

The State of Man

We believe that God created man originally without sin, but Adam and Eve brought sin to all mankind when they sinned after being tempted by Satan. Ever since, all humans are sinful both by nature and by choice. We can be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ. We believe that all who are saved must obey his commands to love him supremely and others sacrificially. We believe that by the power given to us in Christ by the Holy Spirit, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. We believe that all true disciples of Jesus work to make more and better disciples of Jesus.

Romans 3:23 says that ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All is a pretty inclusive word. In Acts 13:22, Paul says that King David was a man after God's own heart. We can read in the Old Testament how David was the greatest king Israel ever had, and the Psalms show us the intimate relationship he had with God. But not even the great King David was immune to the sinful nature of humanity when he committed both murder and adultery.

The apostle Paul also could not totally escape his sinful nature on his own. In Romans 7:15 Paul says "For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" and a couple verses later he says "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out". His sinful nature was too much for him to overcome on his own.

He relied on his faith in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. The first half of the very next chapter, Romans 8, flips what he was previously saying on its head. What he couldn't do on his own before, he now can "because there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."

We have been set free from our sinful nature just like Paul! When we put our faith in what Christ did for us on the cross, our sinful nature loses its power as we become more and more like Jesus. In fact, Romans 6:11 tells us to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. And we aren't left to do this on our own. We are given the Holy Spirit who doesn't condemn us but points out sin which acts as a barrier to becoming more like Jesus.

So, as you process this bad news/good news of our sinful nature but also the redemption from Jesus and the help provided to us by the Holy Spirit, discuss these questions:

- How can I be like Jesus to those who are operating only out of their sinful nature?
- What is the Holy Spirit pinpointing in my life that is making it harder for me to become more like Jesus?