

"Your Soul"

One day you'll separate yourself from everything you possess except one thing. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to consider something that many people ignore. What is it? Well stay tuned and find out.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We search because our eternal destiny depends on what the Scripture says. Now if we're wise, we'll listen with love to God's word and obey it. Every blessing that we enjoy comes from the hand and the heart of God. We give God our hearts and our minds as we listen to Him speak in His word, the Bible. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Life is swift and filled with many joys and sorrows, victories and defeats, hopes and heartaches. Some things we can control, and other things we cannot. When life comes to a close, there are many earthly things that we must leave behind. We'll leave our possessions, our treasures, and our families. Paul said in 1 Timothy 6 and verse 7, "For we brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either." You will only take one thing out of this life. And you're making a decision from day to day where you will go when this life is over. What will you take with you? Your soul.

"Soul?" Now, that's a word you don't hear much these days. My friend, you have a soul. You've always had a soul. And your soul is you. God gave you your soul, and you're deciding each day by how you think and how you live what you're going to do with your soul. You're deciding each day what will happen to your soul by how you think about God and how you respond to Him. You see, God is taking notice of your life. He knows everything about your heart and your life. You can't fool him. He knows what's going on in your soul. What is God seeing inside of you?

Now perhaps you want to study more, and so we're offering this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. And that number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Luke 12:16 to 21, and then we'll explore the concept of having a soul.

Our reading today comes from the words of Jesus in the gospel according to Luke, chapter 12, verses 16 to 21. "And He told them a parable, saying, 'The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do: I'll tear down my barns and I'll build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'" Those are the words of Jesus and need to be taken seriously. Let's pray together. Father, we're grateful that You have given us a souls and that You want to spend eternity with us. Father helps us to so live that we treasure You in our hearts. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

What is the soul? Well the Hebrew word for soul is *nephesh*, and it originally meant "to breathe." God gave us life and breath and we became a living soul. Genesis 2 and verse 7 says in the King James Version, "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 soul." Now to have a soul means that I have a personal

existence. Sometimes the word soul is translated “life,” or “being,” or “self.” While animals also have a life force, only man is spoken of as having as a part of that life a spirit. Now according to Stephen Renn in his Expository Dictionary of Bible Words, the underlying essence of the word nephesh or soul “may be described as that quality which lends to human beings their distinctive individuality as creatures made in the image of God.” Your soul is what makes you what you are as a person.

The Bible translates the word “soul” in a variety of ways and with different meanings. I want to explore some of those meanings. First, the word soul can sometimes refer to that inner person. Here it’s the equivalent to the word “heart.” The Lord God asks us to love Him with all our heart and soul. There really is no difference between those two words. Both refer to that inner person, the seat of our emotions, or our intellect, and our will.

The word “soul” is found 143 times in the book of Psalms, and the psalmists are usually speaking of their passionate inner being. David worshiped God saying in Psalm 103 verses 1 and 2, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” In Psalm 139 verse 14 David said to God, “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; and my soul knows it very well.” Isaiah expressed the feelings of his soul in Isaiah 26 and verse 9, he said “At night my soul longs for You, Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently; For when the earth experiences Your judgments, The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.”

When Mary found out that God had chosen her to bear a holy child, the Son of God, she said, “My soul magnifies the Lord” (Luke 1 and verse 46). When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He told His disciples, “Oh, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (Mark 14 and verse 34). So the soul can refer to our innermost thoughts and emotions.

But the reason the soul is able to feel and to reason is because it’s spiritual in nature. The Lord Jesus warned in Matthew 10 verse 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.” You see that spiritual part of us, our souls, is not a material thing, but it will last beyond this life. The Hebrew writer tells us in Hebrews 12 and verse 9, “Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?” My friend, you have a spirit, a soul, that’s given to you by God. And that’s what makes you a creature made in the image of God. That spiritual part of you is what you will take into heaven or into hell. And that’s why your soul is so important!

Now Jesus is a comfort to our souls. Not only does He offer us forgiveness of sins, He also provides a way that our souls can endure. Christianity is livable! It’s not impossible to live the Christian life. It’s not so difficult that we can’t go to heaven. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 11 verse 28 to 30, “Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Now Jesus loves your soul and He wants to give you an abundant life, and that means giving you peace and comfort.

Second, sometimes the word “soul” refers not to some part of us but to the whole person. For instance, Acts 2 and verse 41 says, “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” Peter spoke of Noah and his family being saved on the ark. 1 Peter 3 and verse 20 speaks of “the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls (or eight persons), were saved through water.”

Third, sometimes the word “soul” refers to the life force in a person, that which gives him life. While soul and spirit are sometimes speaking of the same thing, there are times when they emphasize

different aspects of the spiritual nature of man. Hebrews 4 and verse 12 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The idea here is not so much that these terms are opposed to one another as it is that they overlap and emphasize different aspects of the inner man. The word "soul" emphasizes more the life force within a person, while the word "spirit" emphasizes the understanding and emotions of a person.

