

## Your Soul Luke 12:16-21

The Bible teaches that one day you will be separated from everything you possess except for one thing – **“Your Soul.”**

**What is the soul?** 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 2:7** says in the KJV, “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul.*” To have a soul means that you 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. According to Stephen Renn in his “**Expository Dictionary of Bible Words**”, the underlying essence of the word *nephesh* or soul “*may be describe 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 the inner person.** Here it is the equivalent to the word “*heart*.” The Lord asks us to love Him with all of our **heart and soul**. There is no real difference between these two words. Both refer to that inner person, the seat of our emotions, 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 103:1-2**, “*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 139:14** 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 26:9**, 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*” (**LK. 1:46**). When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He told His disciples, “*Oh, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death*” (**Mark 14:34**). 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 is spiritual in nature.**

The Lord Jesus warned in **Mt. 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.*” You see that spiritual part of us, our souls, is not a material thing, but it will last beyond this life. The Hebrew writer tell us in **Hebrews 12:9**, “*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?*” You see, you have a spirit, (**a soul**), that is given to you by God. And that is 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 is 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 is not impossible to live the Christian life. It is not so difficult that we can't go to heaven. The Lord Jesus said in **Mt. 11:28-30**, "***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.***" Jesus loves your soul and He wants to give you 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 2:41** 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 3:20** speaks of "***the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, 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 4:12** 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 "soul" emphasizes more the life force within a person, while the word "spirit" emphasizes the understanding and emotions of a person.

**1 Thess. 5:23** 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 **Mk. 12:30** 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 is 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 **Mt. 10:28**, as we have 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.***" Death is a separation of the body from the spirit or soul. **James 2:26** says, "***For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.***" While the body dies, the spirit remains alive. **Ecc. 12:7** describes what happens at death. It says, "***then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.***" Your body will decay here on earth, but your spirit, or soul will return to God.

This is why Paul could say in **Phil. 1:21-23**, “*For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am 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 and to be with Christ, for that is very much better.*” When you are 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 that you are living for the Lord Jesus, as you ought to do.

**James 1:21** 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 the word of the gospel into their lives by their obedience, the word saves their souls.

Accepting it means believing that it is 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 or no religion. When Christians stray from the truth of the word of God, they put their souls in peril. **James 5:19-20** 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; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine. The soul who sins will die.*” You see your soul belongs to God; and if you sin against Him, you will die. This death is not simply a physical death, as some wrongly suppose, but also a spiritual one. And if you sin, you will 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.

In **Rom. 2:6-11** God says that in the Judgment He “*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.”*

When this life is over, I hope you can say with Paul, “*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.* Brethren, you have only 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 rule over you.* **Proverbs 23:23** says, “***Buy the truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding.***” 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.

In **Mt. 16:26** 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 **Lk. 12:16-21** Jesus told this parable: “<sup>16</sup>*The land of a rich man produced plentifully,*  
<sup>17</sup>*and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’*  
<sup>18</sup>*And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.* <sup>19</sup>*And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’* <sup>20</sup>*But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’* <sup>21</sup>*So is the one who lays 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 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 before men, and you must be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. This baptism from the very beginning was an immersion in water in the name of Christ. It is in baptism that we call upon God for a good conscience, and when God washes away our sins and gives us newness of life. If you want to get your soul right with God won't you come as we stand and sing?