

The New Nature

by John Edmiston

Walking In the Spirit – Series 2 (A Ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

One of the keys to walking in the Spirit is to realize that you now have a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17) that gives you the power to carry out Christ's commandments.

This new nature is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24) and is in the image of God (Colossians 3:10). Indeed it is Christ in you - the hope of glory! (Colossians 1:27). Now we will look a bit further at these four verses:

2 Corinthians 5:17 MKJV *(17) So that if any one is in Christ, that one is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Ephesians 4:24 MKJV *And you should put on the new man, who according to God was created in righteousness and true holiness.*

Colossians 3:9-14 MKJV *Do not lie to one another, having put off the old man with his deeds (10) and having put on the new, having been renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, (11) where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, foreigner, Scythian, slave or freeman, but Christ is all things in all. (12) Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender feelings of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, (13) forbearing one another and forgiving yourselves, if anyone has a complaint against any. As Christ forgave you, so also you do. (14) And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.*

Colossians 1:27 HCSB *God wanted to make known to those among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Walking in the Spirit is, for all intents and purposes, exactly the same as living out from your new nature, the new creation that you are. You have a new self that is created in righteousness and truth and when you tap into this and 'put it on' you live in righteousness and truth. The new nature is the nature of Christ and cannot sin, nor is it able to do so because it is born of God and not of the flesh (1 John 3:9 which we will look at more tomorrow).

You are a new eternal person, trapped in an old body (which will pass away), and in conflict with its lusts – the lusts of the flesh. The idea is to tap into the new eternal righteous person and to put off the old lustful wicked nature completely.

So we see in Colossians 3:9-14 that Paul tells us to put off our 'old man' with its wicked deeds (which includes lying in this case) and to put on the new man. We are to substitute the new life for the old life. The new life replaces the old life completely. Just as when I put off my gardening clothes and put on my normal clothes. I don't go out the door wearing gardening gloves and old jeans with paint on them! I have taken them off completely and put on a complete set of new clothes. So we are to take off the old man completely and to put on the new man in its place. Old things have passed away, behold all things are new!

Colossians also tells us that this new nature is the nature of God's chosen elect – it is holy, beloved, meek and gentle:

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender feelings of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, (13) forbearing one another and forgiving yourselves, if anyone has a complaint against any. As Christ forgave you, so also you do. (14) And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.

The new nature is from Heaven so it is peaceful, wise and good (James 3;17,18) and is full of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). Thus the new nature is a big change for most of us – for instance being 'long-suffering' is not natural to the old nature at all! The new life we have in Christ is so different to the old life that there is no possibility whatsoever of just 'educating the old nature' into Christ-likeness. In fact the old nature needs to be crucified and 'killed off' (Galatians 5:24)

The only chance we have of truly living the Christian life is to let Christ in us live it for us. Thus it is a conscious decision to chose Christ over the flesh, day after day. We have to make a faith decision to walk in the Spirit. We have to choose to follow our righteous new nature. And this can be a struggle:

Galatians 5:16-25 HCSB I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (17) For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (19) Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, (20) idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, (21) envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar, about which I tell you in advance--as I told you before--that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, (23) gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. (24) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (25) If we live by the Spirit, we must also follow the Spirit.

Now you do not have to construct the new nature, it is already there, it is Christ in you the hope of glory. It is not a matter of studying up on all the virtues and figuring out how to do them one by one. The virtues and righteousness of God are already there. They

are in you. They come with the package known as eternal life. You just need to allow them to be expressed. You just have to choose them, to put them on. Like clothes that are already in a drawer you just have to reach in and choose to wear them.

Your part is simply to follow the Holy Spirit by faith. You do this by choosing the Spirit over the flesh again and again. You spend time in prayer, worship, bible study and in good works that God has called you to do. You make no provision for the flesh. You ignore evil. You flee temptation. You meet with the brethren and you watch and pray so that you will not give in to your old nature. As you do these things the new man is 'put on' and the old man is 'put off'.

It is not complicated, you simply say “Yes” to God and “No” to your flesh. As you do that the spiritual life will naturally come forth out of you. The new nature, which is God's eternal life within you, will be manifested. The glory of God will come forth as you walk in the Spirit by faith.

2 Corinthians 3:18 HCSB (18) We all, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

One of the keys to walking in the Spirit is to understand the glory of the new, born-again nature that you have been given in Christ. The new nature is Christ in you, a perfect, righteous and holy nature in the image of God that is incapable of sin:

1 John 3:9 HCSB Everyone who has been born of God does not sin, because His seed remains in him; he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God.