1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 23 also seems to distinguish the soul and the spirit. This verse says, "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." God wants to save us completely: body, soul, and spirit. And God is saving us as whole people. And this phrase is like the great commandment of Jesus in Mark 12 and verse 30 that you "shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." That's all of you, every aspect of you. And just as we give our all to God, so God saves us completely: body, soul, and spirit.

Fourth, there are times that God distinguishes the body from the soul or spirit. One can lose his life physically, when his body dies, yet not lose his soul. The Lord Jesus warned in Matthew 10:28, as we've mentioned, "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." Now death is a separation of the body from the spirit or soul. James 2 and verse 26 says, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." Now while the body dies, the spirit remains alive. Ecclesiastes 12 and verse 7 describes what happens at death. It says "then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit (that is our soul) will return to God who gave it." Now your body will decay here on earth, but your spirit, or soul will return to God.

Now this is why Paul could say in Philippians 1 verses 21 to 23, "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I'm to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I don't know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart (that is to die) and to be with Christ, for that is very much better." Now when you're a faithful Christian like Paul, you have the promise of being with Christ when this life is over. This is one of the many reasons to become a Christian. And the way to become a Christian is to believe and obey the Lord. And we must never think that Christianity is somehow a trivial matter that has no personal connection. Your faith and your soul are unchangeably united. What you believe will affect your soul for eternity. And so I hope you believe in the Lord Jesus and in His gospel, and you are living for the Lord Jesus, the way you ought too.

James 1 and verse 21 says, "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." You see, when people believe in Jesus, when they repent of their sins, and when they receive or accept the word of the gospel into their lives by their obedience, the word saves their souls. My friend, have you accepted the gospel message? Have you obeyed it?

Accepting it means believing that it's true and not only believing but committing yourself to it, in word and in deed. You not only want to get right with God, you must stay with the Lord. Many these days are leaving the Lord and leaving His church, wondering off into false religion and no religion. When Christians stray from the truth of the word of God, they put their souls in peril. James 5 verse 19 to 20 says, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

Now when people give up on their faith or they start believing something that is false, or they begin to practice sin because of all these things, they could lose their souls. And this is why we need to study God's word, why we need to hold fast to it. You see your home in heaven with the Lord Jesus is dependent on you knowing the word of God and following it. You can know all kinds of technology, history, science, and literature; but if you wish to live forever, to live with the Lord for all time, you must also know the Scriptures and believe them and follow them.

You see, your soul is accountable to God. God said through the prophet in Ezekiel 18:4, "Behold, all souls are Mine (they don't belong to you, they belong to Him); (and so he says) the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die." My friend your soul belongs to God; and if you sin against Him, you will die. I'll speak more about sin next week. Now this death is not simply a physical death, as some wrongly suppose, but a spiritual one. And if you sin, you'll separate your soul from the grace of God. Death is a separation, and the one thing you should never want is to be separated from the God who created you.

Now God's word clearly says in Romans 2:6 to 11 that God in the Judgment "will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, He'll give them eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, He'll give them wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God."

Now when this life is over, I hope you can say "for me to live is Christ and to die is gain." If your soul is right with the living God, heaven will be great gain. Friends you only have one life and you only have one soul. Make your time on this earth count. Seek for glory, seek for honor and immortality in Christ. Do what is good and right, be obedient. Don't let sin overcome you. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding." Oh my friend, follow the Lord. If the God of heaven was willing to sacrifice His Son Jesus on a cross in order to save you from sin, that shows not only how much He loves you but also how much your soul is worth to Him. Friend, how much is your soul worth to you? Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful for the love of Jesus and that He died for us upon the cross, that our souls might be saved. Help us Father to be obedient to Your will. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

In Matthew 16 verse 26 the Lord Jesus asked, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" Your soul is worth more than the whole world. You only have one soul. Get it right with God. On the Day of Judgment nothing else will matter but whether your soul is right with the living God.

In Luke 12:16 to 21 Jesus told the parable: "The land of a rich man was very productive. 'And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' And then he said, 'This is what I'll do: I'll tear down my barns, I'll build larger ones, and there I'll store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 'So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'"

One day the Lord will require your soul of you. Are you right with God? To get right with God, you must believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, you must repent of your sins and turn your heart toward the Lord, you must confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and you must be

baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Now this baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ. And baptism is when we call upon God for a good conscience, when God washes away our sins and gives us newness of life. Oh, we urge you to get right with God today!

Now this month we're talking about your soul, and we're offering this little book entitled "Your Soul." And we'll be talking about your soul, your sin, your salvation, and your destiny. So if you'd like to have a copy of this book or a CD of this message, and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office, and you can call us toll-free, we'll pay for it at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can also download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches of Christ in your area. Now we also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. And we have people that write in all the time. We'd love to send you one. Now if you do get a hold of us for one reason or another, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven. We're interested in your soul.

So please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home somewhere in the area that you live, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. So as always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.