

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOURSELF

(Human Nature And Destiny)

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CHAPTER ONE

THE QUESTION

In our quiet and most thoughtful moments, most of us have reflected on the mysteries of our humanity.

What are these inner sensations we call feelings and emotions, and just what are we supposed to do with them? They seem to have too much control over us. Their demands are the driving force behind most of human behavior. They get us into a lot of trouble; they mess up people's lives; they ignite the fires of personal and global conflict.

And yet they are exactly where we experience our wholesome pleasures, our joys, and our happiness. They help to elevate us to our most noble aspirations and assist us in expressing our deepest humanity. Most of all, they find their highest function in worship and communion with God.

And what about our very existence? Who or what are we? Where did we come from? What is the purpose of our being? Do we have intrinsic value that extends beyond our mortality, or are we as individuals doomed to personal extinction?

Just who are we?

In our search to find out who we are and why we are, human civilization has developed various fields of study: history, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, the humanities and social sciences in general. And, yes, religion, broadly defined.

Almost all of this endeavor falls short because it emerges and proceeds from the wrong beginning point--man himself. By "man," of course, is meant mankind --*anthropos*--both male and female.

Historically, even most of the religion in the world has begun with us. We ourselves are the starting point and the ultimate point of reference. Mythologies ancient and modern are the products of people creating gods in their own image, clothing their imaginary deities with attributes that fit their own desires, and then making them the moral base of their cultures and the authorities that determine their mores and justify their practices.

Secular anthropology fares no better, even worse. Secular theories of human origins and nature are fatally flawed intellectually, are spiritually and morally bankrupt, and have left most of their adherents confused and lost.

CHAPTER TWO

OUR ORIGIN

To understand who we are and why we are, we *must* identify the correct beginning point and proceed from there. If we start from an incorrect beginning point, we will proceed "logically" to the wrong conclusion.

Every human society rests upon certain assumptions about reality, truth, meaning, and authority. These assumptions form the moral foundation of each social system and provide it with its ultimate reference points.

The basis of each society is essentially theological. Even communism was founded upon a theological premise--atheism. Atheism is not a theological vacuum or non-entity. It is a belief system, a radical assumption about God. Communism attempted to build a society predicated on a wrong theology, and it failed.

Secularism never can be the source, the foundation, the protector and guarantor of human rights and civil liberties. America's founding fathers knew that. In the Declaration Of Independence they affirmed that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. Thus they appealed to a Source of our rights that far transcends any and every level of human authority.

If human rights are merely conferred on us by government or by society, then no rights exist apart from those that government or society chooses to confer. In that case it would be impossible for a government or a society to violate unspecified rights, because unspecified rights would not exist. If government or society creates our rights, then government or society can legitimately abolish them.

Whenever a government and/or society fails to recognize its ultimate accountability to a moral authority higher than itself, the seeds of injustice and tyranny have been sown.

"Separation of church and state" never was intended by our founding fathers to mean the rejection by the state of its moral obligation and accountability to the Creator. Such a position could not possibly be "neutrality," because by its very nature it would be hostility.

Because the Judeo-Christian assumptions underlie western civilization-- assumptions that look to God as the Source of our human nature, values, rights and obligations--we held the Nazi leaders accountable at the Nuremberg trials. Because of those assumptions, we champion human rights and dignity throughout the world.

Without those assumptions we are merely intruding into the internal affairs of other governments whenever we charge them with violating the human rights of their own citizens, no matter how cruel and brutal those violations might be.

We are not highly evolved animals to be domesticated and controlled by government. We are uniquely created in the moral and intellectual image of God, and are responsible to Him for our moral character, our conduct, and the use of our endowments.

Moral relativism cannot stand up under the weight of objective reality. Certain essential values derive from our nature and relationships as human beings, and certain universal moral principles and obligations are based on our nature and relationships as moral beings, precisely because we are uniquely created by God. If God is not who He is, we cannot be who we are. We are who we are only because God is who He is.

If we reject that, we look in vain for an adequate basis for human values and rights. If we are only matter, we do not matter. Molecules and electrochemical processes have no intrinsic value and therefore no inherent rights. Most people do not want to live in that kind of a dangerous, amoral society.

Being the wonderful and amazing product of the special creative act of the supremely intelligent and all-powerful Creator, it is only logical that we should expect the Creator to tell us who we are, why He created us, and how we function.

That is exactly what the Creator did. He did the logical thing. He verbalized it and enabled certain chosen, qualified people to write it down, particularly Moses.

Now, instead of flippantly dismissing the Book Of Genesis, people should lay aside their biases and take the time to examine the subject honestly and thoroughly. Jesus Christ took Genesis literally, and He rose from the dead to prove that He is who He claimed to be and that what He said is the truth. That alone should sober one's thinking.

Also, one should not gullibly and uncritically accept the general theory of human evolution. The theory should be brought out of its privileged sanctuary and made to fend for itself in the open arena of objective scientific inquiry. Intellectual honesty requires that we take the time and make the effort to examine carefully the fundamental--even fatal--flaws in the theory.

So we go to the written record--not some fanciful, embellished derivative such as the Gilgamesh Epic--to the clear and direct record of The Scriptures.

"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26,27 NASB).

The prophet Isaiah confessed, "O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay; you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand" (Isaiah 64:8 NIV).

And how did God create the first human being? First, He did so in one day. Genesis 5:1 records, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him" (KJV).

Many symbolize the word "day" to mean a long period of time; however, no reason exists to do so except to try to harmonize the Biblical record with evolutionary presuppositions. God Almighty did not need more than 24 hours to accomplish everything that was done on the sixth day.

Man was the climax of God's creation week, His masterpiece. God's purpose in all that He did in forming the earth during that week was to provide a suitable environment for us.

Genesis 2:7 states, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (KJV). That was the beginning of human existence, including human life processes.

In Job 33:4 we read the words of Elihu: "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (NKJV).

From the side of Adam God created Eve. This was the only time that a woman came from a man. So God created MAN--male and female (Genesis 1:27).

As we read in Genesis 1:26,27 and 5:1, God made us in His image and according to His likeness. So then, to find out the truth about Man, we must start with God.

Contrary to what many teach, this *imago dei*--image of God--is not physical. Jesus Himself made it clear that God is a spirit being (John 4:24). We all know that in this present state we have a very definite and prominent physical component--a body. This is necessary so that in this life we can function in a physical environment. Our bodies shall be transformed at the resurrection.

In this life we are created male and female. This also is a necessity of our temporal existence that will not be present in the resurrection. Jesus clearly stated that in the resurrection we will not marry, but will be as the angels. That is, we will be sexless (see Matthew 22:23-30). Our present masculinity and femininity affect our inner psychological and emotional states. But our physical gender and whatever effects come of it are not an essential part of what is meant by our being created in the image and likeness of God.

As God is an intelligent Person, so we are personally endowed with intelligence. God's intelligence is infinite; ours is finite.

As God is a moral agent, capable of making free and responsible moral choices, so we have been endowed with moral agency, capable of making free and responsible moral choices.

Because we have been endowed with so many qualities that are in kind (though not in degree) the qualities of God Himself, we bear His honor and dignity.

According to 1 Corinthians 11:7, man is the image and glory of God, and woman is the glory of man. Her glory came from God through Adam and therefore in essence her glory is equal to man's. It has been said that she is "twice refined." Her glory is derived through man's, as her name itself (woman) indicates. Therefore man must always honor woman because she is his glory and his glory is God's glory. This is the true basis for woman's equality and rights. A man who demeans a woman demeans himself and also God.

We human beings, male and female, bear the unique honor and dignity of our Creator. Often people excuse their behavior by pleading, "After all, I'm only human." But that is the very point. Because we *are* human, we are responsible before God to live and act like it. Anything that is inconsistent with our high origin and nature is not human; it is sub-human.

The fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God helps us to a right understanding of the nature of God Himself. The apostle Paul said to the sophisticated idol worshipers at Athens, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:29 KJV). He had quoted their own philosophers, Cleanthes and Aratus of Soli.

In the light of who we are, idolatry is both foolish and profane. Man sinks to the level of the gods he creates.

God Himself is a "tri-unity" (Matthew 28:19). This unity of three in one is called The Trinity. So then, as God is a unity of three in one, so we are a unity of three in one, though in a very finite and much limited sense. God consists of The Father, and The Son, and The Holy Spirit. We consist of a soul, and a spirit, and a body. The basic difference is that God is three Persons in One, while a human being is still only one person with three components to his/her personhood. Still, our tri-unity is an image of God's and is part of what is meant by our being created in His image.

The fact that we are created in the image of God is the basis of capital punishment *for capital crimes*. God said, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6 NASB).

This was established before the Mosaic law and is grounded in the nature and value of the human person. Because we are uniquely created in the image of our Creator, we recognize immediately that murder is a capital crime, demanding a penalty equal to the capital guilt of the crime. To lessen the punishment is to lessen the estimate of the guilt of the crime. Whenever government lowers the penalty for a crime, it lowers its view of the value of the interests that the

law is designed to protect and therefore its view of the seriousness of the crime. Capital punishment means that premeditated murder is a capital crime.

If we are only highly developed animals, capital punishment is meaningless. In that case, any punishment for murder is meaningless. Murder itself becomes a vacuous word. In that case, let the law of the jungle rule.

The fact that we are created in the image of God is the basis of our unique worth. Jesus asked a question that no one can answer: "How much then is a man better than a sheep?" (Matthew 12:12 KJV).

Wherever the light of The Bible has gone, it has shown human beings their true worth and dignity. By contrast, atheism eventually degrades people to the level of machinery. We are not merely economic units, resources of the State. We are far more than a product or part of our physical environment. We are the God-crowned master (and protective steward) of the physical elements of this planet, from which we are essentially distinct and which merely serves us as our mortal habitat.

The fact that we are created in the image of God also establishes what should be our attitude and behavior toward our fellow human beings, whoever and wherever they might be. "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be" (James 3:9,10 NIV).

God had to use a direct vision to hammer this through to the apostle Peter. Peter finally came to realize that he is not to call anyone "common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). Only the love of God can truly erase pride and prejudice.

Proverbs 22:2 states plainly, "The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all" (KJV). Also, we remember Paul's words to the Athenians (Acts 17:26).

The fact that all human beings are created equal does not mean that all are created and/or endowed with equal capacities, abilities, and opportunities. It means that we are all fully human and of equal intrinsic value. Even if a person sinks to the lowest level of human depravity and degradation, that person is still fully human and of full human value. A person might have become human wreckage, but no one is human garbage. He or she might have horribly marred the image of God, but that image is still there, and the grace of God through Jesus Christ can restore it.

Because we are created in the image of God, we possess a God-given dominion "over all the earth" (Genesis 1:26). After the flood God said to Noah, "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered" (Genesis 9:2 KJV).

This dominion was given to us to protect and conserve the earth and its resources, not to waste and destroy them. "The earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth" is a popular slogan taught to many children. That cliché is only half right. Someone has said, "Watch out for half-truths; you might get hold of the wrong half." The full truth is that both we *and* the earth belong to God, and we have a moral obligation to manage and use it wisely for His honor and our good. That is the Biblical conservatism that a sterile secular environmentalism and a new-age "deep ecology" have missed completely. As someone has said, "Save the earth, but do not worship the planet."

God has created human beings as high as possible and still remain mortal in this life. "...what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas" (Psalm 8:4-8 NIV). This passage is quoted in Hebrews 2:6-8.

