

A Salvation Trinity

In 2 Timothy 2:15 we read that God has a special interest that we develop the ability to correctly divide the Bible:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

"Divide" here is the Greek ὀρθοτομέω, orthotomeō, meaning, "to make a straight cut . . . to dissect correctly". Dissecting Scripture correctly is a key hermeneutical skill that keeps us out of error, error that comes from misapplying sections aimed at one target to something else.

No topic requires this careful division more than that of "salvation". Entire opposing denominations have sprung up around seemingly contradictory Scriptures on the nature of God's redemptive work in man. Are we saved the moment we trust Christ, or does that merely launch a process of salvation that is not completed until we die? Is salvation forever, or can you lose it because of subsequent sin? Is salvation a free gift or do you have to work hard to obtain it?

Two verses will serve to demonstrate the problem:

- Rest in free salvation without working --> *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)*
- Work super hard with anxiety to complete salvation --> *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12)*

One of the key insights Bill presents in his seminar resolves this beautifully, focusing us on a division in Scripture that many in the church have missed. Once you slice it straight and apply each Scripture to the "thing" it is aimed at, it makes perfect sense. Besides clearing up a lot of confusion, it also represents much of the conviction that undergirds the training aspects of the ministry, specifically his homeschooling program ATI (Advanced Training Institute).

Me, Myself, and I

Evangelical doctrine has long held to the foundational doctrine of "The Trinity" when it comes to describing the nature of God. While He is One God, looking more closely we find He is three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three are seen in the Baptism of Jesus:

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16-17)

That would explain the references to "we" and "us" during creation:

"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Genesis 3:22)

While man was never supposed to be "like God" in the ability to decide good and evil, God did make us in "His image" and, it turns out, like Him in also being composed of three distinct "persons". This trinity is shown clearly in 1 Thessalonians 5:23:

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Spirit "AND" soul "AND" body, with the Greek conjunction "kai" – "and" - separating the words in the original.

Since Paul prayed for each part separately it stands to reason that the way in which each part is to be saved may differ. And thus there will be throughout Scripture passages aimed at how the spirit is saved which, if we attempt to apply to the soul's salvation, will leave us confused. So also with the salvation of our body - strange doctrines arise if we apply passages dealing with that to the two parts of our invisible "inner man".

The "persons" of our "shadow trinity" talk to each other, just as we have seen the Persons of the Godhead do. Here is an example of David's spirit reasoning with his soul as they together try to survive a crisis:

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." (Psalms 42:5)

Here his spirit speaks tenderly of his soul, that person which he calls his "darling":

"Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog." (Psalms 22:20)

In fact, any time we "talk to ourselves" in our thought processes, different parts of our being are adding input, lobbying for control. Each "person" values different things, brings memories and principles to the table. The more of the whole person that is "on board" with the final decision, the more peaceful and assured we are.

Dividing Soul and Spirit

Not a few theologians continue to insist that the invisible inner man is just a single part with two different Bible names. Those same theologians find themselves having to deal with enormous contradictions in Scripture. So it is time to sharpen our thinking - and our hermeneutics - to solve some of these problems.

And speaking of "sharp", it takes a sharp knife to dissect a biological specimen, and it takes a sharp mind to separate the function of our soul from our spirit. But God has given us the tool to do it with:

"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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

It appears that God specifically is eager that we learn to separate soul from spirit, and God's word, wielded by the Holy Spirit, will do that for us.

Three Different Worlds

The reality of God's creation is that one universe is in fact an overlay of a number of different realms, worlds that coexist yet never touch. And we are built to live in several of them simultaneously:

- Physical World - our body moves in the world of atoms and chemicals and the laws of physics. For that we have 5 senses that keep us apprised of what is going on. When we have problems with our body a medical doctor can help.
- Spiritual World - here is the world of God, angels, demons, the "religious" world or even the world of witchcraft or the occult. We are given 5 senses here as well. With them we hear good spirits or bad, see the light, taste that God is good, feel His touch, smell the stench of a corrupt heart. Our conscience is an expression of those senses, a tool to detect - without external input - how things are going over there. There are laws here as well, laws that God has written out in the Bible as well as carved into our spirit for reference (Romans 2:15). When the spirit is sick, people seek out a "spiritual advisor" like a pastor, preacher . . . or priest . . . or shaman.
- Psychological World - the Greek word translated "soul" is ψυχή, psychē or psuche (the "y" and "u" are both correct) from which we get psyche, psych . . . psychology. Yes, psychology is the study of the soul. This is the mental world, the world of emotions, feelings. Mathematicians know some of the laws that hold sway there, laws of logic and the mind that function independently of any law of physics. There are other laws of the soul, laws of relationships, for example, that we must respect or suffer the consequences. When the soul is hurt we go looking for a counselor, a psychologist, a psychiatrist . . . or even a better mathematician to untangle our logic.

