

Men: Old and New

In Colossians chapter 3, it is written:

“Lie not one to another, seeing that *ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:9-10).

This citation illustrates the two personalities which define whether or not an individual is spiritual, or carnal. All of humankind will be categorised by either one or the other—for the most part, the Old man of the flesh, and in the minority, those who desire to “put off” the Old man, and “put on” the New. These become “renewed in knowledge,” being “after the image of him that created him”.

ADAM AND EVE

Man was first formed to be in the “image” and “likeness” of their Creator (Gen. 1:26). However, the first human pair sinned in the sight of God, and ceased to show forth that image. The point in Colossians cited above, is that by being renewed in knowledge, and the forsaking of sin, a person can once again show forth the glorious array of divine attributes of our Creator. This is what is meant by the figure of putting off certain garments, and the putting on of new.

Interestingly, the Genesis record describes how that the original man put on garments to hide his sin:

“the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and sowed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:7).

Here was the putting on of certain garments, in an endeavour to hide an awareness of nakedness before God, and cover up what they had both done. Job alluded to this: “If I covered my transgressions *as Adam*, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom ...” (Job. 31:33). This was the mindset of the original “old man”, even Adam himself: to try and cover up his evil deeds. But it is also written: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:3). It was necessary therefore, for the first sinful pair to confess, and forsake their sin.

In their natural condition, both Adam and his wife hid in the shade of the trees (Gen. 3:8) in fear of their Maker, a feature which was new to their experience. But Yahweh, in the abundance of His mercy called them out of the shade into the light, and gave them the opportunity to confess what they had done:

“And Yahweh Elohim called unto Adam, and said unto Where art thou?” (Gen. 3:9).

The question arises, Why did Yahweh ask Adam where he was? He is the Almighty, He knows all things, so why the need to ask such a question? We suggest that it was to draw out a particular response from man. By a sequence of questions, the Father-Creator drew out a confession from man of what it was that he had done. Notice the points emphasised below:

“Yahweh Elohim called unto Adam, and said unto him, *Where art thou?* And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, *Who told thee that thou was naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?* And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And Yahweh Elohim said unto the woman, *What is this that thou hast done?* And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Gen. 3:13).

Notice particularly this question and answer sequence: Yahweh asks questions, and both Adam and Eve gave a factual account of what had taken place. Sometimes it is thought that Adam is blaming God for providing the woman in the first place, and that Eve blames the serpent for leading her astray. However, both gave a factual account of what happened—which we suggest was rather a confession of what they had done. It would rather appear that this confession was the basis for their sins being covered, and forgiven.

A CHANGE OF GARMENTS

It is written by the inspired Apostle citing the Psalmist:

“David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, **and whose sins are covered**. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:7-8).

Here, a covering = forgiveness. Back in Genesis 3, Yahweh himself provided a sacrificial covering for Adam and his wife to wear: “unto Adam also and to his wife did Yahweh Elohim make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). This literal covering implies that their sins were covered, and forgiven in the sight of God. Also, it is obvious that in order to wear the skins that Yahweh provided, they would both would have to **take off** the old garments of their providing, and **put on** the new, of Yahweh’s providing.

In these events, our position is foreshadowed: the old man of the flesh has to be “put off” in order that the new mindset could be “put on”. It is written: “Woe to the rebellious children, saith Yahweh, That take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit” (Isa. 30:1). We must not seek to devise a covering to hide our sins before God, for He knows all things and there is nothing that can be hidden from Him. A coat of skins implies the death/sacrifice of an animal, which points forward to Messiah as being the lamb “without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God” (1 Pet. 1:20). In embracing these principles of the Atonement (Hebrew: covering), our Old Man is crucified with him, that the body of sin is rendered impotent (Rom. 6:6), and we appear blameless after the image of our Creator.

THE NEW MAN

Colossians chapter 3 records how we are “renewed in knowledge” after the image of our Creator. This is expressed by the Apostle in other epistles as follows:

“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by **the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God ...” (Rom. 12:2).

