

SOUL DISCOVERY

*"To Canaan's Land I'm on my way,
Where the soul (of man) never dies."
-Wm. M. Golden (1914)*

This song is so popular among congregations in the South, and I imagine it is known just as well by Christians all across our nation, that probably even now the melody is playing in your mind. *"My darkest night will turn to day..."* The first and last stanzas and the chorus are burned into our memory. *"Where the soul of man..."* It has been led so many times that we even have the number memorized [432, Sacred Selections]. Just a hint of this old favorite and our mind cues up the entire verse and we are humming along. *"No sad farewells ..."* Once it begins we are bound to recycle this musical memory over and over until something with more mental weight takes it place. *"No tear dimmed eyes..."* And since this song has been grooved so deeply into our consciousness year after year, it isn't likely that we'll be shaking it for quite some time. *"And the soul never dies."* If you've never experienced this before, just sit back and relax - you're about to.

Each time this familiar tune is remembered, so too is the idea repeated and engrained in our thinking that the "soul of man never dies". A song that is esteemed with such reverence surely holds only absolute Biblical truths, right?

Have you ever considered, "what is the soul?" The idea that the song conveys is right in line with common thinking, that the soul is that part of a person that lives eternally. Is this correct? Most have taken for granted that it is, and have dismissed the subject as being too elementary for concern. Yet our Lord's words in Matthew 22:37-38 lead to questions that cannot be answered with the ideology found in the song "Where the Soul Never Dies".

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind (some gospels also include 'strength'). These words are famous and decorate cups and bracelets and T-shirts across all denominations of Christendom. But what do they mean?

Loving God with the heart seems simple enough on the surface. In essence, it means keeping our desire on those things that are

spiritual and eternal, and to guard against falling in love with those things that are worldly and temporal. Satan complicates our attempts at this with the lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life. Loving God with our mind is also an easy concept to grasp, though it too is easier said than done. Worry, anxiety, and a myriad of other negatives chip away at our efforts to think positively.

The concepts of "heart" and "mind" are very common to us, and because they are, many have wrongly considered loving God with them as "simple". (Again, simple to understand, but easier said than done!) With "soul" sandwiched between these two "simple" concepts, all three must be simple, right? Well, not exactly. Throw in that the phrase "heart, soul, and mind" is plastered on so many cups, T-shirts and bracelets that we are numb to its meaning, and you've got a recipe for overlooking the soul entirely. Never mind that 'old favorite' hymns reinforce this oversight.

What is it about the Great Commandment that challenges common thinking about the soul? Loving God with the heart and mind are active processes that are far easier to understand than they are to put into daily practice. Yet it is our Lord's command that we would strive to please God with our efforts to this end. If the soul, as common thinking suggests, is that part of a person that lives eternally, then how can we actively love God with it? What about loving God with our soul is "easier said than done"? Surely Satan will want to prevent us, so what are the hindrances that we will face? These answers can be found in the Word of God.

The intent of this series of articles is to explore the concept the soul, to find a working definition for the soul, and to illustrate real-life application for how we can love God with our souls.

There is a principle of logic that can be used to help us in this study as well as in others: in the Scriptures multiple words are not used to convey the same exact meaning, even though they may be similar. Subtle differences in definition can lead to vast differences in application. With study and meditation we can uncover great meaning from *all* words in a passage. For example, in Peter's famous steps of Christian growth (2 Pet. 1:5-7), "temperance" and "patience" are listed in chronological order. Though the words have similar meaning in our present language, it is not logical in any progression to repeat the same step twice. The Biblical meanings and applications are, as

expected, very different. Just by learning about "temperance", we also gain some insight into what is **not** meant by "patience" - **it does not mean the same thing.**

Applying this concept to the Great Commandment helps to narrow our search for the soul. We can know with confidence that it is not the same as the mind or the heart. Loving God with the heart, as we have discussed, is to keep our desires on those things that are eternal and to avoid the lusts and pride of this world that would take God's proper place. We can know that loving God with our soul is not this. A well known passage related to the mind is found in Philipians:

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phil. 4:8)

While this one verse does not encompass everything related to loving God with the mind, it does illustrate the direction that this part of the Great Commandment leads. Again, we can know that loving God with all of our soul is not on the same path.

Five hundred years before the time of Christ, great ancient thinkers such as Plato and Pythagoras rationalized that a human being consisted of three different elements: the body, the soul, and the spirit. This idea prevailed and was commonly held by many during the years when the events of our New Testament occurred. Popular opinion does not mean a particular doctrinal viewpoint is correct, as we all know. Yet, the Apostle Paul, writing as a man inspired by the Holy Spirit, validates the three-parts-of-man idea when he wrote to the Thessalonians:

*"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."* (1 Thess. 5:23 Emphasis added.)

With this verse giving us two more words besides "soul" that we can define, we are able to narrow our focus still more. Very likely, you already have a general idea of what is intended with the words "body" and "spirit". Unfortunately in our modern religious culture we often use the words "soul" and "spirit" interchangeably. This is part of the reason why the true meaning of "soul" has been lost. As we have discussed already, the Biblical meaning of "soul" and "spirit" cannot be the same--the

intent of the next article in this series is to discover exactly what is meant by these two words. With the concepts of heart, mind, body and spirit understood and removed from our field of view, a working definition of "soul" will emerge. Further study will refine this concept, and then we can look for application—the answer to the question "how do I love God with my soul?"

In the mean time, consider these questions about the soul:

- ▶ Can I touch my soul?
- ▶ Can a soul be sick?
- ▶ If it can, can we heal it?
- ▶ What is "soul food"?
- ▶ Where does the soul live?
- ▶ How can we love with our souls?
- ▶ Does the soul go to heaven?
- ▶ Is it true that the soul "never dies"?

