

A New Creation

By Jeff DeVine

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV

I have meditated on this scripture for many years and the following is some of the revelation the Lord has given me about it.

As you know, everything one experiences, hears, reads, sees, etc. is filtered through one's own perspective, ideas, etc. To me it is like when I make coffee; after the pot is empty, if I make a pot of green tea by putting the ground tea leaves in the filter on top of the old coffee grounds without first cleaning them out, the tea will be tainted by the left over coffee grounds. It is still tea, but not pure; it is affected by the coffee grounds left in the filter.

I try with all my heart and I pray often that God will give me a pure revelation of His word when I read the Bible. Everyone who reads it, filters it through their own theology. It affects their life, tainted by their minds, by their past, by their own thinking. I remember one of Don Krow's classes in Bible College, where a small group of us students took turns reading scriptures as we went through 1st and 2nd Peter. We would stop occasionally and Don would ask us, "What do you think Peter is saying here?" One day, an older Italian lady spoke up and said, "Well, as a Catholic, I think Peter is saying....." and she went on to explain what she saw in the scripture. She didn't even realize what she had said. She didn't say, "As a former Catholic, I used to think this or that", or "Catholics think this..." She still identified herself in her mind as a Catholic and she read the word from that perspective. I remember thinking, the word is being tainted by your past experience as a Catholic. I realized that without meaning to, we all do that. I began trying with all my heart to accept God's word without perverting it by my own ideas and beliefs. I certainly have not arrived at this, but I try. Sometimes I get this overwhelming and very humbling sense that the more I learn and the more I think I know, the more I realize I really know nothing.

All that being said, I would like to tell you that I have gone through a wringer, so to speak with the past, my feelings, my baggage. Emotionally, it has been very painful. I have memories from my childhood that I still don't understand. Some of my earliest memories are very strange and I have tried to determine what must have been happening to me and I can't bring myself to accept what seems to be the answer. I went through some in-

depth counseling that brought out some things that shocked me, things that I didn't know were there. I remember one exercise where I had to sit and visualize a person that I needed to forgive, I was supposed to speak to them as if they were really there. I think that helped me to get over some things. However, I also had memories of people that I was sure I had hurt.

One day, I thought I would try to get in touch with a lady from my past and beg her forgiveness for everything I had done to her. I was sure this would not only be good for me, but would surely help her with whatever baggage she might be carrying. Well, I searched and searched and finally found her. She has married, has two children and seems to be doing well. I was so sure that I had been a terrible influence on her and sure that she was still being affected by the past, so I insisted on opening up to her and asked for her forgiveness; this nearly wrecked her. Somehow, she had found a way to get past those things and although the past might be affecting her in some way that she might not be aware of, I thought it would be good to get it all out in the open between us and put it to rest. Well, she had already found her own way of putting it to rest and she had moved on. She was no doubt bearing scars, but what I did just ripped open those wounds again and poured salt into them.

I realized how selfish I had been. My going to her was really more about me than her. I realized that no matter what I do, I cannot fix the past. I cannot undo all the junk of the past. I thought well, I will just have to bear all the baggage on my own. I have been weighted down much of my life with baggage; baggage of what has been done to me and I must say, mostly baggage of what I have done to others.

In considering all these things and in hearing others close to me open up about the past, I realize we all....everyone, are really damaged and tainted emotionally in some way. I think of Paul; how did he become the great man of God that he was after he had persecuted so many people? He says himself that he martyred men, women and children, cast many into jail, consented to the death of some of them, including Stephen. How did he move on and hold his head up as he proclaimed Jesus to people after some of the horrible things he had done? I think the key is he understood his true identity.

I think many Christians have an identity crisis. I have heard many make remarks like, "I am an alcoholic" or "I am just a pitiful sinner, saved by the grace of God." I know Christians who believe that they ARE gay. I have reasoned with some of them that you cannot BE gay and be a Christian. The Bible clearly says that homosexuals, and of course many other things, liars, idolaters, etc. will not be in the Kingdom of God, so that cannot be what you are.

(9)"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, (10) nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV

So, how can someone be a Christian and also be one of these things that God says will not be in His kingdom. The answer is in the next verse: *(11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

Either you are a new creation, a child of God, or you are one of these other things. He says, "**you were**" some of these things, but NOW you **are washed, purified, sanctified and justified by Jesus.**

Some people are truly a new creation, but still DOING some of those sinful things, but that is not who they are. Because some people still see themselves that way and don't have a revelation of who they are now, they still participate in some of the old behavior, thinking that is who and what they are.

