

# THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;  
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,  
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God  
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1118

## **What is Soul?**

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The next issue will answer the question of whether the soul is immortal or not. However, before answering the question, it is necessary to understand what the soul is, and, to do this, it is necessary to understand how it comes about in the first place. Is it some mystical thing that God plants in man, or is it something that man develops once he comes alive? To answer this, we must start at the beginning with the formation of Adam from the soil of the earth.

**And the LORD God formed man of the dust [soil] of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.** (Genesis 2:7 KJV [CV])

Some translations use the term *living being*, but *living soul* is the more accurate term. In other words, the Lord God took some soil and fashioned Adam, that is, gave him form or, more specifically, a body. However, the body had no life in it, so God then breathed into him the breath of life.

The process by which God made Adam was not much different from how He made all living animals on earth. All had to be formed out of the soil and the breath of life breathed into them. Later, we read that it is called the breath of the spirit of life.

**(21) All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; (22) of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath [neshamah] of the spirit [ruach] of life, died.** (Genesis 7:21-22 NASB)

In other words, it is the Spirit that gives life (Job 33:4; John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6). After all, God is spirit and life, and, when He breathes into creation, He must breathe that which is of His nature. James confirms this: **For just as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead** (James 2:26 NASB).

Having said this, I realize that many make the distinction between breath, as in breathing air in and out to oxygenate the body, and the more mystical concept of spirit, meaning a higher level of existence, even intellect that distinguishes man from animals. I am not going there in this discussion. However, based on Genesis 7:22, I would argue that all flesh living on the land receive the breath of the spirit of life, since this verse uses both *neshamah* for air or wind and *ruach* for spirit, even the spirit of God. Nevertheless, the point I want to stress about the spirit is that it comes from God who is spirit and life. Nothing exists apart from God or, to be very specific, apart from the Son of God. All creation comes forth from the Creator.

So, we can see that the body is from the earth, and the breath of the spirit of life is from God. But this leaves the soul. Where does it come from?

First, let us be clear that the order is first the body, then the spirit, and then the soul. It is not until the body is given the breath of the spirit of life that man becomes a living soul. In other words, the very soul is dependent on the joining of the body and spirit. It is only then that the body becomes a living soul. Thus, it only follows that if the body and spirit are taken away, there is no soul.

So what is the soul?

Studying all references in relation to man, the word *soul* reveals that it is the *consciousness, feelings, sensations, and desires* of man that come about when the breath of life vitalizes the body at birth. The soul consists of the sensations and feelings that man experiences.

As a living soul, Adam began to see, smell, hear, taste, and feel. He was *animated*. Thus, we could say that **the soul is the animation of the body**.

Another way of stating this is that it is simply **the human experience**. One commentator has described the soul as **a phenomenon and a capacity**. In a sense, we do not have a soul but a capacity of soul or capacity to sense or have sensation. **We have soul!**

Man is often described as a soul, referring to life itself, but this is not technically accurate. Although it is intimately connected to life and at times seems synonymous with life in scripture, the soul is not life per se, but **the experience of life as experienced through the sensations and the feelings of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling**. Again, let us be reminded that the spirit gives life (John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6), not the soul.

As a phenomenon, soul is the perception of the senses of the body and encompasses all the sensations of any living, organic body, whether man or any creature with blood flowing through its body.

The soul is not unique to mankind, **for the soul [nephesh] of the flesh is in the blood** (Leviticus 17:11 DNT). Most translations use the word *life* instead of soul, but the Hebrew word is the same one used to describe Adam as a *living soul*.

Thus, the soul is in the blood, and every living creature with blood has a soul or, simply, has soul.

Anyone who has spent any time around animals, particularly domesticated ones, can attest to them having soul. For example, there is little doubt that dogs have soul. They crave food; they desire shelter; they desire warmth and love; and they can be depressed or jubilant, just as humans can and do. In fact, pet dogs often seem to take on some of the character of their owners.

There are many scriptures to support the notion that the soul is connected with the senses. Consider the words of our Lord Jesus: **Because of this, I say to you, do not be anxious for your soul, what you eat and what you drink, nor for your body, what you put on. Is not the soul more than the food and the body than clothing?** (Matthew 6:25 LITV). Or, consider the Lord's invitation to those feeling the pressures and burdens of life: **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** (Matthew 11:29 WNT). It is the soul that feels these pressures and needs to rest in His yoke.

Further, consider these verses that connect the soul with the senses: **With all the yearning of your soul you may sacrifice and eat flesh** (Deuteronomy 12:15); **you may eat grapes to your soul's desire, to your satisfaction** (Deuteronomy 23:24); **their soul abhorred all food** (Psalm 107:18); **a thief when he steals, in order to fill his soul's needs when he is famishing** (Proverbs 6:30); **The just man knows the soul's needs of even his domestic beast, yet the compassions of the wicked are cruel** (Proverbs 12:10); **eating to his soul's satisfaction** (Proverbs 13:25); **honey of the comb, is sweet to the soul and healing to the bones** (Proverbs 16:24); **if you are a person of soulish appetite** (Proverbs 23:2); **The soul that is surfeited tramples on honeycomb, yet to the famished soul, any bitter thing is sweet** (Proverbs 27:7); **cause his soul to see good from his toil** (Ecclesiastes 2:24); **All of a man's toil is for his mouth, yet even then the soul is never filled** (Ecclesiastes 6:7); **to make the soul of the famished empty** (Isaiah 32:6).

Many of these verses should help our understanding of the term *soul food* or *comfort food*, that is, food that brings comfort to our soul.