

Life Beyond the Moon

Fifty years ago at precisely 9:56 AM, this morning, July 21st, Neil Armstrong stepped out onto the surface of the moon and said those now famous words, "That's one small step for (a) man; one giant leap for mankind." It is estimated that no less than 650 million people watched in suspense. Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins journeyed to the moon and back, just as President Kennedy in his prescience speech predicted eight years earlier. Shortly after returning, the astronauts received the largest ticker tape parade in the history of New York City numbering over 4 million people in attendance to welcome these three men home from the moon.

I shall never forget the question asked Buzz Aldrin by a reporter on the tenth anniversary of their famous moon mission, and even more unforgettable, the answer given by this famous pilot and scientist. The question was, "Mr. Aldrin, in light of where we were and how far we have come in these ten years since being first on the moon with Mr. Armstrong, can you give us a statement?"

Aldrin answered, "Well, they taught us how to walk on the moon, but nobody taught us how to live on the earth." Between 1960 and 1973, NASA spent \$28 billion developing the rockets, spacecraft and ground systems needed for what became the Apollo program. According to a recent analysis by the Planetary Society, that translates into an estimated \$288.1 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars. Science has given us medications that can anesthetize the pain of depression, but it cannot give us joy. Science has perfected how we can discover the way the 23 pairs of chromosomes that define our DNA that explains to a degree what we have inherited from our ancestors. But science can never lead us into recovery from our inherited sin nature. Science may even land a man on Mars, but it can still never teach us to live on this earth.

In much of the Christian method of evangelism, we are often very good about telling people how to get to heaven, but we are not always good at instructing our young brothers and sisters in Christ how to live on the earth. The late Erma Bombeck inquired, "If life is a bowl of cherries, why am I always in the pits?" I could paraphrase something similar: "If Christ has given us victory, why am I always losing?"

The Lord Jesus promises His followers, not only life, but life more abundantly (John 10:10)! I would like to go to Romans six, which is the definitive chapter in the Bible that does exactly what Mr. Aldrin was wanting to know, i.e., how to live on this present earth. Let's examine four basic truths that will be most liberating.

1. DISCOVERY – FINDING OUT

Rom. 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Rom. 6:9: "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."

Once a person is saved, he or she is empowered with victory. We are not serving Christ in order to get the victory, we are serving Christ from His victory. I

Corinthians 15:57 says, "But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:17 reinforces this truth: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." We are reigning with Christ right now. We are seated with Christ right now in the heavenly places. Ephesians 2:6: "And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus."

A great problem in living the Christian life is that we don't know who we are in Christ Jesus. We are sinners saved by the grace of God. Often, we place the emphasis on "sinners" and not on "saved." John's description of how God sees us is revealed in Revelation 5:10: "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Since we shall reign with Christ in the future kingdom that shall come, let us do what Romans 5:17 tells us we may do: "... reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." We don't have to live under life's circumstances. The Bible says, in Deuteronomy 28:13, "And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do *them*."

2. DETERMINATION – FACING UP

Romans 6:11 says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The word "reckon" comes to us from the Greek word *logizomai*, which means to take an inventory or do the math. This was an accountant's term. Even in modern English the word means to establish by counting or calculation.

Many times God's people have been told who they are in Christ Jesus, but have never done the personal proverbial math. Those who have trained elephants tell us that soon after a baby elephant is born, to domesticize this massive mammal, his leg is chained to a spike driven firmly into the ground. The little elephant will struggle for approximately 3 weeks to stretch and free himself from the bondage. After this short training period, as long as the elephant's leg is chained, even if it is not fully secure in the ground on the opposite end, he will never struggle to free himself again. We see the elephant's great asset becomes his greatest liability, i.e., his indelible memory. It is not the chain that holds him--it is his perception of the bondage that keeps him stationary, even though he has the power to be loose.

All of us have the ability to suffer from besetting sins, which is a very real malady as explained in Hebrews 12:1: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Even though we are surrounded by and harassed by or assailed on all sides (which beset means), we have the power through Christ to lay aside any and all interferences with our walk with God. But we must be determined. We must face up to this fact that "I (we) can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

3. DECISION - STARTING IN

In Romans 6:13 we see this wording: “Neither yield...but yield...” In Romans 6:16a it reads, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey...” Yielding is placing action on the revealed truth. Since we are inextricably one with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, we need to understand that when Christ died, we died; when He was buried, my old man was buried and when He arose from the dead, my new man arose with Him. Whether we feel victorious or not, we have the victory in Jesus; therefore, let us obey by faith that revealed truth in Romans 6:4: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Romans 5:10 informs us, “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Then Hebrews 7:25 says, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” This is the power of the saving life of Christ! He died for our sins as I Peter 3:18 reads, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” And that same God to whom we are brought through Christ’s precious blood will quicken us (make us alive) with same Holy Spirit that was active in the resurrection of Jesus. Colossians 2:6 assures us, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” Make the conscious decision by faith to obey what God has said in I Peter 1:16b, “...Be ye holy; for I am holy.” You might ask how? The answer is found in II Corinthians 5:7: “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

4. DELIVERANCE – GOING ON

Romans 6:17 says, “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” This is the doctrine delivered that delivers us! Please take note of the wording, “obeyed from the heart.” “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity (God’s *agape* love)” (I Corinthians 13:13). It is love that will carry the day! What keeps us keeping on and going on into his glorious victory in Christ is obedience “from the heart.” It is not obedience with our arms twisted behind our backs that keep us in the straight and narrow, but the overwhelming love of Christ. II Corinthians 5:14, 15: “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

-Pastor Pope-