

Jesus has made the life of believers in Him as certain as His own. As sure as the head lives, the members live also. If Jesus has not risen from the dead, then are we dead in our sins; but since He has risen, all believers are risen in Him. His death has put away our transgressions, and loosened the bonds which held us under the death sentence. His resurrection proves our justification: we are absolved, and mercy saith, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die."

Jesus has made the life of His people as eternal as His own. How can they die as long as He lives, seeing they are one with Him? Because He dieth no more, and death hath no more dominion over Him, so they shall no more return to the graves of their old sins, but shall live unto the Lord in newness of life.

—C. H. Spurgeon, Check-book of the Bank of Faith

YOUR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

by CHARLES CALDWELL RYRIE

Abridged from the author's new book, *Balancing the Christian Life*
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Probably the most important doctrinal fact underpinning the spiritual life is the believer's union with Christ. It is foundational to the truth of cocrucifixion of the Christian with Christ, which in turn is the basis for freedom from the power of sin. Unfortunately, this concept is little understood, unbalanced in its presentation, and unused in application.

What does this concept mean? My own definition is simply this: to be in Christ is the redeemed man's new environment in the sphere of resurrection life. The key word is *environment*, for being in Christ is not a barren state or an almost unreal positional truth (as it is often presented), but a vital, pulsating, functioning involvement. The chief characteristic of this environment is resurrection life, the life of Christ Himself.

In trying to define or describe a difficult concept like this one, it often helps to look at the opposite. What is the opposite of being in

Christ? It is being in Adam and encompassed by the environment of death (I Cor. 15:22). This is a position which all men have by birth, for all sinned in Adam (Rom. 5:12). Notice the contrast in each area—justification, sanctification, glorification—between being in Adam and being in Christ.

Area	In Adam	In Christ
Justification	None (condemnation)	Complete (eternal life)
Sanctification	Slaves to sin	Servants of righteousness
Glorification	The second death	Resurrection unto life

Thus in relation to sanctification or the Christian life which is our chief interest here, being in Christ frees us from the bondage of sin and enables us to live righteously before God.

Before seeing how this works out, it is necessary to consider one other



Do you
really share
the power
of the
risen Lord . . .
as you
were meant
to share it?

question: How do we achieve this position?

We are placed in Christ not by anything we can do, but by the sovereign baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13). In other words, this position which is the basis for all victorious living is effected by something God does for us through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit.

There is probably no work of the Holy Spirit which is more confused than this one. Many who have had some climactic spiritual experience subsequent to salvation have chosen to label it "the baptism of the Spirit."

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it." And they have become so wrapped up in a precious experience that they find it difficult to comprehend the biblical doctrine. This has tragic ramifications, for a lack of understanding of the doctrine of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit will obscure the important truth of union with Christ which is the basis for genuine spirituality.

There are at least four characteristics of the baptizing work of the Spirit:

1. All believers have been baptized by the Spirit. This ministry is not reserved for a select few. If that were so, the body of Christ would be composed only of those selected or spiritually qualified to be baptized. In the key passage (I Cor. 12:13) notice that Paul did not say that only the spiritual people at Corinth had been baptized. He said *all*. Notice too that he did not exhort them to be baptized as some groups do today in order to become spiritual. Certainly this would have been

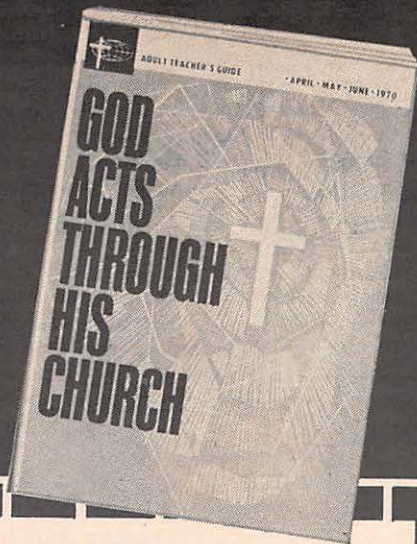
an easy solution to the problems generated by the carnality in the church at Corinth, if it were a valid solution. But baptism, in and of itself, does not give power; it sets up a relationship which in turn can unleash power. Further evidence that all believers have been baptized is apparent in the lack of exhortations or commands to be baptized by the Spirit anywhere in the New Testament.