John 3:3-8 MKJV Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (4) Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? (5) Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born again. (8) The Spirit breathes where He desires, and you hear His voice, but you do not know from where He comes, and where He goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

The old nature, the old man, the flesh – these are capable of sin – but your new nature does not sin. Your new nature is God's nature – it is God's seed within you. Since God does not sin nor does He desire to sin – so your new nature does not desire to sin either.

So then why do Christians sin? Because of the flesh. The flesh is the temporary home where sin dwells and it is in rebellion against God. The old nature part of you wants to serve the flesh and the new nature part of you wants to serve God.

We find that there are two births – a natural birth that is 'in Adam' and a spiritual birth that is 'in Christ'. The bible contrasts those 'born of woman' with those in the Kingdom of God (Luke 7:28, Matthew 11;11-13) and those born of the flesh with those born of the Spirit (John 1:13, 3:6).

Part of you was 'born of the flesh'. This was your first birth and results in the old fallible nature that results in death. You do not have to teach a child how to lie or how to be jealous of its brother or how to hit another child. The child naturally has rage, anger, jealousy and strife built in as part of the old Adamic nature. The flesh is bad from birth. And the flesh nature, in its purest form, wants every impulse gratified right now. The old nature is very persistent and cunning. Some people naively think it can be educated into holiness. However it can only be crucified.

Another part of you (if you are a Christian) is born-again' by the living Word of God. When this happened you were given eternal life and a new eternal nature was created within you. This new eternal nature is 'born of God' and is the true you. This is being born of the Spirit.

The person you see in the mirror is NOT the true eternal you. The person in the mirror is a mixture of your temporary passing-away self (centered around your body) and your true eternal self (centered around your spirit).

You can think of it this way - if a Christian dies then he or she immediately sheds the body, and goes to be with Jesus and loses any further desire or capacity for sin. You lose the sin nature when you die. It is not a permanent part of you. Sin is a temporary intrusion on the real life of the Christian. If you are truly born-again you love righteousness, hate wickedness and feel anguished by any sin that you commit.

(On the other hand if you do not love righteousness and hate wickedness or feel discomfort when you sin then you have not repented of sin and are not born-again.)

Paul says some very remarkable things in Romans chapter 7:

Romans 7:15-17 MKJV *For that which I do, I know not. For what I desire, that I do not do; but what I hate, that I do. (16) If then I do that which I do not desire, I consent to the law that it is good. (17) But now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

Romans 7:20 MKJV *But if I do what I do not desire, it is no more I working it out, but sin dwelling in me.*

Paul says that 'it is no more I who do it but sin that dwells in me'. What does he mean by this? Paul's true self, his eternal self serves God, loves the law and agrees with everything that is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:14-25). On the other hand he gets caught up in all kinds of lust and covetousness (Romans 7:5-10). Paul separates himself from his sin. Paul agrees that he sins but that the sin is being committed by

something other than Paul. The sin is being committed not by 'eternal Paul' but by 'sin that dwells in me'.

Now if I am speeding on the freeway and I get pulled over and I try to tell the police officer that 'it was not me sinning but sin that dwells with in me' then I think she would just double the ticket! But amazing as it may seem this is the literal spiritual truth.

When you sin, it is not the 'true you' who sins, but rather it is sin dwelling in you – that is in your flesh.

Romans 7:17-25 MKJV *But now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. (18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing. For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I do not find. For I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man; (23) but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin being in my members. (24) O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (25) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

So Paul finds himself serving the law of God with his mind and the law of sin with his flesh – but the word 'myself' only appears on one side of the equation: "I myself serve the Law of God". The true new nature of the Christian, the person you will be forever in heaven, the person you most truly want to be in God, that person serves the Law of God.

The new nature does not have to become sinless, it is sinless. It is Christ in you the hope of glory. It is born of the Spirit. It is born of the Word of God. It is born of God. It cannot sin. Nor does it ever even desire to sin, no not the least little bit. Your new nature loves the law of God, the righteousness of God and everything about God.

When you sin it is not your new nature that is in control. You sin because you give in to the flesh or to the old nature. You sin because you do not crucify the old man. You sin because you do not walk in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, when put in control, simply will not let you sin. He will squelch the flesh and stop the impulses from fully reaching fruition.

Galatians 5:16-18 MKJV *I say, then, Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary to one another; lest whatever you may will, these things you do. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

The Bible asks us to 'walk worthy' of our new nature. We have a higher calling and are to set our minds on higher things (Philippians 4:8) and on the Spirit (Romans 8:4-6). As we set our mind on the Spirit we reap life and peace.

Ephesians 4:1-3 MKJV *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling with which you are called, (2) with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, (3) endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

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