The NT uses the Greek word for "psychological" - ψυχικός psychikos - except that the KJV translators did not really know what to do with it. So they translated it "natural". Many Bible commentators replace "natural" with "soulish", which is fine, except that it is a made-up word. "Psychological" carries some unfortunate extra-biblical baggage, but since it also best carries the purpose of this Greek adjective, we will use it.

Here is "spiritual" - πνευματικός pneumatikos from "pneuma", spirit - and "psychological" in the same verse:

"But the natural (psychikos) man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually (pneumatikos) discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

So we can see a clear division in this verse between spirit and soul. In other places it is not always as plain, specifically when our inward man is being discussed without distinction of parts. That is where we must get the knife out.

The Phases of Salvation

The Bible and the universe in general is full of trinities – threes – and the ways of God in redemption are an example. Evangelical theology has long acknowledged that salvation found in Jesus is accomplished in three distinct ways. The old preachers used to tell us:

- Past: We WERE SAVED from the Penalty of Sin
- Present: We ARE BEING SAVED from the Power of Sin
- Future: We WILL BE SAVED from the Presence of Sin

And it is easy to see is a clear connection to the three persons of our being:

- Our SPIRIT was made alive the moment we trusted Christ, His Spirit indwelling us. This salvation cannot be lost, it is unchanged by any subsequent successes or failures on our part.
- Our SOUL is being saved throughout our lifetime on earth, being reclaimed from the sinful personality that defined us previously. In reality, there are two "souls" in the believer, two "persons" - the "old man" and the "new man", one built on this present life, the other on the world to come.
- Our BODY will be saved, redeemed at the final resurrection.

It is interesting that while Paul tells us in 1 Thess. 5 that God wants to save spirit, soul, and body, he elsewhere acknowledges that only two of those actually fully belong to Him, now:

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:20)

Our spirit is already His and cannot ever be lost, and every believer's body will be resurrected, no missing parts, on that final day. But how it will be with our soul, how much of that we let Him reclaim, that is something that is still in doubt. Our choices and obedience in this life will result in eternal rewards or loss, all of that still being determined.

Let's focus on each part of our being and it's salvation more closely.

Spiritual Discernment

Besides being our window to the spiritual world the spirit has a special role in understanding what is going on in the heart. This allows us to truly know others, and they us:

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 2:11)

The only way we know what another person is thinking is by our spirit discerning their spirit. Like a flashlight into their being. Here is another Scripture to highlight this thought:

"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." (Proverbs 20:27)

This could suggest that God uses our own spirit to examine our heart, or that our spirit is a gift from the Lord to see the inward parts of others, which seems more likely. Bottom line is that the spirit reveals the heart. Bringing us back to Hebrews 4:

". . . the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

To know our spirit is to know us. It is possible that the dividing point of soul and spirit described in the passage is what generates our thoughts. Put another way, our thoughts are nothing else but the ongoing discussion between soul and spirit documented earlier.

We can only know others - and specifically the Lord - through our spirit. A damaged spirit renders a person insensitive. While he is fully capable of reading physical data - words, facial expressions, body language - he cannot discern the thoughts and motives of others because we know them through our spirit. To highlight an example Bill gives, a man overcome by a spirit-damaging sin like pornography can easily become a child abuser, overcorrecting for rebellion and stubbornness when the child may be simply tired or confused. The father's spirit has lost the ability to tell. The same man may well damage his marriage. Men often complain that their spouses are incomprehensible, since women will often say something verbally which is not what they mean, in some cases meaning exactly the opposite. It takes all the faculties a man has, specifically listening with his spirit instead of just processing her words with his mind, to navigate those treacherous rapids.

Here are verses that deal with that past tense settled, permanent salvation of our spirit:

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:2)

"For in this hope we were saved." (Rom. 8:24, ESV)

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," (2 Timothy 1:9)

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Cor. 5:17)

Eternal Security

Consider this verse:

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1 John 3:9).

This provides the simplest explanation of "eternal security", the inability of a saved person to ever be lost. If you can't sin, you can't lose your salvation. Strangely, however, the same author in the same book says that we all sin:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8)

The only explanation is that the "new man", the new creation based in the spirit, is incapable of sinning, while the "old man", our old nature, based in the soul, has ongoing sin problems. As the "old man" is replaced with the "new man" as the latter grows, we will - practically - sin less and less. Bill highlights this in his diagram in the Basic Seminar on the "exchange" of the old heart with the new one.

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Two beings, two personalities, two minds, two wills, two sets of emotions. Two souls in one body, an old and a new. James speaks of the ensuing battle:

"A double minded (δίψυχος dipsychos, literally "double-souled") man is unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8)

Our job is to see to it that the "old soul" gets weaker and weaker by being not fed, and that the "new soul" is able to reclaim all of the territory previously held by that old nature now officially "reckoned" dead.

The Spiritual Battle For the Soul

Like the physical world, the spiritual world is occupied by beings, beings with names and personalities and powers and shapes and capabilities. It is a literal world stranger and more wonderful than all the imaginations of philosophers and science fiction writers.

Angels live there:

"And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." (Hebrews 1:7)

So do Satan and his minions, demons. whole hierarchies of powerful creatures that we, stunningly, are supposed to wrestle and fight:

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:11-12)

These weapons for this fight are not physical - or psychological, for that matter - but spiritual, obtained and wielded by our spirit:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [σαρκικός sarkikos, physical, of the body], 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." (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

We interact with spirits on a regular basis. They come knocking, visiting our subconscious being, making suggestions, teaching us facts and ways of thinking. Some are good, those of good men or the Holy Spirit or even other spirits under His control. Some are bad, trying to deceive us, get us to embrace lies so we will get entrapped in evil.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1)

Those spirits - and that includes the spirits of living men under satanic influence - can look like angels, godly men, full of glorious light:

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

So we need to be on our guard. When we hear ideas from the spirits of preachers or teachers, or when thoughts present themselves to us in our heart from that invisible world, we must challenge each one that is trying to pass the barrier between our spirit and our soul. To be more specific, not every thought that comes into our mind is our thought – some come from us, some are suggestions from the Lord and some come from the devil, planting ideas, whispering to our inner man. We need to interrogate every thought and only let it in if we can verify that it is ultimately sourced under the authority of Jesus. Again ". . . bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5). John says it most clearly:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that

confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." (1 John 4:1-3)

If we do not do this and indiscriminately let everything find a home in our heart, our soul, we run the real risk of giving the devil a piece of our mind, a piece of real estate inside us to operate from:

"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place (τόπος topos, a "spot") to the devil." (Ephesians 4:26-27)

The verses quoted imply, by the way, that when we are angry we lose control of our spirit for a time, a time when the Enemy can sneak some of his weapons past our defenses and set up shop. The guard was down for just for a few minutes, but there may be lifelong consequences. That fact was also highlighted by Solomon:

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." (Proverbs 25:28)

Bill has a powerful diagram on strongholds - castles - that Satan will set up in our soul, our mind if we let him. If we have failed and surrendered a piece of our soul to the devil in a fit of careless rage or other failure, we have authority to turn humbly to the Lord, confess our sin, and ask Him, in the name and based on the shed blood of Jesus, to reclaim surrendered ground. Perhaps this process – of the Lord stepping in to heal us, take back soul “territory” that was lost to the Enemy – is what David was referring to when he said:

"He restoreth my soul." (Psalm 23:3)

Soul Life

The word psuche (or "psyche"), Greek for "soul", is translated "life" many times in the NT. Examples:

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life (psuche), what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life (psuche) more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matthew 6:25)

From this it is clear that our present life is intertwined fully with our "soul". The soul is then the sum of our experiences, memories, emotions, dreams, plans for life, learning . . . relationships . . . personality. The "me" that others know. In this sense animals have souls, although they have no spirit.

