

Do Christians Have Two Natures?

Read Romans 7:14-25

In order to understand clearly what Paul is saying in this passage you need to first understand some presuppositions that Paul is making about your knowledge of mankind. Paul is presupposing in this text that you understand the nature of a man and what it means to be born again, to be made alive by the Spirit of God. Paul assumes that you understand some very important facts about the human life. *For example: Do Christians have two natures or one?*

If you don't know the answer to that question, you will get confused by what Paul is saying.

I. What is a Human Nature?

- A "human nature" is that "essence of life" that God breathed into Adam (Gen. 1:27 & 2:7) making him truly in the image of God, possessing the ability to reason, to will, to love, to be moral, and to rule the world. Your nature is who you really are as a person. It is the real you[—your character].
- Our nature actually controls our personality and our actions. It nurtures us.
 - Where does a child get his/her personality? [*our temperament is different*]
 - Where does a child learn how to sin?
- We are all born with a sinful nature that is totally depraved. [So it is our nature that corrupts our personality, and activates our sinful **habits** or weaknesses that we inherited from our first parents (Adam & Eve).

II. Do Christians Have One Nature or Two?

▶ Some theologians believe that a Christian has two natures and some believe that Christians have only one nature. ***Which is true?***

A. Two Natures

- ▶ Born with a sinful nature, the Adamic nature. When you are born-again, you receive a new nature.... but you keep your old one too.
- ▶ Black dog vs white dog, fighting your whole life. All depends on who you say "sic em" to.
- ▶ New nature and the old nature and they war against each other.

B. One Nature

- ▶ Born with a sinful nature, the Adamic nature. When you are born-again, your old nature is crucified and dead... and replaced by a new nature, a new heart, a new spirit [—our spirit separated from God now **in union** with the ***Spirit of God*** enabling us to have the ***mind of Christ***. **1Cor 2:16b**]

III. A Christian has only one nature.

A. Romans 6:6 = Old self was crucified ==> Two words for "old" in Greek:

1. *Archios* = we get our word "archaic" = means old from point of time
2. *Poliosk* = means old in point of use = has nothing to do with age but has to do with usage. (out of date, garbage, useless) If I trade in one new car for another car, I can say the first one is my old car but I don't have it any more.

It is this word that Paul uses to refer to our "old" self. He is referring to our former nature. Who we once were in Adam. But we are not that person anymore. **That nature has been traded in for a new nature!**

▶ **John Murray** suggests that this expression [old self] designates "the person in his unity as talking about a totality: the total person enslaved by sin—what we all are by nature".

B. In **Romans 7:14-25** -- Paul gives Christ credit for the good and Paul takes credit for the bad.

[Free from the Preoccupation with Sin: Paul gives us an amazing example of being pre-occupied with our sin," the self-focus example is evident as Paul uses "I, me, or my" over 34 times in the ten verses 10-24. No where else in Scripture, does Paul put so much focus on the "unholy trinity." Paul gives us the solution to this horizontal self-focus dilemma in verses 24-25: ...*Who will rescue me from this body of death?* He is telling us to go vertical! In addition to the Freedom from the **Penalty of Sin** in Romans 5 and Freedom from the **Power of Sin** in Romans 6, we have Freedom from the **Preoccupation of Sin** in Romans 7, and finally we come to the glory of Romans 8 where we can understand that in Christ, we are free from the **Presence of Sin** as we choose to abide in the Living and Written Word!]

C. **2Corinthians 5:17** = new creation, "old" things have passed away = no longer in usage!

[**2Corinthians 5:16-17**: "*So from now on we regard no one from a worldly (Greek = sarx = fleshly) point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*"]

D. **Galatians 2:20** = the old "I" no longer lives. The new "I" now lives in Christ. I am still in my old flesh but I am a **new** person even right now in my same **old** flesh.

• Even though we are forgiven, **we are still suffering the consequences of our sin.** Not the penalty but the **consequences of sin** -- *dying and diseased bodies, perverted minds, selfish thoughts, personality disorders, etc.* These aren't penalties or they would last forever. They are temporary consequences that we live with until sanctification is completed in our lives.

E. Galatians 5:13-16 -- 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. **16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.**

F. Eph 4:17 -- Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

- Eph 4:22 - to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **Martyn Lloyd-Jones** translates it, "Do not go on living as if you were still that old man because that old man has died. Do not go on living as if he was still there."
- Notice that Paul argues that you were already "taught in Christ" to put off your old self. You were taught experientially at conversion. It is now your "former life."

G. Col. 3:1 -- If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 **When Christ who is your life** appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

- The old man doesn't exist. You're a whole new creation. **You're never exhorted to put off the old man. You have done that.**

Colossians 3:9-10, *"Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."*

In other words behave consistently with who you are. You are a new creation. The old man is dead. The new man lives.

