

Moments for YOU

Volume 52, Number 3

Theme: Two Natures



A NEW NATURE

The Lord Jesus Christ said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Today there are many people that think of the new birth as a kind of change that takes place in one’s life, or what they call a “Christian experience.” But when the Bible talks about new birth it is because God actually gives a *new* life to the one who believes on the Lord Jesus. It is not an improvement of the old one, but a *new* one—born from above. Of course a change will result, because the new life wants to please God.

TRUSTING, NOT TEACHING

Nicodemus came to the Lord with the thought that he would get some *teaching*. Indeed the Lord Jesus is and was a wonderful teacher, but what the sinner needs first of all is to receive a new life, and so the Lord replied, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3). Man had teaching under the law, for “the law is holy ... just and good” (Romans 7:12). All those commandments and precepts laid down for man in the Old Testament were from God. But they did not give a new life, for the Scripture says, “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Galatians 3:21).

Why then did God give the law? Many people do not believe that “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). If I have a child and there is a heavy suitcase which he thinks he can carry, how can I prove to him that he cannot? Just give him a chance to try. God did just that when He gave His commandments, and we have all

failed miserably to keep them.

REBIRTH, NOT REFORM

What the Lord is showing here in John 3 is that salvation does not come by being *reformed*—it comes by being *reborn*. There has been a work of God *for us* at Calvary’s cross when Jesus died for our sins and rose again, but there has to be something wrought *inside us* because the natural heart of man will never respond to God. God uses His precious Word applied by the power of the Spirit to accomplish this. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.... Being born again ... by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:22,23). When we see our need of Christ, repent, and trust in Him, we are born again and receive a new life from God. That is why the believer desires different things. God has given the believer a new life, the “new man” that wants to please Him.

WHAT ABOUT THE OLD NATURE?

When someone is born again, what happens to the old nature? God does not improve it. He forgives our sins, but the nature that causes us to sin will remain with us as long as we are in this body. Even if one has been saved for fifty years, the fallen nature has not improved one bit, and it never will.

In Romans 6 we are told about what God has done in connection with our old nature, and what we are to do with it as well. This old nature is sometimes called “the flesh,” “the old man,” “sin,” or “sin in the flesh.” In verse 6 we are told “Our old man is crucified with Him.” At the cross of Calvary, the Lord Jesus not only bore my sins, but His death was the

MOMENTS FOR YOU Vol. 52, 3rd Quarter, 2008. A quarterly publication sent free upon request as the Lord provides.

Publisher: Moments With The Book, PO Box 322, Bedford, PA 15522. A non-profit, tax-exempt corporation. Visit us online at www.mwtb.org **Senior Editor:** Tim Johnson **Editor:** T. Don Johnson



end of my standing before Him as a child of Adam. God no longer sees the believer as a child of fallen Adam, for we have died out of that position and entered a new position before Him by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Romans 6:9-11).

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

Oh, you say, sometimes I want to do what is wrong! Now it is not the new life that wants to act that way—it is because you're allowing the "old man" to be active. Romans 6:11 says, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." When temptation is presented to us we can turn from those bad thoughts and allow the Spirit of God through the "new man" to occupy us with Christ. The new man finds its joy and deliverance in looking away from self to Christ.

Let me use an illustration to help make this point clear. Let us suppose I plan to build something, and I have a pile of lumber which I have been saving for this purpose. I decide to hire a carpenter to build it for me, and I ask him to please use this lumber for the building. He goes out to look at the lumber and after a while he comes back saying, "I have looked over your pile of lumber and I have some bad news for you. Your lumber is all rotten. There is not one good piece in the whole pile." What did he do? He did not try to improve it, or use part of it. No! He condemned it. This is what God has done with our old nature, and what we should do, too.

My carpenter condemned my pile of lumber, but then he said, "I have some good news for you. I have brought you all the new lumber you need, and it will not cost you anything. It is a gift." It is indeed a sad discovery to find out how very bad the old nature

really is, but this should only lead us to be more thankful for deliverance, knowing that our new standing before God is because of that blessed work accomplished for us at Calvary. Dear born-again believer, never forget that God sees you "in Christ Jesus" and "holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). How great is that!

