

Death and Resurrection Before We Die

“Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life will lose it. And he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:24-25).

The physical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ became a metaphor of what is supposed to happen within us while we are still on this earth. A resurrection implies there is a prior death. What does this death and resurrection look like for us?

Paul, in Romans 6:3-14, explains:

“Do you not know that we who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?” (v. 3). Baptism is the ceremony or sacrament that signifies our death to the law of sin that Paul describes in Romans 7:14-8:2. This law is the human weakness that we all share. It is not just a theological concept, and it is present in all of us whether we believe in it or not.

“Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (v. 4). This newness of life is our resurrection in this life that we can walk in. It is our freedom from the law of sin that has kept us in bondage to our weaknesses.

“For if we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, so shall we also be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we should no longer be slaves to sin. For the one who has died is freed from sin” (vv. 5-7). We are dead to

the hold that the law of sin has on us, which is the human weakness we all battle. "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Look, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). What does this new creature look like?

"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death has no further dominion over Him. For the death He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life He lives, He lives to God. Likewise, you also consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but yield yourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your bodies to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace" (vv. 8-14).

The last part of this passage speaks of our resurrection in this present life. It is our victory over the law of sin. The Mosaic Law was not able to produce this. Religious law does not have the power to break the strength and dominion of sin in our lives.

The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is what victory and the new creature look like: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control; against such there is no law." The Mosaic Law did not provide the grace to overcome the law of sin. This grace became available with Christ. This why Paul says in Galatians 5:4: "You have been cut off from Christ, whoever of you are justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Paul says that the Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Only Christ was able to fulfill the Law because it needed to be done perfectly in order to have its righteousness. The law of sin prevented everyone else from

doing it perfectly; therefore, all others were under its curse.

Our victory over the law of sin is not possible without the Spirit of the ascended Christ within us. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). How do we put on Christ in order for this death to life transition to occur? The answer is in the type faith that we apply toward Christ. Humility toward Christ is required for receiving grace from the Godhead. First Peter 5:5-7 describes this humility: "Likewise you younger ones, submit yourselves to the elders. Yes, all of you be submissive one to another and clothe yourselves with humility, because 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Cast all your care upon Him, because He cares for you."

This is basic biblical spirituality. We unconditionally trust in God and rest our minds on Him from our lust and anxiety—from all of our own understanding. God draws near to us when we draw near to Him (see James 4:8). "And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. While we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:5-6). Christ's Spirit makes all of this possible. Victory over our sin nature was not available prior to Pentecost.

Second Peter 1:4 says: "by which He has given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, so that through these things you might become partakers [partners] of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust" (emphasis mine). This is our experience of death to self and our resurrection in this life. "If you then were raised with Christ, desire those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth. 3 For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3). Lust is the

thing that keeps us attached to the things of the world. Merely changing our location does not change our attachments because we carry our lust with us wherever we go.

When we have Christ's Spirit within us, we also have the mind of Christ. He not only shares with us the victory over sin that He had on earth, but He also gives us a discernment that is not otherwise available. "For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Likewise, no one knows the things of God, except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. These things also we proclaim, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things. Yet he himself is not judged by anyone. For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:11-16). A person without the Spirit can never fully understand the Spirit-filled person, but the Spirit-filled person has the capacity to understand both the natural person and the spiritual.

"Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light'" (Eph. 5:14). Christ's presence within us enables Him to share with us the peace and strength that He has from His own faith in the Father. This can only happen when we have Christ in us by our faith in Him. "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). This is the true enlightenment that no spiritual practice can ever produce.

We are to be dead to sin (see 1 Pet. 2:24). "And you were dead

in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among them we all also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and we were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and He raised us up and seated us together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:1-6).

Christ fulfilled the Mosaic Law and then nailed it to His cross. His Spirit now contains the righteousness of the Law because He alone was able to fulfill it, and also righteousness by His faith in the Father that is transferred to us. We have the righteousness of the law within us when we have Christ's presence because "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and concerning sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4). We have the righteousness of the Law through Christ, without having to perform it ourselves.

"So, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may be married to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, so that we may bear fruit for God" (Rom. 7:4). This illustrates the transition from the Mosaic Law to Christ for justification or righteousness. Paul compares this to a woman who is obligated in marriage as long as her husband is alive; but when he dies, she is released from the law that binds her to husband and is free to marry someone else. Because our husband, Christ, who was under the Law, died, we are now free to marry the resurrected Christ. The Law itself remains but we are not legally obligated by it

because of the death and resurrection of Christ. Legal sin for breaking it does not apply to us.

We are spiritually resurrected in our present life, and eventually we are bodily resurrected into our next life. "So it is written, 'The first man Adam was made a living soul.' The last Adam was made a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:11-14).

You can download Peter Aiello's book, Hidden Treasure, for free by visiting his web site: