

## OVERVIEW OF THE TWO NATURES

1. Man attempts to improve outward behavior, but God focuses our attention on the root problem - the sinful human nature. Outward behavior is simply the evidence of the real problem.

Mat. 5:21-22 (Jesus said) “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall **not commit murder**’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ “But I say to you that everyone who is **angry** with his brother shall be guilty before the court; ...

5:27-28 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall **not commit adultery**’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman **with lust** for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Mat. 15:19 “For out of **the heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

2. God uses trees and plants to illustrate the human life.

Jer. 17:5-6 Thus says the Lord, “Cursed is the man who **trusts** in mankind and makes **flesh** his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord. “For he will be **like a bush in the desert** and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of **salt without inhabitant**.

17:7-8 “Blessed is the man who **trusts** in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. “For he will be **like a tree planted by the water**, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its **leaves will be green**, and it will **not be anxious** in a year of drought **nor cease to yield fruit**.

Psa. 1:3 He (a righteous man) will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither;

Mat. 7:17-18 “So every **good tree** bears good fruit, but the **bad tree** bears bad fruit. “A good tree **cannot** produce bad fruit, **nor** can a bad tree produce good fruit.

3. The human nature is sinful, independent, and beyond repair.

Jer. 17:9 “The heart is more **deceitful** than all else and is **desperately sick**; ...

John 6:63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits **nothing**; ...

Rom. 7:18 For I know that **nothing good** dwells in me, that is, **in my flesh**; ...

Rom. 3:10-12 as it is written, “There is **none** righteous, **not even one**; ... There is **none** who seeks for God; **all** ... have become **useless**; there is **none** who does good, there is **not even one**.”

Rom. 8:8 ... those who are in the flesh **cannot** please God.

Gal. 5:17 For the flesh sets its desire **against the Spirit**, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are **in opposition** to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

4. God uses the law to show me the hopelessness of my human nature in order to persuade me not to rely on it, but rather on the Holy Spirit.

(See also Galatians 3:1-3)

Rom. 3:19-20 *Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, **so that every mouth may be closed** and all the world may become **accountable to God**; because **by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight**; for through the Law comes the **knowledge of sin**.* (See also Heb. 7:18-19)

Rom. 5:20 *The Law came in **so that the transgression would increase**; ...*

Gal. 5:22-23 ***But the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; **against such things there is no law**. Everything that is motivated by the Holy Spirit is in complete harmony with God's character.*

**Note also:** *for the Law brings about wrath, but **where there is no law**, there also is **no violation**. (Rom. 4:15) ... **sin is not imputed when there is no law**. (Rom. 5:13)*

5. James compares the human nature to a "salt water" spring and the divine nature of the Holy Spirit to a spring of "living water"

James 3:9-12 *... from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? **Nor can salt water produce fresh**.*

John 7:37-39 *... Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow **rivers of living water**.' " But this He spoke of **the Spirit**, ... (See also John 4:13-14)*

**Note:** The Law could be pictured as a sign beside a salty spring in the desert, "WARNING! **THIS WATER IS CONTAMINATED AND UNHEALTHY TO DRINK.**" Salt-water "looks like" fresh water, but it is unable to support human life.

**Note:** The Law of Gravity illustrates how my Human Nature continually attracts me away from God. *For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, ... (Gal. 5:17).* My sinful nature influences me spiritually similar to the way gravity influences my physical body. I am always aware of gravity and am continually making adjustments so as not to be overcome by it. If I trip or fall I don't have to stay down. No baby begins the physical life walking.

6. In Romans, chaps. 7 - 8, Paul presents the hopelessness of the human nature and God's perfect solution.

NOTE: In the following verses, "death" refers to "absence of life", i.e. devoid of life originating from God. (as, for instance, a salt water spring).

- a. From God's perspective the believer has "died to" (freed from) the sinful nature, and has been joined to Christ.

Rom. 6:18, 22 *and having been **freed from sin**, you became **slaves of righteousness**. ... having been **freed from sin** and **enslaved to God**, you derive your benefit, ...*

