

**Daily Life with Christ. Love-19: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of love: The real power of sin (AKA “old sin nature”) is in its improper loves.**

# The "Power Of Sin" Is Not The Sin Nature

(Online copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/032018.pdf> and <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

**George:** Stephen, I think your system . . . your view of love is inconsistent . . . is flawed . . . as well.

**Stephen:** How so?

**George:** Well, you claim to come up with foundational, universal, and undeniable meanings of love based on reality— “as such,” as you say—that at bottom love is a desire for what one perceives as a good, and that every person by nature always seeks what he perceives as his good. Your claim is that this is an undeniable law of being and reason.

**Stephen:** Yes, and that this love takes the form according to the undeniable nature of the being and the offices of love. My love for blueberry pancakes, for my wife, and for my children are different because of the respective nature of these beings. They are all viewed as goods to be sought but in different ways according to the different beings.

**George:** But is this not just a distinction between loving inanimate objects and loving people?

**Stephen:** There is more to it than the object of love being an inanimate object or a person. My love for inanimate objects could include me devouring them as per blueberry pancakes or protecting them as per my favorite books. I love them both, but in different ways because of the nature of the beings involved.

**George:** Let’s get back to your claim that it is a universal law that all people seek what they perceive as their good. How do you account for the fact that people are divided with regard to what they perceive as their good? Even Christians, who are fully aware that God is their greatest good often choose sin and evil, knowing full well that it is against their greatest good. Do you not recognize that people can be self-destructive?

**Stephen:** It is a universal and undeniable principle that all men seek higher goods and lower goods. The desire, the love, for higher goods comes from the immaterial intellect and conscience. The desire, the love, for lower goods comes from the material sensible realm—the flesh, as Scripture puts it.

**George:** Oh, so you are talking about the old sin nature?

**Stephen:** I don't care for that nomenclature. It is Cartesian and implies that there is an autonomous or independent nature in the believer as an extra entity that fights against the believer.

**George:** So, you don't believe in the old sin nature?

**Stephen:** I do, but I think it is best to think of it in terms of “fallen nature.” When Paul speaks of the “old man,” he is referring to our former unredeemed human nature, not a hostile thing in us.

**George:** What is the difference?

**Stephen:** The fallen nature is more of a privation of God's supernatural grace to “see,” love, and live in God—fallen nature is from the fall of Adam, a matter of not having the grace that lifts man up to the supernatural level. Before his fall, Adam lived in supernatural grace, so He could orient to God and the spiritual. He lost that at the Fall. The fallen nature is just man oriented to his earthly sense level. It is the unregenerate man who cares little about God. If you look at all the references to the old man in the Bible, you will see that they all fit perfectly with what I am saying.

**George:** Again, what difference does it make?

**Stephen:** For one, we are more responsible for our actions. Instead of blaming some old sin nature entity that makes us sin, we sin and do evil by orienting to the loves of our fallen and natural nature rather than our redeemed nature in Christ. For example, when we sin, we do it because we view it as some earthly good—rather than because of some boogeyman, like the old sin nature, making us do it. In other words, anytime I sin, I do it because of some perceived good, not because there is an alien old sin nature attacking me and making me do it. This has a profound impact on the spiritual life.

**George:** How so?

**Stephen:** It motivates me to go to God to help me overcome my improper desires, improper loves, for certain sins. Motivates me to examine myself and ask myself why I in the world do I see good in sin. It is not as if there is some sin nature in me making me want this or that. It is me, my love for some perceived good in some sin. In other words, every time I sin, I only do so because I, at the moment, think that it is a good thing in some way—it is a love for something because it is seen as a good. Every time I sin, it is because my lower nature of sense appetites overcome my higher spiritual appetites. In sum, we are all responsible for every sin we have every committed—and *it is an undeniable fact of reality that every sin we commit is an act of “love” for something, even if it is an improper love* (e.g., “lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” as per 1 John 2:15-16). No one sins unless he sees that sin as a good in some

way. This is an undeniable fact of reality as such. The only solution is for God to unite our fragmented selves, by lifting up our lower sense appetites and uniting them with our higher spiritual desires. As long as we live fragmented lives, our capacity to love God, others, and self are compromised.