



FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

Foundation 4: Spirit, Soul and Body

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with Peter DeWitt



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Spirit, Soul, and Body

Perfected Forever

Hebrews 10:1-2 contrasts the Old Covenant and the New Covenant: *“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.”* In other words, the Old Covenant could not make the sinner perfect. The sinner therefore continued to come back to offer sacrifices year by year.

The New Covenant, on the other hand, which depends on the sacrifice of Christ—not bulls and goats—does make those who approach perfect! *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14). How wonderful it is that as believers we have been perfected forever in Christ! Yet, this glorious truth expressed in verse 14 also often raises a question: How are we “perfected forever,” yet also are “being sanctified?” The answer to this question is found in the fact that we are made up of spirit, soul, and body.

An Introduction to Spirit, Soul, and Body

One of the most helpful and transformational messages in all of the Bible is that of “spirit, soul, and body.” In short, we are a spirit, we have a soul, and we live in a body. This

teaching is essential to understanding who we are in God! Understanding who we are in God will allow a plethora of scriptures to come alive to us.

For all people, our bodies are our physical selves and our soul consists of our mind, will, and emotions. The difference is in the spirit. As born-again believers, our spirit is actually the Spirit of Christ. By contrast, for those that have not received Christ, their spirit is dead and dark. This is why our spirits needed to be “born again”... because they were dead!

For clarity’s sake, it should also be noted that the Bible uses the terms “flesh” and “heart” as well. Scripturally, “flesh” means a combination of soul and body and “heart” means a combination of soul and spirit. With “heart” you can determine if a particular usage is referring to soul or spirit by the context in which it is used. Now, let’s look at the state of our spirits, souls, and bodies before and after salvation.

Spirit, Soul, and Body: Before Being Born Again

Prior to being born again, we were spiritually dead. Spiritual death is, by definition, separation from God. Spiritual death does not mean you cease to exist; it means you are separated from the source of spiritual life -- God. Before being born again, not only was our spirit dead and dark, but our soul was in rough shape as well. Look how Paul describes the soul of a not-yet-born-again Gentile: “... *you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk,*

in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart...” (Eph. 4:17b-18).

Before we are born again, our minds were blinded, our understanding was darkened, and we were alienated from the life of God. The Bible describes the spirit of a pre-believer as dark or dead (see Matt 6:23b, Acts 26:18). In other words, prior to being born again, our soul looked a lot like our spirit: dead, dirty, dark, etc.

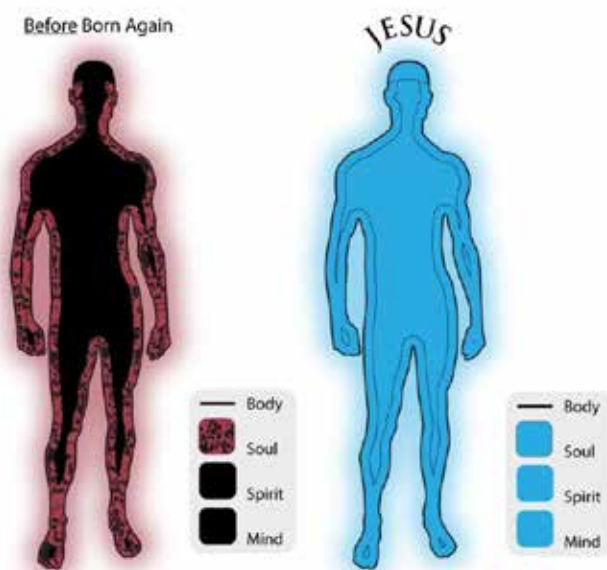


FIGURE 1: SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY: BEFORE BEING BORN AGAIN (WITH COMPARISON TO CHRIST)

For comparison's sake, look at the spirit, soul, and body of Jesus in Figure 1. Jesus' spirit is not dark nor dead. His soul is similarly unobscured by darkness. 1 John 1:5

clearly states, “*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*” Darkness does not exist in God; He is incapable of it! The pre-believer’s spirit is dark and dead. Notice also that the death and darkness that is in the pre-believer’s spirit has “spread” through their soul. Their mind (thinking), will, and emotions are likely often less than “life-giving.” Their thinking is darkened; it is not in line with God’s Word and they may even be hardened or resistant to the Word of God.

