

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

*Hebrews 12:12-13*

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## A WAR AGAINST THE SOUL

*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

*I Peter 2:11*

There are many theories about the nature and essence of the soul of man. Many of those theories begin with the assumption that man “has” a soul, just as many of them assert that man’s soul is “immortal”. That the scriptures speak of “the soul” cannot be denied, nor can the fact that the soul is spoken of, there, as a separate entity from the body and spirit. (see I Thess. 5:23)

The body is actually the only one of those three which can be seen with the eye of the flesh. Yet it is clear that man (at least that one who is born again (i.e.; from above)) has an existence which is not limited to that body of flesh and blood. Paul said it was possible to be absent from the body while being present with the LORD. (see II Cor.5:8)

Thus, it seems clear that a regenerate man, (and quite probably all men), are souls who possess bodies rather than bodies which possess souls. So I would say that man “is” a soul rather than “has” a soul. The LORD said “*all souls are mine*” (Ezek.18:4) John said that he saw “*the souls*” who were slain for the glory of CHRIST in the Revelation. (see Rev.6:9; 20:4) I take that to mean he saw those individuals rather than some disembodied ghosts

There is one Greek word, “*psuche*” which is translated as “*soul*” throughout the New Testament. This Greek word appears in the NT one hundred three times and is translated as “*soul*” fifty eight of those times, as “*life*” forty times, as “*mind*” three times, and as “*heart*” and “*heartily*” one time each.

When we read the creation account of man we see that he “*became a living soul*” (Gen 2:7) whenever GOD breathed the breath of life into that body which HE had formed from the dust of the ground. Thus Adam was made to be a soul. It is interesting that the word which is most commonly used in the Old Testament for “*soul*” (four hundred seventy-five times) is “*nephesh*” which is also translated as “*life*”, one hundred seventeen times. Sometimes this word is translated as *person, mind, heart, desire, appetite, creature, and will* among others.

Strong defines the Greek word, “*psuche*”, as “*the breath of life, the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, and aversions.*” This is the very man himself, the essence of his being. The Greek word for “*spirit*” is “*pneuma*” from whence we get our English word “*pneumatic*”, relating to air or breath.

We see throughout the scriptures the terms soul and spirit, seemingly used interchangeably, yet while it is difficult for man to comprehend the exact difference between the two, the scriptures indicate that there can be a division made between them; though, requiring a quite precise instrument, “*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” (Heb 4:12) What is impossible to men is quite possible to GOD, and who can overturn it.

Contrary to popular opinion, the scripture does not indicate that the "soul of man" is immortal. There is only ONE who can be described in that fashion. *"The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; **Who only hath immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."* (1Tim 6:15-16) It is also true that the soul of man can be destroyed, rendering its supposed "immortality" to be a moot point. *"Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Mat 10:28) The second death is the destruction of the soul. (see II Thess.1:9) Thus Satan's lie to Eve is revealed for what it was. *"Ye shall surely die."*

In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul speaks of *"abstaining from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."* Some have concluded that such an exhortation is designed to stir men up "in the flesh" to war against the flesh. Yet such a warfare is doomed to fail because of the weakness of the flesh. If we understand the "soul" to be the very seat of man's existence and desire, then we would have to conclude that in order for there to be a warfare against the "soul", then this warfare would have to be spiritual in nature.

In point of fact, this is the very argument that Paul makes since he says that these "lusts" war against the soul. How can a man then "abstain from the lusts of the flesh" in the power of the very flesh that is prey to the weakness of the flesh? He cannot; if he embraces those lusts. If a man's delight is in the lusts of his flesh, then he is already a captive to them and there can be no conflict, and he gives no indication of having been made a new creature in CHRIST. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* (2Cor 5:17)

The answer is found in Paul's declaration in Romans, *"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."* (Rom 7:22-25)

The only hope that a child of GOD has of "abstaining from fleshly lusts" is the power of GOD working in him, both to bring to mind his own self destructive tendencies (in his flesh) and to cause him to flee to the only ONE who can deliver him. Even as Joseph fled from Pharaoh's wife because he knew the weakness of his own flesh. So too, we flee to our DELIVERER. *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* (Heb 4:15-16)

The LORD JESUS CHRIST has demonstrated HIS triumph over the "flesh" and all of those who are found in HIM share in that victory. HE was not "susceptible" to the "lusts of the flesh", though HE was tempted in all points even as we. HE has given us victory, even though we often find ourselves wounded and wearied in the midst of battle, by those lusts which war against our soul. Yet the very fact that there is a battle is an indication that we are made partakers of HIS triumph. Those who are taken captive by the snares of the devil give no such indication; yet even some of them may be "recovered", if GOD, should give them repentance.

CHRIST did not merely lay down HIS body of flesh and blood in our behalf, but did make HIS very "soul an offering for sin." (Isa.53:10) It was necessary to the redemption of our body, that HE as our SUBSTITUTE did give HIS body to be scourged, beaten and crucified. Yet such, in and of itself, would have availed us no complete salvation. Therefore, HE did also give "HIMSELF" (HIS soul) an offering that we might be completely justified before the law, men and angels. *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."*(Rom 8:33)

Paul clearly told us that we are in a battle yet we do not fight as those who beat against the air. *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* (2Co 10:3-5)