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### S3. So Complete a Salvation Series

## S3.E3. The Spirit of Man

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 (1 Thes. 5.23-24,) lays the foundation for this discussion.

[Episodes 1 and 2 of this series, *So Complete a Salvation*, are a necessary prelude to this Episode 3, *The Spirit of Man*. It is strongly advised that these first two Episodes be reviewed first before continuing]

Jn. 6.63 *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

Jesus uttered these words following a lengthy discourse with His disciples where He made the comparison between the bread Moses gave to their forefathers to eat, which was the manna miraculously supplied as food for the Israelites in the wilderness, with Jesus' own claim to be the bread of life from heaven. Jesus likened the manna to be of the "flesh," and to Himself as "spiritual." This contrast between "flesh" and "spirit" occurs frequently in the Gospel and is a constant point in Paul's writings.

It is not as though one is evil and the other is good, but it comes down to using the right tool for the right situation. If Michelangelo would have used a broad barn brush to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, it would not have taken years to do, but then the results of a detailed narrative of scenes from creation could not have been painted either. What tool you use in every situation is important, like choosing to use a fork to eat a bowl of soup. In order for man to truly function as the man created by God, he must utilize both the flesh and the spirit as essential tools to life. For the most part the term "flesh" relates to the connection between man's soul and his body, whereas to be "spiritual" relates to the connection between man's soul and his spirit. The soul of natural man finds its fullness when engaged with things and people of the world through the senses of his body; and the soul of the spiritual man finds its fullness when his spirit is engaged with spiritually invisible things of God.

The flesh only becomes sinful when the soul of man uses it to feed upon nature and the world in instances when he, by all means, should be relating to God for spiritual food. This is the argument Jesus is presenting, comparing the physical *manna* given by Moses to the *bread of life* given by Himself. The first is of the flesh, the second is of the Spirit. Wrongful uses of the flesh over the spirit only happen in one of two instances. The first instance is the most bleak and deals with the unsaved fallen man who is considered "dead in sin," because his spirit is alienated and unresponsive to God, as written in Eph. 2.1-3,

*"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."*

This passage of scripture makes it abundantly clear that all the world, from Adam to the present day generation, are all dead in sin, meaning that when sin entered Adam, he initially died spiritually to God; however his spirit remained alive to the spiritual realm of good and evil angels, but only dead to God; just as darkness cannot share the same place as light, sin cannot share the same realm as the unapproachable light of God. (1 Tim. 6.16) There is no place in the holy presence of God or His kingdom for a soul tainted impure in sin. As elaborated upon in previous episodes, man must be born again of the spirit in order to *be made alive* to God. Natural man primarily functions in one mode, the "flesh" in which his soul is interacting with his total environment but absent of any Divine Spirit input. This is why John writes in 1 Jn. 5.19, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world is under the power of the evil one." Clearly, there are two species of humans on the earth today, this very minute, the regenerated race of born-again believers and the unsaved. All of humanity may be found in one or the other. The new species of man are those who have eaten of the Bread of Life, the second species only know the bread of the world.

The second instance of someone acting in the flesh concerns the believer, the one who is saved and regenerated, who willfully chooses the flesh over the spirit. Why would he or she do that? It is a matter of degree of enticement and lust of the flesh, the exercise of the free will, and the strength of the inner spirit. This is in similitude to our foreparents in the Garden when enticed by the devil, Gn. 3.6-7 *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened...”* Thereafter, they died spiritually to God and became fleshly in nature.

The apostle John also appeals to believers to be strong in the faith and not to succumb to the enticements of the world, 1 Jn. 2. 15-17 *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*

## **A Matter of the Will**

The unsaved have no choice in the world; they are dead to God and fleshly alive to the world. But the believer does have a choice and a will to choose, as written in Rm. 8.5 *“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”* Fallen man has a free will limited to the choices of the world and that of the angelic realm (both light and dark.) However, true believers can, and do, either set their minds on the things of the flesh or the things of the spirit. They have the ability through God’s grace, the aptitude to relate to the world through their body, the flesh, “or” to the heavenly with God through the Holy Spirit.

Choosing to act in the flesh in most natural situations, like what to eat for dinner or which outfit to wear, is innocent and is given to the individual preference. However, when the believer willfully chooses a course of action contrary to the Spirit of God, to which he has been joined together in his rebirth, then that is a sinful act subject to judgment and consequence. Let’s elaborate on that for a moment, for the consequences may be great. It is written in Is. 59.2 *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”* What a catastrophic consequence to a matter of willful judgment.

