



## Galatians 2:20

# Our Vital Union in Christ's Resurrection

The person who has accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior is identified with Christ in all that He has accomplished. The believing sinner is joined to Jesus Christ in His death, in His burial and in His resurrection. This is our vital union with Christ. This is the means whereby we walk in the newness of eternal life.

The apostle Paul appropriates for himself this close personal relationship with Christ. A. T. Robertson observed, "So close has become Paul's identification with Christ that his separate personality is merged into that of Christ."

The apostle Paul's passion was, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11). The apostle Paul is not thinking about sometime in the future when his body will be raised from the dead. In this verse, he is thinking of the reality of the resurrection life of Jesus Christ in which he has become a partner by the identification with Jesus Christ in His resurrection. His desire is to have such an intimate relationship with Christ that the resurrection life will manifest itself through him every day of his life. Paul doesn't think of eternal life as something off in the distant future, but in the here and now. God has given us a new kind of life.

Paul prays that the Ephesian church will experience this same power in their lives. He prays that they may experience, "what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*" (Ephesians 1:19-20).

The apostle Paul reminds us that "Christ lives in me" by His Spirit. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9). Christ in His glorified body is in heaven at the right hand of God, but He is represented here by the Holy Spirit. What is said to be done by Christ now is done by Him through the agency of His Spirit.

Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me . . ." (Galatians 2:20). "Having died with Christ in his death, the believer now lives with Christ in his life—i.e. his resurrection life. In fact, the new life in Christ is nothing less than the risen Christ living his life in the believer. The risen Christ is the operative power in the new order, as sin was in the old (cf. Romans 7:17, 20). . . It is by the Spirit that the risen life of Christ is communicated to his people and maintained within them. It makes little practical difference whether he speaks of Christ living in them or the Spirit dwelling in them (cf. Romans 8:10a, 11a) . . . although it makes little practical difference whether he speaks of them being 'in Christ' or 'in the Spirit', it is the former expression that is commoner. . . The believer's present life is lived in faith union with Christ, the Son of God" (F. F. Bruce).

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## **THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION**

### ***God has quickened us together with Christ.***

This is what God did—even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus . . . (Ephesians 2:5-6).

We are identified as living members of the body of Christ. By identification with Christ, we have experienced a co-crucifixion and a co-resurrection with Christ. Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection (Romans 6:4-5). This is the newness of life that comes through our new identity with Christ.

Paul tells us in verse six that we have been set free from the obligation to obey the old man (v. 6). The dead man has been freed from the control by the sin nature. That is not to say we do not experience temptation. It does not mean that we do not sin. The facts are we do sin. We are not perfect. Nevertheless, there has occurred a radical change in our lives.

Jesus Christ went to the cross and died as our substitute that He might redeem those who were spiritually dead. Now that we have put our faith in Christ He has made us alive in Him.

Paul is so identified with Christ that when Christ died as his substitute and paid the penalty due to the law Paul declares I died to the law, too. It no longer has claim over him. Paul abandoned it as a means of justification. He was saved by grace alone. The law provided no remedy for sin. Instead, it condemned Paul and proved him a guilty sinner. It made him a sinner and it punished him for being one. There was no freedom in the law.

The Lord Jesus died under the demands of the law and satisfied its requirements. All believers, Kenneth Wuest reminds us, were identified with Christ in His death and also in His resurrection, and thus have passed out of the realm of divine law so far as its legalistic aspect is concerned. ” Paul died to the law so that he could freely live to please God.

The law demanded the death penalty for all sinners, and Christ paid that death penalty for all sinners by going to the cross and dying. The law killed Him. It declared our Representative guilty and punished Him for our guilt. Because we are so identified with Him by faith, He has freed us from the demands of that death penalty and the law. Now Paul can say I died to the law because I was crucified with Christ.

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Therefore, Paul could declare, "I'm crucified with Christ. It was a past completed action having present finished results. His identification with Christ at the cross was a past fact, and the spiritual benefits that have come to him through his identification are present realities with him. The demands of the law for Paul's death penalty have been completely satisfied in Christ's substitutionary death. God has acquitted Paul based upon the death of Christ as his substitute

Therefore, the law had no more demands on Paul and the power of old Adam's nature over Paul was broken.

