**Salvation — Past, Present, Future**

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*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* ([Ephesians 2:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-9&t=NKJV))

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* ([1 Corinthians 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.18&t=NKJV))

*Are they* [angels] *not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit* [*lit*. “for the sake of the ones about to inherit”] *salvation?* ([Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV))

“Salvation” in the Word of God is spoken of in three tenses — *past, present*, and *future*:

1) Christians *have been saved.*

2) Christians *are being saved.*

3) Christians *are about to be saved.*

The previously quoted verses provide examples of how Scripture deals with each of these three tenses or aspects of salvation.

In [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-9&t=NKJV), salvation is *a past, completed act.*

In [1 Corinthians 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.18&t=NKJV), salvation *is a present, continuous work.*

In [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV), salvation is *a future, inherited possession.*

Since the Word of God presents salvation in a framework of this nature, *it is vitally important in Scriptural interpretation to first ascertain to which of these three aspects of salvation any given passage pertains.*

In *the past aspect of salvation*, dealt with in [Ephesians 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8&t=NKJV), the words in the corrected text, “*you have been saved,*” are a translation of two Greek words that form what is called in the Greek text a “periphrastic perfect.” The “perfect” tense refers to *action completed in past time*, with the results of this action extending into present time and existing in a finished state. The “periphrastic” construction places additional emphasis on the present, finished state and refers to *the persistent results during present time of the past, completed work.*

Salvation in this verse is wrought *by grace through faith*, accomplished completely *in past time*, and is *the present possession of every believer.* This present possession, in turn, constitutes an active, continuing, ever-abiding salvation.

The eternal security of the believer cannot be expressed in stronger terms than the periphrastic construction of the perfect tense in [Ephesians 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8&t=NKJV), for the present results of the past action, in this case, *can only continue unchanged forever.*

However, in [1 Corinthians 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.18&t=NKJV), dealing with *the present aspect of salvation*, things are presented in an entirely different light than seen in [Ephesians 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8&t=NKJV). Rather than the verb tense in the Greek text referring to *a past, completed act*, the tense refers to *a present, continuous work*. The former has already been completed, but the latter has yet to be completed.

Then, in [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV), dealing with *the future aspect of salvation*, matters are presented in a completely different light yet. The wording in the Greek text of this verse refers to something that is about to occur. Nothing is past or present; the reception of this salvation, in its entirety, is placed *in the future.*

Further, the salvation referred to in [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV) is not only to be realized in the future, but it is also *an inherited salvation*. And the thought of *inheritance* further distinguishes the salvation in this verse from the salvation previously seen in [Ephesians 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8&t=NKJV), for the salvation that Christians presently possess *is not* an inherited salvation.

Rather, our present salvation was obtained as *a free gift* during the time we were alienated from God. And, as aliens (outside the family of God), we were in no position to inherit salvation, for inheritance in Scripture is *always a family matter.*

In the Old Testament, “sons” were first in line to receive the inheritance, with “daughters” next. If there were no sons or daughters in the immediate family, the inheritance was passed on to the nearest family member or members, designated by the law of inheritance ([Numbers 27:8-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+27.8-11&t=NKJV)).

Consequently, an individual had to be *a family member* before he could be considered for the inheritance, which, during the present dispensation, is restricted to “children” or “sons” of the Owner. That’s why the statement is made in [Romans 8:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.17&t=NKJV), “. . . *if children, then heirs* . . . .” And that’s also why in [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV) that an inherited salvation pertains *to those who have already been saved, those who are no longer alienated from God but are presently family members*.

In this respect, the complete scope of salvation — *past, present, and future* — has a beginning point, with an end in view. It involves the Spirit of God breathing life into the one having no life, effecting the birth from above. And this has been done with a purpose, an end, in view. This has been done so that the Spirit can take the one who now has spiritual life and perform a work in the life of that individual, with a view to an inheritance that will be realized at *a future time*.

Thus, one should immediately be able to see the importance of proper distinctions being drawn and observed in the realm of these three aspects of salvation. And depending on how one approaches and deals with the different salvation passages in Scripture, either *difficulties can be avoided* on the one hand or *insurmountable problems can result* on the other.

