

## Is man basically good or evil?

Well, that depends on which “man” you are talking about, the spiritual man or the carnal (fleshly) man, the inner man or the outer man, our immortal soul (ie. spirit) or our fleshly physical body ( including our physical brain). We were all created in the image of God, and at the innermost core of our being we are made of the same stuff as God, who is spirit. Our spirits, or souls, are basically good, because God is good and we are made of “God parts.”

The Apostle Paul explains it this way in Romans 7 and 8. He says that he was once “alive” apart from the law, but when the commandment came (ie. the knowledge of good and evil), sin sprang to life and he “died.”

Romans 7:9: *“Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.”*

What Paul is saying here is that we all start out as spiritual beings and are spiritually alive and free from sin. (There is no such thing as “original sin.”) When Paul talks about “life” and “death” here, he is obviously not talking about physical life and death. When Paul “died” as a result of his sin, he did not die physically. Spiritual life and death refer to our relationship with God, which is severed when we fall into sin. When we die spiritually, we lose touch with our connection with God in our innermost selves, and allow ourselves to be controlled instead by our physical, fleshly natures.

Paul further explains that when he fell into sin it was not his true inner self that was doing this. Paul identifies his “sinful nature” as the one who is really committing those sins. Each of us has two natures, our spiritual nature and our physical or fleshly nature. The saying of Jesus is very true that *“the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”* (Matt. 26:41)

Romans 7:17-18: *“As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it but it is sin living in me. 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.”*

Paul then explains that in his “inner being” he delights in God’s law, but another part of him, his fleshly nature has imprisoned him. In his “*mind*” (ie. his human spirit or Godly nature) he is “*alive*,” but in his “sinful nature” he is a slave to sin.

Romans 7:22: *“For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.”*

When the Spirit of Christ indwells us, we are in a sense “reconnected” with our true spiritual nature and are given the power to overcome our fleshly, sinful nature and “live” according to the Spirit of Christ who has enlivened our human spirit and imparted to us “super human” powers.

Romans 8:1-4: *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”*

We see from this that, according to Paul, Christian salvation has nothing to do with physical life and death. It has nothing to do with physically “living” forever. The “*aionian*” life (literally: “*age abiding*” life) that Christ gives us is something that we experience in the here and now. It’s not something that anyone experiences “completely” at any instantaneous moment of time, however. It may best be regarded as a process of transformation that will not be complete until after we die and finally shed these fleshly bodies for good.