms indicate the revolutionary change which has been brought into the life on one who was once dead and alienated from God. They also describe the potential enablement which has been given to every believer.

The Apostle Paul explains this provision as a divine power. He prayed for the Ephesian Christians that they might know this power in their daily lives (Ephesians 1:19, 20) and stated that he sought to live so he might experience the same enablement (Philippians 3:10).

The practical result of this divine provision is that the Christian need no longer live under the dominion of sin nor the influence of the old nature. He has been set free and has the ability to live a life of obedience, righteousness, and holiness (Romans 6:11, 12; Philippians 1:11). Such a life has been described by the Apostle Paul as "*bringing forth fruit unto God*" (Romans 7:4).

One of the greatest sins and one that is found in the lives of all Christians is our **failure to appropriate the provision God has made available through the Resurrection**. It is not the will of God that we live the Christian life in our own strength. He said, "*without Me ye can do nothing*" (John 15:5).

The Christian stands without excuse before this reality of divine provision.

THE RESURRECTION: The "New Man" And The Conditions For Enablement.

It is one thing to know that Jesus Christ has made an adequate provision for our daily lives but it is quite another to incorporate this provision into our daily practice. What must we do to appropriate this power to live a holy life?

In the Crucifixion Jesus Christ provided a cleansing from the believer's old nature. We are therefore exhorted to "*put off the old man*" (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9). In the Resurrection Jesus Christ provided an enablement to live a

holy life through the provision of a new nature. We are therefore exhorted to "*put on the new man*" (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). Until we learn to obey God in this way - we are doomed to spiritual failure. No amount of pious talk or ambiguous praying can be a substitute for clear-cut decisions of faith.

By the use of the term "*new man*" the Apostle Paul is referring to the new nature and ability which has been given to every believer in his salvation (II Peter 1:3, 4; Colossians 1:29; Philippians 4:13). This ability to live the Christian life successfully is not automatic: it must be appropriated by faith. One must learn how to "*put on the new man*" by deliberate choice and practice.

In the previous chapter we found that the Bible presents three conditions for cleansing from the old nature. These conditions are to be put into practice through five steps which are all decisions of faith. Now, in regard to the Resurrection and the new nature, the conditions and the steps are the same but with a positive emphasis. The key is found in the Biblical exhortation that, having "*put off,*" we are now to "*put on*" (Colossians 3:9, 10). The former exhortation refers primarily to the cleansing provided in the Crucifixion and the latter to the enablement which is ours in the Resurrection.

By a decision of faith we are to "*put off,*" for example, the sin of selfishness and to "*put on*" the contrasting virtue of love. Or it may be lust, or doubt, or fear, or jealousy that must be rejected by faith and the virtues of purity, faith, courage, or praise to be chosen in their place. The specific sin from which a believer may need cleansing and the specific virtue with which he may need enablement depends upon his spiritual life and circumstances. The hypocrite, for example, needs a different type of enablement than the alcoholic.

We may not live as though the Resurrection did not happen. It did happen and God has made adequate provision for our spiritual life. Therefore, we must make the spiritual decision to think and live in harmony with the Resurrection (Romans 6:11). We must also make the decision to live in the strength of the new nature (Romans 6:12) and to do so in active dependence on God (Romans 6:13).

These three conditions of success must be put into practice through the five steps mentioned earlier. We must sincerely and honestly acknowledge our need of help, confess our failure to manifest His grace, deliberately forsake our sins of omission, receive Jesus Christ as our specific enablement, and then live our daily lives practicing the virtues provided in Jesus Christ through the Resurrection. These are all necessary decisions of faith.

Without this type of involvement with God and the resurrection, we may expect only failure.

The use of these five steps in regard to the Crucifixion and the Resurrection is one of emphasis only. In fact, the "*putting off*" and the "*putting on*" can be done at the same time. Once the believer learns how to make the decisions of faith, the rejection of selfishness and the appropriation of love may be but the two aspects of the same decision.

