

A Spirit of Resurrection and Life

By Ginny Larsen

Everything looks different when one is lifted up high above where they can see everything below them. Everything looks different in the Light of Jesus' love, sitting in the Heavens with Him. Everything in the world, in my life, inside my heart, and all around me has more meaning and comes alive when I understand I have been "crucified with Christ, and risen with Him." When I understand the power of His resurrection in me through His Spirit – the same Spirit that rose Christ from the dead – I see myself in His Light.

The Christian life can be lived as a dead life for some. How so? A Christian can be born again but not fully living according to what God has for him. Take, for example, the Corinthians, who were carnal Christians. Paul didn't say they weren't true Believers but that they were living "as dead." They were not spiritually dead, because they had the Holy Spirit in them, yet their outward life was as though they were dead. We shouldn't live like this, but sometimes we do. A Christian who is trying to live out their spiritual life by the power of their own flesh lives **as though they were dead** in the power of the flesh – as though it were all up to them. They are not dead, although they live their lives as though they were, because they are not partaking of all they have in Christ – like a rich man who still lives like a pauper. I lived the first two decades of my Christian life like this – as though dead, not walking in the rich understanding of the finished work of Christ. I see many Believers living this way, in fact many preachers, because they lack understanding of the finished work of Christ and their identification with Him in His death and resurrection. I had Christ's life in me, but I lived as if dead, though outwardly people would have thought I was a good Christian because I followed all the rules.

I was not living in blatant sin, for I sought holiness, but I struggled with the inward sins of the flesh like we all do. We have two natures (1 John 1). We still have a sin nature as well as a divine nature, and Romans 6 tells us we are to not let our sin nature have dominion over us.

Galatians tells us if we walk in the Spirit we won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. We go through this pattern until we learn of the completed work of Christ and what that means in our daily lives – that it is all of faith, not our striving to live it. I think most Christians become very aware of their flesh and struggle with it until they are led by the Spirit to see His victory over it according to Romans 6-8. Until I learned of the eternal security I had in Christ, I lived as though I could lose it, under fear of condemnation, and I had an up-and-down experience as though I were under the law of sin and death.

My life was lived under the mentality of "the law of sin and death," and I was still striving under it, just as Paul described his experience as a born-again Jew trying to live under the law of sin and death. Romans 7:14-20: *"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me."*

In Romans 8, Paul goes on to say we are now under the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus: *"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death"* (v.2). This is the freedom that Believers must grow into – a resurrected life, full of love and wonder at Him. All the motivations of our hearts can be suddenly focused on Him and filled with Him, because

we do what He does, love what He loves, and think as He thinks. Everything in this world is then seen for what it is, and its true purpose is discerned. The Christian life can be nothing but religion, rules, and always seeking but never finding. It can go from experience to experience – a false spirituality and a false “righteousness” until one understands the resurrection that belongs to us in Christ. Yes, we can be Christians and yet not know or understand that we have been baptized into His death and raised with Him, as Paul states in Romans:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His [compare this with what Paul is saying in Ephesians 1 and 2]. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:3-11)

Here is a treasure that is so wonderful, so great, and so powerful. It is full of light and life and love, and yet, we miss it and fail to walk in it. When I understood this, my Christian life came more alive. The result? His love filled my heart rather than fear of condemnation. It was like someone turned on the light in my heart and mind, and everything else in my life and the world around me was illumined. Once raised up with Him, one cannot be brought back down to a lesser way of stumbling through the Christian life lived by the flesh and the “law of sin and death” – no longer do we struggle under fear of condemnation as a motivation to live. One who is “risen” does not want to fail to please God because he sees God, loves God, and wants only to walk with God. Unfortunately, so many Christians misunderstand the risen Believer, because they still live under the law of sin and death, and they do not understand their life in Christ or the power of His resurrection in them. These Christians do not understand this newness of life or the fullness of God that comes with it. Instead, they continually seek more “experiences” and are never satisfied. For the risen Believer, there is a fountain that continually fills us and satisfies us that we can drink from on a continual basis because of the death we died with Jesus – for His blood cleanses us and puts away our sin once and for all (Hebrews 7:27, 9:12, and 10:10). Because of our response to Christ’s sacrifice, we were put “in Christ,” and He came into us, through His Spirit. This Spirit quickened us to a resurrected life out from the deadness of what sin brought to a new life unto Him. We are now risen with Him, seated in the Heavens with Him. It is because of the completeness of that salvation that we are enabled to have His Spirit. Later on, we’ll look at what this completeness means.

The Spirit was not given to Believers under the old covenant, as it was under the new covenant, after Jesus rose from the dead. The fact that the Spirit was given to indwell and abide forever in every true believer who is born again was a new thing – the new commandment that God instituted. While we cannot live under the old commandment any longer, there are many today calling themselves Christians who still live by an Old Covenant mentality.

