

Sin, Satan & the Flesh

By Brett Burrowes

I'm going to talk today about sin, the flesh and Satan in the Bible. I have been writing, or have written a dissertation on Paul and the law and sin in Romans 7 & 8, it's titled *Christ the Living Law, Paul's Transformation of the Law From Letter to Spirit of Christ in Romans 7-8*. And I had two sets of purposes in writing the dissertation, one was more academic and the other was more theological or doctrinal.

It really all started back oh about 20 years ago when I went through a Church split over some teachings at this fellowship in NY. And the teachings involved about Satan and Christ, whether sin was a result of a sinful human nature that we have or was it Satan expressing his own nature through us and did we live our lives with the help of the Spirit of Christ of course or was it Christ himself and no longer I living the Christian life? And as Galatians 2:20 says. And it was very disturbing to me that these Christians that I thought cared about me turned on us and walked to the other side of the street and treated us with what I saw was hate rather than Christian love and kindness. And at one point I stood up, probably in ignorance, but I stood up and said to the Church just shortly before I left what Galatians 2:20 meant to me and how Norman Grubb had thrown light on that verse to me and on Romans 7. But I was shaken by what happened and I didn't really, I knew it at one level but not at a level where I felt secure in what I believed. And so I decided to go to seminary to find out for myself what the Bible said, what it meant in the original languages and not that I was just going to take all my seminary professors word for it, but, I wanted, I had to know for myself what the truth was and if the truth was that what Norman was telling me was wrong then I was going to accept it because it was what the Bible said that I knew the bible was the word of God and that was the starting point and the foundation of everything else. And I believe that to be my foundation to this day and the foundation of our fellowship.

So, my ultimate purpose was to find out what the truth was and to investigate all the passages in Scripture in Paul and John and other writers in the new testament, is this the truth? And it took me quite a long time to actually be secure and probably not till the writing of my PhD dissertation did I finally feel secure that it really was the right interpretation of Romans 7 & 8. So it wasn't a simple easy process for me that I just decided in advance what Paul must mean because I want it to be this way, I want to believe it. It has to be really there.

Now on the other side I said I had an academic purpose. I also had some questions about Romans 7 & 8 like how did a good Pharisee like Paul come to view the Jewish law in such a negative light and say that the law in fact was what provoked sin in to expression? It's just kinds of things that Jews didn't say about the law. If you read Psalm 1:19 about the law is holy good and how great the law is, which it is, there's nothing wrong with the law, as Paul claims, but somehow it

got twisted by sin and misused. How did Paul come to these convictions? And how did he come to view the indwelling Spirit of Christ as a replacement for the written law? These kind of more academic questions interested me. So it's a mixture of the experiential, the academic, and also a belief that whatever God had for us it had to make life work, that if it didn't make life work then what is really good about the Gospel and how is it really an improvement over what God gave Moses at Mt. Sinai? If it's just more law then there's really nothing new about the new covenant or about the Gospel.

So I also, as I said, have some theological purposes. I want to show four things: one that Paul did not believe in a sinful human nature or human spiritual nature of any kind good or bad; that human beings are operated by one of two spirits, the spirit of sin or the Spirit of Christ; three that the death of Christ involves Him taking on the spirit of sin in His body on the cross and thereby exorcising humanity spiritually from the spirit—exorcising means like casting out the spirit—and four, my fourth purpose I want to show is that the only way for humans to fulfill God's moral will as revealed in God's law, is for Christ to live out that law through them by His spirit. That humans beings were never meant to be the law keepers only Christ can be the law keeper.

So if you think about it my purpose is not to write so much or to tell you about directly how to live the Christian life here but to provide a kind of foundation. You know it's like a house that you have, you don't live in the basement or the cellar where the foundations is, but if the foundations are not sound the house can collapse as Jesus says in his parable, the storm comes along and the house falls down. So what I want to provide is theological grounding to make the faith of people more secure so that when Satan tempts them or assaults them they have a secure basis and won't be moved. And so it's to provide an even stronger theological basis for what Norman has already taught us.

In writing the dissertation, I had a strategy. My belief is that we're at war to reform God's Church. Or more properly, Christ is at war with Satan to expel him from God's Church. It's my belief that at some point in the early Church, and I'll get into this later, that God's Church was corrupted by Satan. That some of these beliefs such as a belief in a human sinful nature or a belief that humans can be spiritually good or bad was an infiltration into the Church in the late 4th early 5th century. And the doctrine of the Church fit, or changed to fit its circumstances. And that this was not legitimate and ultimately watered down the Gospel and made it difficult if not impossible for people to live the Christian life or for Christ to live through them except in isolated circumstances.

