

Renewal

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In God's creation, spring is a time of renewal in nature. Whether or not God planned it that way, I do not know. Yet it does seem to fit with the spring holy days, because the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are definitely about renewal.

In the Passover service we have recommitted ourselves to God's calling, and during these Days of Unleavened Bread we renew living God's way of life, acknowledging Christ our Savior as the true bread from heaven.

This is the very subject of my message today: renewal.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Ephesians 4:17-24 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 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, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

I I Corinthians 5:14-15, 17 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if one died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

This new creation that God is forming within us is not an instantaneous thing. Mr. Armstrong used to say that God cannot create character by instantaneous fiat; it is something that has to take place over a lifetime of our living God's way of life. I have four points about renewal today.

1. God intended renewal to be a constant throughout our lives.

In Matthew 6, we have the example of the model prayer.

Matthew 6:7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Have you ever considered that there could be, to God, such a thing as meaningful repetition?

God definitely makes use of repetitions as teaching tools for us. We have a set time to live this

life, and that time that we have been given is divided into sections, time markers if you will.

Mark 2:27 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

We rest from our laboring in this world, and we are spiritually recharged, restored, and renewed.

And, of course, daily we take in God's word in Bible study, as our need for spiritual food is typified by our daily need for physical food.

Once again in the model prayer:

Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Once again, if we draw from an example from the Days of Unleavened Bread, this brings to mind God providing manna for the children of Israel in the wilderness. We very much need that true bread from heaven daily, as we live in a spiritual wilderness.

Of course, taking that idea a little bit further with God using repetition, with the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread we begin another yearly cycle of God's Holy days. Every year, this depicts God's plan of salvation for His people and ultimately for all of mankind. After our committing our lives to God, He gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

11 Timothy 1:6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Once we have been given that gift, it is our responsibility to do something with that gift.

I would also like to read that scripture in the Amplified version:

11 Timothy 1:6 (AMP) That is why I would remind you to stir up (rekindle the embers of, fan the flame of, and keep burning) the [gracious] gift of God, [the inner fire] that is in you by means of the laying on of my hands.

Also, one more version of this scripture in Today's English version:

11 Timothy 1:6 (TEV) For this reason I remind you to keep alive the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you.

The original Greek word for the word that is translated 'stir' does in fact mean to 'rekindle' or to 'fan the flames of a fire'. The original word is actually made up of two Greek words, one of which is Strong's # 329, 'anazopureo' (an-ad-zo-poor-eh'-o); and the root word that makes up part of that word is the Greek word 'pur' (poor) which literally means 'fire'. If we borrow from an example of an oil lamp, perhaps from the parable of the virgins, which I think is a very fitting example, the oil lamp needs the oil to keep the flame burning. That is a symbol of God's Holy Spirit. We think of it in terms of stirring up that gift of God inside of us. We need a constant

supply of the oil to keep that flame burning. To God's benefit and to our benefit if that supply of oil increases, then the flame, of course, will increase in intensity, light, and heat. But if the oil decreases to a low level, the flame, of course, becomes a faint glow and if the supply of oil diminishes to a low enough level then the flame would be in danger of becoming extinguished.

Another example that I feel is a very clear indication that God is very much into purposeful and meaningful repetitions is the example of His handiwork, the human body, made in His image, and compared to the body of Christ in scripture. I feel that it is a living example of constant renewing because there are processes going on, involuntary things that take place within our body all of the time that we rarely think about unless something goes wrong. A good example of this would be breathing. Our lungs take in oxygen out of breathed in air, exchanging it with carbon dioxide, which is essentially the body's spent fuel. This is a constant process, ongoing.

Oxygen is delivered to all of the cells of the body, as a constant vital replenishment, keeping us alive. I have also heard, and I tried to verify this information, that all of the cells that make up all of the body are replaced over time. It is said that we have a new body every seven to nine years. I suppose if you knew exactly when that time came around, you might think that a reason to celebrate.

So is it possible that God is showing us in this process of continuous renewing, a physical type of what must take place within us spiritually? A constant, purposeful repetitious cycle of spiritual renewal to keep that Godly spiritual purpose alive within us?

Here are some very good reasons why we need this constant repetition of renewing:

1. Just as ancient Israel came out of Egypt after 400 plus years of bondage, they had a lot to unlearn. Their example is in scripture for us today, in that it was not easy. Actually, we being products of this world as well, probably have things that we need to have replaced with God's ways and, as I think that John mentioned today we are very much affected by that world around us.

Also, this present evil world works against us, and we, as God's people all have targets on our backs. And we can expect an onslaught of salvos being launched against us by our adversary, who is relentlessly looking for ways to trip us up, mostly going after our weaknesses. God allows this to strengthen us, so that we can overcome those weaknesses, so that the new creation in Christ continues to be formed within us.

We are reminded in II Thessalonians 3:13 that it is possible to become weary in well doing, because we are all subject to the same human frailties. King David, a man after God's own heart, knew this very well.

Psalm 51:9-11 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

To me, that scripture implies something. It implies that if we are not careful the Holy Spirit can diminish within us, or it can be taken away. However on a positive side of that, as I mentioned before with the example of the oil lamp, it is also possible for God's Spirit to increase within us.

It can also increase to the level that we can be full of the Spirit. I always used to think that only Christ had a full measure of God's Spirit being God's Son and being divinely the Son of God.

When Stephen was before the Sanhedrin, just before he was martyred it says in the book of Acts:

Acts 7:55-56 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

So I do not know if there is any limit, and I think it is a good idea that we should always ask for God's Spirit to be replenished and to be renewed within us to the largest possible quantity that God would be able to give us.

