

Who Am I?

What am I?

I *am* a complex living (eternal) soul (person), created by God and wholly accountable to God. (Job 4:19) The material part of me is referred to as my *body*. The immaterial part of me that lives in my body *is* most commonly referred to as my *spirit*. (Eph. 3:16) In the Bible, the word *soul* usually refers to the person as a whole (Gen 2:7) but sometimes can also refer to the immaterial part of a man (Jon 2:7). The soul is generally understood to be eternal and has cognition and moral accountability and is either spiritually alive or dead. The spirit is also referred to as my inward or inner man (2Co 4:16), which are all words the Bible sometimes uses interchangeably with the word “spirit” and the word “soul.” For example, I am a woman, a wife and a mother, yet I am not three different people, nor can I be only one or the other. I am a single being that can be described in three ways at the same time, each description revealing something about me.

One aspect of my spirit is, in the Bible, called my *heart*, which, while not referring to the organ in my body that pumps blood, actually refers to that which enables me to choose all I desire and believe. While occasionally referring to the heart as containing emotions (2Co 2:4) —more in line with the way we use “heart” today—overwhelmingly in the Bible, heart refers to cognition; that which we today attribute to the mind. My heart is the center of my being (Pro. 4:23). As the place of my core beliefs, (Rom 10:9; Heb 3:12) my heart directs my thoughts, my will, my intentions, and my actions (Heb 4:12). These form my general character or attitude. (Sometimes referred to in the Bible as my spirit, or mind.) Just as one might have two full time jobs, the inner person has more than one function, or job. I am one inner person, having many functions that are wholly united and interact in an inseparable manner. The inner me can be described in parts, just as my body can be described in parts, but I am one whole inner person. At death, my body alone dies (Mat 10:28), and there is one, and only one, survivor that enters eternity.

My body is a temporary dwelling place that will die and return to dust (Ecc. 12:7), but my spirit is eternal and will live in a conscious state forever (Acts 7:59). All that is human in me, including my body, my thought processes, my human appetites and weaknesses have been contaminated by the effects of the sin that dwells in my body. Eventually my body will die because it is human and subject to the natural laws of this life (1 Cor. 5:35-54). But while I am living in my earthly body, it functions as a vehicle or instrument for my spirit (soul) and interacts as a complex unity, one affecting the other. (2 Cor. 5:1; 4:7; 5:8) What happens in the non physical (spiritual) profoundly affects the physical and what happens in the physical profoundly affects the spiritual (non physical). Because I am God’s creation, I am wholly dependent upon God and responsible to God, being fully accountable for the way I use the members of my body.

At death, my body will cease to live and will quickly disintegrate, but the inward me is an eternal being and will immediately go to the abode of the redeemed, or the abode of the damned. This unnatural separation of the body and spirit (physical death) is the result of the curse of sin on the human race. I will survive the death of my body and give full account of my thoughts, my words and my deeds at either the judgment seat of Christ as a

Christian, or the Great White Throne judgment of the unsaved. When I (my spirit/soul) leave my physical earthly body, I will be given another temporary body that is suited for life in Heaven, or life in hell (2 Cor. 5:1-8). At the resurrection, God will give the redeemed glorified and perfect bodies like that of the Lord Jesus and he will live in it forever in Heaven. God will give the damned a new body as well, and he will live forever in hell.

Who Am I?

I was born a sinful being. It may not have been readily apparent at first, but as I grew older, my naturally selfish and rebellious characteristics made themselves known, particularly when other people or circumstances did not please me. I naturally learned the ways of sinful humans because I was by nature, human and therefore prone to sin (rebel against God's law). The more I was exposed to sin, the more I conformed to it. It came naturally to me—no one had to teach me. Even when I did good things, I had motives that were tainted with some degree of self-centeredness. Sin habits became very easy for me to develop, particularly when I lived my life in the company of others who were habitually sinning. Virtually any sin I repeated often enough became a compulsive habit which eventually controlled me rather than me it.

