

UNDERSTANDING MAN, Part 4 1-22-17 *"Body and Spirit"*

This morning we are in part four of our series on *Understanding Man*, and we read Genesis 2:7 *Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.* And one wonders what went through Adam's mind when he became conscious. He probably said something like, "*One small breath for man, one giant inhalation for mankind.*" Speculation on this could be endless and so could our study of the human being. There is much that could be said about man that I am not covering in this sermon series because it could easily become tedious. But, I feel we must at least cover what the Bible clearly says, especially when Biblical teaching opposes what we might hear these days on this subject. So, this morning, for the sake of truth, and for the sake of wisdom would you put on your thinking cap and ponder the subject of man's constitution - i.e. what elements make up or constitute a human. The feminist says that men are a speck of awareness on a sea of oblivion. The humorist says that women are a speck of logic on a sea of emotion. The poet says, "Sugar and spice and everything nice - that's what little girls are made of." The chemist says man is made up of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, iron, calcium, zinc, potassium and assorted other elements in season. But our concern is much broader than all this and really is psychological and theological. What constitutes man? My simple answer is that he is body and spirit **or** body and soul.

Now, the first part of our study today may seem rather academic. Try to stay with me. The Bible really does not give us a defined, consistent, psychoanalytical breakdown on what man is. If you have heard some teachers lay out precisely what elements or dimensions constitute a man and how these parts interrelate you have heard a lot of extra-biblical speculation. I say that whether you heard it from a Bible-teaching pastor, a secular psychologist or an Indian guru. Lots of Christian teachers write about the Christian life with very neat definitions of spirit and soul or mind and heart, but the Bible just does not make sharp and consistent distinctions that say "this is the soul and this is the spirit and this is the mind and this is the heart." Now those who provide a nice, neat system will always get an audience because people like things neat and simple. Recently, I listened to a man expound the trichotomous view of man. Trichotomy sees man as basically divisible into three parts: body, soul and spirit. Well, this trichotomous teacher just tore into what he called *dead churches* that say man is only body and soul and allegedly forget the spirit. But his attack was totally unfair. Nobody in the Christian world denies that man has a spirit - all they might deny is

that the spirit is an entity separate from the soul. But this fella just had his neat little system packaged up and ready for distribution. **His** system however contradicted the word of God. And any system that breaks man into three basic parts has, at least, gone beyond the Scriptures. That's not saying they are necessarily wrong. It is just to say that they lack Biblical authority for their teaching. All that is clear in Scripture is what you already know, that man has a physical part and a non-physical part, a body and a spirit. If anyone I've read formulated it properly it was Arthur Custance who says, "Flesh + Spirit = Soul," the soul being the person himself. Genesis 2:7 presents it that way. You have a human body made from the dust, God breathed into it the breath or spirit of life and man became a living soul. Body + spirit = soul. But that doesn't satisfy either. The word "soul" is used in numerous varied ways throughout the Bible. Here it refers to the whole man, elsewhere it is synonymous with "spirit". Elsewhere it may be something else.

Now, I am aware that some of you have in mind a very rigid, body-soul-spirit concept that you were taught was Biblical. But, if you just take out a concordance and study these words, you will see that theory will get blown away. Psalm 103:**1** *Bless the Lord O My soul and all that is within me bless His holy name.* There the soul is equated with all of a man's non-physical being. Usually the terms "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably. Charles Hodge, the Princeton theologian writes this:

This doctrine of trichotomy is opposed to the uniform usage of Scripture. So far from the soul being distinguished from the spirit or mind, these words all designate one and the same thing. They are constantly interchanged. The one is substituted for the other, and all that is, or can be predicated of the one is predicated of the other. The Hebrew "nephesh" and the Greek "psyche" mean breath, life, the living principle; that in which life and the whole life of the subject spoken of resides. The same is true of "ruach" and "pneuma" which mean "breath, life, and living principle." The Scriptures therefore speak of the soul not only as that which lives or is the principle of life to the body, but as that which think and feels, which may be saved or lost, which survives the body and is immortal. The soul is the man himself, that in which his identity and personality reside. It is the "ego." Higher than the soul there is nothing in man. Therefore, it is so often used as a synonym for self. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? It is the soul that sins, it is the soul that loves God. We are commanded to love God with our entire soul. Hope is said to be the anchor of the soul, and the word of God is able to save the soul. The end of our faith is said to be the salvation of our souls; and John saw in heaven the souls of them that were slain for the word of God. From all this it is evident that the word "psyche" or "soul" does not designate the mere "pneuma" or "spirit." -Hodge p.48-