Sanctification is a matter of one being *separated* from the world to God. Separation is the simple meaning of *sanctification*. Jesus died a horrible death to enable man’s sanctification, because His passion was for the oneness with God which brings life, not a separation caused by sin which brings death. Jesus prayed a fervent prayer on our behalf, Jn. 17.21 *“that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”* While it is true that the Israelites could only act religiously according to the flesh, sin still has its consequences of separation, of erecting a middle wall of partition. This is in stark contrast to the goal of the cross; when only moments before Jesus breathed His last, that barrier veil in the temple erected between man and God was torn in two—from top to bottom. This action showing man was now able to enter God’s presence through the veil of His Son’s torn body. Lk. 23.45 *“Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two,”* and Heb 10.19-20 *“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.”*

## The Matter of Sin

This matter of sin always has the consequence of separation, whether Old or New Testament. (Is. 59.2 continued) *“And your sins have hid His face from you.”* It is like a thick, dense cloud rising between God and man just as dark clouds hide the face of the sun. Communion with God becomes strained. With regards to the believer, this is a matter of diminished fellowship with God but not of relationship to Him. The believer will always be a child of God regardless of discipline or admonishment. It is written that Adam and Eve hid themselves from God in some attempts to escape the furthering result of sin,

Gn. 3.8 *“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”*

The first result of sin on our part is (or should be) always shame for having done it and the second is fear of consequences. What a sad change in fellowship. Before their sin they would run to meet God when they heard His voice, but now they feel estranged from God, even having a sense of fear of His presence. They *hid themselves from God from among the trees*. On man's side there was this separating sense of shame, remorse, fear, and that dreaded sense of guilt, all mixed with a foreboding sense of coming judgment. These senses overwhelmed Adam and Eve, sensations they had not before known. So they foolishly thought that by hiding themselves they could escape His notice. Ps. 139.1-12 clearly states otherwise. We cannot hide ourselves or our sins from God.

On God's side this was a time of rebuke, judgment, and punishment. This disobedience and accompanying sin broke the covenant between man and God, and God would lose fellowship with His chosen creation; further fellowship with man would be distant, from afar, bound up in covenants of religious worship and fleshly sacrifices. But it is also a time of planned mercy and grace, for a promise would come forth for a redeemer, one to reconcile man back to God, Gn. 3.15, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”*

And so until the coming of Christ this is the current status of man; estranged from God but faintly connected through the religious Law and commandments, sacrifices, holy rituals, priestly offices, and all other routine practices. But, with the completed work of redemption by the sacrificial offering of the blood of Christ, once for all time the price was paid for the ransoming of man from the bondage of sin and death. Man needs no longer to be held captive by the works of darkness involving sin, death, the world, and separation from God. *Redemption* means the reconciliation of man and God. Man may now, through Christ, and in Christ alone, be born again of the Spirit of God and come spiritually alive to God. Man may now come into union with God in Christ Jesus. The word “Gospel” means *good news*, and the good news of redemption means complete deliverance from all consequences of sin, especially from death and the promise of the resurrection of the body (Rm. 8.23), and being one in union with God in Christ Jesus. To this we may all rejoice and say, *hallelujah*, meaning “praise the Lord.”

## A Furthering Word of Caution

There are two elements that work together for man to sin and fall into discipline and its consequences. Satan is referred to in the Bible as *“the deceiver of the whole world,”* in Rev. 12.9; and as *“a liar and the father of lies”* in Jn. 8.44. He uses the enticements of the world and the fallen race therein to deceptively lure believers into sin. The second element is the weakness of the believer’s body yet in need of redemption. A believer weak in spirit is very vulnerable to these lies and deceptions and fleshly desires.

This entrapment may happen personally as well as with the whole of churches. These churches may profess the true God, and worship Him in formal services, and attempt to obey His ordinances. All these religious activities are being done in such a cold and formal way, and with elements of sin and wickedness entering into its midst. Worldly elements have also entered in, to the extent that the actual presence of God is missing, seemingly only to stand at a distance with His abiding sense of life and light greatly diminished. Continuing reading in Heb. 10 we find a stark warning, Heb. 10.26-31

*“26For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” 31It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

However, we cannot allow fear to overcome us, because judgment and discipline is a positive thing that may lead to the restoration of Godly fellowship if we properly receive it with true repentance. And why is this discipline such a positive act? It is because God is not dealing with us in judgment as unsaved sinners but in our relationship as sons and daughters of God. As it is written in Heb. 12.7-11,

*“7If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*

I would like to cite a regrettable example I remember from my early days. The Spirit of God was moving in a time of fellowship, and the Spirit of personal prophecy was flowing upon one after another. Closely knowing each person, there was a strong witness to the accuracy of each prophecy because they were very personal. The last one to receive a prophecy was a young man I knew all too well; he was aggressive, and ambitious for authority and power. Of the many prophecies that evening, this was the only seemingly negative one, but I did not think so. In so many words of the prophecy, the Lord spoke that He was going to strip him down to nothing and rebuild him up—I thought in my heart, “Yes!” “Our Lord wanted to use this young man to His glory.” To be rebuilt according to the heart of our Lord was most positive and powerful.

