

Two Armies

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The new man in every believer is formed by God and inseparably united to Christ. We are ‘created in righteousness and true holiness’. The new man is a perfect work of grace whereby the Holy Ghost in regeneration makes all things new. He quickens, converts and creates a new heart and spirit in those born again. It is a transformative change. The old man represents the corruption of our fallen state in Adam. The new man is our new, holy state in Christ.

Mankind is totally passive in this new work of creation. The Lord tells us, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion’. Paul adds, ‘So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy’ (Romans 9:16). Putting off the old man, and putting on the new man, is not man’s work, but God’s. We are as surely passive in the act of regeneration and the new creation, as in our natural birth and original creation.

The new creation does not mean the old man is dead and gone. He is dying but not dead. He is crucified but not yet buried. For the duration of the time between a believer’s new birth and physical death the old man and the new man co-exist within. We have an old nature and a new nature. There is no end of the old man until death. He does not improve or reform. He may alter his strategies and disguise his tactics to conceal his more flagrant excesses but he is the same old man of sin, wholly evil and totally depraved.

It is important to distinguish the old man; unrepentant and unchanged, and the new man which is Christ in us, holy and undefiled. Peter calls this, ‘the hidden man of the heart’ which is not corruptible (1 Peter 3:4). We feel our sin in the old man, yet we believe by faith that we are righteous in the new man; pure and perfect in Christ to whom we are now joined. This is our actual standing before God. In the new man we are justified and sanctified to the fullest extent possible in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30).

The old man and the new man strive together in every believer like two armies. 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh', says Paul, 'and these are contrary the one to the other'. The experience of the children of God in this world is one of contention between the flesh and the Spirit of Christ in our soul. We are upheld only by grace. We are strengthened and kept only through Christ.

The Lord's people continue to feel the ravages of sin in this body yet we are 'sealed unto the day of redemption'. Satan will always desire to disturb our peace and steal our joy but faith brings us peace and our joy is complete through our unbreakable union with Christ who is, in us, the hope of glory.

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