

God's Plan of Control



What Is Man? (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

All through these studies we've been looking together into the mirror of God's word to discover the real inner nature of man. Briefly, I could summarize what we've seen as follows: Man is a triune being, created in the likeness of a triune God. God is revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit—three persons, one God. Man is revealed as spirit, soul and body—three elements but one personality.

Second, man's rebellion against God caused dislocation and malfunction of every area of his personality.

The third, through the miracle of regeneration, God has made provision for man's restoration in every area of his being. God has a plan for each area of restored human personality, for the spirit, for the soul, and for the body.

We saw that the three main functions of the regenerated spirit are all directly related to God. They are worship, fellowship, and revelation. The three functions of the soul are all self-centered. They are will, intellect, and emotions. The function of the body is to be the temple of God, the dwelling place of God, the Holy Spirit. And, when the Holy Spirit takes residence in the temple, then we're obligated to present our members to God, the Holy Spirit, to yield them as slaves or instruments of God's purposes. And as the body is yielded to the Holy Spirit, it becomes sanctified, or holy, or set apart to God.

Today I'm going to speak about God's program to control regenerated man—how the three elements of regenerated man should relate to each other. This is a very, very important question because we may be regenerated, but if we don't understand how to function after regeneration, we may miss much of God's purpose for us, and also many of the blessings that God has for us.

So, let me begin by saying this. In God's plan, human personality is not a democracy. We've often heard the word "democracy" that we tend to think that everything should function on that basis. God does not function on the basis of a democracy and it's not His purpose that regenerated human personality should function on that basis. God rules man, very definitely, from above through His highest element—His Spirit, the regenerated spirit relates direct to God. The regenerated spirit is joined to the Lord, and through that spirit, through that link with God, God rules and directs

man and therefore man can only be successful in his regenerated life insofar as his spirit is in contact with, and yielded to God, and the remainder of his personality is yielded to the direction of God, received through the Spirit. Let me say that very emphatically. God rules man from above, through the spirit. In turn, man's soul should be subject to his spirit. And man's body should be subject to his soul. So, the spirit rules the soul; the soul rules the body. That's God's purpose. Only insofar as it's worked out, do we have success.

Let me give you an example of David, through his spirit, exhorting his soul. Psalm 42, verse 11:

> "Why are you in despair, O my soul? [You'll notice David is speaking to his soul, so it's not his soul speaking; it's his spirit speaking to his soul. The God-related part of him is speaking to the self-centered part of him.] Why are you in despair, O my soul? Why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance, and my God." (NASB)

You see there, the soul is so moody. It's so changeable because it's related to itself and to the outside world. But the Spirit that's related to God is not moody; it's not changeable. So David is in a mood; he's in a mood of despair but his spirit says to the soul, "Come on now, shake yourself; it's time to praise the Lord." "Don't give way to those moods."

In Psalm 103, verses 1 through 5, we find the same concept. David is speaking. He says:

> "Bless the Lord, O my soul; [so it's not his soul speaking, but his spirit] and all that is within me, bless His holy name. [You see, the spirit is always related to God. It always sees God as worthy to be praised.] Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit; Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle." (NASB)

Notice, the benefits of God, through the soul, reach also to the body. Jesus speaks about the healing of our diseases and the prolonging of our youth. So, that's the way that regenerated man is intended to function. The Spirit relates to God. The spirit gives direction to the soul, and through the soul, that Divine direction, and that Divine life, and those Divine blessings flow out even into the body.

Now let's look for a moment at the special responsibilities of each element of man's personality in this setup. First of all, the responsibility of the spirit is unbroken communion with God and worship with God. Whenever there's a kind of separation between man's spirit and God, then problems set in. So the function of the spirit is to maintain unbroken fellowship with God and to maintain worship at all times.

