

This Resurrection Life

We have been joined to the Lord Jesus Christ! If you and I have responded to the love of God by putting our personal trust in Jesus, then that is just the beginning. There is so much more . . .

For several years, I thought that the 'good news' was simply that Jesus died in my place, paying the price for my sin and failure, so that I could have a right relationship with God and have eternal life with him. When I took that initial step of trust at the age of 11, I was told that I had been 'born again' and that I would be changed because Jesus had come into my life. I don't remember hearing much about **how** that change was supposed to take place, but I do remember that the Holy Spirit had something to do with it! Somehow, it was all going to happen if I carried on praying, reading my Bible and going to Christian meetings!

As we have been looking at different aspects of what it means to be joined to the death of the Lord Jesus, we have also seen the 'resurrection' side of each of those aspects, and hopefully we have begun to see (and experience) how that 'death-and-resurrection' process can work out in our lives. What could have been just theoretical 'doctrine', seemingly remote and maybe not very practical, begins to come into sharp focus as the bedrock of our ongoing life in Christ. **The experience of truth.**

How I wish that someone had told me very early on that as a result of my response to Jesus, God himself had placed me in his Son, that I had been joined to him and that my 'inheritance' was not only some far-off promise of everlasting life but a life in the 'here and now' that was being transformed as a direct result of that almost incredible fact. As it was, no-one told me that, and it was only as a result of the written ministry of a then relatively unknown Chinese believer that I began to understand. My debt to Watchman Nee, especially through his classic book *The Normal Christian Life*, is hard to overstate.¹

I bought a copy of that book when I was about 14. Maybe I got something from it; it's hard to remember. I continued in what was becoming my new routine: involvement in evangelical Christianity, going to a Bible class, attending school and college Christian Union meetings, trying to keep up with reading my Bible regularly, reading Christian books, including some missionary biographies, and 'going to church'. Oh, and trying to pray as well, of course! Somehow that 'going to church' bit didn't seem to fit in quite the same way. I was becoming quite legalistic as I established for myself expectations of how I ought to be living – and applied them to other people as well.

Success evaded me. I didn't live up to my own expectations, let alone what I believed that God expected of me. I think I probably gave a reasonable impression to other Christian folk around me, so they may not have noticed the shortfall. But there was a gaping void inside.

Four more years had passed and my situation changed in three ways: 1. My student accommodation was now a single study bedroom, not shared as it had been before. 2. I started to read the Bible without following the study notes which I had always used before. 3. I re-read *The Normal Christian Life*. It all began to make much more sense. I started to see that my old life really was dead and gone and that I had been living in self-imposed legalism. Inevitably, I also found myself spotting those same legalistic tendencies in the Christian subculture which had become my home territory.

The missionary biographies which I read now inspired me to live a life that was effective for God. The ones that stand out in my memory are *When Iron Gates Yield* by Geoffrey Bull (experiences in Tibet), *God's Fool* by George Patterson (Geoffrey Bull's colleague in Tibet but a very different character!), the *Biography of Hudson Taylor* (pioneering in inland China) and two books by Elisabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendour*, relating the history of five missionaries who were killed in Ecuador in 1956, and especially *Shadow of the Almighty*, the life story of her husband Jim, one of those five. I had first heard about Jim and the others in about 1960, aged 13 or so, and had bought *Through Gates of Splendour* then, but again it only began to make a real impact on me as an 18 year old.

Why am I telling you all this? Simply because, all this time, I still had not fully realised that my life had been joined to the Lord Jesus Christ, although Watchman Nee is very clear about that, possibly more than anything else in his book. How had I missed it? Looking back, I can't understand how I could

¹ The first British edition of *The Normal Christian Life* appeared in 1958, just 3 years before I first read it.

have begun to see that I was included in the death of Jesus without clearly grasping the fact that my Father God had placed me in his Son. That realisation took another 4 years!

The most worrying aspect of this for me is that, during those teenage years, I was probably regarded as someone who was moving ahead in his 'Christian life' perhaps a little more or a little faster than some others around. It's worrying because I know that, in spite of all my apparent keenness and desire to serve the Lord, there was that big gaping void in my life. Move forward to the present day, and someone who is doing all those same things that I was doing in my late teens is probably still regarded in the same way – a 'keen Christian'!

