

The Old Self Becomes The New Self

'You have stripped off the old sinful self and have become the new self, being renewed in knowledge after the image of our Creator' (Colossians 3:9 & 10).

'Our old self was crucified with Jesus so our body of sin might be put aside, so we might no longer be the slaves of sin. They who have died have been freed from sin. If we have died with Jesus, we believe we will also live with Him' (Romans 6:6 to 8).

'Assuming you heard Jesus and were taught by Him, all Truth is in Him so strip yourselves of your former nature, the old unrenewed self ... and be transformed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new self, created in God's likeness in righteousness and holiness of Truth. Reject all falsehood, let everyone speak the Truth with his neighbour, for we are all members of one Body' (Ephesians 4:21 to 25).

We can never properly understand the message of the New Testament until we become thoroughly acquainted with the Old Testament. The above verses in the New Testament were written to sincere, committed Christians. They were being taught scriptural truths they were not aware of, but truths God wanted them to hear. They were being taught not to live as non-believers because the moral understanding of the unsaved is darkened, and in their spiritual apathy they had become callous. Many Christians are not fully aware of the spiritual change that takes place when we are born-again. As Christians, we are required to take action regarding these two 'self's'. We have to put off the old self and embrace the new self. We need to know what exactly is involved. We must be able to identify both 'self's', otherwise how would we know we are putting off the old carnal nature and putting on the new holy character? Knowledge is essential to be able to see the difference between the old and the new self.

The origin and nature of the old self is found Genesis: deceit, lust, disobedience and corruption. 'All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not the Father's but is the world's' (1 John 2:16). Deceit is the result of Eve heeding the devil's lies (Genesis 3:1 to 6) regarding the fruit on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve was tempted by deception, she lusted after the fruit, she and Adam disobeyed, then they both immediately became corrupted and died spiritually. Years later, they died physically as a result of their sin. The devil's lie was the direct negation of God's command. God said they would die, the devil said they would not. The devil's primary activities are lies and deception. He was a liar from the beginning and is the father of lies (John 8:44) and he deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9).

The writers of the New Testament specifically warned Christians against speaking lies and falsehood. Lies and deception produce de-generation, and lust is nothing less than perverted rebellious desire. Lust is a desire that is contrary to the will of God and contrary to the well-being of the person who has those desires. Lust produces sin and sin produces death. 'Each one is tempted when they are drawn by their own lust and are enticed. The lust, when it has conceived, bears sin and the sin, when it is full grown, brings death. Do not be deceived my beloved brothers' (James 1:14 to 16) ... 'The wages of sin is death' (Romans 6:23). That is the second eternal death in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). In order to escape the second death, we need to 'kill' off the old self. We are to 'die' to self or die to sin so we can be made alive in Jesus (Romans 6:11), and there is no other solution for our innate sin nature. The good news of the Gospel message is the old self was 'killed off' on the cross with Jesus. The Gospel is God's only program for dealing with the old self.

The nature which is produced by deception and lust is corruption. The old nature is corrupt and corruptible in every area; spiritually, morally and physically. This old sinful nature is the seed or the offspring of the devil. Because the old self is the offspring of the devil, it produces the nature of him. Jesus said to the corrupt officials, they were of their father, the devil (John 8:44). The devil is the father to the children of disobedience. They are rebellious. The devil is the leader of all rebellion so the behaviour of the old nature is rebellious behaviour. We have all gone astray and have turned to our own way (Isaiah 53:6). The old nature turns its own way and turns its back on God. It seeks its own will, pleasure and satisfaction without reference to God. 'We were made alive (when born-again) when we were dead in transgressions and sins. We were following the prince of the power of the air and were under the control of the evil spirit that still works in the children of disobedience. We lived in the desires of our flesh and of the mind. We were by nature, the children of God's wrath like the rest of mankind (Ephesians 2:1 to 3). The sons of disobedience is a description of those who are not born-again and live in the old self. The devil is able to work in them and through them because of their disobedience. By nature, we are children of disobedience and disobedience always brings down God's wrath. There is a rebel in each one of us, and that rebel is called the old nature, old self or the old 'man'. (We are not speaking about an aging gentleman here, we are speaking about the old nature before conversion.)

