

## Choosing The New Man (Part One)

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Have you ever noticed how many different men God mentions in His Word? Not fellows like Adam, David, John, and Paul, but the *outward* man and the *inward* one (II Corinthians 4:16), the *inner* man (Ephesians 3:16) and the *natural* one (I Corinthians 2:14). Men like the *first* man (I Corinthians 15:45,7) and his cronies: the *foolish* man (James 2:20), the *corruptible* man (Romans 1:23), the *wretched* man (Romans 7:24) and the *dead* man (Revelation 16:3). Or, men like the *Second Man* (I Corinthians 15:47) and His friends: the *righteous* man (I Timothy 1:9), the *perfect* man (Ephesians 4:13), the *devout* man (Acts 10:2), the *just* man (Acts 10:22), the *wise* man (James 3:13), the *prudent* man (Acts 13:7, KJV), the *good* man (Acts 11:24) and—more difficult to see—the *hidden* man (I Peter 3:4).

Do not forget those three men God mentions scores of times: *every* man, *any* man, and *no* man! In addition, there are many, many more—just in the New Testament. In fact, a Bible study organized around any of these men can be quite profitable.

But for now, we will focus on just two men, the *old* man (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9) and his counterpart, the *new* man (Ephesians 2:15; 4:24; Colossians 3:10). The apostle Paul, more than the other New Testament writers, places quite a bit of stress on them—they really deserve our study. Our approach will be to focus on the new man and discuss the old one only incidentally.

### God Creates the New Man

Paul makes this clear when he tells us that God "*create[d]* in Himself one new man from the two" (Ephesians 2:15). Writing about reconciliation, he defines these *two* men in verse 11: physical Israelites (the "Circumcision") and Gentiles (the "Uncircumcision"). Just two chapters later, he reiterates that God created the new man; he commands Christians to "put on the new man which was *created* according to God, in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Finally, this time in his letter to the Colossian and Laodicean Christians, Paul makes the same point; he tells us to "put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of [God] who *created* him" (Colossians 3:10).

Clearly, God *creates* the new man in His own image. This is an important starting-point in understanding what Paul means by the term *new man* for two reasons:

**It strongly argues against the false doctrines arising from Jesus' teaching that Christians are born again upon conversion.** While various denominations hold somewhat different beliefs, a common thread is that the new man, as well as the *inward* (II Corinthians 4:16) and *inner* men (Ephesians 3:16), are metaphoric designations for the same thing, a *spiritual entity which resides within Christians*. This entity, they submit, is an invisible, ethereal, eternal being that is the product of the spiritual birth Christ mentions in John 3:3-8. In short, Protestants believe that the new man is born finished and complete within Christians at the time they "accept Christ."

A twig this is not! It is a misunderstanding of a major truth in God's Word. It leads those who subscribe to it into one error after another. Later, we will show how this misunderstanding of the new man's nature leads some to believe that, once they "accept" Christ, they are saved then and there forever—that is all there is to it.

For now, notice how Protestant theologians use this misunderstanding to support another lie—that heaven is the reward of the saved. They interpret Christ's statement to Nicodemus that "[N]o man has ascended to heaven" (John 3:13) to mean that no *natural* man (I Corinthians 2:14) or *old* man (Romans 6:6) has done so. While they correctly understand these two men to represent the unconverted person, they incorrectly believe Christ was not speaking of the new man. They believe that the new man, whom they confidently proclaim resides within them as a separate spiritual entity, ascends to heaven when they die, there "to be with the Lord." In other words, they understand Christ's words in John 3:13 to refer to the "old man" only.

This simply does not square with Paul's teaching. He teaches that the new man is created, avoiding the misunderstandings inherent in the terms "born" and "born again." In fact, not even once does he refer to the new man as born! The Greek verb translated "create" or "created" in Ephesians 2:15; 4:24; and Colossians 3:10 is *ktizo*, **not** *gennao*. *Ktizo* can mean "to create" (or as a noun, "creator"), "to form," "to make," "to found," or "to fabricate." New Testament writers use *ktizo* only fourteen times, and never does it refer to or even imply birth or conception. Despite Jesus' use of it in John 3, the idea that the new man is born does not appear in Paul's epistles.

However, God's use of *ktizo* tells us something vital about the new man. The most specific sense of this Greek verb is "to found *originally*." *Ktizo*, whose stated or understood subject in Scripture is *always* God, refers to "the founding of a place, a city or colony" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*).

Consider this nuance of meaning as it relates to the new man. A newly founded city or colony is almost always small. If it matures, it will be through the continued efforts of its founder and its rank-and-file citizens over many years. The imagery is important: *The new man, when first established in us by God, is immature and inexperienced.* As we will see later, we have a responsibility to *cooperate* with God, the new man's founder, to ensure that he grows and matures. Understood correctly, Jesus' teaching about being born again fits nicely with this concept.

The fact that God creates the new man is important for a second reason: **It argues that the term *new man* is synonymous with *new creation*** (KJV, "new creature"). Paul uses this term in Galatians 6:15 and II Corinthians 5:17. We will look into these two passages later.

## The Renewal of Our Mind

Let us turn our attention to a second truth about the new man. Once created in us by God, how does the new man mature and grow?

Remember, Paul refers to the new man in Colossians 3:10 as a man "*renewed* in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." "Renewed," translated here in the passive voice, comes from the Greek verb *anakainoo*. It means "to make new" in the sense of "to make different." The new man is *different* from the old one in that he bears the image of God!

