

## ~Other Speakers S-Z: Basilea Schlink:

"If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5: 17). Is that really true? Is the "new man", whom the Apostle Paul talks about so much, a reality or not? Jesus has actually promised this newness to everyone. But are we not usually disappointed when we look at ourselves and see just the opposite? How are we to understand this contrast? The Word of God tells us the "new creation" is a fact, but the reality which we daily experience tells us something quite different.

The solution to this problem was revealed to me after several disappointments in myself, after times of despondency and discouragement, through a deeper understanding of Scripture. For Scripture takes this contrast into account, and it also shows us the way to overcome. When the wonder of wonders has happened to us-born anew by the Holy Spirit (John 3: 3, 5)-we should sing songs of praise. For then indeed a "new man" has been born by the Holy Spirit, a spiritual man, like a new-born child. And this new man, this wonderful creation of God, proves to be alive. He has a heart that feels with God, that rejoices over the redemption of Jesus, while the natural man is indifferent and self-centred. The spiritual man in us has new eyes, new ears. He sees and perceives what he has never before noticed. He recognizes God's plan of salvation and His love in his own personal life and in the events of the times. He recognizes sin as sin and responds to Jesus with sacrificial love. He has a new mouth which pours forth words of praise.

But the birth of the spiritual man in us is not the end. When we are born anew, the spiritual man is like a small, new-born baby. And above all, the old man, the natural man, has not yet died. He has been condemned to death; he has been dethroned. And he senses this, just as Herod sensed intuitively that the Child was a threat to him and that his power would reach an end. That is why he hated the Child and sought to kill Him. And with the new birth a battle begins within us also-between spirit and flesh, between the new and the old man. "The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other" (Gal. 5: 17). We must be prepared for this battle. The Holy Scriptures take this to be a reality in the life of believers.

So after we are born anew, a bitter battle begins and everything depends upon who grows and who decreases. Whose side are we on? Whom do we like? Whom do we dislike? Who will be victorious? We cannot serve two masters. We have to love one and hate the other. But how can the new spiritual man reach maturity, the "stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13) and be victorious? And how will the old man be starved to death?

I would like to testify to three "musts" which help bring the spiritual man in us to growth and victory. The first "must" is to do everything possible to put the natural man to death. The Apostle Paul says, "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, (of the natural man) you will live" (Rom. 8: 13). This will let the spiritual man live and grow. That means taking measures against yourself, against the old man, as it is written in the Letter to the Galatians, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5: 24). Therefore we have to undertake something ourselves. As Scripture says, we have to put to death the strong desires of the old man within us.

For example, the spiritual man needs a prayer life for growth. But if the natural man is ruled by an exceedingly strong need for sleep or talkativeness and does not want to give these things up, the spiritual man cannot grow. Then we cannot find time to be with Jesus, to listen to Him and to speak with Him. And if food plays too great a role, the growth of the spiritual man will also be hindered. Of course, everyone who panders to his lusts will put the spiritual man to death. But the growth of the spiritual man will also be hindered, indeed our spiritual life will finally die away, if we let the natural man live in bitterness, irreconciliation or even hatred.

If we earnestly desire the growth of the "new man" we have to be resolute in putting "to death the deeds of the body". We have to give the death blow to our lusts and other cravings by radically renouncing them. That means that we have to make an "about face", if, for example, we continually read a great deal of unnecessary things or even indecent things that awaken our lusts and strengthen them. Or if we are tempted to sit in front of the television set, we have to say, No. It means getting rid of things that steal our time and interest, that we should be devoting to Jesus. Here is where we should begin to obey the Holy Scriptures and "crucify" whatever is favourable to our old man.

But everyone who has begun to take such measures will have found that he cannot free himself. Rather, after we have entered the fight and have declared war on the old man, we are most likely to experience how often we fall down and are defeated. But in spite of all the defeats, we have given God a sign that we are willing, that we are serious when we pray for release. And then, just when we begin to moan over our inability like the Apostle

Paul (Rom. 7: 24), when we begin to suffer deeply for our weakness under chastening and under seemingly useless measures taken against our ego, we are prepared for the second "must" that will help us become victorious in this fight. We often take this second "must" for granted, knowing that it is part of the battle of faith against sin, yet many of us do not understand how to practise it in depth. It is laying hold of the sacrificial redemption of Jesus. We have to grasp in faith what His death on the cross means for us. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3: 14f).

If we look at Jesus, the Crucified Lord, in faith, eternal divine life will flow into us. That is what Scripture says. Jesus is waiting for us to call upon Him, the Crucified Lord, and say, "Your blood that was shed for the redemption of the world has power to put to death my natural man, to free me from the chains that are binding me!" Yes, we may call upon the Lamb of God and rely upon the fact that Jesus has broken the power of sin of our natural man with all its urges, desires, bitterness and bondage to earthly things, people, etc. When we look at the Crucified Lord in faith, the natural man will decrease and make room for the spiritual man to grow and become mature to the point of perfection.

But this does not mean looking at Jesus only once and taking one deep prayerful sigh, "Set me free?" As soon as an Israelite who had been bitten by a snake turned his glance away from the serpent that was lifted up, the poison from the bite killed him. Here it is a matter of enduring and keeping faith for life. That means that we have to be fascinated by Jesus and His victorious power so much, that we constantly have to look away from our poisoned condition and continually look towards Him, our Redeemer, and say, "You will be victorious in the end!" If the bondage is strong, the battle of faith will take years. But if we fight to the point of shedding blood, we will experience that Jesus has conquered our greatest weakness and our strongest bonds. We have to proclaim the victory of Jesus day by day. I have already mentioned that I have done this every day during a set period of prayer. I proclaimed His victory over my specific sinful bondages. When I do this I have to expect that something will really happen. Jesus has suffered too much; He has sacrificed too much for me, for each one of us, not to see something of the fruit of His redemption in us.

But even if we try to "put to death the deeds of the body" and fight the battle of faith, trusting in the redemption of Jesus, the spiritual man will still not be victorious. The Scriptures clearly speak of a third "must" if we want to reach the sanctification of God and let the old man be put to death and the new man come to maturity. It is God's chastening. It brings our natural desires to death. So God chastens a person, for instance, who is very much bound to another person, by letting him be disappointed in this person time and again. He seeks to free him by this means. Whoever accepts this chastening by saying, "Yes, Father," will receive help in his fight against his bondages. Or a person can be hit by a serious illness which frees him from his bondage to his work or to lust. If his soulish love is crucified, there will be a free place in his heart where the Spirit of God can pour in and love for Jesus can fill more room. Then his joy in Jesus will increase. We find that this spiritual law works every time, if we love the new man and hate the old man. Then we will praise God's chastening. It helps the natural man be put to death so that the life of the spiritual man can be developed.

As we have seen, the victory of the new man, true deliverance and change in our lives will come about, if we  
 (1) take measures against ourselves (Romans 8: 13; Galatians 5: 4)  
 (2) but above all, fight the battle of faith by looking towards Jesus and using the weapons that He has given us for this fight (Hebrews 12: 1b, 2a) and  
 (3) at the same time accept the chastenings God gives (Hebrews, 12: 10f).

These are the prerequisites for everything that is written in the following pages. I cannot give thanks enough for all the changes that have already taken place in people-among my spiritual daughters as well-who have lived according to this advice and fought the battle of faith according to these rules.

**MOTHER BASILEA**

It is your constant patience in faith which will  
 decide the struggle against sin, not occasional  
 victories or defeats.

**MOTHER MARTYRIA**

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