

Two Nature Theory - Exploded

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Published by NTChurchSource.com

With the many varied theories pertaining to sanctification taught in religious circles today comes the widespread theory of two natures in the believer. This theory has been advanced to such a degree that it would seem it is impossible for the believer to live a life free from sin and according to the will of God. But those who hold to the "two nature theory" have no working knowledge of the power of the gospel, and no clear understanding of what God accomplished at the cross.

Because believers fail to realize the reality of their relationship with God, there is a lack of personal responsibility to God. This leads to spiritual instability. In most circles, men deal with the effects of sin, rather than the real problem. When we deal only with the effects, we keep having more effects and they get worse and worse. Only when the problem is done away with will the effects be done away with. The "two nature theory" says that the believer has both a sin nature and a new nature. From this theory come many other false theories on how to deal with that "old nature" or "sin nature" which is said to exist within each person.

In this article we start by asking the question, "Does the believer have a sin nature?" I believe that with a fair exegesis of God's Word and a proper revelation of what God has done in Christ Jesus, we can find the answer that will give every believer a solid footing for their faith and a manifestation of His nature to the world around.

We are not setting forth a "sinless perfection" doctrine, but we are saying that as Christians, we can live without sin as we walk by faith, and that our human natures are not sin natures and need not be hindrances to a walk in victory. Let us allow our experience to match up to the Word of God, rather than trying to find theories and scriptures to justify our experience.

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Why do men believe that God has saved us from our sins, but cannot remove that which made us sinners? Continuing in sin brings forth death (James 1:15). This is spiritual death, not natural death. When Adam disobeyed God, it brought both spiritual and physical death, just as God had told him it would, but physical death did not come immediately when he sinned. So why do so many of God's people today think sin brings physical death, but will not acknowledge that sin brings spiritual death?

One reason is that they have been taught to live with sin. The teachings of men take them around all the warnings of God's Word, and make them feel safe with sin and in sin. You can see that the natural mind can make you believe anything. Spiritually blind men have told spiritually blind men that there are two natures--a sin nature and a new nature--and they have believed the story because it sounds good, but all the time they are being taught to live with sin. The blind are leading the blind, and both will fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14).

God hates sin, and God's children will have the same attitude. God's design is not to leave us in sin, but to work in us to set us free from sin and from the power of sin. Many will not believe this; thus they remain in darkness. Our ignorance will not be excused. I am afraid this type of teaching will cause many to miss the mark, because they continue to live in sin as they have been taught to. Their

consciences have been seared by sin, and their minds say, "Amen."

Following the teachings of men will not excuse us. Each one is responsible for his own actions. Eve said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate." This did not relieve her of her obligation to obey what God had said. The devil is still working in the same way, telling men lies. And because they do not have the truth, they will believe a lie and be damned.

God's redemption is perfect. All man has to do is receive it by faith. There is no other plan of salvation. God did not make a place for sin in His eternal plan. Sin came, but God had a plan from the foundation of the world--one which deals with sin in such a way that God looks at us as if we had never sinned. His perfect plan is being brought to a glorious climax in those who believe and belong to Christ. God's plan is only possible in and through Christ Jesus. *"...He who does the will of God abides forever"* (I John 2:17).

God does not want us to be ignorant of His ways or how He has made us. We need to understand how God has made us to function, and what His purpose is in creation. Ignorance will never allow us to walk in faith. The proper understanding of what Christ did for us at the cross will set us free, and God has given us His Spirit to teach us all things.

God also does not work "in spite of our ignorance." Obedience has no meaning if we are ignorant of God's ways and cannot understand what He has done and what He is doing. God's Word speaks of maturity, fullness, being entirely sanctified, and of holiness, which speaks to us of the end result of God's working--which can be nothing short of the full stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). The Lord is not doing a halfway job. The church, made up of believers, is being brought to a completeness in Christ by the power of God. His plan is perfect and is bringing each member to fullness.

