

## SOUL DISCOVERY - PART TWO

### SEEKING A DEFINITION

What is the soul? Common thinking suggests that it is the part of a person that lives forever. Most people believe that it is our souls that will go on to Heaven or into punishment. This idea is much engrained within us. It's one of those "simple" topics that we all mastered so long ago that it needs no review. In fact, with the phrase "heart, soul, and mind" used so often in Christendom on T-shirts and bracelets it's truly no wonder that we have overlooked the true meaning. Many of the most important things in life are right at our fingertips everyday and are taken for granted, so why would the topic of the soul be any different?

This study became an interest to me when I realized for the first time how significant it was that Jesus, the Son of God, said that one command stood alone as the greatest commandment of all. In all of life, there is nothing more important than loving God with all of our heart, soul, and mind. Well, I knew what this phrase meant - at least I thought I did. Thankfully I started looking to make sure. My first quest was to uncover how to love God with the heart. The answer is two parts: first, keep God in His proper place of being first in our lives; and second, keep our heart free from the pollutions of the lust of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life that would steal away our desire from service to God. Of course there is more that could be elaborated upon, but this is the essence of loving God with our heart.

The next portion I investigated was how to love God with the mind. Quickly Philippians 4:8 provided the framework for an answer. Of course, this aspect of the Great Commandment takes tremendous discipline. It is much, much easier said than done.

With these two portions answered, I realized immediately that I had no idea how to actively employ efforts into loving God with the soul. My understanding of the soul was identical with common thinking - that the soul lives forever. But if Jesus said this

was part of the greatest commandment, there had to be more to it. Our Lord didn't choose his words lightly, and He didn't haphazardly throw these three concepts together. There had to be something about the soul that relates to this life, and it had to be something we can actively control.

Already I was amazed and shaken with the study of heart and mind. There was so much more to apply to life within these two aspects of the great commandment than I had ever considered. Then, in the quest of uncovering how to love God with my soul, I realized something even more disturbing: my working definition of the soul had no true Biblical basis. Maybe you are like I was and need to know more about the soul.

The purpose of article is to find a working definition for the soul.

Already, in the first article in this series, we have discussed that the concepts of "heart, soul, and mind" cannot share the same meaning. **Heart** and **mind** have been somewhat defined in the first article and briefly discussed again here. We also discovered in the first article a different spectrum of words that pertain to the soul: body, soul, and spirit (1 Thes. 5:23). Again, these words cannot share the same definition.

Let's define **body**.

The Hebrew word for body is **chay**. Strong defines it as "alive, raw (flesh), plant or animal, literally or figuratively." It is used in 450 verses. Here are some familiar Old Testament passages that contain this meaning:

► King David's statement about his first son with Bathsheba

2 Samuel 12:22 "And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?"

► King Solomon's famous episode with the two disputing women

1 Kings 3:25 "And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other."

The Greek word for body is **zōē**. Strong defines it as "life, vitality, of animals or plants". It is used in 126 verses. Familiar New Testament passages include:

► Luke 12:15 "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

► James 4:14 "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

► John 6:53 "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

► Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

As seen in these passages, **body** refers to being alive or dead. It relates to our physical bodies and our lifespan. Occasionally, as noted in Romans 6:23, descriptor words change this to include the spiritual aspects (eternal life, book of life, tree of life, etc.). Even in these instances, the meaning of being alive or not is seen.

Now, let's define **spirit**.

The Hebrew word for spirit is **rûach**. Strong defines it as "wind, breath, life of a rational being including its expressions and functions." It is used 348 verses. Old Testament passages using this word include:

► Genesis 1:2 "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

► Ecclesiastes 3:21 "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the

earth?"

►Ecclesiastes 12:7 "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

The Greek word for spirit is **pneuma**. Strong defines it as "current of air, figuratively the spirit, the rational soul, the mental disposition." It appears in 350 New Testament verses, a few of which are:

- Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
- Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
- Romans 8:6 "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Notice the difference between the concept of spirit and body. This is again apparent in John 6:63:

- John 6:63 "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Here, Jesus is saying that His words are alive on both the spiritual and physical plains. It is easy to see the difference between body and spirit. But spirit, as seen in the passages from Ecclesiastes, is actually by definition what many wrongly consider to be the definition of the soul. Using the rules of logic, spirit and soul cannot have the same meaning.

