

## Newness of Life

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were 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. Resurrection Sunday, April 9, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

### **Life does not always seem "new."**

Very soon churches around the world will celebrate Resurrection Sunday, or Easter. As the highest day of the church calendar, the day warrants special attention as we remember the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, having defeated death, hell, and the grave. Because of this, there is hope that cannot be overcome, for even death cannot stop it. In reflecting upon this, I considered how this speaks to my everyday life, my habits, duties, work, and conversation. How do I view each day if these events be true? When doing so, the phrase, "newness of life" kept coming to mind, so I looked it up in Romans. The word, "newness" shows up also in the next chapter, in 7:6, which speaks of the "newness of the Spirit," so the Holy Spirit works "newness" into our lives, the means of which goes beyond the scope of this message.

### **But life does not always feel "new."**

In fact, sometimes life feels tired and old even if someone is still rather young. A popular singer from years past once wrote "life goes on, long after the thrill of living is gone." Where is this "newness of life" when the retiree discovers that the finances aren't there, and neither is there any purpose to life anymore? Or the person in a dead-end job that once promised to be exciting but is now a sorry combination of drudgery and stress? Or the person whose marriage has lost all romance? Or the student who is several years from graduation but hates, absolutely hates, school? How does someone walk in "newness of life" when the circumstances of life are draining, and I have not even mentioned life for those whose country is at war or burdened with a repressive government?

### **What the word means**

The word for "newness," found only Romans 6 & 7, has the sense of "freshness" or "renewed" but not necessarily the sense of "becoming young again." There is a different word for that. This is a refreshing that comes from the Spirit and is caused inside the heart and soul of the person, not by a change in circumstances.

### **It does not mean happy circumstances**

Romans was written by a man who was unpopular amongst his own people, eventually beaten numerous times and once left for dead. He was controversial even among the fledgling religious movement he helps to promote, where even one church (Corinth) questioned his qualifications for spiritual leadership. And he was a citizen of the Roman Empire, famous for its greatness and infamous for its cruelty. I doubt he ever counted on happy circumstances for newness of life. So, how does newness of life come about?

### **Receiving newness of life**

My first thought when considering the presence of newness of life in spite of circumstances was to think of that newness as a sort of resource, but that is too impersonal. Perhaps I would do better to think of newness of life less as a state, a resilience, but rather the presence of a person, the Holy Spirit (remember Romans 7:6). Our response, then, is to seek out people with whom we can trust, pour out our hearts, and pray. Pray until that presence arrives. Support one another through all

the challenges of life and know that in Jesus Christ we live with a hope and even death cannot deny. May you all experience this newness of life this Easter season.