So long as man is in this present world, he bears all the limitations of mortality. His mortality ends in death.. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death" (Ecclesiastes 8:8 KJV). "...it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27 KJV).

How weak, how frail, how insignificant man is in his mortal state! God knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust (Psalm 103:14). God is mindful of the frustrations and temptations that come to us in and because of our mortal state and in our physical environment. Because of this He repeatedly counsels us to accept His proffered strength and grace.

"Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he? (Isaiah 2:22 NIV).

Our confidence must rest in God, not in man. We are likened to clay. "O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we are all the work of thy hand" (Isaiah 64:8 KJV).

We are compared to the tender grass. Psalm 103 goes on to say in verse 15: "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth" (KJV). See also Isaiah 40:6,7; Isaiah 51:12; 1 Peter 1:24.

CHAPTER THREE

OUR PURPOSE

Colossians 1:16 states that all things were created by Jesus Christ and for Him. That includes us.

But why did God create the human race? He did so for His purpose, but what is that purpose?

This is a question of the greatest magnitude. If we know with certainty and clarity the purpose of God in the creation of the human race and the superintending of human history and progress, we will know for sure the purpose of our lives. Then and only then can we live intelligently and purposefully.

Let us reflect for a moment. God had a perfect and complete kingdom. Its structure was flawless. Every angel was in place. But this perfect governmental structure failed God. Satan and a host of other angelic beings rebelled, and for totally selfish, unjustifiable reasons. It failed for one unavoidable reason: it was made out of previously untested beings. Obedience had never been proved, confirmed, and strengthened by being challenged. When the test did come, myriads failed.

But God must and will have a kingdom that will not fail. The voluntary, loyal obedience and devotion of this kingdom must be forged in the fires of opposition and challenge. So God designated a small planet in this solar system as His workshop. He furnished it with everything needed for our care and happiness. Into this environment God placed a marvelous creature made in His own image, endowed with moral and intellectual qualities like those of God Himself, and destined according to His wise eternal purposes.

Human beings are essentially immortal. God's greater purpose for mankind is beyond the grave, beyond the termination of his mortality. Job voiced a question that has been asked from the beginning of human existence: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14 KJV). Then Job gave the inspired answer that none but God could have given him: "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

In chapter 19, verses 25-27 Job declared, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (NIV).

The Holy Spirit through Paul gave us this bold assurance: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man after his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:22,23 KJV).

Instead of preparing themselves to fulfill the eternal purpose of their very existence, people foolishly strive and struggle through life with their minds set on some temporal goal.

"Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lives he blessed himself (for men will praise you when you do well for yourself), he shall go to the

generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man who is in honor, and yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:16-20 NKJV).

"Woe to him who strives with his Maker" (Isaiah 45:9). Rebellion against our Creator is moral insanity.

We strive to earn our graduate degrees, and in so doing we accumulate a little pile of incomplete fragments. "For we are but of yesterday and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow" (Job 8:9 KJV).

The Book of Ecclesiastes expresses the vanity of man in himself, and it does so in an earthly frame of reference. Our temporal existence is worse than meaningless apart from our eternal purpose and destiny. But when we see ourselves in the light of eternity, our earthly existence becomes at once full of meaning and purpose.

The story is told of a teacher who asked a student a series of questions.

Teacher: "What is the purpose of a pen?"

Student: "To write."

Teacher: "What if a pen does not write?"

Student: "Then it is good for nothing."

Teacher: "What is the purpose of a knife?"

Student: "To cut."

Teacher: "What if the knife does not cut?"

Student: "Then it is good for nothing?"

Teacher: "What is the purpose of man?"

Student: "To glorify God."

Teacher: "What if man does not glorify God?"

Student: "Then he is good for nothing."

The human race has been conquered, plundered, dehumanized, destroyed-- by sin. Adam introduced disobedience into the human experience with devastating consequences. God had to place a time limit on the human life span in order to limit sinners' opportunity to progress in

moral depravity in this life. To do this, God had to change the natural creation in order to initiate the laws of physics that now operate, particularly the law of entropy.

Romans 5:12 says "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (KJV). Here Paul affirms by the Spirit that God foreknew (and subsequent human experience demonstrates) that sin would become universal, and therefore He passed death upon all for the reason just mentioned.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27 KJV).

Yes, human glory is transient. Youth is temporary. Beauty fades and strength ebbs. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass" (1 Peter 1:24 KJV). All we have to do is look in the mirror or review old photos of ourselves (and how about those aches and pains as we grow older!).

To read further about what the Bible says about this, please go to Isaiah 2:22; 40:6,7; 51:12.

As a result of sin and its consequences, humanity has lost much of its dominion, in particular its dominion over death. Jesus Christ regained that dominion by His death, resurrection, and present exaltation at the right hand of the Father; and He will restore it to believers at the resurrection. And so, although we do not yet see all things "put under" man, "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor" (Hebrews 2:8,9 KJV).

We see Jesus--the Man in the glory--who conquered death for us. He is the hope of the human race, a hope that belongs to those and only to those who truly believe to eternal life.

We human beings are insufficient in ourselves. We need the universal moral law and the accompanying universal moral authority that God alone exercises and can exercise over moral beings.

"For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:14-17 NKJV).

Yes, we also desperately need God's mercy and grace. We have sinned against the holy and just God of the universe, the Majesty in the heavens, our Creator and Judge. Sin has placed the entire human race in death row! But "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16 KJV).

In the death of Jesus Christ on the cross God demonstrated the value not only of the human race but also of each and every human being. We are not junk. Look at what it cost God to save us!

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18,19 NIV).

"You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20 NIV).

CHAPTER FOUR

MAN, A TRICHOTOMY

The Bible teaches--and human consciousness and experience affirm--that man is a trichotomy. That is, we are triune, three-fold beings, comprised of spirit, soul, and body. Thus in this sense we are a reflection of our Creator, the Holy Trinity.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 we read the express desire and prayer that our whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless to and at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This passage not only identifies the components of our tripartite (three-fold) being, but also teaches that all three are involved in a person's moral character. God works in all three components. He requires holiness in the whole person.

We have an "outer man" that perishes, and we have an "inner man" that (in believers) is renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:6). This "inner man" consists of the soul and the spirit. The human soul is the seat of the deeper, quieter emotions; the human spirit is the seat of the surface, exuberant emotions. In what is called The Magnificat, Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46,47 NKJV).

One way to illustrate our three-fold being is by a series of concentric circles. The inner circle is our soul, the core of our being. The next circle is our spirit, the buffer between our soul and our body; as such it is more sensitive to our body and to the world around us. The third circle, of course, is our body; it is in immediate contact with our physical environment. All three interact. We will explore this in depth in the following chapters.

As we have noticed in the case of Mary the mother of Jesus, both the soul and the spirit are active in worship. (So is the body, as we shall see later).

The prophet Isaiah prayed, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early" (Isaiah 26:9 KJV). This is not merely poetic language. Many devout Christians have experienced some of their deepest soul-communion with God in the

stillness of the night. And many of us know by personal experience that sometimes our morning devotions require a real "jump-start" in our spirit. For some, a morning cup of coffee or tea helps (after all, the body does have an effect on our spirit).

How can we learn the difference between our soul and our spirit, and how each one functions? Hebrews 4:12 gives us the key: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow" (NIV).

The very language of this verse, both in the Greek and in the English translation, indicates that the soul and the spirit are very close and similar. It also indicates that the soul and spirit are inseparable in life, and dividing them is the tearing apart of the human person.

Whatever else this verse might be referring to, at least it tells us that the word of God can expose the difference between the soul and the spirit and thus give us an adequate practical understanding of our inner selves as human beings. For that reason we find in the Bible a clear and sufficient course of instruction on the subject, one that is both authoritative and in full accord with what we know and experience in ourselves and in our interaction with other people.

In this exploration we will learn that some of the three components of our personhood often interact with each other: the soul with the spirit, the soul with the body, the spirit with the body, and sometimes all three together. In fact, most human activities involve all parts of one's being. Some of our mental activities are functions of both the soul and the spirit; some are functions of one or the other.

Our soul sets our direction. It is our "guidance system." Our spirit provides the emotional "drive." A person who is driven impulsively by his or her spirit is like a race car without a steering wheel--a lot of gas and horsepower, but out of control. It reminds one of the old Laurel and Hardy movies where they are driving down the road in (what is to us today) an old jalopy. Laurel throws the steering wheel out of the car and Hardy starts beating him with his hat.

It needs to be mentioned that in the Bible the term "heart" is applied to either the soul or the spirit. Sometimes it means only the emotional expressions of the soul (deeper) or spirit (surface). When used in a moral sense, it means the integrity of the soul (the deep, steadfast commitment; what is called "the will"), or the integrity of the spirit (its disciplined, directed strength and energies). The context guides us in understanding what is meant by "heart" in each Biblical passage.

Death separates both the soul and the spirit from the body. The Bible does not teach "soul sleep" in death. In the Bible "sleep" is a metaphor to symbolize death. The passages in Ecclesiastes and elsewhere that are usually cited to support the notion of unconscious "sleep" in death only express how death appears to "the man under the sun." They show the vanity of life as seen from only a secular human viewpoint.

It should be kept in mind that the Old Testament does not give us a full revelation of life after death. It was Jesus Christ who "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10 KJV).

When Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, "her spirit came again" (Luke 8:55 KJV). When Jesus died on the cross, he dismissed his spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46; also Matthew 27:50 and John 19:30). When Stephen was martyred, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59 KJV).

By the Holy Spirit Jesus preached (through Noah) to the disobedient people when they were still alive. Their spirits are now imprisoned in Hell (1 Peter 3:19).

The soul also departs at death. Genesis 35:18 records that when Rachel died, her soul departed. Elijah prayed that the soul of the widow's dead child would come into him again, and it did (1 Kings 17:21,22). Job speaks of God taking away the hypocrite's soul (Job 27:8 KJV and Hebrew).

Psalms 16:10 prophesied that God would not leave the soul of the Messiah in Hades, the place of the departed dead. This is quoted by Peter in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:27,31).

The prophet Jeremiah used the familiar phrase, "giving up the ghost," that is, the soul (*nephesh*).

Jesus gave us the parable of the rich fool, recorded in Luke 12. God said to the man, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you."

The apostle Paul comforted the people who were alarmed by Eutychus's fall from the third story by assuring them, "his life (Greek: "soul") is still in him" (Acts 20:10).

In Revelation 6:9 the apostle John saw under the altar the souls of the martyrs. They were certainly not still in their bodies. Also, in Revelation 20:4 John saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for Christ.

Now it can be asserted, and often is, that in many Bible passages "soul" means only "life." In some cases that is so, referring to the fact that the soul is essential to life itself. However, it is safe to translate *nephesh* (Hebrew) and *psuche* (Greek) by their primary definition, "soul," unless the context itself clearly means "life" (e.g., Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Acts 15:26; 20:24; 27:22). Passages that refer to the soul itself are usually clear and unmistakable.

Also, these are not merely expressions of "pre-scientific" ideas by primitive people. They are the inspired, inerrant word of God. Contemporary anthropology and psychology have not and cannot improve on them. They are rooted in the realities of our very being.

In concluding this chapter, let us look again at 1 Thessalonians 5:23. "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." Verse 24 records this assurance: "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (NASB).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HUMAN SOUL

The soul is the deepest, innermost part of our humanity. Although the soul is not our total personhood, it is our core personhood, our essential being. For this reason we are often referred to as "souls." Genesis 2:7 records, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (KJV). Most modern versions translate this "living being." That is acceptable, but perhaps a little too broad. Insects are also living beings, and so are plants. See also 1 Corinthians 15:45.