Let's find verses that use the word **soul**.

The Hebrew word for soul is **nephesh**. Strong defines it as "a breathing creature, animal. Used widely: beast, body, creature, any appetite, lust, pleasure." It is used in 682 Old Testament verses, including:

- Describing the state of Samuel's mother Hannah before she conceived

1 Samuel 1:10 "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore."

- Psalms 42:1 "...As the hart [deer] panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

The Greek word for soul is **psuchē**. Strong defines it as "breath, spirit, relating to animal aspect of life only." It is used 94 times in the NT. Several verses include:

- Luke 12:19-20 "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. (20) But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

- Matthew 10:28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

- Matthew 10:39 "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

- Matthew 26:38 "Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."

- 1 John 3:16 "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

- Regarding the life of Gaius

3 John 1:2-3 "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. (3) For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth."

Hebrews 4:12 *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

Notice that even the New Testament definition of *soul* separates it from *spirit* by stating it relates to animal life only. Also notice that with both Old Testament and New Testament uses that soul can involve passions and emotions (Hannah's and Jesus' states of sorrow). John makes it clear that a soul can thrive even without physical health (3 John 1:2). Interestingly, it is because of the good word given to John regarding Gaius that John in turn states Gaius' soul prospers (3 John 1:3).

The parable of the rich man in Luke 12 and the statement of Jesus in Matthew 10:28 that man can kill the body but not the soul both appear on the surface to relate to the spirit. By understanding that the word used in these instances only applies to the animal nature, and not the spirit itself, we gain more insight to the soul. The rich man was going to consume his abundance in selfish living instead of in living for God and continuing to work to benefit others. Just as Paul knew of Gaius' healthy soul by hearing of his actions, the reputation of our actions and lifestyle continues on after our death.

With all of these words defined, we can now put together a working definition for **soul**. Soul cannot mean the same thing as heart, mind, body, or spirit. The concept of *body* is easily understood. The definition of *spirit* is actually the same as what many mistakenly consider to be the *soul*. The soul of a person, then, is not related directly to flesh and blood, and is not the spirit that will return to God who gave it. We see examples of it containing emotions and passions. We see it described as prospering when a person is actively living for God, and it is clear that others can know the state of our soul by our example.

To summarize, the soul is the physical energy of life, including emotions and actions. It is not our flesh, but what we do while in our flesh. We have the ability to direct it at will. It

contains our habits, both good and bad. It is made up of our victories and our defeats. Our soul's state of well-being, as related to serving God or serving ourselves, is evident in how we spend our time, our money, our talents, and our energy. Our soul, in short, is the sum total of the way we spend our life.

The next article in this series will take this working definition of the soul and apply it to everyday life, so we can know how to "love God" with our souls.

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## APOLOGIA

QUESTION: In your last article you mentioned Paul's struggle as being the struggle that every Christian has. Could it be the case that Paul is describing his condition and consequently his struggle before he became a Christian?

ANSWER: The passage under consideration is found in Romans 7:15, 19-20. Paul writes,

*"For what I am doing I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do."*

*"For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."*

The view set forth in our previous article took the position that Paul was describing his condition and struggle as a child of God. Basically we set forth the concept that the Bible teaches that Christians sin. John for example writes,

*"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not us." (I John 2:8)*

This verse describes the truth that even if redeemed, we still err. In fact, John emphasizes that if we do not think that we

do, we are deceived. Our article attempted to connect John's general statement to Paul's specific discussion of the struggle. We see the verses of Romans 7 as Paul discussing the war that exists between the Spirit and flesh. As such it is a part of every Christian's life that will continue until our ultimate redemption.

