

Final Message on the Two Natures in the Christian

By Lehmann Strauss

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Today, I want to conclude this series of five studies on the two natures in the Christian. We have in the past four messages seen something of the fact of the two natures, and the function of the two natures in the faction between the two natures, how that they war, the one against the other. In this last brief message I want you to consider with me, what I'm going to call the feeding of the two natures. There are certain things on which each of the two natures will thrive. And it follows that the nature which is fed the most will thrive the most. When a sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is said to be born again, thereby becoming a child of God. The Bible refers to all such as babes, new born ones. Not all new babies must have to have the, uh, have the proper baby food if they're going to develop strong bodies--I should have said all new babies must have the proper baby food if they're going to develop strong bodies. If for any reason the mother's milk is not adequate, then a formula must be prescribed and prepared at once. Baby needs nourishment in order to develop. Just so must the newborn babe in Christ be fed a proper diet for the new nature. The apostle Peter wrote in First Peter 2:2-3, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is good." The new nature must have the first essential diet of God's word in order to develop. It is called here the sincere milk of the word. In the family of God, we all get our start as babes. We all have tasted that the Lord is gracious. We received a bit of His grace and mercy. Now we are to go on and desire more.

It was through the word that we received our new life. Romans 10:17 so-says so, "Then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Paul wrote to the Colossians, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." How did you receive Him? You were born again through the word of God. First, Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. Now we are to go on in the word. Before a mother will give her baby milk, she will examine the bottle, taste the milk to make certain that it is not tainted in any way, that it has not become adulterated by some foreign substance. The idea of sincere milk is unadulterated milk. Now, in a spiritual sense, the sincere milk of the word is the pure word of God, unadulterated by the traditions and tampering of man. We feed the new nature by simply reading, meditating and studying the Bible. The Christian must desire it, that is, put his mind to it. There is not a taint or impurity in the word of God. Your Heavenly Father will never deceive you, my friend. To grow, you must feed. And your food is the Holy Scriptures. If the new man is going to grow to any degree of strength, he must have the divine nourishment adapted to the divine nature. And oh, my dear Christian brother or sister, take the milk of the word straight. Take it unmixed. Lay aside your preconceived ideas and notions. Read nothing into the Bible. Take nothing from the Bible. Never mind what others have to say about it. Commentaries by able and dependable men of God will be a help to you as you grow.

But you and I must sit quietly with the scriptures and read and meditate so that the Lord can speak to us through His word. The Holy Spirit will guide you into a right understanding of the truth. He will not deceive you. The Holy Spirit is the best and safest teacher of Divine Truth. Some men will corrupt the word of God, according to Second Corinthians 2:17. But the Holy

Spirit? Never. You see, one characteristic of a child of God, or a little child, is his confidence and-and his dependence in others. And one of the characteristics of a child of God, a new born child of God, is his confidence and dependence upon the word of God. Therefore, if you are saved, you will feed the new man. Now the word babes used by Peter is not a term of rebuke, as Paul used it when he wrote to the Corinthians. It's a different term, Paul said, "And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but even as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ." The Corinthian Christians did not feed the new man. Therefore, they didn't grow. As a result of their sad neglect, the old nature dominated their personalities. Notice the contrasting terms, spiritual and carnal in Chapter 3 verses 1 and 2. Spiritual development is a matter of degree, and depends upon the measure in which we submit ourselves to the word of God. And such submission depends upon the knowledge we gain through reading and obeying the Bible. You see, their failure in Corinth to feed the new nature left them spiritually immature, lacking in spiritual understanding and lacking in spiritual power.

Paul calls them brethren, thereby admitting them to be Christians, but they never grew after they were born again. The local assembly in Corinth never fully recovered from the domination of the old man in the lives of the believers there. There were divisions, and disputes, and poor deportment among them. These charges, which Paul made against them, were serious charges. I can tell you in a moment why there are so many contentions and divisions among God's people today. I can tell you why there are so many sinning Christians. I can tell you why some of your homes are disrupted, why the relationship between husband and wife is not good, why the parent child relationship is not what it ought to be. I can tell you why there are so many rebellious young people in our so-called Christian homes. It's because the new man is being starved and the

old man is being fed on the prosperity, and the pleasures, and the pursuits of our times.

Christians who are feeding well on a sound spiritual diet are not running after the attractive, but meager fare of this world. The Christians, who are devoting their spare hours to sports, entertainment, worldly television shows, and the like, are starving the new man and feeding the old man. Now, would you expect such a Christian to be victorious? Would you look for such a Christian to find time for Bible study? Would you expect such a Christian to be regular in the midweek prayer service? Would you expect such a Christian to take time out daily to pray in his private devotions? Would you expect such a Christian to be faithful in his witness for Christ? Would you expect such a Christian to be sacrificial when he's giving?

The answer, my friend, is an emphatic no. And well do each of us know it. Such Christians do not search the scriptures. They will be content to listen occasionally to a preacher or a teacher who has searched it for them. These people cease to pray and are now satisfied to be prayed for. They wouldn't bother to go calling on the unsaved, but they expect others to call quickly when their unsaved loved ones-loved ones are in trouble. Starving the new nature is fatal to spiritual maturity. Oh, feed the new man on the word of God. Feed him daily, feed him diligently. It is not enough merely to believe, we must add knowledge to our faith, so that we might become spiritually mature. Second, Peter 1:5 and 6. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to a virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and temperance patience, and to patience guardedness." Add, add, add! While we are feeding the new man, what should our attitude be toward the old man? Brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, Romans 8:12. We Christians must realize that we are under no obligation to the old nature. We owe the old man nothing, having received God's nature, we are obligated only to feed the new man. Our

indebtedness to the flesh was cancelled through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. John 1:14 says "He was made flesh." First Peter 3:18 says "He was put to death in the flesh." And now we have been reconciled to God in the body of His flesh through death, Colossians 1:22. Our obligation now is to Him, the Lord Jesus Christ who gave us life and from whom we derive all our spiritual advantages.

Actual-actually, there is far more in Romans 8:12 than what we read there. While we are not to be debtors' to the flesh, the very reverse is true. Namely, we are under the strongest obligation to the Spirit. Romans 13:14 says "Make no provision for the flesh, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." To put on Christ means to wear Him so that He is brought into full view of others. When we are doing this, displaying Him, then we will be careful not to feed the old nature and thereby satisfy its lusts. The sensual appetites of the old man crave to be fed. But we must starve him by making no provision for him. When the flesh wants to be fed through evil thinking, through sensual, sexy, and suggestive reading, through impure, gluttonous indulgences to the wrong kind of literature and television shows, we must say no to the flesh and resort at once to feeding the new nature. Turn to your Bible. Turn to prayer. You can pray at any time or any place. The Bible and prayer become potent in us to make us victorious over the flesh. The word flesh here can be understood in the physiological sense of the human body, or in its moral sense of the old depraved nature. In either case, we were to make no provision for it to fulfill the lusts thereof. Do not feed the old nature. Starve it. Take no forethought for its evil desires. And so for the Christian, there is the possibility of victory, knowing the flesh profiteth nothing, John 6:63, we are taught not to provide in any way for it.

Cultivate a spiritual appetite for spiritual food. Feed the new man on that food. Digest it.

Assimilate it. And it will make him strong. Keep the old man on a no diet schedule, and you will keep him impoverished. Some time ago, I was preaching in a church in Philadelphia. One evening, the pastor said "We'll go to the platform by passing through the nursery. And as we go through the nursery, I want you to note the last crib on the left side." And so we walk through the nursery and we made our exit from the nursery. He closed the door behind us. He said, "How old would you guess that the baby is in that last crib on the left side that I told you to note?" Well I said "I have no idea. Certainly not a year old." He said, "That is a teenaged girl in that crib. She has become a victim of arrested development, a strange malady took over at birth. And the doctors have been unable to fully diagnose it, nor to offer any remedy for it. That girl has come into puberty, but actually she is diapered and cared for as an infant child." There was a girl past 13 years of age, and an infant, a victim of arrested development. And I thought to myself, how utterly tragic and pathetic when Christians become victims of arrested development. They do not grow. They will not feed the new nature. They remain impoverished. Oh, my dear friend, where life begins, it should mature. It should develop. It should go on. Paul said "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In Hebrews 6 we read, "Let us go on to perfection." First Thessalonians chapter 3, "Increase and Abound." Second Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

I say again where life begins, it ought to develop. Are you growing, my dear friends? It is pathetic to see Christian men and women, healthy, physically strong, able-bodied people, saved for 10, 20, 30 years, but going about in their spiritual rompers, still playing in a spiritual playpen, still sucking on their spiritual nipple bottles, still acting like crybaby Christians. Grow up, feed

the new man, give yourself to prayer and to the study of the word of God. Do it simply and systematically. Make it your daily practice, and God will help you to grow as you feed the new nature. And today, if you are not saved, you're listening to this broadcast, come to God through faith in Christ. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Now loving Father, bless the meditation of Thy word to our hearts. We pray in Jesus' holy name, amen.