Now the protestant reformation though it was successful in reestablishing that God's salvation is by God's grace alone and received by faith alone, didn't deal with the problem of the continued sinning of believers. It only dealt with the means by which we're saved and go to heaven. In fact, Luther and Calvin the reformers emphasized we continue to sin constantly which drives us to trust

Christ more and not our own works for our salvation. The reformers would have been hostile to the belief that Christ can live out His sin-free life through us. They would not have welcomed that and would have seen it as sort of maybe a sneaky way that salvation by works could sneak back in but in fact we believe that salvation is by God's grace alone and we can do nothing to earn our salvation. And so that's not in doubt, we're starting from that as our basis.

Winning this doctrinal battle against a belief in a sinful human nature means that thousands if not millions of desperate people will hear God's truth. I don't think the problem is that people are not desperate but the Church teaching of a sinful human nature prevents them from hearing the truth. They won't even consider it if their Church labels it as unbiblical or heretical before even really considering it, which has been my experience. So my task and yours as well is to compel the Church to reexamine the Biblical basis of their theology of sin, Satan and human nature and the indwelling spirit of Christ.

More specifically my strategy is to show that evangelical interpretations of sin and the flesh and Paul, are based upon a later interpretation of Paul by St. Augustine in the early 5th century AD and are not original to the apostle Paul himself. And also, that when Paul is interpreted in his Jewish and Greek context of the first century AD, the idea that sin is a spirit is a more natural way to understand what Paul was saying.

Now my strategy's also indirect and somewhat subversive rather than confrontational and aggressive. On the surface in my book I'm being objective and academic, I'm only explaining what Paul means, but if you read between the lines, and I think as most evangelicals would pick up, I'm arguing against evangelical doctrine. My hope is to gain respect as a Biblical scholar not only among evangelicals but also among others, Catholics, liberal protestants, secular scholars so that my argument about sin, Satan and human nature will be taken seriously by all, including evangelicals.

Back to the dissertation. My focus is on the law, how the conception of law was transformed from an external law written on stone or paper, into the Spirit of Christ as a living incarnation or embodiment of the law. Since the Spirit of Christ now indwells believers as the law of Spirit of life, He now lives out His law through the lives of believers. But of course, before I get to that point, I have to discuss what went wrong with the external written law, the letter as Paul calls it, why it doesn't work and why it only ends up becoming an instrument of death and condemnation.

Now scholars for the most part agree that for Paul, one that the law's been subverted and misused by the power of sin in the flesh to bring about spiritual death, two that Christ died and rose from the dead to deal with this situation and three that God has sent His Spirit to dwell in us and put His law in our hearts so that we may do God's will, Jeremiah 31 verses 31-34, and Ezekiel 36 verses 26

& 27. Where scholars and the various Christian traditions don't agree upon is, one, what is the identity of sin? Two what is the meaning of the word flesh and of the phrase old man? Three how does Christ redeem us from the power of sin, what happens in the redemption, in Christ's death and resurrection? And four what does the indwelling of the spirit mean for the believer? Is it merely referring to the location of the spirit or does it mean something more, that the spirit actually in some way possess the believer and lives through the believer?

So I'm going to start and focus mainly on the identity of sin in Romans 7. Sin in a sense is what's called an abstract personification. It's a somewhat a difficult phrase. Something that's abstract is a mental concept, it's not a concrete thing you can touch see or perceive with your senses. It's sort of like justice is an abstract concept, you can't touch justice, or liberty or truth. These are abstractions. A personification is when you treat a thing or concept as if it were a living person. The statue of liberty portrays freedom as if the abstract concept of freedom were an actual person; or justice is a blindfolded woman holding scales; or Britannia on old British coins as a seated woman with a helmet, spear and shield. These are personifications, treating something as if it were a person. So sin is a personification, personification of unrighteousness, of wrongdoing, of evil but is it a personification of some attribute or quality of humans beings or is it an attribute that belongs to something or someone else? Just calling it a personification doesn't automatically make it a part of human nature. Righteousness is sometimes personified in Paul. In Romans 6:18, we are slaves of righteousness, righteousness is our master and we are enslaved to Him. In Romans 10:6 the righteousness of faith speaks as if it were a person. But then we find out that righteousness, in another letter of Paul, 1:Corinthians 1:30, Paul identifies righteousness with the person of Christ. Christ is our righteousness. There are other abstract personifications in Paul, like death is sometimes treated as a person. So sin, even though it's a personification, might be the quality or attribute of another person, just as righteousness is. So just as we know righteousness when we're slaves to righteousness, what it really means is we're slaves to Christ, the one who is righteousness, so why not with sin, if we're slaves to sin, why can't sin be the attribute of someone or something?

