***The Eradication Theory
and the Counteraction Theory
RO70-02***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1977)**

Please open your Bibles to Romans 6:6 as we continue looking at the old man crucified. This is the second segment.

**The Sin Nature**

We found in our last session that Romans 5:12 through Romans 7:6 is a section in which the apostle Paul is explaining how God has dealt with the sin nature of those who are entering heaven. We are all born into the human race having inherited a nature of sin from Adam through our parents. The sin nature places every one of us under moral guilt. Thus we are under divine judgment. Yet, God is taking people who have that kind of moral guilt upon them into heaven.

**Moral Guilt**

God has to do something about that moral guilt, which is referred to here in the passage in Romans under the singular word "sin," referring to that sin nature. God has to do something about that sin nature as the judge of the universe if He is going to permit us to enter His heaven. He has to do something about that moral guilt so that, though we go to heaven, He has not compromised His holiness. He must preserve His integrity.

This particular section of the book of Romans, Romans 5:12 through Romans 7:6, keep well in mind, deals with God's judicial solution for the sin nature problem of believers who are going to heaven. It is God as the judge solving this problem. It has nothing whatever to do with your current holy living. It has nothing to do with your day-by-day walk as a believer. It is not the section of Romans which is dealing with experiential sanctification – setting apart to holiness in our daily lives.

We showed this to you, in part, in the last session, by pointing out that all the Greek verbs in this portion of Romans relating Christ's death and the believer's relationship to it – all the verbs that touch on that are aorist or perfect. Aorist means it's a joint action in the past. Perfect means it's done in the past with results that continue to the present. The point in both cases is that it is done in the past, and there is no reference to something that is taking place in the present, which is the kind of tense it would have to have if we're going to talk about daily Christian living – our current walk before God.

So, just the very Greek tend to show us that there is no dealing in this passage with our current walk before God. It's all something that's completed and done with in the past.

There is no reference, therefore, to a death which the believer is to seek to die now in order to achieve experiential holiness – some kind of an idea of finding some kind of crucifixion of yourself in order to put yourself in the place where you can walk as a godly person. There is no death referred to here which you must seek out.

**Legal Words**

In other words, you cannot base anything about experiential sanctification on Romans 6:6. It's not there. The judicial nature of this particular section is further indicated by the use of certain legal words. So, let's add that point. We know that this is a section that a judge is dealing with – that God is dealing with as a judge because of certain legal words that keep cropping up in this section of Romans 5:12 through Romans 7:6.

**Law**

For example, the word "law," which Paul usually uses in terms of the Mosaic Law, is repeatedly used here. I'll just name the passages. You can research them on your own. We find the word "law" in Romans 5:13, Romans 5:20, Romans 6:14, Romans 6:15, Romans 7:1, Romans 7:2, Romans 7:3, Romans 7:4, Romans 7:5, and Romans 7:6. Those verses all use the word "law." And the very fact Paul keeps referring to "law, law, law" indicates that his mental viewpoint has to do with a judge – a judge who's dealing with a decision and an action: God as judge.

There are other legal words that further confirm this. And I'll just run down those with you. In Romans 5:13, you have the word "imputed." That's a pure judicial word. You have the word "transgressions" in Romans 5:14. "Transgression" is obviously a word that a judge deals with. In Romans 5:15, you have the word "trespass." In Romans 5:16, you have the words "judgment;" "condemnation;" and, "justification." All those are legal terms. In Romans 5:17, you have the word "righteousness." In Romans 5:18, you have the words "trespass;" "condemnation;" "righteousness; and, "justification." These are legal terms. In Romans 5:19, you have the word "righteous." In Romans 5:21, you have the word "righteousness." In Romans 6:7, you have the word justified. If you're looking in the King James Version, it's translated as "freed," but the Greek word there is justified – a legal term. In Romans 6:23, you have "the wages of sin" ("the consequences of sin.") That's a legal idea. In Romans 7:2, you have the word "discharged." In Romans 7:4, you have "made dead." In Romans 7:6, you have "discharged" again. All of those are words that are purely legal terminology.

So, the apostle Paul, in speaking throughout this passage with the word "law" and these various legal terms confirms the fact that we have a right slant and the right viewpoint on this section if we view it as a judicial action on the part of God that's dealing with something that He as God must do relative to our sin nature in order to preserve His integrity when he takes us to heaven. It has nothing to do with our holy and godly day-by-day walk. Any attempt to base the doctrine of experiential sanctification on Romans 6:6 will lead to a false view. And that is exactly what has happened.

**The Eradication Theory**

There are two basic false views I want to look at with you now to alert you to them. These are views that people hold today. The first false view is called the eradication theory.

**A Second Blessing**

Christians today by the thousands are vainly pursuing a thing called a second blessing after salvation of entire sanctification – a blessing which is added to the first blessing of salvation, and which will now completely remove the functioning of the sin nature within the believer. Eradication means removing the sin nature so that you don't sin any more.

**Sin was Redefined**

The problem from the beginning, that this theory was proposed by the Methodist founder John Wesley, was that it never worked out in practice. The adherence to eradication of the sin nature in time found it necessary to redefine sin. They found it necessary to maintain that sin was really temptation, or that it was inadvertent mistakes that are the result of the fact of their finiteness. They quit calling certain things that before they called sin. Now that they claimed sinless perfection, they change these same sins into simply being mistakes, or inadvertent results, or the fact that they were just human (finite).

John Wesley came up with this doctrine, based on the false interpretation of Romans 6:6, because Wesley did not realize that Romans 6:6 is in a portion that deals with God as judge dealing with the sin nature, not God dealing with our sin nature relative to our experience – but God as judge dealing with our sin nature relative to Himself; His own holiness; and, His own integrity. Because John Wesley made that monumental mistake (terrific leader and godly man that he was), he set in motion inadvertently a horrendous satanic consequence which bore its fruition in our day in the charismatic Pentecostal movement, and we outlined those steps for you previously.

**The Failure of the Eradication Theory**

However, Wesley himself was in time frustrated by the fact that sin had a way of dominating again those who supposedly had experienced this eradication. Very few, he observed, actually continued in insidiousness. In a letter that he wrote in 1769 to a Miss Jane Hilton, John Wesley indicated the problem that he was having with this when he wrote to her: "Although many taste of that heavenly gift, deliverance from inbred sin, yet so few, so exceeding few, retain it one year; hardly one in 10; nay, one in 30."

That was very discouraging for the man who had come up with this monumental new doctrine of sinless eradication (sinless perfection) – removing the disease of the old sin nature from functioning within a Christian. After he got these people saved, many of them who were the scum of society, he would then point them on to what he considered a glory land of sinless perfection so that they would not fall aside. But in the process of trying to move people on to spiritual maturity, he missed the boat of realizing that that was through the teaching and the intake of doctrine, and he fell into the concept of removing the old sin nature. Consequently, it was inevitable that in time he should be disappointed by the fact that the people who came to claiming sinless perfection eventually admitted they were failures at it.

In his journals, this is repeatedly referred to (this distress on his part) – the observation of failures on the part of his people who claimed sinless perfection, and were constantly falling short of it. He was also distressed by the high volume, of course, of those who were falling aside. In another quote from a series of his writings called "The Sermons," he said, "Nevertheless, we have seen some of the strongest of them, after a time, from their steadfastness, sometimes suddenly, but oftener by slow degrees, they have yielded to temptation and pride, or anger, or foolish desires have again sprung up in their hearts. Nay, sometimes they have utterly lost the life of God, and sin has regained dominion over them."

What Wesley is saying here is even with people who are their leaders; the people who were most exemplary; and, the people that were outstanding as Christians and workers among them, and who could one day suddenly conclude that they had had the sin nature removed, and could stand up and testify to that effect, found in time that they were still sinners, and that they were failures in living up to the claim.

John Wesley became so desperate over the eradication doctrine that on one occasion he wrote in this way to his brother Charles. This is recorded in his writings called "The Works." He said to Charles, "I am at my wit's end with regard to Christian perfection. Shall we go on asserting perfection against all the world, or shall we quietly let it drop?" I would to God that he had been able to quietly let it drop.

Unfortunately, he had turned a tiger loose that had captured the attention of the old sin nature, and it was so attractive to the old sin nature that people would not let the idea go, because they were indeed sincere, dedicated people who wanted to be godly. And this was a very appealing idea. So, John Wesley, no matter what he thought, and he had some great reservations near the end of his life concerning the doctrine of eradication, he could not turn the tide back. The die had been cast.