We cannot hope to understand God's ways with our natural minds. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 2:13, *"And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit."* When God uses the words "holy," "mature," "perfect," "fullness," and many other words, what does He mean? If we put our own meanings on God's word, we will miss what He is saying to us in His Son.

When God says that those who are in Christ Jesus are a new creation, is this only figurative, or does God make His word a reality in each of our lives? Is anything too hard for God? This great salvation is greater than most will admit and allow to work in their lives. Much of today's teaching says, "Christ did a perfect work of redemption, but it cannot be our experience while we are in this body." But Jesus came that we might have life, and that life is in Him. I am afraid man wants a salvation that will allow him to continue in sin. But again we say that God's salvation does not allow sin to continue. Our life is no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit. We must come to understand what God is saying to us in Christ.

We must live by every word that proceeds from God. God's words must have God's meaning. The Word of God, the Bible, is seen through the whole of the Word. No scripture is of any private interpretation (II Peter 1:20). Every part of the Word relates to the whole. When we remove any part and try to examine it totally apart from the whole, our evaluation will be distorted. We must have spiritual eyes to see the things of God, and we must approach His Word as learners.

What God Intended in the Creation

Many in the religious world have made man something that he is not, because they do not understand how God made man. Much false teaching begins right here. Man realizes the requirements of God's holiness, but his ignorance of how to obtain that expression of holiness has caused all the different opinions and theories. None of these theories can bring us to God's end purpose in Christ. As long as man is battling something in himself--the "sin nature"--which is really not there, we can see that the end will be frustration with no victory.

What caused Adam to sin? Before he sinned, Adam was created in the likeness and image of God. The temptation which caused Adam to sin came from outside himself, not from within. God had told Adam that on the day he partook of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, he would die. Adam partook of the Tree and he did die--spiritually. There was no longer communion or fellowship with God; now he was a sinner bound by sin. He could not keep from sinning--he was now a wrong being.

God's plan was for man to live in perfect relationship and fellowship with Himself. Adam was drawn out of his place of dependence on God; thus he sinned. Sin brought death. His fall was not because he was human, made from the earth, but because he chose to disobey the limit God had put on him. But Christ has made the way back, and we can now know victory in Him. *"We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us"* (Romans 8:37).

Faith is the victory! The enemy diverts our attention to ourselves. But we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free (John 8:32). Paul tells us in Colossians 2:10, *"You are complete in Him"* and in Colossians 1:21-23a, *"You who were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present us holy and blameless and irreproachable before Him, provided that we continue in faith, stable and steadfast..."*

In Colossians 2:6,7 Paul continues, *"As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith..."* The Lord has done a perfect work at Calvary, and will make that perfect work our experience if we will let Him.

God wants us to have knowledge. Lack of knowledge is one of the reasons His people perish. II Peter 1:3 says, *"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, that through these we may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion. and become partakers of the divine nature."* Man surely complicates God's plan and purpose by his natural knowledge. Most of man's "knowledge" has come out of trying to build a doctrine around his own experience. But Jesus said, *"If you do My will, you will know My doctrine"* (John 7:17).

When we walk according to our own understanding, we cannot be walking in faith, and without faith we cannot please Him. It is evident that natural knowledge destroys us by allowing us to try to do God's will by our own power. *"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit"* (Galatians 5:25).

Why did Jesus tell Nicodemus that he had to be born again (or anew)? The reason is found in the answer Jesus gave him: that man is dead and needs life. Man needs eternal life, which is to know God. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "What you need is new birth" (John 3). The trouble with man is sin. But new birth does away with what made man a sinner, the nature to sin because he was spiritually dead. When

man is made alive through new birth, that which made him sin is no longer in him.

I John 3:9 says, *"No man who is born of God practices sin, because God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God."* John also tells us that *"whoever has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself; just as He is pure."*

What It Means to be 'In Adam' or 'In Christ'

In Adam all sinned, and because of Adam's sin all men are sinners. All mankind is dead in sin. Sin caused Adam to be separated from relationship and fellowship with God. Because of sin, Adam died spiritually; therefore he could no longer have communion with God.