Another explanation for sin in Romans 7 is that sin is just a literary exaggeration; we only appear to be out of control and that's just an excuse for doing what we want and some people have explained it that way. So we really are in control. And there is an ancient Roman Stoic writer (Stoicism's a major philosophy of the 1st century) and his name was Epictetus, and he said when a man out of passionate love is under the compulsion to do something against his own opinion and even though he sees the better thing but lacks the strength to follow, one might be all the more inclined to regard him as deserving pity because he is in the grip of something violent and in a matter of speaking divine. So in this view, we're not really in the grip of something divine or outside of ourselves, we've only let our feelings or desires take us over against our better judgment, but if we look at things rationally then we will regain self control. But this is not Paul's view and

directly contradicts Romans 7 because in Romans 7 Paul talks about how the mind is powerless, the law of his mind cannot overcome, the law of his reason cannot overcome the law of sin at work in his members. So he really is out of control of himself, he's not really in control and if he only saw things rationally he could regain control. So it's not literary exaggeration when he says it's no longer I who sin but sin dwelling in me that does it.

Another possibility is that sin is just a psychological principle. I don't think that any of these are Paul's view but I think I have to mention them all. Some people think that sin is just an irrational element of the soul or the spirit which would be the position of many Greek philosophers. But Paul never talks about an irrational element in the soul or spirit and never defines sin in that way. Some Jewish Rabbi's on the other hand talk about an evil inclination that people have as opposed to a good inclination, but in my research, that is just simply too late and doesn't occur until after 150, 200 AD and is impossible for understanding Paul.

A third possibility is sin is just bad habit. When we do something regularly it becomes engrained as a habit eventually acquiring power over us and compelling us even when we no longer wish to engage in the behavior. And this is certainly a tempting point of view. This would be the view of Aristotle and some other early Church fathers, but Paul never talks about habit. He never talks about a process by which sin gradually gains control over us. He talks about in Romans 7:7-11 how when he encounters God's command immediately sin is there, takes opportunity of the commandment and immediately enslaves him. There's no process of a bad habit, it's, sin, for Paul is always present in the person.

Now probably the most important view of sin, that I disagree with, is that of Augustine who viewed sin as a corruption of human nature or of the flesh. Corruption is when something has deteriorated from it's original state of wholeness. Rust would be a corruption of iron or steel so immorality would be a corruption of the human body and of human nature. So in Augustine's view human nature, which is originally pristine and perfect before the fall, was corroded or corrupted by Adam's original sin. Specifically, the corruption of human nature was the introduction of excessive or inordinate desire into human nature. A physical desires, especially the desire to pursue pleasure and avoid pain, became much more extreme and out of whack, so to speak. Now in Augustine's view we're self-operating but we can only choose what we desire and if our desires are out of control we find ourselves unable to stop sinning because we can't change our desires to make them the right desires. So for Augustine it is the flesh that is the problem. The flesh is corrupted by sin and sin doesn't literally indwell the flesh like a spirit indwells a body, rather sin indwells the flesh the way that you see rust corroding iron and gradually causing it to deteriorate and fall apart.

I should back up a minute and explain, well, who is St. Augustine and why is he so important? Augustine is important because all of Western Christian theology—

Catholic and Protestant—as opposed to Christianity in Eastern Europe, Russia, Greece and the middle east, all of Western Christian theology is based on Augustine. Most people do not realize that and probably think that, well, no my theology is all based upon the new testament. And they might give a nod to Luther or Calvin or the Reformers but little do they realize that the Reformers themselves based their theology on Augustine’s interpretation of the Bible as did most Catholic writers as well, in fact probably all Catholic and Protestant writers. This makes him, gives him almost unparalleled importance in the history of Christianity apart from the writers of the New Testament, because everybody in western Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, sees and reads the Scriptures with the lenses or eyeglasses of St. Augustine. We read it naturally in that way and don’t realize or even know that we’re doing it. So he is perhaps, there’s no more important figure in the history of Christian theology than St. Augustine other than the writers of the Bible. That means that all of Christian theology since the time of Augustine, who lived around 354 to 430 AD, is basically a commentary on Augustine, virtually without exception, whether Protestant or Catholic. That doesn’t mean all protestants agree with everything Augustine wrote or all Catholics agree with Augustine, but everyone is in some way either building on or reacting to Augustine.

