

The Old Self Becomes The New Self

‘You have stripped off the old self with its evil practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed into more perfect knowledge, after the image of Him Who created it’ (Colossians 3:9 & 10).

‘We know that our old self was nailed to the cross with Him, in order that our body of sin might be made ineffective for evil, that we might no longer be the slaves of sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him’ (Romans 6:6 & 8).

‘Assuming that you have really heard Him and been taught by Him, as all Truth is in Jesus. Strip yourselves of your former nature; that is put off your old unrenewed self, which characterised your previous manner of life, and became corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion, and be constantly renewed (transformed) in the spirit of your mind and put on the new nature, the regenerated self, created in God’s image, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore rejecting all falsehood, let everyone express the Truth with his neighbour, for we are all parts of one body’ (Ephesians 4:21 to 25).

We will be looking at these three passages of scripture several times throughout this sermon. We can never properly understand the message of the New Testament until we become thoroughly acquainted with the Old Testament. In the above verses in Ephesians 4:21 to 24, and in fact in the whole of chapter 4, we can see that Paul was sharing a truth to sincere, committed Christians. He was teaching them a truth they were not aware of but that God wanted them to hear, for example; ‘you must no longer live as the Gentiles; their moral understanding is darkened; in their spiritual apathy they have become callus’, etc. It is the same of Christians today. Many Christians are not aware of the fullness of the teaching within the scriptures, concerning their position in Jesus.

As Christians, we are required to take action regarding these two ‘self’s’. We have to put off the old self and clothe ourselves with 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 self and putting on the new self? In other words, 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 in Ephesians 4:22. There are three key thoughts in that verse: corruption, lust and delusion or deceit. The origin and product of the old self is deceit or deception. It 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 lie was the direct negation of God’s command; God said they would die, the devil said they wouldn’t. The old self is the product of that deceptive lie. The devil’s primary activity is 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).

Back to Ephesians 4:25 and Colossians 3:9; Paul specifically warns Christians against lies and falsehood. Lies and deception produce de-generation, and lust is nothing less than perverted rebellious desire. Lust is a desire which is contrary to the will of God and contrary to the well being of the person who has those desires. Lust in turn produces sin and sin produces death (James 1:13 to 15), and we know that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

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. We read in Genesis 3:15 that 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, that 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.

Isaiah 53:6 says we have all gone astray and we have turned, every one to his own way. 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. Ephesians 2:1 to 3 says 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 sons of disobedience – we lived in the passions of our flesh, we were corrupt, we obeyed the impulses of the flesh, and we were then by nature, the children of God's wrath, the heirs of His indignation, like the rest of mankind. The sons of disobedience is a description of those who have the old self. The devil is able to work in them and through them because of their disobedience. By nature, we are sons 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 just 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; 2 Timothy 4:4; 2 Peter 1:16). 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 can not ultimately change it. None of these are permanent solutions to the sin born within us. They can't change a thing. We need to change from within so we can produce good fruit, that is Godly behaviour, and we are known by our 'fruit' (Matthew 7:16 & 20). Jesus went on to explain; healthy trees bear good fruit, decaying trees bear bad fruit and decaying trees are to be burned (Matthew 7:17 to 19).

Just as the decaying or corrupt tree is cut down and burned, so also the eternal place for corrupt individuals is the eternal, burning lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). That is the second death (Revelation 21:8) and we read earlier that the wages of sin is death – it is the second death, that that verse refers to. 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 (Romans 6:11), and there is no other solution. The good news of the Gospel is, the old self was nailed to the cross; it was 'killed off' on the cross. The Gospel is God's program for dealing with the old self. We can see that if we carefully study the whole book of Romans. How has Jesus set us free? Read again Romans 6:6 & 8 at the top of the first page. 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 Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ the Messiah 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).

We know that Jesus died on the cross, but the cross was not made for Jesus, it was made for Barabbas (Matthew 27:15 to 18, 20 & 26; Mark 15:6 to 11 & 15; Luke 23:18). 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? O thank God! He will, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:24 & 25).

The nature and origin of the new self is created in the righteousness and holiness of the truth. Turn again to Ephesians 4:22 to 24. It depends on, and is produced by a creative act of God and is not something that 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 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.