In common language we often refer to people as "souls." "Old King Cole was a merry old soul" goes the familiar nursery rhyme. We refer to someone as "a dear old soul," or "the poor soul." Of course, we are referring to the person.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for "soul" is *nephesh*. It has a variety of meanings and is translated by various words, depending on how the translators viewed the meaning in the context. In the King James Version it is translated "heart" 15 times, "life" (the vital energizing activity of the soul) 119 times, "mind" 15 times, "person" 30 times, and "soul" 428 times.

In the New Testament the Greek word for "soul" is *psuche* ("psyche"). The King James translators rendered it "heart" 1 time, "life" 40 times, "mind" 3 times, and "soul" 58 times.

Perhaps if the original words were translated "soul" more consistently when the human soul itself is meant, and other words were used where the functions of the soul were clearly meant rather than the soul itself, readers of the Bible might have a clearer view of the subject. An example of the latter is found in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, where Paul says that he and his fellow-workers were willing to impart to the believers not only the gospel but also their own souls, meaning their lives.

In some cases the original words are applied in a general sense to animals (for example, read Leviticus 17:11 and Revelation 16:3). But only human beings have a soul in the specific sense.

All three components of our person interact with each other. The soul, then, interacts with the spirit and the body.

In a number of passages the Bible refers to the interactions of the soul and the body. Lamentations 3:51 reads, "My eyes bring pain to my soul" (NASB). Sometimes we call the eyes "the windows of the soul."

In some ways not yet fully known the soul responds to food and drink. Did you ever get so sick and tired of eating one thing so often that you wanted to stay completely away from it for a while. You literally "had it up to here." The ancient Israelites had that experience with the daily manna. After a period of time they said to Moses, "Our soul loathes this worthless bread" (Numbers 21:5 NKJV).

Proverbs 10:3 promises, "The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish" (KJV). And Proverbs 13:25 says, "The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul" (NKJV).

Those who wish to do serious Bible research on this point should look also at Numbers 11:5,6; Deuteronomy 12:15,20,21; 14:26; 1 Samuel 2:16; Job 33:20; Psalm 78:18 (*nephesh*); 107:18; Proverbs 6:30; 23:2 (*nephesh*); Isaiah 29:8; 32:6; 55:2; 58:3,5,11; Ecclesiastes 6:7 (*nephesh*); Lamentations 1:19; Micah 7:1; Revelation 18:14. Some of these can be and often are translated functionally (appetite, desire). However, the word in the text itself is "soul."

This is very practical information for some people who are overweight, and also for some people who are addicted to food but do not "put on the pounds." Remember, the soul is the seat or center of the deepest emotions. Perhaps you have noticed that many people who are despondent, frustrated, and even clinically depressed have an emotional attachment to food. They find solace in eating. They are psychologically "chained" to the refrigerator. They pick, pick, pick, nibble, nibble, nibble.

The story is told of a woman who was so deeply frustrated that she went into her bathroom, locked the door, sat down naked in the bathtub, and ate a whole chocolate cake!

In cases like this the overeating is a symptom of a deeper psychological (psyche=soul) problem. Once the psychological problem is identified, addressed, and solved, the eating pattern should return to normal, usually with a corresponding weight loss.

Sometimes the problem is not frustration or depression, but just plain gluttony --a voluntary surrender to a combination of a physical and an emotional (body and soul) desire that has been allowed to grow beyond reasonable boundaries. It is obedience to a desire that has developed into a compulsion, an inner "stronghold." To break this bondage one must first of all surrender his or her whole person to Christ; get to the cross and die to selfishness (sin); let Christ come in and bring His resurrection life; and live victoriously in Him by faith and in obedience to His lordship over every part of one's life, including one's appetites and eating habits. (Then, if necessary, get some good professional help.)

Sometimes worry, grief, and loss impact the soul in a different way, with an opposite effect on the body. The result is a loss of appetite, sometimes with a corresponding weight loss. Here,

too, the cause is not necessarily organic or biological, but deep in the soul (psyche). When the soul is strengthened and rises above the situation, normal appetite and eating patterns are restored.

The interaction between the soul and the body is the basis for fasting (as a spiritual exercise). The psalmist wrote, "I humbled my soul with fasting" (Psalm 35:13 KJV). In Psalm 69:10 he spoke of chastening his soul with fasting. One of the functions of fasting is the discipline of the soul as well as of the body.

As was mentioned earlier, the soul leaves the body at death. Genesis 35 tells us that Rachel did not survive the birth of her last son. Verse 18 reads "And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died) that she called his name Benoni; but his father called him Benjamin" (KJV).

Job 11:20 calls death "the giving up of the soul." Jeremiah 4:10 says that the sword reaches to the soul. In Jeremiah 15:9 "giving up the ghost" (KJV) is literally, "giving up the soul." In Lamentations 2:12 children starving to death in their mothers' arms was termed "pouring out their soul" into their mothers' bosom.

In Matthew 2:20 the angel informed Joseph that king Herod was dead. Herod had sought to kill the baby Jesus. The way the angel phrased it was that Herod had sought the young child's soul.

Eutychus went to sleep during Paul's long sermon and fell from the third floor window. "And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves for his life (Greek: soul) is still in him" (Acts 20:10 KJV).

THE ACTIONS, ATTITUDES, AND SUSCEPTIBILITIES OF THE SOUL

What does the soul do? What are its functions? What is it susceptible to?

The Bible's teachings concerning the soul's functions can be grouped under four headings: intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual.

Intellectual.

The soul has definite intellectual functions. One is memory. Late in his life and career Joshua said to Israel that they remembered in all their hearts and in all their souls that God had not failed His promises to them (Joshua 23:14).

The psalmist said to his soul, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:2 KJV).

Thinking is another function of the soul. The psalmist spoke of "taking counsel in his soul" (Psalm 13:2). As a person "thinks in his heart (soul), so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

The soul is also a repository of knowledge. Proverbs 2:10 says that knowledge should be pleasant to the soul. Proverbs 19:2 says that it is not good for the soul to be without knowledge, that is meaningful knowledge and not merely information. (See also Psalm 139:14; Proverbs 24:14; Jeremiah 4:19.)

Emotional.

As was mentioned earlier, the soul is the seat (center) of the deep, purposeful desires. The soul can be tormented. The Israelites in captivity said, "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud" (Psalm 123:4 KJV). They "had it up to here."

In 2 Peter 2:8 we read that Lot, Abraham's nephew, "was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard" (NIV). Job said to his "comforters," "How long will you torment my soul?" (Job 19:2 NKJV). The psalmist said, "My soul is also sore vexed" (Psalm 6:3 KJV). And the prophet Jeremiah described "the daughter of Zion" as crying out, "My soul is weary because of murderers!" (Jeremiah 4:31 NKJV).

In his song, Moses described the deep, purposeful passion of Israel's enemies in these terms: "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust (soul) shall be satisfied on them" (Exodus 15:9 KJV). This describes the deep, determined passions of troops on the attack.

Deuteronomy 18:6 describes deep emotional family ties as being the deep feelings of one's own soul.

The psalmist said that his soul longed and yearned for the courts of the Lord (Psalm 84:2). He said that his soul experienced a deep, emotionally crushing longing for God's word (Psalm 119:20). In Ecclesiastes 6:9 the "Preacher" said that "What the eyes see is better than what the soul desires" (NASB). That is, what we actually see and have is better than the roving desires of the soul.

In Jeremiah 22:27 a strong desire is described in the Hebrew as "lifting up the soul."

In Habakkuk 2:4,5 pride and expanded desire are described as "lifting up" and "enlarging" the soul.

For further study on this point, please read 1 Samuel 20:4; 23:20; 2 Samuel 3:21; 1 Kings 11:37; Job 23:13; Psalm 10:3; 24:4. In all of these references, the Hebrew word is *nephesh*.

The soul can be deeply troubled, pulled in different directions as it were. Just before His crucifixion Jesus said to His disciples, "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour" (John 12:27 NKJV). See also Psalm 88:3,14; 143:11,12.

The soul feels deep sorrow, anguish and grief. We call this "heart-break." It is the crushing felt by the soul. It "tears the insides out" of a person.

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery (as the compromise alternative to killing him). Of course, Joseph was listening as his brothers were discussing and deciding his fate. Much later, when they appeared before Joseph (not knowing who he was), they were distressed by what was happening to them. Their sharpened consciences troubled them and they began to talk to one another about what could be causing their present difficulties. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us" (Genesis 42:21 KJV). Even the ancients knew that deep anguish was an assault on the soul.

Centuries later, through Moses, God gave Israel instructions on the treatment of foreigners. He told them not to oppress the stranger, reminding them that they knew by experience the soul of the stranger (Exodus 23:9).

The King James Version preserves the literal Hebrew in Isaiah 51:23. It is a promise to Jerusalem that God will punish those who afflict her, who "have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over." Here again we see that oppression is a direct assault on the soul.

Slavery takes away a person's earthly hope, bows down the soul, and breaks the will. Revelation 18:13 describes slavery as making merchandise of men's souls as well as their bodies.

For further study on what the Bible teaches about the deep sorrow of the soul, please read: Leviticus 26:16 "sorrow of heart (soul)"; Deuteronomy 28:65 "sorrow of mind (soul)"; 1 Samuel 2:33 "grieve your heart (soul)"; Job 14:22; 24:12; 30:16,25; Psalm 31:9; 77:2; 119:28; 142:7; Proverbs 31:6 "of heavy hearts (bitter of soul)"; Isaiah 58:10; Jeremiah 13:17; Lamentations 1:16.

Referring to the future crucifixion of her Son, Simeon said to Mary, "(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also)" (Luke 2:35 NKJV).

In the Garden of Gethsemane this is how Jesus described the deep agony of his soul: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38 KJV).

The soul can also experience fear (Psalm 107:26), and pity (Ezekiel 24:21).

The soul can become bitter under unresolved injustice and unrelieved oppression and despair. Hannah, the future mother of Samuel, was "in bitterness of soul." The reason is recorded in the first chapter of First Samuel.

In venting his complaint, Job cried out "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?" (Job 3:20 KJV). In 10:1 he says, "My soul is weary of my life; ...I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (KJV). Job says that some die in the bitterness of their souls (21:25). He claims that God had made his soul bitter (27:2).

In Job 7:11 Job spoke in poetic language of the two levels of his inner feelings: "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (KJV).

Proverbs 14:10 says, "The heart knows his own bitterness (literally, "the bitterness of his soul").

King Hezekiah complained, "I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Isaiah 38:15 KJV).

For further study, read 2 Kings 4:27 "vexed" (bitter); Ezekiel 25:15 "heart" (soul); Ezekiel 27:31 "heart" (soul).

Some of the worst devastation is wreaked upon the soul by bitterness. Bitterness is literally soul-poison. Anger in one's spirit can deepen into bitterness in one's soul. Then it becomes a grudge, poisoning the soul with hate and a desire for revenge. It crowds out all joy and pleasure except the bitter-sweet anticipation of "getting even." It is a living death. This is why anger must be dealt with promptly and purged from our spirit before it moves down and becomes bitterness in the soul.

When Absalom rebelled against his father, David, the usurper asked for advice on how to pursue and defeat the king and his loyal forces. Hushai, David's friend, deliberately gave Absalom advice that would ultimately lead to Absalom's own defeat. Something Hushai said relates to our subject. He said that David's men are mighty men who are "chafed in their minds (literally, bitter of soul), as a bear robbed of her whelps" (2 Samuel 17:8 KJV). In other words, don't mess with a bitter enemy.

