

THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

Volume 05-78

Dear Reader,

Before getting into the subjects of this issue, a few clarifications should be made for issue 04-75. In the opening paragraph I stated, “The truth that Christ could not have sinned while here on earth must be considered fundamental to Christianity ...” So far so good. But I continued, “yet this false doctrine is widely taught and believed today.” Oops! What I meant to say is, “yet the false doctrine that Christ could have sinned is widely taught and believed today.” The second clarification is in brother Leslie’s article at the bottom of page 3 and top of page 4. It said, “and Mary contributed nothing whatever to Him, either physically or spiritually.” Leslie didn’t mean that the womb didn’t supply nourishment and warmth, but that Mary had no part in His conception, so no sinful nature was transferred by either Joseph or Mary. The body was totally prepared by the Holy Spirit. Now on to our subjects.

In this issue we will first discuss the believer’s two natures and then use an outline from Bob Costen on headship. First, what is a nature? We use the term, as does Scripture, but we seldom try to explain it. Webster’s defines it as “the essential character of a thing; qualities that make something what it is ... inborn character; innate disposition; inherent tendencies of a person.” Although intangible, it is a real part of a person, different from the spirit and soul. It’s what makes me think and act as I do. It’s a pig’s nature to get dirty; a cat’s nature to be clean. Yet both are animals with all the same parts, including a soul.

I have recently experienced corrupted computer software. It wouldn’t do things the way it was supposed to. The computer was still able to function (for a while) with this corrupted software, but not in the way it did before. Perhaps we could think of our nature as *our* programming. God gave Adam and Eve uncorrupted “human” programming (nature) which would do things as God wanted. But there was no anti-worm, anti-virus program that automatically protected them. So we sometimes say that Adam and Eve had an *innocent* nature: it hadn’t sinned, didn’t know anything of sin, but *could* sin if tempted to do so. We know Eve listened to Satan and both she and Adam disobeyed God (Gen.3) and the software became corrupted. It lost its desire and ability to respond to and obey God; rather, it now obeyed its “corrupter,” Satan, “your father, the devil” (Jn.8:44). We thus became “by nature children of wrath,” walking “according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph.2:2-3). The corruption was complete. We studied the terrible corrupted state of mankind with a fallen human nature back in issue 04-71 and won’t repeat it here.

Because of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, mankind acquired a conscience, but continued to commit sins anyway, having no desire or power to stop sinning. While he has the capability to refuse to sin, and often uses that capability when it seems in his best earthly interest, he still continues to sin against God in many other ways. He always is far from God, although he may be “religious” because his conscience tells him there is a God. He then does “good works” to promote himself before God and man. But it now is man’s nature to sin.

With this background, let’s begin our study of the two natures. We took this up in the Dearborn Heights Thanksgiving weekend Bible conference last year (11-04).

Practical Truths as to the Two Natures

Mankind since Adam and Eve is born with a corrupted nature, inherited from fallen Adam. “Through one man [Adam] *sin* [the sinful nature] entered the world and death through sin, and thus death passed to all men because all sinned” (Rom.5:12). *Sin* is the root-principle; *sins* are the resulting fruits of that evil nature. Scripture uses two terms – “sin” and “the flesh” – for this sinful Adamic nature. David in his confession for his grievous sins of adultery and murder said, “Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in *sin* my mother conceived me” (Ps.51:5). Christians often refer to Adam’s corrupted nature as the “old nature” or the “sinful nature,” although these are not terms found in Scripture. It is “old” in the sense that God gives the believer a “new” nature – new with respect to time, one he didn’t have before. So I don’t object to the terms “old” and “new” as long as we understand they are human terms to describe scriptural realities. We also use other simple human terms such as *the Rapture* and *the Trinity* to describe great and complicated scriptural truths.

As we saw, Adam was created with an *innocent* human nature (non-biblical term), but one that *could* sin. In contrast, Christ was born with a *holy* human nature (Lk.1:35) that *could not* sin. His nature *hated* sin. *Holy* has the thought of being completely set apart to God. There was “no *sin* in Him” (1 Jn.3:5) – no sinful nature. He was fully human, but absolutely apart from sin (Heb.4:15).

So every person, (Christian or non-Christian) has this sinful nature, inherited from Adam (1 Jn.1:2). It can be civilized, educated, refined, even be religious and do many good things, but can never be made one bit less fallen or less caring nothing for God or His things. Nor is it re-

formed in any way when one is saved or at any time during one's Christian life.

