

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Inside-Out: Old Creation versus New Creation

by Dan Trygg

“For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, in order that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. ¹⁶ So that from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. ¹⁷ The result is if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed off to the side; behold, new things have come to be. ¹⁸ Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry (service) of the reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and placing in us the word of the reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we ambassadorize for Christ, as God [is] appealing through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And those who will walk by this rule (standard, canon, principle, norm), peace and mercy be upon them...”

Galatians 6:14-16

“For we are His workmanship (a ‘made-thing’, creation), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10

We have been studying a number of biblical word pictures that contrast the relationship with God that was available to people before Christ, from what is available to us now. We talked about the Old Covenant versus the New Covenant. The Old Covenant was primarily external, whereas the New Covenant was internal. The Old Covenant offered knowledge of God’s will, but not the power to carry it out. The problem was that their “hearts” were defective, ...polluted by sin. The essence of the New Covenant was that God’s people were given new “hearts”, ...an inner mind and desire to do the will of God through the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Then, last week, we talked about the word picture Jesus used of the bad tree versus a good tree. A tree will always bear fruit according to its inner character and nature. A “bad tree” could only produce “bad fruit”, and a “good tree” would only be able to produce “good fruit. Previous to Christ, we were unable to produce “good fruit” because we were defective, ...“bad trees”. The essence of what God has done for us in Christ, however, is to make us totally new, ...transforming our inner nature to become a “good tree”. As we abide in Christ, the new spiritual nature will produce the “good fruit” of the Holy Spirit.

Today, we are going to look at another of these word picture couplets that contrast the difference between life before Christ, and the life that comes from Christ. This time, the contrast is between the old creation and a new creation. The apostle Paul introduced this idea in 2 Corinthians 5. He was convinced that when Jesus died for all, all died in Him. The purpose for His coming and giving Himself for all people was to make possible a people who would live for Him. This brings us right back to God’s original purpose for His people (Ex. 19:5,6). He was looking for a people who would be set apart to Him, ...a people who would be willing to dedicate themselves to serve Him, and to represent Him to the larger world.

The extent and potential impact of Christ’s death for humanity caused Paul to look at people in an entirely different way. He saw the great possibility of what could happen with those who respond to Christ. He said, “If anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation; old things passed off to the side, behold, new things have come.” This is an amazing statement! A *new creation*! The word for “new” is the Greek word, *kainos*. It means, “new, strange, recently-made, newly-invented; something unheard of, unprecedented, something that did not exist before; of unusual, different, better and superior quality.”

Significantly, this is the same word used in 2 Peter 3:13 for the “new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells”, ...the new creation that God will make at the end of this age that will replace the current heavens and earth. This is not a new idea. It was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet. Yahweh declared, “I will create a new heavens and a new earth, and the former things will not be remembered, or come to mind” (65:17), and again, “‘For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make will endure before Me,’ says Yahweh, ‘so shall your offspring (seed) and your name endure’” (66:22). In the Greek Septuagint translation, the word for “new” is also *kainos*. Anyone from the first century, who was at all educated in the Jewish scriptures, would have made this association. The “new creation” of 2 Corinthians 5 would be seen as a precursor to the coming “new creation” at the end of this age. In fact, Paul alludes to this, indicating that the current creation, which has been subjected to the futility and corruption of sin, longs to be set free from that slavery into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Just as the creation is waiting for the “revealing of the children of God”, in the same way we ourselves, who

have (presently possess) “the first fruits of the Spirit” are longing for the completion of the salvation which has been initiated within us (Rom 8:18-23). It would appear that, just as the fall of humanity precipitated the corruption of the natural world, in the same way, our full redemption and glorification when Christ returns will coincide with the remaking of all creation. The apostle indicates that we have the “first fruits”, the beginnings of that larger harvest, at work in our lives already. *Something* of that “new creation” is inside of us, already! The incursion of that future new age of the kingdom of God coming into our world is presently at work within the followers of Jesus Christ.

