

DEALING WITH THE NATURAL CONSTITUTION

[T]he natural constitution is the expression of **the living out** of the old man which has to do with **human ability, capability, wisdom, cleverness, schemes, and skills**... When speaking of self, we can use self-righteous and talkative Job as a model. But when speaking of the natural constitution, **Jacob**, in the book of Genesis, is the best representative character. We generally think that the record of Jacob points out his craftiness. But, actually, the most outstanding characteristic in the entire life of Jacob is his **natural endeavoring and scheming**... His craftiness is but the superficial expression; his natural constitution is his *hidden characteristic*. Before Jacob became matured, all his history revealed his natural constitution...

Jacob's natural constitution was expressed even before his birth. In his mother's womb **he took hold of Esau's heel**, striving to come out first. When he grew up, he cleverly schemed to gain a position of advantage. **He used intrigue and cheated Esau** of the birthright. Then by a clever device **he obtained the blessing of the first-born** from his father. When he left home, in his wanderings, God appeared to him at Bethel and promised to bless him; then also **he applied his skill and bargained with God**.... God had promised to bless him without any terms, nevertheless, he bargained with God on certain conditions. This only proves how **smart** and **clever** he was!

The reason Jacob was so scheming is that he was so **strong in the natural constitution**... The afflictions, sufferings, and troubles which beset him were for **the breaking of his natural constitution**. The crisis in his life occurred when **God touched the hollow of his thigh** at Peniel. Finally, in Genesis 35, God asked him to go to Bethel and there make an altar unto God, who had appeared unto him when he fled from the face of his brother. From thence **Jacob ceased** all his scheming, and his natural man fell before God. Later, when his son Reuben defiled his bed, though he knew it, he took no action. When his sons cheated him by selling Joseph whom he loved into Egypt, he suffered it. Finally, when he was struck by famine, he had to beg his sons to buy food for him. All his ability, schemes, cleverness, and capability evidently **disappeared and ceased**. His whole being had changed completely.

The Difference Between the **Natural Constitution** and **Resurrection Life**

We have defined the natural constitution as that which pertains to human ability, capability, wisdom, and cleverness, because all these are derived from our natural life and not from the resurrection life of God. They are **acquired naturally**; they do not spring from resurrection by passing through the breaking in Christ. The difference between the natural constitution and resurrection life is indeed great. Our dealing with the natural constitution is that our **inherent ability, capability, wisdom, and cleverness** may **pass through** the death of the **cross**, become **resurrected**, and thereby become acceptable and useful to God. When some people hear about

dealing with the natural constitution, they think that God does not want our ability and capability. This concept is wrong. In order to be useful to God, **we definitely need** our ability and capability.

From the revelation of the Bible, we clearly see that the work of God on this earth requires man's cooperation. It is impossible for man to cooperate with God without possessing any ability and capability. Just as **wood and stone** cannot cooperate with God, so also **foolish** and **incapable persons** cannot cooperate with God. We always say that **a clever man** is useless before God, but **a stupid one** is even **worse**. We also say that a capable man is useless before God, but that the incapable ones are worse. Actually, **all those who are useless in this world are also useless in the hand of God**. Throughout the generations, all those who have been used of God have been the capable ones gained from this world. We have to admit that Moses was **a capable man** with ability, foresight, wisdom, and cleverness; therefore, God could use him to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. Moreover, through him the most important books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, were written. We must also admit that Paul was **a capable man** who had great learning and was rich in thinking; therefore, he was able to receive revelation from God which enabled him to write the deep and lofty truths in the New Testament. Though Peter and John were but fishers of Galilee, we can presume that they were among **the best of the fishers** and by no means ordinary men.

The greatest principle in spiritual service is that of man cooperating with God. Although God does all things, yet in all things God needs man to cooperate with Him. It can never be that those who do not know how to do anything and are incapable and unwilling to do anything can be used by God. We often hear brothers and sisters say, "I believe that God can do it," yet they themselves make no effort to cooperate. **This kind of faith is vain**. No doubt, God can do it, but it is also necessary that man be able to do it. If man cannot do it, though God can, He will not do it. God must seek those who are able and willing to cooperate with Him. **God works as far as man is capable**. God works according to the degree of man's cooperation. Therefore, we must be able and capable, and learn to be a useful man in every aspect; then we are fit for His use.