But, thank God, just as we received the sinful nature by physical birth, God gives His sheep a new, divine nature called "spirit" when we are born from above – at new birth by the Holy Spirit (Jn.3:5-6). We believers are "partakers of the *divine nature* (2 Pet.1:4) – the same nature as Christ's nature! Marvelous! We wouldn't even dare say such a thing if God's Word didn't say it! This nature *cannot* commit sins, loves God, obeys God perfectly. So when we are careless as to the Lord's things and otherwise commit sins, we certainly can't blame this "new" nature!

It might be good to briefly digress. Scripture uses the terms "the old man" (Eph.4:22; Col.3:9) and "the new man" (Eph.4:24; Col.3:9) as to what we *were* in fallen Adam and what we now *are* in Christ. The terms are not synonymous with our old and new natures! We have "put off" the old man (Col.3:9), but haven't and cannot "put off" the old nature. "Our *old man* was crucified with Him, that the *body of sin* might be done away with, that we should no longer be *slaves* of sin" (Rom.6:6). Norman Anderson said as to our old man, that it has reference to all that believers were in the flesh, but they have died to that in the death of Christ. So the thoughts of "old/new nature" and "old/new man" are similar but distinct.

What is the result of having these two opposite natures? Conflict! Satan works through the one, the Holy Spirit through the other. We see this conflict with Paul in Romans 7. See especially verses 15-23. Look at all the "I's" in this portion. The Holy Spirit isn't even mentioned. At this time Paul hadn't learned that he alone couldn't fight the sinful nature, even though he wanted to. Look at verses 20-23. "Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but *sin* that dwells in me. I find then a law [fixed principle or rule], that *evil* is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man [the new nature]. But I see another law [fixed principle or rule] in my members [the old nature], warring against the law of my mind [the new nature] and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin [the old nature] which is in my members." When Paul says "I" in this portion he and his new nature are virtually seen as one, yet that nasty old nature is still there and if anything, more active than before. At least, Paul was more conscious of it. We'll shortly pick up the story again.

God has "condemned *sin* in the flesh" (Rom.8:3). We thus can and should treat our sinful nature as condemned and not feed it or count on it to help us at all. We should have "no confidence in the flesh" (Phil.3:3) because there is nothing good in the *flesh* (Rom.7:18; Jn.6:63; Rom.8:8). It will only hinder our spiritual growth. Paul needed to experimentally find out this truth which he faithfully proclaimed to the Roman believers.

When we truly realize we have no natural power to limit the sinful nature, but have the needed power through Christ and the Holy Spirit, we call that "deliverance," from Romans 7:24. "O wretched man that I am! *Who* will deliver me from this body of death?" This was Paul's need. We, as Paul, need to be *delivered* from this body of death and he had it right: it is through a "who," not a "what"! "I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.7:25). Paul then continued, rejoicing instead of writhing in wretchedness, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1)! "The law [fixed principle or rule] of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus *has* made me free from the law [fixed principle or rule] of *sin* and death" (Rom.8:2), for the Lord on the cross "condemned *sin* in the flesh" (Rom.8:3). Here, "flesh" means in one's physical body, in one's members, as Paul put it. In fact, God sees the believer as walking according to the Spirit, whereas the unsaved walk according to the flesh (Rom 8:4-17). In this eighth chapter, the Holy Spirit is constantly mentioned, quite a contrast to chapter 7!

Practical lessons are found in Romans 6. God considers us to have died with Christ to *sin* (v.2). Our old man – all we were in Adam, not the same as our old nature – has been "crucified with Christ." We can count, reckon, consider our sinful nature as dead, for Christ died to *sin* once, even though *sin* is not actually gone from me (Rom.6:11-14), and thus we can live as alive unto God, having no confidence in the flesh. We have that ability to act as though it was gone, through the Holy Spirit's power, but the fact is, it's not gone, and the nature *we* feed will become stronger and exert greater influence in our lives for either good or evil (v.16). The Holy Spirit can be quenched and grieved! *Sin* didn't die in me, but I can consider that I died *to sin*. So I'm not to fight *the flesh*, but reckon it dead. I don't feed a dead anything!

