

Old Man, New Man, Old Nature, New Nature, the Will, Faith & Grace

Summary

This paper seeks to graciously bring together the biblical teaching on the Old Man, New Man, Old Nature, New Nature, and Will in a manner that provides insight into the nature of biblical faith. It is hoped that other good questions about the unbeliever's and the believer's heart, soul, mind, spirit, and emotions can be addressed elsewhere. These aspects of human personality most certainly have a part of and an influence in the action of the will¹. The most important point to be brought forward in the following is faith in Christ for eternal salvation and daily fellowship with Him.

Biblical Teaching Detailed

The unbeliever, with all his components, is *described* in Scripture as “the old man” (Romans 5:12). The old man is in Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22). The old man has a sin nature (but the old man is not the same as the sin nature: Romans 6:6), and a will (Acts 24:27), among other components. The will of the old man, if left entirely under the influence of the sin nature, would be locked contrary to God's provision for salvation in Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10-19). It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the unbeliever to convict so as to influence the will to act contrary to the dictates of the sin nature (John 16:8-11). Based on the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the unbeliever, the unbeliever's sin nature does not have total control, then, since the one way out of from slavery to the dictates of the sin nature is to believe the Gospel (John 14:6). The convincing and wooing ministry of the Holy Spirit is how God draws the heart of the unbeliever to come to believe (John 16:8; Romans 10:8,9).

When that unbeliever then comes to believe (*active imperative*, appealing to the will: Acts 16:31), as an act of will contrary to the dictates of the sin nature, and with his heart under the influence of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11; Romans 10:10), the old man is crucified (Romans 6:6), and that person is made to be the new man in Christ, entirely by God's doing (1 Corinthians 1:30). He is a new creation – a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The New Testament recognizes that *there is a continuity of person* that remains through the transition from old man to new man and is not identical to the old man or the new man. This is why Paul could tell about the things that he was before he believed, and still say it was him (Acts 22:28; 26:12; 1 Timothy 1:12-16; Philippians 3:4-11). The new man is spiritually new (*kainos*: new in kind), but the personhood continues and the identity of the physical body and the soul of the person is conveyed through the transition from being spiritually the old man (who is crucified) to being spiritually the new man. Willing is shown in Scripture to be done in both the old man and the new man, and by God's design, each has a limited means of choosing contrary to the then reigning nature, in both the old man and the new man. The physical body of the believer will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51) when the Rapture occurs, and the new body will not have associated with it a sin nature to choose (1 John 3:2), so the will of the believer in eternity will be free to exercise itself only for God (stated negatively in Revelation 21:8; 22:15).

¹ For more explanation of *the will and abiding*, see the document *The Will of the Believer, Abiding in Christ & Abiding in the Sin Nature* at: <http://hollyhillsbiblechurch.org/?p=74>.

The new believer, then, is in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30), and is described as “the new man” (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10), who has a new nature, and is indwelt in his position by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11), who has a lengthy list of ministries to the believer². While the old man is crucified, the sin nature, which pertained to the old man, remains (though rendered inoperative in His position in Christ: Romans 6:6) as long as the believer remains in the physical body, but the believer is not at all beholden to that sin nature (Romans 6:12,13). While the believer has two natures, they are clearly opposite but not by any means equal in power, character, authority, and relationship to God (Romans 6). The sin nature is a deposed monarch (Romans 6:12). The believer must operate at any time under either one nature or the other (Galatians 5:16), but can will (*thelō*) to change from abiding by faith in one to abiding by faith in the other. Once abiding in the new nature, which is from Christ, the believer’s will is influenced by the Holy Spirit’s ongoing ministries upon the heart so as to will within the character of that new nature, but has the latitude of will to trust in the sin nature, but not without spiritual consequences. Once abiding in the sin nature, the believer also has the freedom and calling in Christ to stop trusting in the sin nature and so to abide by faith in the new nature. This, of course, is the urging of Scripture, and the singular direction of the ministries of the Holy Spirit, to abide in the new nature, which is from Christ. There is no ability to remain in some hypothetical position apart from one nature or the other (Galatians 5:17). The believer may not simply will to have some specific attitude or behavioral outcome “on his own”, however desirable that might falsely appear – there is no such place of directly willing outcomes apart from one nature or the other. The believer wills in which nature to abide, but the choice is exclusive (entirely one or the other: Galatians 5:16), and all other choices are within the range of that chosen nature, for as long as the believer abides in that chosen nature. Based on the believer’s eternal position in Christ, the only logical course of action is to abide in the new nature, which is from Christ. The motivation of the believer and the ministries of the Holy Spirit are all of grace (Romans 5:21), with God’s mercies also being a motivator (Romans 12:1,2).

Paul will typically convey the believer’s position, then present the imperative(s)³ that are to convey the believer’s eternal position into daily condition. Romans 6:11-13, for example, conveys that though the believer could choose to allow the sin nature to reign, the only conclusion that makes any spiritual sense at all, in view of the revealed spiritual facts (verses 1-10), is to choose to reckon oneself dead to the sin nature and alive to God, which is actively placing faith in what God has accomplished in Christ.

The believer’s will is exercised biblically in his responding by faith to what God has done. Biblical faith is expressed as he reckons himself dead to the sin nature and alive to God (Romans 6:11), walks in Him (Colossians 2:6), walks in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), and abides in Him (John 15:4).

² See the list of ministries of the Holy Spirit in the believer as prepared by Hal Molly: *Galatians 3:5*

³ The general character of the imperatives of the New Testament epistles is to address the will of the believer. Other words or combinations of words, which are not strictly imperatives, have the capacity to address the will as well (e.g., “ought” in Ephesians 5:28; “must” in 1 Timothy 3:2). Occasionally the unbeliever’s will is addressed in some way in the New Testament epistles, but more commonly in Acts (e.g., the imperative in Acts 16:31). See also references given in the document linked to footnote 1.