

A New Life
Romans 6: 5-11

IV

Hello again, dear listeners;

Only a few weeks ago we ushered in a New Year, The year of our Lord, 2016. Am I mistaken or is it perhaps so that you too joined the throng who made some new year's resolutions? If so, how are you doing about *keeping* those resolutions?

Don't worry, you wouldn't be all by your lonesome if you would have to admit you've fallen prey to the '*resolution failure syndrome*'. That nasty list of admissions labelled, " *I tried but things got in the way*"

Never mind, it has been proven time and again that new years resolutions quickly go the way of the dodo bird and the Tasmanian tiger! They seem to fold up and disappear. A pity, but it is so.

Yet there is a resolution, that cannot fail. One that is absolutely reliable to come to fulfilment and a graduation of sorts. O, you say you want to know what it is? Let me tell you- It is God's own resolve to give you and me *new life* in the way of faith! Faith in Jesus Christ and in His death and resurrection.

I say this in all confidence because the bible doesn't lie . It says not only that by his death Jesus Christ has paid for the sins of all those who believe in him. *By his resurrection power Christians are raised up to a new life!*¹

¹ This is confessed in The heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 17.

Christ's resurrection has amazing benefits for those who believe. With his resurrection from the dead he began to hand out great and good gifts which he had earned.

The first of those gifts that he makes believers share in his *righteousness*. Now you might say, "O.K. but what can I do with that?" *A great deal*, for it means something like, "You get a new set of clothes." And if, (as the saying goes) "*Clothes make the man*" these clothes the bible talks about are most special. For they are washed in the blood of the Lamb, that Lamb being Christ!

If you should lay claim to those clothes, (which you can by God's grace and through faith in Christ), you are in a marvelous position. For it means that there is a true and lasting peace between you and God. It means your and my guilt, because of our horrible sins, is fully paid for! To use a biblical word, *you are justified!* God is not angry with you anymore and with those new, bright and clean clothes you receive access to what the bible calls, "*The marriage feast of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem*."

But then that's not all. There is a second and even a third benefit to believers because of Christ's resurrection. The second is that "*by his power you (you believer that is) are raised up to a new life.*"

That is not just a benefit to be 'cashed in' as it were after this life, in heaven. No, you can have that new life *today*. No you can't borrow or buy it, though you may 'beg' it, asking, pleading for it, in the way of true faith. And you may receive it by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Just listen for a moment to what the apostle Paul says about it in what is called his Letter to the Romans chapter 6. There this ambassador of Jesus Christ insist that Christians can simply not continue to live in sin, just because God's grace is so strong and so great that it can turn even the most hardened sinner's life around.

Says Paul, an insistence on continuing in sin if you confess to believe Christ died for you would be a terrible contradiction. For if you truly believe in Him you are united to him. You are wearing those new clothes obtained for you by his death, remember?

But then, if you believe in his resurrection, (and you and I should) you also have a part in that sanctified or holy life which is yours as a result of Christ's resurrection. For Jesus was raised from the dead and he will never die again. Death simply has no power over him. Sin, and its accompanying curse, namely death, has no power over him.

So for believers, united to Christ and his resurrection cannot live in sin anymore. They can't just surrender to sinful passions, thoughts and deeds anymore. **THEY HAVE BEEN RAISED WITH CHRIST TO A NEW LIFE.** Says the apostle, in another letter (that to the Galatians), Christ and the Holy Spirit have seen to a new creation. That is, a redeemed people, bought back from the power of sin and death. A people who looks day by day to its resurrected Savior.

What does that mean practically? This, that each day you and I die to sin, shunning, hating sin and pride, immorality, and all loveless, lifeless, arrogance, and every hint of selfishness and hatred of others. Instead , the new life signals, peace, and joy, the pursuit of true happiness in the service of a risen Lord. It means as well a love and

delight for other members of God's household of faith, that which the bible calls "the communion of faith."

O yes, it's a battle, this new life. For the devil, this sinful world and even one's old, miserable human nature will try to oppose this way of living. While the resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit call for us to live a life of thankfulness, of humility and of sincere love for others, those enemies of theirs and of us, will try to throw cold water on what they call the Christians' "childish ambitions". They'd have us doubt God's Word, and insist on our human rights, our clamouring for the "Self," and "Me" and "Myself", and "I". No matter how sinful and how futile these slogans are.

Would you and I cherish this new, sanctified life in the resurrected Saviour? Then we certainly will have to be genuinely sorry when we have provoked God with our sin. That will have to be # 1 or else how can we know the need for a Saviour. The psalmist David, though " *a man after God's heart*" once committed adultery with a woman 'next door'. When the prophet Nathan had come to him and pointed out his sin David cried to the Lord. His penitence is recorded in what we know as Psalm 51 in the bible. David said,

Have mercy on me O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin!
Then he asked the Lord to create in him " *a clean heart*" and to
" *renew a right spirit*" within him.

In that way David could live a life of love and delight in his Lord and Saviour again. The shackles of shame which had weighed him down were removed. He could breathe the clean and purified air of the new life again. Many years later the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome that God's people there might present themselves to God "as those who have been brought from death to life." (ch. 6: 13b). " For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is external life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 23).

Well then dear listeners, let us rejoice in God's resolve to give this wondrous gift of new life to those he has set apart for himself. It's a living gift, freely given! Elsewhere the bible calls it "*the new life in the Spirit.*"² That Holy Spirit gives life, yes, new life. The amazing thing is that it is a life that never ends.

Practicing, walking in that new life and in that new relationship to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit leads believers in what the bible calls "*triumphal procession*" (2 Corinthians 2: 14). That procession is like the victory parade that a general in ancient times would lead on returning to his own city with vanquished captives following behind his chariots.

But now believers, whose hearts have been captured by God have been joined to Christ's chariot. They are joyful, exuberant captives and they enter God's own city with the sounding of trumpets.

May it be your resolve to cherish being joined to that procession. May many more be joined to live the new life even as we look forward to

² e.g in Romans 7: 6

the day God will make all things new. Moe about that, the next time, the Lord willing. Amen, and thanks so much for tuning in to this broadcast.