But I knew there had to be more, and I wanted it! Cutting a long story short, four years later I was involved in full-time Christian work and training but was absolutely desperate to know more of the reality of the Holy Spirit in my life. After months of agonising (which I now know was needless), the Lord very simply opened my eyes to the fact that he had placed me in his Son, the Lord Jesus, and that all that I wanted and needed was **in him**.

Everything changed! What I had started to see before, that my old life was dead and gone, now fitted together perfectly. **Of course** I was dead to sin, dead to self, dead to law and dead to the world – because I now knew that I was joined to Jesus and **included in his death**. It wasn't just that he had died in my place; he had taken me with him into death . . . and resurrection!

Of course, I didn't see all of that in one shot! But the basic fact that I had started to see was that I was joined to Jesus, I was **in Christ** and I began discovering more of what that meant. More than five decades later, I am still discovering! I would definitely NOT go back to the sort of 'Christian life' that was mine before, however good it may have looked on the outside.

* * * * *

As we have been looking at 'Five Ways Dead – But Very Much Alive', we have seen various aspects of the **fact** that we have been joined to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen that, although we very definitely need to take hold of what God has done by including us in his death, the actual 'dying' to sin, self, law and the world system is already accomplished through his historical death back in AD 33.

The same is true of the positive 'resurrection' side of the process. We need to take hold of it, but we can't manufacture it ourselves. It is still very much a work of grace, God doing something for us, not us trying to do something for him. In actual fact, what God **is doing** for us is based completely on **what he has already done**. Just as our 'death' is already accomplished through being joined to the death of Jesus, so our 'resurrection' is based on his actual physical resurrection, in real time and in a real place.

If you want to get to the top of a tall building, you will need to get into the lift/elevator, and then the machinery will take you to the top floor. You are not doing any work to get there, but the mechanism will be of no benefit to you if you do not get into the lift, putting your trust **into** it.¹ I don't need to explain this illustration, do I? Incidentally, in this 'building', there are no stairs, no ways for us to get to the top ourselves. It's the 'lift' of grace or nothing: you can't 'get to the top' by your own efforts. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."* (**Ephesians 2:8-9**)

Back when I was first converted, I was told that I had been born again, and there was at least **some** small evidence of change in my life. But it was not until I realised that I had been joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus that I began to see **how** that new birth had taken place. As Peter says in his first letter: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be **born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**, into an inheritance, imperishable and undefiled and unfading, reserved in the heavens for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."* (**1 Peter 1:3-5**)

¹ It's interesting and probably significant that, in the original Greek text, the New Testament always says 'believe **into**' or 'trust **into**'. A sense of movement and change of position.

If we have been born again,¹ that new birth has come through the power of Jesus' resurrection. As we have seen before, there can be no resurrection without death having taken place. One of the verses which most of us learnt early in our Christian experience gives a very strong hint in that direction, but I for one didn't see the necessity of 'death' in order to be reborn: *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature (literally, 'there is a new creation'); **the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.**" (2 **Corinthians 5:17**)*. I suspect that the main reason that my early experience did not result in very much change in my life was probably that I was trying to live a new life without seeing the need for the death of the old one. I don't remember anyone telling me about that! Sadly, many will have the same experience and may be wondering why their new birth doesn't seem to have 'worked' very well!

New birth is based on resurrection and resurrection is based on death. We who have trusted in Jesus have been joined to him in both. As we begin to take hold of being dead to sin, self, law and the world system, so we find ourselves increasingly enabled to take hold of this resurrection life, to discover in increasing measure what it means to have been 're-fathered' by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said to Nicodemus: *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"*, and again, the word 'born' means 'fathered'. Our 'spiritual DNA' has been re-written!

So, specifically, let's look at death and resurrection, item by item. This can't possibly be an exhaustive list, but hopefully it will be a help to get us started on more discovery of our inheritance . . .

Dead to Sin. Those character defects! That repeated tendency to failure! Have we started to see that we can consign them to death, that those aspects of our nature have been included in Jesus' death on the cross? Then what takes their place? The purpose of this death is resurrection, so what are the fruits of this new life?