THE TRIPARTITE NATURE OF MAN

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ([1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.23&t=NKJV))

Man is a tripartite being comprised of *spirit, soul,* and *body*; and the salvation of man within its complete scope (past, present, and future) pertains to *the salvation of man with respect to his complete being*. In the study of Scripture it is revealed that each of these three parts of man is subject to salvation at different times. Thus, to understand salvation in its complete scope, one must first understand certain things about man’s tripartite nature. Then, salvation in relation to this tripartite nature becomes the issue.

The first chapter of Genesis reveals that man was created in the “*image*” and “*likeness*” of God. The word translated “God” in the Hebrew text of this statement is *Elohim*. This is a plural noun, which, in complete keeping with related Scripture, would include all three members of the Godhead — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (*e.g., cf.* [John 1:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.1-3&t=NKJV)).

Since *Elohim* is a trinity, for man to be created in the “*image*” and “*likeness*” of God, he too must be a trinity. Unlike the dichotomous animal kingdom (created apart from the “*image*” and “*likeness*” of God) possessing only bodies and souls, trichotomous man (created in the “*image*” and “*likeness*” of God) is a triune being. Man not only possesses *a body* and *a soul,* but he also possesses *a spirit* as well.

Jesus is *Elohim* manifested in the flesh; and having been made in the “*likeness*” of man (but apart from man’s fallen nature), He, as man, must also be a trinity ([John 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.14&t=NKJV); [Philippians 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+2.7&t=NKJV)). This tripartite nature of Christ, in whom “*dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” ([Colossians 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+2.9&t=NKJV)), was clearly revealed at the time of His death.

At this time Jesus yielded up *His spirit*, which went back into the presence of His Father in heaven ([Luke 23:46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+23.46&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Ecclesiastes 12:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ecclesiastes+12.7&t=NKJV); [Acts 7:59](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.59&t=NKJV)); *His soul* went into Hades, the place of the dead, housed inside the earth at that time ([Acts 2:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.27&t=NKJV)); and *His body* was removed from the Cross and placed in Joseph of Arimathaea’s tomb ([Matthew 27:57-61](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.57-61&t=NKJV)). This threefold separation persisted until the soul and spirit re-entered the body at the time Christ was raised from the dead.

Thus, God, *Elohim*, is a trinity; Jesus, *Elohim* manifested in the flesh, is likewise a trinity; and man, created in the “*image*” and “*likeness*” of *Elohim*, can only be a trinity as well. Accordingly, *a complete redemption* provided by the triune God must, of necessity, pertain to man as *a complete being*. *Man’s complete redemption must encompass spirit, soul, and body.*

1) PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE . . . SPIRIT, SOUL, BODY

When man sinned in the garden in Eden, the complete being of man — spirit, soul, and body — became in a fallen state. God had commanded Adam concerning the fruit of *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,* “y*ou shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*” ([Genesis 2:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.17&t=NKJV)). After Satan had deceived Eve into eating of the fruit of this tree, she then “*gave to her husband with her, and he ate*.” Immediately following this, “*the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings*” ([Genesis 3:1-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.1-7&t=NKJV)).

At the time of the fall, Adam and Eve lost something; and it is clearly stated in Scripture that both immediately recognized this fact. That which they lost could only have been a covering of pristine glory that had previously clothed their bodies, for they, following the fall, found themselves in a twofold condition:

1) Naked.

2) Separated from God.

God is arrayed in a covering of “*light*,” connected with “*honor and majesty.*” And man, created in the “*image*” and “*likeness*” of God, could only have been arrayed in a similar manner prior to the fall.

*Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with* [“You have put on”] *honor and majesty*. ([Psalm 104:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+104.1&t=NKJV))

*Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.* ([Psalm 104:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+104.2&t=NKJV))

Recognizing the loss of this covering, realizing that they were naked, explains why Adam and Eve immediately sought to clothe themselves following the fall. They tried to replace the covering that had been lost with a work of their own hands, with fig leaf aprons. And then, apparently realizing the utter inadequacy of this covering, they, in their fallen state, sought to hide from God.

God, finding Adam and Eve in this condition, completely rejected the works of their hands. God completely rejected their feeble efforts to atone for their own sin by seeking to replace the covering of pristine glory with fig leaves.

Then, to bring His fallen creature back into a right relationship (although not in complete keeping with their previously un-fallen state — something still future even today), God provided a covering consisting of animal skins ([Genesis 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.21&t=NKJV)). This necessitated *death and the shedding of blood*; and herein lie basic, unchangeable truths concerning the state of fallen man and the means that are necessary to effect his redemption.

Unredeemed man is a fallen creature, alienated from God; and two things are necessary to effect his redemption:

1) Divine intervention.

2) Death and shed blood.

These truths have forever been set forth in the opening chapters of Genesis and can never change.

(Two different words are used for “*naked*” in the Hebrew text of [Genesis 2:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.25&t=NKJV) [before the fall] and [Genesis 3:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.7&t=NKJV) [after the fall]. In the latter [3:7], the word has to do with *absolute nakedness*, but not so in the former [2:25].

Remaining within the way a person dressed in the East at the time Moses wrote Genesis, and at later times as well, the word used relative to *nakedness* pertaining to Adam and Eve preceding the fall [2:25] could be used to describe a person clothed in a tunic [inner garment] but lacking the mantle or cloak [outer garment]. In the preceding respect, prior to the fall, Adam and Eve were clothed in the Glory of God but had yet to possess the regal outer garments worn by kings [fulfilling the reason for man’s creation — to rule the earth ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV))].

Then, following the fall, no longer clothed in the Glory of God, Adam and Eve were no longer in a position to be further clothed in regal garments, realizing the purpose for their creation. They, apart from the inner garment [the Glory] could not wear the outer garments [royal apparel].

Adam, prior to the fall, never wore regal garments or held the scepter. In this respect, he never moved beyond the description given in [Genesis 2:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.25&t=NKJV) — a “*naked*” condition, “*naked*” *in relation to the reason for his creation* [*lacking the outer regal garments*].

Thus, if man, now separated from the Glory, is to ever fulfill the purpose for his creation, God must act. Redemption has to occur; and this, of necessity, has to include the complete man — *spirit, soul, and body* — with a view to not only *a restoration of the Glory but to regality beyond this restoration*.)

A) SPIRIT

Man’s sin in the garden in Eden produced *death*. Man *died* the day he ate of the forbidden fruit. Since *his body* continued to live, revealing that *his soul* — the life-giving principle in the blood ([Leviticus 17:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+17.11&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Genesis 9:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+9.4&t=NKJV)) — remained unchanged with respect to life (natural life), it is evident that it was *his spirit* that died.

*The spiritual nature is that part of man that links him directly with God*. “*God is spirit*,” and man’s worship of God must be “*in spirit and truth*” ([John 4:24 NASB](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+4.24&t=NASB)). The death of Adam’s spirit separated him from God (establishing the primary meaning of “death” in Scripture — *separation from God*), and this *death* (this separation from God) “*spread to all men*” ([Romans 5:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.12&t=NKJV)).

Scripture speaks of an unsaved person as being “*dead in trespasses and sins*” ([Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV)). With an unredeemed, inanimate spirit (*spiritually dead*), he is *alienated from God, separated from God* ([Ephesians 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.12&t=NKJV)).

But once the person has been born from above, he is then spoken of as *having passed* “*from death into life*,” as *having been* “*quickened* [NKJV: ‘*made us alive*’]” ([John 5:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+5.24&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.5&t=NKJV)). Possessing an animate spirit, possessing spiritual life (having been made alive spiritually), he is *no longer separated* from the One who Himself is “Spirit” ([John 4:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+4.24&t=NKJV)).

This aspect of salvation is brought to pass by the Spirit of God breathing life into the one having no life, based on Christ’s finished work at Calvary; and once this has been accomplished, everything surrounding the work effecting this aspect of salvation has been completed, with this work existing in a finished state (as previously seen through the use of the perfect tense in [Ephesians 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8&t=NKJV)).

Thus, the salvation experience that man enters into at the time of the birth from above is a work of the Spirit, based on a previous work of the Son. It is a *spiritual* birth and has to do with man’s *spirit* alone: “. . . *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” ([John 3:6b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.6b&t=NKJV)).

B) SOUL

*The salvation of the soul*, on the other hand, should *never* be associated with the past aspect of salvation. Scripture carefully distinguishes between *the soul* and *the spirit,* never using the words interchangeably in this respect (*cf*. [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.23&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 4:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.12&t=NKJV)).