In 1 Samuel 30:6 we read that "the soul of all the people was grieved (Hebrew: "bitter"), every man for his sons and for his daughters" (KJV).

Deep discouragement takes place in the soul. Because the soul is where the essential commitments are made (what we call the "will" is really the set of the soul), when the soul is discouraged the person is in danger of giving up ("losing heart").

In Psalm 42:5 the psalmist asks his soul, "Why are you in despair, O my soul?" Then in verse 6 he tells God, "my soul is in despair within me." In verse 11 he repeats the original question and

encourages his soul to hope in God (NASB). In Psalm 43:5 he also repeats the question and his command to his soul to hope in God.

In Psalm 44:25 the people complain that their "soul is bowed down to the dust" (KJV) because of their affliction and oppression.

When David was hiding in a cave from Saul, he recorded his experience in very descriptive language in Psalm 57, including verse 6, "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down" (KJV).

Jonah said that when he was in the belly of the "whale," his soul fainted within him (Jonah 2:7 KJV).

And so in Hebrews 12:3 we as believers are urged to consider what contradictions Christ suffered by sinners so that we will not become weary and give up in our minds (literally, "souls").

Now for the positive side. The soul is also where we experience our deep joy. Joy in our spirit is bubbly, effervescent, the experience of the moment. Joy in our soul is deep and enduring.

We find this in the psalms. "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord" (35:9); "Rejoice the soul of thy servant" (86:4); "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul" (94:19).

Proverbs 16:24 says that pleasant words are "sweet to the soul." In Proverbs 29:17 the Bible assures parents that if they will correct their son, he will give them rest and will give delight to their souls (now, *that's* what every parent should want!). But in correcting your children, do not set your heart (Hebrew, "soul") on their destruction (Proverbs 19:18 NKJV).

Ecclesiastes 2:24 says that one of the basic good things of life for a man (or woman, for that matter) is to "make his soul enjoy good in his labor." One of the vanities of life, says Solomon, the Preacher, is for a "workaholic" who has no heir to drive himself so hard that he takes no time to enjoy life. "For whom do I labor, and bereave my soul of good?" he asks (Ecclesiastes 4:8). Also, in Ecclesiastes 6:2,3 we are presented with two frustrating situations: a person who has everything so that his soul lacks nothing, but cannot enjoy it because others take it away (verse 2), and a man who fathers a hundred children and lives many years but whose soul is not satisfied with good things and he does not even have a proper burial (verse 3).

In Isaiah 61:10 the prophet wrote, "my soul shall be joyful in my God."

In Ezekiel 25:6 the prophet warned the Ammonites that God would punish them because they had "rejoiced in heart (Hebrew: soul)" against Israel. They had a deep sense of gratification in their souls over Israel's sufferings, but it was a wrong kind of joy in the soul. It was evil.

If the soul is right, its joys will be wholesome and right. Its joy will be "the joy of the Lord," and that joy is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10)!

Moral.

We move on now from the emotional functions of the human soul to its moral functions.

We make our deliberate, meaningful choices in our soul--not the impulsive, temporary responses of our spirit, but our deep and settled purposes. In the old "faculty" psychology this was called the "will." In common functional speech we still refer to it as such. This is the set of the soul, especially in its choice of an "ultimate (supreme) end" and the choices we make in pursuit of that end.

This set of the soul determines our moral character. In fact, it *is* our moral character, from which all else flows. It is the "heart," the conscious motive. Deuteronomy 4:9 says "Keep thy soul diligently" (KJV). As a person thinks in his heart (Hebrew: "soul"), so is he (Proverbs 23:7).

We are to love God with all our soul (Deuteronomy 10:12), to serve Him with all our soul (11:13). See also Joshua 22:5; 1 Chronicles 22:19; 28:9; 2 Chronicles 15:12. Quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, Jesus said that this is the first and great commandment (Matthew 22:37).

In chapter 30 of Numbers an oath is called "binding the soul."

The laborer is to be paid his wages, because he sets his heart on it (Hebrew: "lifts his soul to it" (Deuteronomy 24:15. See also Ezekiel 24:25).

In Isaiah 58:10 God promises to bless you if you will "extend your soul to the hungry" (NKJV).

In his despair Job's soul actually chose death rather than life (Job 7:15).

King David prayed that God would not deliver him to the will (soul) of his enemies (Psalm 27:12. See also Psalm 41:2; Ezekiel 16:27).

Isaiah 66:3 says that the souls of sinners delight in their abominations. They set their heart ("soul") on their iniquity (Hosea 4:8).

Jeremiah told the leaders of the Jewish remnants that they were "hypocrites in their hearts" (NKJV. Literally, "souls") when they asked him to pray for guidance (Jeremiah 42:20).

The soul is where people love: Genesis 34:3,8; 1 Samuel 18:1; Song Of Solomon 1:7; 3:1-4; 5:6; Jeremiah 12:7).

The soul is also where people hate: 2 Samuel 5:8; Ezekiel 36:5 (minds: Hebrew "souls"); Acts 14:2 (minds: Greek "souls").

The person who is of a proud heart (Hebrew: "soul") stirs up strife (Proverbs 28:25).

Many, many people's religion touches their spirit only. It is merely the "tingle" of the moment. They have no real love for Jesus Christ, no settled purpose in the soul to obey and serve Him. James says that the double-minded (literally, "two-souled") man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). He has no deep, abiding principles. His soul makes only temporary decisions, to be reversed when circumstances and moods change. James 4:8 says that this is a moral problem: "Purify your hearts, you double-minded" (NKJV). The "two-souled" person must purify the heart (will and passions) from its attachment to selfishness by a total, "single-souled" commitment to Christ.

In the same vein, Peter warns us against following false teachers, who deceive and lure away "unstable souls" (2 Peter 2:14).

Elijah challenged the vacillating people of Israel, "How long will you waver between two opinions?" (1 Kings 18:21 NIV).

So, what is the set of your soul? What is it set *on*? Genuine believers have set their souls on Jesus Christ!

As we learned from 1 Thessalonians 5:23, we are to be holy in our souls as well as in our spirits and bodies. We have purified our souls in obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22). (See also Genesis 49:6; Ezekiel 4:14).

The commitment (set) of the soul puts the entire person into action. What we choose is what we will do. (2 Chronicles 34:31; Psalm 119:129,167; Proverbs 3:21,22).

Ephesians 6:6 says that we are to do the will of God from the heart (Greek: "soul"). Philippians 1:27 urges us to stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together for the faith of the gospel (literal translation).

"And whatever you do, work out of the soul, as to the Lord and not to men" (Colossians 3:23, literal translation).

The unity of believers in Christ is a soul-unity. Acts 4:32 says "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul" (KJV). The church is no casual collection of individuals. We are the true "soul brothers" (and sisters).

Because the soul is the source of our character, we are to keep it under discipline. God appointed regular times in Israel when the people would take time to "afflict" (chasten, discipline) their souls (see Leviticus 16:29,31; 23:27, 32; Numbers 29:7).

The psalmist testified, "My soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalm 131:2). See also Proverbs 23:14.

Spiritual.

We experience our deepest longing after God and communion with God in our soul. Hannah "poured out her soul" to God (1 Samuel 1:15). The psalmist "lifted up" his soul to God (Psalm 25:1).

Only those who know real soul-communion with God can understand and relate to the psalmist's longings: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. ...I pour out my soul" (Psalm 42:1,2,4 NIV). The same deep longings of the soul are expressed also in Psalm 63:1-8 ("my soul thirsts for You.... My soul follows hard after You"); and in Psalm 143:6 ("my soul thirsts after thee, as a thirsty land" KJV).

"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord" (Psalm 34:2). "Truly my soul waits upon God" (Psalm 62:1). "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. ...bless the Lord, O my soul" (Psalm 103:1,2,22 KJV). Also Psalm 104:1,35; 119:175).

The prophet Isaiah knew this deep soul-longing. He prayed, "the desire of our soul is to thy name....With my soul have I desired thee in the night" (Isaiah 26:8,9 KJV).

Jesus told us a story about a man who fattened his assets and fed his body, but starved his soul. On this "poor rich man's" last day on earth, God said to him, "Fool, this night your soul will be required of you" (Luke 12:20, from the NKJV).

To the weary, the heavy-hearted, the sin-burdened, Jesus extends this gracious and personal invitation: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28 NIV).

God's resources for the soul.

God has abundantly provided everything that our souls need. In fact, it is more accurate to say that God Himself *is* the full provision for our souls.

God strengthens our souls. The psalmist testified, "In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul" (Psalm 138:3 NKJV. See Ephesians 3:16 and also Psalm 66:9).

God restores our souls. One of the most well-known and best-loved passages in the Bible is The Twenty-third Psalm. In verse 3 we read the familiar, reassuring statement, "He restoreth my soul."

Do you feel broken deep down inside? Has your very soul given up hope? Does your soul feel disconnected, alienated from God? Does He feel far away? Remember, God is your "Soul-restorer." Turn to Him with all your soul and He will restore you. He is not as far away as you feel. In fact, He is right there with you.

God preserves the soul. "He preserves the souls of His saints" (Psalm 97:10). "He shall preserve thy soul" (Psalm 121:7. Also Proverbs 24:12).

God prospers and satisfies the soul. "Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way he should choose. His soul will abide in prosperity..." Psalm 25:13,14 NASB). "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalm 107:9 KJV).

For our souls to prosper in God, we must obey His word and walk in His ways. For example, Proverbs 11:17 says that the merciful man does good to his own soul. And Proverbs 13:4 reminds us that "the soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (KJV. See also Jeremiah 31:12,14,25; 50:19).

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2 KJV).

The sin, guilt, and punishment of the soul.

The soul is not sinful at conception or birth. God does not create a "sinful" soul. Sin is a voluntary choice against light (knowledge). The soul cannot make a moral choice before the beginning of moral agency.

Under the law of Moses it was recognized that people could and would commit infractions against the law's regulations, especially the ceremonial part of the law. These infractions did not necessarily have any moral character and they were usually classified as "sins" (offenses) of ignorance or omission. When the person discovered the error, he or she was required to offer an appropriate offering as an atonement (e.g., Leviticus 4:27, where the word is "soul" in the original Hebrew).

Remember, the soul is the essential person. The soul is where we as persons make our moral choices and commitments. God said to Israel, "...if your soul abhors My ordinances..." (Leviticus 26:15 NASB. See also verse 43).

In Proverbs 21:10 we read, "The soul of the wicked desireth evil" (KJV). Speaking of injustices committed by those in places of authority, Micah 7:3 says that the prince, the judge, and the great man speaks "his mischievous desire" (KJV). The original Hebrew reads, "the mischief of his soul."

It is very easy to adopt wrong values and priorities, to set our soul on the wrong things. Numbers chapter 11 tells about the time when Israel murmured about the manna and demanded meat in their diet. So God sent them quails, quails, and more quails, until they were sick of quails. God severely chastised them, not for eating meat but for murmuring. The rebellion began among the "mixed multitude" and triggered a murmuring that quickly spread throughout the entire camp of Israel. Psalm 106:15 refers to that historical event. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (KJV). We must be careful not to try to feed our souls on the wrong things. It might seem pleasant to our body and/or spirit, but it will not feed our souls any more than sawdust will feed our bodies.

