

**Sanctification: Transformed into
The Image of Christ
Lesson 13**

I. Introduction

- a. If experiential sanctification is an important aspect of our growth and maturity in Christ and if it ultimately leads to the glory and honor of God then, we should give careful attention to a correct understanding of this doctrine and our part in **actualizing** it.
- b. To accomplish this we will need to identify the specific anthropological **mechanisms** in play (spiritual, physiological and psychological) as we attempt to do the tasks which produce the result of experiential sanctification.
- c. Accordingly, we must be able to identify specific Bible **words** that are related to the task of experiential sanctification as laid out most clearly in the New Testament.
- d. And secondly, we need to comprehend the practical meaning of these Bible words so that we may coax from that understanding how, specifically, we might **act** so as to produce the result of experiential sanctification.
- e. While this might sound fairly straight forward, it is complicated by the basic fact that in the last 2000 years of human history language and science have changed man's understanding of **anthropology**.

II. The Problem of Language and Science

- a. The ancients, both Hebrew and Greek had an understanding of man's anthropology that was limited by their respective **languages**. For example, neither language contained a word for brain. EG: Emotions were said to emanate from the bowel or heart.
- b. The effect of this problem for the 21st century reader is that in many cases the biblical word used (either Hebrew or Greek) describing anthropological functions **does not** translate or carry over into the modern understanding of the nature of persons.
- c. So, when attempting to comprehend the **intent** of the biblical authors relating to anthropology, the 21st century reader should be guided by the results of 2000 years of scientific discovery and knowledge of human anatomy.
- d. **Failure** to make this linguistic and scientific conversion of biblical words would leave one with the understanding that thinking and feeling take place in the physical organ of the heart; and that the bowels are the causal factor in the generation of emotions.
- e. Such faulty understanding of the intent of the writer does not communicate truth and neither will it lead the student down the path of understanding toward **Christ-likeness** and true holiness.
- f. That said, however, as soon as the student of Scripture begins to make such translations into his or her own common vernacular, the door is flung open to the increased opportunity for misinterpretation and error. This is an inescapable **conundrum**.
- g. The task therefore is to make a careful study of ideas expressed in Scripture that relate to the sanctification process and to convert those ideas into our understanding of how to specifically **apply** them to our actual practice.
- h. To approach this thoughtfully we will need to consider what the writers of the biblical text would likely have **known** about anthropology and how the specific wording they used fits into the understanding of a 21st century reader.

III. Understanding Paul's Understanding

- a. Anthropology is typically associated with the sciences and is the methodical study of what **comprises** man. Using the scientific approach man is studied in isolation and no attempt is made to link him with Intelligent Design or to a Creator.
- b. However, the nature of biblical anthropology, though still concerned with man's composition, focuses on how man is created in **relation** to his Creator. The Bible places man in context with his Creator and offers no understanding of man apart from Him.
- c. Although Paul wrote extensively throughout his lifetime addressing all manner of topics and ideas, he did not, for whatever reason, set down in writing a **precise** exposition of the body, flesh, spirit, soul, mind, of the inner man.
- d. What Paul did have to say about theological anthropology may be found as an underlying theme in his letters to the churches, and especially in his letter to the Romans. It is from these primary sources that our ideas must be **pieced** together.
- e. In order to fully understand Paul's approach, it is necessary to delve into the key concepts and terminology he employs relating to anthropology; terminology which reflects **both** his culture and religion.
- f. Although Paul was a Roman citizen, he grew up in the **Hellenized** City of Tarsus which was home to universities renown for their teaching of the prominent Greek philosophies of the day. Acts 22:3 *I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.* KJV
- g. We can infer from this that Paul was **likely** conversant with these philosophies and how they differed from Jewish concepts of the nature of man.
- h. Paul's treatment of the nature of man begins with the Old Testament formulations because above all else, Paul was trained as a **Pharisee**, and thus, his thinking reflects the thinking of the Pharisees as to the nature of persons. Phil 3:5 *Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;* KJV

IV. Old Testament Ideas of Man

- a. There is a contrast between the Greek and Hebrew views of man. The Greek man was viewed as an inharmonious union of soul and body who was related to two separate worlds: material and **immaterial**.

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- b. In the Hebrew view, however, man is flesh animated by God's breath (spirit) (*ruach*), who is thus constituted a living soul (*nephesh*) connected to God by creation and able to live **harmoniously** in obedience to Him. (Gen. 2:7; 7:22).
- c. Because the Hebrew language is a general language and **lacks** the precision of the Greek, *nephesh* may refer to a variety of man's aspects and will need to be determined by the context in which it is used.
- d. Soul may indicate **any** of the following: "living being," "life," "self," "person," "desire," "appetite," "emotion" and "passion"
- e. The word means that which breathes, and is distinguished from basar, "flesh" or material **body**. Isa 10:18 *both soul and body*:
- f. As the life-breath, it departs at **death** (Gen 35:18; Jer 15:2). Hence, the desire among Old Testament saints to be delivered from Sheol. Ps 16:10, "*Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol*"
- g. By an easy transition the word comes to stand for the individual, personal life, the person, with two distinct **shades** of meaning which might best be indicated by the Latin *anima* and *animus*.
- h. As *anima*, "soul," the life inherent in the body, the **animating** principle in the blood is denoted. Deut 12:23-24, '*Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the soul; and thou shalt not eat the soul with the flesh*'.
- i. As *animus*, "**mind**," the center of our mental activities and passions is indicated. Thus we read of:
 - 1. a **hungry** soul Ps 107:9
 - 2. a **weary** soul Jer 31:25
 - 3. a **loathing** soul Lev 26:11
 - 4. a **thirsty** soul Ps 42:2
 - 5. a **grieved** soul Job 30:25
 - 6. a **loving** soul Song 1:7
- j. Man **is a soul** but he **has** a spirit (*ruach*) and that spirit is neither material itself nor dependent upon matter, but capable of conversing with other spiritual beings, which are not necessarily the objects of the senses. Eccl 12:7 *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. KJV*
- k. The (*ruach*) spirit is an **understanding** spirit. It is able to discover and receive truth, to think and reason, and form intention which suggests that spirit may serve some sort of executive function within man. Job 32:8 *But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. KJV*

V. Summary

- a. The imprecision of the Hebrew language makes it impossible to articulate a **decisive** anthropology that delineates form and function that might provide guidance for the understanding of the 21st century student of Scripture.
- b. However, a few **generalized** nuggets do shine forth from the gleanings of the OT treatment of the nature of man.
 - 1. Man is created by God to be in relationship to Him. Man is both material and **immaterial**
 - 2. Since God is spirit He has created man with an immaterial spirit which serves the **function** of enabling communication directly with God.
 - 3. The spirit belongs to God and will **return** to Him.
 - 4. Man in his immaterial **essence** is the soul or mind.
 - 5. The soul **animates** the body and when it is no longer in the body the body ceases to live.
 - 6. The soul is **everlasting** and continues to exist beyond the physical life of the body.
 - 7. Soul and spirit and body shall one day be reunited in a resurrected **body**.

VI. Application

- a. If you understood Paul's intended meaning perfectly when he writes about experiential sanctification, what difference might that make in your ability to live a Christ-like life?
- b. Besides your lack of perfect understanding is there anything else that limits your success as you attempt to live a Christ-like life?