• If you believe the old nature is not dead and discarded then you will blame all your sin on that nature and say, "Hey I'm still a sinner, just forgiven!" Meaning that you don't think you can help it. It leads to all types of sinfulness within Christians.

H. Philippians 1:23-24 -- But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. *"I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body."*

I. Romans 13:14 -- But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.** [In **Ephesians 6:11-17**, every piece of the armor of God that we are told to **put on** is the person of Jesus Christ.]

J. Addition theology vs Transformation theology

• Prior to saving grace entering our lives, our human nature is separated from the presence of God or the Spirit of God —we are dead in sins and trespasses (**Ephesians 2:1-2**) because our fallen body and soul is separate from God's presence. **God injects, so to speak, the resurrection life of Christ into us.** His Spirit washes our hearts clean unto new birth (**Titus 3:5**). We don't get a "born-again nature" installed into us that is somehow separate from us. We are born again and come into the presence of God—He is in us and therefore we are in Him! Christ's life lives in us. *Born-againness* isn't a capacity that is strapped on, like a gas-powered electric generator sitting outside the shed that may or may not get activated. The human heart becomes spiritually alive again. The old man -- the old, dead, spiritually-hostile-to-God person we used to be -- has been shed. We have life according to the new man -- the new, living, spiritually-born-of-God person (man/woman) we become through and in Christ Jesus (**Colossians 3:10**).

SUMMARY [POINTS]

- 1- A human has but one nature. He can by definition only be one person at a time. Therefore a Christian, too, has only one nature.
- 2- In our inner man resides either the Adamic, sinfully corrupted nature, or there resides the new nature created by Spirit of Christ.

- 3- If you are not born-again then you still have a sinful nature and are unable to quit sinning [Chapters 5 and 6 of Romans cannot apply to you!].
- 4- A sinner is unable to live righteously. He can never break the **habits** of sin.
- 5- A sinner is dead to God [separate from his indwelling presence] and alive to sin [— literally a child of the devil—**John 8:44.**]
- 6- But a person who has been born-again spiritually by the Spirit of God is now dead to sin and alive to God[—because he/she has been given the resurrected eternal life of the Son of Man! **John 3:16**]
- 7- He is no longer enslaved to sin. He has now been empowered by God's Spirit to break the **habits** of sin. [**Romans 6:17-18:** *But thanks be to God that, though you used to be **slaves to sin**, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become **slaves to righteousness.***]
- 8- We only have one nature at a time and are therefore only being nurtured either in righteousness or unrighteousness, not both.
- 9- The human nature nurtures/teaches/dictates our personalities, attitudes, and actions. [Only in Christ can we attain the character of Christ.]
- 10- [The Old Adamic Nature: fallen body/fallen soul/dead spirit (the Old Man) which had the dominion of death, enslaving and corrupting every part of our being and life, was crucified by faith at the Cross of Jesus. The New Nature with God's Spirit in union with our spirit is the New Man given at regeneration, but we still live in a fallen world ruled by Satan and still deal with our fallen body and soul (it's best to define our soul as a tri-unity of our mind, emotions, will).]
- 11- That old nature had taught us (nurtured us) in the ways of sin (the laws of sin, the **habits** of sin). Our new nature, the Spirit of Christ, now nurtures us in the ways of righteousness (the law of God, the **habits** of holiness).
- 12- Christians, still living in their corrupt bodies (their bodies of death, the flesh), are tempted to live according to those old **habits** of sin. The Confession calls this "*remnants of corruption.*" These **habits** are no longer being taught or empowered by the Adamic Nature for that nature is now crucified. These **habits** remain in the outer body, the body of death, but are actually powerless over the

believer. Even though he is a prisoner in the body of death which was trained in the laws of sin (Romans 7), a believer has to choose to quench and grieve the Spirit in order to live according to those old sinful **habits**. His inner man will not want to sin and his outer man does not have to sin, but the mere presence of *remaining corruption* causes a warfare for a Christian.

13- This residual sinfulness is a wretched reality in the life of a saint.

14- But the good news is a Christian is no longer a **sinner** by nature, rather we are **saints**, but so important to understand is that a saint is a "saved sinner"! The curse, penalty, and power removed. We have a transformed heart that is continually being sanctified [being more and more holy—we have the opportunity to seek **God's will** rather than be prisoners of our fallen **self-will**. **Ephesians 5:15-17**]

15- Once we had no ability to do righteousness (**Romans 3:10**). We only had the ability to sin. NOW we have the ability to do righteousness (to be righteous) and to not sin because of Christ in us, who is our righteousness (**1Corinthians 1:30**).

16- He is now united to Christ by nature and is therefore a saint, a justified child of God.