In the Parable of the Rich Fool, mentioned earlier, Jesus quotes the man as saying to his soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19 NASB). Even though the man was aware that he had a soul, he was completely ignorant of what to feed it. Like many people today, he thought he could feed his soul on material things. He told his soul to eat, but gave it physical food instead of the Bread of Life. He told his soul to drink, but did not give it the Water of Life. No wonder God addressed him: "Fool."

We are warned to abstain (stand back) from fleshly lusts, because they "war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). Get completely away from them. Do not even come near them.

Proverbs 6:32 tells us that a man who commits adultery with a woman destroys his own soul. "Destroy" does not mean to annihilate, but utterly ruin.

Acts 15:24 informs us that in spreading their erroneous doctrines, especially wrong ideas regarding sin and salvation, false teachers subvert the very souls of those who follow them. In 2 Peter 2:14 the word of God warns us against false teachers who are "beguiling unstable souls" (KJV). Spiritual instability is epidemic, leaving people easy prey to those who propagate soul-ruining teachings.

Belief and behavior go together. Unless a person has so compartmentalized his or her mind as to isolate theory from practice, what we believe will affect how we live. The Scriptures make clear that wrong teaching leads to wrong living. Conversely, they also teach that impenitence will produce wrong teaching. In 2 Thessalonians 2:12 we read that God will judge all those "who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (KJV). Because God forbids sin, they make a "god" that will permit it.

Also, we can "mess up" our souls by reckless words. In Proverbs 13:2,3 we read, "A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth, but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence. He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life (Hebrew: "soul"), but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." On a different subject, verse 4 goes on to say, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (KJV).

The Bible teaches and human experience demonstrates that our speech can get our souls (as well as the rest of us) into deep trouble. Proverbs 18:7 warns us again, "A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul" (KJV). Likewise, Proverbs 21:23 instructs us, "whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles" (KJV). The problem is not the mouth itself, but what we do with it--and that is determined by the kind of person we choose to be.

Here is one of my favorite prayers: "Dear Lord, help me to keep my big mouth shut. Amen."

The ultimate punishment of the soul is called "the second death" (Revelation 20:14). God clearly told the prophet Ezekiel, "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4,20 NKJV). Again, the soul is the innermost part of our personhood. It is our essential being. For this reason we are often referred to as "souls." And remember, this death is not annihilation, but total ruin, a "living death."

Proverbs 22:23 says that God will spoil (plunder) the soul of them who spoil (plunder) the poor. Let it be a warning to those who are tempted to mis-use free enterprise to commit fraud.

Jesus Christ Himself said that we are not to fear them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Rather, we are to fear Him who "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). That is, we are to fear God. Again, "destroy" does not mean to put out of existence (extinction). It means total ruin, to make entirely unfit for its intended use and purpose.

Romans 2:9 says that there will be "tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man" who does evil." (See also Proverbs 20:2; Isaiah 3:9; Habakkuk 2:10).

Losing one's soul does not happen suddenly at the judgment. That is the ultimate and final stage of a process that begins when a person chooses to sin and thus brings alienation from God upon himself or herself. The process grows and progresses throughout life unless the person turns to God in genuine repentance and is reconciled to God by faith in Jesus Christ. Alienation of the soul from God brings alienation from one's self. A lost soul is not a whole person. He or she is empty at the core. Alienation from God and therefore from one's self spreads like a cancer through all of life. It robs all relationships of life of their wholeness, eating its way through the concentric circles of marriage, family, career, community, society. Whatever successes a person might seem to have in any or all of these areas, the essential ingredient--personal fellowship with God in Jesus Christ--is missing. According to Christ Himself (John 17:3) real life, life that is eternal in quality as well as in duration, is found only in knowing Him and the Father.

The priceless and eternal value of the soul.

How precious is the human soul! How immeasurably and eternally valuable it is! Jesus asked, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36,37 KJV).

Dear friend, your soul will live forever in eternity. Where will that be? The choice is yours.

Reason demands that we not only secure the salvation of our own souls by personal faith in Jesus Christ but also that we do all we can to persuade others to do the same.

Someone has said, "Don't just win souls; win soul-winners."

Only the self-deceived live to save only themselves. A truly converted person will be motivated by the love of God to do everything possible for the salvation of others.

"He who wins souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30 NKJV).

"If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19,20 KJV). See also Ezekiel 3:19,21; 33:9).

Hebrews 13:17 says that true spiritual leaders are "soul-guardians." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account..." (KJV).

The value of the human soul cannot be measured. No earthly price can be placed on it. The value of one soul far exceeds the combined value of the entire physical universe! God values the human soul so highly that He gave His one and only Son to die on a cross to save it. That alone gives us an idea of the magnitude of its value. How tragic that people treat their souls so lightly and sell them out so cheap!

He who refuses instruction despises his own soul (Proverbs 15:32). Also, the person who persists in self-deception "cannot deliver his own soul" (Isaiah 44:20).

The salvation of the soul.

In the Bible sometimes when people said that God had "redeemed" their souls, they were referring to some kind of deliverance in this life (see for example, 2 Samuel 4:9; 1 Kings 1:29; Psalm 35:3; 72:13,14). The redemption of the soul, however, goes far beyond this life.

Under the law of Moses God made it very clear that we cannot forgive our own sins and therefore we cannot save our own souls. That is why He instituted certain animal sacrifices for sin, and also certain offerings (see Exodus 30:12, 15,16). For the redemption of the soul, the innocent must suffer and die in the place of the guilty as a substitute.

In some pagan cultures people try to atone for their own sins by offering human sacrifices, including their own children, to their offended "gods." This only compounds the evil. The prophet Micah asks rhetorically, "shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7 KJV).

Jesus Christ gave his soul as an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10-12; Mark 10:45; John 10:11,15,17; 1 John 3:16). In these New Testament passages the word rendered "life" is literally "soul." That is an appropriate rendering because the soul itself is the very core of the person, and the giving up of the soul *is* the giving up of life itself.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins was foreshadowed in the shedding of the blood of countless sacrificial animals on the altars of Israel. And why the blood? Leviticus 17:11 explains. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul" (NKJV).

The poured out blood of Jesus Christ on the cross fulfilled this essential condition of our salvation, the one condition that we could not possibly fulfill. He became the only substitute who could satisfy the demands of the broken moral law. He took our place and bore our sins. Only God Himself could do that, and He did it in His Son, Jesus Christ. The Old Testament sacrifices only pointed toward His once-for-all sacrifice. Certainly the redemption of our souls is costly (Psalm 49:8). It cost Jesus Christ everything.

Now that Jesus Christ became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), animal sacrifices are no longer meaningful and therefore have been abolished.

Our part is to "repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Saving faith is a simple, sincere commitment to Christ, including a full trust in His completed work on the cross on our behalf. Hebrews 10:39 says that we "believe to the saving of the soul."

To every person, everywhere, in every generation, Jesus calls "Come to me ...and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-30).

The psalmist said to God, "My soul trusts in You" (Psalm 57:1 NKJV). He said to his soul, "Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you" (Psalm 116:7 NKJV). See also Jeremiah 6:16.

The apostle Peter writes to believers that we "were as sheep going astray," but that we are now returned to "the Shepherd and Bishop" of our souls (1 Peter 2:25).

The psalmist cried out, "Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee" (Psalm 41:4 KJV). In verse 3 of the familiar Twenty-third Psalm he declares, "He restoreth my soul." Does your soul need to be restored? He is the One who will do it if you come to Him.

Hebrews 6:18,19 says that our hope in Christ is "an anchor of the soul." Biblical hope is the anticipation of what is absolutely certain. The Christian's hope in Christ is an anchor for the soul that holds it steady through all the storms and surging waves of life.

Is your soul anchored to the "mercy seat," where Christ, our interceding High Priest, sits on the right hand of God the Father?

To explore other Bible references to the soul see Psalm 19:7; 34:22; 71:23; Proverbs 11:17 KJV; 16;17 KJV; 22:5,25 KJV; 29:24 KJV; Isaiah 38:17; 55:3 KJV; Jeremiah 26:19 KJV; 38:17,20 KJV; Ezekiel 18:27 KJV; Hosea 9:4 KJV; James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:9.

CHAPTER SIX

THE HUMAN SPIRIT

All conscious animals have a spirit. But not all spirits are alike, just as not all bodies are alike. Only the human spirit is permanent and returns to God. All others are temporary.

Ecclesiastes 3:21 reads, "Who knows the spirits of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the beast, which goes down to the earth?" (NKJV). This is not talking about the breath and gravitation. Human and animal breath respond the same to gravity. It is referring to the difference between the human spirit and the animal spirit, and what happens to each at death. The author of Ecclesiastes asks the question, "Who knows...?" The answer is that we now know by the fuller revelation of The Scriptures.

In this chapter we are focusing our attention on what God has revealed in His word about the human spirit.

Our spirits were created by God. God is "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Numbers 16:22). Isaiah 42:5 says that God created the heavens and the earth and all that it produces. He gives "breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein" (KJV). Notice that "spirit" is distinct from "breath." Also, Zechariah 12:1 tells us that God forms the spirit of man within him. It implies that the forming of the spirit in a person takes place as the person as a whole is being formed, that is, during gestation.

Hebrews 12:9 says that God is "the Father of spirits." This certainly does NOT mean, as some teach, that a "god" somewhere is producing "spirit children" who are waiting for us to make bodies for them. The idea should be dismissed as ludicrous nonsense. It is sad that millions believe it.

God--the only true and living God--creates human spirits individually by a divine act.

Hebrews 7:9,10 says that Levi paid tithes in his ancestor Abraham, "when he was yet in the loins of his father" at the time Melchizedek met Abraham. On this statement some build a doctrine that asserts that God created all of us as spirits and/or souls all at once in Adam, and that our spirits and/or souls have come down from Adam through our male ancestors from generation to generation. By a little mature thinking we can see how illogical this idea is, and what mental gymnastics are required to support it.

This Bible passage has nothing to do with procreation. It is a figure of speech that means simply that Levi was only a future descendent of Abraham when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, and that this gave the Melchizedek priesthood (now possessed only by Jesus Christ) precedence over the Levitical priesthood (now abolished).

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for "spirit" is *ruach*. The King James Version (and others) translate it as "wind," "breath," "mind," and "spirit," depending on how the translators viewed its meaning in the context.

In the New Testament the Greek word for "spirit" is *pneuma*. It also is translated by various words, depending on how the translators viewed its meaning in the context.

Also, as we shall see, at times in the Bible it is not easy to tell if the word means the human spirit or The Holy Spirit. Only the context can help us decide.

Our spirit is an essential part of our humanity, our personhood, but it is not the "core." That is the soul, as we have seen. Our spirit is more sensitive and responsive to our body and to our physical and social milieu. It also interacts with our soul and with our body.

Self-consciousness.

The Bible teaches that our spirit is the seat of general self-consciousness. The Book Of Job records that Elihu understood this. He declared, "But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8 KJV).

Proverbs 20:27 says, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly" (KJV). And in 1 Corinthians 2:11 the apostle writes, "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him?" (NIV). Read also Job 20:3 and Psalm 77:6.

Emotions.

Our spirit has greater emotional sensitivity and flexibility than does our soul. It is subject to impulses. It is excitable. It is where we feel enthusiasm. It is the source of emotional drives and

compulsions. It is where we experience our emotional "ups and downs," our mood swings. Of course our body plays a part in this, too, because all three components of our being interact.

In a sense it can be said that our spirit is the "shock absorber" between our core being (soul) on the one hand and our physical body and general environment on the other. It has the emotional resiliency--"bounce"--to take the impacts of daily living and recover from them rather quickly.

