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### S3. So Complete a Salvation Series

## S3.E2. What is Man (2) - A Tripartite Being

1 Thes. 5.23-24 “<sup>23</sup>Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly (completely); and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

If man was created in the *image* and *likeness* of God as was discussed in the previous episode, then our attention must now be focused on those elements of *likeness* which include man’s *spirit*, *soul* and *body*. With these components of man, he is complete; and like Christ, is able to function in relationship in both this physical world and in the spiritual realm of God. Our opening scripture lays the foundation for this discussion. In this passage of scripture several important ideas are readily brought forth:

**First**, the goal of salvation is not going to heaven or obtaining eternal life, as these are the benefits already inherited at the new birth, man’s regeneration in Christ. Rather, the focus

here is placed upon coming into wholeness or the completion of what has been started in that spiritual regeneration. Just as in the natural, a new born infant must mature and learn to function as a grown adult; the new birth is but the beginning, the launching point, the actual crossing the threshold into the Kingdom of God where a maturing process is required for our new spiritual walk.

**Second**, is the fact that the whole man is a tripartite being formed of spirit, soul, and body, and that wholeness, or completeness, must come to each part. If in the natural one matures in body but never grows up and matures in his soul life, he is ill equipped to deal with his world. From the beginning of creation, where man was formed of the dust of the earth and life breathed into him and he became a living soul, to the grand culmination of all things at the second coming of Christ when, in the resurrection, these bodies will no longer be formed of the dust of the earth but will be fashioned of a spiritual substance in the likeness of Christ; the grand intent of God has always been that man, the *likeness* of Christ, will always be composed of spirit, soul, and body—and our destiny will be its wholeness.

**Third**, attention must be drawn to the fact that the ordering of things is intentional: first stated is the *spirit*, then the *soul*, and finally in the resurrection, the *body*. Thus, salvation is a progressive work within us. In Rev. 1.8 Jesus proclaimed His past, present, and future life, “...*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*” We too may proclaim, in spirit I was saved, in soul I am being saved, and in body I will be saved. We must conclude that our rest in salvation lies not in an initial confession of faith in Christ, but our rest actually lies in our continual faith in Christ— Col. 1.27 “*it is Christ in you the hope (which is expectation) of glory (which is entering into the full consummation of all things.)* Christ is our perpetual rest.

**Fourth**, all of this may raise many more questions regarding our salvation, which is good, but this should not raise concern or anxiety as to how this will happen. Rather, our reliance must be placed upon our *faith*, and that aspect of faith, which is *hope*, and those elements of hope which include the anticipation and expectation of the continual work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Israelites were worried and anxious as they saw the Pharaoh’s army closing in on them, but then Moses spoke, Ex. 14.13

*“And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.”*

So also here, this Thessalonian passage of scripture ends with the encouraging words in verse 24, “*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*” From the beginning of time man was never intended to live his life independent of God but to live in the reliance, rest, and peace of His fellowship. This is righteous living. And so, this promise of assurance of God’s intervention in our lives is confirmed again as the apostle Paul in Phil. 2.12-13, reassures us,

*“12Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”*

Salvation is thus a cooperative effort involving the mercy and grace, and perseverance and faithfulness of God working “in” us, and we by faith embrace these Divine blessings, search them out in the Word of God, lay hold of them by faith, for they are life to our souls, and find our rest in God—In Christ our Savior.

**Sixth.** The word “whole” used in both phrases, “*sanctify you wholly*” (sometimes completely) and “*whole* (sometimes entirely) *spirit, soul and body*, are derived from the same Greek word *holos*, meaning whole, complete, entire, without any part lacking. The idea is that of leaving no part unsanctified, of doing the work completely so far as it possibly goes. Furthermore, the primary idea of the word *sanctify*, and this is important to know, is “separation;” hence meaning to set apart, to separate from the kingdoms of darkness and this world and to consecrate to God; to thoroughly cleanse or purify as one who is set apart to holy services.

