



“The Path to Your Renewal: What Can You Expect?”

Romans 15:13



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A RATHER NEW CHRISTIAN came into a group of older believers and noticed that the conversation had gotten rather sour, and that these older believers were expressing their fears about the world, and about this and that. They were really being very cynical, and in being that way, these older, mature believers were really grieving this new Christian that they would talk that way, having all that they have in Christ. Later she said, “You know, I don’t want to be a mature believer if that’s what you become.”

Well, obviously, we all tend to go through times of fear and sourness and staleness; and unless we get renewed from time to time, we get old in our Christian life. We need revival; we need renewal and I believe we can expect it. That’s the first thing I want to say. If you want renewal, expect it, because God will give it. He is a wonderful Lord. He will give you renewal. He has put Himself on the line. The Bible promises this to us, that when we are spiritually dry or defeated, God will give us the answer to our dryness and defeat.

The first Scripture I want us to go to is Psalm 103. It is a psalm that ends with the word “renewal.” Its thought is that of bringing us to renewal. Verses 1 through 5:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit; Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle.”

Your part, I notice, is verses 1 and 2 – “Bless the Lord.” That’s a vigorous giving of yourself with all your strength. It says to bless Him.

PURPOSES OF GOD IN RENEWAL

Praise is part of renewal. God answers praise. Indeed He does; and here we are called to praise. To “bless the Lord” could be translated, “stand up and cheer.” It means “agree with God enthusiastically.” Recall His blessings. Bless the Lord – that’s your part. Renewal begins as you bless Him, love Him, rejoice in Him. Now God’s part is to meet you at the place of your need – to pardon, to heal, to redeem, to crown, and to satisfy you. As the last line says, “So that your youth is

renewed like the eagle." That's the purpose of God. He wants you to have continual renewal.

GOD'S STRENGTH FOR OUR WEAKNESS

Turn to Isaiah 40, another passage that illustrates the openness of God for your renewal. Isaiah 40:29-31 from the Living Bible:

"He gives power to the tired and worn out, and strength to the weak. Even the youths shall be exhausted, and the young men will all give up. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

Notice, the obvious thing is that we all get weary. Everyone gets weary. Young people get weary. Older people get weary. A young person came into the office the other day, and I said, "How are you?" And this young person said, "Tired." We all know what that is. It says that even the youths shall get tired and worn out. And that's true with young and old. We all go through that – ups and downs in our physical life and in our spiritual life, because they are related.

I like that story about the two salesmen who met in a hotel. They came down to breakfast together, and when the waitress came to the table, one of the men said to her, "I see you are feeling better." And she said, "Well, as a matter of fact, I am. I took two aspirin, and I do feel much better." She walked away, and the other man said, "Do you know her? Have you been here often?" The man answered, "No, I never saw her before in my life. But most people are always feeling bad, so I thought I'd say just that."

And all of us do get weary. But they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew or exchange or regain their strength. In a sense that word "exchange strength" means that He exchanges our weakness for His strength. In the place of our difficulties and inabilities, He puts His abilities. As we wait upon the Lord, He does that for us. Going through your fainting weaknesses, my friend, God has renewal for you. He promises it.

In II Corinthians 4, Paul is talking about all he has suffered for them and what he went through for them, but he said, "It's worth it." He did go through a lot, and he talked about the difficulties he met, and then in verse 16, he says:

"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

DAILY RENEWAL

Now, it seems to me that there we have the healthy way to renewal. It should not be that a person waits, and waits, and waits until there is an awful crisis, and he is renewed, but there should be that sense of daily renewal. Truly, our outward man does change – we get old – but inside we get younger, we get better – that’s the point. And that happens day by day as we come to the Lord.

You know, nature is an illustration of this very thing. God’s daily renewal takes place in nature – darkness, then the sun comes up and gives us light and warmth. Then the flowers begin to open, and the birds begin to sing, and all things seem to come alive. You begin your day, and you go through your day. So, spiritually we rise from sleep, and spiritually we should daily be renewed and invigorated to go into our day. So the Bible tells us we can expect renewal. We need it daily or we sink into terrible troubles. So, praise the Lord, seek Him, confess your sins, continually get into that powerful Word of God, and He will renew you. You can expect God to renew you.

The second thing I want you to know is how God renews you. It is good for us to know the way God renews you. We see that in Titus 3:4,5, that God the Holy Spirit is God the Renewer, or the Renewing God. Titus 3:4 says:

“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared...”

(that’s the first coming of Jesus Christ)

“...He saved us,”

(and that is speaking now of the larger view of His great saving work)

“Not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit...”