So as I was saying, it’s as if we read the Bible with colored contact lenses on and we’re not even aware that we have them on, so that Augustine is causing us to read and understand Paul through that color, like we’re seeing the world through blue eye glasses and everything appears blue in Paul because that’s how Augustine has led us to read it. Since almost all doctrinal disputes between Christians go back to disagreements in the interpretation of Paul, if Augustine controls our interpretation of Paul, how great is that influence?

Some of the Catholic doctrines with which Protestants disagree also go back to theologians working out the implications of Augustine’s doctrine of sin and sinful human nature, such as purgatory. For example, if we are not finished being made sanctified, our human nature is not sufficiently purified by our death, then what do we do? What happens? Do we just go up unfinished our process of sanctification into heaven? Well Catholics then decided we must go through purgatory to finish the process of sanctification to get into heaven. There’s a certain logical sense to that. If there’s a sinful human nature and it’s not perfected by the time we die, then it has to be perfected after we die. Protestants have sort of lived with the contradiction. The same as with the immaculate conception of Mary, that well if Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary who had a sinful human nature why didn’t he inherit a sinful human nature? And so Catholics invented the doctrine of immaculate conception to solve the problem of Jesus’ sinlessness. That why he didn’t inherit a sinful human nature from Mary. Protestants again sort of live with that contradiction and probably don’t even realize that there is one. Of course I think that we have a much simpler solution by discarding the sinful human nature problem then the problem that created purgatory and immaculate conception completely disappear. Because there’s no sinful nature to

be purified or sanctified and there's not sinful nature for Jesus to inherit, therefore there's no need for these doctrines.

Now in Augustine's favor, he was the champion of the idea of salvation by God's grace alone, not by human works. Luther was merely reviving Augustine on this point. Augustine wrote extensively hundreds of pages on this point and was absolutely clear and I'm not sure exactly why the Church didn't always follow him but he was sufficiently read by at least those who could read, that people understood what his point about salvation by God's grace alone was.

Now, I'd like to back up a little bit here and just talk about Augustine's life, just to give you more of a picture of who he was. He lived from 354 to 430 AD in Northern Africa in what is now the Muslim country of Tunisia and he also lived for a time in Northern Italy the city of Milan which is still a major city in Italy today. His mother Monica was a Christian and his father was a pagan who worshiped the old Roman Gods. He came from a kind of country gentry background, not upper class but he wasn't lower class either. He was well educated just not extremely wealthy. He became a professor of rhetoric, public speaking and debate of which he was a master in the ancient world. Augustine's social class and his education have a great deal to do with how he understood sin, but I'll discuss that a little later. He thought of his mother's Christianity as sought of primitive and superstitious and decided it really wasn't for him, but he didn't really like his Father's following the old Roman Gods was a little outdated too and so he became a follower of this religion, rising religion called Manichaeism which was a religion founded by the Persian prophet Mani in the 3rd century AD. Mani taught that there were two deities in the universe—good and evil—and they were in conflict with each other. The evil god created matter or these dark particles and the good god created human spirits and the human person is a mixture of these dark and light particles. To be saved we must resist the impulses of the evil material body created by the dark god.

Now Augustine was converted to Christianity sometime in the 380's and you can read an account in his book *The Confessions*, which you can buy anywhere, the world's first introspective and brutally honest autobiography. Augustine was not light on himself about sin. And it's one of the most influential classics of western literature. He violently rejected his former Manichaeism and wrote extensively against it, debated publicly with his former teachers and basically publicly exposed them to shame by exposing their inconsistencies of their faith. This reaction against Manichaeism is part of why Augustine is so opposed to the idea of sin as a spirit. So part of it is his hostility to his own former belief, which is a normal thing when one converts from one religion to another then you become hostile to what you used to believe and that's one element. Augustine then became a priest and leader in the Church and then a bishop or overseer of teaching and worship in the local churches in the city of Hippo in North Africa. He fought against the British monk Pelagius, who taught that Christians could keep the law, break the force of habit and earn our own salvation, Christ was basically

a great moral teacher who showed us the way. Augustine fought vehemently against that and to argue against Pelagius Augustine asserted that human beings were unable, hopelessly, to do God's will and the law and could not earn their salvation. And the way that he argued against this was by insisting that Romans 7 described the normal Christian experience and in this way he could safeguard against the idea that we could keep the law by our own efforts. Augustine was the first person, as far as I have been able to tell, in Church history who asserted that Romans 7 described the experience of Christians, everyone else, all the Church fathers before that understood Romans 7 to refer to Jewish life under the law, not to Christians, and for various reasons that I'll explain in a few moments, this was very appealing to Augustine's audience.