The renewal we receive from God at the Passover must be renewed daily. Once again this is mentioned directly in the model prayer, Matthew 6:12—our need for forgiveness and our need to forgive daily.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

2. Healing is a type of renewing. In addition to the fact that God is the source of our calling, and the source of the renewing and replenishing of all of our physical and spiritual substance, He is also our healer.

Exodus 15:26 And said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you."

This scripture breaks into an exchange between God and Moses about the murmuring children of Israel who are complaining about not having water to drink, and God has just told Moses how to make the water drinkable.

This scripture has a good tie-in with this spring Holy Day's reference to being brought out of Egypt.

Healing seemed to serve a special purpose in God's plan at the time Christ walked the earth as a man. Christ performed numerous healings, and He gave His disciples the power to heal and to cast out demons. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Luke 9:1, 2, 6, 11 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing.

That purpose is also explained in Matthew 9:

Matthew 9:6 "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" —then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."

That is also repeated in Mark 2:

Mark 2:10 "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" —He said to the paralytic,

I like to think that healing is not limited to just physical healing, but also to emotional and mental healing.

It does suit God's purpose that He has called the weak of the world:

I Corinthians 1:27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

My point being that in certain ways we are the walking wounded, and none of us is without his share of troubles in varying degrees. I think that God has pointed out that there is a need to heal the church in general. Just the fact that we were called out of the world and He has not called the elite of the world. He has called us. This is not a bad thing, and I do not want that to sound discouraging. I think it is a very good thing that God is pointing out how He will work with the weak of the world and He will produce more than the world will ever become.

Referring back to the main scripture from my first point however, this time we will read the scripture which follows:

I I Timothy 1:6-7 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Other translations render a sound mind, as '*self control*'.

3. God intends the ongoing process of renewing to facilitate spiritual growth and the bearing of fruit.

John 15:1-8 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

The word 'abide,' the original Greek word, can also mean continue, dwell, endure, be present, and remain. I think that is part of what we have to do, to have that constant ongoing renewal process continuing in intensity and spiritual purpose, so that we will eventually bear spiritual fruit.

Philippians 1:8-11 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Romans 6:22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

The statement "*Against such there is no law*" can have two meanings. The word "*law*" can refer to God's law, meaning that if you have the fruit of the Spirit you will naturally have no conflict with all of the law of God. But it can also mean that no one will have any argument with the way you are.

Matthew 5:14-16 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

The fruit of God's Spirit manifests itself in us. People notice qualities and character attributes which will stand out in anyone in whom God's Spirit is bearing fruit. They may know nothing about the one true God, but these Godly qualities will be recognizable as being significant having a value to anyone.

In Luke 2 we see the perfect example of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is when Christ was a young man. It is so well spoken, and I think that this is what God has in mind, when He wants us to have the fruit of the spirit, and that He wants us to bear much fruit and to be lights.

Luke 2:41-43, 45-47, 52 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

The point being that the fruit of the Spirit, and being lights, will give us favor with God and the world. We all, as members of the body of Christ, have been blessed with different gifts and talents. Yes, even though we are the weak of the world, God does make certain that we do

have those qualities within us. I have been impressed with my own sons' abilities and also other children in the church, second and third generation Christians, as a special blessing that God puts on them.

I Corinthians 12:1, 8-11 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

God expects to reap what He has sown in us, and it is very important that we bear spiritual fruit. In Luke 19, the parable of the talents (I will not turn there), God is very much looking for a return on what He has created within us.

I saiah 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Even though the wonderful handiwork of God's creation just naturally continues to renew itself, as the years go by, the body clock gradually runs down. Although, nowadays we seem to be living in fairly favorable conditions.

More and more people are living longer lives. Before I go to work in the mornings some days I will have on the 'Today' show and there is a feature with Willard Scott, with people who are one hundred years old and older. They do not look like they are about to drop over, or on their last legs, they look very healthy and vibrant. I am also reminded of one of my health and fitness heroes, Jack LaLaine, he is well into his 90's, and is one of the most physically fit than most people his age. I also read an article recently, on the BBC news website, about a man in Ukraine who is reportedly the oldest living man, he is 116 years old. They asked him, as they always ask, "to what do you attribute your long life?" He said it was because he had never got married. When I read that I said to myself that I hope that he is wrong on that.

And of course, we have the biblical record of long life spans in the days before the flood.

My point in all of this is that even though with optimal conditions human beings can thrive, God never intended physical flesh and blood to live beyond a human life span; but only for a finite, temporary period of time. All of us will only live a human life span, whether it be 70 years, or 100, or perhaps more.

This brings me to my final point.

4. God is bringing us toward the ultimate renewal. God is going to replace this physical body with a spirit body.

John 12:24-25 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who

loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

God is the source of the Holy Spirit which He has put into us, and the source of that flame, which is to be continually renewed within us, increasing in intensity and in spiritual purpose over our lifetime, facilitating spiritual growth and the bearing of fruit. As that new creation in Christ, we must continue to take on all of God's attributes, eventually reaching the time when we will be redeemed, and will be resurrected into the eternal family of God.

The source of that Holy Spirit as typified by fire, or as a symbol of fire is also commented on in Hebrews 12:

Hebrews 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

And a description of His Son, given to the apostle John:

Revelation 2:18 These things saith the Son of God, who has eyes like unto flames of fire, and his feet like fine brass.

There is no future in this physical realm. It serves God's purpose for now but its days are numbered.

In this continuing spiritual renewing, God is leading us to an awesome future, when He will renew all things on a large scale.

I will conclude my message with II Peter 3:

II Peter 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.