When Paul declares, "I have been and am now crucified with Christ" he is saying it has brought death to the law. We are free from all the curse and guilt of the law. We are now free to live for God. Paul is not saying here that the law of God had lost all meaning or relevance for the Christian behavior. This is the error of antinomianism, which Paul was at pains to refute both here in Galatians as well as in Romans. . . There is an ethical imperative in the Christian life that flows from a proper understanding of justification (Timothy George).

This new life brought about a change in Paul's regard for himself. He can say, "I no longer live. The self-righteous, self-centered legalistic Saul died. His death with Christ ended Paul's enthronement of self, and he surrendered the throne of his life to Jesus Christ.

Paul stresses again and again through out his writings that he does not live the Christian life in his own strength. The resurrected living Christ Himself took up His residence in Paul's heart. The apostle proclaimed "not I but Christ lives in me. This became the source, the motivation and goal of his life. "Not I, Christ!"

Paul would not give us the idea that Christ operates automatically in a believer's life. He is not a robot. The Christian life is a matter of living the new life by faith in the Son of God. It is then faith and not works or legal compliance that releases God's power to live a Christian life.

Since Jesus Christ loved me with such great love as to sacrifice Himself for me, then He loves me enough to live out His life in and through me.

Moreover, Paul can declare, "Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. His life is now Cristo-centric. It is a Christ-centered life. His life is a person, the Lord Jesus living in Paul. The Lord Jesus is manifest in Paul's daily life through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Paul is dead, crucified, buried, as far as his attempting to be accepted by God in his own self-righteousness. He is like a dead man. He can do absolutely nothing to make himself acceptable before God.

Therefore, this new life in Christ is "a Person within a person, living out His life in that person," says Wuest. Instead of depending on a set of rules and regulations in order to be accepted by God Paul now yields to the Holy Spirit to produce in him a life that is pleasing to God. He is "energized by the divine life resident in him through the regenerating work of the Spirit."

I like the way Wuest summarizes Paul's conviction: "Instead of a sinner with a totally depraved nature attempting to find acceptance with God by attempted obedience to a set of outward laws, it is now the saint living his life on a new principle, that of the indwelling Holy Spirit manifesting forth the Lord Jesus."

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We, too, can now say with Paul, "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Paul described this transformation in a believer who has come to God by faith in Christ in terms of a death and resurrection. This is the believer's vital union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Therefore, Paul prays that God the Father would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love . . . (Ephesians 3:16-17).

### *God is the author of this new life.*

It is according to the riches of His glory. It is a miraculous act of God at the very core of man's being. He creates a new birth and gives new life. It takes place deep within the inner man and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit. This inner man is the personal, rational self that has experienced spiritual renewal by the Spirit of God. It takes place at the very core of our personality in that part of man that responds to the Spirit of God. He does it so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith . . . that you may be filled up to the fullness of God (vv. 16-17, 19).

Christ wants to enter into the inner recesses of our heart, settle down, and make Himself at home. This is something no man can do. It takes the miraculous power of God to do that. To dwell means to settle down in a dwelling, to dwell fixedly in a place. Christ wants to live in our life and express Himself through our personality. Christ wants to settle down and feel completely at home as a permanent resident in our inner person.

Do we make Him feel at home, or do we keep Him out of certain rooms in our heart? Do we welcome Him in and tell Him here, make me your home? Do we take down all of the private, no trespassing signs? Do we allow Him to be the Lord and Master and King of every area of private, personal and professional lives? Do we say, here Lord, you be the absolute master of my life? Or do we keep the keys to the private areas of our lives and lock Him out of the house? Do you dread His absolute dwelling in your inner person?

Because of this struggle that we all experience in our daily life, Paul cried out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). We need God's power to make Christ Lord of our lives. We must have His resurrection life to live the Christian life. There is no other way to live it.

"But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood . . . That was Paul's testimony. God was pleased to reveal His Son in me . . ."

Martin Luther said, "After I was born God supported me. Heaping mercy upon mercy, He freely forgave my sins, replenishing me with His grace to enable me to learn what great things are ours in Christ. To crown it all, He called me to preach the Gospel to others. Then he asked, 'What prompted Him to call me? His grace alone.' Amen.

Christ has made Himself real *in* Paul's inner being. Has Christ revealed Himself *in* you?

