

From Adam to Christ

1 Cor. 15: 45-49; Eph. 4: 20-25.

G. Davison.

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In our meetings we often speak of the "transfer from Adam to Christ," and I have in mind to give an outline of the truth which this remark entails. That it does aptly describe the work of the Spirit in our souls there is no doubt, and we may be helped to see the bearing of this from the two passages we have read.

First, in 1 Corinthians 15: 45 we must notice the two words the Spirit uses in drawing attention to the great distinction between Adam and Christ. In this verse he does not speak of the first man and the second, but the "first" and the "*last*". There was no order of manhood in this world prior to the creation of Adam, nor will there ever be another order of manhood introduced subsequent to Christ. Adam was the beginning of the "natural" race; Christ is the beginning of the "spiritual" race in so far as an order of manhood is in view. Christ is called the "second man" in v. 47, but there it is a point of time. This helps to the understanding of v. 46. In point of time Adam, the head of the natural race, was first in this world somewhere about four thousand years before Christ came into it in Manhood. There are then but two orders of manhood in view, and we have our part in both, as we shall see.

Three great distinctions are described for us in v. 45, distinctions between these two heads of a race. The first is intimated in the statement that Adam was "made." That is, he *received* life. It is not said of the "last Adam" that He was made, for if the first man received life as made, the "last Adam" *gives* life; He is a "quickening spirit." We also read that the first man was *soulish* (the same word as that translated natural in v. 46) but the "second Man" is *spiritual*. Moreover it is obvious that the "first man" was a creature, but the "second Man" is the Creator. In Scripture, when one divine Person is named as being the Creator, it is always the Son. How remarkable that when the Son created Adam He had in view His own coming into manhood, Himself the "second Man," in order to displace the first and to transfer His own from the first condition to the second, from the natural to the spiritual. That is why we are told in v. 46 that the natural preceded the spiritual in point of time.

The next three verses continue the explanation of the distinctions between these two men and between the races of which they are the heads. In v. 47 we have *origin*; v. 48 *character*; and in v. 49 *destiny*. While v. 48 — character — is our present theme, it may help if we consider how these three verses are connected.

As to origin, the first man, Adam, was of the earth, "made of dust," as the New Translation correctly renders it. Hence the word of God to Adam after the fall, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." In contrast to this the "second Man" is "out of heaven," quoting again from the New Translation. Thus the "first man" had his origin in dust — earthy; but the "second Man" originated "out of heaven."

The race is in view in v. 48, where character is the theme. If the "first man" was earthy, it follows that the race which sprang from him must also be earthy, or "made of dust." If the "second Man" is "heavenly," so also is the race which springs from *Him*, not only in origin (as in v. 47), but *characteristically* as being already linked with the "second Man," and as having in view the display of His features today.

Finally we notice the thought as to destiny. While we still bear the physical features of the "first man," v. 49 assures us that we shall bear the physical features of the "second Man." We understand this to be the meaning of the word "image." In this connection we deliberately use the word physical, because we shall see from Ephesians 4 that we are to bear His *moral features now*; His *characteristics* are to be manifested in us at the present time whilst we wait to be conformed to His *image*.

We began our existence as of the race of the man "made of dust"; now through grace we are associated with the Man "out of heaven." As in the first condition we could but manifest the features of the first man, but now by the power of the Spirit of God we are able to manifest the features of the "second Man." We still bear the image of the first man *physically*, but we shall yet bear the image of the "second Man" — the heavenly One, for our destiny is to be with Him and like Him forever at His coming again. Such is the teaching of this great resurrection chapter, where these verses are found.

In these verses in Ephesians 4 we see how this transfer from Adam to Christ takes place in order that the features of Christ, the Man out of heaven, might be seen manifested in our lives. In 1 Corinthians 15 we had before us the "first man" and the "second Man," but in Ephesians 4 we have the "old man" and the "new man."

It may be helpful to point out that there are four new things in Christianity — the new covenant, the new man, the new birth and new creation. In contrast to the new covenant we read of the old covenant, and in contrast to the new man we read of the old man. Yet we do not read of old birth in contrast to new birth, nor old creation in contrast to new creation. The reason being that when God styles a thing old He has done with it. In the cross of Christ both the old covenant and the old man were brought to an end judicially in view of the bringing in of the new covenant and the new man, but God has not yet done with the first birth or the first creation. We sometimes use the expression "old creation," but this term is not found in Scripture. The nearest approach to it is in Hebrews 1: 11, "they shall wax old," but the actual term "old creation" is not used. We are thus still connected with the first birth and can glorify God in it; and He will yet fill the first creation with His glory as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2: 14.

In support of this we read in Revelation 21: 1, "a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." Why is the word *first* used in contrast to new, not the word *old* as we might have expected? Doubtless it has in view the end of the kingdom, when Christ will hand it back to God according to 1 Corinthians 15: 23-28. He will not hand it back until He has brought all to that state of perfection in which it was created. This will be the full fruit of reconciliation. Could we imagine that He would hand it over to God in a disordered state? As having brought all into subjection, and having subdued every enemy, He will present the Kingdom to God in its original perfection. Hence it does not say when the first heaven and first earth pass away that they are old.

In relation to this subject of "new and old" another thought of importance comes to mind in 1 Corinthians 2: 14, where we read of "the natural man," and in v. 15 "he that is spiritual." Again in 1 Corinthians 3: 1, Paul refers to the Corinthians as "carnal," that is, fleshly. Relating these terms to those which we have already considered — the first man and the Second Man, and the old man and the new man — we are able to discern what we as believers should be and what we should not be as we seek to manifest the features of Christ in this world.

To be carnal is to walk in the power of the old man, and thus manifest only the features of the first man; as spiritual we shall walk in the power of the new man, and thus manifest the features of the Second Man. Whilst we are in this world we shall always be marked by what is *natural*, whether as wives, husbands, children or fathers. We must not confuse what is *natural* with what is *sinful*. Death to

nature is not taught in Scripture. That we have need to regulate what is natural in the light of what is spiritual is certainly true, but spiritual things were never intended to make us unnatural as long as we are in this world. In Ephesians 4: 20-25, these truths come clearly before us. It is after the assertion that we have put off the old man and have put on the new, that we are told how to regulate every relationship of life so that it becomes evident that we *do* represent Christ. We can, and ought, to bear His character in every walk of life in which we are set.

In this same epistle, Ephesians 2: 10, we read, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This verse sums up what we have in view in calling attention to the verses in Ephesians 4. What those "good works" are, and wherein lies our power to walk in them is taught here. We may add that, whether in chapter 2 or in chapter 4, "created" refers to "new creation." This has been brought about in our souls by the Holy Spirit of God, and is termed here "the new man."

In Ephesians 4: 20-25 we learn how it is possible for us to manifest in this world for the pleasure of God features which first came to light in our Lord Jesus Christ. We need power to do this, and we find in this section that in putting on the new man we have the subjective power in our souls to reproduce such features. Two things are to be noticed here — teaching and practice.

"But ye have not so learned Christ" involves that we have become subject to the teaching of the New Testament. This verse doubtless refers to our Lord where He now is at the right hand of God; the Man who glorified God in this world in His life and in His death. The next verse speaks of the truth "in Jesus." Taking the two verses together we learn that if Christ in heaven is our Teacher and the Source of power, it is He also who set the pattern of what we should be as He moved through this world well pleasing to God. What we now learn *from* Him is that which came to light *in* Him when in this world. It is not the thought of God that one character of life should be seen in Christ and another character of life in us. He works in us to reproduce the same characteristics as those seen in our Lord when He was here. That is the bearing of the words, "as the truth is in Jesus."

We next read what has happened in order that this may become possible. We are told that we have put off the old man and have put on the new man. The correct reading of these verses is that we *have done this*, not that *we should do it*. What we *should* do is to answer to it in our lives, so that it becomes evident that we *have* put off the one and put on the other. What is this "old man"? Where can we see a description of him? In Romans 1: 18-32 there are some thirty sins listed, and every one of them springs from the same root, "our old man." This epistle uses other terms to express the same truth, "our *old man* is crucified with Him, that the *body of sin* might be destroyed," Romans 6: 6. Again, "in the likeness of *sinful flesh*," Romans 8: 3. All these terms refer to the same thing, the root principle sin, from which all the sins recorded in Romans 1 have sprung. We may thank God that we have not been guilty of all these horrible sins, but be our sins lighter or darker according to our own estimation, every one of them springs from the same root, and that root is in us all. It is humbling to think that although we may not have committed all these sins, yet the same root which led to them in others is in us, and we could have been guilty of them all. It is a descriptive picture of the "old man."

We put off the old man by *profession* when we turned to Christ for salvation; we were glad to renounce all that is "corrupt" and "deceitful," the two features used to describe the old man in verse 22. We then read that "righteousness and true holiness" characterize the new man. We have already seen that the old man is not Adam, neither is the new man Christ, but Adam *fallen* gives character to the old man and Christ in *sinless perfection* gives character to the new man. Hence in turning to Christ we turned from the one to the other. This we learn from such Scriptures as the one before us.

An important principle is stated in verse 23, "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind." If, as having put on the new man, we are to come out in the features of Christ, we shall have to guard our minds. What are the objects which engage us? the things which constantly come into our minds? Do we continue to think of the old path in which we walked before we believed the gospel? Do the interests of this world engage our thoughts, or do the interests of Christ engage them? These are questions which we need to put to ourselves for, as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he," Proverbs 23: 7. If we persist in thinking of these evil things they will mark us in our ways, as will good things, right things which are for the pleasure of God, if we set our minds on them. Let us guard our minds, let us "think on these things," those beautiful features listed by the Holy Spirit in Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 4: 8.

The change in character which follows the putting on of the new man is described as affecting the various spheres in which we live. This is in view from Eph. 4: 25 right on to Eph. 6: 9. The first circle is that of our brethren, Eph. 4: 25-32. Then we have our conduct in the world, Eph. 5: 1-21; followed by the conduct of "wives," Eph. 5: 22-24; "husbands," Eph. 5: 25-33; "children," Eph. 6: 1-3; "fathers," Eph. 6: 4; "servants" Eph. 6: 5-8; "masters," Eph. 6: 9. So whatever we are, and wherever we are, Christ ought to be seen in our every relationship. We have read to verse 25 only, "wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another." If we are moving as we should and doing the things we ought to be doing, there will be no need to lie about matters. It is when we do wrong, and are afraid of others knowing it, that we are tempted to lie, and instead of being marked by truth we may be marked by falsehood. Actions as well as words are included in this. How good for us to be at all times and under all circumstances marked by the transparency Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 4. Let us think right things, and so be marked by right things, thus as characterized by the features of Christ, and as having put off the old man and having put on the new, it will be manifest that we have been transferred "from Adam to Christ."