Elihu had been listening in silence to Job and his three "comforters." The emotional pressure kept building up inside him. Finally he spoke up: "there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding" (Job 32:8 NKJV). He was referring to himself and the fact that God was prompting him in his spirit to speak, even though he was a younger man.

Wars result from the intense stimulation of the human spirit. How many wars would have been avoided if there had not been a mass agitation of people's spirits? Frustration and anger; the lust for conquest; the exciting prospect of adventure and glory; the *esprit de corps*; stirring martial music; arousing speeches; and normal patriotism stimulated beyond reason. Even a just war cannot be successfully waged without enlisting the human spirit to fuel it.

1 Chronicles 5:26 records that God "stirred up" the spirit of Tiglath-pilneser, king of Assyria, to invade part of the northern territory of Israel and carry away three tribes of Israel into exile because of their idolatry.

In 2 Chronicles 21:16,17 we read that God stirred the spirit of the Philistines to come against Jehoram, a wicked king of Judah.

Jeremiah 51:11 says that God "raised up" the spirit of the kings of the Medes to come against Babylon to destroy it because of its violence against the temple of God.

We should be guided by the reasonable commitment of our souls, not driven by the mindless impulses of our spirits. Someone has said, "Our feelings have no brains."

Nevertheless, God has given our spirits their emotional functions, not to rule us but to strengthen us emotionally in our commitment to what is reasonable and right, and to make sensible living pleasurable. Without the emotional strength and zest of the human spirit life in general would be pretty dull and matter-of-fact.

Everyone who has raised funds or taken an offering knows the importance of the involvement of the human spirit. Exodus 35:21 records that when there was a need for the materials to make the tabernacle, the people came, "every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering..." (KJV).

And remember, the Lord loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). (Even though He will accept money from a grouch!).

Later, the people of Israel responded with the same enthusiasm of spirit at the rebuilding of the temple. First, God "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia" to issue a proclamation calling on all Jews who were willing to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1). Later, after the work had ceased temporarily, the Lord sent Haggai the prophet to challenge the people to go forward with the work. Then the Lord "stirred up the spirit" of the leaders and the people, arousing their enthusiasm and putting them into action.

It is recorded about John The Baptist, "And the child grew and became strong in spirit" (Luke 1:80 NIV). And of Jesus Himself we read, "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit" (Luke 2:40 NKJV; some versions omit "in spirit").

When Jesus chose His disciples, He did not draft unmotivated "losers." He picked active, enthusiastic men. Oh, yes, He had to corral and re-direct their enthusiasm. It did not take much to start them arguing over who would be first in the kingdom. On one occasion James and John wanted to call down fire and burn up some adversaries. Judas Iscariot turned out to be a scheming, thieving traitor. But one thing is sure--there was not a dead-head in the whole bunch!

Even when it came to prayer, their spirit was willing. The problem was that they gave in to the weakness of their flesh. So Jesus urged them (and us) to stay awake and pray because "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

And then there was Saul of Tarsus. Paul, that is. When Jesus wanted a missionary who would press on in spite of cold, hunger, danger, opposition, beatings, and even the prospect of death itself, the Lord did not go to the mediocre, "high-maintenance/low-impact" drifters whose ambition in life was barely to exist. Instead, He intercepted a "type-A" Pharisee who was "breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1 KJV) and on his way to Damascus to arrest them. Jesus turned Saul around at full throttle. "What shall I do, Lord?" Saul asked (Acts 22:10). He reported duty immediately, ready and raring to go.

Later, when Paul was at Athens, "his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16).

He testified to the believers at Rome, "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son" (Romans 1:9). Notice, Paul did not say "I serve my spirit. He said "I serve God with (or in) my spirit." The difference is fundamental. Our spirit is our servant, not our master. It energizes us, but it must not control us.

Paul urges us to be "fervent (boiling) in spirit" (Romans 12:11). He lived what he commanded.

The human spirit is where the nine supernatural gifts of the Spirit operate in the Spirit-filled believer. This is especially true of the perceptual and the verbal gifts.

Jesus "perceived in his spirit" what the scribes were reasoning in themselves (Mark 2:8). See also 1 Corinthians 5:3,4.

Paul writes, "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful" (1 Corinthians 14:14 NIV).

Verse 32 of the same chapter says, "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. Notice, it does not say that The Holy Spirit is subject to those who prophesy. It is their own human spirit that is subject to them; that is, they are in control of how their own spirit responds to the Holy Spirit so as to keep that response Biblical.

Actions and Attitudes Of The Human Spirit.

Our human spirit is far more emotionally flexible than is our soul. It can cover the entire mood range from discouragement to elation. If undisciplined, the human spirit can become impulsive and explosive.

The Bible uses the term "vexation of spirit," especially in the Book Of Ecclesiastes (1:14,17; 2:11,17,26; 4:4,6,16). Worry, uncertainty, perplexity, and confusion put our spirit under stress. This affects our body because of the close interaction between our spirit and our body. In his suffering Job said, "The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison" (Job 6:4 NIV).

Pharaoh's dream troubled his spirit (Genesis 41:6,7). Also, king Nebuchadnezzar's dream troubled his spirit (Daniel 2:1).

Daniel's dreams caused him to be grieved in his spirit within his body (Daniel 7:15). His body was temporarily overwhelmed (Daniel 8:27).

John 13:21 reports one of the occasions when Jesus was troubled in his spirit.

Paul says that when he came to Troas, "I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother" (2 Corinthians 2:12,13). We call this anxiety.

Extremely good news can also initially overwhelm our spirit before it eventually lifts our spirit. When Jacob received the exciting news that his son Joseph was still alive, "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived " (Genesis 45:26,27).

Our spirit is the first to feel the shock of frustration, grief, and anger. Exodus 6:9 says, "So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they would not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage" (NKJV). "Anguish" is a translation of the Hebrew word *qotser*, meaning "shortness, impatience."

In a comforting, assuring prophecy to God's people, the prophet Isaiah said, "For the Lord has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected" (Isaiah 54:6). Many rejected wives have felt that same intense pain in their spirit.

Job said, "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 7:11). Notice the difference between the spirit and the soul, and the feelings experienced by each.

Job also asked, "why should not my spirit be troubled?" (Job 21:4). Here again the word for "troubled" is "shortened."

Jesus stood before the tomb. Four days earlier death had taken away Lazarus, His close personal friend. John 11:33 records that Jesus "groaned in His spirit." The Greek word translated "groaned" is a form of the verb *embrimaomai*. It means "to snort," like the snorting of a horse. Our Lord's human spirit was powerfully stirred. Jesus hated death. Death is the ultimate enemy of humanity and part of Christ's mission was to destroy it. He was indignant, outraged. We can feel the passion of His spirit as He commands, "Move that stone!" "Lazarus! Out!"

Our spirit also feels sorrow and sadness (1 Kings 21:5). We call this feeling "heart-sick."

Hannah had to share her husband with another woman, Peninnah. This common but outrageously unnatural arrangement was a source of constant inner pain to Hannah. The bad situation was made even worse by the fact up to that point she was childless, and fecund Peninnah kept taunting her about it. When Hannah poured out her frustration before the Lord, she could not or at least did not even put her words into sound. Only her lips moved. Eli, the backslidden priest, thought she was drunk and rudely told her to get rid of her alcoholism. But Hannah explained, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:15 KJV). The sorrow in her spirit drove her to open up her soul, the deep core of her being, and "pour it all out" in total intercession before God.

On one occasion, when the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign, "He sighed deeply in His spirit" (Mark 8:12).

Our spirit can be overwhelmed. It can even be broken. When the Amorite and Canaanite kings heard about the miracle of Israel's crossing of the Jordan, "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" (Joshua 5:1 KJV). That is, their human spirit was overwhelmed.

When the queen of Sheba heard the wisdom of King Solomon and saw the splendor of his court, "there was no more spirit in her" (1 Kings 10:5 KJV). Today we would say, "it took the wind out of her sails." That is, her human spirit was overwhelmed (but in a different way from the Palestinian kings in Joshua's day).

God "shall cut off the spirit of princes; He is awesome to the kings of the earth" (Psalm 76:12 NKJV).

The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel warning that because of His judgments on ancient Israel, "every spirit shall faint" (Ezekiel 21:7 KJV).

At times the psalmist's spirit was overwhelmed within him (see Psalm 77;1-3; 142:1-3; 143:3,4). At one time or another in our lives, most of us have had the same experience. The sudden situation or the mounting pressure was just too much for our spirit to handle and we "went under" emotionally.

The Book Of Proverbs (the "get smart" book) also speaks about the human spirit and what affects it and how.

"A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it crushes the spirit" (Proverbs 15:4 NASB). "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" (15:13 KJV). "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones (17:22 KJV).

Notice the progression. Sorrow breaks the spirit; a broken spirit "dries the bones." This is an example of the interaction that takes place among our human components. Disappointment and disillusionment have contributed much to ill health.

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14 KJV). Much could be said about the importance of the condition of one's spirit in physical recovery.

Many people, including young people and children, viciously wound the spirit of others by their attitudes, words and actions. In his book Wounded Spirit author Frank Peretti details the pain he himself experienced in his childhood from bullies. The book is recommended reading to help people get a realistic "feel" for the trauma that many go through in their spirit from this not uncommon form of abuse.

Years ago in The Dalles, Oregon, two boys were verbally and physically abused while growing up. Each adopted a different defense mechanism. One boy grew up to be a "wimp"--afraid, timid, passive, avoiding confrontation. The other grew up to be a bully himself--aggressive, hurting others. In different ways a wounded spirit ruined both men. So far as I know, neither man recovered.

Professional help for people suffering a wounded spirit needs to be Biblically based. Without an understanding of what the Bible teaches about our personhood, mental health professionals are missing the master key. They need to lay aside any prejudices they might have and be willing honestly to lay the empirical data alongside Biblical teachings to see if they correlate. If they do,

professionals should at least include the Biblical perspectives into their education and clinical practice, or go the next step and integrate their professional formulas into the Biblical matrix.

Now, the good news is that our human spirit can be refreshed and renewed. That is the positive side of its flexibility.

Keep in mind that our spirit and our body affect each other. Samson's spirit was "revived" by a drink of water (Judges 15:19). Our body is a wonderful machine. The soul "steers" it as the spirit "drives" it. It also needs "fuel." If it is not properly maintained, it is not a responsive vehicle for our spirit. One can have a champion race car driver at the controls; but if the car is in bad shape, he will not get much performance out of it.

Paul's spirit was refreshed by much needed Christian fellowship (1 Corinthians 16:18).

Paul said that he had no rest in his spirit when he came to Troas because he did not find Titus there. Anxiously he went into Macedonia. When he found him, he noticed that Titus's spirit was refreshed by his fellowship with the Corinthian believers. This relieved Paul and filled him with joy (2 Corinthians 2:12,13; 7:13).

Centuries before Job said to God, "You have granted me life and favor, and Your care has preserved my spirit" (Job 10:12 NKJV). He knew by experience that God is the Source (and ultimate Resource) of strength for the human spirit.

Early in His earthly ministry Jesus took a roll of the prophet Isaiah and read from what we know as chapter 61, verses 1-3. Although Jesus did not read the entire passage, it is all fulfilled in Him. In verse 3 we read that God anointed Jesus to give "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Ah, that's it! The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness! Our spirit is involved in worship. The prophet prayed, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early" (Isaiah 26:9 KJV).

Remember Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 14:14, "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful" (NASB; NIV).

