

Functions of the Soul



What Is Man? (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

In previous talks we've seen that man is a triune being, created in the likeness of a triune God. Triune means three in one. God is revealed in the Scripture as three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, yet but one God. Man was created in the likeness of God and the Scripture reveals that man is a triune being consisting of spirit, soul, and body, yet but one person.

Now through man's rebellion against God, as we've seen, a radical change took place in every area of his personality. His spirit died; his soul became infected with rebellion; his body became subject to corruption, decay, and ultimately, death. However, thank God, that He has provided a remedy, and this remedy is regeneration. In regeneration, man's spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ, is reunited with God. The lamp within him is rekindled. Man's soul is saved from the guilt and the consequences of sin, and man's body also is revitalized from within. In this way, it then becomes possible for regenerated man to function once again in accordance with God's plan. In a certain sense, sin is a failure to function according to the purpose for which we were created, and salvation from sin restores to us the possibility to function in that way.

According to God's plan, for regenerated man, each part of man has its own special functions. Yesterday I spoke about the three main functions of man's highest part—his spirit—and I said that they were worship, fellowship and revelation.

Today I'm going to speak about the functions of the soul of man.

First, let me repeat something that I said, a kind of simple way of distinguishing the three elements of man. The spirit of man is God-conscious. The soul of man is self-conscious. And the body is world-conscious. Through his spirit, regenerated man knows God. Through his soul, he knows himself. And through his body and its senses, he knows the world around him. It's important to remember that only God's Word can divide between soul and spirit, the two inner elements of man's personality. This is clearly brought out by the writer of the Hebrews, in Hebrews 4:12. He says:

> "The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul

> and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (NIV)

I always think in terms of a surgeon's scalpel that penetrates into the innermost recesses of the human body. But God's Word is a spiritual scalpel that separates, in man's inner personality, between his spirit and his soul. And if we do not receive the revelation of God's Word, and study it and apply it, we shall not understand the difference between the spirit and the soul. Without the revelation of God's Word, man is just aware that there's something within him, an inner personality, but he really cannot understand the different elements or their different functions, so we're dependent on the Word of God for this revelation.

You remember that we said the Word of God is a mirror that shows man not his outward appearance and form, but his inner being, the various elements and how they operate.

Now let's try and get a clearer picture of the soul. This is very, very important for a successful Christian life, for clear understanding. I'll say this, the soul is the self. It's the ego. It's the I. It's the part of man that starts sentences with that simple little word of one letter in the English language, "I."

The soul, according to most Bible interpreters, has three main functions. You remember, we looked at the three main functions of the spirit—worship, fellowship, revelation—all God related. Now the three main functions of the soul, in a sense, are all in the realm of self. The three main functions are: will, intellect (or mind), and emotions. Let me say that once more. The three main functions of the soul are the will, the intellect, or we may say the mind, and the emotions. Let's put it in simple words. The will says, "I want." That's the expression of the individual soul through its will. And in a certain sense, that determines the direction of that life—"I want," "I don't want." "I will," "I won't." Those are the expression of man's soul and it's critical because that determines the course of a man's life. A man may say, "I will believe" or "I won't believe." "I will submit to God" or "I won't submit to God." "I will love my wife" or "I won't love my wife." And whatever decisions the soul makes become decisive in the course of that life.

Let's contrast the spirit and soul in this respect. The spirit expresses God. The soul expresses itself. The spirit is not interested in self-expression. The spirit's function is to express God. The soul expresses itself.

Let's look at the next function of the soul—the intellect or the mind. This is expressed in the simple phrase, "I think." The soul, in the area of the mind, functions with reason, concepts, ideas, problems, and so on. There's a very important difference between two things that outwardly may appear similar between the spirit and the soul in this respect. The spirit has direct revelation knowledge. The spirit says, "I know." "I know God." "I know I have eternal life." "I know my sins are forgiven." The spirit directly receives the truth from God, often in a supernatural way. The soul deals with concepts and ideas and processes and reasonings. Now I'm not saying that that's not important, but it's important that we distinguish the two. Revelation belongs in the realm of the spirit. Theology belongs in the realm of the soul. The spirit knows. The soul entertains ideas and reasons, and shuffles around with concepts. In a certain sense, the soul is somewhat like the computer.