The solution to the old self is not self-help. That gives free reign to a rebel. The solution is not enforcing law. Law cannot change the rebel. The solution is not psychology which the scriptures call old wives fables (1 Timothy 4:7). The solution is not religion. God does not send the old self to church, Sunday school or to memorise scripture. Religion can only temporarily conceal corruption but it cannot ultimately change it. None of these are permanent solutions to the sin born within us. We need to change from within so we can produce good spiritual fruit – Godly behaviour, and we are known by our ‘fruit’ (Matthew 7:20). We need to accept we are sinners who need to have our sins removed. We need to believe Jesus took our penalty. We need to receive His forgiveness. That is the only way of escape from the slavery of sin. It is by knowing and believing that our old self was crucified with Jesus and when Jesus died on the cross, the old self was killed off with Him. ‘I have been crucified with Jesus. It is no longer I who live but Jesus lives in me and the life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself up for me’ (Galatians 2:20).

Jesus died on the cross not made for Him, it was made for Barabbas (Matthew 27:26). Jesus took the penalty for all of us on a cross meant for someone else. Barabbas was due to be crucified on that cross but at the last moment, by divine providence, an exchange was made and Jesus took the place of Barabbas. Jesus also took our place. He took our divine judgement. The scriptures state that clearly, but only by being open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, can we see this truth. That is why we must crucify the old self – to avoid God’s judgement. Jesus took the place of our old nature – our old self and it was crucified with Him. This is a fact whether we believe it or not. Whether we accept it or not will affect us, but nothing can change that fact. That is why Paul said, “Who will release me from the shackles of this body of death? Thank God He will, through Jesus our Lord” (Romans 7:24 & 25).

The origin of the new self is created in the righteousness and holiness of the truth. It depends on, and is produced by a creative act of God and is not something man could ever produce by his own effort. Not by religion, by good works, by psychology, by obeying spiritual laws or even the law of Moses. God has done what the law could not do (Romans 8:3). The creative act of God proceeds out of the Truth of God’s Word. It is exactly opposite to the lies spoken by the serpent that produced the old self. The nature of the new self is described as righteousness and holiness and is in the likeness of God. That is according to the purpose of God. The new self is created according to God’s original purpose for man. In the new self, God’s likeness is restored. In the New Testament we are told not to lie which is the primary manifestation of the old self (Colossians 3:9). The new self is being progressively renewed as we grow in God. We are a new creation once we are born-again (2 Corinthians 5:17), and after creation there is an ongoing process of being renewed. The purposes of the new self is to come back into the true knowledge of God and we are restored into the likeness of our Creator.

The new self is produced by a birth – that is we are to be born-again. Jesus said we must be born-again if we desire to enter the Kingdom of God, and we are not to be surprised He was so adamant about it (John 3:3 to 7). The new birth is described as being born of water (baptism), and of the Spirit (baptism in the Holy Spirit). ‘As many as received Him, He gave the right to become the children of God to all those who believe in His name, who owe their new birth neither to blood or to the will of the flesh nor to the will of man but to God’ (John 1:12 & 13). We are to be born of God. ‘You have been born-again, not from perishable seed but from imperishable seed by the living Word of God which will remain forever’ (1 Peter 1:23).

The new self is a product of being born of God and through receiving the imperishable seed of God’s holy Word. As we receive God’s Word by faith and obey it, God’s Spirit brings forth within us the very nature of God. Jesus Himself is called the Word of God (John 1:1; Revelation 19:13). Jesus is the Word of God and the scriptures are the Word of God. The Gospel is the spoken Word, while Jesus is the Living Word. When we believe, receive and obey the spoken Word of God, we are receiving a ‘seed’ (Luke 8:11). That seed brings forth in us by the Holy Spirit, by our obedience, a new incorruptible, imperishable, eternal nature. We gradually become like the Living Word, Jesus Himself.