The idea that the passage in Romans 7 is not a discussion of our present struggle but rather one that existed before we became Christians is not a new view. Many people have been influenced by this view and have the idea that once becoming a Christian we live above sin. Take for example the way people view the word "saint". When this word is used it brings to mind those who have risen to some mystical position in life where sin never rears its ugly head. The concept of a higher victorious life centering on an experience of victory over indwelling sin is a common description of what it means to be a Christian. The problem is first theological in that it is not biblical. Secondly, according to the scriptures those who take this view are deceived, and thirdly, it is a detriment to our evangelistic efforts. Many who believe that a Christian must live above sin are reluctant to obey the Gospel realizing that it is a goal far too lofty for them to reach.

The fundamental passage to this discussion is that of Romans chapters 6 through 8. The pivotal point is the specific description of the intense struggle with sin as depicted in Romans 7:14-25. As we read this section, all of us can identify with it. As Paul describes the struggle note the descriptive phrases. He says he is sold under sin (v.14). He lacks understanding of his own actions (v. 15). He desires to live correctly, but in the end sins anyway (v. 15-16, 18). He speaks of sin's ability to control his actions. When the battle rages he notes it is between his body (with its passions) and his mind. Even when he knows what to do he feels powerless to do it. Finally, in conclusion, he describes himself as a wretched man in desperate need of the salvation offered by Jesus.

Does this describe your life? It certainly does mine. The problem with this passage stems from what most see as the Christian life and what Paul describes as his life in Christ.

Many read the above description and reach the conclusion that surely this cannot be a Christian! Thus we reason that Paul must be describing his life as a Jew before being converted.

However, the biblical data does not support this meaning of this passage. In fact the Bible, when rightly divided, teaches that Paul was describing his present experience as a child of God. Rather, it is Paul speaking of a Christian's struggle with sin. It also becomes evident that it is not a description of defeat but of the process of slaying the old man and putting on the new man! The goal of sanctification is Christ-likeness and it is not won without the battle. Our struggle with sin is a sign that sanctification is occurring. It is when we cease the struggle that we should become concerned.

We now turn our attention to the scriptures to show that the above view is in harmony with them.

The first point we note is that in Romans 7, Paul uses the present tense. It did not say he used to struggle but rather that the struggle is presently raging. At the time of the writing Paul was a Christian, and his use of the present tense indicates the struggle he was undergoing.

Galatians 5:17 teaches the same thing. Here we read,

"For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for they are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."

Note again he is writing to Christians. He is describing once again the struggle that they undergo.

The final argument we set forth is found in Philipians chapter 3. Beginning in verse 3, Paul describes his life before Christ as one in which he was blameless touching the law. In fact he boasted in his flesh and listed all of the accolades and accomplishments he later saw as rubbish. Paul, before his conversion, did not sense his unrighteousness. In fact he felt that he was on good ground and in good standing before God. Romans 7 could not be a description of how he felt about his

life before Christ. He felt just the opposite as this passage shows. Later in Philippians, Paul states that he knows he has not attained to perfection, nor has he apprehended it yet but he says he presses on! Thus these passages along with the others show that Romans 7 is a description of the battle that all saints must fight.

In Romans 7:14-25 Paul is describing the normal Christian life. We all struggle but remember Christ is the victory!

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## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
March 1 - 8 7:00 nightly	Junction City Congregation Junction City, KY	Rodney Sneed (Eubank, KY) Sun. - Wed. Hunter Bulger (Fort Deposit, AL) Thu.- Sun.
March 6 - 8	Willow Oaks Congregation Russell Springs, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
March 19 - 22	Noble Congregation LaFayette, GA	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
March 20 - 22  Fri. & Sat. 7:00 Eastern Sun. 10:30 and 1:30 Eastern	Fayetteville Road Congregation Fairburn, GA	Carley Conner (Cookeville, TN)
March 20 - 22	Napoleon Congregation Woodland, AL	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
March 26 - 29	Goochtown Congregation Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

March 27 - 29	Verona Congregation Verona, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
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## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. During Jacob's dream about a ladder reaching into Heaven, what did God tell him his descendants would be compared to?
2. In Esther who was hanged on a gallows for an alleged plot to murder the king?
3. Who was the king of Babylon when the "handwriting on the wall" incident occurred?
4. What is Jesus' name for Peter, "Cephas," translated to mean?
5. In Galatians who did Paul use as symbols of freedom and bondage?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH...