

## The difference between Soul and Spirit- 2

Having looked at the differences in the outworking of 'soul' and 'spirit' in Christian lives and the life of the church, it is good to give some more detail about human beings and their 'make up', to make this teaching more complete. We read this in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* This makes it clear that human beings are made up of 3 parts, body, soul and spirit. It is also a most wonderful thought that they can be preserved, kept and maintained, in a blameless state until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; we will look later at how that may be achieved. We have already quoted Ephesians 1 about 'all spiritual blessings' and that the outcome of the whole truth expressed in this phrase is in order that we can be 'holy and without blame before Him (God) in love'. That is where spiritual blessings take us, the spiritual blessings have an effect on not only spirits but our souls and bodies too; but of course, we have to be 'spiritual' and in the 'Spirit' for it all to work out in practice. But, whatever, we are body, soul and spirit, so the Spirit of God has to be operative in all three parts of a human being for them to be 'spiritual'.

So, let's look at body, soul and spirit and see how they inter-relate to each other. Body is obvious, it is the outer shell in which humans live. As we have said in the first part of our teaching, humans are living souls; so much more than a body, but we have a body nevertheless. The human body is a most wonderful creation and astonishingly our bodies are able to see, hear, feel, run, sleep, wake up and so much more. Bodies are formed from the union of two cells to such perfection that such a happening would be unbelievable, if it were not true and of God. The statistics of such a possibility are so great as to rule out any thought of evolution; an Almighty all-wise God as creator is the only sensibly logical possibility for such a wonderful thing; it is just the blindness of the heart and mind, caused by sin, which prevents the world seeing the truth. Bodies are made up of cells, of many different types, but all develop from the original union of the egg and sperm. Every type of cell performs a function and they work together so the body has natural life and can be a place in which the human soul can live and function and outwork its unique character on the face of the earth. There are many different nationalities, with slightly different genetic origins giving different facial features, but all humans are essentially the same in bodily construction. Each body has two arms, two legs, a head, a heart, a brain, a liver and so on. All bodies have blood which circulates around the body to nourish every cell. As we have said, it is highly complicated, and as human beings learn more of how their bodies work they discover the intricacies of each cell, which is a micro-world of its own. It is controlled by the DNA within that cell, and in the end we must join David in his conclusion expressed in Psalm 139, saying *"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you **because I am fearfully and wonderfully made**; your works are wonderful, I know that full well"*. The word 'fear' really means 'awe', and when David saw how wonderfully he was made it left him in awe of the creator who had made him. So, we have a body, and the more research which takes place the more we discover how brilliantly designed human bodies are.

Because of sin, sadly, bodies decay with age and eventually die; the age varies of course, but it happens when one vital part stops working. Bodies can be and are subject to disease, and the older people get the more their bodies wear out and they become increasingly subject to disease. However, for the Christian, with a mortal body, given life by the Spirit of God and laid down in the service of our Lord Jesus, the possibilities for our bodies being kept whole and well and being used for the glory of God are immense; *"By His stripes we are healed"*. (For more thoughts on staying well please see annex 1)

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Bodies clearly are totally integrated with souls. Soul is the second of the three parts of a human being and contains all the attributes which make us noble beings, the pinnacle of and above all the other parts of God's creation. When God made humans He 'made them in His own image', in His likeness, and He gave them, among other things, the capacity to will, to have emotions, to love and to hate, and to make judgements. He gave humans a conscience, a place of knowing, and God gave intelligence, the ability to understand and so on. These are some of the elements of the human soul and make 'us' what we are. Each human is different, we are totally unique and yet each is known of God. There are of course genetics which determine many of our characteristics. The author, for example, looks very much like his father, and has a daughter who looks very much like her mother, though is, in temperament, much more like her dad. But humans are more than a machine, determined by their DNA; we are living souls, and when, for example, we are upset, afraid or even angry we have feelings within our soul which communicate with our bodies relative to how we feel. Body and soul are very much working together at these times, and feelings are very clearly felt within the body, produced by hormones and a nervous system but still very much more than a physical function. The human mind can be very creative and imaginative and have great understanding, and these faculties can be used for both good and evil. The way we are thinking within our minds at different times affects our bodies, and yet the way our bodies feel, especially when ill or in pain, affects the way we think.