One day while studying the passages of Scripture on the resurrection of Christ R. W. Dale was overcome by the reality of the living presence of Christ. He walked about his study shouting, "He is alive! He is alive! He is alive! I want my people to know you are alive! Christ is now alive in me. Christ can now be a living reality when He is revealed in us. Do you know the indwelling reality of the resurrected Christ in your life? Is He at home and is He free to express Himself in your life?"

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## **FAITH IN THE RESURRECTION**

By nature, we were dead in trespasses and sins. However, when we put our faith in Christ to save us we were born spiritually and Christ came into our lives. The apostle Paul expressed this resurrection life saying, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). This happens with every believer when we are saved. His new life in us begins at conversion and continues throughout our lives.

Jesus Christ stands at the door and waits for you to open the door and invite Him in for fellowship (Revelation 3:20). He is speaking to the church, not lost people in that passage. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. The context is fellowship, not salvation. The ascended Christ said, "I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with Me. To His disciples Jesus said, "Abide in Me and I in you. "

All genuine believers know the indwelling Christ because it is impossible to be a Christian and not have the Holy Spirit living in you. You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness (Romans 8:9-10). Paul makes it very clear that every Christian has the Holy Spirit dwelling with him. Have you made Him feel at home in your heart?

The apostle Paul said, "Christ lives in me, and it is true of every born again believer. We have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and baptized into the body of Christ. As a result Christ lives in us by the indwelling Spirit (Romans 6:3-4).

This Christ in you, the hope of glory is a mystery that has been hidden down through the ages until the coming of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:27). It is a miracle created by the Holy Spirit in the believer (Ephesians 1:13).

Now for the believer to live this new kind of life God offers we must exercise faith in Christ. We are so identified with Christ that now we are to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. We are now to literally count a thing to be true. The present imperfect could mean, do this continually, or continue doing this (Cleon Rogers). I am to count upon the fact that God sees me as having died unto sin's dominion and the Holy Spirit has made alive unto God because I have experienced a co-resurrection with Jesus Christ. We are to take God at His word and count every promise as true. We are to rest upon these great truths as already fulfilled. This is the way God sees me and I accept that as the truth about me.

By faith union with Him, therefore, His people must consider themselves dead in relation to sin and alive in relation to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11), writes F. F. Bruce.

The Holy Spirit enables us to live this new life in Christ. The apostle Paul writes, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Galatians 5:16-17). Literally he says, "Be constantly walking by means of the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Kenneth Wuest expands the original, "habitually order your manner of life, and you will in no wise execute the passionate desire of the evil nature, for the evil nature constantly has a strong desire to suppress the Spirit, and the Spirit constantly has a strong desire to suppress the evil nature. "

When I first became a Christian I thought that now that I have been born again I could live the Christian life all on my own. Now that I am saved I have the wisdom and power to do great things for God. But that is not what God does. He wants us to let Him live His life through us. We must reckon on the fact that we are dead and alive in Christ. It is our responsibility to allow the Holy Spirit to live the resurrection life of Christ through us. The Holy Spirit can live the life of Christ through the child of God. He gives us the power as we acknowledge our need and yield to Him control of our lives. This is what Jesus meant when He told us to abide in Him. Unless we yield to the Spirit's control we will not experience the resurrection life of Christ in our lives. There is no abiding if there is no yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit.

The *fact* is in God's eyes you have died and rose again.

Our *faith* in God says, I agree with You.

Now the *power* by which the resurrection life of Christ is manifested in our lives is through the Holy Spirit. The power of the resurrection is mine as I permit the Holy Spirit to live His life through me. The resurrection life of Christ is lived in the Spirit's power in your life. It is a day-by-day, moment by moment walk of faith in the Lord.

## **THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION**

What then should be the effect of this new life upon our daily lives? How then should we live?

A change in lordship has taken place in the believer's life. The law is no longer master. Christ is the new owner. Those who put their faith in Christ are united with Him by the faith—united so closely that His experience now becomes theirs: they share His death to the old order (under the law) and His resurrection to new life (Bruce). Self has been dethroned in this new order. Now the resurrected Christ lives in me by His Spirit.

This is the kind of life that does not have to submit to sin's control. The apostle Paul stresses that because we have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-3).