And Scripture also carefully distinguishes between salvation in relation to *the spirit* and salvation in relation to *the soul*. Salvation in relation to *the spirit* is always dealt with *in a past sense*, but not so with the salvation of *the soul*. Rather, the salvation of *the soul* is always dealt with *in a future sense*:

*receiving the end of your faith -- the salvation of your souls.* ([1 Peter 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9&t=NKJV))

*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls.* ([James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV))

*But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe* [are faithful] *to the saving of the soul*. ([Hebrews 10:39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.39&t=NKJV))

The statements and exhortations in these verses pertain to *Christians alone* — those whose *spirits* have already been saved and whose *souls* are in the process of being saved, with the salvation of the soul being realized only at *a future time*.

C) BODY

The salvation of *the body* presents very few problems for the majority of Christians. Very few Christians contend, contrary to Scripture, that the body has either already been redeemed or is in the process of being redeemed. Scripture places the redemption of man’s body entirely in the future ([Romans 8:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.23&t=NKJV)).

The Christian’s body is presently in a continuous state of deterioration. The body grows old and weakens with time; and the body is subject to sickness, disease, and eventually death. This must ever remain the case as long as the body remains in its present state. The “*wages of sin is death*” ([Romans 6:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+6.23&t=NKJV)), and the unredeemed body must pay the price that sin requires.

Within this unredeemed body lie two opposing entities, each seeking dominion — *a redeemed spirit*, and *an unredeemed soul.* The unredeemed soul is housed in an unredeemed body, and the two are mutually compatible. But the redeemed spirit housed alongside an unredeemed soul in an unredeemed body experiences no compatibility with either of the other two at all. Compatibility is not possible, for “*what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*” ([2 Corinthians 6:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+6.14&t=NKJV)).

This heterogeneous union is what produced the cry of the Apostle Paul in [Romans 7:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+7.24&t=NKJV),

*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*

(For information on the redemption of the body, refer to the appendix — “[Adoption, Redemption of the Body](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-six.php#Adoption,%20Redemption%20of%20the%20Body)” — in the author’s book, [God’s Firstborn Sons](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-six.php#God%E2%80%99s%20Firstborn%20Sons), in this site.)

2) SOULICAL, SPIRITUAL, CARNAL

According to the Word of God, every man can be categorized as being either *soulical, spiritual*, or *carnal*. The word “soulical” pertains to all non-Christians, and the words “spiritual” and “carnal” pertain to two classes of Christians.

A) SOULICAL

*But the natural man* [the “soulical” man] *does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*. ([1 Corinthians 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.14&t=NKJV))

The Greek word translated “soul” throughout the New Testament is *psuche*. This word has to do with “the natural life” of the individual. The soul is the seat of a person’s emotions, feelings, and desires pertaining to his man-conscious existence.

The Greek word translated “*natural*” in [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.14&t=NKJV) is *psuchikos*, a form of the word *psuche*. *Psuchikos* is the “natural” or “soulical” life (self-life) that man has in common with the animal kingdom.

The soulical man is dominated or ruled by his soul, which includes all the experiences, desires, emotions, sensations, likes, and dislikes within the personal, natural life of the individual. Such likes, dislikes, etc. will vary from individual to individual, but all emanate from the soul-life of man. The soulical man is alienated from God and, thus, possesses no way to grasp spiritual truth. A man must *be born from above — made alive spiritually* — before he can possess spiritual discernment.

B) SPIRITUAL

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual . . .* . ([1 Corinthians 3:1a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.1a&t=NKJV))

The Greek word translated “spirit” throughout the New Testament is *pneuma*. This word is used in the New Testament referring to the Holy Spirit, man’s spirit, angels (both fallen and un-fallen), a state of mind or disposition, wind, and breath. Examples in Scripture of the last four are [Luke 8:55](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+8.55&t=NKJV); [John 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.8&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 4:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+4.21&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+1.7&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.7&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 3:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+3.19&t=NKJV).

Man’s spirit is the seat of the higher divine life pertaining to his God-conscious existence. The Greek word translated “spiritual” in [1 Corinthians 3:1a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.1a&t=NKJV) is *pneumatikos*, a form of the word *pneuma*. The spiritual man is one who is controlled by the Spirit of God acting through his own spirit (through a spirit made alive by the birth from above).