“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts,

let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39).

The Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified. Under the law, there was no righteousness that was complete and pure where the Spirit could dwell in the heart and abide there forever. After Jesus came, there was true righteousness fulfilled – completed – for He was raised for our justification. Thus, the law is fulfilled in Christ, Who paid the full penalty of it, and cleansed us from our sin, once and for all, so that His Spirit could come and abide in us, making us a new creation in Him. It is only the righteousness of Christ Himself in us that makes us a place where His Spirit of holiness can dwell. It is not one single thing that we did or could ever do. Law could never do that (Romans 8). He fulfilled the law by both paying the penalty and becoming our righteousness – a righteousness we could never attain under law.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17-18).

Many preach that this proves we are still under law, but it proves just the opposite. Those who still think they must themselves keep the law in order to fulfill it are under a curse to keep it without one flaw (Galatians 3:10). It is Jesus Himself Who is the only fulfillment of the law, and only He could fulfill it. He accomplished in us what the law could not for us. It is only His resurrection life in us now that is our resurrection from the power of sin and its deadness. His resurrection life is His will and law and love in our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33, and Ezekiel 36:26), which gives us true life in Him. When we are born of His Spirit, we are given a new heart – a new will. One does not obey the Lord's commandments by trying to keep the commandments, because in truth, he is not keeping them, even though he thinks he is (Galatians 6:13-15). One obeys by believing in Him (adhering, trusting in, clinging to, relying on Him – John 6:29) and walking in His love toward God and men (Romans 13:10). God's moral law fills our heart and our will when we are risen with Him, by faith. Ultimately, the final fulfillment will come when we are transformed and risen to be with Him – Heaven and earth will pass away, and there will be a new Heaven and earth, where only righteousness dwells.

It is because of His resurrection life is in us that His salvation is complete in us. If that salvation were not forever and complete, His Spirit would not be able to dwell in us. If it were dependent on our "righteousness" or sanctification, His Spirit could not indwell us until we accomplished that perfection, which we cannot. We would have no guarantee of eternal life, yet it is His Spirit in us that IS that guarantee, not our own level of sanctification (Ephesians 1:13-14). As it is, in Christ, we are complete (Colossians 2:9-15 – see below). If it were dependent on our ability to, in any way, earn it or keep it, it would be incomplete until we arrived somehow in our being able to accomplish that. God's Spirit cannot dwell in anything but complete and perfect righteousness. This is why Israel could not have His Spirit dwelling in them under the law – because they failed to keep it. For the Spirit to indwell them, they would have had to be perfect in righteousness. Even the Pharisees, who tried to keep "every iota and dot" of the Law, failed to obtain the righteousness that would enable His Spirit to indwell them and give them eternal life (Matthew 5:20). Paul knew that this kind of righteousness was useless, and he counted it as dung in order that he could count Christ's righteousness as his (Philippians 3:3-11). Once He comes into our hearts, He abides there forever (John 14:6) and we have eternal life by Him. It can only be lost if we depend on our own imperfect righteousness, not Christ's perfect

righteousness, which is forever to the uttermost. *“For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14), *“consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”* (Hebrews 7:25).

Our salvation is complete, because His work is complete. It could only fail if He failed. It gives us a new heart, a new will, and a new life. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new, because His Spirit has made us new and raised us up to be with Him (even now) in the Heavens with Christ. *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, 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 2:4-6).

Back to our word “complete” in Colossians 2:9...Complete in Him, Thayer Definition:

1) to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full

1a) to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally

1a1) I abound, I am liberally supplied

2) to render full, i.e. to complete

2a) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim

2b) to consummate: a number

2b1) to make complete in every particular, to render perfect

2b2) to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, (some undertaking)

2c) to carry into effect, bring to realization, realize

2c1) of matters of duty: to perform, execute

2c2) of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish

2c3) to fulfill, i.e. to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment

John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible (Colossians 2:9):

And ye are complete in him,... Or “filled up”, or “filled full” in him; that is, are perfect in him: saints are in Christ, and all fullness being in him, they are full too, of as much as they stand in need, and are capable of containing: for these words are not an exhortation to perfection, as the Arabic version reads then, be ye complete in him, like those in Gen_17:1; but are an affirmation, asserting not what the saints shall be hereafter, or in heaven, but what they now are.

We are complete, even now in Christ, yet it is for us in this body of flesh to learn to live by faith according to that which He has done for us, in us, and in step with the Spirit that He has given us. It is only when our eyes of understanding are opened so we can see His power in us that we are enabled to truly do so, reckoning ourselves dead to sin, self, and the world, but alive with Him. If we still see ourselves as having to attain righteousness or keep ourselves, we are still struggling to do for ourselves what He has already done. So I pray with Paul:

“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of

wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:15-23).