Spirit, Soul, and Body: Immediately After Being Born Again

OK, so hopefully you understand the difference between the spirit, soul, and body of a pre-born-again person and Jesus Himself. On the day before we asked Jesus to come into our life, our spirit man was dead and dark. But at the very moment we believed on Jesus, God took our dead spirit man out of us, breathed into us His Spirit and we became born again (Jn. 3:3). Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians (5:17-18) echoes the same truth: “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God...* What a powerful truth! When we were born again we became a new creation! We received the Spirit of the Living God on the inside of us! This is why we are each now called a “*temple of the Holy Spirit!*”

These verses from 2 Corinthians 5 are referring to your spirit man. It was your spirit that was born again by the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, on your day of salvation, your

soul was not born again, and neither was your body. If you were tall or short, fat or skinny before your salvation, you would still be the same shape or size right after your salvation. If you had anger problems before your salvation, though your salvation likely had some measure of immediate impact on those emotional problems, there is still a process to working those sorts of things out. The rest of your walk with God is about this process of transformation--becoming more and more Christ-like in your thinking, will, and emotions (i.e., in your soul).

After you are born again, however, you cannot become more Christ-like in your spirit. You actually have Christ living in you, and He doesn't change! You don't have part of the Spirit of Christ living in you. You have the whole Spirit of Christ in you! No wonder that is our hope for glory! You don't have Jesus Christ "lite." You have "full-strength" Jesus Christ in you. Completely. Totally. Fully. You carry the indwelling presence of the living God with you every place you go! People no longer need to go to a specific temple to experience the presence of God, they just need to run into you on the street or say "hi" to you in the office! The presence of God is going with you everywhere! That is why Jesus so confidently said "*I am with you always!*" (Mt. 28:20). When you are born again, Jesus makes His home in you!

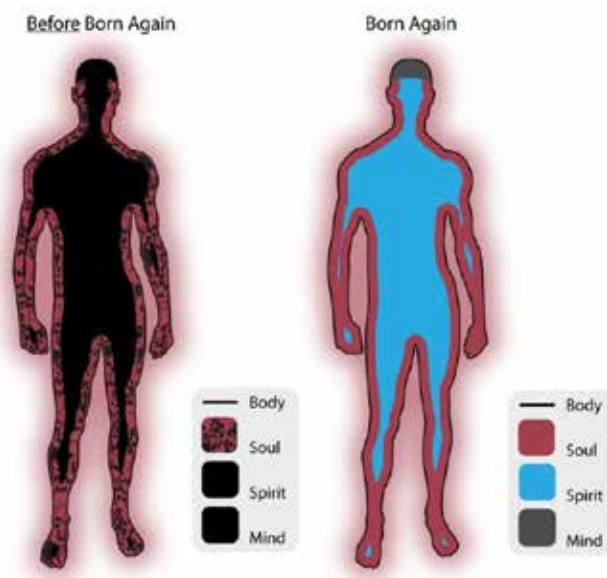


FIGURE 2: SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY: BORN AGAIN (WITH COMPARISON TO BEFORE BEING BORN AGAIN)

In regard to your spirit, as a born-again believer, you have been perfected forever. And that is the context in which God views you--as a spirit. The Bible says God is a Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24). That verse shows us that God is not looking on your soul or your body but instead on your spirit. And when He sees your born-again spirit, He sees Jesus Himself in you! In God's eyes, you are no less accepted before Him than His very own, perfectly obedient Son Jesus! We have become co-heirs with Christ! It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me! The life we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God (see Rom. 8:17 and Gal. 2:20)!

In Figure 2, notice how perfect the spirit of the born-again believer is. If you look all the way back to Figure 1, you will see it is identical to the spirit of Christ! Your spirit cannot get any more like Jesus' once you are born again!

While you cannot become more Christ-like in your spirit after being born again, you can become more Christ-like in your soul. Again, our soul is made up of our mind, will, and emotions. By reading and submitting to God's Word, our soul experiences an ongoing, transformational process. That is why we can BOTH be "perfected forever" AND in the process of "being sanctified" at the same time. Our spirit is already perfect, our soul is being perfected.

"I thought you were a Christian!"

There is only one part of us that was born again--our spirit. This is why people can be born again and still act like carnal fools. We may think "I thought you were a Christian!?" They are. They have received Jesus and are no-less born-again than you or the apostle Paul! They are just acting in accordance with their un-transformed minds (soul) and not their perfected spirit. God lives on the inside of them, but they are doing their best to not let Him out!

Our soul needs to be transformed in order to mirror Christ and it is updated to the ways of God by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2). That transformative work is generally not "automatic" at salvation. In other words, it is a process! As our soul is transformed, our body then comes in line with the soul. For a simple example, being free from

condemnation removes fear and a lack of fear keeps us from stress. Studies show how stress can cause sickness (Salleh, 2008). Our transformed soul will transform our body. The process of living from “the inside, out” starts with our spirit, proceeds through our soul and affects our bodies and the lives of those around us as well!

A major ploy of the enemy is to try to keep us from realizing that we have the gold-standard of righteousness, purity, and perfection already living on the inside of us. If he can convince us that we are still “bad” in some way at our core, then change is something that has to be from the outside of us. Did you catch that? This is so key. If we do not realize that we have the Spirit of Christ living at our core, then we have to find some way to “get good into us.” We will believe that acting bad is natural and that we have to really strive and try to act good. This is the way of the world.