We need to actively cultivate the new self through worship, prayer, church fellowship and obedient service to our calling. Between putting off the old and putting on the new, we have to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, put on the new nature, consciously reject falsehood and speak the truth. There has to be a total change in the way we think and this can only be done by the Holy Spirit. Our minds are being exposed to the Spirit of Truth that brings to us the truth of God’s Word. ‘Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God’ (Romans 12:2). We must not allow the old self have its way in our lives, but we are to be transformed by the renewing of the mind by developing and maturing the new self. The renewing of our minds is one essential phase in the process of become like Jesus, which is a work of the Holy Spirit. The hope of His calling is the full development of the new self and His glorious destiny for believers. Before we can understand or comprehend that, the ‘eyes’ of our hearts need first to be opened by the Holy Spirit. ‘By having the ‘eyes’ of your heart opened so you may understand the hope of His calling, and what the riches

are in His glorious inheritance in the people of God' (Ephesians 1:18). This tells us our hearts have been in darkness and the Holy Spirit has to bring us the Light of His truth. We can only understand the Gospel after our spiritual 'eyes' have been opened. Through the truth of the Gospel, our spiritual eyes are opened and we can see what God has for us in the new self. 'Blessed are your eyes for they do see, and your ears for they do hear' (Matthew 13:16). 'Blessed are those whose eyes see what you see' (Luke 10:23).

The Holy Spirit works through the mirror of God's Word. 'If anyone listens to the Word without obeying it, he is like a man who looks in a mirror, for he observes himself and then goes away and promptly forgets what he was like. He who looks carefully into the law of liberty and is faithful to it, he will be blessed by his obedience' (James 1:23 to 25). 'We see in a mirror dimly, but then – when transformation comes – we will see face to face! For right now I know only in part but I will know (the truth) clearly as I am known by God' (1 Corinthians 13:12). The 'mirror' of the Word shows us both the old self and the new self, and what God can do by grace. We need to look in the 'mirror' of the scriptures and see our 'reflection' and we need to act on what we see. The Holy Spirit only works with us while we are looking in the 'mirror' of God's Word.

The new self must grow at the expense of the old self. 'He must increase and I must decrease' (John 3:30). Although that verse does not apply directly to us, that is a principle for all of us. Jesus must increase in our lives, as we – the old us – decreases. Only in the proportion the old self decreases, does the new self increase. The growth is slow and gradual. Little by little God drives the sin out of us until we are able to live in the new self. 'Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased enough to inherit the land' (Exodus 23:30). That verse was written for the children of Israel as they were entering the promised land. God promised to drive their enemies out so they could gradually inherit all the land. The principle applies to us. The Lord drives out our sin little by little so we can inherit our promised land – eternal life.

We have to die to the old self before the new self can be born, rise up and live. There are two stages in dealing with the old us. We first need to accept by faith what God says about the old self and we have to accept God's verdict on the old self, which is a sentence of eternal death. We accept by faith we died with Jesus, then we have to consider our new selves to be alive with Him. We all know it is true, but we need to slowly grow into maturity and live in the new self. We have to deny the demands of the old self. Jesus said we have to deny ourselves and take up our cross, whatever the personal cross is for us (Matthew 16:24). We must present ourselves to the Holy Spirit and yield every part of our personality to Him. The result will be obedience. The new self operates in total obedience to God. We do whatever He tells us to do and we go wherever He tells us to go at the time He says is right.

'In Him we obtained an inheritance, for we had been foreordained (chosen and appointed beforehand) in accordance with His purpose, Who works out everything in agreement with the design of His own will' (Ephesians 1:11). We are in line with the huge overall, eternal plan God has for mankind and He works everything out in conformity with His own will. Eventually, everything will fall in line with God's purpose and His will. This was God's original purpose in creating man, and God's does not want His ultimate purpose to be frustrated. 'I will not contend forever, neither will I stay angry, for if I did stay angry, the spirit of man would be consumed before Me and My purpose in creating the souls of men would be frustrated' (Isaiah 57:16). He worked out a plan of redemption for whosoever will come to Him (Revelation 22:17). Nothing will prevent God from fulfilling His own plans. It may take many thousands of years, but eventually, He will get His way. God is in complete control over all His creation, and that includes mankind.

