

The Big "If"

"Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." Romans 6:8

What does it mean to live with Christ? It means that Christ's life has become our life. "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is our life*, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with Him in glory (Colossians 3:3)." The life of Christ is a holy life. It is a life free from the deceit and destructive power of sin. It is a life of complete submission to God's will. It is a life of unbroken fellowship with God. It is a life that is fully satisfied in God. It is a life filled with God's love, peace and joy. It is the life Jesus spoke of when He said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10)." It is an overcoming, triumphant, powerful spiritual life. It is a life that cannot be shaken by the changing events in the world. It is a life that cannot be wrecked by the schemes of the devil. God has ordained that Christ's life is to be our life. Christ's life is our spiritual destiny and Christ's life can be our present reality. This is the life that Christ purchased for us when He died on the cross. The Bible says, "You shall call His name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21)... to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days (Luke 1:74-75)." The life we have in Christ is not an impotent salvation in which we confess our sins every Sunday only to be defeated by sin every week. Absolutely not! Christ's death on the cross has not only saved us from the penalty of sin; His death has saved us from the power of sin! The cross of Christ has given us a complete and victorious salvation! "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57)!"

However, Romans 6:8 contains the big "if" and it also assumes that we *believe* the big "if." All of God's promises contain this big "if" even if it is not expressly stated. *If* you believe God and His Word, you will receive His promises. For example, 1 John 1:9 can only become experientially real to you *if* you *believe* it is true; otherwise, you will doubt that your sins are forgiven when the devil accuses you and condemns you. Therefore, Romans 6:8 might also read: "Now if we *believe* that we have died with Christ, *we believe* that we shall also live with Him." In other words, we must believe and act on the Biblical truth that we have *died with Christ*, in order for our belief that *we live with Christ* to become real. This was the apostle Paul's testimony: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live; and the life that I now live, I live *by faith* in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20)." If we don't believe and act on this divine truth, we will doubt that our sinful nature is dead and gone *when we are tempted to sin*. We will eventually give

up believing that we are dead to sin in Christ. This is particularly true in any area of your life where in the past you have had great difficulty overcoming sin. You must stand firm by faith in the truth that your sinful nature has died with Christ and has been removed in Christ so that you can experience freedom from sin - every sin!

There are many professing Christians who think they have Christ's life, but their words and deeds do not demonstrate that they believe and act on the truth that they have died with Christ. Many of these same Christians also think they still have two natures within them (Christ's new nature and their old sinful nature). They believe that both the presence and power of Christ and the presence and power of sin indwell them and whichever one they yield to the most gains the upper hand. This belief is not based on the Bible. Our faith must be based on Biblical truth to be real and effective. Anyone who still believes that the malignant presence and power of sin indwells them has no choice but to try to live the Christian life by the power of their natural personality and strength *even while they mistakenly think they are living the Christian life with "the help of" the Holy Spirit.*

The life of Christ is an exchanged life - not a changed life. There is a great difference. If my old car is in need of repair, I could change its carburetor. If it breaks down again, I could try changing its transmission. If it fails again, I could keep changing more parts and hope it will work. Or, I could decide my old car is beyond repair and exchange it for a brand new car. This is similar to the divine exchange God accomplished in us. He knew our old man was beyond repair and our sinful nature could not be changed, fixed or improved. Therefore God completely disposed of our old sin nature and exchanged it for Christ's divine nature. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17)."

We could never spiritually change ourselves; that is why God exchanged our sinful nature for Christ's holy nature. It is only by faith in this divine exchange of the cross of Christ that we can experience the life of Christ. The overcoming life of Christ is not a life that we can earn by our willpower and self-effort; it is a gift of God that we receive *by faith in Christ's completed work on the cross.* "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17)." If we believe and act on the truth that we have died with Christ, then Christ will be our life - today, tomorrow and forever!

Tomorrow: Romans 6:9

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