Ecclesiastes 3:**21** (NIV) *Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?*" Animals even have "spirits" according to that. Again, what we find in the word of God is man made of two parts: Ecclesiastes 12:**7** *then the dust will return to the earth*

as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. Man is physical and non-physical, body and spirit.

Now, yes, there are verses that seem to distinguish soul and spirit. I am fully aware of these, but the rest of Scripture doesn't jive with a view that holds them apart. I 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.* "See there" says the trichotomist! Elsewhere we read Luke 10:27 *And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."* Look at that. Now you have to be a quartotomist! You can find a verse or two for any view, but it breaks down under scrutiny. All that stands is body and spirit. And the spirit also goes under the names *heart, mind, or soul.*

You know, the human is a fabulous creature and incredibly complex. He is a body - a biological machine. But behind it, or in it, is a ghost (a non-physical entity) that rules it or at least influences it. Without the body, man isn't whole; without the spirit James says the body is dead and that's a literal death. The spirit is life. We saw that in Genesis 2:7 *Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.* The body and spirit have an intriguing relationship. The body affects the spirit. Depression, for example, may be a spiritual problem or a physical problem or both. The spirit certainly does affect the body. Your spirit directs your hand to move and it does. Incredible! Your spirit is sad or tense and the body gets sick. What a mystery!

Christians cannot explain it all, but we can certainly stand fast against those who deny any non-physical dimension to our existence. In our day of neuro-surgery and brain tampering some scientists think they are messing with what Christians call the soul or spirit, but they're not. The brain is the bridge between the body and soul. Kill it and you've lost the connection, but not the spirit. Wilder Penfield, the neurologist, one day had an experience which opened his eyes in a new way to the existence of a ghost in the machinery. Here is how he described the event:

When the neurosurgeon applies an electrode to the motor area of the patient's cerebral cortex causing the opposite hand to move, and when he asks the patient why he moved his hand, the response is: "I didn't do it. You made me do it." It may be said that the patient thinks of himself as having an existence separate from the body. (Custance Two Men Called Adam.99,100)

The medieval theologian, Hugo St. Victor described the close inter-relatedness of things in a characteristically succinct manner thus: *“The spirit was created for God’s sake, the body for the spirit’s sake and the world for the body’s sake: so that the spirit might be subjected to God, the body to the spirit, and the world to the body.”* Well, ho out there, wake up, the preacher is coming back to earth! I know that was a bit heavy, but I think important in light of some contemporary issues.

But, I want to shift gears now and begin to look at how man's makeup as body and spirit relates to how we live and how we view life. We have two major headings. The first is this: the body is important and good. It’s strange that we have to say that but we do. The fact is that God created the human body. But I want you to look at yourself for a moment and ask out loud, “What went wrong?” The answer is that the body you have now is a post-fall body. It is a victim of human sin and so it isn't what it should be. It is prone to sickness and to death. But that doesn't make the body intrinsically bad. Adam had a body. Jesus had a body. Physical existence is good. It is part of our humanity. But many hyper-spiritual groups have in some way said the body itself is evil. The Greeks, influenced by Socrates, had this idea, so that many early Christians refused to believe that God would take on flesh. The heretics of our day deny that Jesus Christ was God. The first heretics denied that He was man because anything physical was, in their view, corrupted. I John 4:**1-2** *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.* But many who associated the physical with the sinful could not.