2. Each believer is baptized by the Spirit only once, at the time of his conversion, and there is no scriptural reference which would indicate that the same person is baptized a second time. Indeed, the Greek tense of the word *baptize* in I Corinthians 12:13 indicates an un-repeated experience. Since Spirit baptism places a person in the body of Christ, a second baptism would mean that that person had been removed from the body since his first baptism and was on the occasion of the second being reinstated into the

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YOUR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

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body. Such an idea is completely foreign to Scripture.

3. All believers have been baptized, whether they know it or not. I do not mean to imply that no experience results from this new position, but the baptism itself, the actual placing of the believer in the body of Christ, is something which happens whether or not we have any experience or consciousness or understanding of it.

4. The fact that all believers are baptized into the body does not in itself guarantee that power will be experienced or displayed in the life. The Corinthians, all of whom had been baptized, fell far short of displaying the power of God in their lives. They were baptized and carnal. The Galatians too had been baptized, but were far from spiritual Christians (Gal. 3:27; cf. 1:6; 4:9). The demonstration of power compatible with our new position involves other factors, but the position itself can be attained in no other way than by the baptizing work of the Spirit.

Thus union with Christ means the introduction of the believer into that new environment of Christ's resurrection life by means of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. Formerly in Adam, we are now in Christ, transferred by a miracle of God's grace.

When I was a student the transplanting of the cornea of the eye was a new and startling operation. One particular case gained a great deal of publicity, for it involved transplantation of the cornea of a condemned criminal awaiting execution into the eye of a blind citizen of that state. The prospective recipient visited the donor before his execution, and this of course received even more publicity in the papers. In due time the execution was carried out, the operation was performed and the sightless man was able to see.

That cornea illustrates very well what is true of every believer in Christ. Formerly he was, as the eye in that criminal, in Adam—condemned justly to death. There was no hope of escape apart from a miraculous intervention. And that is exactly what happened when he believed in Christ. A miracle did occur and he was removed from the condemnation of death in Adam and placed through the baptizing work of the Spirit into Christ. And then that one who was condemned was justified and placed in that new sphere of resurrection life

with all of its privileges and responsibilities. This is the true story of every believer in Christ.

IF UNION with Christ involves (as it does) partaking of all that He is, then the most important consequence of this union as far as the victorious life is concerned is that it is the means of actualizing our cocrucifixion with Him (Col. 2:12; note especially Rom. 6:1-10). Being associated with Christ by baptism into His death, burial and resurrection is the basis for the crucifixion of the believer's sin nature and his victory over sin; and this is all based on our union with Him which has been accomplished for us by the baptizing work of the Spirit.

Some become so concerned with the question of whether or not water baptism is in Romans 6 that they miss the principal point of the passage. Certain facts seem to be obvious. (1) Water baptism by whatever mode or all of them together could never accomplish what is said to have been accomplished in the passage. Water cannot crucify the old man and provide the basis for not serving sin (v. 6). (2) On the other hand, baptism in relation to death, burial and resurrection is an obvious picture of immersion. The proper resolution of the matter is to admit that although it is the baptism of the Spirit which does the work, it is water baptism which pictures what is done. Water baptism is the object in this object lesson, but the work of the Spirit is what makes the lesson true.

What is it that has happened? A death has occurred for believers because of the union with Christ in His death. What is death? Death does not mean either extinction or cessation; it always means separation.

What, then, is the crucifixion of Romans 6 a separation from? To answer we need only recall the subject of the chapter, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (v. 1).

In other words, the death to sin of Romans 6 is a separation from the power of the sin nature. It is separation from the domination of sin over a Christian's life. This is accomplished by the crucifixion of the sin nature in order to "destroy" the body of sin so that we need not serve sin (v. 6).