Believers are already *sanctified* “in Christ:” 1 Cor. 1.2 “*Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,...*” This is a kind of imputed legal sanctification simply by virtue of our spirits in union with the Spirit of Christ. This act enables us to draw near to God to further the sanctification process. Here however, the prayer is that they may be sanctified to the fullest extent—or rather, that God may so sanctify them as to bring them to full maturity and wholeness of their nature, that their whole character, spirit, soul, and body be transformed towards the *likeness* of Christ.

**Seventh.** The idea of wholeness must be carried beyond the idea of perfection or completion of individual parts, that is, spirit, soul, and body. The thought here invokes the development of the whole man, so that man does not simply “have” spirit, soul and body, but that man “is” spirit, soul, and body; and man’s true wholeness comes when he is complete in in all three components. This tripartite nature defines man; he is incomplete without all three aspects working together to make man what he is. Man is not a soul that has a spirit and lives in a body. Rather man is spirit, soul and body; all three aspects are integral to man, meaning that each is absolutely necessary to complete the whole man, and that man cannot function as God intended him to function without spirit, soul, and body interacting, working together to make him in the *image* and *likeness* of God.

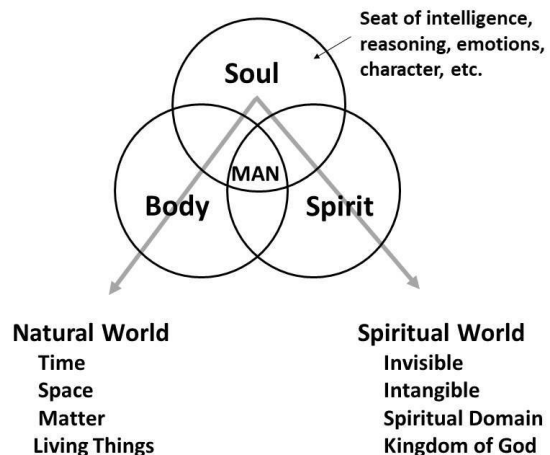
A change in one part necessitates a corresponding change or adaptation in another part. For example, good and righteous thoughts will bring peace to the soul and a release from stress and anxiety that reduces the blood pressure and other bodily consequences to stress. The three parts of man interact in such a way that each part is constantly adjusting to changes in the other parts. Man, alive in soul and body but dead spiritually to God, is incomplete and is in great need for a renewed spirit. After death, the soul and spirit await the resurrection of the body into newness to be their eternal abode.

## **The Functioning man**

Let's take a closer look at this tripartite nature of man to understand how all three components of man work together to make man what he is: man. Starting at the beginning at creation, Gen. 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 being.”*

Parceling this scripture out: “God formed man of the dust of the ground,” relates to the **body**. Then, “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,” relates to his **spirit**. And, “man became a living being,” relates to his **soul**.



**SOUL.** The **soul** constitutes who you are, it defines your personality and character; it is the seat of your intelligence, memory, will, conscience, and emotions. The philosopher Rene Descartes is attributed to saying, “I think therefore I am,” - meaning that the very act of thinking proves one’s existence. To the natural man this philosophical phrase may prove one’s existence to himself. However, I would prefer a more Biblical stance, “I am a soul, therefore I think.” The first is by experience, the latter is by faith.

However, a soul by itself is like a central processing unit (CPU) on a computer that functions as the brain of the computer: it processes data and instructions, makes calculations, performs operations logically, and does special tasks to convert raw data into usable information. However, a CPU with an empty hard drive does nothing on its own. It just sits idle waiting for some kind of input. The hard drive stores the computer’s operating system that manages how things run on the computer, along with holding programs, pictures, documents, and all kinds of data. The CPU needs the supply from the hard drive, and the hard drive requires input of data and information by some source; without such input the hard drive is empty and remains useless to the CPU, and the CPU would then remain idle.

With that similitude of the computer in mind, the soul of man, like the computer’s CPU, needs input, otherwise it cannot function. The soul processes all data and information brought to it, stores some in memory, decides the value of things, acts upon urgent situations, categorizes things as good or bad, like and dislike, chooses what to keep or act upon, and so on. And so, the question remains, just how does the soul acquire its data and information. This process is what makes man in the *likeness* of God—the ability to interact and receive data and information from BOTH the physical created realm of the world AND the spiritual uncreated realm of the heavens; thus enters the absolute necessity of the **spirit** and **body**.

**BODY.** The soul of man interacts and receives data and information from the created realm of the world through the *body* and its senses. The marvelously created senses of man, so

intricately and miraculously made, perform detailed functions allowing man to detect an extremely wide range of created elements in our natural environment. The marvels of the eye enable man to see, not just independent objects, but the objects in a multitude of distinguishing colors, their relative brightness, their distances and/or rate of movement, etc.

The interaction between *soul* and *body* has enabled man to extend and elaborate on his senses: such as using telescopes to see greater distances, even into the universe; satellites remotely sense the earth using various technologies; sonar extends the hearing to great ocean depths; food recipes add spices to enhance our tastes; the concoction of various perfumes and aromatic incenses enhances our smell; and the hands to use materials to create elaborate and ornate structures and objects of beauty. The loss or diminishment of any sense, such as blindness, deafness, paralysis, loss of taste, and so on, greatly inhibits and limits our function in this natural environment.

**SPIRIT.** Except for psychics, black magic, fortune tellers, and the like, many today think they have no further need beyond the development of their natural senses and developing their soul to interact with the world around them and in their relationship to people and the natural environment. To live in such leanness of spirit, men remain only in the likeness of man—who is Adam—and not enjoy the likeness of God—who is Christ. Christ fully functioned in the natural realm but also was keenly aware of the spiritual environment interacting with God the Father and with the demonic world of the devil.

And so, the soul of man must seek to interact with the spiritual world around us through his spirit; Its unseen reality exists alongside of our natural physical world but is not perceptible to our natural senses. Of primary focus for the believer, this spiritual realm is the habitation of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but not forgetting also in this realm are evil spirits of the demonic domain of Satan. The spiritual is approached first by faith:

Heb. 11.6 *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”*

If one does not believe in God, or the Word of God, then he is without faith and unable to access the spirit world. Following faith, the regeneration of a new spirit is required, which is the Spirit of Christ, indwelling the believer; this accentuates man’s spiritual senses, as it is written,

Jn. 3.3 *“<sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, “Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” And,*

*Jn. 3.5-8 “<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>Flesh is born of flesh, but spirit is born of the Spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be amazed that I said, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wishes. You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”*

Natural man often circumvents this Divine method of interacting with the spiritual realm by employing both the talents and spiritual abilities of the natural man in practicing astrology, Ouija boards, séances, spiritualism and eastern mysticism—including beliefs in the spirit reincarnating and progressing towards intellectual and moral perfection, and the belief that the ultimate expression of reality consists of an impersonal “life force,” a belief that there is no God for anyone to personally relate to, or a god who is able to reveal himself to humankind. This “life force” is only an object of power, an energy that gives life to living things and the ability to practice or do things in this life.

Man, God adamantly commands us, is not to practice or believe in such practices under pain of consequences; it is written,

Lev. 19.31 *“Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.”*

Deut. 18.10-12 *“10Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, practices divination or conjury, interprets omens, practices sorcery, 11casts spells, consults a medium or spiritist, or inquires of the dead. 12For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD.*

Gal. 5.20 *“The acts of the flesh are... idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies.”*

Dabbling in the spiritual realm outside the direct sanction of the Holy Spirit is most serious. On the dark side it has its tentacles in every part of world cultures with practices like yoga, black magic, beliefs in karma and reincarnations, mindfulness and meditations, voodoo, personal psychics, astrology, and so on, and on. Be not deceived, as someone once said, “you cannot walk through a coal mine and not get dirty,” any association with this dark realm will have a negative effect on your spiritual well-being with adverse consequences. Satan is still prowling about this earth and again and again whispering those tiny words into the ears of candidates for his kingdom, as he said to Eve, Gn. 3.5 *“you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