See again Colossians 3:9 at the top of page 1. We are told not to lie which is the primary manifestation of the old self. The new man is being progressively renewed. 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 image 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 in John 3:1 to 11. The birth is described as being born of water (baptism), and of the Spirit (baptism in the Holy Spirit), then read John 1:12 & 13. ‘As many as did receive Him, He gave the authority to become the children of God, who owe their birth neither to blood or to the will of the flesh nor to the will of man but to God’. We are to be born of God. ‘You have been regenerated, or born-again, not from a mortal origin but from one that is immortal by the living Word of God’ (1 Peter 1:23).

We see that the new self is a product of being born of God and through receiving the imperishable seed of God’s 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 in John 1:1 and in Revelation 19:13. Jesus is the Word of God and the scriptures are the Word of God. The Gospel is the preached word, while Jesus is the Living Word. When we believe, receive and obey the preached 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.

To cultivate the new self, see again Ephesians 4:21 to 25. 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. Now 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 and acceptable will of God’ (Romans 12:2).

In both Ephesians 4:23 and Romans 12:2, Paul says not to allow the old self have its way in our lives, but we are to be transformed by the renewing the mind; 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 the 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 – enlightened – so that you can understand the hope to which he has called you, and how rich is His glorious inheritance in the people of God' (Ephesians 1:18). This tells us that 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 '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 only listens to the Word without obeying it, he is like a man who looks in a mirror, for he observes himself and then goes off and promptly forgets what he was like. But he who looks carefully into the law of liberty and is faithful to it, he shall be blessed by his obedience' (James 1:23 to 25). 'For now we see in a mirror that gives only a dim reflection, but then – when transformation comes – we shall see in reality face to face! For now I know only in part, but then, I shall know (the truth) clearly as I have been understood 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. See again the word transformed. 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 that 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).

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 man and we have to accept God's verdict on the old self, which was death. We accept by faith we died with Jesus, then we have to consider our new selves to be alive with Christ. 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 that 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, whatever He tells us to do, and we go wherever He tells us to go.

'In Him we were made God's heritage and 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 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 doesn't

want His ultimate purpose to be frustrated. 'For I will not contend forever, neither will I stay angry always, 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), so 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.

In Genesis 1:26, we see that God first speaks about man in the singular, then in the plural. He says let us make man (singular) then he says let them rule (plural). He is talking about His purpose for the whole human race, not just one man. The two purposes are; man is to show God's image and likeness and the second is; man is to rule. God made man on the sixth day 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 man.

Mankind are to exercise God's authority on His behalf. Man was created to have dominion and rule over all the things 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 now been given authority over those same forces of darkness in the spirit world, something Adam and Eve didn't 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 that the enemy possesses, and nothing shall in any way harm you"' (Luke 10:17 to 19).

God's image in man was marred by sin. 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 the purpose of His coming to the original purpose; 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. Those purposes are to show forth God's likeness and to show forth God's authority. It is almost as though God is beginning His creative process all over again, starting with the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. Now mankind is on the right path once again to fellowship 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 or the new man.

'For those whom He foreknew, He also destined from the beginning to be transformed into the image of His Son that He might become the firstborn among many' (Romans 8:29). That is God's destiny for the new man; to become the image of God and to rule and reign. We are to exercise Christ's authority on His behalf. 'Jesus approached and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go then and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always, until the very end of the age. Amen"' (Matthew 28:18 to 20). Jesus said the authority has been given to Me, but I am sending you, to exercise My authority on My behalf. Our responsibility is to exercise Christ's 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 Christ, 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 is to go on until Jesus returns.

'But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away, through the blood of Jesus have been brought near. For He is our peace. He has made us 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; that from the two He might create in Himself one new man, so making peace' (Ephesians 2:13 to 15). The new man is one collective new man, comprising all the people of God. This new man is to operate in harmony with other believers to form one corporate body. We are to re-enact Christ's earthly ministry to fulfil God's two purposes. 'The two' as underlined above, are that we are to show God to the world and we are to exercise God's authority on His behalf. That will prove to be the good and acceptable will of God, Paul wrote about in Romans 12:2. That is the hope to which He has called us believers. That is our glorious inheritance.

Amen and God bless you.

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