The later Protestant reformers all followed Augustine on this point but John Wesley would later disagree in the 18th century. Up to this point in time Romans 7 had been understood by all the Christian teachers and writers as referring not to Christian experience but the experience of the Jews under the old covenant law from which Christ had redeemed us. And in my view it's the early Church fathers who are correct and Augustine who misinterpreted Paul here, and it's likely that Augustine never read many of these early Church fathers and so was expressing a novel opinion, that no other Church father up to this point had had.

Augustine died around 430 during a siege of Hippo by the vicious Barbarian tribe the Vandals and that at the end of his life.

To summarize, Augustine's view of sinful human nature has four sources. He was reacting against his former Manichean views of an evil deity while at the same time adopting their idea that humans have two natures in conflict with each other. Two, he was reacting against Pelagius's perfectionism and salvation by works. The third source of his view of sinful human nature is that his status as a man educated in Greek philosophy led him to view human beings as being operated by one of two spirits as being superstitious and unlearned or uneducated and fourth, and perhaps most importantly, fundamental changes were occurring in the Western Church as a result of Constantine's making Christianity a legal religion in 312 and Christianity becoming the official religion of the Roman empire in 380AD. And at this time many thousands of educated and upper class people found it politically wise or expedient to become Christians. If Christianity was the official religion then it was necessary to become Christian in order to succeed in public life, whether that meant political office or just economically, or in business. Christian theology changed to fit this situation. Perhaps not consciously but nevertheless it did so and since Augustine came from this very class of people I think at some level his theology changed or he changed Christian theology in order to fit his situation. In fact in one book I have recently been reading, about Christian and the establishment of a Christian aristocracy in the later Roman empire, has argued exactly this point that the that there was a large influx of the upper classes, the wealthy, the educated classes into Christian Churches in the late 4th and early 5th centuries and what this did

was change the nature of the Churches and of the Christians there or the people that were professing to be Christians, the people, the audience of the preachers. And so the preachers consciously or unconsciously changed their message to fit their audience. And of course we see this today in 19th and 20th century America where preachers are tempted to change their message to fit a modern American audience and to update the Gospel to fit our modern context and in the process liberalize the Gospel or make it more acceptable. So one might say that Augustine was a liberal of his time, whether Augustine would have referred to himself that way is another question but he certainly did change the way the Gospel was taught and understood.

So lets go back to the meaning of the word flesh. In Greek the word is Sarx. Some modern Evangelical translations, the New International Version, or the New Living Translation, use sinful nature or old nature, and this is an example of Augustine's theology being read into the text because there's nothing about the word Sarx that means sinful nature or old nature. Flesh in it's most basic meaning is meat or animal flesh. For example, 1 Cor. 15:39 talks about the flesh of animals. Flesh can be the soft parts of the body, the muscle and fat as opposed to the bones or the blood and Luke 24:39 Jesus refers to himself not being a spirit but as having flesh and bones as the apostles do, or Galatians 1:16 where Paul says flesh and blood has not revealed this to me. Flesh then can be extended to mean the human physical or earthly body, as for example when Paul says in Galatians 2:20 the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God that the flesh there is the body, the mortal body. And there are numerous other references: 2 Corinthians 12:7 the thorn in the flesh, does not refer to sinful human nature or some besetting sin that Paul was struggling with but some affliction of his physical body. Philippians 1:20-24 Paul contrasts being with Christ in heaven or remaining in the flesh. Obviously it's life in the physical body. Flesh can also refer to one's physical relatives. When Paul talks about his kinsmen according to the flesh in Romans 9:3 and 9:5, or Jesus in His earthly life who in the flesh was descended from David Romans 1:3, or Abraham our forefather according to the flesh in Romans 4:1. Flesh can be that which is human as opposed to that which is divine or spiritual or supernatural, Galatians 1:16 again, flesh and blood has not revealed this to me but it came through a revelation of the Son of God in me, or Ephesians 6:12 where he talks about our warfare is not against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities. So its flesh, is that which is human as opposed to that which is in the realm of the spirit whether that's the realm of the Holy Spirit or of evil spirit as in Ephesians 6:12. Flesh can also have a sense of that which reflects human weakness as opposed to divine power. Isaiah 31:3 talks about the weakness of the flesh of trusting in human resources as opposed to trusting in God; or Matthew 26:41 the flesh is weak, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. And finally, perhaps the most important is where flesh is used to reflect spiritual opposition to God, the flesh opposes the Spirit and the Spirit the flesh, the two are in conflict with each other so that you cannot do whatever you want. Or the works of the flesh, or you

have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires in Galatians 5:24 and of course Romans 7 and 8.

