

# Publishing Editor's column

THE ONSET of autumn has been more noticeable this year than in recent years. The trees are changing colour to provide a blaze of beautiful browns, yellows and reds before their leaves drop to provide cover for hibernating insects and animals and later improvement to the soil. We can rightly remind ourselves of the promise that God made to Noah and his descendants, that the seasons would come and go without fail: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22, ESV).

This promise, so faithfully kept, means that everybody takes for granted that tomorrow will come; the expression 'as day follows night' illustrates this. While it is true for the earth, it is not true for individual men and women. Every morning there are many who do not wake to see the light of a new day. This uncertainty for us is underscored by the proven certainty of God's arrangements. The prophet rightly says, "All flesh is grass . . . The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40:6-8). Expounding this prophecy, the apostle adds: ". . . And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:25).

In contrast to human mortality, the gospel reveals the secret of life and immortality. Indeed, its certain basis is an event quite beyond human ability to bring about: the resurrection from the dead. The acres of graveyards full of dead peoples' bones testify to the certainty of our mortality. One empty tomb unmistakably exhibits God at work in support of His purpose: "[God] hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

We are right to remind ourselves that this is not a "cunningly devised fable" but an historical event, witnessed and accepted by sceptics. The Apostle Paul was among the most sceptical, but he could not deny the reality of the resurrection when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. This fact, he repeatedly affirmed in his public defences before rulers, had changed his whole life and perspective.

This historical event, faithfully recorded by the New Testament writers, in fulfilment of the witness through the Old Testament prophets,

provides for us a sound basis of faith. It also gives the prospect that those who trust in God and seek to be patterned upon Jesus will also be raised from the dead, no more to return to corruption, at his coming.

When Paul wrote to Timothy that Jesus had "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" he was not simply being repetitious for emphasis. Of course Jesus was both alive and immortal after his resurrection. But he was so because of the life that he had lived, and it is this life of delight in godly ways that we are urged to imitate as his disciples.

Jesus' resurrection highlights the quality of his life. So resurrection is also the pattern for our own life now. Baptism enacts a death and resurrection, a dying to an old way of life and a rising to a new, with Jesus' example and teaching as the model. So, writing to the Colossians, Paul exhorts, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (3:1-4).

This resurrection requires that we show it in specific activities: the first (although, given our natures, a continuing need): "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (v. 5, ESV); the second: "put . . . away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (vv. 8-10, ESV).

The third, having cleared out the evil and inappropriate, develops in the believer Christlike characteristics: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love . . ." (vv. 12-14, ESV).

Such character development makes for trees of righteousness destined to ". . . still bear fruit in old age . . . ever full of sap and green" (Ps. 92:14, ESV).

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