

Sermon Mini Series: Everything You Need to Know About Our Humanity

Sermon Title: What the Bible Says About Being Comprised of a Body, Soul, Spirit, (and Mind, Conscience, Heart Etc.)

April 22, 2018

Introduction: Just how is it you work as a human being? What controls your brain if it is just a complex computer or your heart since it too has memory and neuron cells? What do we call the operator who sits at the control of our being?

Theme verse: *Genesis 2:7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (ESV)*

Does the Bible teach that we are 1) one unified whole, or 2) two parts, ie. Body and soul/spirit, or 3) three parts, body, soul and spirit?

If it teaches one of the above three (and not the other two), does it matter in our daily lives?

1. We are not made up of three component parts, those being body, soul and spirit.

Here's why:

- The terms "Soul" and "Spirit" are used interchangeably in Scripture.
 - The Hebrew word for soul is *nephesh* and the Greek word is *psyche*. The Hebrew word for spirit is "*ruach*" and the Greek word for spirit is "*pneuma*".
 - The immaterial part of humans who are in Hades or Heaven are called both spirits and souls. *Hebrews 12:23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (ESV) and 1 Peter 3:19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, (ESV) vs, Revelation 6:9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. (ESV)*
- The terms "Soul" and "Spirit" are used interchangeably in Scripture in the following ways:
 - When people die, the Bible sometimes says their souls depart and other times their spirit departs. *John 19:30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (ESV) and, Luke 12:2 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (ESV)*
 - When the Bible talks about the immaterial part of man sometimes it uses soul and sometimes it uses spirit. *Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (ESV) but James says, James 2:26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (ESV)*

- When the Bible talks about the immaterial part of man sinning, both soul and spirit are mentioned as culprits. *1 Peter 1:22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, (ESV) and 2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (ESV)*
2. We are not made up of two distinct parts, i.e. body and soul/spirit (although the soul/spirit can temporarily exist on its own outside the body until the Day of Christ).
- The idea that we are two separate parts, body and incarnated soul comes from Greek thought not biblical thought.
 - The Bible speaks of each of these physical parts of our body as having psychological functions: bones, heart, bowels and kidneys!
 - The Hebrew word “*nephesh*” found in Genesis 2:7 above is the best description for soul. It means “life”. Once God breathed into Adam the *nephesh*, he became a living animated being and the Hebrews saw no disconnect between a man’s *nephesh* and his body. Another way of saying it is “person”. Otherwise, how could these passages make sense? *Proverbs 25:25 Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. (ESV) or Numbers 21:5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. (KJV) Deuteronomy 12:15 (KJV) 15 Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart. Numbers 6:6 “All the days that he separates himself to the LORD he shall not go near a dead body (nephesh). (ESV)*
3. Instead we are (as Millard Erickson describes us) a conditional unity. There is not an independent operator inside our bodies (our person) controlling the levers of our arms and legs. Our person is connected to and linked inextricably to our bodies. Only at death are we temporarily separated from our bodies and will at the resurrection someday become whole once again.
- Although our spirit/soul can exist at death apart from our body, this state is not the norm and is called the intermediate state. Here are the passages: *Luke 23:43 And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (ESV) and 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good*

courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (ESV)

Application, does it matter?

Seeing ourselves as a unified whole (conditional unity) matters because we will see ourselves as a whole not in parts. If we saw ourselves as parts (Greek thought) then we could imagine that our bodies don't matter, only our thoughts and emotions. But that is non-Christian thinking. Here is how one author puts it:

“This view of the total, indivisible man has far-reaching implications. It means first of all that everything a person does has spiritual, social and physical connotations. Praying is not just a spiritual exercise. The person who prays is a social and physical being, and these relationships are involved in praying. Eating is not only a physical activity. Even nutritionists recognize the social context of eating as an important factor in human well-being. Whether a person eats with thanksgiving and to the glory of God is also important. So we have to be careful when saying that certain activities are physical while others are social or spiritual.

In the following list of activities— eating, praying, celebrating a birthday, studying the Bible, exercising, digging ditches and singing hymns—we cannot make three separate headings and call some physical while others are social or spiritual. Each activity is physical, social and spiritual. The whole life is always physical, social and spiritual at the same time. There can never be a human activity unrelated to God, to the community or to the physical order.”¹

¹ <https://www.truthaccordingtoscripture.com/documents/death/nature-of-man.php#.WtjW2YjwbIU>