**Faking Eradication**

This idea of eradication creates, as you can imagine, immense psychological trauma in the adherents when they fail. They are often driven to trying to fake it. Once they recognize that they are not sinless, they don't want to admit it to themselves. They don't dare admit it to other people. And they try keeping a front and faking it through.

**Dr. Harry Ironside**

One experience of that nature that has been recorded for us was done by a former teacher of mine at Dallas Seminary. He was one of the great expositors of all time: a man named Dr. Harry A. Ironside. Ironside for many years was the renowned pastor of the Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. He was an immensely effective Bible teacher. Therefore, it is interesting to read his experience in the Holiness movement, for he was in the Salvation Army, which was a branch of the Methodist movement, and he was deep into the seeking of personal eradication.

His testimony is significant because, in his early years, he was completely open to the idea of the eradication of the sin nature. He was strongly in favor of it, and he zealously pursued it. This is not somebody who is standing on the outside critical of the position to begin with, and criticizing it. Ironside was in it. He was for it, and he pursued it. He sought, and as a matter of fact, finally came to the place where he claimed to have attained sinless perfection and the second blessing.

He tried desperately to maintain this theory, however, against mounting evidence to the contrary in his experience. Later, I can tell you, he felt very, very strongly about the second blessing experience. He used to tell us in his lectures that when people come up and asked him whether he has received the second blessing, he would say, "No, I have not received the second blessing. I have received the third, the tenth, the twelfth, the fortieth, the five thousandth," and he would go on like that. But he would said, "I have not received the second." And they would reply, "I don't understand, brother."

"Well," he said, "I have seen many others who have received the second blessing, and it made such jackasses out of them that I've never wanted it myself." Now for you to understand the reason for Ironside's statement of that nature and his strong feeling about the second blessing, I'm going to read to you his experience as it is summarized and recorded in a book called Christian Holiness by J. Sidlow Baxter. He summarizes Dr. Ironside's position in this way:

"Dr. H. A. Ironside, in his trenchant little work, Holiness: the False and the True" (Incidentally, you can still go to the library and get that book, and it will give you the whole story. We're going to give you the summary tonight), "paints a sorry picture of his own inner torture and that of other Christian workers brought up during the earlier years in the eradication doctrine. If every young man sincerely handed himself over to Christ, and reverently claimed the blessing, and intensively persevered to experience the eradication of inbred sin, he did. Yet at last, exhausted after years of painful trial and retrial, he knew that any further pretense was sheer hypocrisy. And at the same time, he discovered that others around him who professed the blessing were similarly heartsick with secret agony of disillusionment.

"After his conversion in early youth, he linked up with the Salvation Army, which at that time, to quote his own words, 'Was at the zenith of its energy as an organization devoted to going out after the lost.' Young Harry soon enjoyed the Army holiness meetings. Substantially, the teaching was this: When converted, God graciously forgives all sins committed up to the time when one repents. But the believer is then placed in a lifelong probation during which he may at any time forfeit his justification and peace with God if he falls into sin from which he does not at once repent. In order, therefore, to maintain himself in the same condition, he needs a further work of grace called sanctification. This work has to do with sin, the root, as justification had to do with sin, the fruit.

"The steps leading up to this second blessing are: firstly, conviction as to the need of holiness, just as in the beginning, there was conviction of the need of salvation; secondly, a full surrender to God, or the laying of every hope, prospect, and possession on the altar of consecration; and, thirdly, to claim in faith the incoming of the Holy Spirit as a refining fire to burn out all inbred sin, thus destroying in toto every lust and passion, leaving the soul perfect in love and pure as unfallen Adam.

"Dr. Ironside tells how he continually sought the blessing until: 'At last, one Saturday night, I determined to go out into the country and wait on God, not returning till I had received the blessing of perfect love. I took the train at 11 o'clock, and went to a lonely station 12 miles from Los Angeles. Then I alighted, and leaving the highway, descended into an empty arroyo (or watercourse). Falling on my knees beneath a sycamore tree, I prayed in an agony for hours, beseeching God to show me anything that hindered my reception of the blessing.