Romans 6:11-13 tells us that we were dead, and now in Christ we are alive. We were sinners because we were spiritually dead, and now having been born again by the Spirit, our spirits made alive, and we are children of God (I John 5:10-12). We were sinners by nature, but now in Christ we are no longer sinners. We do not have a sin nature--what was dead is now alive. We are a new creation in Christ. We are no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of Christ dwells in us.

Man's "flesh" is not sinful, nor is his body with its senses and appetites. It is only when these appetites control us that they become sinful. None of the functions of the body or soul are sinful. Paul tells us in Romans 8:4 that the requirements of the law are fulfilled in us who walk according to the Spirit.

God's Word says we are either in Adam or in Christ. There are no in-betweens. Some have said that when man is unregenerate he has only one nature but when he becomes a child of God he has two natures. But this is only speculation, not truth based on the Word of God. When we make a place for sin in the Christian's walk, we have to come up with some very strange doctrines. Man draws his own conclusions because he would rather trust in his own experience than in God's Word. He tries to find ways to justify his own feelings and experiences. We must start the other way--with God's Word--and make truth our experience.

Year after year, many are trying to "kill the old man." They don't even know what or who the old man is. There is no place for the old in the new! If we are in Christ, we are in the new creation. Christ is the new man; Adam is the old man. Romans 6:6,7 tells us that our old self ("old man") was crucified with Him so that our body of sin might be done away with, that *"we should no longer be slaves to sin. For he who died is freed from sin."*

In Christ we have been made alive spiritually. We have been born again by the Spirit. When man, from his heart, believes in Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior, he is made alive in his spirit, because this is where we worship and commune with God.

Sin is really self-rule. It is the disposition that rules the life apart from God. When that rule is changed and Christ is made Lord of our lives, we are no longer sinners, nor do we continue to sin. We need to go on from here and be renewed in our minds, that we may have knowledge of God's great salvation which cannot leave us with two natures battling one another until we pass out of this body.

What Do We Have in Christ?

What does it mean to be free from sin? Does the Word of God really mean what it says? The Holy Spirit does not play games with us. The Lord does not give us a salvation which leaves us sinners. If we have a sin nature, we are sinners. To consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God is to be a once for all experience which is ours by faith. The Scripture never tells us to keep dying to sin. If we are dead, we will not sin! Neither does the Scripture tell us to keep considering ourselves alive to God in Christ Jesus. We are to consider ourselves once for all alive to God in Christ Jesus. "...*The just shall live by faith*" (Romans 1:17). Christ has become alive to us; now His word must become life. We must live by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). God is speaking to us in Christ.

I John 3:3-6 tells us, "*The one who has his hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure...He appeared in order to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.*" John puts our lives in direct relationship with Him, saying, "I know Him." The Christian cannot continue to sin and say, "I know Him."

A Christian is one who is alive in Christ and in fellowship with God. If this is a reality, then the believer is hearing and communicating with God, learning about God through a personal walking out of His will. He begins to be exercised by the Spirit so that he can begin to function as a spiritual person. His life is being lived in Christ, the Word of God.

Natural knowledge will never work when we come to understand what God has done for us through Christ Jesus. We need the mind of Christ if we are going to instruct others in life. Our words need to be life and spirit, and this can only be possible when the Holy Spirit is leading and working in us the life of Christ. The Holy Spirit is able to refine our whole man. Human it may be, but it is still not a sin nature. Our minds must be renewed, to become the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the one who is working this in us. It is through His power that we bring every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5).

We could say that we have been "infected," without saying that we have a sin nature still with us. That infection must be taken care of by the working of the Spirit, who gives us the power to put off and put on. Romans 8:13 says, "*If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*" The Lord is coming for a church "*without spot or wrinkle*" (Ephesians 5:27). The results and effects of sin are going to be removed. Where we are marred, the Holy Spirit is working to renew, and to remove every blemish. Too often, the effects of sin have been called the "sin nature," when in reality they are simply the result of our past lives in sin.

We are continually being changed, transformed and renewed, but it takes only one act of God to deal with what made us sinners. When a person is saved, he is taken from one kingdom and put into another kingdom. New birth takes the sinner out of us and makes us children of God. In the minds of many, it seems that the grace and power of God working in our lives is not capable of making us new creatures. But the Lord is doing a perfect work in us as we walk in faith, pleasing to Him. The believer needs to know that he has entered into the rest of God, and he is free. Those whom the Son has set free are free indeed!

Some Misunderstood Passages

Galatians 5:16-18 is used by many to prove they have two natures. They say "the flesh" is the sin nature, and the Spirit is the new nature. But these scriptures do not say this. The passage only says that these two, the flesh and the Spirit, are in opposition to one another.

The flesh and the Spirit are only in opposition to one another when a person is under the law. The law brings bondage, but the Spirit brings freedom. Verse 24 tells us, *"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."* If the flesh is the old man or sin nature, it has been crucified--and that means death. But the flesh is not the sin nature; it is only the instrument that has been used by sin. Paul says he was sold into bondage to sin. Man has only one nature--a human nature. When he has faith that brings him into life, and is cleansed from all sin, that which made him sin is changed through the new birth. Man was a wrong being, and now that he has been born again, he is brought back into proper relationship and fellowship with God.

Man does not need a "sin nature" to be able to sin. Adam sinned and did not have a sin nature. It is possible for Christians to sin without having a sin nature. They can be drawn out of their abiding place in Christ. If their relationship is as it should be, they are finding fulfillment in Christ, not in their own desires. If we are properly related to the Lord, we will be properly related to other people and things. But we can never let this mean that our desires and imaginations, minds and wills are not set aside for God's use only. They must be disciplined by the Spirit as we are exercised to discern good and evil. There must be a working out of what God has worked in us.

Paul's words in Romans 7 and Galatians 5 can never be taken to mean that we have two natures. In Romans 8 and in Galatians 5:18 we read words to this effect: "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." When you are under the law, you may not do the things you please. Romans 7 tells us that Paul wanted to do good, but could not. But Romans 8:2 tells us, *"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and of death."*

If Christians are going to rightly understand the seventh chapter of Romans, God must reveal to them whether this was Paul's experience as a Christian or the experience of his past life under the law. This passage has been one of the problem texts pertaining to the two nature theory. One reason for wrong understanding is that man is trying to justify his experience, rather than allowing the Word of God to change him. The attitude we see today should cause us concern. Christians are trying to make room for sin in their lives, rather than looking for a way to be free from sin and thus please God as they walk in faith.

In this time we have too much natural thinking and man-made theology. We need to get back to God's way and His working. The reason there is so little holiness today is that there is so little understanding of what God is doing and how He is doing it in us. We will never understand God's ways if we do not have a personal relationship with Him. Out of this relationship comes the power to be sons of God and live in His life. Faith brings us into a vital experience of His life. We are not talking about the "eradication" or "identification" theories. We are speaking about what happens at new birth. That which is born out of the Spirit is spirit. We came into the world at one time in a human body through natural birth. Now if we are going to have eternal life, we must be born again--not born again in the flesh, but born again of the Spirit. God's plan is perfect. He knows what we need to be made like Him. First we need to be made alive spiritually, and then we need to live His life by faith--not our life, which is governed by selfishness or our own passions and desires.

Paul's desire for the believers was that *"God sanctify you entirely. And may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (I Thessalonians 5:23). Was this only wishful thinking on Paul's part? Paul understood God's plan and His working, and if we will seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, Jesus will become our wisdom and knowledge. Only when we create a salvation that is separate from our relationship with Christ do we get into all these theories, which can never transform us into His image or bring us into full growth in Christ. God leaves no place for sin or a sin nature in His new creation.

I Peter 2:24 says, *"He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."* Those who hold to the two nature theory must see there was nothing God could do to cause the old creation to fulfill His purpose. There had to be a new creation. Jesus said that you cannot put new wine in old wineskins, or both will be lost. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. There is no place for any of the old in the new. We just need to *"sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts"* (I Peter 3:15).

A proper understanding of law and grace would throw light on this area of our walk in Christ. Many say they are free, but they continue to battle, flesh against Spirit, because they are under the law. But Romans 7 says we died in Christ to the law, that we might be free to be joined to another. The law was our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we now may be justified by faith. Paul says we now are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus.

Paul tells us in Galatians 1:11 that the gospel he preaches is not according to man. He goes further in II Corinthians 7:1, and tells us to cleanse ourselves from all that can defile flesh or spirit, and in the fear of God to complete our consecration. This would not be possible if we had two natures. Paul further says in II Corinthians 6:16, *"What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God!"* How can this be possible in reality if what many say (that they still have a sin nature) is true? What contradiction and belittling of this great salvation!

Conclusion

Our bodies are not our natures. Emotions, mind and will are not our natures. When we were in sin we lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind. We were, by nature, children of wrath, but because of God's mercy and love, when we were dead in our transgressions, He made us alive together with Christ (Ephesians 1:3-5). Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:10, *"We are His workmanship..."*

The Scripture tells us to put off the old man, and put on the new man. If the old man were the sin nature, we would not be able to put it off, nor could we put on the new man if it were the new nature. The old nature, or sin nature, is only a theory that seemingly allows the believer to live in a condition other than utter dependence on Christ. Because of this, he lives with a battle going on continuously.

I John 1:7 does not teach the need of a continual cleansing from continual sin: *"If we continue to sin, we do not know Him."* Verses 8 and 10 are not speaking to Christians, but to those who said they had no sin or had not sinned, and had no need of forgiveness. John tells them, in the 9th verse, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* The scripture tells us that He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness, but many have been taught that this doesn't mean what it says.

Many sincere brothers who have been used by God have had little understanding in the area of our personal holiness; thus they have gone off to justify their natural thinking and have come up with many theories which can never bring them to a place of faith. Faith must hear God. When man creates one false theory he usually ends up having to back it up with many other false theories. But the truth sets us free to walk in the Spirit and do His will.

II Peter 1:3 tells us, *"His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness."* The following verses go on to reveal to us the outworking of our life in God as we *"apply all diligence..."* This is not a struggle but a rest, a walk in relationship with Christ, as we allow Christ to work in us and through us. It is from our relationship with Him that all the manifestations of His divine nature are revealed in and through us.

Paul said, *"I have been crucified with Christ"* (that was the old Paul). He went on to say, *"...the life which I now live in the flesh (this is the new Paul) I live by faith in the Son of God..."* Then he said, *"I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly"* (Galatians 2:21). We can see that most of the scriptures used to support the two nature theory would put the Christian right back under the law, if viewed in this way.

We need to seek God for understanding, that we might not nullify the grace of God, but be spiritual. We need to stop allowing ourselves to be taught by men with natural minds and natural understanding. This is not possible until we can recognize the word of God flowing through spiritual brethren. *"The natural man receiveth not the things of God. He cannot even know God's ways or His working..."* (I Corinthians 2:14 RSV).

The salvation that is being preached today allows for sin, but the gospel of the New Testament gives no place for the Christian to practice sin. Man does have a human body, but that is not a sin nature. If it were, we would have to say that Christ had a sin nature because He had a body like ours. But Christ did not have a sin nature. We must conclude that the "nature" is not the body.

Christ also had a mind, emotions, and a will, and they all were set aside for the Father's will to be done through. So we must also conclude that the mind, emotions and will are not a sin nature, in Christ or in us.

Christ had a human nature, but this was not a sin nature. We also have a human nature, and it is not a sin nature. The human nature has only been used to express the sin which was in us because we were sinners. Our bodies and souls controlled us when we were sinners, but if we are in Christ, we are being controlled by the Spirit.

We pray that these truths will set you free from past theories and give you new confidence in your Christian walk.