The human mind has great capacity but also great weakness. The history of what humans have invented down through the centuries is proof indeed of the way humans use their amazing abilities. The fact that humans are so creative in many ways reflects the fact that we are made 'in the image of God' who Himself is a creative being. The human mind in its creative mode can make things which are for good or for evil; in fact, in most lives there is a combination of things which are good and evil at work. For example, the computer being used to write this piece is a wonder of modern technology and ingenuity, but computers can be, and are, used as much for evil as for good.

Minds work in amazing ways through our thought processes. In the New Testament, there are a number of different words for 'mind', 'thinking' and so on. Some words mean intellect and intelligence, and others the thought of the heart, at a much deeper level than intellect. So, it is clear from the way God has inspired men to write the scriptures that He understands the different aspects of mind and thought, and that it is really all quite complicated. Most people don't really know themselves as they discover they are this combination of thoughts, feelings and so on, which is why, as we have said all through this teaching, we need the 'Word of God' to really show us the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

Thoughts in the mind can dominate our bodies and therefore our lives. People can be dominated by fear, often quite irrational fear; it works out through the body and totally restricts the freedom of that life. On the other hand, bad 'things', pain for example, in our bodies can very much affect our thinking and attitudes and behaviour. Most people experience fear in one way or another. Different people have fear about different things; some can overcome and manage their fears while others can be totally overcome by the fear. It does however demonstrate the connection between souls and bodies with the feeling it generates within us. We can look down from a great height with our eyes and yet that can create fear in our minds which will communicate feelings of fear in our bodies. Sometimes such things can be very useful, as a means of keeping us safe, and in its purest form is a God given means of protection. However, sin has spoiled everything, so that which is meant for good

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is turned against us, and people who possess fear in their minds, often totally without reason, find it affects them and possesses and fills their bodies, as well as their minds, and creates in them a state of anxiety which will dominate and control a life. We see therefore that human beings are very vulnerable to all sorts of outside influences, and these things can totally ruin lives by dominating thinking and actions, and because of the interaction between soul and body bring both into great weakness. All sorts of obsessional behaviour works in both mind and body; images in the imagination can fire that body to all sorts of things and yet at the same time desires within the body can cause all sorts of images and imaginations to be formed within the mind. It just shows how everything interlinks and how easily people can be led away into deception and sin.

Sickness in the body can affect the way people think and behave; so we see the interaction of these two parts in lives and how vulnerable people are without the Lord Jesus. Sin is a very present evil in human lives; thoughts and actions go together and cause human beings to do the most awful things at times, and yet can inspire people to do the most courageous and selfless acts. Souls have consciences, the place where we are aware of right and wrong. The conscience is there to limit sin and make people aware of when they are doing wrong. There is the little voice, 'the knowing' within us telling us that what we are doing, or about to do, is wrong. Conscience is not part of our physical body, it can't be detected on any scan, and yet it is there and will often communicate with us through our feelings. Again, we see how integrated all these parts of our personality are. Sadly, consciences can become so deadened that they no longer prevent sin; people are left without any protection from themselves and just go on fulfilling the lusts of their flesh, to the total degradation of their own being and sadly sometimes other people's as well. The more we go against our conscience the less it will speak to us, until it becomes silent altogether. Again, we need the 'Word of God' to speak and convict us and bring our consciences back to life, so that we can acknowledge Him and His righteous judgement of our lives and get right with Him.

The Bible talks of the 'lust of the eyes' and is another good way to show the connection between soul and body. We see things with our eyes, just a natural look, it could be any object, but then that object can appear attractive to us in some way. There has already been therefore an interaction with our souls, our wishes and desires. We can then desire that object which we have seen using our natural eye. King David obviously did that with Bathsheba, because she was attractive to his eyes. He desired her and coveted his neighbour's wife, desiring her above the law of God and his moral duty to Bathsheba and to Uriah, her husband. We all know the tragic consequences for David and his family, but it all started through just seeing and that all led to the 'lust of the eyes' and the desires that follow. God says you will not covet, but even the religious Paul was unable to stop himself coveting and was aware of his own sin. So we see how sin works and how it operates in the connection between souls and bodies.

So, we have had a fairly brief look at some of the ways in which souls and bodies inter-react, and I am sure that you could provide more examples from your own experiences, but we now need to look at the third part of human beings, 'the spirit'. Watchman Nee, in his book mentioned earlier in part 1 of this teaching, calls the spirit 'the innermost man', comparing it to the 'outer man' which is the soul. Both soul and spirit are of course inside our bodies and not visible from the outside. We see the body which is the 'outermost' man. The 'spirit' is not recognised by psychologists or psychiatrists. They only recognise soul and body, and therefore all human efforts and methods which ignore the spirit are totally unable to fully deal with and resolve human problems. Also some so-called Christian

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teachers, particularly within the prosperity/miracles movements, only recognise man as two parts. They equate spirit and soul, in particular the mind as part of the soul, and use this as a method of creation through imagination and use of the power of the mind. It is the same way that Shamans work in their occult practice and is not of the Holy Spirit. Beware of such things and the temptation to use the creative power of your mind to obtain and create what you want either materially or of reputation in this world. (Read Matthew 7.21-23 and let him/her that reads understand).

The truth is, as Paul describes the bodies of Christians as 'the temples of the Holy Ghost', they are the dwelling place of God. The spirit is the part of a human being which has the capacity for God to put His presence and nature there. The tabernacle and temples in the Old Testament consisted of three sections. The very central section was for God to dwell in. It was called the 'Holiest of all' and God placed his presence there after He had filled either the tabernacle or the temple, at relevant points in the history of Israel. The design of the 'Holiest of All' was very specific. There were cherubim there, made out of pure gold, and cherubim were the guardians of God's holiness. Therefore the very central place is called the 'Holiest of All' indicating that when God dwells in us our spirits must be holy. Therefore the need for us to be cleansed from our sin and to receive a new heart and a new spirit from the Lord, into which God can put His Spirit, is clear.

As we suggested earlier, it was always God's intention to put eternal life, His own life, into human beings, and is why God made human beings in the way they are, in the likeness of God. God wanted to live in humans and for that to happen there had to be a suitable place within us where God could live. The 'living soul' was created with a 'spirit', the 'innermost man' that has the capacity for God, who is a Spirit, to live there. Jesus, as we have seen, was a 'life-giving spirit', and the Spirit of God who was in Him dwelt in His spirit and made Him the 'life-giving spirit'. On the other hand, the 'spirit' was empty when God made Adam, in his innocence, and when Adam chose to disobey God and eat of the fruit of the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil', sin entered into his spirit. It brought spiritual death, and sin and death began then to interact with his soul and body. The spirit in Adam was empty as He had to make a choice of whom he would serve; he had to exercise his free will, and this was demonstrated by the tree of which Adam chose to eat. The choice was one of life or death, between the tree which meant 'spiritual death' or the one which meant 'spiritual life'. (As an aside; Jesus, if we read Psalm 118 and Philippians chapter 2 and see the depths of the working of eternal God, had already made His choice before He came to the earth, and therefore could be a 'life-giving spirit'. Please read and understand).

But we must return to our subject and to Adam and what happened to him. One possible way of describing what happened to Adam, when he sinned, is that he then had a 'death-giving spirit', rather than the 'life-giving spirit' in our Lord Jesus. We read in Romans chapter 5, "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*", and therefore we understand why 'spiritual death' is in the spirits of all human beings.

As we have said, God had to make things that way, as one of the characteristics of God is that He chooses; He makes choices. Adam, being made in the image of God, had to be free to make his choice. When sin entered into Adam and Eve they knew they were naked, their consciences were in operation, they were self-conscious, they were afraid and hid their bodies. It was a crazy thing to do as God sees all, but then sin, of course, distorts the human view of God, and immediately blinded their hearts to the truth at that time and continues to do so for the whole human race. Human

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beings, ever since sin entered into them, are self-conscious rather than God conscious. They are very much aware of their own self-interest and this makes them very soulish, as their lives are dominated by their own thoughts, will and emotions and there is no life within their spirits to exercise control over the desires of the flesh and mind.

So, we see how what is in the 'spirit' relates through the soul to the body and affects the whole manner of our thinking and living, and ultimately the wages of sin is death, in that bodies die. That is the tragedy of sin, and why Jesus came to give us life and that we might have it more abundantly. He says that all the others who come into our lives are thieves and robbers, who come to steal, to kill and to destroy. That is what satan has done, stealing souls from God and bringing death and destruction into them. Satan of course does not have the creative ability of Almighty God and therefore the only way he could have the human souls, whom he coveted, was to steal them. That is exactly what sin has done, and with the theft comes the death and all the destruction which we see in human lives. Souls without the life of God within them fail to fulfil their potential and in many ways descend into a state of misery, sadness, boredom and much toil. Our Lord Jesus is a 'life giving spirit' and when we receive Him He does the opposite, He brings joy and peace and fulfilment as He brings eternal life into us. It comes into our spirits, and where death has worked through from our spirits into our souls, now life works through into those very same souls, and life changes everything. Hallelujah.

With sin in the 'spirit' there is a denial of God and death, spiritual death, entered into the whole human race, coming upon all who have natural life on the earth. The world, dominated by sin, lives in 'spiritual darkness', far away from any knowledge of Almighty God. Sin controls behaviour from within the 'heart' or 'spirit'. Jesus, understanding this, when He gave a list of all the major sins, said, *"These things come from the heart of man"*. So we see how sin has affected everything and because it has entered the spirit of humans it permeates all thinking, feeling, behaviour and all our actions, indeed every part of a soul and body. This is why we need a Saviour to impart to us a 'life-giving spirit', and His name is Jesus Christ.

It is important perhaps here to break in and look at the real things which 'drive' human beings in their lives. The most basic instinct of course is the desire to survive, the desire for food, the desire to eat and drink. The second most basic instinct is for the survival of the species, to procreate the species, and that instinct is common to all species including human beings. The principle pre-occupation of animals is to feed, and in many ways human lives are taken up with providing food for themselves, whether it is having land and growing crops or having employment and paying for food. Souls and bodies are of course taken up in all of this activity, and combine with thoughts and methods to do so and then outwork them in practice. Jesus said about what we eat and drink, *"All the nations seek after these things"*. So that involves souls and then bodies, and yet because of sin in the spirit there is no trust in God to provide, so all these activities are motivated in the end by fear. Jesus says, *"Fear not, you are worth more than many sparrows"*, realising the problem with human hearts, and also says, *"Your Heavenly Father knows your needs"*, moving us towards faith in God. The whole world structure is ultimately to secure that which we need in this life, create wealth, and to prolong natural life. It is all a natural instinct, as all are in 'bondage through fear of death', having no hope of eternal life without our Lord Jesus. So, this need to survive permeates thoughts and feelings and the needs of our bodies, and as we see, in reality, dominates so much of what humans do with their lives.



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The second instinct, as we have said, is to procreate. Humans do not have eternal life and because of sin bodies will die. All natural bodies, whether animal or plant, on the earth die. Some live for just a few hours and others for many years, but nevertheless all species need to procreate otherwise they will become extinct. God has created some amazing ways within both the animal and plant kingdoms by which procreation can take place and how 'a mate' can be found.

Indeed, God gave Adam a helpmeet, a wife through whom the species would be continued, and we are told that *"Eve is the mother of all living"*. For human beings, failure to procreate is seen as a 'shame', a humiliation, within many cultures, and we can see this even in the Bible. We have *"Give me children or I die"*, the cry of heart from Rachel as she had failed to produce a child. Abraham suffered in the same way with his longing for an heir; in spite of his many riches, the lack of a son and heir undermined his whole peace. Happily, God met both their needs but we see there is such an involvement of souls and bodies in this area, with the emotions and bodily desires all getting caught up together, all of course distorted, so much, by sin. There is a mixture between feelings within the soul, they could be called emotions/affections, and the natural physical feelings within a body. The Bible seems to bring these together and calls them the works of the flesh, when affections and emotions get mixed up with physical activities. Flesh lusts, flesh desires, flesh wants, and the physical desires of the body and the natural affections and emotions which God intended to be pure and holy are corrupted by sin. These lusts permeate into body and soul, and the outworkings of these desires can very easily lead to all sorts of immorality. Understanding the problem, God gave laws to stop this sort of wrongdoing. "You will not murder; you will not commit adultery; you will not covet your neighbour's wife". These laws have been taken up by most forms of social structures, within most cultures, and yet they are readily broken as the desires exceed the constraints of law. Law was given to contain sin not to remove it, only Jesus can do that. As society becomes more permissive, laws are changed to accommodate the desires and works of the flesh. As the awareness in consciences of what is right and wrong diminishes, hearts become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and the inward protection of conscience that God has given to human beings is lost, and sin through flesh operates to the destruction of lives. All this comes from sin within, from the law of sin and death, the spiritual law which works in human beings. Jesus said, *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man"*. We see, therefore, the origins of wrongdoing and how souls and bodies are caught up together in such activities, and how intricately involved they are together in the lives we live.

We see too all the possible corruptions which humans can enter into, as Paul describes in Romans chapter 1. No longer do we just have fornication and adultery, with immoral relationships between men and women, but also between man with man and woman with woman. *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet"*. It is now not politically acceptable in the West to speak against these things, indeed laws have been changed to accommodate such practices and make them acceptable within society. Nevertheless, the Bible is really clear and shows us how affections and emotions within the soul work out that which moves into bodily activity. Again they are intricately involved together; the outworking causes men and women to fulfil the desires of their flesh and mind, and 'burn in lust' in one way or another towards each other. Soul and body combine to participate in such things and enjoy the 'pleasures of sin for a season'. Hearts are hardened, souls are

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damaged, and bodies diseased all through these 'fleshly lusts', which work to destroy the nobility of human beings created by God and drag them down into a morass of sordid behaviour, so far away from the image of God in which humans were created in the first place. Paul says people who do such things receive the recompense, the payback, and the results in themselves for their immorality, and so it can be seen, especially the way disease, both physical and also psychological, affects those who participate in such things. God is not mocked.

We see in many ways how powerless humans are to stem the tide of sin which emanates from the human heart and so controls souls and bodies. For all these reasons, we understand so much why Jesus told us we need to be 'born again' and have a 'new spirit' and a 'new heart'. We need a new nature, the divine 'life-giving' nature, placed in our spirits, so that the very life of God can then work out through soul and body and bring 'life' into all that we do. The blood of Jesus can wash us clean from all our wrongdoing, and go on keeping us clean so that we can walk in the light in fellowship with God, in 'God consciousness', rather than being given up to our vile affections. Ephesians tells us, *"We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works"*; to work things which are right with God and fulfil the righteousness of the law, in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