The word for "soul" in Psalms 42:5 - *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"* - is the Hebrew word "nephish", clearly part of our invisible man. Same word used often for animals:

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature (soul, "nephish") after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so." (Genesis 1:24)

The makeup of kingdoms of living things can be summarized as follows:

- Human Kingdom - Body, Soul, Spirit
- Animal Kingdom - Body, Soul
- Plant Kingdom - Body

As such our present "soul" finds many aspects ending when this life ends:

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life (soul, "psuche") dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. " (Acts 20:24)

Paul is telling us that he is willing to shed his hopes, dreams, ability to enjoy and influence this present life, build memories, relationships, all to see Jesus objectives furthered. He was willing to lose his soul in the context of this present life to gain Jesus approval. And this is exactly what Jesus says to us all:

"He that findeth his life (soul, "psuche") shall lose it: and he that loseth his life ("psuche") for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 10:39)

To save our "psuche" life is to preserve our mind, memories, hopes, aspirations, relationships. All of our being which is built on things of this life will end, when life ends. Thus only that part of our soul that has been built on a life foundation that NEVER ends will survive. The preservation of our "soul" is then the transfer of our personality from being built on this sinful life to being built on eternal things, on the Savior and His Kingdom, plus those hopes, dreams, relationships, emotions that spring from that invisible reality.

What is clear from this is that, unlike our redemption from the penalty of sin when we received Christ, this salvation will take a lifetime to accomplish, and there is, unlike the first, no guarantee of complete success.

Paul speaks of a salvation that is guaranteed and one that may be lost in the following passage:

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

There is a foundation, and that foundation is Jesus Christ. On this foundation each of us is constructing a house - our "soul house", our life house. Note the multiple references to "work", our work. We have the power to build materials in there that burn or that don't burn, up to us. The house made up of mostly wood will be well occupied in this life, happy, comfortable, built with much less cost and effort than the poor soul next door that can only afford a relatively small shack of marble, gold and silver. One day, though, "The Fire" comes roaring through the neighborhood. The big wooden house gets destroyed - "lost" - while the small neighbor house goes on as though nothing happened.

Interestingly, though one house is "lost" and one "saved", the owners are themselves both "saved", although one "by fire", meaning he lost everything. Of course this highlights the fact that all Christians will be in heaven, although those that lived only for this life will lose that "reward" which Paul mentions. What is that reward? I suspect it will be having a permanently better state in eternity. A bigger "soul", perhaps?

Nobody will be sad in heaven, but perhaps some will be happier than others. By analogy, say four individuals are standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon: a fully sighted man, one who is "red-green" colorblind, one that is "blue-yellow" colorblind, and one who is fully colorblind, shades of gray. Which individual will be unhappy as they gaze across all that wonder? No one will be unhappy - all will be delighted, never forget it. Yet the more sighted ones know what the less capable ones are missing. Color IS an advantage, and in this context, a reward.

This salvation of our soul, our "house", is surely the salvation Paul had in mind when he said:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13)

Or when he asks us to to save ourselves and others:

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 4:16)

Or James when he similarly urges Christians to work on Bible memorization, knowledge to see their own souls saved:

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21)

Here Paul actually refers to both phases of salvation:

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10)

This is most plain. We were saved by Jesus, and because of this we are being saved by Jesus.

Present Continuous

Here are some more verses that highlight the continuing nature of the salvation of our soul. An explanation of Greek grammar will help. The Greek has several different tenses to express the action of verbs:

- "Aorist" or "Punctiliar" Tense: it happened, happens, will happen. Says nothing fancy, doesn't mean "once for all" . . . just "happen".

- "Continuous" or "Imperfect" Tense: continued, ongoing motion. Was happening, is happening, will be happening. This precludes a conclusion, a terminus to the action.
- "Combined" or "Perfect" Tense: it happened, but with continuing results.

The important thing is that we need to add the sense of "-ing" to our English when "present continuous" tense is used in the Greek. With this as background, consider the following verses which contain "continuous" tensed verbs:

"(You are) receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:8-9)

"But according as He who did call you [is] holy, ye also, become holy in all behaviour, because it hath been written, 'Become [be becoming]' in the majority texts] ye holy, because I am holy;" (1 Peter 1:15-16, Young's Literal Translation)

"For the word of the cross to those indeed perishing is foolishness, and to us--those being saved--it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18, YLT)

"But if within the sphere of the light we are habitually ordering our behavior [KJV "walk"] as He himself is in the light, things in common and thus fellowship we [the believer and God] are having with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son keeps continually cleansing us from every sin." (Wuest's translation of 1 John 1:7)

Such verses cause entire denominations to reject the permanency of salvation. Now it should be clear that these Scriptures simply focus on a different part of our being than the already permanently, fully saved part.

