

Old Natures Never Die

A daily devotion for June 19th

From your friends at RayStedman.org

Read: Genesis 20

And Abimelech asked Abraham, What was your reason for doing this? Genesis 20:10

Has anyone had to say to you, As a Christian, what were you thinking of when you did this thing? Have you ever had to say it to yourself: What got into me anyway? I thought I was further along in the Christian life than this. Here I have done this thing that I thought had long ago passed out of my life. Whatever got into me? If you have ever had to ask yourself that, you need to learn the lesson Abraham had to learn here.

You are still capable of the worst sin that you have ever committed—and more. Abraham has been a coward for thirty years, and he is still capable of being the same coward he was at the beginning, hiding behind his wife, subjecting her to dishonor and disgrace and shame in order to protect his own skin.

This old nature with which we are born, which is perverted and twisted so that it never operates as God intended it to, is totally depraved. That does not mean that it cannot do what appears to be nice things in the eyes of others and even of ourselves. There is something about the old self, the flesh, which is able to simulate righteousness. In the flesh's pursuit after pseudorighteousness,

even if it succeeds in an outward demonstration of a sweet and lovely nature, it has never achieved anything but self-righteousness. Self-righteousness always demands self-praise, a longing to be admired and to win the attention of others. If you fail in your pursuit of self-righteousness, the result is self-pity. Either way, it is the flesh, and it can never please God. This is why when God comes into the human heart through Christ, He never tries to do anything about cleaning up that old nature. He writes it off as worthless. No matter how it looks in the eyes of others, if it comes from the self-advancing, self-centered core, it is worthless, and it always will be. What you now are in the flesh you always will be, if you live a hundred years. If you lay hold of that concept, you will find it one of the most encouraging truths in your Christian life, because it will release you from that awful burden of self-effort that tries to make the old nature behave itself. You must renounce self as the Word of God tells you to and quit feeding it, protecting it, polishing it up, trying to make it look good. Give it up. Accept all that Jesus Christ is in you and wants to be through you, for His nature is perfect.

Any dependence upon self always results in the kind of experience that Abraham had. After thirty years of walking with God and learning wonderful lessons in the spiritual life, the minute he steps out of a dependence upon God, he steps back into that same ugly nature he had in the beginning, and it is unchanged after thirty years. Old natures have to be kept under control by walking in the Spirit. Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature, Paul tells us (Galatians 5:16).

Father, You have not called me to improve myself. Help me to recognize what I am, that in myself I can never be good enough, and to appropriate all that Christ can be to me and through me, for His life is satisfying to You.