The spiritual man, unlike the soulical man, controls his emotions, feelings, and desires pertaining to his still-present, man-conscious existence. He brings his unredeemed body under subjection and exerts control over the soulical man. This, of course, is not performed within his own power, but within the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is an experience open to redeemed man alone, to an individual who has been made alive spiritually.

Unredeemed man, on the other hand, although a trichotomous being, fails to rise above the dichotomous animal kingdom in his natural or soulical existence. He lacks a redeemed spirit with the accompanying, indwelling Holy Spirit. He, with an inanimate spirit, is spiritually dead. And, consequently, he remains alienated from God. Thus, an existence outside the soulical (natural) for unredeemed man is not possible.

C) CARNAL

*. . . but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.* ([1 Corinthians 3:1b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.1b&t=NKJV))

The Greek word translated “carnal” is *sarkikos*. This is a form of the word *sarx*, which means “flesh.” *Sarkikos* (fleshly) is the opposite of *pneumatikos* (spiritual). The carnal Christian is, thus, “fleshly” as opposed to “spiritual.” He is one who allows himself to be controlled by his soul rather than by the indwelling Holy Spirit. He, as the soulical man (the unsaved man), follows his personal emotions, feelings, and desires.

He, however, unlike the soulical man, has been born from above and is capable of grasping spiritual truth. But, unlike the spiritual man, this truth is not being received. Thus, the carnal Christian, without an impartation of spiritual truth flowing into his saved human spirit, remains immature and fleshly, following the fleshly impulses of the soul.

(The use of “flesh” or “fleshly” in the preceding respect would be a direct allusion back to that which occurred in Eden at the time of the fall. Man, following his fall, possessed a body that was no longer enswathed in a covering of Glory, with the exposed flesh openly demonstrating this fact. This is what is meant by Christ coming “*in the likeness of sinful flesh*” [[Romans 8:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.3&t=NKJV)]. Christ came to earth in a body not enswathed in the Glory of God.

This was *the crux of the ignominy and shame surrounding the events of Calvary*. Not only was Christ’s body of flesh [apart from the covering of Glory] arrayed in a mock regal manner [with a robe and a crown of thorns], but He hung on the cross without even His Own garments to cover His body, for all to behold that which had been wrought by sin 4,000 years earlier — *nakedness, and death* [[Matthew 27:27-36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.27-36&t=NKJV)].

There though is nothing wrong with “flesh” per se. Man was created in a body of flesh, Christ presently has a body of flesh, and both God’s Son and man will live in bodies of flesh forever.

But, though there is nothing wrong with a body of “flesh,” *there is something wrong with a body of flesh that is not enswathed in the Glory of God*.)

Within the scope of that which God reveals about the impartation of spiritual truth *to redeemed man alone* lies the great lesson concerning unredeemed man’s relationship to the Word of God. It is utterly futile for unredeemed man to either himself attempt to understand the Word of God or for redeemed man to attempt to teach him the Word of God. Scripture is “*spiritually discerned*,” and *a man must be born from above — be made alive spiritually*, which places him in a position where he can exercise spiritual discernment — before he can understand the things of the Spirit of God. The soulical (unredeemed) man, completely alienated from God — spiritually dead and in no position to exercise spiritual discernment — cannot understand spiritual things, and they appear to him as no more than “*foolishness*” ([1 Corinthians 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.14&t=NKJV)).

(Unredeemed man can understand the letter of Scripture [*i.e*., the stories or accounts of events in Scripture, viewing them as he would a secular book]. But to take these stories or accounts of events and see the spiritual content that God has built into them is completely beyond his ability [*cf*. [2 Corinthians 3:6ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+3.6ff&t=NKJV)]. He simply cannot understand the things of the Spirit, for, spiritually, he is dead; he is alienated from God.)

Thus, herein also lies the reason why the things of the Spirit have been hidden from the “*wise and prudent*,” but revealed unto “*babes*” (*cf*. [Matthew 11:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+11.25&t=NKJV)). Certain Christian intelligentsia of the present dispensation, even though saved and in a position to understand the Word of God, too often seek spiritual discernment in the light of worldly wisdom rather than through comparing Scripture with Scripture and looking to the indwelling Spirit *to lead them “into all truth”* ([John 16:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.13&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 2:9-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.9-13&t=NKJV)).

