

Does Jesus Offer Anything to the Old Nature?

Even as Judas was attracted to Jesus on some level, as well as the attraction of the faith and the Spirit to Ananias and Sapphira and other hypocrites mentioned in the scripture, the Christian faith seems to have some appeal to the old nature. The old nature in some ways is like an animal, seeking only to meet its own needs. What needs might appeal to it? What could interest the old nature in a change (or conversion) to following Christ?

- Avoidance of the wrath of God to come in hell
- A promise of the pleasure and joy in heaven
- A change from the lifestyle of sin and debauchery that doesn't really offer any long-term pleasure here on earth to a lifestyle that offers purpose and structure.
- A caring community of church members who do not accept you just because you are prominent in the community
- The ability to receive recognition for talents you possess, whether it be preaching, leading, singing, or other talents.
- The ability to feel that you are a cut above others who don't give as much money, time, or other asset as you do.
- The ability to raise children in an atmosphere that will allow them to avoid some of the destruction present in our society.
- A reason to reject the mainstream of society that has provided some feelings of resentment.
- An escape from the pain of leading a lifestyle that is troubling other believing members of your family
- A relationship with the most powerful being.

Some of the above items are not bad in themselves. The list just points out that there are attractive elements of the faith that will appeal to the old nature. They will not appeal to everyone's old nature. Some want to live in debauchery, and dismiss any connection with God.

Only the workings of the Law and Gospel can produce true conversion, with a new spirit that will be born from above to do battle with the old nature. The new nature loves God. Often, it is not easy to determine which nature is responsible for various acts, but God assures us that, beginning with baptism, this new nature is alive, nourished by the Holy Spirit, and producing fruit.

We need to be careful to avoid the approaches to evangelism being promoted today that might appeal only to the old nature. Jesus even warned that there would be **many** on the day of judgment that would say to Him, "Did we not cast out demons and perform many miracles in your name?", but He would say, "Depart from me, you evildoers." This is another indicator of why we shouldn't trust in our Christian lives for assurance of salvation.

Our attempts to reach others should be by leading a life based upon the cross with an understanding of the law and gospel. Only the message of the law and gospel can convict

the heart and produce a true faith in the cross.