Work to Rest

Salvation is spoken of as "rest", and by now we should all be expecting to find that rest expressed in phases, past, present, and future. The day we rested in Christ we, like the Children of Israel poised on the East side of Jordan, ready to enter the Promised Land, were given the irrevocable title deed to all the rest, the inheritance that God's grace has bought for us. But the Israelites discovered that that which belonged to them still had to be "possessed", fought for, subdued. There were enemies, even giants in the land. Before they could "rest" they had to "work", and how much rest they enjoyed was largely determined on how effective the fight was. And this remains the lot of the believer in Jesus in exactly the same way:

"For if Jesus (in this case "Joshua") had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:8-11)

Unbelief will keep us from getting this practical job done. If we do not believe that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6), we will circle our wagons around what we can see and "count on" in this life and live for the here and now. If we DO believe that He loves us and sees us and

that "he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting", then we will "not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (Galatians 6:7-9)

And is it not stunning that the conclusion of the Hebrews 4 discussion on labor and rest resolves into the discussion of the difference, the "dividing asunder of soul and spirit". The Lord divides us apart, noting every difference between what He created in us - the spirit resting in Jesus - and what we are practically where work remains to be done - a soul needing to be reclaimed. And He tells us to take courage and get busy so we not miss any of all that Jesus bought for us with his precious blood.

Resurrection of the Body

Last and perhaps least, let's focus on the salvation of the body. Our physical bodies need saving from the decay that sin has brought, but it is clear that this did not happen when we trusted Christ, nor is it happening now as we become more like Jesus. No, this is all in the future. The following lengthy passage is key to understanding this:

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." (1 Corinthians 15:35-45)

The current body is seen as a seed to be planted. When so done, the body will one day rise up just as the plant springs forth from the seed. And just like the seed the new thing emerging looks completely different from the seed that went into the ground. So much so that it is frankly impossible to predict exactly what you are going to get. Some large seeds produce low plants, like pumpkin seeds do. Sequoia Redwood seeds are tiny, yet "resurrect" into the largest trees on earth. Coconut seeds are large and produce a large tree, some small seeds produce tiny plants. Each of us will have our future physical glory determined by God and unrelated in part, at least, to the size of the splash we make on earth with our spirit and soul.

It is also interesting to note that the character of the new body will be different, as required by the new environment it will be living in. He calls the current body "soulish" (natural), but that body will be "spiritual". Our souls define our earthly life, as noted. There we will be living spiritual lives, forever.

Peter focuses on that future salvation, which gives us courage to live for the world to come as though nothing else matters . . . because it doesn't:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:3-5)

And again, looking for future grace:

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;" (1 Peter 1:13)

That day will seal us forever as we are, all work of salvation ended. What is then will continue to be so, unchanged, forever and forever. Linger over these solemn words spoken in the last chapter of the last book of the Bible in the context of the new heavens on the one hand and the lake of fire on the other, after the final judgment:

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Revelation 22:11)

What a motivation to rest in Jesus for forgiveness of our sins, then to "get busy" and make sure we conquer all of our souls for Him, continually entering further in a practical way into the rest of a life grounded on His daily help and promises. We are looking for that day when all work will cease, and we will be like Him and with Him through the endless ages of eternity, saved spirit, soul, and body.

Back to Bill

We have spent some time clarifying this particular perspective for the simple reason that failure to understand this division results in many wrong perspectives of all that Bill's ministry has sought to do. The intensity with which God describes the expected effort on our part to see His will done in our soul, our "life" is expressed in the intensity and urgency that motivates Bill.

The clearest expression of this is his homeschooling program, the "Advanced Training Program"(ATI which is unparalleled in its intensity, discipline, expectations. Families rise before dawn to study the Scriptures to be "approved unto God". Young children learn Greek, memorize large amounts of Scripture, learn math and science from the Bible. Many older ones eschew college and plug straight in to Christian service. All are taught discipline in all areas of life. The seriousness with which this is pursued has led to the accusation that Bill is teaching "salvation by works", of being preoccupied with gaining the favor of God by living a perfect life instead of by faith in Jesus.

From the preceding study we now know that though we are saved by faith to a salvation that is full and free and permanent, God expects us to then get suited up for an intense and consequential battle that we will engage in the rest of our lives. We are not raising our children to "make it" in this life. Instead we want to see them trust Christ as Savior, then to "save their souls", their lives for Jesus, as well to train them to be highly effective foot soldiers in the battle of the Kingdom of God. They need to lay

down their lives as necessary to gain treasures in heaven that no one can take away and that pay dividends forever. On the other hand Jesus tells us that a loss here exceeds the value of the entire world.

