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**Presentation Transcript**  
**Spiritual Renewal – Newness of Life**  
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Today we're concluding our series on *Spiritual Renewal*. This is part seven. The title is *Newness of Life*.

There is so much that is said about spiritual renewal in the Bible. I've heard a number of sermons over the years about it. What we attempted to do in this series is to get to where the rubber meets the road. For me, it's not sufficient to say, "Commit, pray, study, meditate, fast." How do you do those things? Part of the problem with being spiritually weakened is we've lost commitment. So *how* do you get that back? Just saying we need to have it doesn't solve the problem. What do we pray, study, meditate and fast about? That's the question.

When we're weakened spiritually, God tells us to remember our past with Him – honestly and in detail – to rehearse our story so that we can see clearly what God has done in our lives. We have all seen the light of many, many people grow slowly dim and finally extinguish – flicker out. We've seen them lose their way in broad daylight, losing focus, forgetting what they ought to be doing and thinking about – forgetting about God's presence in their lives, while remembering their failures and errors in the past and growing discouraged and distracted – growing weary with doing well and sinking down into inactivity. There are so many who no longer walk with us.

Look with me Matthew 3:45 – Jesus said:

**Matthew 3:45** – *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, upon finding one pearl of great value, went and sold everything he had and bought it.* He sees this pearl of immense value, perhaps, in a bazaar. And he realizes, if he can just get his hands on that one pearl, he's got it made. So he leaves the pearl – it's now out of his sight. He goes and he's doing what he has to do to try to obtain it, but he never forgets

what it looks like, even though he's not looking at it any longer. In great haste and intensity, he goes and sells everything he owns, hoping to get that one pearl.

The problem for us is that, once the pearl is out of our sight, we tend to forget what it looks like. God's solution to that human tendency is to call us to remembrance. When we first saw the pearl, what did it mean? To me, it points out the need to be careful, to be alert, to self-monitor, to self-examine, lest the same thing happen to me, but mostly to never forget what God has done for me.

Do you remember the first time you realized what could happen to you if you gave your life to God? Do you remember what it was like the first time you realized God was working in your life? Do you remember when you first understood what Christ's sacrifice meant?

We just came through the Passover season. What is it Jesus said, as He gave the bread and wine to His disciples? "Do this in remembrance of Me." Even the biblical festivals call us to remembrance of God's works in our lives and to keep moving forward toward the goal. It's amazing what we can find in the Bible about spiritual renewal and the connection to the holy days.

There's a story recorded in the book of Joshua about the first Passover the Israelites observed once in the holy land. Let's go to Joshua 5:10 and read that.

**Joshua 5:10** – *While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth of the month, in the evening, on the plains of Jericho. And the day after the Passover – on that very day – they ate of the produce of the land – unleavened cakes and parched grain. And the manna ceased the day after they ate the produce of the land, and there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*

Think about it. The Passover was a time to remember their deliverance from Egypt. They were down then, but God promised to take of them and to give them a good land. And the very first Passover they observed, they began to eat the fruit of that land. God saved them and now He was delivering them and making the promise good that He made to them forty years earlier. The moment was made sweeter by the looking back to where they'd come from. It was a time of knowing that God had been with them all along, even in the bad times. It was a time of renewing.

Jesus tells us to take unleavened bread and wine on the Passover, and do it in remembrance of the deliverance He brings to us. We are renewed.

Continuing on in Joshua – verse 13:

**V-13** – *When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went to him, and said, “Are you for us or for our adversary?” And he said, “No, but I am the commander for the army of the LORD. Now I have come.”*

“Now I have come.” Something big is going to happen here. It says:

**V-14** – *Joshua fell on his face at that point. “We’re going to go to battle and God is going to be on our side.”* After they had kept the Passover and remembered how God had been with them, then it’s time to do something *big*. They were ready. They had been renewed.

Let’s look at another example out of the Bible. We can read in 2 Chronicles about the building of the temple. David planned it and stored up materials. Solomon built it. It was a house for God. It was grand. You can read the passages about it. It was amazing. Just saying it doesn’t do it justice. To get it, we have to read the account. The temple was a visual, tangible focal point for the people of Israel – a way to remember God was with them in their lives. So after the temple was built, we see Solomon do something very important in 2 Chronicles 7, beginning verse 8:

**2 Chronicles 7:8** – *At that time, Solomon held the feast for seven days, and all Israel with him – a very great assembly – from Lebo-Hamath to the brook of Egypt. And on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, for they had kept the dedication of the altar seven days and the feast seven days. And then, on the twenty-third day of the seventh month, he sent the people away to their homes joyful and glad of heart for the prosperity that the LORD had granted to David, and to Solomon, and to Israel, His people.* So this is the Feast of Tabernacles – that seven days with the Eighth Day following – a time to celebrate what God had done for them – a time to *remember* – to look back at their history and to see God in it with them – a time of refocusing and encouragement.

