

KEENER THOUGHTS

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SHORT BIBLE PHRASES OF GREAT IMPORTANCE # 11 IN SERIES

OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: **old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.** And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (II Co. 2:16-21)

I am often quite frustrated as I hear preachers apply this passage of scripture, especially "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: **old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**" They almost consistently apply it to their conversion, and how much their life changed for the better after they "got saved." Sometimes as they compare themselves among themselves, and I behold their obvious superiority, and that of their ministry, compared to others, I am almost fearful to be among them, lest I pollute their pure conversation. At other times, they so charge their fellow Christians to attain to this grand standard of theirs, that I hear them saying to others, "Show me your faith by your works," so I may affirm or deny its reality. I readily confess that they may well be making a legitimate application of this passage of Scripture. Nevertheless, I am quite sure, because of the

context of these words, that they are not using the statement as Paul was using it here, nor are they practicing biblical exposition.

Paul's basic statement in this passage is that in this body of our "tabernacle" we groan, being burdened that this mortality might be swallowed up in life. It is not a boasting of any victory in this body at all, either real or potential. It is rather a confession that this old creation is defeated by our fallen nature, and that any victory hoped for must be in the new creation, not in the "Old Things." He says in verse sixteen, "*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*" If we go back to verse 4, and notice the connecting "wherefores," and "therefores," we will clearly see that this is all one statement, and we will be forbidden to reverse the context, from that which is invisible to that which can be seen, in fleshly conduct, by the natural eye. We have seen His miracles and earthly activities, some actually, and others as like us, have seen them only through the Holy Word, but in either case, we do not by that standard of His earthly life, know Him now. We have presently a far greater witness of Him. From this point in time and forward, we know Him by faith in his death, burial and resurrection, as revealed in Scripture, not by sight, and it is in this context that Paul says, "*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh:*" Gill says in this place, "Nor do we make account of the saints themselves as in this mortal state, but as they will be in the resurrection, in consequence of Christ's having died for them, and rose again." On the clause "**Old things are passed away,**" Gill comments thus: "The old course of living, the old way of serving God, whether among Jews or Gentiles; the old legal righteousness, old companions and acquaintance are dropped; and all external things, as riches, honors, learning, knowledge, former sentiments of religion, are relinquished:" On the clause "**Behold all things are become new,**" he comments, "There is a new course of life, both of faith and holiness; a new way of serving God through Christ by the Spirit, and from principles of grace; a new, another, and better righteousness is received and embraced; new companions are sought after, and delighted in; new riches, honors, glory, a new Jerusalem, yea, new heavens, and a new earth, are expected by new creatures."

I would not claim that Gill has all this right, though I agree with his exposition here, and more certainly I would not claim that I have an understanding of this passage superior to that of anyone else. I do, however, firmly believe that there is an increasing tendency within Christendom to focus on our religious conduct, and overlook the preeminence of Christ in us which is the only hope of glory. There is far too much note taken of what we do, and should do, concerning things which can be seen in us by self and others, and far too little of what Christ has done. There is far too much instruction pointing to the security and profit of men, and too little to the glory of God, through Jesus Christ.

If we are, indeed, new creatures as this text suggests, it is by Christ's effort not ours', and by the work of the Holy Spirit upon us, and His presence within us. The greater our realization of this truth becomes, the more of our new creation will be displayed. We will not need to concentrate a great deal on showing others, defending our actions, proving our comparative superiority, or doing great things for the cause of God's kingdom, etc. As He dwells in us through the person of the Holy Spirit, we will become more of what we should be. That will never come to pass through our knowledge or effort, nearly so much as by God's presence in us. I wonder if we should worry less about praying more, saying more, doing more, and knowing more, and start concerning ourselves with listening more, to what God the Holy Spirit has to say to us. He does speak to our hearts. Oh that we would listen as we should!

--FLK