

# Renewal

Sometimes things go from bad to worse. We have an idea of the kind of person we ought to be and would like to be, but our efforts to live a quality life seemingly get us nowhere. The harder we try to overcome them, the stronger the grip our bad habits seem to have on us. Disappointment, frustration, and disillusionment become daily companions. What we would like at such times is a chance to start all over, a fresh opportunity to make of life something worthwhile.

The truth is, in Jesus Christ we can have a new opportunity to live. Jesus invites those who are weary of struggling with life on their own to come to Him for rest and for help: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). In Christ there is a very real renewal of life. It is as though our tired past is washed away, and we are given a fresh life to live. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). Becoming a Christian is so much like starting over in life that it is spoken of as a new birth (Jn. 3:3), and as a resurrection from the dead (Rom. 6:4).

Not only in becoming a Christian, but in living as a Christian there can be a daily renewal of life. God's forgiveness is available to us at every moment: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9). In Christ there is compassion and grace. Our record can be washed completely clean at any time we are sincerely sorry and willing to repent of our sins. We can start over and be renewed. "'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the Lord, 'though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool'" (Isa. 1:18).

The new quality of life the Christian can experience results from a radical change in his thinking. Two important texts speak of this as the source of our renewal. In Rom. 12:2, Paul wrote, "And not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." And in Eph. 4:20-23, he said, "But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Learning to base our conduct on truth and reality, as opposed to falsehood and illusion, makes a wonderful difference in the "freshness" of life!

Jesus Christ is not only concerned with what we have been, He is more concerned with what we can be. The woman taken in adultery, brought to Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees, was a person whose past would have caused the religious leaders to write her off as a lost cause, an expendable piece of human trash. But Jesus saw in her something worth salvaging. He said, "Go and sin no more" (Jn. 8:11). Th is was no

minimizing of the seriousness of what she had done, but rather the promise of being something better than she had ever been before.

The possibility of renewal is one of the cherished possessions of those who have become obedient to Jesus Christ. In a world where most people are worn out trying to better themselves by merely human efforts, the chance to gain a fresh start in life is not the least of the blessings of Christianity. In Christ and in Christ alone can this renewal be found. But make no mistake about it, in Christ we can start over!

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