



SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY

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In closing the fifth chapter of 1 Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul prayed, *“may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23). It is worthwhile delving into this scripture in more detail.

One thing the whole world is especially seeking in this age of worldwide turmoil and unrest is peace. Isaiah, when prophesying about the coming Messiah wrote, *“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”* (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus is the Messiah that Isaiah prophesied about, and He is the Prince of Peace. In any relationship, whether it be in marriage, the family, the church, the community, the nation, or the whole

world, when Jesus is given His rightful place in the hearts of men, peace will result. Jesus is the answer to all of the world’s problems and Paul emphasizes this by asking that *“the God of peace Himself sanctify”* His people.

The word sanctify is often translated to mean, to set apart. However, in the Koine Greek, which was used by the Apostles when the New Testament was written, sanctify in this verse is *hagiasai* (Gk) meaning, “may-He-be-holyizing,” or “may God be making holy.” What Paul is saying is, may God, the God of Peace, be in the process of making us holy - completely, not just a little holy, but completely holy! Holy means to be righteous, morally, and spiritually perfect, without blemish. *“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’”* (1 Peter 1:15-16).

This is a high calling, but let us not be discouraged in our weaknesses and failures. Reflecting on the promise of a son that the Lord made to Abraham and Sarah both of very old age, though they questioned the possibility of Sarah bearing a child, the Lord said, *“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”* (Genesis 18:14). Let us not doubt God’s promises for Jesus declared, *“With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible”* (Mark 10:27). Yes, God has called us out from the world. Why? To make us holy like His Son Jesus. Jesus went before us as the forerunner. He paved the way. He lived here on this earth in a human body just like ours and is acquainted with our weaknesses and temptations, but *“though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him”* (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Therefore being perfected, Christ became the perfecter. During the three years of Jesus’ ministry here on this earth, He taught how to live a righteous life which, if followed, will lead to being transformed into the image of Christ. *“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 Corinthians 3:18). It is by living a righteous life and submitting to the Holy Spirit who lives within us, that we will be changed into Christ’s likeness. Oh, Glory to God!

The next portion of 1 Thessalonians 5:23 to consider is *“may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless.”* This scripture describes who we are as human beings. We are composed of these three distinct natures. We have a spiritual nature, a soul nature, and a human natural body. They are very different from each other. Note that Paul begins by asking that God would first sanctify the whole spirit of the believers, next the soul, then the body. This is just the opposite of what we see in the world today.

We are particularly good at caring for our bodies. From the moment we rise in the morning we begin tending to our body’s needs; showering, getting dressed, eating breakfast, etc. This consumer-focused world we live in is constantly bombarding us with advertising trying to convince us to buy more of their products to care for our bodies. The dominating focus

of advertising today is clothing, food, cars, cosmetics, medical products, and housing. The greatest emphasis in the world is to indulge ourselves physically.

We develop our soul nature by the music we listen to, the TV programs we watch, the books we read, the walks and hikes we enjoy through nature, loving our spouses and children and being together with family and friends. These all nurture our soul nature, they make us feel good and constitute our character.

What about our spiritual nature? Are we feeding our spiritual nature? When we submit our life to Jesus and ask Him to forgive us of our sins, our spiritual nature is awakened within us. Being water baptized and rising out of the water we become a new creation in Christ Jesus. This experience causes our spiritual nature to become even more alive. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He comes in power, to help our human spirit to become more in tune with God who is Spirit. Remember what Jesus said when conversing with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24).

God is Spirit while we are human, flesh, and blood. How do we communicate with God who is Spirit? How do we worship God in spirit? We pray with our human language of understanding, but how does our spirit converse with God? With the help of the Holy Spirit who is always with us, we can communicate directly with our heavenly Father, spirit-to-Spirit. When we were filled with the Holy Spirit He gave us a heavenly language enabling us to speak to God directly. *“For he who speaks in a tongue (the heavenly language) does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. He who speaks in a tongue (the heavenly language) edifies himself”* (1 Corinthians 14:2,4). What a beautiful gift we have been given; to be able to speak to our Creator in His language, spirit-to-Spirit with the added benefit of building ourselves up in the spirit.

It is vitally important to pray in our human language. *“For if I pray in a tongue, (the heavenly language) my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with*

the understanding” (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). There are over 500 scriptures in the Bible referring to prayer, emphasizing the significance of prayer in the believer’s life. Even Jesus recognized the need to communicate with His Father in prayer. *“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God”* (Luke 6:12). Jesus also gave a stern warning to His disciples: *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh (our soul and human nature) is weak”* (Matthew 26:41). Paul wrote: *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

The next part of our being that Paul desired to be preserved in the Lord is our soul. The first reference to the soul is found in Genesis 2:7, *“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). Some translations substitute the word “living being” for “living soul.” In reality, our soul is what we reveal to the world around us through our character, our personality, our emotions, likes, and dislikes. Our soul is the real us, unique and genuine. We can change the clothing we wear or our hairstyle but that does not reveal who we really are. It is our soul that bears that distinction, and when we die, our soul continues to live. We can touch, feel, and see our human body, but the soul is invisible because it belongs to the world of the eternal. *“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption”* (Psalms 16:10, KJV) and *“But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me”* (Psalms 49:15, KJV).

Jesus made a very profound statement about our soul when He said, *“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul”* (Matthew 16:26).

We have been instructed that when we gather together to worship the Lord, we must strive to be led by the Holy Spirit in singing, praise, and ministry. This means that we are to yield our souls and our spirits to the Spirit of God. During day-to-day living, our souls are exposed to many different influences, what we see with our eyes, what we hear with our ears such as the music we listen to, TV images we see, and what we read. If during our waking hours, we

allow our soul (our mind) to be constantly bombarded with worldly images and music, then little room is left for our spiritual nature to respond to the Holy Spirit’s influence. However, the more we focus our attention to the realm of the spirit, the more the Holy Spirit can become the dominant factor in our lives.

Interestingly, our emotions, which are an integral part of our soul, are influenced by many factors. Take music for example. There are rhythms or beats associated with different music styles. Western, rock, jazz, and classical music all have different rhythms. If we are musically inclined, rhythm typically impacts our emotions. If you listen to a lot of jazz, country or rock music, you may find soft, quiet, and slower singing to be less pleasing. These are human emotional feelings. What God desires, especially during our worship services, is for our spirit nature to be influenced and directed by the Holy Spirit and not by our human nature. As previously mentioned our emotions are influenced by many different factors. However, our emotions can also be touched when we yield to the Holy Spirit. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, God’s people might weep or become exuberant in praise and rejoicing. It is a wonderful thing to behold. However, let us not allow our natural mind to think that we can induce this experience by human effort, such as clapping quickly, loudly, and jumping up and down. Let us totally surrender our whole body and soul to the Holy Spirit and then delight in the joy of the Lord as He affects our emotions.

God is a God of variety. In our worship services, we often sing hymns slowly and reverently. *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* (Colossians 3:16). We also sing songs of praise, rejoicing, singing loudly and clapping our hands to the Lord. *“Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!”* (Psalms 47:1). Sometimes we have musical accompaniment in our church services. Note the word ‘accompaniment,’ meaning musical instruments are to support, not played so loudly that they drown out the voices of the singers. *“The Lord was ready to save me; Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord”* (Isaiah 38:20).

Keeping the above paragraph in mind, what God is looking for is for us to be sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit when we gather together. *“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him”* (2 Chronicles 16:9). Therefore, in order to become sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit, it is important to be careful about what we expose our soul and our spirit.

The question is, how do we become sensitive to the Holy Spirit? The answer lies in seeking the Lord in our daily devotions, *“Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near”* (Isaiah 55:6). Devotions are strongly encouraged for singles, for married couples and the family.

Think of devotions in this frame of mind. When you begin devotions, imagine you are sitting at the foot of the cross of Calvary. You are looking at the face of Jesus, remembering these words, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Considering this scripture, how can we begin devotions if we have anything against anyone? While we were living in sin, Jesus died for us to forgive us of our sins. How much more must we be willing to forgive others. Can we honestly be at odds with our spouse, our children, or anyone while looking up at the face of Jesus? If we are sincere in our faith, it would be impossible.

It is advantageous to read God’s Word. *“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it”* (Isaiah 55:11). In other words, when we read God’s Word, it yields benefits. Can we ask for anything more wonderful than to have God reward us with His benefits and blessings when we read His Word? Reading the Bible is highly beneficial whether alone or with your spouse and with your children.

Is there anything more precious to the Lord than as individuals we spend time praying for our brothers and sisters in the Lord? Nothing is more beneficial to a marriage than when couples hold hands and pray for each other. When we incorporate daily devotions in our lives, we can face the challenges of life knowing that God is there to help us when we need Him.

In closing, when we set time aside for personal devotions and converse in tongues, that wonderful heavenly language that allows us to communicate directly with God, spirit-to-Spirit, we will become more sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit. We will more readily recognize how the Holy Spirit is moving in our local assembly when we meet together. Then we will be able to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth which will result in being able to minister according to the gifts God has given us. Following this admonition will bring about the needed balance in our lives between spirit, soul, and body leading us to become more and more like Christ. Glory to God.†

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SHARON STAR

The Sharon Star is a monthly publication and mailed as a free-will offering plan. The articles within are intended for inspiration and information to those who are interested in the unfolding revelation of the Word of God.

Published by:
Global Missions Inc. in North Battleford,
Saskatchewan, Canada.

The Sharon Star is found online at:
www.globalmissionsinc.org/sharon-star

Publications Mail Agreement 40012206

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