

God's Solution for the Problem of the Old Self



The Old Self and the New Self (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. This week we're studying together two of the most important characters of the New Testament. And yet, for all their importance, they are never once named. They are the old self and the new self.

Yesterday our starting point for our study was Ephesians 4:20-24:

> "But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." (NAS)

Yesterday we focused on the origin and the nature of the old self. Briefly, what we saw was this: that the old self is the product of deception; that is, the lie of Satan, that which directly contradicts the Word of God. Deception, when we yield to it, in turn produces lust; that is, perverted harmful desire. Lust, in turn, when we yield to it, produces sin. And sin, when it has taken its course, brings forth death. So that's the order of the degenerative process. Deception, Lust, Sin and Death.

The nature that is described as the old self has two distinctive marks: first, it's corrupt, spiritually, morally, and physically corrupt; second, it's a rebel. I summed this up by saying, "There's a rebel inside each one of us."

Today we're going to examine God's solution for the problem of the old self. And let me remind you this is a problem that confronts every one of us. This is one problem that is universal to the entire human race.

First of all, let's mention some things that are not God's solution. We can rule out all the solutions beginning with "self" and they are multiplied daily in terms of contemporary psychology and thought, self-realization, self-fulfillment,

self-expression, because all these give rein to self, which is a rebel. So every one of these solutions, and others like it that begin with "self," are just giving free rein to a rebel. I think we've passed through a generation which decided that it was wrong to discipline children and to restrain them and that children should be granted freedom of self-expression. I believe that generation has learned, alas too late, that what it was doing was giving freedom of expression to a rebel.

Another thing that is not God's solution is a system of law. Many people look to law to deal with the problem of the old self. But Israel's failure, to whom the Law of Moses was given, is a demonstration that law does not achieve the desired end. The reason is not that there's anything wrong with law. Law is good in itself, as Paul says in Romans 7, but it cannot change the rebel; and anything that does not change the rebel is not a permanent solution.

The third thing that is not God's solution for the old self, and this one may surprise you, is religion. God does not send the old self to church or Sunday school or arrange for the old self to memorize Scripture or do all the things people do in church, sing hymns or say prayers. Religion is somewhat like a refrigerator, if I may express it that way, and I'll show you why in a moment. Religion can temporarily conceal corruption or arrest it, but it cannot ultimately change it. It's like a luscious peach that we see. It looks so good and so fresh and it's so appetizing and yet, left to itself, it will quickly wither and rot because the process of corruption is already at work in it. Now, you can arrest that process of corruption for awhile by putting that peach in the refrigerator, and in the refrigerator it will stay fresh looking and attractive much longer, but ultimately, even in the refrigerator it will wither.

Now, trying to deal with the "old man" by religion is like putting the peach in the refrigerator. Religion is a kind of refrigerator. It arrests the process of corruption, it may conceal that it's at work, but it ultimately cannot change it.

So there are three things which are not God's solution. All the words that begin with "self": self-realization, self-fulfillment, self-expression; secondly, a system of law; and thirdly, religion. None of these work because none of these can change the nature of the old self. They cannot change the rebel. You see, the old self is a rotten tree, and this is what Jesus says about a rotten tree in Matthew 7:17-19:

> "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the rotten tree bears bad fruit. 'A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit.' 'Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'" (NAS)

So the old self is a rotten tree. It cannot produce good fruit. And therefore there is only one solution, it must be cut down! It must be done away with!

We've said that the solution to the old self, in terms of a rotten tree, is to cut it down. Let's use language that applies to a human being rather than a tree. God's solution for the old self can be summed up in one plain familiar word, "execution." God does not send the old self to church or to the psychiatrist or put the old self under the law. God executes the old self. There's no other solution for that rebel. But the good news of the gospel is that execution has already taken place in Christ! This is really the key to understanding the gospel message! It's God's program for dealing with the old self. This is very vividly stated in The Living Bible in Romans 7:24-25. Paul says:

> "Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? [That's the old self, this 'deadly lower nature.' Who will free me? Then he cries out with gratitude:] Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free. [Free, that is, from this deadly lower nature, this old self.]"