Still, people who would not say that the body is evil, still feel that humans would be better off without one. But, understand this - our eternal and glorified state is going to be physical. Did you get that? You know, we have this hyper-spiritual concept of glory like we're going to be ghosts or something. Not-so. The eternal kingdom will be a new heaven and a new what? A new **earth**. It will be physical and you and I will have bodies, better bodies, thank God, perfected bodies, but still bodies. The New Testament says that at Christ's coming the dead in Christ will be raised and we shall all be changed. That is I Corinthians 15:51. It is the theme verse for our nursery ministry. I Corinthians 15:**51** *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.* Philippians 3:**20-21** *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will **transform** the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory.* This is the resurrection of the believer. Death is the casting away of the body, but resurrection is the

transformation and perfection of the body. II Corinthians 5:8 *We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.* Paul here refers to the intermediate state where the spirit of man is with the Lord but has not yet known the glory of the resurrection. II Corinthians 5:1-2 *For we know that if the earthly tent, which is our house, is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.* As he says in I Corinthians 15, this mortal body shall put on the immortal. Until Christ's return, those who have died are not quite whole or complete. They have as yet to be clothed with their eternal body.

God made sinless Adam with a body. Perfect Jesus had a body, and glorified Christians will also have a body. Conclusion - the body is okay. In fact, its good and not to be at all despised. Now this means several things. First of all, it means that bodily functions are nothing to be ashamed of. It's tough for me to imagine that Jesus my Lord experienced for 33 years all that I go through physically as a man. He had that same sex drive, yet without lust. He had that same desire for rest yet without laziness. He hungered, yet without cravings and gluttony. But His body was like mine. It went through all the same profane processes. Friends, don't despise your body as some would have you do. I Timothy 4:1-3,3a *But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. 3a Men who forbid marriage.* Why? Sex is evil they say. God calls that the doctrine of demons. Masters and Johnson didn't invent sex. Hugh Hefner didn't invent sex. He gave rules to govern it, but we read that God created it, as he also created food, to be gratefully shared in by believers. Now it is certainly a fact that sex and food are grossly abused by our society – grossly abused. We therefore need to be cautious not to abuse God's gift but, dear people, it's alright to enjoy your chow. God has created physical pleasures to be enjoyed. It is not sub-Christian to enjoy food - if you say your blessing. By the way, here is a great supper blessing that I appreciate more each year. *Bless O Lord, these delectable vittles. May they add to Thy glory and not to our middles.* Of course, it isn't the prayer, but the mindset behind it that counts. I Timothy 4:4-5 *For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; 5 for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*

So, you see, the body itself is not evil. Frankly, the Roman Catholic Church historically has missed this. They not only forbid marriage for their leaders but during the middle-ages especially

they were highly ascetic. An "ascetic" is one who is anti-body; he avoids pleasure like the playboy seeks it out. Maybe you've seen movies where these guys go around hitting themselves with bricks to mortify the body in order to save the soul. What does God say about that? Colossians 2:**20-23**

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 Which all refer to things destined to perish with use)--in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Don't be fooled. Christianity is pro-body, not anti-body. It opposes excess and it opposes asceticism. But it is pro-body. So, let's get physical. But let's do it God's way. I Corinthians 6:**19-20**

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? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. How can the temple of God be evil? Also how can we abuse and tear down God's temple? This recognition should lead us to care for our bodies and for the bodies of others. As Christians we have spiritual and physical concerns. To others we hold out the word of life and the cup of water in Jesus' name. For ourselves we care for soul and body. It is not Christian to neglect bodily care. Paul said his goal was that Christ would be exalted in his body. I Corinthians 10:**31***Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Now that's incredible! Eating and drinking are our most animal activities. Purely physical it would seem, but this verse says that even in these you can glorify God. Clearly you can see that God made your body and intends to be glorified through it.

There is, however, more to be said, for man is more than physical. So, we come to our second major heading which is simply that the spirit is important and good. And whereas many Christians need to hear the former point, even more need to hear this one, because we live in a society that is preoccupied with the body and with physical concerns. We have restaurants galore, health spas, easy sex, designer clothes. The cosmetic industry is a multi-billion dollar enterprise. We are obsessed with the body - to make it look good, smell good and feel good. If you want to know what is important to America just look at the magazines featured in our stores. What are the articles about? Look good, feel good, dress good, and enjoy your sexuality to the full. We are hardly an ascetic society, no, we are a self-indulgent, physically obsessed people. In Philippians 3 Paul writes about people whose god is their appetite. That is much of America. We are dominated by the physical. Satan, our flesh, our world, put tremendous pressure on us to sell our souls for a