17- And his new nature is teaching him new **habits**. His new nature is nurturing him anew = this is the process of SANCTIFICATION.

18- Positionally the believer is sanctified in Christ and guaranteed to be conformed to His image.

19- We are "now" sanctified in Christ as a "new creation" and "becoming" sanctified as we "live out" what we are in Christ.

20- It is God's work to sanctify us, but we also learn to cooperate with him in obedience.

21- The old nature has been crucified and our new nature now reigns in our inner man, giving us a driving passion for righteousness. Residual passions/lusts/sin (old **habits**) tempt us because we still live in the flesh, the body of death. But in Christ we have the power to overcome those residual passions of our body of death, the flesh, as the Grace of God masters and nurtures our life via our new nature/heart/spirit.

22- At regeneration/justification our old nature is crucified with Christ and we are given a new nature. In sanctification we are given the effectual graces that nurture us into His likeness [the process of attaining the character of Christ that will influence our will—our choice of behavior—the way we live or walk in the fallen world].

23- God crucifies our nature, imputes to us a new nature, and imparts to us the grace to live according to the Spirit, producing spiritual fruit. [We hang out on the vine as the Lord works through a believer to produce this fruit (see **John 15:4-5**).]

24- **Our responsibility is to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:11ff)**, meaning we should understand that our old nature is dead, we have a new transformed nature in Christ, we should strive to cooperate with the nurturing of the Spirit and we should break the **habits** in our mortal body that we had learned from our old nature.

25- A man has one nature, only.

26- He is born with a sinful nature. That sinful nature nurtures him in sinful **habits**.

27- At regeneration that sinful nature dies. But the **habits** remain because we are still prisoners of our corrupt bodies.

28- At regeneration a man is given a new nature. That new nature nurtures him in righteous **habits**.

29- So a Christian has only one nature at a time.

30- As we continue to study Romans 7 we will see how a Christian struggles with old **habits** of sin. [Stop your preoccupation with sin! Instead be occupied with a vertical focus on God—what He did and what He continues to do through the “Body of Christ”.]

31- Sanctification is the mortification of those old **habits** of sin through the power of the Spirit of God while at the same time learning new **habits** of righteousness.

Theological Proponents:

John MacArthur, “I believe it is a serious misunderstanding to think of the believer as having both an old and new nature. Believers do not have dual personalities...there is no such thing as an old nature in the believer.” “At new birth a person becomes a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. **It is not simply that he receives something new, but that he becomes someone new... The new nature is not added to the old nature, but replaces it.** The transformed person is a completely new “I”. Biblical terminology, then, does not say that a Christian has two different natures. He has but one nature, the new nature in Christ. The old self dies and the new self lives; they do not coexist.”

Other proponents include: **B. B. Warfield, John Murray, Martin-Lloyd Jones, Jay Adams, Charles Solomon, Ray C. Stedman, Bob George, Howard Hendricks, et.al.**

IV. Why does it matter?

A. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones -- The old man is the man that I was in Adam; that is the man that has died once and forever. No where does the Scripture tell you to get rid of your old man, for the obvious reason that he has already gone. Understand that the "old man" is not there. The only way to stop living as if he were still there is to realize that he is not there. He is non-existent; he is no longer there. Your self--your old self, has gone. Never think of yourself in those terms again. (Rom 6, p. 65)

B. Understanding this helps the believer from being double-minded in the outworking of sanctification. It is the *Platonic Dualism* that nearly drove Luther insane as he would beat himself to punish, as he perceived it, his sinful nature trying through force of will (human effort) rather than relying on grace alone reckoning the truth sufficient.

C. Understanding this enables us to love in grace as we understand that the process is incomplete in each of us. It also should cause us to not grade sin as to who in the body is less or more sanctified—if I commit a sin and if you commit a sin as a believer regardless of what it is, my sin and your sin is equally heinous. Example: What is rooted in me excludes me from looking at another brother that struggles in an area I do not and considering him "worse" and me "better." **Once we grasp this understanding we are truly able to minister to one another in a new and gracious way.**

D. Since a Christian has only one nature and that being the new nature, a clean heart, created by and indwelt by God's Spirit then the sin that is currently remaining in your life has no power source. [*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51:10*]

E. The old Adamic nature has been killed and removed. Therefore you can overcome any sinful habit in your life and will overcome them all.

F. There is no temptation too great that you can either excuse sin or fear sin.

G. **It is time to realize who you are in Christ.** Give Christ all the credit for the good and step up and take responsibility for the bad and **stop it.**

H. Stop it through the power of God's Spirit in you. It will not be easy or quick or even complete in this lifetime. But do not lose heart, it will be successful and your life will count for God's glory [as he lives and breathes through you as you.]