However, God still cannot use one who is **merely naturally capable**. Natural capability, unless broken, is a **hindrance** to God. It must be broken; it must pass through death and be resurrected that it may be used by God. Natural ability is similar to raw iron which, because it is too hard and brittle, is not suitable for use and is easily broken. Resurrected ability is like wrought steel, firm but malleable, suitable for use and not easily cracked. Therefore, God cannot use one who is incapable; neither can He use one who is capable, yet has not been broken. Those who are usable in the hand of God are those who are capable, yet whose capability has been broken. If we examine all those who have been used by God throughout the generations, almost **all were very capable, rich in soul-power, having foresight** and **cleverness**, while at the same time they were broken by God.

How can we differentiate natural ability from resurrected ability? How can we tell which is an inherent ability and which is the ability that has been broken? There are seven points of comparison. We shall look first at natural ability: **First**, all natural ability is selfish, and all its schemes and devices are for the sake of self. **Second**, all natural ability is mingled with the elements of flesh and temper; therefore, when it is disapproved, it becomes provoked. **Third**, all natural ability involves craftiness and maneuvering. **Fourth**, all natural ability contains pride and makes oneself feel capable, thereby resulting in boasting and self-glorification. **Fifth**, all natural ability is not under the control of the Holy Spirit and is extremely daring in doing anything. **Sixth**, all natural ability has no regard for the will of God; it acts entirely according to self-will. **Seventh**, natural ability does not rely on God and does not have to rely on God, but relies wholly upon self.... Resurrected ability is exactly the opposite. **First**, all ability which has been broken and resurrected is not for self, neither does it contain any element of self. **Second**, all resurrected ability is devoid of the flesh. **Third**, resurrected ability does not scheme. **Fourth**, resurrected ability is not proud nor does it boast in itself. **Fifth**, resurrected ability is controlled by the Holy Spirit and does not dare to act according to our wishes. **Sixth**, resurrected ability is for the will of God. **Seventh**, resurrected ability relies upon God and does not dare to act according to self, though truly able and capable.

Since we are clear now concerning the difference between natural and resurrected ability, we should examine ourselves in our experience. When we exercise our ability, is it for self or for God? Am I making decisions on my own and acting individually and egocentrically, or am I able to stand the criticism of others and suffer their opposition? Do I employ schemes, or do I look to the grace of God? Do I give glory to God, or do I boast and glory in myself? Am I controlled by the Holy Spirit or am I acting as I wish? Do I fulfill my own desires, or do I care for the will of God? Do I attempt to achieve the goal by any means, or do I commit all things into the hand of God, trusting Him for the outcome? Am I depending solely on my own resources, or am I relying upon God with fear and trembling? If we examine ourselves strictly, we will discover that in our living and service, **many areas are still in the natural constitution and of the old creation**; therefore, we cannot bring forth fruit of resurrection.

Dealing with the Natural Constitution -- The Objective Fact

Dealing with the natural constitution is the same as dealing with the flesh and the self—it is based on objective fact. Since **our old man has been crucified with Christ**, our natural constitution also has been dealt with in the old man. In the sight of God it is an accomplished fact. We too must see this by the Holy Spirit. Only those who see this objective fact will have the experience of the subjective dealing.

Dealing with the Natural Constitution -- The Subjective Experience

Flesh, self, and the natural constitution—all three—are the expressions of the old man. Therefore, the principle in dealing with them is the same: on one hand we have the objective fact, and on the other hand we need the subjective experience. The objective fact is that Christ has already crucified our old man, while the subjective experience is **the applying of the death of Christ through the Holy Spirit to ourselves**. If we apply it to the flesh, it is the dealing with the flesh; if we apply it to our opinion, it is the dealing with self; and if we apply it to *our ability* and *capability*, it is the dealing with the natural constitution.

The Process Of The Experience Of Dealing With The Natural Constitution

The process of the experience of dealing with the natural constitution closely resembles that of dealing with self. This **spiritual seeing** is the first step toward our experience in dealing with the natural constitution. We must see that our old man has been crucified with Christ; then we shall experience the dealing that follows. [The second step,] is that we realize that the natural constitution is **a very strong expression of the old man**. After we have seen the first two points, we will automatically receive **the crucifixion of Christ** upon our natural constitution [through the power of the Holy Spirit]. [In other words, **every time we discover** our cleverness, wiles, and capability, **we must immediately** apply the death of the cross to them. In this way, the stamp of the death of the cross is applied to all the practical expressions of the natural constitution]. Once we receive and apply this, all our natural ability will be **stamped** with the mark of death and gradually become withered. This receiving is a great spiritual crisis in our life; it may perhaps become our Peniel in experience. It is here that our natural ability and capability are touched by God, and the hollow of our thigh, wherein lies the strength of our body, **becomes limp**. Hereafter, we can no longer as before use our ability and capability as we wish. Thus, **we pass a crisis** in our dealing with the natural constitution; we gain an experience in a subjective way.