Let’s look a little closer at what Paul says, “If anyone is in Christ, he or she *is* a new creation; old things have passed off to the side; behold, new things have come to be.” Note that it does *not* say that the old things are *gone*, ...or that they *ceased to exist*. It says, literally, “the old things went off to the side”. The word can mean different things. It *can mean* to pass away or cease to exist (Matt. 5:18; Mk. 13:31; Jas. 1:10), or it can also refer to something that “loses its force, or becomes invalid” (Matt. 5:18; Lk. 21:33). Jesus also used it to refer to the idea of “passing by” something, in the sense of disregarding it, or ignoring it (Lk. 11:42; 15:29). The question for us is to attempt to understand what it means here. *Something* is different. The “old things” are not front and center, like they once were. Somehow they have been pushed aside by something else. “Behold, new things have come to be.” It does *not* say, “all things have become new”, as some translations render this verse. It says that new things, ...*kainos* things..., have come into existence in this person’s life. The implication is that these “new things” are pushing aside the “old things”. Interestingly, the apostle John used a similar word to describe a phenomenon that is happening within us, now that we are Christians. He says that he can write to us about the new commandment to love one another because, “the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining” (1 Jn. 2:8). This is a bit stronger word picture. It is from a Greek word that literally means “it is led off to the side”. In this case, “the darkness is led off to the side, and the true light is already shining.” A few verses later, he used the same word to “the world is led off to the side, and the lusts of it; but the one doing the will of God abides unto the age.” What age? The age to come. In other words, John expected that we can live a different life, because the life of the age to come, the “light”, is already within us, and it is leading the darkness and the lusts of the world off to the side in our experience. “If we abide in the light as He is in the light, ...the blood of Jesus His Son will keep on cleansing us from every sin” (1 Jn. 1:7). It is the “light” in us that drives away the darkness.

Paul had already used a couple of word pictures in 2 Corinthians to describe the radical change God has introduced into our lives. God manifests the sweet aroma of the experiential knowledge of Jesus through our lives, so that we actually become the fragrance of Christ in the presence of other people (2:14-16). The immensity of that thought causes Paul to ask the rhetorical question: “Who is adequate for these things?” He answers this question in the following chapter, but not before adding *another* word picture! “You are a letter of Christ (Christ’s letter) experientially-known and read by all people, ...written not with ink, or on tablets of stone, ...but written by the Spirit of God on the tablets of human hearts” (3:2,3). Then he said, “Our adequacy is of God, who made us adequate as servants of the new covenant” by virtue of the indwelling Spirit of God, who gives us life (3:5,6). His presence within us produces a radiant-glory that goes far beyond the external glow that was upon Moses’ face. The glory in our lives is from the transformation and transfiguration of the radiance of God shining out from within us (3:7-18). God is the One who has shone in our darkened hearts, so that people could see His radiance, and know that it did not come from *ourselves*, but from *Him* (4:6,7). In light of these two other word-pictures, it would seem consistent that Paul is speaking in a way very similar to John, ...the new things that have been introduced into our lives have made the former things to be irrelevant and of no binding power. We have the power to change, to be transformed, by virtue of the indwelling Spirit. We have been created new, and of a quality and character that is radically different and superior to what we were before. There is something new, strange, unknown, ...something not of this age..., that is in us *now*.

It is *God* who has done this. *He* has created us new. We can’t claim any credit for it. Just like the fragrance of Christ, and the light of the knowledge of Christ, ...this, too, is of God. His purpose is to appeal to the surrounding world *through our lives*. We are ambassadors for Christ. Actually, a more accurate translation would be, “...On behalf of Christ we ambassadorize, ...as though God is appealing through us” (vs. 20). Consequently, again, on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God, ...reestablish proper, friendly relations with Him. God worked through Christ so that we might become righteous in Him, and we could then become co-workers with Him (5:21-6:1).

It is possible to become a new creation in Christ. This happens when we are born from above, and the Spirit of God makes us new. It is important for us to realize that this new reality *is* in us, ...and learning to walk in it is different than how we are used to living. We need to be renewed in our minds, ...our self-perception..., in order to walk in the power and victory that comes with this awesome gift. In Galatians 6, Paul wrote that religious trappings and traditions do not matter. What matters is learning to walk in accordance with this new creation.

Finally, God has created us for a good purpose. He will bring opportunities for service to us. He has prepared us to live the Christ-manifesting life in those settings. He will reveal Himself, and appeal to others, through our lives.