The important factor is that the decisions be made and made as a response of genuine surrender and faith in God. Diagram 12 indicates some of the choices that a believer has. The Christian must make a choice. Simply stating the words is worse than worthless. Mere platitudes invoke the judgment of God.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS: Daily Choose By Faith To Live In The Enablement Of The New Nature. We May Have Purity Instead Of Lust, Courage Instead Of Fear, Etc., Through The Crucifixion And Resurrection Of Jesus Christ.

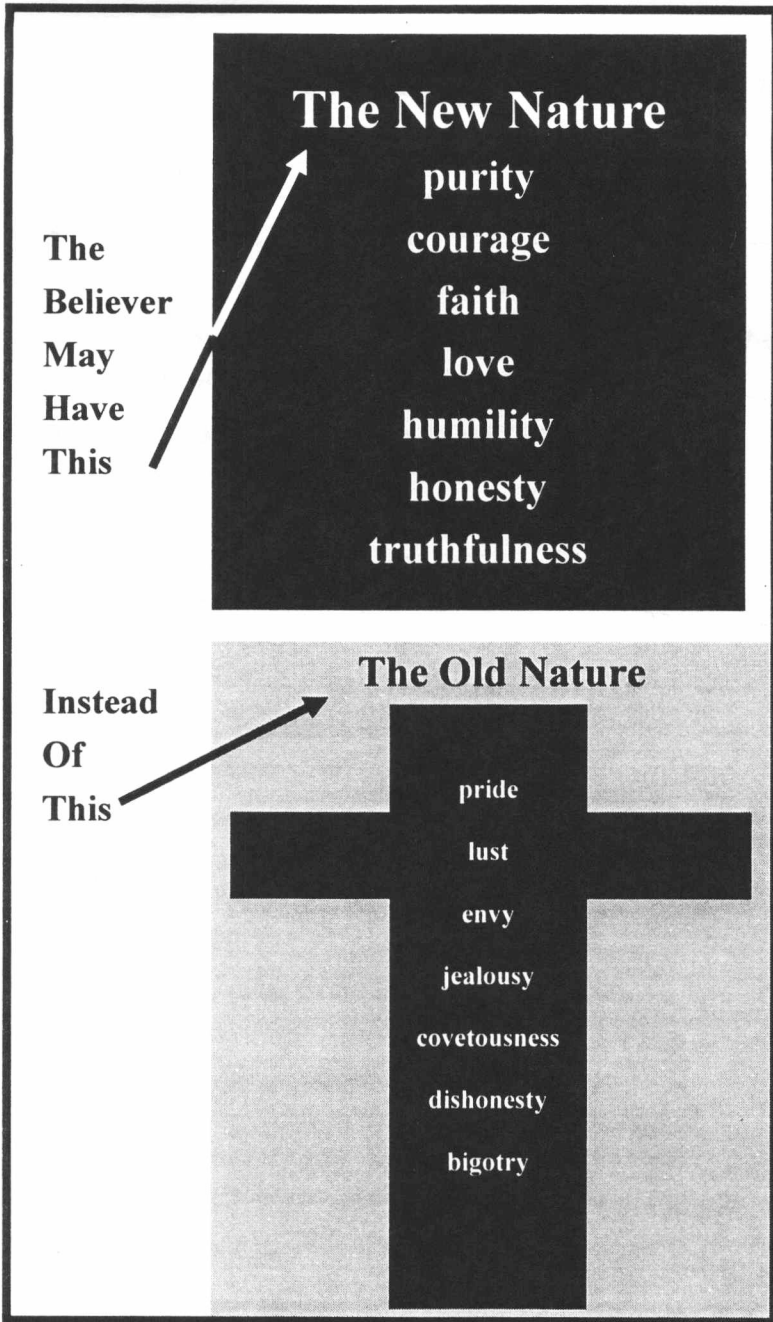


Diagram 12: The Believer's Choice

