

Spirit, Soul, and Body

Key Verse: Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NKJV)

Introduction

In Lesson 4, we learned that we are made righteous through faith in the finished work of Jesus. However, in our day-to-day living, we do often do not seem to be very righteous. How can God say we are righteous when we make such bad choices at times? The key to understanding and correcting this situation lies in the proper understanding of the three-part nature of man.

Three Parts — One Person

Man has three dimensions: spirit, soul, and body. He is a spirit being who has a soul and lives in a body. Each part relates to a different realm: spiritual, mental, and physical.

 **What are the three parts of a man or woman?**

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Spirit of Man

Man's spirit is that part that knows and relates to God. It is the real you.

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:11-14 (NKJV)

Soul of Man

The soul of man includes his intellect, will, and emotions. People sometimes confuse the spirit and soul of man, thinking they are the same. While it may be

difficult at times to distinguish between the two, they are not the same. They can be separated.

For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

Body of Man

The body is that outward part of a person that houses the real you. It contacts the physical realm. The body is a housing or vehicle through which a person's spirit and soul functions in this present physical world.

For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:1-6 (NKJV)

Salvation of the Whole Person

Man is a three-part being. The salvation of each of those parts is related to the born again experience. However, each part experiences a different salvation process as we move toward that final righteous and perfect state originally intended by God.

The spirit attains perfection at the very instant a person is born again. The soul ideally moves toward perfection over time as it is renewed to the things of God. Final perfection of the soul is completed when the person goes to be with the Lord.

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NKJV)

The body moves away from perfection as it deteriorates throughout a person's life until it finally decays in death. Perfection comes to the body when believers receive a new body at the coming of the Lord.

Which part of man experiences full salvation first?

Salvation and the Spirit

Before salvation, a person is dead in sin. When a person is born again, his spirit is replaced with a new spirit making him a new creature in Christ.

Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, Ezekiel 11:19 (NKJV)

And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV)

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

This new spirit is joined to God's spirit and has the righteousness of Jesus.

But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. 1 Corinthians 6:17 (NKJV)

For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

When God says you are righteous, He is referring to the real you, the spirit. The spirit man of a Christian is totally righteous. There is nothing that can be done to make that spirit more righteous than it is.

When the Bible states that you are righteous, what part does it mean?

At the death of a believer, his spirit immediately goes to be with Jesus. His works will be judged to determine his rewards, but his salvation will not be in question.

So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NKJV)

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (NKJV)

At the death of a non-believer, his spirit eventually ends up at the Great White Throne Judgment before being cast into the Lake of Fire.

Then I saw a great white throne The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15 (NKJV)

Salvation and the Soul

After the new birth, a Christian's soul (mind, will, and emotions) must be saved. This salvation of the soul is a process that takes place over a believer's entire life as his mind is renewed and transformed to conform to the will of God.

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. James 1:21 (NKJV)

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 1 Peter 1:22 (NKJV)

and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, Ephesians 4:23 (NKJV)

At death, the soul goes with the spirit to be with the Lord (for believers) or to await the Great White Throne Judgment (for non-believers).

Salvation and the Body

When a person is born again, he receives a new spirit, but his body is not replaced. If you were bald a minute before salvation, you will still be bald a minute after salvation. Unfortunately, the body also retains its old desires for self-gratification after you are born again.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. 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. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the law of the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:18-25 (NKJV)

At death the body dies and decays. Later, when Jesus returns and Christians are resurrected, they will receive a new, spiritual body that is perfect in every way. (However, until that day, the Bible gives us specific instructions on how we are to rule our bodies rather than to let our bodies rule us. Those instructions are discussed later in this lesson.)

So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ... Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 51-52 (NKJV)

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. Philippians 3:20-21 (NKJV)

Successful Christian Living

To live a life that brings glory to God and joy to us, we must properly address the various aspects of our three-part nature.

Spirit Responsibilities

The born-again spirit will always seek to serve God. A Christian must realize that his spirit is righteous with the righteousness provided by Jesus. Attempts to perfect our right relationship with God through good works will hinder our relationship with God (see Lesson 4 on Righteousness).

Body Responsibilities

We must not let the body rule our spirit and soul. The body will self-destruct if we let it. The body is sense oriented. It chooses to do what feels good for the moment, regardless of later consequences. It does not like pain, discomfort, or pressure. It will avoid anything that is difficult and run to anything that feels good or brings pleasure. If we allow the body to have its way, it will bring death to our life.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. Romans 8:5-7 (NKJV)

We must present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. That means that we must bring our bodies into submission to God's will. The key to accomplishing this on a regular basis rests in the realm of the soul.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

What are we supposed to do with our bodies?

But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:27 (NKJV)

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Colossians 3:5 (NKJV)

Soul Responsibilities


A person's spirit is in union with Jesus and it will always want to do God's will. The body is always seeking that which is easiest or produces the most pleasure. Therefore, the body will always choose against God's will in order to satisfy its own desires. There is constant conflict between a believer's spirit and body.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. Galatians 5:16-17 (NKJV)

The soul has an essential function in this conflict. When a situation arises, the spirit will always urge you to do God's will while the body will always urge you take a different route. Your soul will cast the tie-breaking vote.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

Which way your soul "votes" depends on how well you have renewed your mind to the things of God. If your soul is strong in the things of God, it and your spirit will gang up on your body to drag it to the altar and present it as a living sacrifice to the will of God. However, if your soul is weak in the things of God, you will end up following the desires of your body and further weaken your soul.

 **What must you do with your mind so you can effectively present your body as a living sacrifice to God?**

Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:11-12 (NKJV)

You can measure your progress in renewing your mind by evaluating the choices that you make each day.

Sanctification

When something or someone is sanctified, it is set apart for God's use. As Christians, our lives—**spirit, soul, and body**—must be set apart for the use of our Lord.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also

forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 (NKJV)

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. John 17:17-19 (NKJV)

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NKJV)

Summary

Man is a three-part being.


The spirit, when born again, is righteous. You cannot add to what Jesus did.

The body is self-serving. It must be presented as a living sacrifice, requiring it to serve God's purposes rather than its own desires.

The soul needs work. It is our job to renew our mind so it functions with godly purpose and wisdom rather than with worldly goals.

Your mission in life is to renew your mind and rule your body. If you do this, your life will bring glory to God and joy to you. Failure to be diligent in this mission will lead to shame and discouragement.

Response to Truth

 List some practical steps you will take to renew your mind.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

 List some practical steps you will take to present your body as a living sacrifice.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____