Now, flesh then normally has the sense of human bodily nature, unless of course it refers to animal flesh. It refers to the human body and soul and its abilities or lack of them. It includes bodily appetites, desires, emotions and feelings. But we must be careful not to just read Augustine's theology of a corrupted human nature or corrupted body into the word of God. Flesh refers to human bodily nature as indwelt by the spirit of sin which has invaded or taken up residence there. So the big difference between Augustine and myself is whether sin is a deterioration of human bodily nature or whether it is an invasion of human bodily nature by an outside spirit distinct from the human self which has come in and taken over. There's nothing in the word flesh or Sarx that demands either interpretation, it just means human bodily nature and as a result of sin, whatever it is, and we'll get to that in a moment, the flesh stands in opposition to God.

I'd like now to talk about how Paul portrays sin as a disease of the body, that sin is an invasion by the spirit, by a spirit as a possession of the body. In the ancient world the passions or evil desires were considered to be a disease of the body and I believe that Paul takes up this idea in Romans 7. Like a disease, sin causes death. We have to remember that there were no real cures for any diseases in Paul's time, even a common cold could be something life threatening and half of all babies died before the age of 5. So we have to be careful not to read our modern understanding of disease in to the Biblical text. We have to remember that disease was far more life threatening, there were no cures, and they had different understandings of disease. In a modern world we view diseases as caused by things like bacteria or viruses and largely in impersonal terms. The ancient world viewed disease as caused by one of two main factors: either internal causes, the body just was naturally deteriorating, or by the imbalance of liquids or what they call humors in the body such as blood or bile or phlegm. This was held by most philosophers by medical doctors and by the educated classes. Other people, especially the lower classes of society, viewed disease as caused by evil spirits invading the body and causing disease, and this was held by, not only by the lower classes, but predominantly by Jewish people as well in the ancient Mediterranean world of the Bible. And these lower classes and the Jews were considered to be superstitious by the upper classes and the early Christians also held this point of view because we find in healing diseases Jesus is casting out demons from people in the Gospels. Paul's thorn in the flesh, which is some kind of affliction of his body is described as a messenger of Satan, 2 Corinthians 12:7. And so it seems that the writers of Scripture and Paul himself, held to the idea that disease was caused by evil spirits. Augustine on the other hand, who comes from more of the educated classes, is fond of describing sin as some kind of wound to the body. And so he gravitates naturally to the idea of sin, the first idea of sin as a deterioration, or a corruption of the body. And a corruption is sort of the like, kind of a natural deterioration like rust is a corruption of iron but in this case it's a moral deterioration rather than a physical

deterioration. In this view Satan wounded human nature and the body at the Fall, he didn't actually enter in to it and indwell it. Paul however, his view fits more the idea of being invaded by some kind of evil spirit. As I've said before, Paul expresses a view of disease in 2 Corinthians 12:7 where he says the thorn in his flesh was an emissary of Satan. Somehow an emissary of Satan has entered his body or a messenger of Satan causing disease. In Romans 5:12 Paul says sin entered into or invaded the world. In Romans 7:17 & 20 Paul distinguishes sin from himself, it is no longer I who sin and not I who do the sin. He distinguishes sin from the flesh in Romans 8:3. They're not identical. Sin takes up residence and indwells human flesh just the way a demonic spirit would in Romans 7:17 & 20 and just like an enemy invader would, sin takes us captive and makes us do it's will in Romans 7:23. Sin produces evil desires but it's not identical with those evil desires in Romans 7 & 8. And in Romans 8:15 sin is described as a spirit of slavery. So Paul outright identifies sin as a spirit in Romans 8:15. Some translations try to reduce that to a mere attitude or mindset but since the Holy Spirit the Spirit of adoption is a real Spirit which comes to dwell in us no one would say that the Holy Spirit is part of our human selves, or some human attitude, so the same is true of the spirit of slavery, it is a spirit which comes from the outside and invades us. And of course Ephesians 2:2 is the most clear of all in which Paul describes how we all once walked under the authority of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now operates in the children of disobedience. And the operation of this spirit is associated with the desires of the flesh, the Satan operated body which produces the distorted desires and appetites of the flesh. And finally Paul can describe the body as the body of sin, Romans 6:6, because it is the body that sin indwells or inhabits.

Another support for the idea that sin is a spirit is that in the early Church, baptism was viewed as an exorcism of Satan from the person. Luther supported this practice but Calvin opposed it and many Churches—Catholics, Anglican's, Lutherans—although not reform churches, continued to practice exorcism as baptism up through the 19th century, supporting the idea that at one point in the Church it was a common view that Satan was exorcised or expelled from the human self at conversion because baptism is a symbolic act through which one expresses one's faith in Christ and converts to Christ, to faith in Christ. Another, an additional support for the idea that sin is an evil spirit is that this idea is prevalent in Jewish thinking prior to Paul. In the dead sea scrolls, which were rediscovered in the 1940's and 1950's, a group of Jews called the Aseans, there is a document called the community rule and part of that community rule is called the rule of two spirits and scholars believe it was written some time between 300BC and 100BC, and in this document it says that God created the human kind to rule over the world appointing for them two spirits in which to walk until the time ordained for his coming, these are the spirits of truth and falsehood. And he also says upon earth the operation of these spirits are these, one enlightens a man's mind making straight before him the paths of true righteousness and causing his heart to fear the laws of God the spirit ?? humility, patience, passion, goodness, insight, understanding and powerful wisdom, sustained by God's

constant faithfulness. This sounds a great deal like the fruit of the spirit and indeed the ancient Aseans believed that they had the Holy Spirit dwelling within them and that they were the group at the end of time who were in the new covenant and blessed by God with the Holy Spirit and so it's very similar to the early Christians even though they didn't believe in Jesus as messiah. The rule of two spirits also talks about the operations of the spirit of falsehood, result in greed, neglect of righteous deed, wickedness, lying, pride, deceit, fraud, hypocrisy, lack of self control, and all these sound like the works of flesh which Paul describes in Galatians 5. So it's reasonable to conclude that Paul in his portrayal or contrast of sin, the spirit of sin and the Spirit of Christ, is just drawing upon common Jewish tradition which the Aseans were also expressing. And so it makes it even more likely that Paul was in fact talking about two spirits and not about a sinful human nature. Many other early Jewish and early Christian writings identify Satan with sin. I won't go into those here but the reason that this is so important is that it shows that early readers of Paul's letters, especially those coming from a Jewish background, would have read Paul as referring to sin as an invading evil spirit. Indeed the early Church fathers, prior to Augustine, almost entirely interpreted sin in Romans 7, as a reference to the serpent in Genesis 3 and therefore to Satan. And this comes from Romans 7:11 where Paul says sin deceived me which most scholars recognize as a reference to Eve's statement the serpent deceived me in Genesis 3:11. One early Church leader in Alexandria, one of the chief cities in Egypt in the Eastern Roman Empire, his name was Didymus the Blind, he lived in the 4th century AD and he said, it is the devil who dwells in sinners and does the evil through them, just as Christ works the good in believers. And another very important early Church theologian known for his important work on the Trinity and the Holy Spirit calls the devil sin itself and the word he uses is one word Onoharmartia?? which clearly identifies the devil and sin and he does this in commenting on Romans chapter 7. Another Church father of the 4th century, Methodius, says about Romans 7, but the devil whom he calls sin because he is the author of sin taking occasion by the commandment to deceive me into disobedience deceived and slew me by such a choice I am sold to the devil, fallen under sin, the law of the devil according to the lust which dwells in the flesh. So he takes the law of sin and death and calls it the law of the devil. And one of the earliest Church fathers, Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyon, in what is now France, writes that Adam became a vessel in Satan's possession. And I can mention other early Church father's Origen, Sudo-Macarius, who lived in the 3rd and 4th centuries who also take this view. And what all this shows is that the dominant interpretation of Romans 7 for some reason changed in the late 4th century early 5th century in Western Christianity, from the idea that sin was an evil spirit that expressed itself through human beings, to a view that sin was a corruption of human nature and just part of us rather than a spirit that indwelt us.

Now the reason for this, this change, I suggest is probably because there was a huge penetration of the early Church by wealthy, educated people at this time in the mid to late 4th century, and as a result the theology of the Church shifted to

accommodate them. It wasn't any kind of conscious plot but these educated people, because Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire in the 380's, realized that it was politically wise and expedient to become Christians. And so more and more people became Christians who were not necessarily truly converted and some of these became leaders and theologians of the Church and many of the leaders and theologians of the Church felt some pressure to accommodate these people and to preach in such a way that would sound reasonable to them and not uneducated and superstitious as the idea of being invaded by an evil spirit would sound. And so these beliefs were quietly set aside especially in the Western Church, and especially because of Augustine's influence.

So the point of Paul about the weakness of the flesh, is that the flesh, it's not that the flesh is bad, the flesh is neutral, it's which spirit is in charge of and indwelling the flesh? That whereas once sin was indwelling us and operating through our flesh and producing the sinful passions in our flesh, the sinful appetites, it was because of our weakness and ultimately with our acceptance of Christ and our accepting a new Spirit and Satan being cast out, flesh is still neutral, it's still weak, but flesh is meant to be weak and meant to be operated by a spirit greater than ourselves, namely the Spirit of God and not the spirit of Satan. It's not that something is wrong with human nature which is what Augustine does and what's reflected in the NIV and the New Living Translations.