Remember, our new nature only gives us godly desires, not the power to carry them out. But Galatians 5:16-18 tells us to "walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." If I do not quench Him (1 Thes.5:19) or grieve Him (Eph.4:30) by disobeying Him or trying to act in my own power, *He* will take up the conflict and victory over *sin* is assured, for "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 Jn.4:4).

What is the kind of work the sinful nature does? See Galatians 5:19-21. "The works of the flesh are evident, which are":

- Adultery; sexual immorality; uncleanness; lewdness
- Idolatry; sorcery
- hatred; contentions
- jealousies; outbursts of wrath
- selfish ambitions; dissensions,
- heresies (party forming); envy
- murder; drunkenness; revelries,

- and the like.

What are the works of the new divine nature? Feeding this new nature will produce works that will always manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22-23):

- Love; joy; peace
- Longsuffering; kindness; goodness
- Faithfulness; gentleness or meekness; self control
- (and the like).

The truth of the two natures is one of the reasons God says for a Christian not to marry an unsaved person (2 Cor.6:14-18). “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (v.14). A yoke binds two together to act as one, and marriage is one of the strongest human examples of a yoke. The saved and unsaved persons have only one nature in common, and that’s the sinful nature, which hates the very things the divine nature loves. Nor can the unsaved partner *ever* understand divine things (1 Cor.2:14). That’s how “fallen” the sinful nature is! So the pleadings of the saved partner will fall on deaf ears unless God in pure mercy intervenes! Is that the formula for a happy marriage for a Christian, or the formula for conflict and more conflict? A saved man, in an unequal yoke marriage, but trying to go on with the Lord, brought his fist crashing to the table and said to my father, “Roger, it’s a hell on earth!” We don’t want you experiencing a hell on earth of your own fault.

So, the “new” divine nature always wants to love and obey God, while the “old” sinful nature always wants to please itself, and never please God. F.B. Hole says, “Thus, many perplexing questions and problems would be solved by honestly asking, ‘What is the *real* (secret) motive which makes me want to do, or not to do, this or that? It is for Christ-glorification or for self-gratification?’”

RPD

One of the thorny points of Scripture involves the position God assigns especially to women in His order of headship. It often goes against modern secular belief, so if both men and women aren’t prepared to accept what God decrees as being for their eternal good, there is bound to be resentment or outright conflict. More often than not, when there is a deviation from Scripture, men don’t take the position assigned to them and the women take a position not assigned to them. Let’s see what Bob Costen has for us.

HEADSHIP FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 11:3-16 AND OTHER SCRIPTURES

Divine Order (vv.3-6)

- The Head of every man is Christ (v.3)
- The head of the woman is man (v.3)
- The Head of Christ is God (v.3; Ps.16:7-8; Isa.50:4-5)

- Every man praying or prophesying [preaching] having his physical head covered, dishonors his spiritual Head which is Christ (v.4)
- But every woman who prays or prophesies (either privately among women or as she says “Amen” to the prayers of the men) with her physical head uncovered, dishonors her spiritual head which is man (v.5; Acts 21:8-9)
- If a woman is not covered (Gk: katakalupto – having something down on her head), let her be shorn (and look like the man she is trying to emulate), but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered (v.6)

Creation Order (vv.8-12)

- The man should not cover his head because he is a picture of the image and glory of God (v.7)
- The woman is to be covered because of her position in creation: the woman originally came from the man (v.8). The Church comes from Christ who went into a deep sleep (death) and was wounded in the side so He could have His Church.
- Woman was created for the man (v.9)
- There is no inferiority, but dependence (v.11).

Angelic Order Within Creation (v.10)

- The woman’s covering is called power or authority on her head because of the angels who are observing God’s order in the Church and how obedient His people are (1 Cor.4:9; Eph.3:10)

Order in Nature (vv.13-15)

- Is it proper for a woman to pray to God uncovered? (v.13)
- Nature teaches us that it is to a man’s shame to have long hair (v.16)
- But if a woman has long hair, it is to her glory which is given her for a covering – Gk: perobolaiou, something thrown around the head, a different thought than the added covering, above. She is to cover her head, including her hair

Assembly Order (v.16)

- If anyone is contentious about God’s order, neither the apostles nor the assemblies had any custom of disregarding God’s Word. Therefore, a woman is to be covered even if she doesn’t understand all the doctrinal points.