sensual thrill. We are dominated by the body. Our society pushes you to be someone mastered by your flesh, who is a slave to your passions, and some of us are, ruled by a desire for food, drink, sex or rest. Oh, you may pay lip service to Jesus, and stand in church and sing hymns but your real time of worship comes when you sit at the dinner table oogling and oggling at the hot bodies on your favorite TV show while you sing your hymn of praise, "*Praise to my flesh, the almighty, the king of leisure.*" You serve your master with a willing spirit. The flesh says, "Bring me some cake." *Yes, Master.* Flesh says, "Let me sleep." *Yes Master.* "Buy that item." *Yes Master.* The end of such a life is destruction! –Michael Quoist writes, "*If your body makes all the decisions and gives all the orders, and if you obey, the physical can effectively destroy every other dimension of your personality. Your emotional life will be blunted and your spiritual life will be stifled and ultimately will become anemic.*" And **you know** that is true. It has happened to all of us to some degree.

Again, I'm not at all denying that bodily pleasures are okay. I am adding to it that the spirit, soul, and mind of man is to control the physical. What's happened to most people is that the spirit is nothing, the body is everything. The physical has its place but it has rebelled and mutinied against its rightful master. Our job as Christians, seeking to glorify God, is to give the reigns of life to and put the priority of life on the spiritual. Here is your verse for the NFL playoffs. I Corinthians 9:**25-27a** *Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave.* Paul insists that his body be under control and that is not easy for us. But it is critical and possible to let the spirit run your life.

Man is body and spirit together. He is complete only when they are together; but realize this: your spirit **can** exist without your body. Your body without your spirit is what we call "death". What then is more intrinsic to your being? What is most important? Body or spirit? Listen to Scripture. I Timothy 4:**8** *Bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.* If your body is bad and spirit is good you will be perfected in both forever, but if your body is good and spirit is bad they'll both spend forever in hell. So, Jesus said, Matthew 10:**28** *Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* So, what is most critical? Body or soul? It's clear enough. Tozer says, *When man fell through sin he began to think of himself as having a soul instead of being one. It makes a lot of difference whether a man believes that he is a body having a soul or a soul having a body.* Listen to this I

Peter 3:3-4 *Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.* What does God care about most? What counts in His eyes is the spirit. God's word says man looks on the appearance but God looks on the heart. II Corinthians 4:18 *We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

These verses tell us of God's values. Are they your values? What rules in your life - body or spirit? What is most important to you, the physical or spiritual? What do you value most about others, their spiritual or physical qualities? Let me tell ya, if you can truly say that the spiritual is more important to you than the sensual you are a rare bird in this culture, but you are a bird on God's side. God is with you, and wisdom is with you.

Honestly now, think about this. Many, in fact, all of you to some extent have a plan for the physical. You have a diet, of sorts, to meet bodily needs, an exercise plan to develop physically. Some of you actually carry out your plan. You have a plan for preventive care of your body to keep it healthy. That's all well and good. You are to be applauded for those things, and they do matter, but I ask, *Do you have a plan to meet your spiritual needs, to develop spiritually, to prevent spiritual problems?* How much thought and time and money do you invest in your spirit? Are you an out-of-balance person, strong in body, weak in spirit? And if you admit you are what will you do about it?

I used to work out a couple of times a week at a gym called *Body Works*. They have all kinds of equipment and classes to help get your carcass in shape. *Body Works* they call it. So, I suppose you could call our church *Spirit Works*. We offer resources for spiritual health and soul development. We offer teaching from God's word live and recorded. We have books to check out. We have classes and support groups and counseling and these things are great for your spiritual health but you must use them with faith and with consistency. If you have questions about what you can be doing to strengthen the spiritual dimension of who you are, please see me, or write me, or maybe one of our staff here. And even more importantly, speak to God about it, looking to Jesus for help. Jesus Christ, the perfect man, came to make us whole and right, to make us what God meant for us to be as creatures in His image. By His grace, you can be that – in body and in spirit. Let's pray.