The clearest expression of the purpose of the ATI training program is found in a section of Scripture that is almost completely ignored by the modern church. While I can recall hearing one or two messages on this passage from other preachers in my lifetime, it forms the cornerstone of ATI:

*"And beside this, giving all diligence,
add to your faith virtue;
and to virtue knowledge;
and to knowledge temperance (self control);
and to temperance patience (endurance);
and to patience godliness;
and to godliness brotherly kindness;
and to brotherly kindness charity (love)
For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.
Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:" (2 Peter 1:5-10)*

On the surface this passage appears to fight everything that Evangelicals believe about salvation. But this no longer bothers us, right? We have learned that as long as we "slice it straight" a section like this that challenges us is our friend. Rather than destroy the correct Biblical foundations we have received about salvation it strengthens them by removing confusion.

- We have been taught, "Faith plus nothing!" pleases God. Yet this tells us "Faith plus Virtue plus Knowledge plus Self-Control plus Endurance plus Godliness plus Brotherly Kindness plus Love" pleases God.
- We have been taught, "You become godly by resting in Jesus, a gift!" Yet this says "Giving ALL diligence, add to your faith . . . Godliness". The implication is that if we are not super focused and go after it ourselves, we will miss out on Virtue, Godliness, and Love.
- We have been taught, "God picked you, His love toward you will never change based on what you do or do not do!" Yet this says we must "give diligence" to make our "calling and election (choosing, selection) sure". Implying we might damage our "elect" status. Perhaps that is in our own mind only. The point is made in the passage that if we do not keep climbing this ladder of character growth we will actually forget that we were ever saved. A wasted life. Stalled growth = loss of everything, at least as far as our life is concerned. Regardless, we cannot rest long in the reality of being individually loved, "chosen" - there is still much that demands our diligent focus.

So to fulfill this mandate Bill developed ATI. As an expression of this purpose every student will remember the "Faith Journal", "Virtue Journal", and "Knowledge Journal" which young people complete and then get recognized at one of the annual conferences.

Most parents drawn to the program are impressed with the Bible focus. Indeed, every aspect is Bible with all other topics as "Unit Studies" springing from the verses being considered. Parents joining ATI are often burdened with the lateness of the hour, the nearness of eternity, the need to focus our lives exclusively on the objectives of the Savior in the time we have left. Thus they are drawn to a training program is a "boot camp" for future soldiers, trained from birth for one purpose, and one purpose only. This discipline objective is clearly taught is Scripture:

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (2 Timothy 2:3)

Now, some young people going through such training have grown up to rebel against the purpose ATI was created for. I recall a recent article by an ex-ATI student called, "Stolen Dreams". It was the cry of some who felt themselves unprepared to be successful in life, unable to see their dreams realized because of ATI. Instead those dreams were stolen, as they saw it, by the misguided objectives of their parents through wasted years invested there.

To apply what we learned here, young people in ATI are trained to "lose their life (soul)". Some have subsequently rejected this objective after coming to majority, now seeking desperately to make up for lost time and "save their life (soul)", what's left of it. Like the Israelites of old, having not seen the "promised land", they weary of the desert and just want to get back to – or in some cases, kids born along the way, get to for the first time – normal life in Egypt.

I doubt any ATI parent feels they have done it all right. Some of us have felt like total failures at times. But they are right. However imperfectly executed, ATI is designed to invest in the dreams of others, specifically the Kingdom of Jesus, at the expense of personal aspirations. But the conviction grows that the regret felt now over "stolen dreams" of the heart will pale to insignificance compared to the regret felt later when standing before Jesus sometime in the next few years, looking at ashes left from the wooden delights of this life with few precious things actually laid up in heaven. To some of us it still seems so worth the effort to cash all the dreams of life in on bold experiments like ATI toward the goal of altering that scenario.

Each of us must decide what values we will pursue, what materials we will use in building our house, be that our own life or the "house" which is our family. Maybe ATI will be part of that for you as it is for some of us. Regardless, we hope we all are now very aware that it is not the start that matters, and definitely not the blessings or trials of the middle of the race, but the end of the course that matters so incredibly much. Bill has lead the way in encouraging us to lay down our souls for Jesus so we may recover them to life eternal. Perhaps a few more will discover the old vision, and come along.