Probably the most well known passage about flesh and spirit of course is in Galatians 5 & 6. But in Galatians 5:16 and 5:17 in the New American Standard say but I say walk by the spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh for the flesh sets it's desire against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. For these are in opposition to each one another so that you may not do the things that you please. In actual fact, even this translation, as almost literal as it is, is not quite accurate and influenced by Augustine. It should read, in my opinion, for these are in opposition to one another or are contrary to one another so that you may not do what ever you please. In other words that you are not independent of the spirit that is operating the flesh or the spirit of God. And I think what is implied from all of Paul's writings when you just, you don't just take Galatians 5:16 & 17 out of context, that the flesh is not some independent reality, but in light of Romans 7 is something that is operated and indwelt by the spirit of sin, the spirit of slavery that he mentions in Romans 8:15. And so Paul can talk about the desire of the flesh, because by flesh here he means humanity separated from Christ, in rebellion against God, the unbelieving world, and so if we walk by the spirit that is we walk in the awareness of Christ's Spirit living through us in that belief in that faith, then we will not carry out the desire that characterizes sinful humanity. The flesh, that is the human world apart from Christ, sets it's desire against the spirit and the spirit sets itself against the human world dominated by Satan, and they're in opposition to one another so that we do not do whatever we please. I don't think there's any more clearer statement that we don't have any kind of independent choosing apart from our being operated by one of the two

spirits. The key is the NAS has eliminated the word ever, you may not do what , or the things, what ever you want and translated it just as that you please. So instead of so that you may not do the things that you please implying that we don't really do God's will, what it means is that so you may not do what ever you please. In the New Living Translation it just simply translates it as, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives then you wont be doing what your sinful nature craves, the sinful nature wants to do evil which is just the opposite of what the spirit wants, these two forces are constantly fighting each other so you're not free to carry out your good intentions. And basically that's just Augustine's understanding of Romans 7 just read right into Paul. And the idea of letting the Holy Spirit guide your lives gives this impression of I am still in control because I have to let the spirit guide my life. It's not that he takes control of me and lives through me and that it's no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, it's I live and I just allow Christ to direct me and give me some directions, hand me a piece of paper but I'm still the one driving the car, which is totally impendent and totally false and totally not Paul. The new international version says basically the same thing, so I say walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature, for the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the spirit and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature, they are in conflict with each other so that you are not to do what ever you want. Well it preserves the ever so it's a little more correct there but obviously sinful nature is a wrong translation. And it changes it into a command so that you are not to do what ever you want but it's not a command it's just a statement of fact. So that you do not do what ever you want, you're not independent is really what Paul's point is.

So as you can see, even our modern translations are influenced greatly by Augustine's theology. Now I'm not saying that the NIV or the New Living Translations are overall terrible translations or that you should never use any part of them, I'm just saying that when it comes to the apostle Paul and specifically passages about sin, the flesh, and the Spirit of Christ operating us, that's when they read Augustine's theology into the text. There's other parts of Scripture where thy are perfectly fine in the way they interpret and translate the Bible. But I think it is important that we be aware that translation can influence our theology and we're not even aware or the theology can influence translation and we're not necessarily aware that it's doing that and then influence the way that we understand what's happening when we're being tempted and why we find that life may not work the way that the Bible says it is supposed to work.

So in summary, the flesh is just bodily human nature which has been taken over or invaded by a spirit, the spirit of error, the spirit of Satan, the spirit of sin or the spirit of slavery in various parts of Scripture. Sin itself is not something that has gone wrong with human nature, it is not some psychological principle, it is not a corruption of human nature. Sin is an invading spirit, what Paul calls the prince of the power of the air the spirit which is now at work in the children of disobedience. So sin is the spirit of Satan operating in us, operating in our flesh, while we were unbelievers, but fortunately for us Christ came and died to expel

that spirit from us, from operating us, in his death on the cross and when we believe in that, believe in Christ's redemption of us and participate in his death to sin and his resurrection, then the old spirit goes out and we are joined to the new spirit, the Spirit of Christ, by whom we are now to be operated through our faith in Him as Paul says in Galatians 2:20, it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live I live by faith or rather by the faithfulness of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. And so our faith in His faithfulness are what enables Christ to live his life through us just as sin or the spirit of Satan once lived his quality of life through us.