How has Jesus set us free? Let's turn to Romans 6:6. This is what Paul says:

> "For we know... [I would comment on that. The problem with many Christians is that they don't know. This is a fact stated clearly in Scripture, but many do not know it.] For we know [now listen] that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin..." (NIV)

That's the only way of escape from the slavery of sin. It's by knowing and believing that our old self, that deadly lower nature, was crucified with Jesus; that when Jesus died on the cross, that rebel, the old self, was executed in Him. Our old self was crucified with Him. This is a fact of history.

I think I should give you just a brief personal testimony of how God made this so real and vivid to me personally. It was a good many years ago, about the time of Easter, and because of the significance of Easter I had in my mind a picture of the hill of Calvary or Golgotha and three crosses upon it, and the central cross was outstanding. It was higher

than the other two on either side. And as this scene was before my mind, the Holy Spirit spoke to me and He asked me a question, “For whom was the center cross made?” And then it was as though He added, “Be careful, think before you answer.”

So I thought it over and I gave this answer, “The center cross was made for Barabbas.” That’s a fact. Barabbas was due to be executed on that center cross, but at the last moment by divine providence, an exchange was made and Jesus took the place of Barabbas.

So the Holy Spirit said to me, “If the center cross was made for Barabbas and Jesus was crucified on that center cross, then Jesus took the place of Barabbas.”

And I said, “Yes, that’s right.”

Then the Holy Spirit said to me, “But I thought Jesus took your place?”

And I said, “Yes, He did.”

Then the Holy Spirit said, “Then you must be Barabbas.”

And at that moment, I realized it, with a flash of insight. I never argue with people about this. God’s Word states it clearly, but it’s only the Holy Spirit that can help you to see: “You’re the criminal! Your old self is the criminal, the one for whom that cross was legitimately made. It was made according to your specifications. It fits you exactly. It’s where you ought to be, where I ought to be.”

But the glorious and wonderful message of the Gospel of God’s mercy is: At the last moment an exchange was made. Jesus took the place of Barabbas. Jesus took the place of the old self. Our old self was crucified with Him. This is a historical fact. Whether we know it or not, whether we believe it or not, it will affect us, but it doesn’t affect the fact that God’s remedy for the old self is execution. He doesn’t improve him, He doesn’t reform him, He doesn’t make him religious, He doesn’t send him to church or to the psychiatrist, but He has ordained his execution. The mercy of God is that the execution took place in Jesus. So we can say, as Paul says, “What a predicament I’m in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free.”

So, our time is up for today but I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow we’ll be looking at the opposite side of the coin, the new man. I’ll be explaining the origin and nature of the new man.

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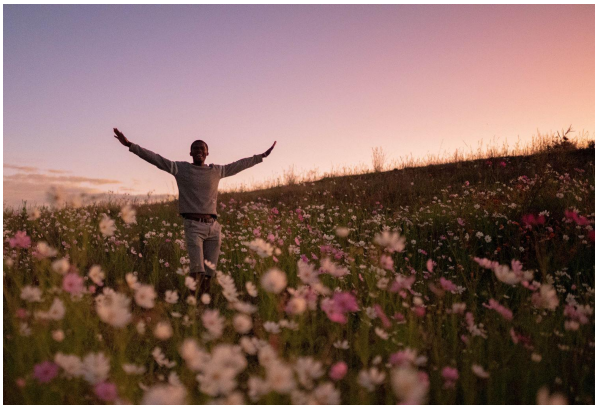

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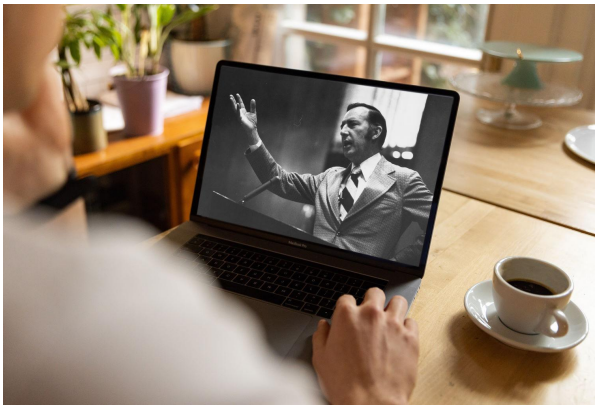

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