I struggled with this for years until I began to understand that I am not what I do, I am what God says I am. So, either these people are truly God's children and they need to seek Him for the grace to overcome the flesh, or they are truly not born again and just have some head knowledge about God.

I know for sure what God did for me when He saved me. That experience was not imaginary. I am still getting a revelation of what it all truly means, but I do know that the old man who was both traumatized by others in the past and who traumatized others, is not me. That old man is dead. I cannot go back in time and undo what another man, a dead man did to others. I also cannot go on carrying baggage from things that were done to another man, a dead man. I realize that I truly am a new creation. *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* 2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV

Even though I am a new creation, a new and different man, I can still choose to carry the baggage of that old man. I did that for many years until I realized it was weighting me down and I don't have to bear it. I choose to meditate on my true identity. If I ever, and I have at times, allowed myself to think back and recall some of the past of that old man, I begin to feel a gloom and depression coming over me, a sadness. It begins to affect not only the way I see myself, but the way I see others.

I pray daily for God to help me see others and love others the way He does. I do get caught up in an attitude about people sometimes when I focus on what they are doing or what they have done. God is beginning to show me, not to look at people according to what they do or have done, but according to who God says they are, or in some cases, according to God's will for them. I am just beginning to understand what Paul meant when he said: *"From now on, we regard no one according to the flesh."*

2 Corinthians 5:16a NKJV

I think the only way a Christian can move on and have a productive future, a wonderful relationship with our Heavenly Father and a baggage free future with others, is to get a revelation of our true identity.

It has taken me years to come to this revelation and it is still growing. The devil hates it and he tries to bring up memories and accusations sometimes. He sometimes tries to put guilt and condemnation on me and I have to rebuke him and tell him, and myself, I am a new creation; I am a new man, the old man is dead. That horrible wretch that once bore my name and was known by others for the wretch that he was, is not me. That pitiful misguided child, the sinful young man that walked according to the flesh is not me. He died in 1998 in a nasty little hotel room in Lop-buri Thailand when he dropped to his knees and cried out to God for mercy. That is the day I was born, a child of God, righteous, sanctified, purified; I have been growing in that revelation since then.

I don't take lightly the pain that people are experiencing, I know it is real and heavy; believe me, I know all about it. I carried my own pain and worked through these things from my perspective. I am telling you how God and His word helped me; He truly did set me free.

One more short example of something God has shown me when it comes to how I see others; I was reading a story recently about a woman in Sudan who is a Christian. She is married and has one child and is about to have another. She is in prison, accused of sexual immorality and apostasy. They accuse her of converting from Islam to Christianity. She says she was never a Muslim, but nevertheless, they have sentenced her to be beaten because her husband is Christian and that means that they don't recognize her marriage as legitimate and for apostasy she is sentenced to be executed.

When I read this story, I wished I had super powers so I could fly over there and wipe out every one of those heathens that were doing this horrible thing to this lady and her family. I had such hateful feelings rise up in me towards the judge that sentenced this woman to die and for the police that would carry this out. I wanted to destroy them. God spoke to me and said, "Why do you want to destroy those men?" I said "Because

they are evil and they are doing a horrible thing to this innocent lady and her family." He said, *"Yes, they are doing a horrible thing, but do you remember my word says when you were at your worst, Christ died for you. Christ died for those men too; and think about this: If someone destroyed these men for what they are doing now, what about my will for their future? What if someone had destroyed Saul when he was persecuting my people, we would not have had Paul."* God is helping me to have more mercy for people. Innocent people don't need mercy; guilty people need mercy. I am also reminded of what a huge debt that God forgave me, so how can I not forgive a small debt that someone owes me.

All this is about how we see others and how we see ourselves. We must see people and ourselves through God's eyes; we must think eternal.

I have spent years contemplating all these things, working out the past, my past actions and the past actions of others. What God is showing me helps me deal with the present and also the future. How I see and will continue to see myself and others, whether it is healthy and enjoyable or not, depends on how I have learned to deal with these things. I pray that you allow God's word to help you as well. As I said, I have not arrived at a perfect revelation and thereby a perfect attitude about myself and others, but God continues to minister to me and He always takes me back to the word. I have to say, that unless I specifically "dig up" the old man and strap his baggage on, I believe I have been set free from the majority of the negative effects of the past. My life is peaceful, happy and blessed. My marriage is wonderful, my relationship with my children is awesome.

(12) Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (13) Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, (14) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:12-14 NKJV

I pray that this helps you identify with your true identity in Christ and sets you free from the baggage of the past so that you may go forward, unhindered and enjoy the abundant life that Christ came to give you.