

# The Two Natures in the Christian Part 2

By Lehman Strauss

Lehmann Strauss:

Thank you very much. Today we bring the third in a series of studies on the two natures in the Christian. We have been examining something of the old nature, the unregenerate nature, and we've been looking at some of the inability or the incapacity of the old nature. We saw first that the natural man does not have the capacity to know and understand God. And then secondly we saw how that the natural man is incapable of obeying God. Now in the third place, we want to see how the natural man is incapable of pleasing God. Romans 8:8 says "so then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Now this is a hard saying to those unsaved persons who try to be kind to others and who practice with regularity their religious beliefs. But whether a man is rich or poor, learned or ignorant, kind or unkind, religious or non-religious, he cannot please God. Now if that shakes you up my dear friend, go back to the Bible. They that are in the flesh cannot please God, Romans 8:8. Such persons may endeavor to live within the law and maintain a high standard of citizenship, but there is no capacity within the natural man to please God. Why is this? It is so because all who are in the flesh do their own works in their own way. When a man is not born of God, he does not worship God. Therefore God is displeased with his worship. If a man seeks by his good works to justify himself, he has displeased God, simply because God has already provided justification through the death of Jesus Christ.

It is a terrible indictment upon the natural man that in all of his efforts God is not pleased. Here is a vital and an essential truth. The question is do we believe it? Will we admit to it? It is only as

saved ones that we can please God. And the sooner we learn this the better it will be for us. This is conclusive as to the character and incapacity of the natural man. He cannot know God. He cannot obey God. He cannot please God. Now let us turn from the negative function of the old nature to the positive one. We have examined three things of which the old nature is incapable. Now let us look at some of its attitudes and actions. First, look at the condition of the natural man's heart. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Jeremiah 70:9. Here the heart means the natural man, the old nature, the heart of fallen Adam, which was passed on to his posterity. The depths of the natural man's heart are known to God only, for He only can know its secret and motives. It was the risen Christ who said "I am He which searcheth the range in hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works, Revelation 2:23. If an honest man will disagree with the prophet Jeremiah's description of the heart of the natural man, such a disagreement could only prove the prophets inspired statement that the heart is deceitful.

The heart is unreliable because it is desperately wicked, or morally sick, with no human remedy to help it. Isaiah wrote "A deceived heart hath turned him aside." Some preachers talk about man needing a change of heart, but the heart of the old nature will never be changed, not even God Himself attempts to change it. Others speak of improving the heart. But my dear friends the heart of the unsaved man cannot be improved, because it is mortally sick, not even God Himself attempts to improve it. And then there are those others who appeal to sinners to give your heart to Christ. Now tell me, what would God want with a heart that is deceitfully, mortally, morally sick. Look at our Lord's description of the function and fruit of the natural man's heart. He said "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulterers, fornication, thefts, false witness,

and blasphemers" Matthew 15:19. What would God want with a heart like that? This description given by our Lord in His day was true of the heart of the natural man ever since the fall. Going back into early history of the race during Noah's time, we read "And God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

You see the character of man's heart has not changed except that be for worse. "For as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" Matthew 24:37. Since the heart is man's thought workshop, the place of his thought processes, and since it is only evil continually, its function can produce nothing other than fruit after its kind. It was Augustine who said that without God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, the heart of man can do nothing but sin. Some modern scholars will disagree with Augustine, and say that people have changed for the better since the flood. But they fail to take note of what God said after the flood, namely the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, Genesis 8:21. The heart of man cannot function differently from what it actually is, nor will it ever. The condition is a permanent unchanging one. Our Lord said that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and flesh is exactly what it remains. A criminal was released from prison on the testimony of others, that while a prisoner in the penitentiary, he had a change of heart. I'm using the quotation a "change of heart". That was an unsound basis on which to set the prisoner free. He may never again commit the same crimes which sent him to prison, but it will not be a change of heart that keeps him from it.

If some restraining influences keep him from repeating that one particular crime, we can be certain that he will give expression to his natural desires and inclinations in other ways. For the

heart of the natural man is not subject to the laws of God. Romans 8:7 says "because the carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." The natural man is not blamed for his inability, but the Bible states clearly the fact of his limitations. God is not blaming the individual man for his natural state, He's simply telling it like it is. That's the way it is. It's because of these limitations that his attitudes and actions are what they are. The function of the natural man's heart is seen in his attitude toward the blood of Christ, and that blood was shed at Calvary for every sinner. Listen to this verse, First Corinthians 1:18, or two verses, 1:18 and 23, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. That we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness." It is not merely the historical fact of the death of Christ that is in view here. The fact of His death and even a certain moral influence which might result from His death are within the range of the capacity of the natural man.