God’s Order for Dress and Deportment (1 Cor.14:34-37; 1 Tim.2:9-15; 1 Pet.3:1-6)

Deportment (1 Cor.14:34-37; 1 Tim.2:11-12)

- The women of the assembly are not to speak when the assembly is “in assembly” (14:34)

- They are commanded to be under obedience (v.34)
- If they need to learn something, they can ask their husbands (or, the men) at home (v.35)
- It is shameful for a woman to speak “in assembly” (v.35)
- Women are to learn in *quietness*, not causing a disturbance, with all subjection (2:11)
- They are not permitted to *teach* in the assembly (2:12)
- They are not permitted to have authority over men in spiritual things (2:12)

Department and Dress

- Women are to adorn themselves in modest apparel and also not in *very* costly (Gk: poluteles – a strong word) clothing (1 Tim.2:9)
- Moderation, propriety, faith, love, holiness and self-control should characterize the women, who are physically saved in childbearing (vv.9,13-15)
- Women should be well-pleasing to God, with good works, having a chaste manner of life (1 Tim.2:10; 1 Pet.3:2)
- Women should let the “hidden man” (Christ) be seen, having a “gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Pet.3:4)

General Guidelines for Women’s Ministry

- Woman’s primary sphere is the home, rearing children for the Lord, showing hospitality and guiding the house (1 Tim.5:10-14; Prov.31:10-31)
- A divinely-given helper to her husband (Gen.2:18-25)
- Wives can help their husbands in giving clear understanding of the Word to others, as Aquilla, Priscilla and Apollos (Acts 18:26)
- All sisters have at least one spiritual gift, as do all brothers (Rom.12:6-8; 1 Cor.12:7; Eph.4:7-8). “Men” in Ephesians 4 is saved *mankind*, men and women. Women simply use their gift less publicly
- Sisters can definitely teach children (2 Tim.1:5; 3:15)
- Euodias and Syntyche, in spite of their temporary disagreement, worked with the apostle Paul in the gospel (Phil.4:2-3)
- Experienced sisters should teach younger “good things” about married and home life (Tit.2:3-5)
- Sisters can open their homes for meetings (Acts 12:12)
- Sisters can gather for prayer with other women (Acts 16:13)
- Women can pray and prophesy (tell forth God’s Word) among other women, both saved and unsaved: they can use their gift (1 Cor.14:5)
- Wives can pray with their husbands (1 Pet.3:7)

- Either a man or woman could take a Nazarite vow to separate himself or herself to the Lord (Nu.6:1-2). God wants separated, reliable, useful people!

Some Devoted Women of the Bible

- **Sarah**, called a holy woman, obeyed her husband, Abraham (1 Pet.3:5-6)
- **Deborah**, was a gifted prophetess (Jud.4:5) under her own palm tree
- **Jochobed**, Moses’ mother, had great faith (Ex.2:9; 6:20)
- **Daughters of Zelophehad** desired and obtained their inheritance (Num.27:1-7)
- **Rahab** the harlot became a godly mother in Israel (Josh.6:25)
- **Ashsah**, the daughter of Caleb, desired a blessing from her father (Jud.1:12-15)
- **Ruth** committed herself to God and His people (Ruth 1:16-17)
- **Hannah** was a praying mother who became a praising mother (1 Sam.1-2:12)
- **Abigail** was a woman of understanding (1 Sam.25:3)
- **Hulah** was a prophetess in her Jerusalem home (2 Ki.22:14)
- **The virtuous woman** of Proverbs 31:10-31 shows God’s ideal in a woman and her many-faceted work in and out of the house for her family
- **Mary**, the mother of Jesus, was devoted to God (Lk.2)
- **Elizabeth**, Mary’s cousin, likewise (Lk.2)
- **Anna**, an aged widow, was serving in her temple lodging (Lk.2:36-38)
- **Mary of Bethany** anointed the Lord’s feet (Jn.12:3)
- **Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna** and others ministered to the Lord of their material things (Lk.8:2-3). Mary took the resurrection message to the brethren (Jn.20:17-19)
- **Philip’s four daughters** prophesied (Acts 21:9)
- **Phoebe** was a servant of the assembly at Cencrea (Rom.16:1)
- **Priscilla** was of great help to her husband in serving the Lord in Corinth, Ephesus and Rome, as well as having the assembly in her home (Acts 18:2-3, 24-26; Rom.16:3-4)
- **Lois and Eunice**, Timothy’s grandmother and mother, taught him the Scriptures (Acts 16:1-3; 1 Tim.1:5)

Bob Costen