Remember also the words of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in what is called The Magnificat: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46,47 KJV).

The Discipline Of Our Spirit.

The Bible makes clear (and human experience shouts its agreement) that we have a moral obligation to discipline our spirit. Our spirit is volatile. It can be destructively explosive if its energies are not kept within the bounds of reason and revelation and directed positively and

productively. God wants our whole being, spirit as well as soul and body, to be "preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

We all know by experience that our spirit can be provoked. When our spirit is provoked, it is easy to say things that we wish afterward had never been said.

Ecclesiastes 10:4 advises us, "If the spirit of a ruler rises against you, do not leave your post; for conciliation pacifies great offenses" (NKJV).

James 4:5 reads "Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us tends toward envy...?" (NIV. Note: the versions give a variety of readings).

In Proverbs we read some very direct and pointed words about ruling our human spirit. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (16:32 KJV). "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (25:28 KJV).

The way to rule our spirit is first to let Jesus Christ rule us. If we do not open up and ask Christ to come in to live and reign in us, we will remain the same selfish slaves to our own desires and impulses. The most we will do is make "trade-offs," denying one desire for the sake of gratifying a stronger conflicting one that we think will bring an improvement in our behavior. For example, we will repress anger for the sake of the benefits "anger management" brings in personal relationships, but we will never be truly free from its dominion until we release it to Christ and bring it under His lordship within us.

The Bible warns us against the folly of reacting quickly to the impulses of our spirit. Again we go to the "get smart" book. Proverbs 14:29 says, "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding, but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (KJV). "Hasty" means "short," as in "having a short fuse." Such a person puts a high premium on folly.

"A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit" (Proverbs 17:27 KJV). "Excellent" means "cool." A cool spirit is a pleasant one to live with and to be around. So God is saying to us: "Cool it!"

On the folly of emotional impulsiveness, Ecclesiastes 7:9 "tells it like it is." It says, "Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools" (NIV).

Anger is like a tornado. It is highly destructive, even when it comes quickly and passes quickly. When a tornado hits, you quickly find the safest place available, "hunker down," and remain still until it blows over. Even though the emotions of the human spirit are powerful, like the wind they are also very changeable. They usually come quickly and pass quickly. So when we feel their "velocity" beginning to pick up within us, our "safe place" is Christ. "Hunker down" in prayer and stay still in His presence until the inner storm subsides.

Instead of merely reacting to our spirit, we should learn how to respond to it and to direct its energies in positive, productive ways.

Some Christians "spiritualize" the impulses of their spirit. They confuse the whims of their own spirit with the genuine leadings of The Holy Spirit. Because they are so "in touch" with their own spirit, they imagine themselves to be super-spiritual. This is not spirituality; it is instability. It is not a sign of spiritual maturity but a sign of both spiritual and emotional immaturity. Instead of following the "winds" of The Holy Spirit, they are only "flapping in the breeze."

God requires us to have a humble spirit. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better is it to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:18,19 KJV).

"A man's pride shall bring him low, but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit" (Proverbs 29:23 KJV). "The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit" (Ecclesiastes 7:8 KJV).

A person who puts integrity over impulse is said to have "a faithful spirit." That person will keep his or her spirit under obedience to the moral law of God, the law of love. Proverbs 11:13 agrees: "A talebearer revealeth secrets, but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (KJV). Let us remember this whenever we hear a juicy bit of scandal and we think we are going to explode on the inside unless we repeat it.

On this subject it is interesting, almost amusing, how some widely held secular theories contradict each other. One theory says that if we give in to our feelings and behave accordingly, we reinforce that behavior. Another theory maintains that if we give in to our feelings instead of "repressing" them, we release them. Some try to reconcile the two theories, but clearly both cannot be true. What is "reinforced" cannot at the same time be "released." Feed an appetite and we will satisfy it for the moment; but the next time it arises, it will be stronger and more demanding.

Whenever we yield to a desire, we strengthen that desire. We do not get rid of the desire by gratifying it any more than we get rid of an unwanted animal by feeding it. The gratification of the moment will stop its immediate demands, but it will come back stronger and hungrier the next time. Conversely, whenever we refuse to yield to an unreasonable desire, we weaken that desire. This is not "repression," but *rejection*--that is, we reject the demands of that desire. We refuse to surrender to it; we refuse to let it control us. Instead, we have surrendered to Jesus Christ and are living under His liberating control. Repression is like pressing one foot on the brake pedal and the other foot on the gas pedal at the same time. That feeds the energy, but only internalizes it. Rejection is like taking the one foot off the gas pedal.

We must also guard the romantic feelings of our spirit. Malachi 2:15 warns, "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth" (KJV). Many infatuations begin in the human spirit and then later involve the flesh.

A man begins to feel real or imagined rejection from his wife. He begins to feel sorry for himself--misunderstood, unappreciated. He pours out his feelings to a pretty young thing at work. She listens and responds sympathetically, "I understand how you feel." "The way she is treating you is not fair." "Let's talk about it some more." What is happening? She is feeding something in his spirit, something he feels starved for, and he is eating it up. Something is happening in his spirit, and the rest of the story is predictable. Unless he stops feeding his spirit on this relationship, before long they will be in bed together and he will be far down the slippery slide to disaster.

A disciplined spirit is a contrite, chastened, obedient spirit. The high and lofty One who inhabits eternity says, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15 KJV). He also says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2 KJV).

In the Sermon On The Mount Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3 KJV). "Poor" here means "destitute." A destitute spirit is not necessarily a weak spirit. A destitute spirit is "spent" of its selfish drives, impulses, and ambitions. It is humble, submissive, spiritually dependent on God and trusting in Him, recognizing its need of His grace.

The apostle Peter says that the real beauty of a godly woman is "in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4 KJV).

Our moral character also includes our spirit. That is, we are required to be holy in our spirit. Remember 1 Thessalonians 5:23, where the apostle expresses his prayerful desire that our spirit as well as our soul and our body be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The psalmist wrote, "Blessed is the man...in whose spirit there is no guile" (KJV).

And Paul reminds us that "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17 KJV). See also the majority reading for the last part of verse 20. Read also chapter 7, verse 34.

Hebrews 12:23 says that we are come "to the spirits of just men made perfect" (KJV).

In Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle urges us in The Holy Spirit, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1 KJV).

The sanctifying of our spirit is not merely a "do-it-yourself" project. As in every part of our walk with God, believers have the promised resources of God's grace. The following passages are not just formal closings to correspondence. They are the invoking of God's grace for the needs

of our human spirit. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Galatians 6:18; Philemon 25 KJV). "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit" (2 Timothy 4:22 KJV).

Yield to God's grace and you will have God's grace to sustain your spirit through its emotional storms, pressures, ups and downs.

The flip-side of all this, of course, is the fact that sinners follow their own spirit. They obey the strongest desire, even when it means suppressing weaker competing desires.

God hardened the spirit of king Sihon in his opposition to Israel (Deuteronomy 2:30). This was a judicial act on the part of God. Sihon was already under God's judgment, and God was merely maneuvering him through his own selfish spirit into a position where he would be totally defeated.

In Job 15:13 we read the statement of Eliphaz falsely accusing Job of turning his spirit against God.

In Ezekiel 13:3 God speaks through Ezekiel to the foolish prophets, who "follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing" (KJV). Like many people today, they had their own "new age" phony "spirituality."

The psalmist said that the ancient Israelites were a generation "whose spirit was not steadfast with God" (Psalm 78:8 KJV). This is a reminder to us to keep our spirit steadfast in its commitment to God.

God "weighs" our spirit. This is not about pounds and ounces, grams and kilograms. It is about character--depth and moral "substance" versus shallowness and impulsive "froth." So we read in Proverbs 16:2, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits" (KJV).

If a person is not in fellowship with God, that person's spirit is dead toward God, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). This is not a mystical, metaphysical, or ontological "death" of the spirit itself. It is a *relational* death-- separation from God, its Source of being and life. No wonder so many people's spirit is out of control, wracked by destructive impulses and desires, wounded, broken, lost.

Salvation involves a change in the human spirit. It is not a mystical change in the essence of the spirit itself, but a change in its direction, its attitude, its relationship with God, its character.

Jesus said to his night-time visitor, Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6 KJV). The Lord had just said to him, "You must be born again." Nicodemus was thinking only of the physical and responded, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus replied to this inane line of questioning by saying in essence, "I have used physical birth to illustrate moral and spiritual rebirth. You are hung up on the physical and therefore you do not understand what I am saying. Physical birth applies to the flesh, the body. The new birth applies to the spirit. It is the result of the human spirit surrendering to the moral influences of the Holy Spirit. The result is a new spirit. As a teacher in Israel you should have known that from Ezekiel 18:31."

God does everything morally possible to save a person's spirit. He especially takes extreme measures if necessary to restore a believer who has fallen into immorality. In the church at Corinth a man formed a particularly outrageous incestuous relationship. Instead of grieving over the situation, the church became "puffed up" and defensive about it. Paul sternly told the church to join his own spirit, "with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ," to deliver the man to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (see 1 Corinthians 5:1-5). The salvation of the soul and spirit is so eternally important that God will allow Satan to attack and even to destroy if necessary the body of a believer who has fallen into deep sin in an endeavor to bring that person to genuine repentance before it is too late.

Isaiah 65:14 warns that they who forsake the Lord "shall wail with a broken spirit." (NASB).

So, "shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Hebrews 12:9 KJV).

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18 NIV).

Romans 8:16 says that when we become true children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, His Spirit "bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." He has put a new spirit within us (Ezekiel 11:19).

After David sinned so terribly in the Bathsheba affair, his conscience came under a crushing weight of conviction for the evil he had done. We feel the anguish of his soul in his prayer of repentance. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10 NASB). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (verse 17 NASB).

David was not praying for God to perform some mystical, metaphysical "transplant surgery" on his heart or spirit. He was praying for God to purify his spirit from the dominion of the impure desires that had led to his adultery and the subsequent murder he committed in the attempted cover-up, from the deceitfulness involved, from the propensity to hide his sins, and to restore the fellowship with God that his spirit had once known and enjoyed but was now severed by his sin. He prayed that God would "tune" his spirit to right desires and pursuits, and strengthen it in its disciplined submission to God.

God does this, not by a passive inner "spiritual operation," but by securing our conscious and whole-hearted cooperation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE HUMAN BODY

In the ancient Greek philosophical mind-set it was a common assumption that matter is somehow "evil." And if matter is evil, therefore the human body must be evil.

So when Christians read Bible passages that spoke of "sinful flesh," "sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3), and that contained such statements as: "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing" (Romans 7:18); "the body of sin" (Romans 6:6); "put to death the deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13); they read them through Greek philosophical "glasses." As a result, for centuries it was common for Christians to reject and even abuse their bodies in their efforts to be "holy."

Remnants of this ancient Greek philosophical mind-set are still with us. Even today a form of orthodoxy assumes the Augustinian notion that sin is a "thing" that inhabits the body from conception and birth. A favorite "proof-text" is Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (KJV). The verse is read to mean only one thing--that sin is a mystical, ontological "essence" that is inbred into our physical being.

On the contrary, the Bible teaches that the body is neither sinful nor holy in itself. The body is made made out of matter--physical substance. Matter has no moral quality; therefore, the body itself has no moral quality. Sin is not a quality of substance, a "thing." What matters is what we *do* with the body, whether we keep it our servant or allow it and its desires to become our master.

God's word teaches us to discipline our bodies, but not to neglect or abuse them. Asceticism is not true spirituality. Paul says of asceticism, "Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence" (Colossians 2:23 NIV).