Even at this level we see how we need to be 'spiritual' and not 'of the soul' or soulish, if we are to walk in ways which are separate from the ways of the world; to 'glorify God in our bodies and our spirits which belong to Him'. Being spiritual is much more than just being so in meetings and religious life, but it applies to the whole of our lives, allowing the Spirit of God to work out the righteousness of God, from our spirits, through our souls, into our bodies, so our desires and actions are controlled by the love of God, which has been poured into our hearts. *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law"*. This is the outworking of the Spirit of God in the life of a spiritual man or woman. There is no law against these things, no law is required to contain these wonderful fruits, as they are the outworking of the righteousness of God. They bring from the life of God in us, by His Spirit, good works in our souls and bodies. Faith will rise from our hearts, from the new nature within us. This nature naturally moves towards God; we cry "Abba Father" as sons of God. The faith by which we live is the faith of the Son of God and that will move us naturally, spiritually, to trust God and want to do His will. God will work in us 'to will and to do of His good pleasure', and the life of the Spirit of God will outwork in all we do.

We will look to God to provide our needs, which does not mean we don't work, but we seek His kingdom as the priority in our lives. Also, we will look for God's provision of a husband or wife; we will look to Jesus in all things and not seek to manipulate our own circumstances. The grace of God will cause us to be faithful to the one God gives us as a husband or a wife, keeping our eyes from roving and lusting after that which is wrong and enabling us to love the one to whom we are married. 'Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church'. He gave Himself for the church, one bride to have and to hold, and so must husbands who call on the name of the Lord Jesus follow His example. We will then discover we are 'new creations' in Christ Jesus, remade spiritually, made alive and 'made free' so that that which works out in our lives is the life of God. Paul says, *"God works in you"*, and all the interactions in our beings can be from the life of God. *"The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and of death"*.

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There is the development of a discipline, a self-control, it is a fruit of the Spirit, by which the Holy Spirit exercises a control over every part of our natural lives. He controls our motives and our desires. He enables us to control the natural desires of our bodies and not be dominated by them. This is whether the desires relate to sexual matters, eating matters, and/or those which relate to the things of this world. There is a 'peaceable fruit of righteousness' which brings peace and rest to the soul, and a peace with God in which we can walk as one with Him, knowing we are fulfilling His will. Our joy is full and our souls and bodies outwork the life of God from within. This is how our bodies, souls and spirits are 'preserved unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

So I hope we see how soul and body and spirit all relate to each other, and that it is the nature of what is in our spirits which ultimately controls what we do and feel. The need to be filled, and to continue to be filled, with the Spirit of God is clear, so that we can walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh, and be spiritual men and women. How we need the 'Word of God' to discern for us that which is soul and that which is spirit, so that we know that the good works we do come from the proper thoughts and intentions in our hearts; that we are not self-seeking but genuinely submitted to the will of God and only seek His will and His glory in all that we do in our lives.

So to reiterate, this is how the prayer which Paul prayed for the Thessalonian church is fulfilled. *"I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus. Faithful is He who has called you; who also will do it"*. Amen.

### Annex 1

Even for Israel under the 'Old Covenant' we read, *"But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak.....And ye shall serve the Lord your God, he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee"*. The question is, how much more under the New Covenant, now Jesus has died and risen again for us? Such thoughts should be a challenge for us all, not to condemn, but rather to draw out our hearts to seek God for the highest He has for us and not to allow our bodies to dominate our lives, as happens with so many people in the world. The author is well aware how the Lord has taught His people through things they have suffered, but also seen many people healed when prayed for, and known the Lord Jesus heal his own body also. Yes there is a balance, but let's get the balance right and look to the Lord Jesus for all He can do for us, rather than to the limitations of man. Paul, the apostle, tells us to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are God's. It is clear that the two parts, body and spirit, go together in living, and that gives enormous potential for the Christian for holiness and wholeness of life and living, both in body and spirit, as the wholeness within a spirit regenerated by the Holy Ghost permeates all of our being.