"'Various matters of two private and sacred-in-nature to be here related came to my mind. I struggled against conviction, but finally ended by crying, 'Lord, I give up all: everything; every person; and, every enjoyment that would hinder my living alone for Thee. Now, give me, I pray, the blessing.'

"'As I look back, I believe I was fully surrendered to the will of God at that moment, so far as I understood it, but my brain and nerves were unstrung by the long midnight vigil and the intense anxiety of previous months. And I fell, almost fainting, to the ground. Then a holy ecstasy seemed to thrill all my being. This, I thought, was the coming into my heart of the Comforter. I cried out in confidence, 'Lord, I believe. Thou doest come in. Thou doest cleanse and purify me from all sin. I claim it now. The work is done. I am sanctified by Thy blood. Thou doest make me holy. I believe. I believe.'

"'I was unspeakably happy. I felt that all my struggles were ended. With a heart filled with praise, I rose from the ground and began to sing aloud. Consulting my watch, I saw it was about half-past-three in the morning. I felt I must hasten to town so as to be in time for the 7 o'clock prayer meeting, there to testify to my experience.'"

Now, doesn't that sound like something very familiar to you that takes place in the charismatic movement today? It was the feeling of ecstasy after intense emotional outlay as he went through in that arroyo, struggling, crying out to God, and finally in exhaustion, the emotions just taking hold and insisting on being released, and relaxing themselves in such a way that he thought that God was doing something for him. I don't know whether the devil was doing something with Ironside that night, as very often he does in the charismatic Pentecostal movement, or whether this was just the physical body saying, "Enough is enough," and the nervous system reacting against itself and releasing itself. But in any case, the results were the same. And this is exactly what is taking place in the charismatic movement today – this intense, emotional, reaching-out for God in an exhaustive way, until they indeed do get a sense of release; a sense of joy; and, a sense of something that's very pleasing to them. And they think that God has done something for them.

Well, continuing: "From then onwards, young Ironside was an earnest testimonial and advocate of the doctrine. The wilderness was passed. He was in Canaan. He was entirely sanctified. Inward sin bias was now destroyed, or so he thought. But as time went on, evil desires began to reassert themselves. He was nonplussed. However, a leading teacher assured him that these were only temptations, not actual sin. So, that pacified him for a time.

"Later, he became a cadet, then a lieutenant, then a captain in the Salvation Army. During those years, there were tormenting relapses; all-nights of prayer; and, renewed struggles after self-crucifixion with inescapable evidence that the supposed eradication of the sinful nature was a delusive sophism.

"He writes: 'And now I began to see what a string of derelicts this holiness teaching left in its train. I could count scores of persons who had gone into utter infidelity because of it. They always gave the same reason: 'I tried it all. I found it a failure. So, I concluded the Bible teaching was all a delusion. And religion was a mere matter of the emotions.' Many more, and I knew several such intimately, lapsed into insanity after floundering in the morass of this emotional religion for years. And people said that studying the Bible had driven them crazy. How little they knew that it was lack of Bible knowledge that was accountable for their wretched mental state, and absolutely unscriptural use of isolated passages of Scripture.

"'At last I became so troubled I could not go on with my work. Finally, I could bear it no longer. So, I asked to be relieved from all active service. At my own request, I was sent to the Beula Home of Rest near Oakland. In the rest home, I found about 14 officers, broken in health, seeking recuperation. I watched the ways and conversation of all most carefully, intending to confide in those who gave the best evidence of entire sanctification. There were some choice souls among them, and some errant hypocrites. But holiness in the absolute sense I saw in none. Some were very godly and devoted. Their conscientiousness I could not doubt. But those who talked the loudest were plainly the least spiritual. They seldom read their Bibles. They rarely conversed together of Christ. An air of carelessness pervaded the whole place. Three sisters, most devoted women, were apparently more godly than any others. But two of them admitted to me that they were not sure about being perfectly holy. The other was noncommittal, though seeking to help me. Some were positively quarrelsome and boorish. And this I could not reconcile with their profession of freedom from inbred sin. At last, I found myself becoming cold and cynical.'

"Dr. Ironside tells how he struggled free at last from this spacious perfectionism which had so flogged and foiled him. Then he adds: "Since turning aside from the perfectionist societies, I have often been asked if I find as high a standard maintained among Christians generally who do not profess to have the second blessing as I have seen among those who do. My answer is that after carefully, and I trust without prejudice, considering both, I have found a far higher standard maintained by believers who intelligently reject the eradication theory than among those who accept it. Quiet, unassuming Christians who know their Bibles and their own hearts too well to permit their lips to talk of senselessness and perfection in the flesh, nevertheless, are characterized by intense devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ; love for the Word of God; and, holiness of life and walk."

I think that's an excellent case history that has been repeated many, many, many times in Christian circles of those who have pursued the satanic doctrine of eradication of the sin nature. All the devotion that Ironside brought to seeking such a goal could not accomplish it, because that is not God's way.

So, theory number one that comes out of Romans 6:6, when you do not understand that it is not dealing with experiential sanctification, but with judicial dealing of God with the sin nature, is eradication.

**The Counteraction Theory**

In order to counter this view, a second view was developed, but which also had the problem of basing itself on Romans 6:6 to come up with a doctrine of Christian living. That is called the counteraction theory. Sometimes this has been referred to in days past as the suppression theory as well. It too, as I say, is based on Romans 6:6, but it seeks to avoid the error of eradication. It teaches that the inherited sin nature cannot be eradicated, but that the Christian can achieve victory over it. The counteraction theory comes much closer to the scriptural position, but it is in trouble from the beginning because it is trying to establish the doctrine on the basis of Romans 6:6, in this area of Scripture which deals with God's judicial answer to the sin nature, not with His experiential answer.

This view holds that experiential sanctification is achieved by the counteraction effect of an inward joint crucifixion of the sin nature with Christ and the working of the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. The inward crucifixion of the sin nature with Christ is a current action which the believers seeks. So, immediately there is the problem. He is seeking something to crucify him currently with Christ in a passage that only uses aorist and perfect tenses, talking about something that happened in the past, and could not in any way be dealing with something that is the current experience.

Well, the result of this counter action theory is self-crucifixion – seeking to die to the sin nature, which is impossible. It is completely illogical even to suggest that you can in some way detach yourself from what you are. The idea here is to claim the death of Christ in one's experience so as to make the sin nature inoperative, or to have it counteracted. It holds that the sin nature does remain in the believer until death, functioning as an entity.

The basic problem with the counter-reaction view, again, is that it's based on Romans 6:6. The reason that this is a problem is because Romans 6:6 uses two words that are related. It uses the word "crucifixion," and it says that out of that crucifixion comes a destruction. Crucifixion ends in a termination. When a person is crucified, there is a termination in death. There is a bringing to an end. And Romans 6:6 says exactly that: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him; that the body of sin might be destroyed; that henceforth we should not serve sin."

The first problem that the counteraction viewpoint has is that it is saying that it can bring the old sin nature into a position of crucifixion, and yet that it is still alive and functioning. But that's not what the passage says. The passage says that if he's talking about the old sin nature when it's crucified, it's also destroyed. So, the counteractionist is right back where the eradicationist ended up. The eradication person read this, and he just read it for what it says here in English. And the logical conclusion, as Wesley came to, was that that's talking about the sin nature, and the sin nature can be destroyed. It says here, "So that I won't serve sin anymore." Now, that's what the passage says. No matter how you are to argue, Wesley would go back and say, "Look at that. That's what it says." And people since have done the same thing.

However, the counteractionist tries to get around that by playing with words. And when you push him to the corner, he is extremely frustrated, because he's trying to base a holiness of life on a passage that cannot sustain that concept. That has nothing to do with that. This is only talking about what God does relative to His own holiness in dealing with our sin nature as the judge – not our daily living, and what God does for us to enable us to live godly lives.

This crucifixion is a past, completed, once-for-all act, so it cannot be related to a current dying-to-sin in experience. So, if this is a crucifixion that is taking place in the past, and it results in a destruction, well, where is the old sin nature that supposedly is still there functioning? What you have said is that the sin nature is dead and gone. That's not what the counteractionist wants to say. He says, "That's what the eradicationist says, and that's the very thing we're trying to get away from. We're trying to neutralize what these people are saying about sinless perfection.

The principle of counteraction is true only in the sense of what Paul later refers to as the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ that counteracts the inbred sin quality, and he is going to get to that. He gets to that after Romans 7:6, where he has finished his discussion about judicial dealing with the sin nature. Once he gets into the experiential area, that you get into in chapter 8, he brings in God the Holy Spirit left and right, and he brings in the power, and the condition, and the structure of controlling that evil quality within you, and it's a whole different picture.

However, then, indeed, the sin nature can be countered, but not on the basis of this verse here, because what this verse says is anything but countering. But this verse is talking about the old sin nature. Then what this verse says is that it's dead; it's been crucified; it's out of the picture; and, you shouldn't have any more trouble with sin.

Experiential sanctification is related to our full union with the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. The resurrection life of Jesus Christ is not in Romans 6:6. Romans 6:1-7 does not deal with the believer's inward sanctification.

So, here's what you have between these two views. The eradicationists are always trying to bring their experience up to the level of Romans 6:6. They keep trying to push his experience up to what he believes Romans 6:6 is saying about experiential sanctification. The counteractionist, on the other hand, is forever trying to take the words of Romans 6:6 and bring them down to his experience. He just admits that sin is prominent and functioning with him, and he tries to take the words of Romans 6:6, and he tries to bring those words down here to where he's living, so that he's comfortable with what the verse says.

The whole problem is that you're dealing with a verse that has nothing to do with your day-by-day walk with God. Once you understand that, and once you get away from that, then you can start getting the pictures of what the verse is actually saying.

If the views of the counteractionists and the eradicationists were true, you'd have a problem, for example, with Romans 6:12: "Do not let sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in all its lusts." Yet, verses 6 and 11 talk about something being dead in the believer. And if that's the sin nature being dead in the believer, will you tell me why on earth the apostle Paul is saying in verse 12 that we should not let sin reign in our physical body? Why on earth would he tell us such a thing if he's just gotten through telling us that the sin nature has been crucified' that it's dead; and, all you have to do is claim it? That's what the counteractionist tells you. He says, "Just claim it. Just believe it. Just rely upon it. Just admit that it's so, and then go from there, and you will be in." And they play on this word "reckon" that the apostle Paul uses in verse 11.

We have the same thing in verse 13: "Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," and so on. That's talking about the physical body. Well, if they're inwardly dead to sin by some kind of reckoning, why in the world would it be necessary for them to yield themselves to God?

The whole picture is completely fouled up and completely distorted God. The Holy Spirit, who performs the inward work of experiential sanctification, is simply not mentioned in Romans 6:6 as indeed He is later in the experiential section of the book of from Romans 7:7 through Romans 8:36.

Furthermore, the right of water baptism portrays the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is described in Romans 6:1-4, and which Holy Spirit baptism produces a death to something which occurred in the past, and not a death which is yet to be achieved in the present or sometime in the future. So, what we have here is a fantastic contradiction on the part of both of these viewpoints.

So, let's get into the position that the Bible actually teaches. We start with the word "knowing." That's the Greek word "ginosko." It's the word which means "to know on the basis of an experience." In this case, it is the experience as a result of the faith you have in the Word of God. It's in the present tense. It's something you will continually know. It's active. The believer possesses the understanding. It is participle. It expresses here a cause.

We would translate it: "Since we know this." The word "this" looks like this in Greek: "houtos." "Houtos" is in the neuter, so it means "this thing." It introduces a statement about what is known: "That" is the Greek word "hoti." "Hoti" introduces the explanation of "this." "Hoti" is going to tell us what's in the "this" – this that we are supposed to know.

"That our old man." The word "our" is based on this person pronoun "ego." It's the first-person plural. "Our" is the possessive pronoun form. But the word "our" here does not refer to something that each of us personally possesses. What this word refers to is something that we possess in common. It is something that Paul calls "our old man." So, the word "our" does not refer to something that you, you, you, you, and you possess. It refers to something that is a total unit that all of us possess together as a whole. And that thing is called "our old man."

The word "old" is the Greek word "palaios." This is an adjective. This is a word which indicates long duration of time. The emphasis is upon the period of existence. A long duration of time is the opposite of the Greek word "neos," which means recent time in short duration. "Palaios" means time in long duration, and that's why we get the idea of "ancient" from it. And we could almost translate it as "ancient." That's what it connotes.

