

## Newness of Life

Sunday, April 12, 2020 Resurrection Sunday at The First Congregational Church of  
Marshalltown, Iowa

Romans 6:4 "Therefore we are buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

### Introduction

Today is the anniversary of the Resurrection of Jesus, celebrated by Christians around the world. Some theologians have interpreted the story of the Resurrection in mythological terms, in that Jesus has risen again the hearts of those inspired by His struggle against injustice. Thus encouraged, we continue the struggle in His Name. While I believe these theologians deserve to be treated with respect to their scholarship, I disagree with their interpretation. While I do believe that the story of Jesus can inspire people to work toward justice, I don't think their interpretation goes far enough. I don't believe that the Resurrection of Jesus is mythological, unless we agree that some myths actually took place. Rather I believe that all the miracles of the Bible, however outlandish, could have actually taken place because the most outlandish miracle of all is the Resurrection, which I believe actually took place. The ramifications of this are too numerous to outline here, so I'll consider just one: Since the Resurrection actually happened, those who follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord live in "newness" of life. I'd like to look at that phrase today.

### Meaning of "newness"

"Just as Jesus was raised from the dead by God the Father, so we should walk in newness of life," so wrote the Apostle Paul. Before trying to reflect on what it means, let me share what I do not think that it means. I don't think that it means a perpetually happy life with no problems. A rabbi is some movie whose name I do not remember said, "God has not promised us the pursuit of happiness. That was Thomas Jefferson." With apologies to people who are not fans of J.R.R. Tolkein, one of the best examples of what is not newness of life I know comes from his great epic, The Lord of the Rings. There's a whole chapter devoted to Tom Bombadil, a person who never experiences anything bad, no matter what. He is always happy, and has no reason ever to be unhappy. But he's also out of touch with the rest of the world. "Newness of life" does not apply to him.

### "Newness" refers to renewal

The word for "newness" in "newness of life" is a stronger term than simply the phrase "new life". It has its roots in the concept of freshness and renewal. Someone in "newness of life" has the Holy Spirit renewing his spirit and fitting him for heaven, which

is the opposite of the body which declines with age and eventually fails. That, I believe, is why the Apostle wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:16:

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day"

#### *Such a person adopts the perspective of eternity*

The heart attitude of such a person is revealed in the following verses (2 Corinthians 4:17-18):

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." He develops a view of the temporal from the vantage point of the eternal, and that changes his perspective on everything."

#### *Such a person views people in terms of potential*

Another characteristic of someone walking in "newness of life" is their view of other people. 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 states "Therefore, from no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Such a person not only looks at life from an eternal perspective, they look at people the same way, not in terms of present appearance but of potential and grace.

#### *Applications*

A couple of applications to consider are that these afflictions (and Paul's afflictions were not really light) prepare for power in heaven and a gravitas in this life, bolstered by a spirit that is renewed by the Spirit even as our bodies age. Like the Catholic priests, I urge you to consider your baptism, which is but a symbol, but a symbol isn't a symbol unless it represents something that is real.

Another application is to think of yourself as dead, but I'll speak more of that when we can gather together in person again.

#### *Conclusion*

Jesus has risen from the grave, literally, and sends to us the Holy Spirit. The Spirit causes us to walk in "newness of life". It is not a matter of always feeling happy or "fresh", but nonetheless is a renewal of our spirit, fitting us for heaven, that continues even as our bodies age. It is the abundant life, one that we can look back upon and say that it was worth it, it was worth it all.