And, although those Christians who seek spiritual discernment in this manner may often be looked upon as great spiritual leaders, theologians, expositors, etc.; they, in the final analysis, cannot understand these things. Such individuals can only be sadly lacking in the very realm where they are held in high esteem.

While at the same time, “*babes*” (Greek: *nepios*, those who are still on the milk of the Word and have not grown enough to even partake of solid food), by the leadership of the Spirit of God — as they compare Scripture with Scripture and look to the Spirit *to lead them “into all truth”* — can invariably be brought into an understanding of these things. They, by turning to the Word and looking to the Spirit for discernment and leadership, can understand more about these same spiritual truths than the “*wise and prudent*” who turn to places other than the Word and either ignore or reject the Spirit’s discernment and leadership.

REDEEMED MAN

Redeemed man, through a past and finished work of the Spirit, based on a past and finished work of Christ, has been brought from a dead to a living state spiritually. He has passed “*from death into life*.” And in this living state, he is now in a position to realize *the purpose for his salvation — the salvation of his soul.*

One aspect of salvation is past. The individual presently possesses eternal life, and nothing can ever change or nullify this fact. But the individual has been *saved for a purpose, which will be brought to pass only within the framework of his realizing present and future aspects of salvation.*

And this complete panorama of the salvation message, with a purpose in view, *must be recognized.* Redeemed man *must recognize* that there is not only a past aspect to salvation but present and future aspects as well. And the present and future aspects of salvation are inseparably connected with man one day being brought into a realization of *the purpose for which he was created in the beginning — “. . . let them have dominion”* ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV)). Present and future aspects of salvation have to do with man occupying *regal positions* following the time when he, in that coming day, is brought into a realization of the salvation of his soul.

1) THE COMPLETE SALVATION ISSUE

In order to effect man’s eternal redemption, the Spirit of God deals with unsaved man on *one basis alone*. The Spirit deals with unsaved man *solely on the basis of Christ’s finished work at Calvary.*

But once an individual has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and has been dealt with on the basis of Christ’s finished work, realizing the birth from above — the salvation of his spirit — the salvation issue then shifts *from* the salvation of his spirit, *to* the salvation of his soul. The salvation of the spirit becomes a past, completed work and is *never* dealt with as an issue beyond this point. The Spirit of God, from this point forward, deals with the individual *solely on the basis of present and future aspects of salvation.* The individual, from this point forward, is dealt with in relation to *the salvation of his soul.*

Thus, all Scriptures dealing with carnality or unfaithfulness of Christians, resulting in forfeiture or loss, MUST pertain to issues surrounding the salvation of the soul, NEVER to issues surrounding the salvation of the spirit.

Once the salvation of the spirit has been effected, making it possible for the indwelling Spirit of God to impart spiritual truth into and control an individual’s life through his own spirit, then man’s unredeemed soul occupies the center of attention. And salvation now (in relation to the soul, not the spirit) becomes dependent on the actions of the individual.

Salvation now becomes dependent on the life one lives after his spirit has been saved. Salvation now becomes dependent on the individual allowing the Spirit of God to impart spiritual truth into and control his life through his own spirit.

An individual allowing the Spirit of God to impart spiritual truth into and control his life through his own spirit progressively grows from immaturity to maturity. He progressively grows into a spiritually mature Christian. Growing in this manner, he exerts control over his emotions, feelings, and desires pertaining to his man-conscious (soulical) existence. And, by this means, he will ultimately come into a realization of the *salvation of his soul* (*life*).

On the other hand, an individual who refuses to allow the Spirit of God to impart spiritual truth into and control his life in the preceding manner can only remain a carnally immature Christian. Apart from the assimilation of spiritual truth, resulting in spiritual growth, he cannot help but be controlled by his emotions, feelings, and desires pertaining to his man-conscious (soulical) existence. And, accordingly, such a person will ultimately suffer *the loss of his soul* (*life*), which can have no bearing whatsoever on his eternal salvation (for that is a past, finished matter which has already been dealt with).