Because sinful behavior was such a natural part of me and others living around me, I never thought of it as wickedness or an offense to God. Compared to other people, I assessed myself as being an acceptably good person and excused or justified behavior that I sensed was less than perfect. If I felt guilty, I engaged in altruistic behavior to assure myself (and others) of my good intentions and worth as a human being. All in all, I was very satisfied with my life and assumed my problems were the result of chance or bad luck, not my sinful choices or the sinful choices of others. I considered my sinful habits a natural part of life and found it easy to laugh and find enjoyment in activities that I knew were destructive and harmful.

Because I was an unrepentant sinner, I was incapable of understanding spiritual things or pleasing God in any way. In this sense, I was spiritually dead. I lived in complete spiritual darkness, not comprehending truth as God defines it and not able to respond to it in any way. Because I was blinded to the truth, I did not comprehend that I was actually an enemy of God, doomed to experience the eventual destiny of those who are in bondage to sin. I was completely deceived, imagining instead that I was acceptable to God, deserving His love and blessings of my own choosing. At the same time, I had no delight in obeying God's law and expected God to cater to my demands and desires instead.

Had my body died at this time, I would have gone on living in a place called hell where there would have been no hope for deliverance or rescue. Eventually I would have been brought from this place of torment in a resurrected body to the Great White Throne judgment of the unsaved. At this judgment, it would be revealed that I was the property of Satan and subject to the same condemnation as he and his angels. Every sin I ever committed in thought, word or deed would have been brought up as evidence against me. In the end, I would have been sentenced and then cast into a lake of fire where my

resurrected body would die just as my first body died. But I, being an eternal being, would have lived forever in the torment of fire and darkness, separated from God, with no hope.

Because my body and soul was spared an early death, I continued to live the life of an unredeemed sinner, unaware of my eventual fate and unaware that I was, in actuality, a child of Satan's world system. I did not seek to be reconciled to God. I didn't even know that I was estranged from Him. At the time, God was seeking me and was orchestrating events in my life in such a way that I would be confronted with spiritual reality. I was exposed to the Bible and people who believed the Bible. The words of the Bible were powerful and different than any words I had ever heard. Because the Word of God is living spirit empowered by God, it had the capability of enlightening my understanding—the inward me. God's Spirit enabled me to begin understanding the Bible's message and for the first time, I realized I was a sinner who did not keep the perfect law of God.

The more I learned about God's holiness and God's Word, the more I saw how sinful and unholy I really was in comparison. I then tried to reform my life and cease sinning. I found to my dismay that I could not. I became dissatisfied with my religious efforts, knowing they did not result in peace of any lasting kind. I began to understand that none of my good deeds could change my heart—who I really was inside--let alone suffice as a payment for my sin. I began to realize I needed a Savior, someone who was qualified to pay the penalty for my sin in my place. I realized I needed what the Bible calls God's grace—the God given power to save and change me on the basis of God's love and character, not my own.

I began to understand my desperate and helpless condition and began to see the spiritual peril I was in. Because God had opened my eyes of understanding, I readily listened as I was told the Gospel story of Jesus' death on the cross of Calvary and His resurrection three days later. As I pondered the meaning of what He did and who He was, I saw that my only hope for deliverance was in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on my behalf. I believed what the Bible said and believed that Jesus died in my place, taking the penalty upon Himself for my sin. At that moment, I put my faith (trust) in Christ alone and depended on Him completely for the forgiveness of my sin. I entered the only door through which a human being can experience forgiveness and real heart change—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The moment I believed, turning from my own ways to God's way, putting my trust in Jesus Christ, I was born into the family of God. Instead of living in spiritual darkness, I was brought into spiritual light. Everything about life looked different and had new meaning. Whereas I *was* spiritually dead and blinded to spiritual truth, I now enjoyed new spiritual life and understanding. I, that is my inner self, was changed into a new person at the moment of spiritual birth and God's Spirit united with my spirit in such a way that I can never be separated from Him again. God cleansed and redeemed my inner self. I am no longer "in Adam," but am "in Christ."