The function of the soul is submission and self-denial. Remember that it was in the soul that rebellion started, that the soul, through that, has been infected with rebellion. The great problem of the human soul is rebellion, self-centeredness, asserting itself (I want, I think, I feel, I'm important, cater to me), and before man can function as God intends, that has to be changed. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:24 and 25:

> "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If any one wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'" (NASB)

What's the first step in following Jesus? Denying ourselves. What does that mean? It means saying "No" to my soul. My soul says, "I want," but I say, "No, what you want is not important. God's will takes precedence over yours." Your soul says, "I think." But my answer is, "What you think is not important. What God says takes precedence over what you think." My soul says, "I feel," and my answer to my soul is, "What you feel is not important; it's the revelation of God that's true. Your feelings are changeable and unreliable; that's why you're so moody; snap out of it. It's not what you want; it's not what you think; it's not what you feel. I deny myself." And then Jesus goes on:

> "For whoever wants to save his life [but the Greek word is soul] will lose it; and whoever loses his soul for me, will find it." (NASB)

How can you lose your soul? I understand it this way. You lay down that rebellious ego that's the soul. You renounce that kind of life that's in the soul. The soul willingly accepts death. It comes to the place of the cross, yields up its life, and then a totally new life is opened up to the soul, a life that flows from God, through the spirit into the soul.

Then the function of the body in this relationship, as we've already seen, is to provide a pure temple for the Holy Spirit, and to provide yielded members as slaves to do the will of God, the Holy Spirit.

And let me say, that I personally believe in the light of this, every believer has an obligation to keep his body in the best condition that he can keep it in, always viewing it as a temple of God, and his members as instruments of God.

To give you a clearer picture of the interrelationship of these three elements, spirit, soul and body, in regenerated man, I want to take a type of experience which has, I would say, a corresponding expression in each area of man—in his spirit, in his soul, and his body, and I'm choosing to use certain words in a rather specific way.

In the area of the body, this experience is physical pleasure. In the area of the soul, the experience is happiness. And in the area of the spirit, the experience is joy. So we have pleasure in the body, happiness in the soul, and joy in the spirit. What's important is to distinguish between what we have in the soul and what we have in the spirit. You see, happiness depends on circumstances. Therefore, it's changeable. But joy depends on God alone, therefore it's unchangeable. We can be very unhappy and yet have joy.

I always think of happiness—the young man in his sports car on a spring day with his girlfriend beside him, driving down the road, feeling he owns the world. He's happy. Six months later, it's winter and his girlfriend has jilted him; his car is broken down and it's raining. He's unhappy. That's happiness—it depends on circumstances. But joy is a thing of the spirit and depends only on God.

Listen to what David says in Psalm 43:

> "Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I praise you with the harp, O God, my God." (NIV)

You see, David was cast down. He was depressed. Things were going against him. He was unhappy. But he said there's a solution for unhappiness. It's to get back in touch with God through my spirit. And when I'm in touch with God, He doesn't change. There's no circumstances with God; He's the great unvariable, unchanging, eternal source of joy.

In the New Testament, Paul says this in Romans 5:11:

> "Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (NIV)

I believe in a sense that's the ultimate of Christian experience. It's rejoicing in God. It's the spirit related to God ruling the whole being. And though circumstances may be against us, joy is still ours in the Spirit, through an unchanging relationship with an unchanging God.

Radio Program

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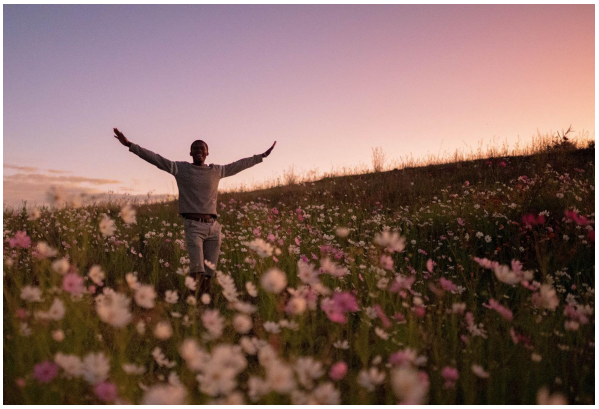


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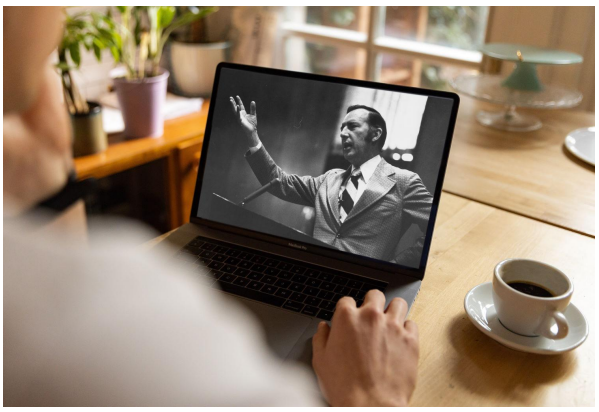
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