CHAD PRINCE
(Oxford, AL)

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: In Romans chapter 6 and in verse 14, Paul writes, "*For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace*". If sin does not have dominion over us, then why do we still sin?

ANSWER: The subject of indwelling sin has been one that has confused students of the Bible for centuries. Much has been written on the subject and various conclusions have been reached by theologians as to "why we who are dead to sin continue any longer in it." There are those who teach that Christians do not sin and actually live above it. The above passage is one of many that are cited as "proof texts" of this position.

We find the above view to be a very serious error concerning the life we now live in Christ. Those who think that they do not sin have reached a state of self-deception that results in a form of self-righteousness that is dangerous to one's soul as well as a detriment to the salvation of others. The problem often lies in the failure of bringing to bear on a passage the other passages in the scripture that are also connected.

Before we analyze and give our understanding of the specific verse above, we will answer a related question; "do Christians sin?" This is an easy question to answer because we have a direct statement from the Bible on it. In I John 1:8 we read,

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

This passage should make clear the truth on the question of whether Christians sin. It is a passage that is written to children of God. It is written to those who have fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is written to tell us we sin and if we think we do not then we are deceived.

The second passage that has a bearing is found in Romans chapter 7. The apostle Paul tells of his own personal struggle with sin in his life. In Romans 7:15 he states,

"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."

Continuing in verse 19-20:

"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 above shows the struggle that every child of God has with sin. Paul did not take the position that He did not sin. Rather he mentioned that he often did that which he did not want to do. Thus sin was dwelling in him.

He continues into chapter 8 and gives at least a couple of reasons why those who are born again still sin. The first reason is that we live in a fallen world. He writes,

"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Verses 20-21)

He also states that, *"Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly awaiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."* (Verse 23)

Paul tells us that as Christians we struggle with and often succumb to sin due to the fact that we live in a fallen world and that we are still in the flesh. We could also add to his list the fact that Satan as a roaring lion walks about seeking to devour us (I Pet. 5:8). The good news is that one day we will see the present world destroyed and a new heaven and a new earth emerge wherein will dwell only righteousness, our bodies transformed into a glorious state, and Satan cast into a lake of fire. However, until then we will battle and often give in to sin.

Though it is beyond the purpose of this article we do feel that we must make mention of the fact that we are responsible for fighting sin and not yielding to it. We should never take the view that since we know we will sin why bother with fighting it. God expects us who are dead to sin to no longer live in it. We are to mortify our flesh on this earth and put sin to death in our lives. (Rom. 8:13, Rom. 6:1-2, Col. 3:1-5) The key to victory over our sin is to battle it by walking with Christ and confessing our sins. (I John 1:7-9)

Now that we have established that we do and will sin, the reason why we continue to sin, and the remedy for our sin, we are ready to look at the passage raised in the original question. In Romans 6:14, we read

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

Many, as the question illustrates, interpret the phrase "sin shall not have dominion over you" to mean you will no longer sin, that sin no longer manifests itself in our lives. But as we have already established, it cannot be interpreted to mean that Christians do not sin. Thus we must look at this passage in another light.

It may be that the problem lies within the idea of dominion. This word refers to power. So with some, the meaning becomes sin has no power over us in making us sin. However, this is not consistent with what the Bible teaches.

The dominion of sin is not its ability to make us err but its power to separate us from God. Sin has dominion over mankind because of two things it can do. It first and foremost has the ability to separate us from Holy God. It makes us enemies and causes us to become the target of His righteous wrath. This is referred to as death. Many think death is a cessation of

existence but that it is not so in the scripture. It is a separation. Sin brings death because of its nature and power to separate us from God.

Secondly, sin has power to bring death through law. A legal system can justify one only if one is able to comply perfectly with all legal requirements. As James tells us, to offend in one point is to offend in all. God has proven that man is not capable of keeping legal requirements and thus justify himself. Since this is the case sin through law had dominion over us. It kept us removed and separated from God.

The reason that Paul says sin does not have dominion over us is that Jesus has dealt with both aspects of sin's dominion. Consider I Corinthians 15:56-57,

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Jesus defeated death by overcoming sin. He led captivity captive so to speak. Those who obey the Gospel are no longer dead in trespasses and sin but are made holy by His blood and are reconciled to God. (Eph. 2:1-13)

In addition He kept the legal requirement of the Law perfectly and thus can make us righteous concerning it by His blood. Thus that which gave strength and dominion to sin has been destroyed by Him!

In conclusion we know that sin's dominion has been destroyed because of what Christ has done. We need only to obey Him and become dead to sin but alive unto God.

SAM DICK
(Cave City, KY)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES

February
18 - 22

LOCATION

Gilstrap Congregation
Gilstrap, KY

SPEAKER

Joe Hill
(Hager Hill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

And remember last month's questions?

1. Who spoke against Moses and was stricken by God with leprosy and confined outside the camp for seven days?
MIRIAM (Num 12:1, 10, 4)
2. In first Samuel when Israel was in battle with the Philistines, who went to the Philistine garrison prior to battle to see if the Lord might help them? JONATHAN AND HIS ARMOR CARRIER (1 Sam 14:1)
3. What did Solomon say no one has the power to do? RETAIN THEIR OWN SPIRIT (Ecc 8:8)
4. Who blessed the infant Jesus when Mary and Joseph took Him to the temple to be circumcised? SIMEON (Luke 2:25-35)
5. Paul said the return of Christ will be accompanied by what two things? HIS MIGHTY ANGELS AND FLAMING FIRE (2 Thes 1:7-8)