2) THE COMPLETE SALVATION MESSAGE

The shift of the salvation issue *from* the spirit to the soul at the time of the birth from above necessitates a corresponding shift *from* the salvation message that is to be proclaimed to the unsaved (which concerns the salvation of the spirit) to the salvation message that is to be proclaimed to the saved (which concerns the salvation of the soul). *This must ever be the case*, for that which is past *ceases* to be the issue, and that which is present and future *becomes* the issue.

The only message to be carried to the unsaved is *the gospel of grace*. This is the good news that “*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*.” This message *alone* forms the basis upon which the Spirit can breathe life into the one having no life ([1 Corinthians 15:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.3&t=NKJV); *cf*. [1 Corinthians 2:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.1-2&t=NKJV)).

But once the unsaved individual has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, experiencing the birth from above, the message *must* then change, for the goal of the message will have been realized. The Spirit *must* then deal with the individual on an entirely different plane, with the issue at the forefront no longer being the salvation of the spirit, but *the salvation of the soul.*

Thus, a minister with a congregation placed under his care has been charged with *a tremendous responsibility*. His central ministry is among the saved, among those capable of grasping spiritual truth; and he is to disseminate spiritual truth to these individuals as it relates to things surrounding present and future aspects of salvation, not to things surrounding the past aspect of salvation. He, in this manner, is to “*feed the flock of God*,” looking ahead to Christ’s appearance in all His glory ([1 Peter 5:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.2-4&t=NKJV)).

This individual is responsible, under the leadership of the Spirit of God, to provide proper spiritual nourishment for those Christians placed under his care. And the only thing that God has provided for him to use as he feeds the flock of God is *the Word of God*.

As a minister in charge of a flock, he is to expound this Word under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. And Christians placed under his care are to receive this proclaimed Word into their saved human spirits. Then the Spirit of God can take this “*implanted Word*” and effect spiritual growth to maturity, with the end result being *the salvation of their souls* ([James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV)).

The tragedy in Christian circles today is the light regard that pastors of churches have for fulfilling the very purpose for their ministry. And, the end result of pastors failing to properly “*feed the flock*” entrusted to their care will be the entrance of innumerable carnal, immature Christians into the Lord’s presence at the end of the present dispensation with redeemed spirits, changed bodies, but wasted and thus unredeemed souls — forfeited lives. Their eternal salvation will remain unaffected; but, with the forfeiture or loss of their souls, they will be unable to realize the inheritance presently “*reserved in heaven*” for the faithful. Consequently, they will occupy *no position* among the “*many sons*” who will be brought to glory.

(The subject surrounding pastor-teachers and each having been entrusted with a flock, with a view to the salvation of not only the souls of the pastor-teachers but the souls of those in their flocks as well, is developed more fully in Chapter 8, [The Ministry of Elders](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#The%20Ministry%20of%20Elders), of this book in this site.)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Failure to understand and distinguish between the salvation that we presently possess and the salvation to be revealed when our Lord returns has wrought untold confusion in Christian circles.

Many Christians take Scriptures dealing with the salvation to be revealed and seek to apply them to the salvation that we presently possess. And misapplying Scripture in this manner, these individuals arrive at the erroneous conclusion that it is possible for a saved person to be lost, which not only casts reproach upon the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ at Calvary, but also does violence to numerous portions of the Word of God.

Then, on the other hand, there are those Christians who recognize that the loss of one’s eternal salvation is not possible, but still fail to understand distinctions between the salvation of the spirit and the salvation of the soul. Most from this group take many of these same verses and seek to either apply them to the nation of Israel or to unregenerate individuals, whether Jew or Gentile. And applications of this nature not only remove the Spirit’s exhortations and warnings to redeemed individuals, but erroneous interpretations in one area of Scripture will often, for the sake of consistency, lead to erroneous interpretations in other areas.

Thus, the importance of understanding distinctions between the salvation of the spirit and the salvation of the soul becomes self-evident.

Let it be forever stated: Redeemed man has come into a position from which he can *never* be removed. But this same redeemed man, in this position, is directly responsible to his Creator; and, at a future date, he will either *inherit as a joint-heir with his Lord or suffer loss in the presence of his Lord*. The former will be realized through the salvation of his soul, or the latter will, instead, be realized through the loss of his soul.