As a matter of fact, I have both heard and read brilliant and eloquent sermons on the cross in which moral principles were set forth, preached by the natural man and appreciated by the natural man. But in the above mentioned verses namely First Corinthians 1:18 and 23, the Apostle Paul, writing by divine inspiration, has in mind the divine unfolding of the redemption of sinners through grace. The preaching of the cross from God's viewpoint must of necessity include the divine person of His Son, while the preaching of the cross from the natural man's viewpoint merely sets forth a philosophy. There is a difference. The preaching of the death of Christ as the one absolutely essential means of man's salvation is repulsive and foolish to the [clears throat] it's repulsive and foolish--pardon me--to the most intellectual mind of the natural man. Again, God is not blaming man for it, but merely stating what the condition is. The reason

for this attitude is clearly stated. It's because as a natural man, already lost and perishing, he can't show any other attitude. The natural man's perishing nature sees the death of Christ as an abhorrent spectacle because it demands the sacrifice of one for the salvation of all.

To the Jew requiring a miraculous and spectacular religious sign as an evidence of the divine reality, the cross is said to be a stumbling block. They wanted messianic wonders, the overturning of Rome's despotic powers. They couldn't reconcile a cross with a messiah, and consequently it became a stumbling block. While to the Greek filled with philosophical inquiry and seeking after wisdom, the cross was an absurdity. The way to God, however, is neither through religious pageantry nor mental culture. The unchanging heart of the natural man, when listening to the divine claim of Christ's substitutionary death for sinners regards the whole idea stupid, and silly, and worthless. The natural man's ideas of religion are not the same as God's. Nor can it be otherwise, for the one reason that he is a natural man. Now look at another passage bearing on this part of the subject. Second Corinthians 4:3, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Now mark well those to whom the gospel is hid or veiled, it is not veiled to those who will be lost when they die, or who be who will be lost in eternity, but who are lost now. Let me read the verse again. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." You see the natural man is born lost, and because he is a natural man, he is blind to the claims of the gospel of Christ.

Call upon the natural man to give a doctrinal statement as to the meaning of the cross and you'll get some sort of a new evangelicalism, a kind of new modernism. Because of his limitations as a natural man, he can do nothing else. He may issue statements about his doctrines, but they will

be doctrines of demons according to First Timothy 4:1. He might take you into the depths, but they will be the depths of Satan, Revelation 2:24. He will not necessarily be an apostate or even a false teacher, since not all false teaching issues from false teachers. He could be sincere in his beliefs. He could be very earnest in his preachments, but if he has not been born again by the Holy Spirit he is by the very nature of the case blind to the gospel of Christ. If a man cannot see the sun on a clear day when the sun is shining, it must be because the man is blind. So Paul is simply saying that if the Gospel cannot be seen by a man to whom it is presented, it is because that man is lost. The natural lostness of his estate will cause him to insist that he can't see it, and that in spite of the fact that it has been clearly set before him. That blindness might be extended through satanic power, or else through willful unbelief after the Holy Spirit has once enlightened him.

But until there is a work of God's Holy Spirit in a man, the light of the gospel is not comprehensible. The rejection of the Gospel is as clear a proof of moral depravity as inability to see the light of the sun at noon is a proof of blindness. Again, it must be said that this is not a blame being put upon the natural man but rather a statement of his condition. Now my friend you have to see this, and so must I, if we're going to be saved. No one will ever want to be saved until first he recognizes and realizes that he is lost. If there is no realization of the lostness of your state, you will never want to be saved. And lost you are if you have never been born again. And it was for you and for me that the Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save, for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Why don't you take your place as a lost sinner? Open your heart to receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, and this will be the day of your salvation. May God help you to make the decision. And again may I urge upon you to write to

Biola and let them know that the broadcast is being a blessing to you and encourage them in this ministry. Now let us pray. Loving Father we are deeply grateful for Thy Holy Word and for the privilege of looking once again at some of these significant passages. God help us, we pray, to apply the truth, and may we all be better people for having heard it once again. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

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Lehmann Strauss: Today in this fourth in the series on the two natures in the Christian, I want to take up the matter of the function of the new nature. Just as there is a certain incapacity about the old nature, that is there are certain things the old nature cannot do, so also with the new nature. What the old nature cannot do, it cannot do because it is corrupt. And what it does do it does because it is corrupt. Now there are some things the new nature cannot do because it is perfect and holy. First, the new nature is unable to commit sin. The Bible says "Whosoever or whoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God" First John 3:9. In First John 5:18, we read "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." The divine nature in the Christian, which is the new nature, is just the same as it is in Christ. Being conceived by the Holy Ghost, Christ had no human father, and because He was born of God He could not sin. Now it is not enough to say that Christ did not sin, it must be said that He could not sin. Christ was impeccable. The nature of God is so abhorrent to sin, that it is not possible for that divine nature to have any complicity with sin whatever. You could no more get the divine nature to sin than you could prevent the old nature from sinning.

Now it is the divine nature that is communicated to believing sinners, and it is that new nature in the believer which cannot sin. Any member of the human body in which the new nature dwells can sin. But whenever any part of my body engages in sin, rest assured that it is because the old nature has dominated it. In First John 3:9, "The seed is the divinely imparted life of God in the believer, and that life is incapable of sinning." Some teachers tell us that what is in view here is not the committal of an act of sin, but rather continuance in sin. Contrariwise, the text means exactly what it says, namely that the new nature that is born of God doth not commit sin and cannot sin. It is a case of moral impossibility. This text does not teach the doctrine of sinless perfection, that it is possible for a Christian to live without sinning, nor does it teach that when the Christian does sin he does not do so voluntarily but unwittingly. The only distinction to be made is the distinction between the two natures, and the Apostle John is telling us that the new nature cannot sin. Look once again at the phrase "the new man". The Scriptures teach that the new man is created in righteousness and true holiness, Ephesians for 24. Now what is true holiness but the holiness of God? Divine holiness is perfect, and too pure to even behold sin, let alone take part in it. Thus the new man is incapable of consorting with sin in any form.

This new man is the product of a new creation, and the creation is according to the image of God who created him. Notice in John 3:6, the new nature is incapable of change, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Because the new nature is God's nature, it is not alterable or affected by men or demons. It remains constant because God by His very nature cannot change. The immutability of God is that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change. A change is either for better or for worse, and since God is absolutely perfect, He cannot be improved upon,



nor can He deteriorate. He doesn't need any change. He can't become any greater than He is. We read in Hebrews chapter 1 "they shall perish but thou shalt endure. Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment as a vesture Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed, but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end. The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seeds shall be established before Thee." "For I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." I change not, God says. That's a quotation from Psalm 102 and Malachi Chapter 3 verse 6. Now we do read in Hebrews "they shall perish but Thou remainest. They all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up. They shall be changed, but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail."

Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, and today, and forever. Mutability or change belongs to creatures. Immutability belongs to the Creator only. For with Him only there is no variableness. James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of light with whom is no variableness, neither shadow nor turning." The unchangeableness of God's nature cannot be disproved. God is eternal and God is Spirit, therefore He does not change. Any change in Him would make Him less than God. Now when God the Holy Spirit enters the believing heart at the time of regeneration, God's nature does not change merely because He finds another place in which to dwell. Of the new man Paul says in Colossians 2:10, "Ye are complete in Him." This work of God in the life of the believer that is complete and perfect cannot become incomplete nor can it become imperfect. God's purpose in redemption cannot fail. The new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness remains unchanged and unchangeable in spite of the fact that the old man sins. He who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever will remain constant even until He has perfected

the whole man, which includes the body. The goal of our perfection will be achieved only when Christ comes again.

First Thessalonians 5:23 says "In the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The function of the new nature is to glorify Christ in the believer. When our Lord was yet upon the earth, He said "and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, He shall testify of Me, He shall glorify Me." You see it is the Son whom the Holy Spirit seeks to magnify and exalt in this present dispensation. And inasmuch as it is the body of the child of God in which the divine nature resides, it is his body which must be yielded to the glorifying of Jesus Christ. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" First Corinthians 6:19 and 20. Not only the church, but each member in it, is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Therefore we should never desecrate our bodies for profane uses, but rather consecrate them for a holy use.

Thus the whole design of the Spirit's occupation and office in the child of God is to glorify Christ on earth in full view of men. The Father has exalted the Son in heaven when He sat Him at His own right hand. But He must be glorified on earth among men, and it is the function of the divine nature in the believer to perform this. Now there is a faction going on between the two natures. There is a conflict. Every child of God knows this. By virtue of what each nature is in itself, they are opposed, the one to the other. Having learned something of the characteristics and function of

each nature, it is not hard to see that they cannot possibly live at peace together in the same personality. They differ in character, ability, inability, desires, and goals, hence the trouble, the confusion, and conflict within the child of God. Every Christian knows there's a battle going on within himself, but not every child of God has learned what the word of God teaches concerning that battle. It is necessary to know the doctrine and the secrets of victory before there can be victory, peace, and comfort. Now let us look at one passage which states the fact of the conflict between these two natures.

Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusteth or wareth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Now the flesh here is the old man, the unregenerate man, the old nature, while the Spirit is the new man, the regenerated man, or the divine nature, or the new nature. These two natures are said to lust or war against each other, since their aims and purposes are diametrically opposed, the two are contrary. Now the unsaved man does not know anything about this conflict. If an unsaved man wants to do a certain thing, he goes ahead and does it. If it's a saved man, my old nature wants to do something wrong, my new nature will resist, and the Holy Spirit will say "no you shouldn't do it." On the other hand, if the Holy Spirit prompts me to use my members to glorify Christ, my old nature will put up stiff resistance at once. The old man does not find delight in prayer for example, the old nature has no desire for Bible study, the old nature has no compassion for lost souls and witnessing for Christ. Every child of God knows that the Christian life cannot be lived without a struggle.

The very fact of the conflict is sufficient evidence that the old nature is not eradicated during this earthly life. If the old nature could be eradicated, the whole personality would be wiped out in as much as it is a part of the human nature we inherit at birth. The conflict between the two natures is a constant one, and we need not expect it to be otherwise. The flesh in the believer is no different from the flesh in the unbeliever. The great faction between the two natures is described by the apostle Paul in Romans seven. There Paul gives to us a portrait of his own struggle in which every believer sees a similar likeness to himself. In his fight for victory over his old nature, we see a desperate effort straining to the very limits of human endurance. The cause of the conflict is described twice by use of the phrases "sin that dwelleth in me". Notice that in Romans 7 verses 17 and 20, an evil is present with me, Romans 7:21. You see it is the principle of evil present in the old nature which will not permit the cessation of hostility.

Paul describes the conflict in the following words: Romans 7:22 and 23, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." The true greatness of the Apostle Paul can be seen in the bold admission both of the conflict and of the times of defeat. He closes the account with a confession of the wretchedness of the old man, and a cry for deliverance. Every honest Christian must admit that such a conflict is his own personal experience. We all confess that we have found this to be very true, namely Romans 7:19 "The good that I the new man would, I the new man do not. But the evil which I the new man would not, I the old man do." How often we fail to accomplish the good we set out to do and in shame we admit that the evil we don't really want to do we sometimes find ourselves doing. The new man always has good desires, but our members do not always respond to those desires. This is

the dualism in the soul of the child of God. We find ourselves doing something we hate, and then we hate ourselves for having done it. To know the right thing to do, struggle to do it, only to meet defeat is a despairing experience.

I have not-not-I am not now thinking merely of those sins of immoral acts. What about pride? Prayerlessness? Gossip? Indifference toward the unsaved? Failure to study God's word? We struggle to do these things we know we ought to be doing every day of our lives, and the struggle never ceases. And I maintain that this struggle is the normal experience of every Christian. I question the honesty or the sanity of any man who says that the conflict in Romans 7 is that of the unsaved man, and that as soon as a man receives Christ as his Savior and Lord the struggle ceases. We Christians are living in a body indwelt by two natures, and these two natures will continue to be at war with each other. I'm reminded of the little boy who, about to be punished by his father for disobedience, said "Daddy it's awful hard to be good isn't it?" Yes my friends it's awfully hard to be good. The old nature will not allow you to be good without a struggle. But thank God there is hope. Now in the concluding message of this series, I want to deal with how to have victory over the old nature. If you are not saved, come to the Savior at once. If you are saved my friend, pray God that through His word and by His Spirit you will be enabled to live a day of victory for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. And now loving Father, bless to every heart the truth of Thy holy word, for we pray in Jesus' name, amen.