God's Spirit now lives within me and is united with me (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:15,19). He enlightens me and causes me to begin understanding spiritual things that I could not comprehend before I was saved. The Holy Spirit now works to purify me from sin so that the royal image of Christ can be seen in me. Though I am a new creature in Christ, I live in a body that is not changed. My flesh itself is not sinful, but it is still human, and therefore still subject to human appetites and sins. I am conscious that sin dwells in me, and evil is present. (Rom. 7:24-25) Even though my body is already showing signs of deterioration and will continue to break down until it stops functioning all together, the real me, the inward me that lives in my body, is experiencing spiritual growth and renewal day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).

I am now a rightful heir to all the promises and blessings entitled to God's children. As I submit to Him and subject my thoughts and will and heart (the sum total of all that I am) to His Word and His authority, I experience His power in my life to become more and more like Him. (Gal. 5:16) Before I was saved, I did not hunger and thirst for righteousness and had no delight in the Word of God. Now I long to live like Christ and I am saddened when I do not. I am now keenly aware of the limitations of living in an imperfect body that is subject to human weakness and frailty. Because sin is contrary to my new nature, its presence grieves me and causes me to look forward to the day when I will be delivered from its presence. (1 Cor. 15:52-53;56-57) I am eagerly anticipating living in a new and perfect body together with Jesus in Heaven. (Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:4)

Meanwhile, I am no longer a child of Satan, taken captive by him at his will. I have been freed from the dominion of sin. I no longer *have* to obey sin or submit to its demands. I am able, by God's power that lives within me, to bring my body under subjection to Christ so that I might live for Him and please Him in this life on earth. All the resources of Christ live within me and all the privileges of a child of God belong to me simply because I belong to Christ. I enjoy the blessings of an obedient child and progress in spiritual strength and maturity to the degree that I depend on Him and actively submit to the Word of my Father and to His wise management of my life. If I do not keep my body in subjection to the Holy Spirit that is united with me, my human propensities will wage a war against the Spirit and will keep me from living the life of a child of God.

Though Satan is my defeated foe and I am no longer his captive, He is the enemy of God and God's children and will attempt to intimidate me and bully me into submission. Satan can no longer lay claim to me, dominate me, indwell me or keep me in sin's power. He cannot overrule God's limits or protection and can never reclaim me. He does, however, work to deceive me and prevent me from knowing the truth concerning my relationship to God and God's work in the hearts of His people. He would have me ignorant of the deceptive nature of sin and its potential to destroy my life and rob me of blessings that are rightfully mine as God's child. Because he desires the complete destruction and humiliation of God's plan, God's people, and God's kingdom, he works tirelessly to distort any understanding or knowledge that I might acquire which would assure me of God's love, forgiveness, truth, or purpose for my life. He wants nothing less than stunted spiritual growth, to the end that I would turn away from obeying God and God's law and thereby be separated from my source of strength and blessing.

Who am I? Though I may not look like it at times, I *am* a child of God. I am redeemed--purchased with the precious blood of God's own Son. I am justified and forgiven, no longer under any judicial condemnation because Jesus was condemned in my place. I am changed and I am being changed for I have been set apart as God's, for God's purposes. I am to glorify God in both my body and my spirit (1 Cor. 6:20). I am under the care and tutelage of my Heavenly Father who loves me and gave Himself for me. Like a father does his child, He disciplines me, provides for me, comforts me, guides me and keeps me safe by His power and His grace. He is preparing a permanent home in Heaven for me where I will live with Him and enjoy Him forever. The more I learn about my Father and the future He is preparing for me, the more I am amazed at His love for me.

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” 1 John 3:1-3