The only way we can mortify the flesh is by walking in the Holy Spirit. Only by abiding in Christ can we put to death daily the temptations of the flesh. God has provided us the power in the Holy Spirit to die daily.

Since I have the power of the resurrected life I don't need to go in the backyard and dig up all the old sins and lusts, i.e., make provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts (Romans 8:3).

However, it is not enough just to mortify the flesh. The person of the Holy Spirit manifests the resurrection life of Christ in the believer's daily life. As you submit in obedience to the Holy Spirit to live His life through you, you experience the resurrection life of Christ. The resurrection life of Christ is lived by the Spirit's power in your life.

Wuest translates, "habitually order your manner of life, and you will in no wise execute the passionate desire of the evil nature, for the evil nature constantly has a strong desire to suppress the Spirit, and the Spirit constantly has a strong desire to suppress the evil nature." "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit when we are under His control, and



dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit when we are under His control, and when we are under His control we are under His influence. Don't be under the influence of wine, Paul admonishes, but be under the influence of the Spirit. The believer is possessed and controlled by the person who fills him.

The very moment you put your faith in Christ the Holy Spirit came to dwell in your body to possess it, to own it, to control it. When you are filled with the Spirit you are controlled and led by the Spirit. If an individual is filled with wine he is under the influence of wine. If he is filled with the Holy Spirit he is under the influence of and controlled by that person. His life is therefore, ordered by the Spirit. In either case a person's conduct and behavior will be different than it was before he came under the influence. When you come under the influence of the Spirit your conduct and behavior will be different. He produces a new kind of life in you. The Spirit of God conforms us to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God transforms the individual. It is not automatic. It takes place as we yield the controls of our lives to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Since Christ dwells in us, we are "greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Since Christ dwells in our hearts we can have victory over the devil because "the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Are we trusting in the indwelling Christ to destroy the works of the devil? Are we trusting in His omnipotent power to rebuke the devil when he attacks us?

One of the old Puritans prayed: "When I feel the serpent at my heel, may I remember Him whose heel was bruised, but who, when bruised, broke the devil's head."

This vital union with Christ in His resurrection life is ours in practice when the Spirit of God who lives within us transforms us. The resurrection life of Christ is manifested in the believer by the Holy Spirit's control. The Spirit of God who fills, and controls us transforms our lives. The Spirit in us manifests this new resurrection life. The experience of being controlled by the Spirit will not be yours until you yield yourself to His control.

God is not in the business of creating robots. He does not make all of us look alike, smell alike and think and emote alike. He is busy creating unique individuals who are willing to allow Christ to reveal Himself and live His life through them.

Since Christ is indwelling in our lives are we willing to make Him sovereign in our lives?

Have you handed over the keys to every room of your life? Is He free to express Himself in your life? Is there absence of suspicion, stress and anxiety over His presence? Do you make Him feel wanted, loved, accepted and understood? Where there is love there is no fear. Perfect love casts out all fear. He loves us and is committed to the best God has in store for our lives so there is nothing for us to fear. He is perfect love. We can have no fear in the midst of that kind of love. When we yield control to Him He brings joy, rest, and peace to our lives.

Do you tolerate Him, or do you welcome Him with wide-open arms into your heart?

J. B. Philipps paraphrased Philippians 4:13, "I'm ready for anything through the strength of the One who lives within me. Since there is indwelling in us the power of God we can now live above the chances, changes and circumstances in life."

## *A foretaste of glory*

This new life in Christ is a foretaste of that glorious day when Christ shall appear at His Second Coming, When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4).

Christ in you the hope of glory carries in it the surge of energy that will one day result in the full possession of our resurrection bodies. One day Christ will return and in a moment this old body will be changed into a resurrected body just like His!

Paul sounds a lot like the apostle John in that verse. John wrote, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). Since Christ dwells in us, we have "the hope of glory."

Since the pure and lovely Lord Jesus Christ lives within us, how can we pursue an impure life style?

The apostle Paul's passion is Christ. For him life is from Christ, life is with Christ, life is in Christ and life is for Christ. When Jesus Christ lives in me my whole desire becomes to live is Christ. Christ becomes my passion. When the pressures were gathering from all directions Paul could say with profound conviction, "for to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21).

For to me living is Christ. I pray the resurrection life in Christ becomes the passion of your life, too.

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Series: Our Vital Union with Christ

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