Although the human body has no moral character in itself, it is sacred in the sense that it is set apart by God for a holy purpose. It belongs to God both by creation and by redemption. Jesus said that the body is more than clothes (Matthew 6:25).

The apostle Paul makes very clear by the Spirit how we are to regard our bodies and how we are to employ them. "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body. Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ

and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, 'The two will become one flesh.' But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:13-20 NASB).

"The earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth" is a popular notion. And it is just as erroneous as it is popular. The truth is that both we and the earth belong to the Creator. That includes our bodies.

Another popular (and erroneous) notion is that our bodies are our personal property and that we can do whatever we want with them. As a result, many people treat their body as a toy to be played with, something for "thrill-seekers" to take unnecessary risks with. Such "dare-devil" stunts and escapades are glamorized as acts of bravery. In reality such foolhardy actions show reckless contempt for the Creator. It has been said that when people deny the future life, they tend to become careless about the present one.

It is the fact that we are created in the image of God that makes murder a capital crime.

This includes suicide. I was born and raised in the state of Oregon. Most of my life has been lived in Oregon. So I do not speak as an outsider or a newcomer. The Pacific Northwest, including Oregon, is the "least churched" region of the United States Of America. "Least churched" is a euphemistic way of saying that a greater percentage is without God, secularly sophisticated but spiritually unenlightened, and lacking in the reverential fear of God, than anywhere else in the nation.

So it is no wonder that Oregon has the dubious distinction of being the first state in the USA to legalize "physician assisted" suicide.

After the second heroic effort to defeat Oregon's suicide law failed, two ministers were discussing the tragedy in a public place. When one minister remarked that the voters had shown disregard for God, a man standing some distance away bellowed out, "There is no God!" A few bystanders cringed.

When any society wants to legitimize an evil, it first finds the right semantic guise for it. Reality is traded for (and buried under) words.

"Assisted suicide" will become killing with consent. Eventually it will lead to killing without consent. "Right to die" is another supporting slogan. But where did we get such a right? Did God give it to us? Was He consulted or even considered? "Death with dignity" is another semantic self-deception. Our dignity comes from the fact that we are created in the image of God. Without

that we are only animals. What "dignity" can a mere human animal have after its high origin and nature has been rejected?

My godly mother died with cancer. She honored her Creator and Lord by acknowledging that her body and her life were sacred because they belonged to Him. She trusted God, received the best available medical care (including proper pain management), and died peacefully. Hers was a true death with dignity.

Suicide is the ultimate act of defiance to God. It is the supreme assertion, "I will have the final say in my life."

Some other popular ideas are also based on the false notion that our bodies belong to us to do with as we please. We hear it from the abortion defender: "Keep your laws off my body!" "Keep your rosary off my ovaries!" *Ad nauseam*.

Now, the word of God clearly states that our bodies are to be our servants, not our masters. The members of our bodies are instruments--tools--to be used rightly.

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God...for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Romans 6:12,13,19 KJV. See also 7:5,23. Please note that in Romans 7:5, as in many other places, the NIV translates "flesh" as "sinful nature." This is a theological bias).

So then, the body is a source of temptation to mis-use it, either by the indulgence of unnatural desires or the wrong use of natural desires. If we misuse the body to serve unreasonable desires, it becomes our master. Our natural desires were given to us for a purpose. Exercised wisely and properly they serve us and bring pleasure to the proper activities and functions of the body. When we make their gratification our chief pursuit, we misuse them. Unnatural desires are added to the endeavor to achieve self-gratification (tobacco, alcohol and other drugs). Lusts grow despotic, demanding, enslaving.

Consider some of the ways people misuse their bodies.

Sex.

Sex is a gift from God. So is fire. And gasoline.

Sex is one of the most powerful of physical/emotional drives. When God created human sexuality, He placed it firmly and exclusively within the boundaries of monogamous, heterosexual marriage. And He did so for our good. The Biblical commands and penalties

regarding human sexuality are there to protect the holy establishment of marriage and to insure our well-being and happiness.

Even the occasional misuse of fire can destroy a house. So even the occasional misuse of sex can destroy a home.

Reality is on the side of the Bible. They both agree. If we live in harmony with the word of God, we live in harmony with reality. If we violate the word of God, we violate reality, usually with devastating results. This is where the inexorable law of sowing and reaping operates.

Romans 1:24 says concerning the pagan world that God "gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves" (KJV. See also 2 Peter 2:9,10; Jude 7,8). All laws regarding human sexuality are both moral and natural, and their violation is a dishonor to the human body.

Eating.

Another of the most powerful drives is the desire for food. In the taxonomy of physical needs, food and water rank at the very top, just below the need for air.

As with others of God's gifts, eating and drinking is intended to be a wholesome and pleasant experience, both physically and emotionally. Imagine how "tedious and tasteless" meals would be if they were like sitting in a service station and pumping the tank full of gasoline.

The mis-use of this God-given gift occurs when the desire itself becomes our master. We stop eating to live and start living to eat. Instead of eating the food, the food eats us. We are all familiar with the results. Here again reality is on the side of the Bible.

"Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat" (Proverbs 23:20 NASB).

Jesus warned, "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34 KJV).

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31 NKJV).

As was mentioned earlier, besides the misuse of the natural desires, people abuse and even destroy their bodies by the indulgence and development of unnatural ones. These are foreign to the body and have to be introduced into it. Immediately we think of the endemic addiction to drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.

Dissipation, overwork, sleep deprivation, lack of exercise, physical and emotional stresses, and other unhealthy attitudes and behaviors--these are also harmful to our bodies.

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh, but envy the rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs 14:30 KJV).

"A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22 NASB).

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14 KJV).

The misuse of the body to gratify the demands of its unnaturally indulged and developed desires results in what the Bible calls "corruption." "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7,8 NKJV).

True Christians have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts (Galatians 5:24). That does not mean that we are bland, emotionless stoics. It means that we have renounced our slavery to our own desires. Crucified with Christ, we died to sin. Risen with Christ, we live a new life of holiness. We have received Jesus Christ into our hearts and lives as Savior and Lord. He rules and reigns in us in His resurrection power. We gladly bring our desires under discipline in obedience to His Lordship. As a result, we enjoy life in its fullness in fellowship with God and in harmony with His moral and natural order.

"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:2 KJV).

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14 KJV).

Galatians 5:16 says that we are to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

"Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11 KJV).

Read also Romans 8:1-14; Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 2:11; 3:5; 1 Peter 4:2.

A Biblical lifestyle is a healthy lifestyle. It is a disciplined lifestyle, motivated by love for God and a purpose to please Him and not merely for enlightened self-interest.

"Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones" (Proverbs 3:7,8 NASB).

The Scriptures "are life to those who find them, and health to all their whole body" (see Proverbs 4:20-22 NASB).

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2 NKJV).

Paul wrote to Timothy that bodily exercise has its benefits, though they are small compared to the benefits of godliness (1 Timothy 4:8). It must be remembered that this was written by a man who walked many, many miles in his missionary journeys.

In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul expressed his resolute determination to discipline his own body and its desires. "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (NKJV).

In warning us not to allow our bodies to lead us into sinful practices, Jesus made some very descriptive and shocking statements. "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell." "If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire" (Matthew 5:29; 18:8 NIV).

Jesus said this knowing that rational people will stop misusing the members of their bodies as instruments of sin long before they would gouge out their eyes or cut off their hands and feet. Nevertheless, He is emphasizing the absolute necessity of not allowing our bodies to lead us to sin. Our bodies are temporal; the horrific punishment for using them to sin is eternal. Even the extreme measures our Lord described would be far better than eternal fire; and the contemplation of that fact alone should make sane people recoil at even the thought of using the members of our bodies to sin.

It must be remembered that in the verse preceding Matthew 5:29 Jesus said that if a man looks on a woman to lust after her he has committed adultery in his heart. He is not talking about temptation; He is talking about intent. A momentary distraction is not the same as purposeful thinking.

James says that the most unruly and most difficult member of our body to control is the tongue. "If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!" (James 3:2-6 NKJV).

"Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24 KJV).

We cannot control the tongue unless we submit it to Christ and let Him rule it by the power of His Spirit in us.

Years ago a lady was earnestly seeking the pentecostal experience. Someone said to her, "Sister, are you seeking tongues?" She replied, "No, I'm trying to get rid of forty feet of the one I have!"

Although Christ does the controlling, we must yield to His control and cooperate with His Spirit.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1 KJV).

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1 KJV). The fear of God as our motive to moral purity--that is what Jesus was appealing to when He stated the severe and extreme measures in Matthew 5:29 and 18:8.

In all of the purposes and uses of our bodies, their highest employment is in worship and praise to God. We bow our heads and our knees; we raise our hands and lift our voices in prayer, praise, and song.

We also use our voices to preach and teach, to bless, admonish, and encourage. We use the members of our bodies as "instruments of righteousness" in daily living and service to God and to our fellow human beings.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31 KJV). That supreme purpose must be our ultimate motive in all that we think, say and do. It is our clear guide to holy and "wholly" living.

There have been times when "presenting our bodies a living sacrifice" to God has necessitated exposing it to dangers, disease, and even death for the sake of Christ and His cause. Many ministers, missionaries, and others have suffered greatly in their bodies for the cause of the gospel. And only God knows the complete roster of the believers who have suffered torture and martyrdom. Like Daniel's three companions (Daniel 3:28), they "yielded their bodies" for the sake of the truth.

Referring to what he and his companions went through for the sake of the gospel, Paul said that they were "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10,11 KJV).

And so Jesus taught us, "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Here again we are urged to fear God in view of eternal values and consequences.

In that vein Paul writes, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:20 KJV).

Divine healing is a subject all of its own. Here we only call attention to the fact that God said, "I am the Lord who heals you" (Exodus 15:26 NKJV). Matthew records that Jesus healed all that were sick in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 53 that says that Christ took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses (see Matthew 8:17).

But no matter how well we take care of our bodies, and in spite of the fact that God heals and sustains them, our bodies are corruptible in this present mortal state. We are dust (Genesis 3:19; Psalm 103:14). "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass" (1 Peter 1:24 KJV). Peter referred to his body as a "tent," and death as "putting off" his "tent" (2 Peter 1:13,14).

But death is not the end of God's purpose and plan for our bodies. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2 KJV). At the resurrection, God will transform the lowly earth-bodies of believers and fashion them in the likeness of Christ's own resurrection body (see Philippians 3:21, also 1 Corinthians chapter 15; Romans 8:23).

Nothing is impossible to God. No matter what has happened to the actual flesh and bones of our bodies, at the resurrection God will reconstitute our essence and physiognomy in an eternal state for its eternal destiny.

Job asks the question, "Man dies...and where is he?" Then he gives the answer: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand in the latter day on the earth...in my flesh shall I see God" (see Job 14:10-14; 19:25-27).

In conclusion, let us remember that human beings are essentially immortal. Believers seek for the right kind of immortality, that is, eternal life (Romans 2:7). Jesus Christ has brought that immortality, that eternal life, to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). It was not clear until then, the Old Testament giving only a partial, incomplete revelation concerning life after death.

Our ultimate purpose is beyond this world and this life, and that eternal purpose defines our meaning and should determine how and for what we live this life.

One bumper sticker reads: "Live for God. Don't sweat the small stuff."

As Jesus stated in His prayer to the Father, real life is an established and permanent relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

If you have not done so, come to Christ and get into a right relationship with God through Him. Lock into God's purpose, and live life to the full.