Rom. 7:4 ... you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

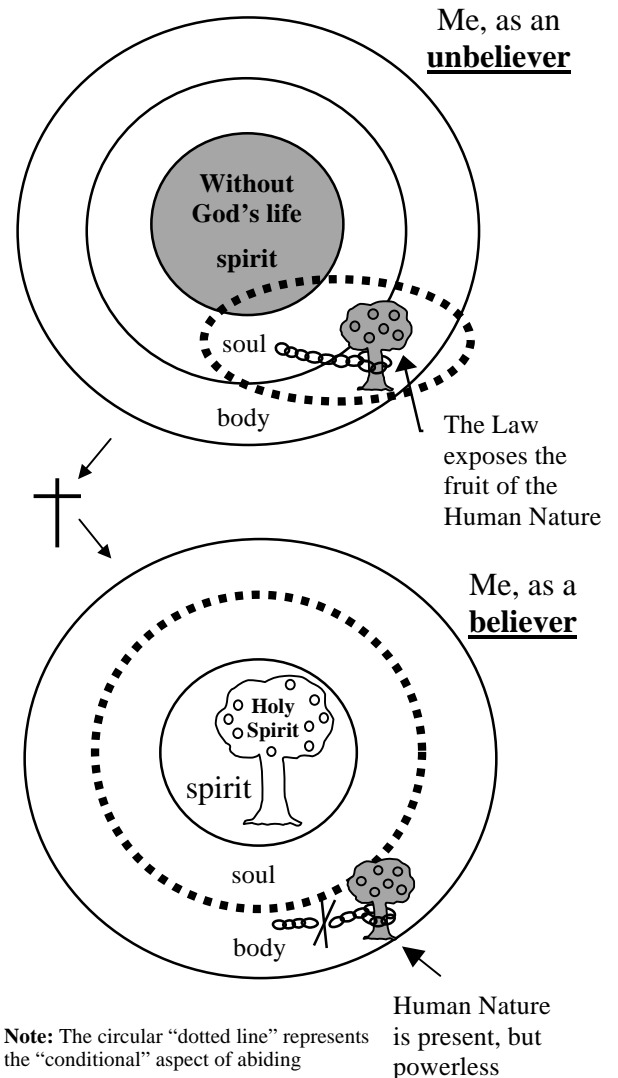
- b. As an unbeliever I was dominated by my sinful nature, which resides in my physical body.

Rom. 7:5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death (absence of life).

“The fact is, Christians **died to sin**. The Greek aorist (past) tense for “died” suggests a **specific point** when the action occurred, at salvation. Death, whether physical or spiritual, means **separation**, not extinction (cf. vv. 6:6-7, 14). Death to sin is separation from sin’s power, not the extinction of sin. Being dead to sin means being “set free from sin” (vv. 6:18, 22 above). That being true, Paul asked, **How can they live in it any longer?** Obviously believers cannot live in sin if they died to it.”<sup>1</sup>

- c. Now, as a believer, I have been freed from bondage to the sinful nature.

Rom. 7:6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.



- d. God never intended the Law to be a means by which humans could make the sinful nature acceptable to Him, but rather He used the Law to demonstrate how “totally unacceptable” the sinful nature is.

Rom. 7:7-13 ... I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.” ... So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Pub., Inc.) 1983, 1985.

- e. Paul experienced what every Christian needs to learn, that the sinful nature is not the least bit improved since I became a Christian. No matter how I try, I cannot make it conform to God's character.

Rom. 7:14-16 *For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into **bondage to sin**. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing **I hate**. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.*

- f. Paul became aware that the sinful nature cannot be changed. It no longer represented his real desires, but what other option did he have?

Rom. 7:17-24 *So **now, no longer** am **I** the one doing it, but **sin which dwells in me**. For I know that **nothing good** dwells in me, that is, **in my flesh**; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, **I am no longer** the one doing it, but **sin which dwells in me**. I find then the principle that **evil is present** in me, the one who wants to do good. For I **joyfully** concur with the law of God in the **inner man**, but I see a different law **in the members of my body**, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is **in my members**. Wretched man that I am! Who will **set me free** from the **body** of this death?*

- g. God's solution for the hopelessness of the sinful human nature was not to repair or overhaul the old nature, but to provide a new nature that is totally compatible with His character. Paul did not reside in Rom. 7, nor should I.

Rom. 7:25 *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand **I myself with my mind** am serving the law of God, but on the other, **with my flesh** the law of sin.*

8:1-4 ***Therefore** there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has **set you free** from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law **could not** do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but **according to the Spirit**.*

8:5-8 *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, **the things of the Spirit**. For the mind set on the flesh is death (**absence of life**), but the mind set on the Spirit is **life and peace**, because the mind set on the flesh is **hostile toward God**; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is **not even able** to do so, and those who are in the flesh **cannot** please God.*

Gal. 2:19-20 *“For through the Law I **died** to the Law, so that I might live to God. “I have been **crucified** with Christ; and it is **no longer I** who live, **but Christ** lives in me; ...”*

Gal. 5:16 *But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*