The regeneration is that one great act when God the Spirit puts life in us when we believe in Christ; and the renewing of the Holy Spirit is continuous, unending, the progressive work of the Lord. He begins with regeneration, He continues with renewal, and completes the redeemed person. So it is the Holy Spirit Who takes the Word of God and gives you visions of all your possibilities in Christ. We sing about it:

*“Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art;
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.”*

That’s renewal when we begin to love as we ought to love; the Spirit stooping to our weakness, giving us power to do this. He brings you in contact with the virtues and the values of the cross and the blood of Christ. You can expect renewal. God the Spirit will bring it to you, and that is God’s method.

THE BATTLE FOR RENEWAL

The third thing I’d like you to see is that you can expect opposition. And the opposition begins right inside you – you are your greatest problem. You have within you an old nature called the flesh, that is, that which operates without the consent and control of the Lord. There is that side of you that tries to resist renewal and “cops out” on renewal when the opportunity comes. Remember how Jesus said, “Jerusalem, O Jerusalem how often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not!” Or, one translation says, “You would not let me.” And there is that within us, that part which says, “Oh, no I don’t!” The flesh lusts against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh, and the two are contrary one to another. There is that battle going on. So we must admit that strange reluctance to God and give ourselves over to His power to overcome. He is able to win that battle... He has already done it!

ASSURANCE OF RENEWAL

Romans chapter 8 is a wonderful place for us to turn for that assurance, where the Apostle Paul makes the confident claim, for he says, “For the law of the Spirit of life, or that principle and that power of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.” That old drag or old lag that’s in you and me for renewal. Friend, there is opposition, but thank God again, there is also the Spirit of God in you Who stands in opposition to your opposition, and He is greater than all. You can expect God to renew you. You can have renewal by the Holy Spirit – God’s renewing power, or the renewing God.

JUDGMENT OR RENEWAL

Thirdly, you can expect this opposition deep within you. But the fourth thing is, you can expect judgment if you don’t get renewed. I am sorry to lay that heavy thing on you, but that’s true. It’s renewal or judgment, -- your choice. You see, God loves you too much not to stimulate you in your conscience, or by troubles He will bring

to your life, or whatever way. He loves you too much not to stimulate you for renewal. If you are disinterested, indifferent, or disobedient, only a careless God would let you go on that way without His intervention. He lovingly acts in a corrective way – not to destroy you, but to correct you.

God has greater purposes for you and for me than just to save our souls. He is bringing sons to glory, and He is bringing glory into the sons of men. And His plan is that you and I will come with the Lord Jesus Christ someday and reign with Him – we have great and marvelous purposes in the plan of God. He is not improving the world a little bit here and there; our Lord Jesus Christ is gathering up people for His name to be like Him. So renewal or judgment is the issue here, and it is the disciplines of God that act in a loving way to bring us to renewal.

We find this in Scripture in many illustrations. John Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark, at one time as a young believer went with Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey, and defected. He got discouraged and went home. You would think that's the end of him. Not at all. God the Spirit worked on his life, and he was renewed. Later on the Apostle Paul said of him, "John Mark is very important to me, be sure and send him to me." Mark was a renewed man.

But alongside him was Demas, also one of the apostolic party. He defected, and never repented. The last word we hear about Demas is, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." That's it, -- either renewal or judgment.

Take Peter, for instance. He denied the Lord, and cursed to prove his independence of Jesus Christ, but then repented. In his renewal, he became one of the great apostles of the church, one of the greatest men of all history.

Or Judas, who was alongside Peter; he defected. He did not repent, and he hung himself – tragic!

Charles Finney, the great revivalist, made this comment: "A revival of religion is indispensable to avert the judgments of God from the church. The fact is, Christians are more to blame for not being revived, than sinners are for not being converted. If Christians are not awakened, they may know assuredly that God will visit them in His judgments." Friend, you have got to be renewed continually or you are in trouble. A faithful father will see to it because He loves you that much. Get happy in the Lord – fast! If you are not prepared for personal renewal, be prepared for personal problems and troubles. We have all experienced it.

One of our members wrote a paper on "The Severity of God," and closed it this way: "The message is clear. We are not to trade upon the steadfast, abounding love of God – for His love includes His wrath as part of its legitimate, divine activity."

Then what can we expect? We can expect renewal if we want it. We can expect the Holy Spirit to be the agent God uses. We can expect opposition from within. We can expect judgment if we aren't renewed. That's it!

Hosea the prophet of the Lord said to the people of God (God speaking through him):

"Return, return O Israel, to the Lord your God, ...take words with you and return to the Lord... I will heal their backsliding, and I will love them freely..."

Then he says,

"I will be as the dew to Israel."

There really is no choice, is there? All of us seek renewal. That's why we come to worship. That's why we have quiet time; that's why we are in a small group where we share our hearts.

O God, renew us day by day by the power of the Holy Spirit!