Paul uses a similar verb in Ephesians 4:22-23, where he asks that "you . . . be *renewed* in the spirit of your mind." That Greek verb, *ananeoo*, again translated in the passive voice, means "to renew" or "to renovate." Through years of living Satan's way of life before conversion, our mind grows corrupt; even the best parts of it become "like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

The apostle provides more details about this renewal process in Romans 12:1-2. Here, he uses the same phraseology—the renewal of a person's mind—in a context that makes his meaning crystal clear: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

The noun "renewing" (*anakainosis*) is related to the verb *anakainoo*. Like *anakainoo*, it carries the sense of renovation to a *different*, rather than a younger, state. This attests again that the new man is different from the old.

We have noted that Paul uses the verb *renew* in the passive voice in Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:22-23. In Romans 12:2, the gerund *renewing* is also part of a passive structure, "be transformed." A "problem" of the passive voice is that it does not tell us the actor of a verb, except through the use of an optional prepositional phrase. For example, "The stone was thrown," although a complete sentence, does not tell us *who* threw the stone unless we tack on the phrase *by John*.

We know the renewed man is different from the old, but who is the actor? Who does the renewing Paul mentions so often? God? Humans? Angels? Romans 12:1-2 tells us:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

In verse 1, Paul issues a call for action: He pleads for us to present ourselves to God as holy. In verse 2, he tells how, in a general sense, we must do this. We become holy by transforming our mind through a renewal process. In saying this, Paul establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between our mind's renewal (cause) and our transformation (effect). Renewal causes transformation.

Notice something else about verse 2: In it, Paul is doing far more than just telling us *how* to be transformed; he is exhorting us to carry out that transformation. God does not renew our mind! If God, by fiat, simply caused us to be transformed by renewing our mind, we would need to take no action whatsoever. God would simply renew our minds, and as an effect of His action, we would be transformed. If that were how it worked, Paul's exhortation to us would be useless, senseless, and illogical.

No, *we* are to renew our mind. As we do so day by day, we invariably experience a transformation of character, such that we become less and less "conformed to this world." It comes as no surprise, of course, that growth to holiness requires effort on our part. The apostle Peter issues a call for holiness in I Peter 1:16, "Be holy, for I am holy" (see Leviticus 11:44). Notice the context. Peter says we are to be "holy in all [our] conduct" (I Peter 1:15), that is, our way of life. How? "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts [those of the old man], as in your ignorance" (verses 13-14). Clearly, Peter exhorts us to become holy by changing our conduct. In following chapters, he specifically defines holy conduct for servants, wives, and husbands.

The relationship between holiness and conduct is not just a New Testament teaching. The Old Testament says the same thing. For example, Leviticus 19 clearly connects the holiness we are to seek (verse 2) with our conduct. The chapter outlines the moral and ethical conduct God requires of holy people in a number of areas, such as business and sexual matters.

Of course, all this does not deny or belittle the part God plays in our individual growth to holiness. Notice Romans 12:1 again. We attain holiness "by the mercies of God." In reality, God has a huge role to play. As we showed before, God establishes the new man in the first place. We could never do that. In addition, He provides vital help on a day-by-day basis through His Holy Spirit, a vital role, as Paul makes clear when he reminds us that God "saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

### **How We Renew Our Minds**

The most basic way in which we renew our minds is by obeying God's law, the perfect reflection of His character and nature. Notice how consistently Paul describes the new man in terms of the behavior and conduct God expects from him. In fact, wherever Paul broaches the subject of the new man, a discussion of a Christian's proper moral and ethical conduct is never far away.

For instance, Paul says in Titus 3:8, "This is a faithful saying . . . that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works." Here, only three verses after his discussion of the mind's renewal by the Holy Spirit, Paul stresses the importance of good works. He takes the same approach in Colossians 3:10, commanding us to "put on the new man," and just two verses later, he begins to tell us how that new man should act: "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering . . ." (verse 12). Here, Paul begins a discussion of Christian conduct that continues almost to the end of the book.

However, it is in Ephesians 4 that Paul most clearly connects the new man with Christian conduct. He begins his discussion by contrasting the old man with the new. Notice how he defines the old man in terms of conduct—our past way of life: "Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man" (Ephesians 4:22).

Paul uses the same terminology in Romans 6:6, associating the old man with a Christian's past lifestyle. He reminds us "that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." Just a few verses later, Paul states the effect of the old man's death in terms of conduct: "Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body" (verse 12).

In Romans 6, a lengthy discussion of baptism, Paul does not break his train of thought by elaborating on the way of life of the old man nor of the new. He elaborates on both ways of life elsewhere. Yet, in verse 4, he makes a significant overview statement, exhorting us to "walk in newness of life."

What is this new walk of life? In Ephesians 4:24, Paul commands us to "put on the new man," and in the very next verse, he begins to give instructions in a Christian's moral and ethical conduct: "Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor" (verse 25). These instructions continue virtually to the end of the epistle.

Paul uses this opportunity to define precisely what he so beautifully summarizes as "walk[ing] in newness of life" in Romans 6:4. For example, he appeals to Christians to avoid irresponsible anger in

Ephesians 4:26, to turn from stealing (verse 28), and to shun "corrupt communication" (verse 29). Notice how often he uses the word "walk" in Ephesians 5: "walk in love" (verse 2); "walk as children of light" (verse 8); "walk circumspectly" (verse 15). He is describing the walk of the new man.

The Christian walk, the way of life of the new man, is a pervasive theme of Ephesians. Even in its first three chapters—the so-called "doctrinal" ones—Paul contrasts the walk of the old man with that of the new. In Ephesians 2:2, he speaks of our past conduct, "in which [we] once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience."

But, if Satan works with the old man, God works with the new one, whom He created: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (verse 10). Paul introduces the "Christian living" section of the book (Ephesians 4-6) by beseeching us to "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1).

The new man walks the walk of a Christian, obeying God's law. He conducts himself according to God's Word.