"Our ancient" what? "Our ancient man," which is "anthropos." "Anthropos" is not the word for man in terms of a male person in gender. It's the word for man in the sense of a human being. The word does not mean "nature." There is the first clue that we have to observe. We have to let the Word of God say what the Word of God does.

Where people are going astray on Romans 6:6 is that they're saying it's talking about the sin nature, but it doesn't use that word. It says "our old man." There's a totally different Greek word that looks like this: phusis." Now that is "nature." That's exactly what it means. But "anthropos" does not mean nature. And if you were to check this through, this word is used hundreds of times. None of the modern translations ever translate the word "anthropos" by the concept of "nature." They translate it in terms of mankind.

**The Old Man**

Therefore, we may establish that this is not true. "Old man" that Paul speaks of does not equal the "old sin nature." Negative. It does not equal that. That is not true. "Old man" does not mean the "old sin nature." Well, what is the old man? What does the Bible have in mind when it speaks about the ancient man? In terms of the context of all we've been reading, what would you think Paul has in mind in the course of the logic that he has been discussing? What do you think he would have in mind by the expression "old man?"

**Adam is the Old Man**

Well, there's only one idea. There's only one person who could qualify for that. And that's Adam. Adam is the old man. And Paul uses the term "old man" to mean the whole race of mankind in Adam viewed as a whole. We've been talking, and Paul has been talking, about the condition of humanity in Adam – the place of death and destruction. And in contrast to that, we have "the new man." I need not tell you who the new man is. That is Jesus Christ – the place of life and eternal blessing, as Adam, the old man, was the place of death and destruction.

**The Old Man has been Put Off**

In Ephesians 4:22-24, we read, "That you put off concerning the former manner of life, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Now you will notice that this verse says that a Christian can put off the old man, and he can put on the new man. Now, if this was talking about the sin nature, you're back in the same trouble that the eradicationist has gotten into in interpreting Romans 6:6 in the first place as talking about the sin nature as the thing that was crucified and was dead. There's no way you can put off the inbred sin nature. There is no way you can do that. Here again, the aorist tense comes in. And the aorist tense talks about something done in the past, so what you have to read here is: "You have put off concerning the former matter of life, the old man." You've already put off the old man. Here you are back again with that idea of something that's been done in the past in your experience as a Christian. The old man has been put off. That's obviously not the sin nature.

Look at Colossians 3:9-10: "Do not lie one to another, seeing scene that you put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, that is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." Here again, you have the aorist tense. You have put off the old man in the past. Yet you know very well that these believers in Colosse still had their sin natures. And yet Paul says, "You people have put off the old man." Putting off the old man is the equivalent of regeneration. You cannot regenerate yourself, and you cannot put off the sin nature. This is something that has been done for you. And it is not true that you have in the past put off your sin nature.

So, what is the old man? The old man is the condition of the whole human race in Adam. It refers to that place of death. The new man, in contrast, is the whole body of regenerated believers in Christ, the new creation. Adam is the old man. All the humanity that is in Adam constitutes the old creation. Christ is the new man, and all the believers are in Christ, constituting the new creation. The old mankind in Adam was what God judicially has dealt with in Romans 6. And when Romans 6 talks about our old man, it's talking about our mutual relationship to the humanity which was in Adam. Water baptism, of course, pictures this divine death and burial of those who are in the Adam humanity.

Let's add one more to it before we close. 1 Corinthians 15:45 has this expression that enlightens us: "And so it is written, the first man, Adam" There you have Adam specifically called the man using the same word "anthropos" that Romans 6:6 uses. So, it is the first man Adam was made a living soul.

Verse 47 says, "The first man is of the earth (earthy). The second man is the Lord from heaven. The first man is the ancient one who is the federal representative of fallen humanity in contrast to the New Man, Christ.

So, the context of Romans 5:12-21, which leads to the old man of Romans 6:6 – you will look back and notice that it deals with this one man Adam, who leads all to death; and, in contrast to the one New Man, Jesus Christ, through whom comes life. All the context leading up to Romans 6:6 keeps driving way as Adam as that old man, and Christ in contrast to him. Now we'll go from there as to what happens to that old humanity, and the consequences of that to you and me personally.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)