

Negotiating Your New Nature

Many of God's children live far beneath their privileges. That's why Paul is so passionate in writing the book of Romans – he pleads for us to access the royalty that is already within us through the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever said or done something that was totally out of character?

- I can't believe I just said that.
- I can't believe I did that.
- That's not like me.
- I just "lost it."
- I don't know where that came from.

So where DID that come from? From the heart! You think your mistake was an exception – and in one way it was. It was an exception to your general rule of not allowing what's in your heart to be exposed to the rest of the world. But in reality, that embarrassing mistake was not an EXCEPTION to what is in your heart – it was a REFLECTION of it!

Have you ever heard this? "He's got a good heart." Wrong!

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

But you are right about one thing – "that's not like me!" **If you are a child of God, then acting like an outright pagan is BENEATH you.** But we still do it sometimes – WHY? Because although your spirit is redeemed, your flesh is not, and it still struggles to do what is right.

Romans 7:20-24 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, **(NOT I) BUT SIN** that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For 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. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Let's unpack this Scripture passage and dig further into the Apostle Paul's instructions on how to live above sin ...

TWO LAWS – THE LAW OF SIN AND THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT

When we receive the Holy Spirit, we become KING'S KIDS and receive a His holy nature. That changes all the rules!

- For the first time, we have freedom from sin's dominion, which gives us the power to choose not to sin.

John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

- From this moment on, we will not continue to live in sin, and in fact our new nature cannot live in sin.

1 John 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

- At this point, our old nature is not eradicated but merely subdued within us, so our flesh still has the ability to commit sinful acts.

1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

- However, the born again nature within us restrains us from habitually committing sin. As long as we let the Spirit lead us, we will not sin!

Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

TWO LAWS – LAW OF GRAVITY AND LAW OF AERODYNAMICS

The law of the Spirit doesn't destroy the law of sin but overcomes it.

As long as a bird flaps its wings or a plane runs its engines, the law of aerodynamics enables them to overcome the law of gravity. However, gravity has not been destroyed. If the bird folds its wings or the plane shuts off its engines, gravity reasserts itself and they plunge to the ground. Christians can live above sin - if they keep "flapping their wings!"

NOT I, BUT SIN

Indian Pastor: There is a white dog and a black dog inside me, fighting to the death. Which dog wins the fight? The dog that I feed the most!

Martin Luther: Shortly after the Reformation, some of his young followers wrote him with a question, saying, "We are harassed by many temptations which appeal to us so often and so strongly that they give us no rest. You don't seem to be troubled in this way, and we should like to know your secret. Don't temptations bother you? Are you somehow immune to sin?" Luther wrote a reply back to them, saying, 'I, too, know something of temptation. But the difference is that when temptation comes knocking at the door of my heart, I always answer, Go away! This place is occupied. Go back where you came from, for Christ is here.'

Young Girl: When Satan comes knocking at the door of my heart, I just send Jesus to answer the door. When Satan sees Jesus, he says, 'Oops, I am sorry, I must have the wrong house.' And he goes away.

NOT I, BUT SIN

Romans 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Wretched – exhausted and near death from the battle

Deliver – a soldier pulling his wounded comrade from the battlefield

In "The Aeneid" by the Roman poet Vergil (he died shortly before Jesus was born) there is an account of an ancient king named Mezentius, who was so unnaturally cruel in his punishments that he used to chain a dead man to a living one. It was impossible for the poor wretch to separate himself from his disgusting burden. The corpse was bound fast to his body, hands to hands, face to face, lips to lips. It lay down and rose up whenever he did, it moved with him wherever he went, until the welcome moment when death from the noxious fumes and infectious decay finally brought relief. Several ancient writers mention this as a practice of Roman tyrants; however, Vergil's account is one of the most vivid:

Till cursed Mezentius, in a fatal hour,
Assumed the crown, with arbitrary power.
What words can paint those execrable times,
The subjects' sufferings, and the tyrant's crimes!
That blood, those murders, O ye gods, replace
On his own head, and on his impious race!
The living and the dead at his command
Were coupled, face to face, and hand to hand,
Till, choked with stench, in loathed embraces tied,
The lingering wretches pined away and died.

To a very real extent, these prisoners were dead the moment they were chained face-to-face with the corpses, even though they were still alive. They were shackled to death, and that death was certain to kill them too. That's how it is for us with our old nature. Sin is equivalent to death, so as long as we allow ourselves to remain shackled to sin, we are shackled to death, and it is certain to kill us too.

**OUR OLD NATURE RESTRICTS US TO THE POINT OF KILLING US,
UNLESS WE ARE SET FREE!**

NOT I, BUT SIN

Philip Yancey: Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson performed a rather bizarre experiment on ants. After noticing that it took ants a few days to recognize one of their crumpled nestmates as having died, he determined that ants identified death by clues of smell, not visually. As the ant's body began to decompose, other ants would invariably carry it out of the nest to a refuse pile. After many tries, Wilson narrowed down the precise chemical clue to oleic acid. If the ants smelled oleic acid, they would carry out the corpse; any other smell they ignored. Their instinct was so strong that if he daubed oleic acid on bits of paper, other ants would dutifully carry the paper to the ant cemetery. In a final twist, Wilson painted oleic acid on the bodies of living ants. Sure enough, their nestmates seized them and marched them, their legs and antennae wriggling in protest, out to the ant cemetery. Thus deposited, the indignant 'living dead' cleaned themselves off before returning to the nest. If they did not remove every trace of the oleic acid, the nestmates would promptly seize them again and return them to the cemetery. They had to be certifiably alive, judged solely by smell, before being accepted back into the nest. Sin for us is like oleic acid. It is the scent of death upon us. We are coated in it, and there is nothing we can do to get it off of us. Our best effort to wash ourselves doesn't get rid of the stench. Our efforts to cover the stench with good works don't help either. It is still on us, and it is just a matter of time before we are carried away and dumped in sin cemetery, which is hell. That's how it is for us. We could do nothing to remove from ourselves the stench of death. But Jesus covered us with something that is capable of removing the stench of death and restoring us to God. It is His blood!

In the old shepherding communities, all would have understood this image because all knew the problem of the shepherd. He would check his flock in the morning and find a new lamb ... but the mother had died during the night. In another portion of his flock he would find a mother, sitting silently beside a lamb stillborn during the night. The mother would die of a broken heart and the orphan would die from the lack of sustenance. All logic would tell you to put the orphan under the care of the childless mother ... but the two would not accept each other. That's like us – we are so separated from God that God is dying of a broken heart and we are dying from lack of sustenance. We are foreigners to one another. It seems hopeless, but one thing can be done. It is still being done by shepherds. If you slit the throat and drain the blood of the dead baby and wash the orphan in the blood of the lamb, the living mama smells her own and moves around so that the orphan can suckle ... and live. We could do nothing to remove from ourselves the scent of sin and the scent of death, but Jesus did it for us. He removed the stench from us by covering us with His own life-giving blood.

NOT I, BUT SIN (Romans 7:20, 24)

Romans 7:25 I thank God **through Jesus Christ** our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

NOT I, BUT CHRIST (stay under the blood!)

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet **NOT I, BUT CHRIST** liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.