

SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY– Sunday September 8th 2013.

Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:22-23)

Beloved in the Lord,

As I read this blessing, it occurred to me that all too often we get the order wrong, and that is why we experience so many difficulties in our lives. God's order is spirit, soul and body. Man usually has it the other way around: Body, soul and spirit. Isn't it true that we place a greater emphasis on our body, than on our spirit?

In order to answer this question truthfully, we need only to do a short audit of our average day. How much time do we spend on the needs of our body in an average day? We feed it, clean it, exercise it, pamper it, give it what it desires. Compare the time spent on the needs of the body, with the time we spend in feeding and exercising our inner man, our spirit and our soul. We will soon find that we are usually way out of balance in favour of the body.

This is so wrong and detrimental to our overall health. The body is just a residence for the spirit and soul. We are not our body. This body is mortal. This body is slowly ageing and falling apart. Paul writes to the Corinthians: ***"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16)***

From the very moment we are conceived, the clock for our body is ticking. It relentlessly ticks on, minute by minute, and with every minute our body is getting older, and heading towards inevitable death. The body experiences a time of growth, it reaches its peak and then begins the journey down toward the grave. We read in Psalm 103:15-16: ***"As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.¹⁶ When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer."***

Oh, how true these words are. We flourish like a flower, we bloom and then we wither and die. This could be an extremely depressing truth, if our life was this body. Please understand that the words of this Psalm refer to our physical body and not our spirit and soul.

Our body is mortal. It is subject to time and space. Not so with our spirit and soul. Paul likens our body to a tent: ***"For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.² For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,³ inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.⁴ For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.⁵ Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.***

⁶ Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight— ⁸ we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2. Corinthians 5:1-10)

Over and over, these words show us that our physical body is not who we are, it is simply a residence, albeit a temporary one, for the real us, our spirit and soul. As we stand and look at a loved one laid out in a casket, we know and feel that they are not there. All we see is the residence they lived in. The spirit and soul have departed and we are left with the residence that now needs to be disposed of in a loving and honourable manner.

If we are Christians, if we have accepted Jesus as our personal Lord and Saviour, then at the moment of death, our spirit and soul go straight to our Heavenly Father in Heaven. If we are not saved, then they go straight to hell, the place of the lost.

There will be a resurrection, at God’s appointed time. At this time our spirit and our soul will be reunited with a new spiritual body that will never die. We will spend eternity either in the New Jerusalem or in the lake of fire. More about that another time. What I wish to emphasise today is that we need to consider that our spirit and soul are eternal. Therefore we need to nourish, nurture, care for them. We return to our foundation text:

“Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We are hereby commanded to abstain from all evil. We are to be separate, to live a holy and consecrated life. This only happens when we live by the Spirit and not by the flesh. We need to make this confession everyday: **“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” (Galatians 2:10)**

The key to a successful, holy and God pleasing life is to crucify your ego daily. Further along in this letter Paul writes: **“Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:24-25)**

To walk in the Spirit is to live according to God’s Holy Word. To be lead by The Holy Spirit. This means to surrender oneself fully to Him. Not my will but Yours be done in all things.

Much easier to say than do. We often are willing, but find that our flesh is weak. We give in to its demands, it’s passions and desires. This is the spiritual war that rages within us.

Victory comes only when we walk in the Spirit. Victory comes when we strengthen our inner man. If we are always just living carnally and feeding our body and it's desires, it will rule over us. On the other hand if we feed and strengthen our inner man, then the spiritual will gain ascendancy. We will live in harmony with God.

This is why Jesus taught that we should seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that everything else will be added to us. See Matthew 6:33. When we put God and His Kingdom first, then everything else falls into place. That is the Divine order. It is so wonderful and beautifully simple. Put God first and He takes care of the rest. Hallelujah.

On the other hand, the person that puts self first and who seeks after all those things; such a person ends up losing the lot. Jesus told it this way in the parable of the rich fool:

Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." ¹⁴ But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵ Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." ¹⁶ And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. ¹⁷ And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸ Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.' ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." ²⁰ But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' ²¹ So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:13-21)

I think that the story is very clear. The rich fool wasn't rich in God and in dying, he lost the lot. He lost it all, not only his riches but more importantly – his soul. There is nothing more tragic, nothing more terrible than that.

Jesus shed His blood on the cross, so that we would not have to lose our soul in hell. He loves us so much, He took our punishment upon Himself and died in our place. He suffered so we wouldn't have too. Everyone who calls to Him in faith, who comes to Him in faith receives forgiveness and eternal life.

So if we are to spend eternity with Him, shouldn't we be focused on getting to know Him already now? Shouldn't we strive to be closer to Him with everyday?

There is nothing better than to live for Jesus. When you live according to God's order and His way, you are blessed. Put Him first. Strengthen your spirit and soul and your body will comply. Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.