

Temperament Can Be Changed!

The Apostle Paul put into words the heart-cry of despair felt by every sincere individual who laments his weaknesses of temperament: "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" (Romans 7:24) His answer is electrifying, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Yes, temperament can be changed! This is clearly seen from II Corinthians 5:17 where Paul wrote: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

Since temperament is our "old nature," what man needs is a "new nature." That "new nature" is imparted to man when he receives Jesus Christ into his life. The Apostle Peter could speak on this subject from personal experience, for his temperament was vastly changed by receiving the "new nature." In II Peter 1:4 he refers to those who have been "born again" by faith in Jesus Christ as having become ". . . partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The "divine nature" which comes through Jesus Christ is the only escape from the control of our natural temperament, for only through Him are we made "new creatures."

There have been unusually self-controlled individuals who have changed part of their temperament and most of their conduct, but they have not cured all of their weaknesses. Even they have had their besetting sins. Satan knows our major temperament weaknesses, and you can be sure he will use his power to defeat us. His greatest delight in regard to Christians is to see them defeated by their own weaknesses. The victory, however, is available through Jesus Christ whose Spirit can make all things new in the believer's life.

Admittedly, all Christians do not experience this transforming power. Just ask a convert's husband or wife, or in some cases, children! In fact, I'm sorry to have to admit that the majority of Christians do not see a *complete* transformation of their temperament. The reason is abundantly clear: the Christian has not remained in an "abiding" relationship with Jesus Christ. (See John 15:1-14) But that does not change the fact that the moment the individual received Jesus Christ, he received the "new nature" which is able to cause "old things to pass away and all things to become new." We shall see that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not only commanded by God for every Christian (Ephesians 5:18), but this filling results in the Holy Spirit so controlling a man's nature that he actually lives the life of Christ. Before we come to that subject, however, it would be good for us to examine the basic types of temperament so we know what to expect the Holy Spirit to do with us