These are not incidental thoughts instigated from man’s natural curiosities, but a struggle against a spiritual force, an invisible power of evil right out of the camp of the devil and his demons. It is clearly written,

Eph. 6.12 *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

The expression, against *“flesh and blood”* is used often in the Bible elsewhere: Jn. 1.13, Mt. 16.17, 1 Cor. 15.50. The sense is clear, that it is not by mere “human power” utilizing all man’s intellect, ingenuity, and resourcefulness that we war; that the evil influence does not lie within ourselves and of wicked men, but it is a war with spiritual powers of evil that occupy the darkness of the world. These evil powers entice men and women to follow their ways and to

come under their power, and even to act on their behalf. Obedient followers have become to Satan what the Church is to Christ—their expressions upon the earth. Herein is the warfare.

The remainder of the verse deals with those belonging to this evil authority and power, the ***principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness***. This is a clear reference to angelic powers of good or evil, of Satan and demons, all which instigate wickedness in the hearts and minds of man, whose end goal is to gain all authority in the earth and reign as God. Thus in Rm. 8.38 attention is drawn to those “*angels, and principalities, and powers;*” and Eph. 3.10 speaks of “*principalities and powers in the heavenly places;* and Col. 1.16 it reads of “*things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether it be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers.*” All of this represents a dark and evil governmental kingdom under the authority of the devil that permeates the lives of people on the earth.

Natural man, in yet his fallen condition, being spiritually dead to God and the angels of righteousness, is ill equipped for this warfare. Their fallen spirits are exposed to this realm of darkness and all its influences. Their unredeemed bodies are easily enticed to immoral acts. And their souls, yet eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, seek what is best for them and whatever they determine to be good or evil. They act religiously even when they have no actual connection to God, and believe they are morally superior because they are acting out what they think to be “truth,” but it is actually only the religion of *flesh and blood* and the best that fallen man has to offer. In Genesis we see that Able brought the sacrifice of a lamb to God, whereas Cain offered the fruit of the ground. It is written Gn. 4.4-5 “*And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, sbut He did not respect Cain and his offering.*” Looking ahead to Christ, God required a blood sacrifice, not one of the earth or works of man. God further admonished Cain, Gn. 4.7 “*zlf you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.*” In religion man creates his own worship environment and reasons out his service to God. This is unacceptable to God; for His way alone is righteous.

I am not writing this from any sense of moral superiority or self-righteousness, but only as one whose spirit has come alive to God in Christ, who is the Righteous One. Only God can deliver you and me from these powers of darkness and deliver us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son. (Col. 1.13) To come alive spiritually is to be as a branch connected to the vine, it draws all its essence of life from the vine into itself; we are to be connected in like fashion to Christ and to draw from His life that sustaining essence into our lives.

It must be concluded here that salvation of man is not a simple act of faith believing in Christ in order to have eternal life. Nor is salvation an afterthought of God to try to remedy Adam’s disastrous fall from light into darkness. But that salvation of man is part of an eternal plan of God to create one new man, different from all creation, and be set aside for a special relationship with God, eternal in the heavens.

### **S3.E1. Questions for Discussion**

1. What is man as a tripartite being, and how does that relate to his complete salvation?
2. How does the resurrection fit into God's plan for man's salvation, and how does it fit into the second coming of Christ?
3. Explain what makes man created in the "*likeness*" of Christ; and explain how this was lost in Adam's sin.
4. Explain the order of salvation: spirit, then soul, then body, and what is the timeframe for each.
5. How has man continued to function in the realm of the spirit even when alienated from God; and how has this affected the Church.
6. What is spiritual warfare; who are the principalities and powers; and explain how man cannot fight this battle in "*flesh and blood*?"