When Paul has taken most of **Colossians 2** to explain that we are included in the death of the Lord Jesus, he then launches into **Colossians 3** by saying: *"Therefore if **you 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**. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since **you laid aside the old self** with its practices, and **have put on the new self** who is being renewed into a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him – in which there is no Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on** a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things **put on** love, which is the perfect bond of unity."* (**Colossians 3:1-14**)

I make no apology for quoting these verses again! Paul uses the imagery of taking off one set of clothes and putting on another new set. The old clothes are our old life, with all the defects which he lists here (and maybe more), and the new clothes are the 'new self', the one sharing in the resurrection of Jesus. In one way, it has all been done: we have already been included in Jesus' resurrection; in another, the process continues daily. I like the way Paul says 'the new self who is **being** renewed . . .' That tallies with our own experience, doesn't it? And yet the ongoing daily experience is based on the historical facts of Jesus' death and resurrection. It couldn't happen otherwise!

In Romans 6:11, Paul puts it even more succinctly: *"Even so, count yourselves to be dead indeed to sin but alive to God **in Christ Jesus**"*. That's the key – we are **in Christ**, joined to him in death, resurrection and glorification. More about that next time.

¹ The Greek word translated 'born again' in this passage literally means 're-fathered'. See [Reborn](https://www.justonecandle.uk/page19.html) from <https://www.justonecandle.uk/page19.html> for a short study.

Dead to Self. It's very much a continuation of the same thing: 'the new self who is being renewed'. As we saw back in **Philippians 3**, Paul writes: *"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish **so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him**, not having a righteousness of my own derived from law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God on the basis of faith, 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 3:8-11**) I don't think Paul is writing about 'attaining' to the resurrection of his physical body. He knows that is already promised and certain. He is writing about seeing the power of Jesus' resurrection working out in his day-to-day life **now**, the 'new Paul' whose old self-centredness, self-righteousness and self-sufficiency have been replaced by new characteristics:— seeking to 'gain Christ and be found in him' – in other words, living a transformed life; having the righteousness of Christ – and therefore an open relationship with God; being dependent on the grace of God and finding all he needs in him.¹

Dead to Law. Paul could hardly have been more specific in his comment that *"you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, **so that** you might be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead, **in order that** we might bear fruit for God."* (**Romans 7:4**). None of this death, these aspects of death, are an end in themselves. Yes, death gets rid of the old, but always with the purpose of genuinely fruitful lives as **death makes way for resurrection**. The seemingly impossible standards which Jesus set in the 'Sermon on the Mount', way beyond the extent of the Law of Moses, only become possible by the resurrection life of the Holy Spirit at work in us. *"But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."* (**Romans 8:11**) Once again, Paul is not writing here about future physical resurrection from death, but about experiencing resurrection in our daily lives **now**. *"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set you free² from the law of sin and death"* (**Romans 8:2**).

There is no question; our new birth, our new life in the Spirit of God, is intimately involved with the resurrection of Jesus and the fact that we have been included in it by being joined to him.

Dead to the World. As we have seen, we are not trapped in the world system, human-orientated and Satan-driven as it is, but have been brought into the Kingdom of God. A Kingdom that already exists but will be fully revealed when Jesus returns to rule on this earth. In the meanwhile, sometimes unseen, the Kingdom on the earth consists of those who share in this resurrection life, those who have responded to the call of God in his Son, Jesus the Messiah, the 'called-out-ones' – the Church!

* * * * *

There is no way that I – or anyone else – can tell anyone **how** to live this resurrection life, except to urge you to take hold of what our Father has given us by placing us in his Son. How can we do that? Perhaps the simplest way to start is to tell the Lord what you have begun to see, what has started to become real to you, and tell him that you are standing on that basis. I recommend speaking to him out loud; it seems to help!³

For me, that means that each day I find myself thanking him that he has placed me in Jesus, taking hold of that fact afresh, some 50+ years since it first became real to me – and then more spins out from that. It's a different kind of prayer: not asking him for things, but taking my stand on what he has done and then thanking, praising and worshipping him for the **truth that is becoming experience**.

Dave Taylor August 2026

Further copies can be downloaded from www.justonecandle.uk
and are also available at <https://justonecandle.substack.com>

¹ See **2 Corinthians 12:9**. Paul's weakness was the opportunity for God's power to **dwell** in him.

² 'Set you free' – the aorist tense, speaking of something that has been done once and for all!

³ **Romans 10:8-10** shows the value of speaking out the truth which we have trusted.