One of the things I pray for is that the Church of God will one day remember what the Feast is for. So many of us just see the vacation side of it. And it *is* a time to get away – that’s what renewal is about – but it’s so much more than that! There’s not much said about remembering and renewing, but you can see it there.

Let’s look in the book of Nehemiah and think about that. That story is just amazing. It’s about the return of the captives to Israel, charged by God with the rebuilding of the temple, the city and the wall. It’s a story of how they lost their way and forgot what they were supposed to do, and were restored by an observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. When we think about these things, it becomes clear to us that remembering is so very important. And the holy days look backward and forward. It’s spiritual renewal and looking forward. But there is something else – something *awesome*! Let’s look in Titus 3:4.

**Titus 3:4** – *But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God, our Savior, appeared, He saved us – not because of the works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.* God gives us the Holy Spirit when we commit to Him. And one of its functions is *renewal*. But there's much more to this kind of renewal than just getting back to where we were. Let's look in Romans 12:2.

**Romans 12:2** – *Do not be conformed to this world, but transformed – not conformed, but transformed – by the renewal of your mind, that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God – what is good, acceptable and perfect.*

That word *transformed*, in the Greek – *metamorphoo* – means *to change the essential form or nature of something; to become; to change; to be changed into; to be transformed – a metamorphosis.* And that word *renewal* – I'm not even going to try to pronounce that – but here's what it means: *to cause something to become new and different with the implication of becoming superior; to make new* – the implication of becoming of superior. Spiritual renewal isn't just getting back to where you were, it's going *beyond* it. It's spiritual growth.

I heard a lecture once at UNM Grand Rounds. It was called *Schizophrenia Is Like Golf*. The lecture pointed out a proclivity that people who have schizophrenia manifest. They go to a psychiatrist because they have these horrible, disturbing symptoms. And the psychiatrist painstakingly develops a cocktail of various drugs to try to control, or minimize, those symptoms. It's very hard to do this, because it's mostly trial and error, and there are, sometimes, three to five drugs involved, so it's very hard to get the balance. But a skilled doctor can often help people with this terrible condition to live a more normal life. There isn't anything else that works, so that's the best option that we have at present. But no one likes to take pills. So, when these folks start feeling better, they think, "Oh, I don't need these pills anymore and they quite taking them, and they spiral down – but lower than they have been when they first came in. So you may be wondering why it was called *Schizophrenia Is Like Golf*. Well, everybody thinks he's good at it, but nobody really is that good. Nobody likes to take pills, so we're not really good at taking medication. That was his point. So they quit taking their pills. They spiral down, but they always seem to go lower than they had been when they first came in. And each time this cycle repeats, they never get quite back to where they were before. So it's a downward spiral – some ups and then deeper downs.

With Christians, however, our cycle is just the opposite. When we get down, if we survive it by doing the work of remembering, we come out *stronger* than before. The cycle of trials and spiritual weaknesses and renewal make us stronger. We learn something from it each time. We become wiser and more dedicated and more difficult to deter. God literally transforms our thinking.

It's not fun to be spiritually depleted. It means discouragement, weakness, inactivity, negativity, depression, anxiety, etc. It means trials, mistakes, suffering, and anguish. But, when we go back to God and find renewal, we're always better off than when we started. We see this as a process of spiritual growth – up, down, and then up higher.

Let's read something Paul said. It's in Romans 6:5 and 6.

**Romans 6:5-6** – *If we have been united with Him in a death like this, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.* So notice, this is a looking back on God's intervention – not just in our life, but the life of every person.

In life – Christian or otherwise – there are many trials – many things to get discouraged about. Life can be hard, frustrating, depleting. When we give our lives to God, our trials – or our crucifixion of our old self, as Paul call it – have a powerful purpose in our lives – to transform us into something *better*. Our trials, as well as the blessings, are God's involvement in our lives. It's all part of His plan to perfect us.

Let's back up in the text and read this, starting in verse 1 – Romans 6:

**Romans 6:1** – *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so grace may abound? Some people foolishly think that. Paul says: By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? We were buried, therefore, with Him, by baptism, into death in order that, just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, we, too, might walk in newness of life.*

It all works for the good. It's all about God being with every step of the way to perfect us, to change us, to transform us into the image of His own Son. The way we stay positive in a negative situation is to understand what's happening and to look back and see how God has been working with us – to remember God in our lives and know that He's working on our behalf to perfect us. If we do that, we will be spiritually renewed and walk in newness of life.

Well, that's it for today. Check back in two weeks to see more.