“... we faint not; but thou our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day ...” (2 Cor. 4:16)

It is clear from these testimonies, that salvation requires a mental change. Our “mind” needs to be “renewed in knowledge” daily, and this can only be done by the continual study and application of the Word.

THE CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL MIND

The importance of having a correct mind-set is emphasised by the Apostle, who speaks of two dispositions of thought: one leading to grace and life, and the other to condemnation and death:

“They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be **carnally minded** is death; but to be **spiritual minded** is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom. 8:6-8).

There is a parallel with Colossians chapter 3. Here, the Old Man of the flesh is the “carnal mind”, and the new man a “spiritual mind”. The carnal mind (more accurately the minding of the flesh) will lead only to death, whereas the spiritual mind (more accurately, the minding of the Spirit) will only lead to life. We must therefore develop a spiritual mind, which can only come into being by a constant application to the Spirit-Word. This is the mind of Christ himself: a mind that we ought to emulate: “... Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ...” (Phil. 2:5).

Possessing a spiritual mind cannot be achieved in an instant. It is something which has to be nurtured and developed, through tribulation and trial. There is a constant warfare in the mind between the old, fleshly thinking, and the new, spiritual mode of thought:

“This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:16-17).

The Apostle Paul recognised this struggle within himself:

“... I see another law in my members, *warring* against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:23).
But then he also recognised the power of God to save:

“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 7:24).

This struggle between the carnal and spiritual elements within our thinking is acutely recognised by those whose heart is set on spiritual things. Indeed, if we do not recognise the struggle in ourselves, it could well be because there is no struggle—we are wholly dominated by fleshly thinking to such an extent that the spirit-mind cannot develop, and is instead crowded out.

THE NEW CREATION

Those who seek to develop spiritually, are said to have been “born again” (Jno. 3:3). They are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23). They are therefore members of a New Creation which commenced with Christ, the firstborn of the dead, the Word “made flesh”. Returning back to Colossians, we read that:

“He is the head of the body, the ecclesia: *who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead;* that in all things he might have the pre-eminence” (Col. 1:18).

Messiah himself is the beginning of a new Creation, and those who follow him are likewise members of that Creation. So it is written:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new ...” (3 Cor. 5:17).

THE NEW MAN CANNOT SIN

The apostle John describes the New Man thus:

“Whosoever is born of God *doth not commit sin;* for his seed remaineth in him: and he *cannot sin,* because he is born of God” (1 Jno. 3:9).

The question arises: How can it be said that we “cannot sin,” when in actual fact not only can we sin, but we do sin every day? The answer is that when we sin, it is not the New Man that sins: rather it is the Old Man rearing his head once more. The New Man is born of God, and he cannot sin, but the Old Man is born of the flesh, and it is this part of our personality that sins and commits iniquity—hence the internal struggle referred to above: the flesh against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.

When we come to consider the sacrifice of Christ, we see how Messiah put to death every temptation to sin. Never permitting the carnal mind to develop, he showed forth a spiritual mind in all things. As the Firstborn from the dead, he is the beginning of a New Creation, and we who seek to participate in his sacrifice must seek to crucify the flesh, and nurture the spirit within ourselves: “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 ... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him” (Rom. 6:6-8).

Colossians chapter 3 speaks of the aspirations of the faithful:

“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” (Col. 3:1-4)

Putting to death the Old man of the flesh is a daily effort, as the Apostle said: “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31). We must set our minds on heavenly things, seeking after spiritual things. There is no discharge in this warfare: there are no holidays, or days off in our warfare of faith. Let us therefore fight the good fight with renewed vigour, so that when our Master comes, he might identify himself within us, the “image” of one who overcame, the Mind of Christ himself. And seeing in us something worthy of perpetuation into immortality, we might be changed, in the twinkling of an eye to become partakers of glorious, sinless, divine nature (1 Cor. 15:52).

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