

A NEW CREATION

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” —2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Most of us are familiar with the saying, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”. That may be true, but if that is our philosophy regarding our Christian lives, we will end up settling for routine with very little expectation of change. But what if we were to change the dog?

When we read through the New Testament, we find that it is full of expectancy of growth and change. Paul writes, “...since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Colossians 3:9-10). The goal of the Christian life, as Paul states here, is that we be renewed in the image of our Creator.

The problem is that although Christ has come to live within us, we still retain our sinful natures. If we try to live the new life by the old dog; that is by human effort, we will never be able to change, because there are two competing forces at work in our lives. We have the natural, earthly nature, but we also have been raised with Christ and indwelt by His Spirit. Galatians 5:17 says, “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so you do not do whatever you want.”

We cannot evangelize the old nature or live the Christian life by the old nature or even try to sanctify it. This is the civil war taking place within every Christian, and here is the dilemma: Earthly things are visible and natural, but heavenly things are invisible and supernatural. The default position to which we constantly revert is the natural. We want to live by what is normal, but in reducing the Christian life to what is normal, we will simply be living by what we can do for Jesus, rather than something He, alone, will do through us.

Paul says, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ, you have been brought to fullness” (Colossians 2:9-10). This is what the Gospel is ultimately about, living in the fullness of Christ. “Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught...” (2:6-7). This requires discipline of the mind, the will and the heart, but in bringing Christ in, we become new creatures, and it will be His character that will begin to be expressed in us and through us.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, help me to live in your strength and to overcome any desires of the flesh that are not in line with your will. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: How is the battle of the flesh against the Spirit going in my life?