But, when we realize that our salvation experience gave us a brand new spirit--that our old man is dead, gone, removed, etc.--we start to see “living Christ-like is about letting Jesus out of me!” Wow! This is so good! It has changed my life! As a believer, holiness is not trying to work towards being something we are not; it is simply living out what we already are!

As an aside, the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible makes a very costly mistake in “interpreting” what should read “old man” as “sinful nature” in the New Testament. While the translation team surely meant well, the reality is 2 Cor 5:17 shows us that the believer no longer

has a sinful nature at all! All things have been made new! Your old man is dead! You don't have a propensity to sin at your core at all; you are completely holy at your core! You are the Spirit of Christ at your core! Don't believe the lies anymore that you are fighting against some bad part of you. You are instead learning to think correctly about who you are in Christ!!! Amen!

Can I feel my spirit?

Now, you may think back to your salvation experience and think "I didn't really feel any different." Some people feel a major thing happen at salvation, for others, there is not a particular sense one way or the other. You cannot actually feel "being born again," and that is because we cannot feel our spirits. We can feel our body; we know when we drop something on our toe. We can also feel our soul; we know when we are happy, sad or angry and can describe our emotions to others. We cannot, however, describe how we feel in our spirit.

Our flesh cannot touch our spirit, and our soul cannot touch our spirit. Our spirit, on the other hand, can and does affect our soul. For instance, we can often sense a demon on someone. "I can't put my finger on it, but something's not right about them..." That's not our soul or body feeling that, that's our spirit recognizing a demonic spirit. It's spirit to spirit. Spirit communicates to spirit, but not to the flesh or to the soul. (An exception is that God can override our natural ability so that we can see angels, etc. – to see into

the spirit-realm. This is the discerning of spirits (1 Cor. 12)). For people to see spirits with their physical, natural eye is not natural. God provides for this by overriding what is natural and allowing you to see into the spiritual realm.

The Mirror of the Word

If your soul and body cannot feel your spirit, how then do you understand what is going on in your spirit? You have to get it by the Word of God! The Word of God will tell you what is true about your spirit. The only place you can get understanding about what is happening in your spirit is by the Word of God or by the Spirit of God talking to you and telling you. James says it this way: *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does”* (James 1:22-25).

The Word of God is a mirror so we can see who we are in Christ. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7). If we understand who we are as a born again person, with the Spirit of God on the inside of us, we will begin to live out that understanding! 1 Cor. 15:34 says *“wake to righteousness and sin not.”* We are the righteousness of God! When you realize that -- when you wake up to who you are in God -- the end result is you will not sin because

as a man thinks in his heart, so is he! This is the practical difference between having a righteousness-consciousness vs. having a sin-consciousness. When you are constantly aware of your righteousness and of the Spirit of Jesus living on the inside of you, then you will act accordingly. If you are constantly aware of your emotions and failings, you will act accordingly.

Awake to Righteousness!

You may feel like a hypocrite to say that you “are the righteousness of God.” That is understandable. But, the fact of the matter is, if you, as a born again believer, act like you are a sinner, that is when you are actually being a hypocrite. Hypocrisy is: “the practice of claiming to have ... beliefs to which one’s own behavior does not conform . . .” (Oxford University, 2005). It is not hypocritical to act like the righteousness of God because that IS WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST!

We need to think accurately and realize what happened at the Cross. We need to realize what happened when we accepted Christ into our lives. We were gifted righteousness by God. To act un-righteous is to act in non-conformity to our very belief about what Jesus did on the Cross. The enemy is wanting you to focus on your fleshly faults. But, God says “would you please come into agreement with me?”

You have permission to start to realize that you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. He has perfected you forever and you are in the process of being sanctified by

renewing your mind to the truth of who you are in God! As you focus on this reality, you will walk more holy on accident than you ever did on purpose! The lyrics of the old Hymn bear this out:

*"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace."*

Looking at Jesus will transform us. We are not transformed by trying hard not to sin. We are transformed by renewing our mind to the reality that Christ is in us. That's the hope of glory! *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Cor. 3:18). When we realize who we are in Christ and gaze upon His Word to clearly see Christ in us, we are transformed on the outside into the image of God that we see on the inside. That's how we go from glory to glory!

Scriptures

"For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins." (Hebrews 10:1-2)

“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:14)

“...you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart . . .” (Eph. 4:17b-18)

“But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt 6:23b)

to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’ (Acts 26:18)

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, (2 Cor. 5:17-18)

“I am with you always.” (Mt. 28:20)

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (Jn. 4:24)

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rom. 12:2).

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he

is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” (James 1:22-25)

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. (Prov. 23:7a)

wake to righteousness and sin not.” (1 Cor. 15:34)

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21)

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18)

Reference

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