Are you, dear reader, looking for something good in the old nature? God gave it up long ago, and if you give it up now you will be a happy person. Allow the Great Carpenter to throw a tarp over the pile of rotten lumber. It will not improve while under there, but he says just to consider it is not there. That is what it is to "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin." When some bad thought comes into your mind, how are you going to be set free? If you allow the Spirit of God through the new man to occupy you with Christ, you *will* be set free.

FEEDING THE NEW NATURE

It is vitally important that we read God's Word and pray. If we neglect this, the enemy knows our weak points and he will come and work on that "old man" to lead us into sin. A true believer can never be lost, but he can, like David of old, lose the *joy* of God's salvation and dishonor his Lord. The prayer of the Psalmist is good for us all: "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:12-14).

—Condensed from *Two Natures in the Believer* by G.H. Hayhoe.

THE TWO NATURES

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6); “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other” (Galatians 5:17). These and similar passages clearly show that there are two distinct and diverse springs of action in the Christian. These are frequently referred to as “the two natures in the believer.”

WHAT IS A NATURE?

In ordinary terms “nature” expresses what we have by our origin, as well as the qualities that are developed in us by growth. We speak of a lion’s nature (ferocity), a vulture’s nature (scavenger), and a lamb’s nature (gentleness). Now the Christian has experienced two births, and is subject to two growths. Two sets of moral qualities belong to him: the one as born of Adam, the other as born of God.

“BORN OF THE FLESH”

In contemplating what we are as men, we must distinguish sharply between what we are by God’s creation, and what we became when Adam sinned. At that moment, man did not lose any component part of his being; he still consists of “spirit and soul and body.” Nor was a fourth part added to man’s being at the Fall—that which entered man’s being was *sin*, which has defiled every part of his person.

“BORN OF THE SPIRIT”

At the moment of conversion, a new, spiritual life is given, which produces a distinct moral change in the believer. This communication of Divine life to the soul is viewed in the New Testament under various figures. It is likened to the implanting of an incorruptible “seed” in the soul (1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9); to a

cleansing of the heart, a “washing of water by the Word” (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 5:26); to a renovation of the will, or a writing of God’s Law in the mind (Hebrews 8:10). The figure of the seed conveys the idea of a subsequent growth; the washing of water suggests a process of cleansing only begun; while that of God writing His Law in our minds displays the durability and permanence of His work of grace. It is from this new life or nature, imparted by the Spirit, that all spiritual life proceeds.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Having thus considered, very briefly, the two natures in the Christian, we must now distinguish between them and the person in whom they reside. Deeds belong to the *individual* and not to his *nature*. How many Christians today speak of “the flesh” in such a way as to escape responsibility for their sins. If evil deeds by a Christian were excusable because the flesh still remains within him, could not every sinner on earth excuse himself in the same way?

It is the *person* who sins, and is the sinner; it is the *man* who needs to be forgiven and justified; it is the *man* who is responsible to walk not in the flesh but in the Spirit. It is the same *person* all through. It is the *man* who is born again, and not a nature. True, at the new birth he receives a new life, so that he now has two natures, and his responsibility is to mortify the old while feeding, strengthening, and being governed by the new. The “flesh” is *in no way* improved by the presence of the “spirit,” any more than weeds are bettered by planting flowers in their midst. My responsibility lies in making no provision for the flesh, and acting according to the dictates of the spirit.

—Condensed from *The Two Natures* by A.W. Pink.

SPIRITUAL FOOD

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jeremiah 15:16).

We have seen that there are not only two natures, but that, with their different origins, they have widely different tastes. Thus there are “the things of the flesh” and “the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5). Let us not forget that both these natures will be daily calling our attention to their distinctive cravings. While two different people may thrive on the same kind of food, the two natures in a Christian cannot. What feeds the old nature only starves the new; while that which is food for the new is thoroughly distasteful to the old.

We are told, therefore, to “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14). Peter warned us to “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). On the other hand, we are exhorted, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).

Let us, then, be like vigilant sentries on the watch, challenging all that we read, or think, or do, or say, with this test: *Will this be food for the renewed nature, or will it minister to the flesh?* Let us pursue nothing which would do the latter. May increased tenderness of conscience and distrust of self be ours, dear fellow-believer. May Christ Himself be more and more our daily food—His precious Word our constant delight.

—From *The Old Nature and The New Birth* by George Cutting.

***Which nature is stronger?
The one we feed, of course!***

THE SECRET OF VICTORY

There are certain truths we accept as soon as we trust Christ; however, many of them must be made good in us through later experience. Every converted person, for example, is ready enough to acknowledge his own inherent badness, but it is only after long and fruitless struggles to be good that he is forced to the absolute conviction that “In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). It is not merely that I have sinned, but that I am in my old self nothing but sin: *in me good is not.*

Along with this goes the kindred truth that we are “without strength” (Romans 5:6), and perhaps this is even harder to learn. We freely confess to have no strength for salvation, but we think at first that we have (or ought to have) strength to perform that which is good, and to overcome the sin that dwells in us.

Eventually, it becomes evident that if fruit for God is to be brought forth in our lives, it must be through the new nature. So that these things do not remain as mere doctrines on the pages of our Bible, the Holy Spirit is given to the believer. This gift of the Holy Spirit is a wonderful thing! Life, peace, and freedom from the power of sin are all connected with Him (Romans 8:2-6).

We should never forget the constant need of prayer and meditation on God’s Word. Although we have a new life and the indwelling Spirit, these things are never intended to weaken in our souls the sense of our absolute dependence upon God for strength for every moment. Prayer is the expression of dependence, and in the rich pastures of divine truth we shall find food in abundance.

—From *Victory Over Sin* by William Barker.

THE NEW “I”

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

SINS TAKEN AWAY, LIFE GIVEN

When a sinner comes to Christ, all that was against him is perfectly cleared away forever, so that he can stand without fear before a righteous God. Our sins, death, and the judgment are *taken away* from us.

On the other hand, He *gives us* something: “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). This eternal life is a present possession, and comes to us in the new nature that we receive when we are born again. This new nature is holy, it loves God, and because it is born of God it not only *does not*, but also *cannot* sin (1 John 3:9).

WHICH “I”?

The Christian has three distinct “I”s—his *personality* (human nature) by natural birth, his *old sinful nature*, and his *new nature* from God. Romans 7:20 shows all three. Paul explains that he is no longer connected with the old man but the new. To paraphrase: “Now if I (the old nature) do things that I (the new nature) don’t want to do, it is no longer I (myself) doing them, but sin (as a foreign body) that dwells in me.”

CHANGING THE “I”

The changing of the “I” from the old man to the new man is most important. Though in God’s sight we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) at the moment of conversion,

our understanding of this fact and its blessed effect in our lives may take many years to be fully realized. When we are finally grounded in the fact that the old man has been crucified, and by faith acknowledge that “I” am a new person in Christ, a thousand things that were snares and temptations to the old “I” will fall away. May we firmly grasp the truth that “I” am no longer a *sinful man* with a new life, but rather a *new creature* in Christ Jesus who still has indwelling sin.

It is a wonderful step for a believer when practically he finds that *his* thoughts, *his* feelings, *his* pleasures are changed, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because the new “I” delights in it “after the inward man” (Romans 7:22).

KEEPING THE FOCUS

The only way to attain to this truly happy state is by daily seeking to please Christ, daily seeking to live the new life, always looking on *myself* as a Christian.

The whole question is, “To what do I now yield my body, soul, and spirit?” Is it to the old nature, the foreign body that still dwells in me? No; *I* will yield them to God. *I* love truth, *I* love holiness, *I* love the Lord, and *I* will serve Him with my tongue, my hands, my feet—with *everything* I am and have. “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

This is not the work of a day. It may be that you have been identified with the old nature for the last thirty years, and it has had sole control over you. It is only by keeping it in death—day by day—that our members will learn to forget the sway of the old master and become accustomed to the new.

—Adapted from *Plain Papers for Young Believers* by A.T. Schofield.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

QUESTION: Some people are good-natured and religious almost from birth. Do they need the new nature?

ANSWER: Most certainly they do! The very man to whom Jesus spoke those memorable words, “Ye *must* be born again,” was a noble and religious man. Morally, socially, and religiously, everything appeared to be in his favor, yet the Lord met him point-blank. Never forget that the old nature is totally incapable of doing anything that pleases God: “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). After the old nature has been to a seminar, a church, a Bible school, a summer conference, or even seminary, it is still the old nature!

QUESTION: Can the believer ever be completely free of the old nature, or can the new nature ever subdue it entirely?

ANSWER: As long as the believer lives on this earth, the old nature will be present. He is told to consider it dead and crucified, but even when subdued it always waits for opportunities to show signs of life. When victory seems close at hand, watch out—self-dependence and pride come from the old nature!

There may have never been a more mature Christian than the Apostle Paul. Read Romans 7 for an account of his struggle with the old nature. Also, note that when Paul was given a glorious vision of heaven, God considered it necessary to inflict Paul with a “thorn in the flesh” to guard against his pride (2 Corinthians 12:1-7). If Paul was not immune to the flesh, neither are we!

QUESTION: What are believers to do when they allow the old nature to act?

ANSWER: God in His wonderful salvation has made provision for this. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). Our blessed Lord did not exhaust His interest in us on the cross, but continues to intercede for us when we fall into sin.

Our first responsibility is to recognize that we have sinned. We must not attempt to shift the blame to the “old nature,” as though it acts independently of us. Then, we are told: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God loves to have His children walking closely with Him. Unconfessed sin hinders that communion. When we allow the old nature to have its own way, let’s be quick to judge it and confess it.

QUESTION: Can you give any hints that will help me to distinguish between the desires of the old nature and the promptings of the new?

ANSWER: I cannot give you any that will enable you to do away with God’s Word, or relieve you of the necessity of prayer and exercise of heart. The Word of God can discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, and the throne of grace stands ever available that we may find grace in time of need (Hebrews 4:12,16).

However, it may be helpful to remember that just as a compass is true to the *north*, so the new nature is true to *God*, and the old nature is true to *self*. All which has Christ for its object is of the one, all which has self for its object of the other. A thousand perplexing questions would be solved by asking, “What is the secret motive which drives me in this? *Christ-glorification* or *self-glorification*?”

The Flesh

Received by natural birth.

(Romans 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:21,22)

Describes the nature of the “old man.”

(Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 3:9; Rom. 6:6)

“Is corrupt according to deceitful lusts.” *(Ephesians 4:22)*

Serves sin. *(Romans 7:25)*

Manifested in evil deeds.

(Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 7:5)

Cannot please God.

(Romans 8:8)

Is at enmity with God.

(Romans 8:7)

Cannot understand God.

(1 Corinthians 2:14)

Dead to God. *(Romans 6:6)*

Leads to death. *(Romans 8:6a)*

Is good for nothing.

(John 6:63a)

Buried with Christ.

(Romans 6:4)

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24)

The Spirit

Received by spiritual birth.

(John 3:3-6; 1 Peter 1:22,23)

Describes the nature of the “new man.”

(2 Corinthians 5:17; Col. 3:10)

“Is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

(Ephesians 4:24)

Serves the law of God.

(Romans 7:25)

Cannot sin.

(1 John 3:9)

Manifested in good deeds.

(Galatians 5:22,23; Romans 7:6)

Loves God.

(1 John 4:19)

Is renewed in the knowledge of God.

(Colossians 3:10)

Alive to God. *(Rom. 6:11,13)*

Leads to life and peace.

(Romans 8:6b)

Gives life.

(John 6:63b)

Lives with Christ.

(Romans 8:2)

*“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
(Romans 7:25)*