Then, the third area of the soul, the emotions—this is expressed in the simple little phrase, "I feel." The soul responds to impressions from the mind and from the body. The soul therefore, in many cases, is very unstable—up one moment, down the next—happy one moment, sad the next. You see, there's again, the difference. The spirit responds to God, and God never changes; but the soul responds to the world around, and the world around is in a continual state of flux. So the soul that's based on its impressions received from the world, through the body and through the mind, is always subject to change, to flux, to moods, to impressions. Bear in mind then, that the soul determines the direction of the life, and the soul may either respond to the spirit or rebuff the spirit. Later in these talks I'm going to speak more fully about the way in which spirit and soul relate to each other.

Now let me speak about the different ways in which God's plan of redemption is worked out in the spirit and in the soul. We can take just two key words that sum up the difference. The spirit must be regenerated—must be born again. The spirit must have that particular kind of life that comes only from God. When Jesus said, "You must be born again," He was speaking about a spiritual experience for He went on to say immediately, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," contrasting it with physical birth. So the rebirth is something that primarily affects man's spirit. But the soul must be saved. The soul is guilty. The soul has rebelled. The soul is the author of rebellion, and consequently God deals with the soul on that basis of rebellion. God says in the Gospel, "The penalty for your sin and your rebellion has been paid by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross; I'm offering you pardon and peace and reconciliation, but the only condition upon which you can receive it, is that you lay down your rebellion.

So the key to salvation, for the soul, is to believe and then to surrender. And you see, mere intellectual believing, without surrender, does not produce that radical change which the soul needs. There are many, many people who have intellectual faith. They honestly, intellectually, believe the

truth of the gospel but they have never seen that they're enemies and that the only way they can be reconciled with God is through surrender. The key for the soul's good is surrender.

In World War II, when the axis powers asked the allies for peace, they asked for conditions of peace and the response of the allies was, "We'll make no conditions; we demand unconditional surrender." Well, that's exactly how God answers the human soul when it wants peace. God says, "I'm not making any conditions; I demand unconditional surrender." And only through unconditional surrender can the soul be reconciled with God and have true peace and salvation.

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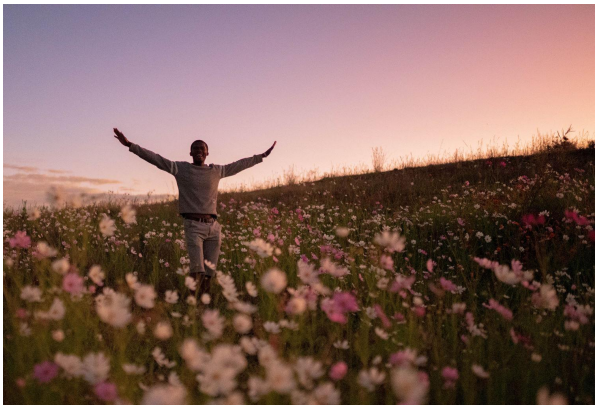

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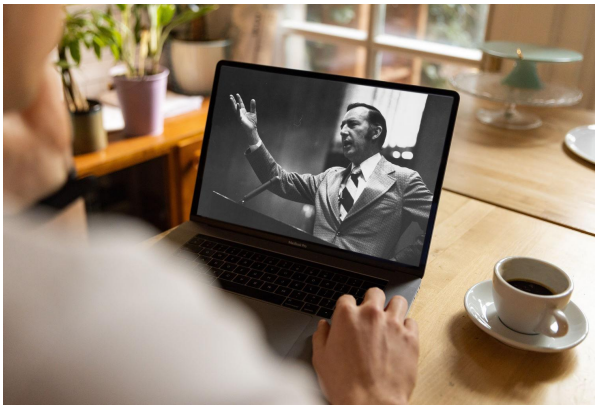

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