God first speaks about man in the singular, then in the plural (Genesis 1:26). He said, "Let Us make man," (singular) then He said, "Let them rule," (plural). He is talking about His purpose for the whole human race, not just one man. The two purposes are, mankind is to reveal God's image and likeness and the second is, mankind is to rule under God's authority. God made man on the sixth day (six is the number of man) then He rested on the seventh day. It seems God would not rest until He had created His likeness. Everything else in all creation was building up to that one major creation – man. Nothing else, in all of the creation on earth, has been made in God's image and likeness. That is equally true in the new creation. God will not rest until He has recreated His own image and likeness, once again, in mankind. Mankind are to exercise God's authority on His behalf. Man was created to have dominion and rule over all the animals and birds on earth (Genesis 1:28). But there is more. Since the forces of darkness came and deceived Eve and caused a delay in God's ultimate purpose, we humans, as Spirit-filled believers, being the new creation, have been given authority over the forces of darkness in the spirit world, something Adam and Eve did not have. 'The seventy men returned with joy saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!" Jesus said to them, "Behold! I have given you authority and power to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power the enemy possesses, and nothing will in any way harm you. Do not rejoice the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven"' (Luke 10:17 to 20).

God's image and likeness in mankind was marred by sin. We were created in the same form or shape God is. Jesus, Who was God on earth was the form, shape and size of a normal man. Just as Jesus was the image of God the Father, so all mankind was created in the same form and shape, which is the image of God. The likeness of God is His character of righteousness and holiness. Adam and Eve were initially perfect like God is, but their disobedience caused them to act sinfully and lose the perfect character of God. They were still His physical image but they were no longer like Him. When we are born-again and grow in God we should become the likeness of God, developing His perfect character. Man, who was destined to be a ruler, became a slave to sin. Man fell from his position of rulership to a position of slavery because of his disobedience. 'The first man Adam became a living soul, the last Adam, Jesus, became a life giving Spirit' (1 Corinthians 15:45). Jesus is called the last Adam. This directly relates to the reason of Jesus' first coming to earth, to the original purpose for the creation of Adam. Jesus came as the last Adam to seal up and to terminate the evil inheritance of sin and corruption in the original Adamic race, and then to fulfil the two purposes of God which had been frustrated by Adam's disobedience. It is almost as though God is beginning His creative process all over again, starting with the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. Those who believe in Jesus are on the right path to fellowshiping with God just as Adam once did. Adam was created to live forever but died because of his disobedience to God. Now because of Jesus, eternal life is once again within our grasp – as long as we are obedient to God. We have come the full cycle, and are heading towards the goal – eternal life with God.

Jesus was God the Father's perfect image and likeness here on earth and He was the Father's delegated authority here on earth. 'Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father ... What I am telling you I do not say on My own authority, but the Father Who lives in Me does His works' (John 14:9 & 10). The words and the works of Jesus, received their authority from the Father speaking and acting through Jesus. Jesus exercised the Father's authority, perfectly. Working on the Father's behalf, Jesus fulfilled perfectly the two purposes of God's creation. Adam had originally been created for this purpose but failed where Jesus succeeded. After His death and resurrection, Jesus commissioned His disciples to do the same for Him as Jesus had done for the Father. 'Just as the Father has sent Me forth, so I am sending you' (John 20:21). Jesus commissioned the disciples to do the same as He did. To reproduce His likeness and to exercise His authority. That is God's purpose for the new self.

'Those whom He foreknew, He also destined from the beginning to be transformed into the image of His Son so He might become the Firstborn among many' (Romans 8:29). That is God's destiny for the new self, to become the image of God and to rule and reign. We are to exercise Jesus' authority on His behalf. 'Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go then and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, until the very end of the age. Amen"' (Matthew 28:18 to 20). Jesus said the authority had been given to Him, and He was sending the disciples to exercise His authority on His behalf. Our responsibility is to exercise Jesus' authority by making disciples of all nations. We need to baptise them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In other words, all that we do for Jesus we know the triune God is behind us. Our teaching is the expression of the authority delegated to us. We are not commissioned to teach whatever we please, we are commissioned to teach what we are told to teach, just as Jesus did. This process will go on until Jesus returns.

'Now in Jesus, you who were far away, through the blood of Jesus have been brought near. He is our peace. He has made us (Jews and Gentiles) one Body and has broken down the hostile dividing wall between us by abolishing in His own crucified flesh, the enmity, the law with its decrees and ordinances which He annulled so from the two (covenant peoples, Jews and Gentiles) He might create in Himself one new man, so making peace' (Ephesians 2:13 to 15). The new man is one collective new man or self, encompassing all the people on earth who accept Jesus as their Saviour. 'Through Jesus we both (Jews and Gentiles) have our access to God in one Holy Spirit to the Father' (Ephesians 2:18).

Amen and God bless you.

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