That word *destroy* does not mean to annihilate, which would infer that the sin nature is eradicated in the Christian. Notice its use in II Thesalonians 2:8: "And then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the

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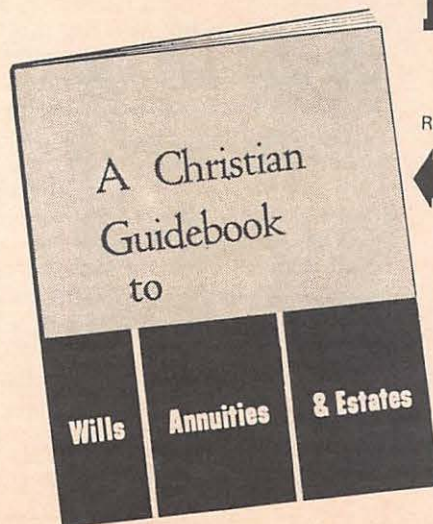
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spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." The man of sin is "destroyed" at the second coming of Christ and yet he continues to exist in the lake of fire into which the devil is cast a thousand years later (Rev. 20:10; in the Greek the plural verb "shall be tormented" indicates that all three beings are alive in the lake of fire forever and ever).

Another interesting use of the word is in Luke 13:7: "Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Here the word is translated "cumbereth." Obviously the fig tree did not destroy the ground in the sense of annihilating it, but it did make the ground useless or idle as far as serving a good purpose was concerned. In the same sense the sin nature has been "destroyed"; that is, it has been made ineffective, useless, so that we do not have to continue in sin.

The Scripture speaks both of the crucifixion of the old nature (Rom. 6:6) and the crucifixion of the person (Gal. 2:20). This is no contradiction; rather it is simply another illustration of the unity of man's being. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, and I think evil. The flesh produces hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife (Gal. 5:20), and yet I am the one who bites and devours others (Gal 5:15). Thus it is not strange or out of line for the Scriptures to speak of the crucifixion of the old nature and of the person.

THROUGHOUT this section of Scripture not only is the death taught but also our resurrection. The truth includes not only the fact of separation from the old, but also the all-important association with the new, the risen life of Christ. It is mentioned in every verse in Romans 6:4-10. Union with Christ, therefore, not only breaks the power of the old capacity but it also associates us with Him who gives the power to live according to the new capacity.

When did or does all this happen? Historically, it occurred when Christ died and rose again. But as far as our personal history is concerned this union with Christ does not happen until we receive the Saviour and at that moment are baptized into His body by the Holy Spirit.

These truths may be present or absent from our daily experience. The fact that we have been crucified with Christ—that the power of the

sin nature has been broken and made inoperative, that we need not serve sin—this is unalterable and does not depend on anything I do. But putting this into practice does depend on meeting certain conditions, one of which is reckoning these things to be true (v. 11).

Reckoning involves counting up the weight and truth of the facts that have been revealed in verse 1-10 and calculating them to be true *for me*. It has the idea of considering, evaluating and putting on my own account all that the crucifixion of Christ means to me in regard to breaking the power of sin in my life. Failure to make this basic calculation is often the reason why the practice of these truths may be absent from the believer's daily experience.

What our Lord has done makes it possible to live the Christian life; putting the possibility into practice involves a number of other factors, many of which include the exercise of the human will. We do not choose to make or break union with Christ; but we may choose whether or not to enjoy its benefits. We cannot create the new nature nor break the power of the old, but we can choose to listen to the old and obey it even after its power has been broken.

When one is living under a dictator of a country he has no choice but to obey the laws of that dictatorship. If the dictator is overthrown by a democratic regime and sent into exile in another country, the citizens are free to live a new kind of life. But it is quite conceivable that there would be some within the country who would prefer the deposed dictator and seek to serve him even though his power had been broken. And serve him they could, receiving their instructions over his clandestine radio and carrying them out while rejecting the freedom into which they had been brought.

Christians are citizens of heaven with a new freedom to live lives pleasing to God. But the sin nature has not been eradicated nor has the individual's will been nullified; therefore it is possible to choose to listen to and follow the promptings of sin, but it will never be possible for sin to regain the domination and control it had before conversion.

END

• • •
There are always two kinds of people: those who are willing to work, and those who are willing to let them.