

It's Time for Your Personal Resurrection

The Bible says, *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:4). Please observe the words, “like as Christ.” What an honor, we who have received Christ and followed Him in baptism may be like Christ! The old man has been buried and now, we who are saved have the very risen Lord living within us through the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The result of the Risen Lord living through us means that we have now the authority (through Him) to “walk in newness of life.”

Am I talking to someone through this article that might say like the late Erma Bombeck, “If life is a bowl of cherries, why am I always in the pits?” In other words, if Christ has risen and given me this newness of life, why am I not living the Christian life that was so real for the early church that many gladly died for our Lord? I remember in the youthful portion of my ministry talking with another young preacher whose accolades of perceived spiritual accomplishments was the rave of our fellowship. I recall well, he told me in our youth, “Johnny, I believe that I shall die for the Lord and I am willing.” I have to admit I was impressed. Yet, within four years this young man had “hit the skids” having morally messed up. You could hear the repercussions throughout Christendom as though a mighty redwood had just fallen. And in some ways, that’s what had happened. Now through the years I have seen this duplicated far more than I would like to converse about. I have often thought of my old friend’s statement of being willing to die for our Lord. In our culture, with the freedoms we enjoy in our great country, we have freedom to be Gospelizers without repercussions as a rule. So the problem is not so much do we love Jesus enough to die for Him, but do we love Jesus enough to live for Him?

Let this Easter be a Resurrection Sunday for any of you who embraced Christ, but have drifted or fallen into sin. You may be asking, “How can I return to God when I have gone so far away? You may ask, “Is there hope for me that I may use of God again?” Another important question in your mind is “Will I be accepted by other believers, if I do return to the Lord?” Let’s talk about it:

1. How can I return to God, when I have gone so far away?

The answer lies in a familiar verse of Scripture, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). God accepts by His unmerited favor through the shed blood of Jesus; the Word says, *“...the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth us from all sin”* (I John 1:7).

In the story of the prodigal son, although he was so very far away, the father was always looking down the road waiting for his return, and when the father saw him, he broke into a run. We understand in the history of the regal mid-eastern man this was a shameful act to allow your legs to be seen. Yet as we see the Scripture tells us *“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him”* (Luke 15:20). The closest English word for “run” as reflected in the Greek would not be jogging, but sprinting. What a Lord! In the beautiful picture of the father’s response is the symbolic way Jesus was telling us He would receive us! He was willing to be shamed to the point of not only a little disgrace, but like the father who lifted his royal robes high, disgracing himself before the whole town, we see Calvary. Christ in the role of the Everlasting Father as Isaiah referred to Him, emptied Himself as Paul explained to the Philippians and stripped Himself allowing mortal man to crucify him publicly, that we might be accepted when returning like the

prodigal! Now would a God who loved us like that make it difficult for us to return back to Him? Let's get the answer again from Scripture: *"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us"* (Psalm 103:12).

2. Is there hope for me that I may used of God again?

The Devil is a master at reminding us of our errors of the past in an attempt to make our future useless. A person who has been involved in sin, after repentance can fall into spiritual paralyses because he or she felt as though they are now not worthy to be used of God – damaged property.

There is a wonderful story in the Bible of when Jesus was questioned by a Pharisee for allowing a woman with a known past to anoint him. Jesus gave an answer that not only gave great hope to the woman, but to us today. In Luke 7: 44-48, Jesus pointed out: *"And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."*

A person who understands how great is God's mercy and forgiveness is aware that they, more than anyone, should be appreciative of God's forgiveness so much so that they become energized to the next level of faithfulness and service. The forgiven person hates the sin that took them away from God. The sin that scarred them has also become a vaccination that keeps them from going back and makes them thrive in Christian maturity.

3. Will I be accepted by other believers, if I do return to the Lord?

From the loving heart of true believers, the answer to this question is an emphatic yes! But to non-believers or backslidden parasitical brothers or sisters, there may be a problem. Please know that if unforgiving people have a problem, the problem is with them, not the Lord or even with you, the recently forgiven. In the model prayer, the only portion of the prayer that has an addendum is Matthew 6:12, *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* Then after the prayer Jesus taught, *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"* (Matthew 6:14, 15). We are clearly instructed that if we do not forgive, neither would we receive the same forgiveness from God. Therefore we dare not take the attitude of non-forgiveness.

What we must do after we have sinned against the Lord is not be pre-occupied with what others think, but what the Lord from this point forward desires. Do not confuse this teaching with excusing our obligation to make restitution to an offended person or people. Jesus said, *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy*

gift” (Matthew 5:23,24). We shall make our amends where needed. Whether we receive the forgiveness of man or not, if your Lord has forgive