However, this young man did not think so. Later, he told me he was embarrassed by the prophecy and totally rejected it. I was saddened by his response. I watched this young man grow up, to leave our fellowship for another more “aggressive” one, one in which he hoped to gain some recognition and authority. But this was not to be. After several years his actions conflicted with the pastors, and he was put out of that church. So, he started his own church and grew it out of a people he could easily sway and manipulate. He thought of himself as a prophet, but his words were tainted, being lured on one hand with false promises on the other. After many years the two of us came together once more to advance our understanding of the preparation of the church to become the Bride of Christ. However, this union did not last very long as his narcissistic personality squashed any life out of our fellowship. He continued in his ways until his death. He became a successful businessman, but did not leave a legacy of a church which simply withered away.

Man has a will to choose right and wrong, good or bad. The unsaved judges from the flesh, meaning he evaluates things from all that he has ever learned or experienced in his (or her) natural lifetime. A believer, however, also judges the rightness of things from their upbringing and course of life; however, they now have another source of input into their life, the Spirit of Christ. Their new objective is to grow spiritually in the likeness and mind of Christ and not to be swayed by the love for the world or the enticements of the devil. A baby, naturally or spiritually, is incapable of deciding things for himself and is in need of a teacher. We cannot remain babies dependent on others but must mature spiritually. Heb. 5.12-14 describes it this way,

*“12For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”*

**“To have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil,”** firstly pertains to our spiritual senses such as discernment and intuition and not to our natural senses of the flesh. Secondly, *the good and evil* addressed here is not necessarily moral good or evil as much as it pertains to doctrine, teachings, and living the life of a true believer. Young Christians are very gullible and subject to manipulative ways of errant preachers and false prophets, in which there are many in the world, some even have come out of our own local churches. But the greatest deception lies in the seemingly comfort and safety of “religion,”—for the routine practice of an organized church with its rituals, formatted services, clergy, choruses, and so on. It appears right to the natural man, for he cannot discern the higher ways and calling of the Spirit but allows himself to be cuddled in the arms of religious systems full of promises and structured routine, but absent of life.

## **The Word of Life**

We travel to the most remote places on earth to make converts, which is good and the right thing to do, but we then leave the new converts in the hands of immature leaders and religious organizations, and popular TV personalities. There are, however, many ministries whose focus is on *spiritual maturity* that go by unnoticed in the vast sea of denominations and freelance teachers and prophets. Pray to be connected with such spiritual guidance with ministries focused on the simplest visions such as that of Gal. 2.20, *“I have been crucified with*

*Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* What an amazingly powerful scripture that is. It takes much effort to feed upon this scripture to glean from it its spiritual truth. Paul exhorts and cautions the Church of Corinth, 2 Cor. 11.1-4,

*“<sup>1</sup>Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. <sup>2</sup>For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. <sup>3</sup>But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. <sup>4</sup>For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!”*

These two passages of scripture are among many such scriptures that good and upright doctrines may be built around, doctrines that give insight into a higher calling of God in Christ Jesus. The end of the last passage reads, *“you may well put up with it!”* It means to believe a lie, by putting your spiritual lives into the hands of religions, of denominations, teachers and false prophets—men and woman greedy for power, fame, and wealth. A proper start in a walk to *spiritual maturity* is to examine again and again the two scriptures mentioned, meditate upon them, listen to teaching explaining these verses, and undoubtedly such a quest will lead to many more scriptures that point the way to spiritual maturity.

## **A Sampling of Meditative Scriptures**

Following are a few examples of what we can call “seed scriptures,” scriptures when properly sown, brings forth life and growth. For example: Rm. 6.3 speaks of being *baptized into Christ, and into His death*—what does it mean to be *“baptized into Christ?”*; Eph. 2.4-10 which speaks of being raised up with Christ from spiritual death into the presence of God—note, *raised up is in the past tense! What is the significance of this?*; Jn. 3.3-8 where Jesus speaks of the absolute necessity of being *born again*—what is the true meaning of your regeneration? Phil. 3.12-15 where Paul cries out from an inward spirit overflowing with a desire to *press on for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus—what of this “upward call”*; and not neglecting the simplest of single verses of 2 Cor. 5.17 that speaks of each believer being *a new creation and the old has passed away and all things have become new*—the old has really and truly passed away!, and of Col. 1.27 of the promise of *Christ in you the hope of glory*—if hope means anticipation, what are we anticipating? In such pursuit, the immature hope of attaining heaven and eternal life will grow dim in the light of feeding upon the substance of Christ in the Word of God. You will never be the same again. This is the way of the Spirit; it brings light and life into the soul.

### **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?*"